

**“When the people move, the Church moves”:** A critical exploration of the interface between Migration and Theology through a Missiological study of selected congregations within the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa in Johannesburg.

**By**

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**Pietermaritzburg, November 2015**

## DECLARATION

I declare that this research is my own work and that it has not been previously submitted to any institution for degree purposes and that all quotations and sources have been duly acknowledged.



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**25 November, 2015**

As the supervisor to the candidate, I hereby approve this thesis for submission

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**Professor Roderick Raphael Hewitt**

As candidate co-supervisor I hereby approve this thesis for submission

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**DR. Federico Settler**

## **DEDICATED**

To

My friend and academic colleague Honest Mangena, my colleague and countryman who passed away; alone and far from home at the peak of this study. To all people on the move; displaced women & children, migrants and refugees, students and migrant workers and those who died in perilous journeys crossing borders;

Your spirits live-on and in this study

You are the victors and not victims.

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which made this study possible,

All Glory be to God.

## ABSTRACT AND KEY TERMS

Is the Church a Host, Home or Hostile to migrants in the face of a global migration crisis which has fuelled mixed reactions? What are the mission-ecclesial implications of human migration and what does it mean for a local congregation to have over 90% of its members being foreign migrants in an increasingly hostile context with xenophobic attacks? This study explored these questions through a mission-ecclesial examination of the lived experiences of migrants with the UPSCA selected congregations in Johannesburg.

The main objective of the study was to establish contours for a theology of migration in South Africa with a view to enabling South African theological scholarship to explore the multiple challenges related to migration. This was done through a theological reflection on themes that emerged from the sociological examination of the lived experiences of migrants. In responding to research question on experiences of migrants, the study demonstrated how migration (like any other phenomenon) gives birth to hybrid contextual theologies as congregations are constructed or de-constructed by mission-ecclesiological and intercultural forces of migration calling into question their identity, vocation and witness.

The thesis of the study argued that, '*when the people move, the church moves*', as an assertion that the church is not the temples built in local communities, but it is a lived religious experience embodied by people who belong together through a family or community called church. As people move, they do not leave behind their religious experiences (*faith/beliefs*); instead, they move with them and articulate their migration experiences in the light of these personal religious convictions and draw on them for the perilous journeys and as survival strategies in host communities. The study found that migrants are in the majority of all selected congregations but despite these demographics; but despite these demographics, congregations continue to conduct services in old liturgical fashion, oblivious of the changing membership profile and cultural diversity which now characterises their composition. Therefore, study contends that local congregations should not treat migrants as '*hosts*' or people who are temporal guests and need to be taken care of; rather they are partners whose agency should be valued.

The study also argued that the congregations experiencing changes in membership are not “dying or dwindling,”<sup>1</sup> but they are transforming into new multicultural and transnational Christian communities which provide a safe space for migrants to preserve their cultural identity, find meaning for their faith and network as part of the survival quality of life strategies. However, the study alluded to the tensions between what the church preaches and what it practices with regards to hospitality and care for strangers noting that migrants live “in between homes.”<sup>2</sup>

The research also demonstrated how migrant communities appropriate their vulnerability and marginalization to reinvent and recreate metaphors of survival through constructing or deconstructing new forms of identity in these contested spaces characterised by multiplicity, cultural diversity, crime and vulnerability within the Johannesburg CBD. The role of the church (or lack of it) in the life and wellbeing of migrants was investigated and study found that most all selected congregations were not competent and study made recommendations to guide the design and implementation of programs aimed at ensuring that the selected congregations are spaces of safety for migrants. This study argues that the untapped theological and spiritual dimensions of migration, if properly understood and natured; can leverage effective responses to the needs of migrants and re-position the church for transformation, playing a prophetic role in the lives of the marginalised of society.

In attempting to identify theological resources on the migration experiences, study suggests that any authentic Christian theological reflection must address all forms of tribal, ethnical and national divisions and promote relationships through acknowledging diversity, arguing that much as South African churches were the meeting place against colonialism and apartheid, the post-Apartheid church must continue to take sides with the oppressed and

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<sup>1</sup> Researcher worshiped in Johannesburg during the period from 2007 to 2014 I observed that there was a generally accepted notion that congregations which were previously whites dominated had dwindled as whites had been replaced by blacks the majority of which are foreigners who found it easy to worship in these congregations than in the townships due to services being conducted in English and easy access around Johannesburg.

<sup>2</sup> This notion is based on Young Lee’s concept that migrants live on the margins of two homes, their home countries and the host communities. According to him, they experience exclusion on the margins that is symbolised by the suffering of Jesus on the cross. For Lee, suffering is inevitable for all Christ’s followers and especially those living on the margins of society or what he refers to “in between world.”

marginalized people. In the light of these observations, Christian experience can be a resource in dealing with xenophobia and intolerance not just in the church but also in communities where there are tensions between locals and foreign nationals. Given the new forms of identities and communities that emerge from these encounters, a clearer understanding can contribute immensely to the human psyche and in particular; to the church's ecclesiological practices and mission.

By exploring the lived experiences of migrants, the study unmasked the dominant ideologies around the experiences of migrants and refugees, exposing the double standards and poor government policies that perpetuate their exploitation (particularly with regards to women and children) citing government's gender insensitive migration policies as a challenge that needs to be addressed. Study demonstrated that there are intersections between gender, migration and some biblical narratives noting that these biblical texts should help us to read and interpret scriptures with new lenses. There is a changing landscape in the face of intensified human mobility as more women are now active beyond the traditional roles and the South African experiences of the African migrants selected for this study, attested to this phenomenon.

Study concluded by a summary of the findings and offered guidelines and recommendations for the government and local churches towards a contextual theology of migration which seeks to appropriate the agency of migrants at the centre of theological reflection as a way of developing transformative models of integration, assimilation and social cohesion through mission engagement with migrants.

**Key Terms:** *Human migration, Migrants and Refugees, Transnationalism, Theology, Ecclesiology, and Mission*

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS**

ACMS	Africa Centre for Migration Studies
ACRC	Africa Communion of Reformed Churches
AFD	African Diaspora Forum
ANC	African National Congress
CBD	Central Business District
CMC	Central Methodist Church
COPE	Congress of the People
CorMSA	Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa
CWM	Council for World Mission
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
ETE	Ecumenical Theology Education
FMSP	Forced Migration Studies Programme
IOM	International Organisation on Migration
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MEC	Member of Executive Council
MSF	Mecins Sans Frontiers
NRF	National Research Foundation
PAJA	Promotion of Administrative Justice
PSSOP	People Against Suffering Suppression Oppression and Poverty
SABA	South African Black Association
SABC	South African Broad Casting



SACC	South African Council of Churches
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SAMP	Southern African Migration Programme
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Plan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UPCSA	Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCRC	World Communion of Reformed Churches
WMR	World Migration Report
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Unity, Patriotic Front
ZAR	Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek

## ILLUSTATIONS

Table 1: Map of the Gauteng province in Johannesburg

Table 2: Summary for demographic information of participants

Table 3: Responses for statement 5: (Received any support from congregation?)

Table 4: Responses for social networks: (Who are the closest people in contact?)

Table 5: Responses for statements 6-10 in section B: (Worship and liturgy experiences)

Table 6: Summary for responses to question 14: (Diversity)

Table 7: Summary for responses to question 15: (Diversity)

Figure 1: Pie chart for statement 4: (How did you get accommodation?)

Figure 2: The process flow for theological discussion on the outcomes of the study.

## Political Map of Gauteng province of South Africa and location of Johannesburg



**Table 1: Gauteng Map showing all the municipalities along with province boundary, municipality boundary with their capital city.**

Source: <http://www.mapsofworld.com/south-africa/provinces/gauteng.html>

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## **Key Terms and Definitions for the study**

Human migration, Migrants, Refugees, Transnationalism, Theology, Ecclesiology, and Mission

### **Human Migration**

According to the United Nations Development Report (2009), human migration is the movement of people from one place to another. Migration can occur within a single country, between countries and across the international borders. It can be voluntary when people make personal choices to relocate, or they can also be forced to move. Stutz (2006) also understand migration to be ‘movement of people from one geographic location to another’ and notes that migration can result in many different causes, among them wars, poverty, or search for economic opportunities. For this study, migration will refer to multi-directional movement of people within local communities, cities or countries.

### **Migrants**

According to a briefing by the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, *Who Counts as a Migrant?* (Anderson and Scott, 25 August 2015) there are many ways to interpret the term ‘migrant’ and “when counting migrants and analysing the consequences of migration, who counts as a migrant is of crucial importance.” As a result, this publication notes that “there is no consensus on a single definition of a ‘migrant,’ as migrants might be defined by foreign birth, by foreign citizenship, or by their movement into a new country to stay temporarily (sometimes for as little as a year) or to settle for the long-term.” Given that in South Africa there are no refugee camps, there is no clear distinction between refugees and migrants. Therefore, in this study the term will refer to all people who are originally from other countries but are now resident in South Africa, documented and undocumented.

## **Refugees**

Dr. Tally Kritzman-Amir (<http://www.clb.ac.il/english/refuge>) cites Article 1 of *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee 1951* for a definition of "refugee" in International law "as any person who, as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."

## **Transnationalism**

Transnationalism according to Vertovec S. (2009:3) "refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation states." Vertovec adds that transnationalism provides much-needed, single, clear and condensed text concerning a major concept in academic and policy discourse today as such, this concept provides lens for understanding migration. For Roger Waldinger and David Fitzgerald (2004:4), ["the contemporary age of migration, rather, "transmigrants. . . maintain, build, and reinforce multiple linkages with their countries of origins" (in Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc 1995:52), thereby expanding the range of "home" to encompass both here and there. Such a fundamental change required entirely new concepts: "transnationalism" identified the social connections between receiving and sending countries; "transmigrants" denoted the people who forged and kept those ties alive" (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992)].

## **Theology**

According to Millard Erickson (2013), theology is the study or science of God. As he explains further, the God of Christianity is an active being, so this initial definition must be expanded to include God's work and his relationship with all of his creation. Thus theology will also seek to understand God's creation, particularly human beings and their condition, and God's redemptive working in relation to human kind. For this reason, Erickson identifies the key elements of theology which deserve attention:

- **Theology is biblical.** It takes as the primary source of its content the canonical biblical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. This is not to say that it simply draws uncritically on surface meanings of the Scriptures. It utilizes the tools and methods of biblical research. It also employs the insights of other areas of truth, which it regards as God's general revelation.
- **Theology is systematic.** That is, it draws on the entire Bible. Rather than utilizing individual texts in isolation from others, it attempts to relate the various portions to one another into a harmonious or coherent whole.
- **Theology also relates to the issues of general culture and learning.** For example, it attempts to relate its view of origins to the concepts advanced by science (or, more correctly, such disciplines as cosmology), its view of human nature to psychology's understanding of personality, its conception of providence to the work of philosophy of history, and so on.
- **Theology must also be contemporary.** While it treats timeless issues, it must use language, concepts, and thought forms that make some sense in the context of the present time.
- **Finally, theology is to be practical.** By this we do not mean practical theology in the technical sense (i.e., how to preach, counsel, evangelize, etc.), but the idea that theology relates to living rather than merely to belief. The Christian faith gives us help with our practical concerns.

## **Ecclesiology**

According to Jack Wellman (2014) ecclesiology comes from the Greek words *ecclesia* (church/assembly) and *ology* (study of) and refers to the study of the church. In Christian systematic theology, ecclesiology is one of the major areas of study and investigates what the Bible teaches about the church both universal (all believers in Christ) and local (local gatherings of believers in Christ). In short,



ecclesiology is a discipline that is concerned with the study of the church's identity and how or who constitutes the community called church. In this study the definition of ecclesiology should be understood to be a theological discipline that seeks to understand and define the church. It should be anticipated that mission and ecclesiology will overlap in most instances or inferences arising from this study and the fact that theology and ecclesiology are related but not essentially the same, has been taken into consideration.

### **Mission**

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC, 2012) understands mission to be 'the crossing of all borders that separate people from God, one another and creation.' David Jacobus Bosch (1991:519) explains that mission today is a mission in many modes, and therefore '*mission as...the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to belie, is the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community for the sake of the world.*' These two perspectives of mission will be relevant for this study.

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.1 Introduction

Seven years after the xenophobic attacks on foreigners by local South Africans in 2008, similar attacks re-surfaced in Isipingo, south of Durban and spread to the north, then nationally from the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2015. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) broadcast images of shops owned by foreigners being looted and burnt down in the violence directed to foreign nationals on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2015. These attacks spread to kwa-Mashu and Inanda in the north of Durban before going national with similar incidences reported in Rustenburg and Cape Town. According to the Rising Sun newspaper (April 7 2015, Vol. 29) homes and businesses of local people accused of accommodating and employing foreigners were targeted and looted or burnt down. As The Mercury, (April 8, 2015) also confirmed, these attacks started after King Goodwill Zwelithini is alleged to have given a speech at a moral regeneration event in Pongola in which he was reported to have said ‘foreigners should return to their home countries because they are changing the nature of South African society with their goods and enjoying the wealth that should be enjoyed by the locals.’ Although the King later appeared on television denying the allegations of his remarks, foreigners who were attacked believed that the violence was incited by the King. An SABC Television news broadcast on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2015 televised speeches from South African leaders (among them Home Affairs minister Malusi Gigaba) calling for tolerance towards foreigners and distributing food parcels and blankets to the displaced migrants and their families.

The reports of violence against foreigners highlighted above indicated that little progress had been made in changing the attitudes of local South Africans since 2008. This was despite evidence from the studies conducted in the past which demonstrated that most South Africans have negative perceptions towards foreign nationals (Crush, Ramachandran, & Pendleton, 2013). The authors argued that there was no indication that politicians and policy makers had made progress in developing effective

programs to avert similar attacks in future. This raises questions about the role of leadership in such critical moments such as civil unrest, protests and violence that seem to be embedded in the culture of South African public sphere and it was particularly of concern to note the absence of church leadership as these developments unfolded.

What has the government been doing since 2008? Were there any lessons drawn from these horrific events that drew global attention as foreigners were set alight? What are the churches doing to address the complex challenges faced by migrants other than providing temporary shelter and food during times of violence and displacement? More importantly, what are the experiences of migrants and what role can the churches play in providing sustainable ongoing care and support? This phenomenological and interdisciplinary study examined the experiences of migrants in selected congregations within the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) in Johannesburg with a view to exploring the missional and ecclesiological implications of the presence of migrants in these selected local congregations.

*Insertion, a personal statement*

I am a Zimbabwean national now resident in South Africa and studied in South African Universities (University of Kwa-Zulu Natal and Stellenbosch University) since the year 2000 and went back to Zimbabwe in 2004. I came back to South Africa in 2007 after being appointed to a position of transnational HIV and AIDS Coordinator in Johannesburg<sup>1</sup> working with congregations in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe within the UPCSA. This appointment took place in 2007 at the height of the Zimbabwean economic meltdown that happened as tensions between the ruling ZANU PF and the opposition MDC mounted. Following the disputed elections there was violence and people were fleeing the country in large numbers and as a result, a number of people interpreted my move to Johannesburg in the light of the challenges in Zimbabwe, not as an appointment to the office of the transnational church, for which I was eligible like any minister within the UPCSA. This led to inexplicable animosity and tensions from fellow colleagues locally and back home, with some

even referring to me as a ‘refugee’ or as some would put it; “this one from Zimbabwe,” a no-name kind of person, someone who fled his country to seek safety in South Africa. Notwithstanding the transnational nature of the UPCSA, such labelling developed into an identity crisis within my-self as I felt unrecognised by local South African while having to deal with rejection from some close associates at home. If I could face such isolation and stigma as a minister and working from the central office of the church, how much more were the ordinary African migrants within the church subjected to? It was these personal experiences and tensions that latter generated an interest within researcher to investigate the experiences of African migrants in Johannesburg. More specifically, as a minister; the researcher felt let down by the church (for not developing a non-discrimination policy to protect non-South Africans); all this in a context where the government seemed to be doing little to respond to these challenges.

Therefore, the researcher embraced the task of seeking to explore these issues from a theological perspective, and so this thesis was proposed. In the years that followed I no longer took offence when being labelled or treated suspiciously as a foreign migrant, instead I began to probe and explore the lived experiences of African migrants as a survival strategy to cope with the dilemma I found myself in. Given that the UPCSA is a transnational church, my responsibility at the central office involved working with the congregations in the three countries and in order to perform effectively in this position, I had to think beyond my Zimbabwean experience and nationality and my experience resonated with the challenges faced by foreign African migrants struggling to survive the harsh realities of living in new South African communities. What is it really like to be a Presbyterian Church member and minister coming from outside South Africa, working and living in a city like Johannesburg?

Owing to the challenges highlighted above, the researcher’s thinking in this study was greatly influenced by his personal experiences; first as a male minister within the UPCSA church and as an African migrant working in Johannesburg from which the

subjects for the study were drawn. Given these circumstances, ethical measures<sup>2</sup> have been taken to guard against compromising the investigation and the study does not claim to address all issues on migrants in Johannesburg, but delineated between the economic and political issues while examining the missional, ecclesiological and theological issues around the experience of migration.

In line with the growing concerns for emerging urban challenges in the post - Apartheid South African context, this study aimed at exploring the experience of selected migrants in Johannesburg with a view to developing a theological framework that will contribute to the interdisciplinary discourses concerned with the complex challenges arising from the situation of migrants. In charting a way towards this agenda, the study firstly explored migration as a distinctive developmental contemporary challenge, “the sign of the times,”<sup>3</sup> what seemed to be a threat to peace and stability in urban communities not just in South Africa but globally.

Secondly, the foundational understanding of the concept and trends in migration led to an exploration of the lived reality of migration and the experiences of migrants as understood by themselves. Thirdly, from this vantage point of the experience of migration, the study drew on scholarly work to map contours for a proposed theology of migration in South Africa and the findings from the study offered recommendations on the role of the church in pushing for a sustainable human rights based approach in caring for migrants, working towards proper integration and ensuring that developmental agenda or South African policy makers take the presence of migrants in South African communities seriously.

## **1.2 Background and Motivation**

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<sup>2</sup> This includes paying attention to my position as a minister within the church and using a gender sensitive framework provided by Dolores Williams

<sup>3</sup> This was a call of the Second Vatican Council for churches to consider human migration as a “sign of our times,” a contemporary challenge needing an urgent response (Blume, 2002)

The findings of Crush, Ramachandran, & Pendleton (2013:34) confirmed that local South Africans perceive foreigners as criminals who take their jobs and women. Other scholars such as Bond (2010:7) agreed that the country is struggling with a high level of unemployment and warned that this, combined with a high influx of African refugees and migrants seeking better employment opportunities, will often lead to disturbances amongst the low income level local population groups (Bond, 2010:7). These scholars also agree that very little change has happened since May 2008 and suggest that in dealing with the challenge of violence against foreigners, the following points are to be noted:

- In the case of South Africa, the link between xenophobia and conflict is the collective fear of a struggling local population for their future economic wellbeing, as revealed in the work of Lake and Rothschild (1996:44).
- As Lake and Rothschild (1996:44) further observe; South Africa is a country receiving high levels of the foreigners from African countries and this makes the country an easy target for problems within society, such as crime and unemployment. Foreign migrants become competitors in an already struggling economic system.
- There have been ongoing threats to foreigners since May 2008. Studies done by the Consortium for Migrants and Refugees in South Africa in 2009 found that the foreigners were still under threat of violence and that little was done to address the causes of the attacks (Crawford, 2010, in [www.cormsa.org.za](http://www.cormsa.org.za) accessed 26 Nov 2012).

In the light of these observations, there is a need for a broader investigation of the following:

- An examination of the psycho-social and spiritual realities of African migration to South Africa.

- In what ways does migration impact on the identity, ministry and mission of local congregations?

Therefore, it became critical to explore and examine the lived experiences of African migrants living in Johannesburg and worshipping in local churches. What ought to be the role of those congregations in addressing xenophobia and in improving social, political and economic living conditions of foreign migrants. It is in this context that the study proposed to interrogate the phenomenon of migration - not just as the movement of goods and information, but more significantly, from the perspective of human mobility; through the lives of foreign migrants who are members of selected congregations of the Uniting Presbyterian Church (UPCSA) in Johannesburg. It was hoped that this will lead to the following accomplishments:

- A deeper understanding of the ecclesial and missional issues and challenges which arise from the presence and experiences of migrants in Johannesburg.
- Identify missional insights from the experiences of migrants that can serve as a resource for the healing and encouraging of pastoral care for migrants.
- Exploring alternative models of care based on the experiences of migrants to promote human rights, dignity and tolerance in the South African context.

### **1.3 Rationale and significance of study**

This study was significant in that it attempted to examine the ecclesial and missiological dimensions of migration and its impact on South African communities. The quotation: “*When people move the church moves*”<sup>4</sup> identifies a missional ‘umbilical cord’ kind of relationship between movement of people and movement of church (its ecclesial and missional identity). It is this movement of people in and out of different communities that holds the transformative power for the church to be dynamic, to move ecclesiastically and missionally. The study shows how migration

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<sup>4</sup> Cited from Jacob Sol (1982). “*Refugees: A challenge to the South African Churches- A Ministry to Refugees Handbook*.” The South African Council of Churches.

gives birth to hybrid contextual theologies as congregations are constructed or deconstructed by missio-ecclesial and intercultural forces of migration calling into question their identity, vocation and witness.

Secondly, the study draws attention to a marginalized group of people in urban communities of Johannesburg. Despite the South African government's "open policy" towards migrants from other African countries—a gesture for their support during the apartheid era—migrants who come to Johannesburg without following formal procedures, are branded 'illegal' because they are considered to have not complied with formal immigration procedures ([www.cde.org.za](http://www.cde.org.za) accessed 29 October 2015). As a result, they are condemned to some clandestine existence; seeking accommodation and work while living in fear of being detected and deported by the authorities. Avoiding local police makes them vulnerable as they become easy targets of corruption, bribery, crime and unscrupulous employers or landlords abusing them through cheap labour and exorbitant rental fees and unsafe accommodation. These practices create a marginalized class of 'aliens' compelled to survive on the periphery of society. The study attempts to unmask the dehumanising effects of this unfolding phenomenon, with a view to exploring how the church can play a life giving role in the lives of African migrants living in Johannesburg.

Similarly, migrants who are granted permanent residence or citizenship status endure marginalization and derogatory names such as '*makwerekwere*,' a term used by local South Africans to refer to people who are from outside South Africa and meant to imply their inferiority status. According to Zulu (2011:33) "citizenship allows recourse to rule of law but does not guarantee protection against prejudice and discrimination by the host communities" (Zulu, 2011:33). It could be argued that the problem is systemically constructed through South Africa's immigration laws which favour an 'open policy' on the surface; while the process of determining the legal status of migrants and the extent to which they can socially and economically participate in society receives very little attention. The same can be said regarding social protection during the process of reception and settlement. This is a double standard, and the S.A. government presents a good picture of 'an open and welcoming



country' in its foreign policy, while denying the migrants full rights to residency, citizenship, and protection of rights and benefits.

This phenomenological and interdisciplinary study employed the transnational theory of migration as an approach to globalization and utilized qualitative approaches within a constructivist paradigm; a belief that the world we experience is constructed by each of us and together (Guba and Lincoln, 2005:197). Drawing on the extensive work of scholars and organisations, among them the Africa Centre for Migration and Society at the University of Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg and The Southern African Migration Programme (SAMP) Policy briefings, the study explored migration as a developmental challenge that offers an opportunity for the churches to be engaged in meaningful mission.

Whilst relying on the socio-economic data to explore the context of the study, the agenda was theological; aimed at contributing to the inter-disciplinary body of knowledge seeking to interrogate the complex challenges related to the rapid population growth in urban cities, such as Johannesburg. The movement of people into the urban cities is an important phenomenon and this theological study is supportive of Ignatius Swart and Stephan de Beer's (2014:2) observation on what is required as part of the methodology when academically examining emerging urban challenges;

[A] way of thinking that is overtly normatively inclined, as evident from the applications of new working concepts such as the 'good city', the 'imagined city', the 'postcolonial city', the 'sustainable city', and the 'postsecular city' (Sic); a way of thinking, accordingly, that is particularly geared towards alternative epistemological productions and practices; and finally, a way of thinking that (re)prioritises the political, motivated by an idea framework of rights-based, anti-technocratic, anti-authoritarian and anti-neoliberal discourse that in view of inclusive and sustainable urban alternatives wants to include the agency role of ordinary, poor and marginalised occupants of the urban as inherently part of the envisioned drive towards alternative epistemological production and practice (Swart & de Beer, 2014:2).

Although Swart and de Beer (2014:2) were concerned with public theology as a theological framework for the approach in the urban space, the inter –disciplinary nature of their approach offers a hermeneutical key which could be central to understanding the experience of migrants in the light of Peter Phan (2008) and Jorge Calisto’s (2009)<sup>5</sup> suggestion that migration is one of the essential sources of an intercultural theology of migration. It is therefore necessary to pay attention to these proposed methodological frameworks as resources for this reflection.<sup>6</sup>

A detailed methodology section for this study is presented in Chapter three that outlines the methods employed in examining the experiences of migrants as both method and resource for theological reflection on migration. The methodology section shows how the study conducted three focus group discussions with 24 participants (9 males and 15 females aged between 22 and 48), held interviews with six leaders (4 males and 2 females) and supplemented this data with self-administered questionnaires from members of the selected congregations under investigation.

### ***1.3.1 Research questions and objectives of the study***

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. Exploring the theological, social, economic and political realities of the experience of migrants in four congregations of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa within the city of Johannesburg.
2. Analysing models of care for migrants with respect to human rights, dignity and tolerance.
3. Identifying social and theological resources that can contribute to developing a South African theology of migration.

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<sup>5</sup> Cited in Donald Kerwin and Jill Marie Gerschutz, eds., *And you Welcomed Me: Migration and Catholic Social Teaching*; Lanham, Md.: Lexington, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Phan insisted that the great resource and starting point for theological reflection on migration is the experience of the migrants themselves.

The main objective of this study was to examine the lived experiences of migrants with a view to identifying resources towards a theology of migration that can enable South African theological scholarship to explore the multiple challenges related to migration, from the experiences of migrants themselves. The methodology that gives recognition and voice to the sayings of African themselves and building a theology from below based on such saying has been proposed by Lartey (2013) whose thinking was considered in this study.

The rapid expansion of urban populations and particularly, the growing ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity of communities as a result of the presence of migrants and the free movement of people across South African provinces and African regions has influenced the development of different discourses in the phenomenon, as clearly observed by notable scholars Swart and De Beer (2014:3) who mention that:

There has never been a singular discourse, as evident from the way in which public, intellectual, civil society, cultural, religious and popular discourses have all depicted the city through diverse narratives and visions. As a result, whilst the different discourses have at times complemented each other, they have more often also given rise to contesting images and ideas (Swart and de Beer, 2014:3).

It is in the light of these ‘contesting images and ideas’ that this study attempted to contribute to these multiple discourses by adding a voice, albeit a theological one, to the already dominant ideologies seeking to shed light on the current challenges in Johannesburg with regards to African migrants.

### *Research Question*

The study sought to respond to this core question: *What are the theological issues that emerge from the experiences of migrant worshippers within the selected congregations of the UPCSA in Johannesburg and what is (or what ought to be) the role of the church in addressing challenges related to migration?*

## **1.4 Context of study**

The study is located in Johannesburg, at the heart of Gauteng province in the former gold rich areas of the Witwatersrand. The land that was developed into a world class city over many years was originally inhabited by the San people before the arrival of groups of Bantu speaking people from the South of the country ([www.gautengcc.co.za/jhb-history.htm](http://www.gautengcc.co.za/jhb-history.htm) accessed 25 September 2014). The Sotho and Tswana speaking people established villages, chiefdoms and kingdoms that stretched from what is now Botswana through to the to present day Lesotho in the south, to the Pedi or Venda areas of the northern Transvaal. More specifically, the stone-walled ruins of Sotho-Tswana villages were scattered around the parts of the former Transvaal in which Johannesburg is situated. According to archeological studies conducted by Professor Revil Mason at the University of Witwatersrand in the 1960's, the Sotho–Tswana people practiced farming, raised cattle, sheep and goats, and extensively mined and smelted copper, iron and tin ([www.joburg.org.za/index.php?](http://www.joburg.org.za/index.php?) Accessed, 17 May 2015).

During the *Mfecane and difaqane*<sup>7</sup> wars most of the Sotho–Tswana villages around Johannesburg were destroyed and their people driven away between the 18th and early 19th centuries resulting in the famous reign of the Zulu Kingdom (Matebele) led by Tshaka ([www.joburg.org.za/index.php?](http://www.joburg.org.za/index.php?) Accessed, 17 May 2015). The 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw the arrival of the Dutch speaking Voortrekkers from the Netherlands who used modern weapons against the Matebele and formed alliances with the Sotho-Tswana people; driving Tshaka and the Matebele people further north<sup>8</sup> and establishing settlements in the mineral rich areas such as Rustenburg and Pretoria in the 1830's and later discovered Gold and claimed sovereignty over what became known as Johannesburg in the 1880's leading to the gold rush.

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<sup>7</sup> This was a period when African indigenous tribal groups fought against each other in search for grazing land, cattle women and mineral resources

<sup>8</sup> The movement up north continued until some descendants of the Zulu kingdom settled in places like Bulawayo, my home town located in Zimbabwe. The Ndebele people in Zimbabwe are originally from the Zulu kingdom and settled there under the leadership of Mzilikazi and later Lobengula his son

Before the discovery of Gold, Johannesburg was a dusty settlement some 55 km from the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) capital which was Pretoria, the town—named after two surveyors employed by the ZAR, Johannes Meyer and Johannes Rissik ([www.gautengcc.co.za/jhb-history.htm](http://www.gautengcc.co.za/jhb-history.htm) accessed 25 September 2014). As news about the newly established gold rich settlement spread, people from all over the country and even beyond the South African borders flocked in; seeking employment and in doing so they also gave active support to the building of the city populated with white miners from Europe and competing to recruit Africans who had to perform skilled mining. The search for economic opportunities intensified, and these mining activities led to the influx of African women who brew beer and cooked food which they sold to the migrant workers. The South African culture and music industry is rich with this heritage, depicted through music and drama which portrays the life of migrants in the hostels during that time ([www.gautengcc.co.za/jhb-history.htm](http://www.gautengcc.co.za/jhb-history.htm) accessed 25 September 2014).

As the competition for the control of the land increased, tensions developed between the Boer government in Pretoria and the British<sup>9</sup>, culminating in the Jameson raid that ended in fiasco at Doornkop in January 1896 and the second Boer War (1899–1902) that saw British forces under Lord Roberts occupy the city on 30 May 1900 after a series of battles to the south of its then-limits ([www.gautengcc.co.za/jhb-history.htm](http://www.gautengcc.co.za/jhb-history.htm) accessed 25 September 2014). A series of these wars forced many African mineworkers to leave Johannesburg resulting in a shortage of labor, a situation which was addressed by bringing new laborers from China. After the wars, most of these Chinese laborers were replaced by black workers, although many Chinese stayed on, creating Johannesburg's Chinese community, who, during the apartheid era, were not legally classified as "Asian," but as "Coloured." It is important to note how foreigners were brought into South Africa to provide cheap labor and at a later stage these settlements of laborers would result in the creation of migrant communities. This pattern was common not just in Johannesburg but for example, in Kwa-Zulu Natal as

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<sup>9</sup> The British were also advancing their colonial interests through the projects that combined settler administrators and missionaries such as the popular Cecil John Rhodes and David Livingstone. Livingstone and Robert Moffatt latter pioneered the establishment of the Presbyterian and Congregational mission schools and centres working under the London Missionary Society.

well, where the Indians were also brought into South Africa as migrant laborers in the Sugarcane plantations.

Later in the 1930's, South Africa's gold went into the world markets leading to major infrastructural, housing and building developments between the 1940's and 1950's. As a way of keeping the growing numbers of black migrant laborers out of the city, the apartheid government developed a series of South Western Townships (Soweto) that later became a popular uprising place and breeding ground for black liberation fighters seeking equal opportunities and demanding rights for the oppressed blacks ([www.gautengcc.co.za/jhb-history.htm](http://www.gautengcc.co.za/jhb-history.htm) accessed 25 September 2014).

The continued struggle against apartheid led to the first black democratically elected government when the African National Congress (ANC) came into power on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1994 - signaling freedom of movement for previously restricted black Africans and opening equal opportunities for all people; values which are enshrined in the freedom charter and the S.A constitution. The dawn of democracy led to the influx of many migrants from politically and economically troubled parts of Africa such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia, this coupled with the return of South Africans who fled the country in large numbers during the reign of the oppressive Apartheid regime. The new ANC government, feeling obliged to pay back their African brothers who hosted them in exile when they fought the Apartheid regime-relaxed the borders and allowed the influx of many migrants and refugees fleeing poverty and persecution in their home countries, somehow without an effective regulatory framework.<sup>10</sup> As most scholars (among them Crush et. al, 2013) have also noted that the government had no clear policy to address the influx of refugees and economic migrants as they did not for-see the violence that will break out from South Africans against foreign nationals.

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<sup>10</sup> It would seem to me that the ANC government did not foresee the complexity of free movement of people against the regional economic and political instability. Even worse, there is no distinction between economic migrants and refugees as all non-South Africans are branded foreigners and treated the same way.

This lack of comprehensive migration regulatory Policy with a clear vision on the part of the S.A. government was demonstrated by the manner in which they handled the initial series of xenophobic attacks that broke out against foreigners from the 12<sup>th</sup> of May in 2008 starting in Alexandra, in the north-eastern part of Johannesburg and spreading to most parts of the country (SABC News Channel, 13 May 2008). Instead of integrating the already settled local community based foreign nationals, the government set up isolated temporary camps for foreigners- away from their work places, shops and other facilities; making them easy targets for discrimination and targeted xenophobic violence.

In attempting to address the past ills from the Apartheid system which divided South Africans along racial, ethnic and economical classes that led to oppression of the black majority and gave privileged status to white South Africans, the government became politically short sighted. White supremacy and social or economic divisions bequeathed by the Apartheid system are still noticeable in contemporary South Africa where most black people are still living in the crowded townships and informal settlements. Ethnicity is still prevalent in national politics in that Zulus and Sotho speaking people are still the majority living in former areas designated by the apartheid regime. As a result, new residents from other ethnic groups find it difficult to move into the townships due to language, culture and ethnical differences. The generally low regard for people who do not speak local South African languages diminishes their chance to settle in those communities and this phenomenon makes migrants vulnerable to xenophobic attacks.

### *Policy context*

Allowing free movement of people requires more than a gesture. It requires not just Policy shifts, but clear and sustainable implementation strategies that are developed from below, with the people and for the people. According to Crush and Williams (2001) and Landau (2010) the South African government has passed almost 200 pieces of new legislation since 1994 but progress on migration legislation has been

very slow despite a memorandum of understanding having been signed between the South African government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that allowed refugees to enter South Africa. The Refugee Act was passed in 1998 and the Immigration Act later followed in 2002 (Crush and Williams 2001) with the later criticised for being too focused on the reduction of illegal immigration through repressive forms of law enforcement<sup>11</sup> that failed to consider the long term implications of the presence of migrants in South African communities.

Similarly, very little seems to have been done within the church context, notwithstanding the attempts made by African scholars concerned with the religious experiences of migrants among them; Mnyaka (2003), Nzayabino (2005), Orobator (2005), and Ohajiriogu (2009), who suggested that religion plays a central role in shaping and maintaining identity among migrant populations. However, one of the limitations of these studies is that they did not pay much attention to the spiritual and psychological dimensions of migration. The current study was built on the socio-cultural and economic strengths of these previous attempts and aimed to bridging the knowledge gaps from the perspective of contextual Christian mission.

Indeed, migration is a critical developmental issue for Africa and governments together with denominational Church Policy formulations should take human mobility into account. Some of the questions in this study have been raised by African scholars concerned with the religious experiences and migration, for example Orobator (2005) and Ohajiriogu (2009) who argued that religion plays an important role in shaping and maintaining identity among migrant populations. As this thesis argues, when people move, they do not leave behind their religious experiences; instead, they move with them and articulate their migration experiences in the light of personal theological reflections of the journey. This was also the case during the period of colonialism and slavery of Africans taken to the Americas, where different types of African religions also made the journey and mutated in their new environment. Thus, religion plays an

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<sup>11</sup> For further discussion on the critique of this policy refer to SAHRC, 2002 report. Reference is made to this dialogue to demonstrate a lack of clear policy formulation on the part of the South African government to deal with the influx of migrants in local communities, a gap that is clearly seen in the manner in which local police arrest and detain migrants for long periods without trial.



important role in shaping the identity of individuals and communities, especially in the light of Gunn's assertion that like "identity, religion is less a matter of theological beliefs than it is an issue of family, culture, ethnicity, and nationality" (2002:16).

### *The constructions of transnational experience*

Moving into Johannesburg introduces most migrants from least developed African countries into a modern cosmopolitan city that they will not find easy to adapt to. Freeways and modern transport systems mean that migrants from rural places cannot easily walk long distances any more as they have to depend on the sophisticated transport system with little or no money to meet their traveling expenses. Searching for jobs becomes a complicated task. Further to the already complex environment for new arrivals in Johannesburg, cultural diversity presents another challenge when they are introduced to new foods, languages and religious differences.<sup>12</sup> The use of derogatory terms such as '*makwerekwere*'<sup>13</sup> to label foreign African Migrants due to their inability to speak local S.A. languages can contribute to miscommunication between migrants and locals when they go to the shops, schools, work, restaurants and other places providing public services. Sometimes unscrupulous employers, insensitive public officials and opportunistic locals take advantage of these language barriers to exploit foreigners.

Local leaders do not seem to understand the challenges that migrants have to endure in Johannesburg. Addressing delegates during the opening service for the Oikotree Movement<sup>14</sup> in Soweto, Johannesburg on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2013, the General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) at that time, Rev Mautji Pataki called on South Africans to remind Zimbabwean migrants to go back to

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<sup>12</sup> This specifically applies to Muslims around the Fordsburg and Mayfair suburbs of Johannesburg who are visible in their religious clothes. They rarely mix with people from other faiths and live in secluded areas which were previously designated for Indians. This poses a great challenge to integration as their cultural and religious practices lead to a secluded life, leaving them vulnerable to xenophobic attacks.

<sup>13</sup> *Makwerekwere* is a derogatory term used by local South Africans to refer to people who are from outside South Africa. The word is taken from the poor pronunciation of words.

<sup>14</sup> According to information available on their website ([www.oikotree.org](http://www.oikotree.org)) Oikotree is an ecumenical space in open to people of all faiths in which a movement of those seeking to live faithfully in the midst of economic injustice and ecological destruction can take shape. It is sponsored by the Council for World Mission (CWM), the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the World Council of Churches.

Zimbabwe to vote.<sup>15</sup> While he had a strong point to put across; namely making sure that Zimbabweans in the neighbouring countries have to be encouraged to participate in the processes that will restore democracy in Zimbabwe, his language failed to demonstrate sensitivity to the plights of African migrants living targeted for xenophobic violence in Johannesburg. This statement points to language that is xenophobic; “*you live with them, you work with them; tell them to go back to their country and vote.*” The message could have been conveyed better and the South African Church leadership needs to realise that the hatred of foreigners is fuelled by the manner in which leaders publicly speak about foreigners and referring to non-South Africans as “*them*”, is counter revolutionary to initiatives aimed at making sure that migrants fully integrate into the South African Society.

Such irresponsible public statements from leaders do not promote peace and stability in communities. Responding to a crowd that attacked foreigners a local leader in KwaMashu identified as Nkosi retorted:

“This issue of xenophobia is not something that is limited to a specific ward and we see it now spreading to the whole of Durban”.

“These people [foreign nationals] did not just appear here and while the overwhelming narrative is that they are here illegally and contribute towards high rates of crime, the ones being targeted are honest business people who have every right to trade in South Africa”.

"These people uplift the economy and now there is an effort to drive them out. The government needs to step in. They are our brothers and sisters and our councillors will continue to try and settle the situation,” he said.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Addressing delegates of the Oikotree Global Movement in Johannesburg, he was making reference to the Referendum on the new constitution which was scheduled for the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2013.

<sup>16</sup> This is according to the <http://www.msn.com/en-za/news/featured/xenophobic-violence-government-walks-the-walk-but-will-it-talk-the-talk/a-AAaUQkm?ocid=iehp> retrieved 13 April 2015

Even with this attempt by a local official to offer a positive response to the plight of foreign migrants, his use of the terms; “*these people*,” “*them*” against “*we*” or “*us*” are creates divisions and is not inclusive but rather sends the stereotype and subliminal messages that worsen the exclusion of foreign nationals in local communities.

As Spielhaus (2006:2) found out; [t]he increasing use of antagonistic categories (in Germany) such as “you” and “we”, “our culture” and “your community” did not support integration. Although he was referring to the German context, Riem Spielhaus, a scholar of Islamic studies slammed the use of exclusive language arguing that it has implications for the integration of Muslims in Germany. The use of these terms did not promote integration but tended to fuel xenophobia and reflected a misunderstanding of complexity of challenges faced by migrants who are driven from their homes by wars, poverty and political instability to settle in the host countries.

At a Xenophobia community meeting in Daveyton Methodist Church on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2013 which was organised by the SACC following the death of a Mozambican taxi driver Mido Marcia who was dragged by the police at the back of a van, concerns were raised about treatment of foreigners and this triggered serious public debate on the discriminatory treatment of migrants. His terrible death prompted national, regional and international outcry after the video went viral and sparked a public debate on police brutality. The message by the Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) for Community Safety in Gauteng, Nonhlanhla Faith Mazibuko made an appeal for tolerance against people from other countries. She explained that the Provincial government was committed to ensuring that incidents of xenophobia are addressed and outlined the following programs:

- South African government does not create refugee centres because they have a policy of ‘integration’ and encourage refugees to work and play an active role in society than keep them in isolation.<sup>17</sup> She attributed this approach to a

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<sup>17</sup> Although the Refugee Act, passed in 1998 was a commendable legislative piece as it provides for the needs of migrants and refugees seeking refuge in South Africa, stating that refugees are allowed to work and access education in South Africa as enshrined in Chapter 2 of the Constitution (with the exception of political rights and the rights to freedom of trade, occupation, and profession, which do not apply to non-citizens), it does not address the right to access basic services such as housing, water, sanitation and safety. As a result, foreigners are excluded from basic services in some communities.

realisation that Apartheid confined most people to certain places and denied them the freedom of movement.

- Government has formed community safety forums and structures that promote involvement of foreigners
- Ensuring that foreigners have access to health care, schools and other social services and amenities. These views were challenged by the representatives of the African Diaspora Forum (ADF)<sup>18</sup> who argued that there are huge gaps between the government Policy and real life experiences of migrants. Access to health care and schools still remain a challenge for foreigners who are turned away for lack of ‘proper documents’ such as valid identity documents and passports (www.adf.org.za Accessed on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 2015).

The MEC acknowledged that African countries contributed to the liberation of South Africa from apartheid and noted that African countries play an important role in the development of the South African economy. Rather than blaming everything on foreigners, she pointed out; ‘we need to work together to fight crime, prostitution, violence and abuse of women and children’ (Mazibuko, Address at a Community meeting, 15 March 2013). Drawing on her past experiences as a child, she also reminded her audience that some South Africans like her went to Catholic schools and their teachers were foreigners and were taught to treat strangers with respect. She made an important observation that strangers also have certain obligations; “you do not come into somebody’s house and start doing as you please, you must conduct yourselves properly and respect the laws of the land” (Mazibuko, 15 March 2013).

In spite of some short comings from some of the leaders, the member of the executive Committee (MEC), [a political public figure] dealt with the concerns on xenophobia better than the church leadership. This raises questions about the role of the church and Christian leadership in the context of intensified human migration.

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<sup>18</sup> African Diaspora Forum (ADF) was created as a reaction to the xenophobic attacks in May 2008. Several community leaders and concerned residents in South Africa, called by Ivorian community leader Marc Gbaffou and Carnival organiser and pan African enthusiast Rayban Sengwayo, came together and decided to create a platform for African migrants to voice their concern and work for an integrated society.

The Boksburg Advertiser (Friday, Nov 30 2012), published a story '*Foreigners live in fear*' in which it was reported that more than 12 foreign shop owners in Delmore informal settlement in the East Rand are living in fear after being forced to shut down their shops. This resulted from threatening letters which were distributed by local South Africans shop owners accusing Somali shop owners of taking customers away from their business. The report cited Mohamed Isaacs, a foreign shop owner saying that a group of local residents has given them until the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2012 to vacate their shops. 'On November 15, they came back and told us that we have to leave, because if we don't, they will throw us out of the area by force' (Boksburg Advertiser, Nov 30, 2012).

Although a stakeholders' meeting was scheduled after the foreigners made reports to the police, some local people stated in the meeting that they did not want foreigners anymore, and threatened to remove them by force. According to Sgt Mashudu Phathela, a spokesperson for the Reiger Park SAPS, the police were monitoring the situation closely, "We are concerned. We are trying to help both parties to resolve the apparent tension by peaceful negotiation with the assistance of community leaders, we are not taking anyone's side, but we will continue our work of implementing the law by protecting everyone regardless of race or nationality" (Phathela, in Boksburg Advertiser, Nov 30, 2012).

The paper further reported that an attempt to restore peace and stability in the area led to a joint meeting attended by police, Somali representatives, community leaders and local business people held on the evening of Wednesday 21 November, 2012 and this meeting was called off after hundreds of residents arrived at the venue and caused disruptions. On the same night of November 21, a Somali was robbed of his cell phone, and another threatened with death and a third Somali's vehicle damaged. The attacked Somalis were advised by the police to open criminal cases, including charges of robbery, theft and malicious damage to property (Boksburg Advertiser, Nov 30, 2012).

Following these developments, Ekurhuleni mayor Mondli Gungubele condemned xenophobia and other related forms of intolerance while speaking at the Social Cohesion Summit hosted by the municipality (Boksburg Advertiser, 30 November 2012). According to Ekurhuleni metro spokesperson, Sam Modiba (Boksburg Advertiser, 30 November, 2012), Gungubele said the Summit marked a continuation of the city's efforts to ensure that the violence visited upon fellow Africans is never repeated in Ekurhuleni again. Gungubele vowed that the municipality will continue to work hard to ensure that its police officers are well trained to deal with violence perpetuated against foreign nationals, gays and lesbians in the area. "Xenophobia, sexism, homophobia and racism are some of the culminations of ignorance of our people to the factors key to the success of our nation," (Boksburg Advertiser, 30 November 2012) added Gungubele noting that unity is key to development. In ensuring that challenges faced by communities are addressed, the mayor outlined the municipality's commitments to the following:

- Build local economies to create more employment, decent work and sustainable livelihoods;
- Improve local public services and broaden access to them;
- Build more united, non-racial, integrated and safer communities;
- Promote more active community participation in local government; and,
- Ensure more effective, accountable and clean local government that works together with national and provincial government (Boksburg Advertiser, 30 November 2012).

### *Crime Reports involving foreigners*

Media reports on crimes committed by foreigners suggest that there is a clear indication that arresting and detention of migrants is one of the pre-occupations for the South African Police Services (SAPS).

For example: *Rosebank Killarney Gazette, week ending 12 October 2012* provided the following crime statistics under their “*Police report, Hillbrow Police Station*”, on page 2:

Common assault 21, assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm 15, possession of drugs 3, armed robbery 3, intimidation 3, malicious damage to property 4, drunk driving 20, reckless and negligent driving 3, aggravated robbery 1, shop lifting 6, common robbery 7, driving without a licence 1, theft 8, money laundering 1, possession of dangerous weapon 1, fraud 6, crimen injuria 1, possession of suspected stolen property 2, house breaking and theft 1, attempted business robbery 1, theft out of motor vehicle 2, rape 1, attempted robbery 1, and illegal immigrants 21.

Contrasted with statistics on the same publication for the week ending 7 December 2012, the *Rosebank Killarney Gazette, under Police Report, Parkview Police station on page 2*; the highest number under their Arrests is that of so called “illegal immigrants”;

Fraud, 1, illegal immigrants 23, common assault 5, drinking in public 8, residing in an open space 17, theft 17, possession of dagga 1, rape 1, drunkenness 2, drunk driving 8, assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm 1, house breaking and theft 1, loitering 1, possession of suspected stolen property 2, malicious damage to property 1.

A comparison of these two reports from the same source within a two months interval reflect a pattern of police categorising undocumented migrants as “illegal immigrants” and therefore automatically listing them as “criminals.” Whereas crime statistics<sup>19</sup> do not list “illegal immigrants” in the categories of crimes for which people have been arrested, Police reports have added “illegal immigrants” and record the highest number of people arrested under this “crime” category. This seems to suggest that the SAPS make a lot of unlawful arrests for people without documents to boost their crime statistics. There is no distinction made between asylum seekers and the so

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats/2012/provinces/gauteng/gauteng.htm>

called ‘illegal immigrants’ given that both categories of migrants do not always have formal documents for living in South African.

In order to verify the reports on whether there are any prosecutions for people arrested as illegal immigrants, the researcher visited the Lindelani Detention Centre. Lindelani is a Zulu word meaning “wait” and the centre host thousands of migrants awaiting deportation to their countries of origin. Even refugees and Asylum seekers are labelled illegal immigrants and detained for long periods without trial. Although the government is aware of human rights abuses committed by state and private security personnel at this facility, officials constantly deny such abuses. For example, in responding to questions raised by Mr G.B.D Mc Intosh of the Congress of the People (COPE) during a parliamentary debate on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2012, the Minister of Home Affairs chose to emphasize that it was the “illegal immigrants” and not asylum seekers who are detained in Lindelani. This is very clear on the following extract from the Parliamentary Monitoring Group ([www.pmg.org.za/node/30871](http://www.pmg.org.za/node/30871) Accessed 23 July 2014).

#### **QUESTION 3118**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION: Friday, 09 November 2012**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 39 of 2012**

**Mr G B D Mc Intosh (Cope) to ask the Minister of Home Affairs:**

(1) What rights do arrested asylum seekers (a) have or (b) don't have once they are placed at Lindelani Holding Centre for Refugees;

(2) Whether she has found that those rights or limited freedoms comply with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Charter on refugees and asylum seekers; if not, why not; if so, (a) how are they implemented, (b) by whom are they implemented, (c) how many resident officials of the various rights departments are stationed at Lindelani for this purpose, (d) what systems are in place to monitor the observance of these rights, (e) to whom are any matters of violations of these rights reported and (f) by whom are they investigated;



(3) Whether she has been informed of any reports of transgressions of the rights, wellbeing and welfare of the refugees held at Lindelani or who are in transit; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the details of the specified reports which the Minister has acted upon in the past five years?

**REPLY:**

(1) Asylum seekers are not detained at the Lindela Holding Facility. This facility is only for the holding of illegal foreign nationals who have no lawful basis to be in South Africa and they are awaiting deportation. Asylum seekers on the other hand are awaiting a decision on their application for Refugee Status and therefore have temporary lawful status in South Africa and cannot be arrested or detained.

This response is not factual as some asylum seekers are rounded up and locked with so called ‘illegal immigrants’ who are deported and in some case incarcerated at the centre for long periods under unlawful detentions.

(2)(a) – (f) Not applicable, as asylum seekers are not detained at Lindela. The screening process at Lindela ensures that all foreigners who are placed there for deportation have their residential status in South Africa properly investigated and confirmed as being illegal foreign nationals. Once an illegal foreign national is arrested by the Inspectorate Unit of the Department, a full interview is conducted and checks are done on Departmental systems to ensure that the foreigners do not have any pending applications or status.

(3) No. Refugees are not held at Lindela. Refugees have lawful status in South Africa and therefore cannot be detained for deportation purposes ([www.pmg.org.za/node/30871](http://www.pmg.org.za/node/30871) Accessed 23 July 2014).

The above parliamentary conversation suggests that there are political leaders who are concerned about the rights of African migrants and refugees living in South Africa. The responses provided to questions raised about Lindelani give conflicting statements as some genuine asylum seekers or refugees are rounded up and locked

with so called ‘illegal immigrants’ who are deported and in some cases incarcerated at the centre for long periods without trial under unlawful detentions.

### *Lindela Detention Centre*

Lindela Detention Centre is a holding facility for temporal detention of ‘illegal foreigners’ which is located 40 kilometres from the city of Johannesburg, in the West Rand, Krugersdorp area. The Department of Home Affairs set up this centre in line with the Immigration Act (No. 13 of 2002) which gave the department legal authority to arbitrarily detain and deport alleged ‘illegal immigrants’ in South Africa. According to FMSP (2010: 5), the Immigration Act grants legal authority to DHA ‘to identify, detain, and deport illegal foreigners.’ However, such procedures must adhere to legal protections such as the South African constitution, the promotion of Administrative Justice Act No. 3 of 2000 and the Immigration Act (FMSP: 2010: 5) which provide a legal framework to protect fundamental rights of foreigners during arrest, detention and deportation.

Although these regulations are set out to enforce legal procedures regulating the running of the centre, research which has been conducted on the activities of the facility by the Forced Migration Programme (FMSP, 2009) suggest that there are human rights abuses and violations.

In a ten months study aimed at improving the DHA administrative challenges at the facility, FMSP interviewed 734 detainees on their arrest, documentation, detention before arrival at Lindela, procedures at the centre, conditions of detention, including medical care and basic needs as well as experiences of corruption and violence (FMSP, 2009).

Key findings for the study indicated that despite the DHA’s efforts to comply with the regulations and legal requirements in running the facility, ‘there continue to be

systematic violations of the law at Lindela' (FMSP, 2010:5). The report notes that proper procedures are not followed and there are irregularities in the classification of illegal foreigners and failure to use legally prescribed forms to notify individuals of their legal status and rights related to this status, resulting in prolonged and indefinite detentions. Such omissions, in essence, mean that the detentions and deportations are conducted illegally since detainees are not informed of their rights. Many detainees expressed anger and frustration with the DHA officials and were not aware of any rights related to their situation; this is reflected in the words from one of the detainees below;

“I do not know why I have not been deported. I do not know if I’m going to die here or when they will ever let me go. I am so tired and disappointed.” Detainee at Lindela Detention Centre (FMSP, 2010:13).

Although some foreigners were aware of their rights as detainees, they could not realize them owing to the institutional barriers such as lack of access to the DHA. Immigration officials are the only group allowed to maintain contact with the staff of the private security company of Bosasa which is in charge of the internal security operations for the Centre. They prevent detainees from exercising their legal rights of review and appeal under the Immigration Act. Corruption was also reported and there were wrongful arrests of asylum seekers who were part of the detainees. This has raised fears that the DHA is sending people at risk of persecution back to their countries of origin and this constitutes a violation of the international prohibition against *refoulement*. There have also been stories that some South African nationals have been mistaken for foreigners and also arrested for detention in Lindelani.

According a report posted by Amy Herron on PASSOP’s website ([www.passop.co.za](http://www.passop.co.za); accessed November 26, 2012) the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and People Against Suffering, Suppression, Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP) together with 39 foreigners unlawfully detained at Lindela, instituted urgent court proceedings against the Department of Home Affairs for systematically

and unlawfully detaining foreigners for in excess of 120 days in contravention of the Immigration Act.

The two organizations jointly expressed disappointment at the ministry of Home Affairs' failure to respect the rights of the foreigners, unlawfully detaining them in contravention of the South African Constitution, the Immigration Act, and the Immigration regulations instituting legal proceedings to challenge the detention on Friday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, 2012 in the South Gauteng High Court ([www.passop.co.za](http://www.passop.co.za); accessed November 26, 2012). They argued that the Department has on several occasions, failed to respect law and without serious intervention the South African government will continue to fail to protect the rights of detained foreigners. According to the South African Immigration Act, foreigners cannot be held at Lindelani Repatriation Centre (LRC) for a period exceeding 120 days and some of these 39 foreigners were detained for as long as 16 months (PASSOP: Nov 26, 2012).

This report points to similar concerns identified by the study conducted by FMSP (2010:5) which cited systematic violations of the law at Lindelani. Both reports show that LRC has a reputation of unjust administrative practices towards foreigners, failing to transform in line with the prevailing legislative frameworks resulting in continued human rights violations by the DHA (FMSP Report, 2010:5).

#### *The Central Methodist Mission in Inner City Johannesburg*

One of the important projects that have been a major focus from the perspective of the church's role in caring for migrants is the Central Methodist Mission in the Johannesburg CBD. This place is well known for providing shelter to African migrants-especially Zimbabweans. This is the inner City ministry started by the Bishop Paul Verryn who earned himself the title of the "people's Bishop." According to Bompani (2008:133 in Hopkins et. al ed. 2013:131-147) migrants know this "safe space" even before leaving their own country. This church is a six storey building with two basement floors dubbed "Soweto" by the church occupiers-drawing a symbolic link with South African's famous black townships that were at the centre of

the struggle against apartheid, sometimes dubbed ‘dangerous’ (Bonner and Segal 1998:32).

The church began to provide support in 2005 (Rafto and Mlambo 2009:10) after the Zimbabwe economic meltdown and political violence following the disputed 2002 elections which drove some Zimbabweans out of the country. The church had previously sheltered homeless South Africans on a lesser manageable scale. The two basements in the Church are mainly occupied by Zimbabwean Ndebele speaking migrants, while the upper is dominated by the Shona speaking migrants-these two tribal groups have a history of tensions back in Zimbabwe and this arrangement added to the already tense circumstances that breed violence.

During the May 2008 xenophobic attacks against foreigners, Bishop Paul Verryn provided shelter to over 3000 refugees and challenged the local government action that sought to evict them and also confronted his own Methodist church leadership over the housing of refugees inside the church hall. Bishop Paul Verryn demonstrated that the public sphere is the “common space in which the members of a society are deemed to meet through a variety of media, to be able to form a common mind” (Taylor 2007:185). It could be argued that no other religious organisation since the demise of apartheid in 1994 has been more successful in occupying this common place than the Central Methodist Church has demonstrated.

#### *The role played by other churches during the 2008 xenophobic attacks*

According to Landau (2009:14) many foreign nationals turned to churches for protection, shelter food, clothing during the xenophobic attacks in 2008 because churches were publicly recognised as “safe places.” Appealing to members of their congregations, churches provided human resources and transport to distribute donated goods to temporal<sup>20</sup> refugee camps and they were involved in the provision of medical supplies, doctors and nurses (voluntary), counselling and offering spiritual and emotional support in the camps. For example, doctors from his People Church provided free medical assessment and medication at the Bramley police station where

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<sup>20</sup> It has already been noted that South Africa does not have refugee camps as part of ensuring that refugees integrate into communities and be able to seek study and work opportunities.

many foreigners sought protection. The report further notes that in Germiston City Hall, Bedford Chapel worked closely with Medecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) to protect the well-being of displaced people. Other churches such as the Northfield Methodist Church organised security personnel in Benoni Town Hall.

“For the first time the moral authority of religious leaders, as well as a few other recognised figures inside the broader civil society cluster, was recognised and indeed sanctioned to serve as the primary mediator between the refugees, the local communities and the South African government” (Phakathi, 2010:15).

This is commendable and should not only happen during crisis moments but there should be ongoing engagement and partnerships to address these challenges.

#### *Other Socio-Legal issues related to migration*

The following analysis of the legal instruments and principles that guide the Immigration Act is based on the work of Loesche et al. al (2012:2) in their report with the Solidarity Peace Trust and PASSOP entitled; ‘*Perils and Pitfalls- Migrants and Deportation in South Africa.*’

##### *1. Core Principles of Applicable Law*

As I have already alluded in the introductory section, South African law regulates the arrest, detention, and deportation of illegal foreigners. The sources of law include the Constitution, the Immigration Act and accompanying Regulations, and the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA).

#### *Key rules under the Immigration Act and Regulations:*

- i). Only immigration officials – not police – may declare someone an illegal foreigner for the purposes of deportation
- ii). If police/immigration officers detain someone to confirm their immigration status:

- The officers must help the detainee access their documents (if readily available), contact other people who can confirm their status, and access departmental records
- Detention for the purpose of verification must not last longer than 48 hours

iii). If police/immigration officers detain someone for the purpose of deportation:

- When it is decided that a person is an illegal foreigner and should be deported, that person must be informed in writing (1) that this decision has been made and (2) that he or she has the right to appeal this decision.
- That person has the right to ask any officer at any time to confirm his or her detention for the purposes of deportation by a warrant of the court.
- If the requested warrant is not issued within 48 hours, the person must be immediately released.
- The person must be told about all of these rights upon his or her arrest in language that he or she understands.

iv). Maximum detention times:

- A person detained for the purpose of deportation cannot be held for longer than 30 days without a further warrant of the court (specifically, one which has good and reasonable grounds).
- Even with a further warrant, the detention may not last longer than an additional 90 days.
- After someone is held for 120 days, they must be released immediately, regardless of official status.

v). Prescribed forms must be used in giving effect to the above provisions.

vi). The dignity and human rights of all detainees must be protected at all stages of arrest, detention, and deportation (Loresche et al. al, 2012:2).

Therefore, it is clear that although there are international and South African national laws that regulate treatment of people as they move across borders, these laws are constantly flouted by the authorities such as the South African Department of Home Affairs and the police services. This study is concerned with the dignity and human rights violations of migrants who get arrested and detained. As Loesche et. al

(2012:2) have rightly noted, ‘the rights and dignity of migrants must be protected at all stages of movement including when they are arrested, detained and deported.’ A violation of these rights is not consistent with the key rules governing treatment of individual people as highlighted below;

*Key rules under the Constitution and Promotion of Administration of Justice Act (PAJA):*

i). The processes of arrest, detention and deportation must respect individuals’ rights and be fair, lawful, and reasonable.

ii). Detainees have the right to:

- Be told in writing that their rights are impaired (explain) by administrative action,
- Be promptly informed why they are being detained and that they have a right to consult with any legal professional they choose,
- Challenge the legality of their detention in person,
- Have their human dignity respected at all times, including the provision of adequate accommodations, nutrition, reading material, and medical treatment,
- Communicate with and have visits from a spouse, partner, next of kin, religious counsellor, or medical professional.

*Other legal provisions:*

- South African law does not require the detention of asylum seekers, refugees or illegal foreigners (Refugees Act 130 of 1998, South African Immigration Act).
- Officers are supposed to use discretion in deciding to detain people, and are mandated to do so in favor of liberty (South African Immigration Act).
- The Children’s Act requires that unaccompanied minors, even if undocumented or illegally in the country, be placed in temporary places of safety – not detention centers like Lindela (Centre for Child Law and Another v (sic) Minister of Home Affairs and Other 2005 (6) SA).
- The DHA is legally required to consider asylum claims of a family as a whole to prevent families from being torn apart.



(Source: Perils and Pitfalls- Migrants and Deportation in South Africa, Report by Solidarity Peace Trust and PASSOP Johannesburg, 5 June 2012).

### ***List of other organizations providing support to migrants***

#### *1. People Against Suffering Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP)*

According to information available on their website ([www.passop.co.za](http://www.passop.co.za), accessed November 26, 2012), People Against Suffering, Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP) is a community-based non-profit organization and grassroots movement that works to protect and promote the rights of all refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in South Africa. PASSOP believes in and advocates for equality and justice for people across all societies, irrespective of nationality, age, gender, race, creed, disability or sexual orientation. Archival material on migrants will be extracted from PASSOP to shed some light on the experiences of migrants in South Africa.

#### *2. Southern Africa Migration Project (SAMP)*

As reflected on their website ([www.idasa.org](http://www.idasa.org) accessed November 26, 2012), SAMP is coordinated by Idasa, one member of the international network of organizations that aim to promote public awareness of migration-related issues, conducts applied research on migration and its relationship to development, provides policy advice and expertise, supplies the governments of Southern Africa with policy-relevant information regarding cross-border population migration, offers training in migration policy and management, and conducts public education campaigns on migration-related issues. Data collected through SAMP studies will provide reliable statistics on migration and show how the South African government is responding the challenge of increasing human mobility.

#### *3. African Centre for Migration and Society*

The Africa Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) is based at the University of Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg. The ACMS is formerly Forced Migration Studies Programme, (FMSP) and has conducted studies on migration. Sociological studies on migration conducted by the ACMS and their Migration and Religion programme provided resourceful insights into the realities of migration and immigration in South Africa.

#### *4. The Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CorRMSA)*

Part of the preliminary data examined for this study was drawn from the reports compiled by the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA) formerly known as the National Consortium for Refugee Affairs, a national network of organizations working with refugees and migrants in South Africa ([www.cormsa.org.za](http://www.cormsa.org.za) accessed 26 Nov 2012).

*Other notable offices providing support to migrants and refugees are:*

- C.J. Cronje Building, 80 Loveday Street, Johannesburg; Assists migrants with accessing government services and provides general advice to migrants.
- 100 Christian De Wet Road, Florida Park, Gauteng; assists migrants with government accessing services.
- 19 Planet Avenue Crown Miles, Johannesburg; Home Affairs Office that must accept all applications for asylum in Johannesburg.
- Corner D.F. Malan Drive and Struben Street, Pretoria West, Gauteng; Receives asylum applications in Pretoria Area.
- The African Diaspora Forum which advocates rights for migrants in African communities ([www.adf.org.za](http://www.adf.org.za), Accessed 23 July 2014). According to information available on their website ([www.adf.org.za](http://www.adf.org.za)) African Diaspora Forum (ADF) was created as a reaction to the xenophobic attacks in May 2008. Several community leaders and concerned residents in South Africa, called by Ivorian community leader Marc Gbaffou and Carnival organiser and

pan African enthusiast Rayban Sengwayo, came together and decided to create a platform for African migrants to voice their concerns and work for an integrated society through this forum.

## **1.5 Methodology in brief**

### *Location of congregations*

The congregations selected for this study are located in Johannesburg within the Gauteng province of South Africa. They are all in the previously white dominated communities.

### *Sample*

The selection of key informants for this study employed purposive sampling technique to identify key informants from the selected congregations based on their experience of migration, gender, age and membership within the UPCSA congregations. It should be noted that although the interviews were scheduled to be conducted in all selected congregations, the majority of participants who cooperated and agreed to take part in the study were drawn from one congregation (Yeoville) which the study found that 90% of its members are migrants. Key informants were people who either kept church records or were actively involved in the church activities and proved to have information and experience regarding demographics, cultural and linguistic challenges, style of worship and how the ministry of these congregations has been shaped by the presence of migrants.

### *Method*

It has also been noted that this study was phenomenological and interdisciplinary employing the transnational theory of migration as an approach to globalization and utilized qualitative approaches within a constructivist paradigm non- numerical data

to answer a research questions. Non-numerical data consisted of statements made by people during interviews, written records; comments made during focus groups and observed behavior.

### *Data analysis*

Analysis of data collected for this study combined thematic and critical discourse analysis methods due to its interdisciplinary nature. It employed this method to examine the key statements drawn from interviews and paid attention to how the migrants understand their experience of migration and use biblical texts, hymns, sermons in seeking to interpret the realities of their circumstances as foreign migrants living in Johannesburg. The data collected from the focus group discussions, self-administered questionnaires and interviews were first transcribed, coded and then later analysed thematically to isolate the themes that emerged out the study. It was this analytical process which generated themes that formed the heart of theological reflection towards what the study identifies as a contextual South African theology of migration: - an attempt that came closer to a post- colonial theological perspective on migration.

## **1.6 Chapter summary and outline of chapters**

**Chapter one** outlined the problem and gave a motivation for the study based on the argument that many local South Africans still perceived foreigners especially from African nations as criminals who take their jobs and women. Scholars like Patrick Bond (2010) point out that the country is struggling with high levels of unemployment and that this, combined with a high influx of refugees and migrants seeking better employment opportunities, tend to lead to disturbances amongst the low income level local population groups. The researcher also used this chapter to provide a personal background on his migration experience as an insertion and highlighted measures taken to guard against compromises that such experiences may have on the findings herein.

In cementing the rationale and significance for this study, it was argued that very little has happened to change the negative perceptions of local South Africans towards foreign migrants since May 2008 and suggested that more still needed to be done, hence the contribution. The quotation used in the title of this thesis states that “*When people move the church moves*” and it identifies what study refers to as a missional ‘umbilical cord’ kind of relationship between movement of people and movement of church, its ecclesial and missional identity which needs to be constantly transformed in the light of new contextual developments necessitated by the presence of migrants.

**Chapter two** is dedicated to literature review on the trends of migration and its causes in Southern Africa and the chapter follows a thematic approach to discuss developments in the field of theology and migration studies, particularly paying attention to the exploration of relevant literature for this study, is the engagement of the concepts developed in the field of theology and migration.

**Chapter three** will outline the location of the study and profile the selected congregations before describing the research design and methods employed in conducting the study. Sampling, data collection and analysis procedures, instruments and ethical considerations will be discussed before delving into the theoretical frameworks and concepts that are key to this investigation.

**Chapter four** will be a presentation of data collected through field work and drawn from focus group discussions, interviews with key informants and self-administered questionnaires. This chapter will also outline the challenges that impacted on the planned procedures and how these addressed and present the profile of the participants for the study.

In **Chapter five** the study follows a contextual method to theologically reflect on migration through the lens of the lived experiences of the migrants and particularly pays attention to the themes that emerged from the study to highlight the theological,

ecclesial and missional implications of the lived experiences of migrants in Johannesburg.

**Chapter six** aims to highlight conclusions that came out of the study and presents the recommendations with a view to providing guidelines for local church mission engagement with migrants in Johannesburg. These conclusions are presented thematically to identify and isolate the findings that are missional, ecclesial and theological. This section will also demonstrate the incompetency of the selected congregations and identify ways in which their ministry can be improved before highlighting the limitations and areas that need further research.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter examined the situation of migration and postulated on the problem of intensified human migration into South Africa arguing that theological reflections on the phenomenon of migration present an opportunity for resources that the church could use to address xenophobia. The motivation for the study was based on the argument that many local South Africans still perceived foreigners especially from African nations as criminals who take their jobs and women. The researcher also used this chapter to provide a personal background on his migration experience as an insertion and highlighted measures taken to guard against compromises that such experiences have had on the findings of the study.

In cementing the rationale and significance for this study, it was argued that very little has happened to change the negative perceptions of local South Africans towards foreign migrants since May 2008 and suggested that more still needed to be done, hence the contribution. A closer examination of the migration policies was presented within the context of South African situation and a brief methodology section and summary of chapters were provided.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to literature review on the trends of migration and its causes in Southern Africa and follows a thematic approach to discuss developments in the field of theology and migration studies; particularly paying attention to scholarly developments in the field. Central to the exploration of relevant literature for this study, is the engagement of the concepts developed in the fields of theology and migration. The interdisciplinary nature of the study allowed the researcher to utilise the socio-cultural and economic studies on human mobility, where extensive work has been done,<sup>21</sup> as compared to theological studies on migration in southern Africa. It should be noted that most studies<sup>22</sup> conducted on theology and migration have been done in the western context, although there is now reasonable amount of literature on migration including conference papers and journal articles that have examined human mobility in southern Africa.

### 2.2 Contemporary Human mobility

Statistics on global movement of people by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)<sup>23</sup> indicate that there are more than 200 million people migrating around the world, or one out of thirty five people on the planet.<sup>24</sup> The World Migration Report (2010)<sup>25</sup> estimates the number of international migrants<sup>26</sup> in Africa in 2010 to be 19 million, - an increase of 1.5 million migrants since 2005. This figure accounts for 9% of the total global stock of migrants, and of these, 2.2 million were

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<sup>21</sup> Part of this literature is from the work of Aurelia Segatti and Loren Landau from the Africa Centre for Migration at the University of Witwatersrand.

<sup>22</sup> For example the work of Daniel G. Groody, a Roman Catholic priest, scholar and film producer working with migrants in the Mexican border with the United States. He directed a film on migration entitled "Dying to Live"

<sup>23</sup> More statistics on global movement can be accessed from the website of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) at: <http://www.iom.int>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>25</sup> Retrieved, 7 August 2012 on [http://www.jcp.ge/iom/pdf/WMR\\_2010\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.jcp.ge/iom/pdf/WMR_2010_ENGLISH.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> For purposes of this study, the terms 'migrant' and 'foreigner' will be used to refer to people from other countries living in South Africa, employed and unemployed, legally or undocumented. This is because in South Africa refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants are not clearly distinguished as they all enjoy the freedom to move and work. In some countries refugees are confined to refugee camps.

estimated to be in Southern Africa of which 1.9 million were hosted by South Africa (WMR, 2010).

According to the World Migration Report (2010:29), the overwhelming majority of migration is fully authorized and estimates suggest that only 10-15 per cent of the global 214 million migrants find themselves in irregular situations as a result of overstaying. They enter host countries through legal routes but exceed the number of days authorised for stay. More importantly, 'South - South migration is as significant as South-North migration' and as the WMR warns:

[I]t is important not to fuel fear and negative perceptions of the North being overrun by poor migrants from the South, while of course not ignoring the vexing incidence of irregular migration today (WMR, 2010:29).

The report raises one of the important questions which, in my opinion require further exploration; how do we get to the root of the phenomenon - most notably, the underlying disparities in livelihood and safety opportunities? For example, the UNDP Human Development Report (2009:45) identifies the place of birth for individuals as the 'most significant determinant of human development outcomes.' Indeed, this points to the complexities that undergird the current global situation with regards to human mobility.

According to Calder et al (2010) it is clear that the intensified movement of people across borders poses serious political, economic and even sociological challenges to governments. For example the immigration reform bill endorsed by President Barack Obama on June 27, 2013 with a Senate vote of 68-32 in favour of final passage, only recently brought the bill one step closer to bringing the biggest changes to U.S. immigration law since 1986, offering hope and prosperity for immigrants, businesses and families who have been waiting for decades ([www.migrationexpert.com](http://www.migrationexpert.com) accessed 22August 2014).



According to this website, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act bill (S. 744), is to “overhaul the U.S Visa system to give American companies better access to foreign skilled workers, give new hope to the 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States, and would also invest more in border security.” This means that migrants do not have to wait for the bill to pass but may qualify for one or more visa options that are currently available while the bill is under discussion.

Presenting the 10<sup>th</sup> Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture entitled, “Freedom, truth, democracy: citizenship and common purpose,” Mary Robinson<sup>27</sup> (Sunday Times, 14 July, 2013:10) posed the question of whether, in spite of the innovative provisions of the South African Constitution, it can be truly said that freedom from want has been adequately secured for all (South Africans) in the past 18 years. Expounding the concept of “citizenship”, Robinson made an interesting remark noting that often;

“When we think of citizenship, we think of a definition based on nationality of a particular country. But her view was that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we need a new concept of citizenship that embraces all those people who find themselves in the country-nationals and migrants alike...this is particularly relevant to countries like South Africa, a “go to” country with a strong economy that attracts and will continue to attract a large migrant population” (Sunday Times, 14 July, 2013:10).

Indeed, for a country with an admirable constitution that opens with the words, “We, the people of South Africa... believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity” (www.sa.gov.za, Accessed 24 July 2014) this seems to confirm a national commitment to ‘unity in diversity’ and also values acceptance and tolerance for ‘all’, including migrants; as a pre-requisite for peace and development. This is similar to the Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that declares, “Everyone has duties to the community in which they live (UNDP 2012:23).

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<sup>27</sup> Mary Robinson is the former President of Ireland and president of the Mary Robinson Foundation-Climate Justice.

There are studies that have focused on the role of churches in the lives of migrants within the African context and some examined issues relating to integration in South Africa (Hlobo, 2004; Nzayabino, 2010; Khumalo, 2009; and Jeannerat, 2009). The work of Bishop Paul Verryn of the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg stands out as a reference model<sup>28</sup> in this regard. Lessons have been drawn from the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg led by Bishop Paul Vermulen,<sup>29</sup> to explore new models of community relationships that promote tolerance and hospitality for people coming from outside South Africa.

A few studies (Culbertson, 2009; Khumalo, 2009) also reflected on the work of Bishop Paul Verryn with the Zimbabwean migrants and Sabar (2004:408) and observed that ‘the paucity of attention to religion leaves a major gap in our understanding of African migrants.’ This would suggest that without such an understanding; Christian Mission remains far detached from the realities of human mobility in Southern Africa- with devastating pastoral and ecclesiological consequences. Considering that statistics on migration (IOM, 2010:124) point to an increasing number of people moving globally, with challenges encountered by both receiving and sending countries, African scholars have explored religious experiences of migrants among them; Mnyaka (2003), Nzayabino (2005), Orobator (2005), and Ohajiriogun (2009), and have noted that religion plays a central role in shaping and maintaining identity among migrant populations.

Another study by the International Organisation on Migration (IOM:2010) focusing on globalization alluded to the complexity of migration or immigration highlighting the “push – pull factors” such as attraction of skilled labour by developed or receiving countries and poverty or economic instability as push factors for the sending countries. These studies have demonstrated that there are positive as much as there are

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<sup>28</sup> A detailed examination of this program will be provided in the next chapter

<sup>29</sup> Bishop Paul Vermulen was in charge of the Johannesburg Central Methodist church and provided shelter to migrants at the church premises. He was criticized for creating “unhealthy conditions” and won legal battles with local businesses that made claims about the “unhealthy state” of business environment. Even his own Church lost a case against him and had to wait for 5 years before his term expired for them to remove the migrants.

negative effects to receiving or sending countries with regards to migration. With intensified displacement of persons adding to the rise in forced migration, dominant interpretive frames influenced by globalization frequently distort the motives and situation of the people on the move.

Therefore, the phenomenon of intensified migration presents a theological opportunity to offer alternative lenses to view the reality of migration. This is essentially critical in the light of conflict, poverty and political instability that have led to the Northern bias perception of Africa as a “dark continent” because of persistent displacement of large population groups in which the rights and aspirations of the people are not respected. Many countries have ignored the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948 in Paris, as a direct response to the Second World War which represents an expression of rights to which human beings are inherently entitled (UN, 1948).

Migration is a multifaceted phenomenon<sup>30</sup> that comes with complex challenges. It has economic, political, social and even theological/ ecclesiological implications of a huge scale; for example according to studies conducted in Johannesburg by Lauren Landau (2009:10) and the Africa Centre for Migration;

- there are emerging forms identity as migrants leverage survival strategies in host communities
- There are new forms of exclusion and Landau suggests that religion is one of a number of strategies for negotiating inclusion and belonging, while transcending ethnic, national and transnational paradigms
- Contested space and competition for resources in the absence of a self -defined and dominant host community
- Strategies for becoming both part of and apart from the Johannesburg City or local communities

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<sup>30</sup> The definitions and types of Migration are discussed broadly in the next chapter

According to statistics highlighted above, the South Africa region is the most preferred destination for people migrating in Southern Africa with the bulk of these migrants settling in big cities such as Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. As early as 1982, a study conducted by the South African Council of Churches<sup>31</sup> (Jacobs, 1982:38) gave warnings that migration and displacements of people, as a growing global phenomenon, will impact not just on the social and economic spheres of sending and receiving communities or countries,<sup>32</sup> but also on the church's mission and identity. Thus, the movement of people across borders has ecclesiastical and missiological implications that cannot be ignored and this is a challenge that we should embrace.

### *A challenge to Christian mission*

In the light of increasing numbers of migrants within the Johannesburg inner city, scholars like Landau and Seggati (2011:12), in their work '*Contemporary Migration to South Africa, A regional Development Issue*', sought to understand the phenomenon of migration from a developmental perspective with a view to exploring models of promoting integration/social cohesion, enhancing tolerance and addressing xenophobia, as well as seeking to understand the experiences of migrants in South Africa.

Working through the Africa Centre for Migration and the Southern Africa Migration Project<sup>33</sup> they have conducted studies exploring how migrant communities articulate,

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<sup>31</sup> This handbook by the South African Council of Churches entitled: "*Refugees: A challenge to the South African Churches- A Ministry to Refugees Handbook*" identified the situation of refugees as a challenge to the South African churches and developed a handbook for the ministry to refugees. At that time, there were concerns about South Africans in refugee centres around Southern Africa as people fled uprisings against apartheid and liberation movements fighting against colonialism.

<sup>32</sup> According to the World Migration Report (2010), Yevgeny Kuznetsov, a senior economist with the Knowledge for Development Programme at the World Bank Institute asserts that there is increasing evidence that migrant remittances have a positive impact on poverty alleviation in the countries of origin.

<sup>33</sup> The Africa Centre for Migration and Society is based at the University of Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg. The Southern Africa Migration Project. The Southern African Migration Programme (SAMP) is an international network of organizations founded in 1996 to promote awareness of migration-development linkages in SADC with offices in Canada and Cape Town. According to information available on their website ([www.queensu.ca](http://www.queensu.ca)) SAMP conducts applied research on migration and development issues, provides policy advice and expertise, offers training in migration policy and management, and conducts public education campaigns on migration-related issues.

negotiate and construct meanings to suffering experienced as a result of living in a foreign country.

A study by SAMP (2006) of South African citizen's attitudes to migrants concluded that South Africa continued to be a society in which xenophobia remained well entrenched. The results revealed that many South Africans wanted to give "limited or little rights to migrants, [and] even benefits they were legitimately entitled to" (Crush et al. 2013:10). As the report further suggests, "Citizens' beliefs about migration and migrants were informed largely if not exclusively by stereotypes, myths and unverified biases. Inter-personal contact and social interaction with migrants was [and still is] limited, though on the rise from previous years (Crush et al. 2013:10).

Interestingly, SAMP findings were reinforced by the World Values Survey, a global longitudinal study of peoples' beliefs and values, which indicated that South Africans were more hostile and resistant to migrants and refugees than citizens of any other country (in Crush et al 2013:1). The expressions of these findings were confirmed on May 2008 as local South Africans went on a rampage orchestrating the worst xenophobic attacks in post-apartheid South Africa and resurfaced in 2015.

Notwithstanding the fact that undocumented migration has been a difficult category to track in southern Africa,<sup>34</sup> the relation between migrants and human trafficking activities that take place through illegal cross-border activities such as the one televised by SABC documenting cross border activities in Beitbridge and Messina,<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> This is according to Kok et. al, (2006) who note that undocumented migration is dubbed variously in different settings and is comprised of immigrants who lack documents authorizing their stay or residence in the receiving country; those who have overstayed their authorized duration of residence/stay and who are determined to avoid contact with the law enforcement agencies; defaulters of amnesty; and unsuccessful applicants for formal granting of refugee or asylum status who try to avoid discovery in one way or another.

<sup>35</sup> South African Broad Casting (SABC)'s Special Assignment, an investigative programme televised the documentary on activities between South Africa and Zimbabwean border on Thurs 9 March, 2012 at 21:30 p.m. Similarly, El Jareera News Channel, on Monday 15 July 2013, news reported on the

received disproportionate amount of attention in the media. As reflected by the study conducted by the Human Scientific Research Council (Kok et al 2006:23), most people migrating through these illegal means are driven from their local communities by political instability, poverty and unemployment. The study notes that ‘over the last decade, refugees and asylum seekers have fled from Zimbabwe, Namibia and Swaziland to South Africa and Botswana’ (Kok et al, 2006:23) citing political turmoil as a driving factor for most people leaving Zimbabwe after the disputed 2002 elections between the two main political parties, ZANU PF and MDC.<sup>36</sup>

Sadly, the perceptions of local South Africans about perceived threats from foreign nationals ignore the fact that South Africa has become the preferred destination for some Africans fleeing conflicts, poverty and political or economic instability in their countries. Consequently, these ill-informed perceptions have fuelled growing tensions between locals and migrants who are perceived to be draining resources meant for local people. In the light of the growing tensions and unsupported claims against migrants some studies<sup>37</sup> have sought to understand these perceptions by examining the phenomenon of migration and seeking to address xenophobia through exploring models of promoting integration/social cohesion, addressing poverty, and unemployment as well seeking to understand the experiences of migrants in South Africa. Notably, the Africa Centre for Migration and the Southern Africa Migration Project<sup>38</sup> have conducted studies exploring how migrant communities articulate,

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bodies of Mexicans who die on the borders of Us and Mexico and viewers were shown countless graves of people who die on the move.

<sup>36</sup> In 2002 Zimbabwe had the national elections that were disputed by the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) which challenged the ruling ZANU PF party. These elections were followed by violence and the so-called “smart” economic sanctions imposed by the European Union which targeted the ruling elite. Unemployment rates and inflation went up forcing ordinary Zimbabweans to migrate. As the brain drain continued through formal migration of skilled labourers, ordinary people resorted to informal and illegal means of migrating to neighbouring countries such as Botswana and South Africa.

<sup>37</sup> Among them Loren Landau and Aurelia Segatti who have done extensive work on African migration studies through the Africa Centre for Migration and Society at the University of Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg. Loren Landau is the director of the Africa Centre for Migration (formerly Forced Migration Studies Programme, FMSP) and his work focuses on human mobility, development and sovereignty. Aurelia Segatti was appointed Senior Research Fellow with the Institute of Research for Development from 2008 to 2010 on a joint research programme with Loren Landau. She is currently based at the African Centre for Migration & Society, where she is involved in two international research programmes: the Research Programme Consortium “Migrating out of Poverty” and French National Research Agency XenAfPol Programme on Xenophobic violence in Africa.

<sup>38</sup> The Africa Centre for Migration and Society is based at the University of Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg. The Southern Africa Migration Project .The Southern African Migration Programme

negotiate and leverage religious identity to construct meanings to suffering experienced as a result of living in a foreign country. Similarly, the Southern African Missiological Society<sup>39</sup> made a call for proposals on the subject of Migration in Africa in March 2012, after raising a critical question: where is Christian mission located in all of these matters in a continent where migration has become a way of life?

This points to an urgent need for African scholarly work around challenges associated with migration. This knowledge gap has also been identified by Swart and de Beer (2014:7) who assert that;

what further illustrates the vacuum in South African theologies, and particularly in public theologies, with regard to the urban, is that one of the most significant reflections in recent years on a local urban church was a non-theological, non-fictional publication, *Sanctuary* (Kuljian 2013), on the work of Paul Verryn and the Central Methodist Mission in Johannesburg, in response to the massive challenges of migration (Swart and de Beer, 2014:7).

In responding to these calls, African scholars like Myaka (2003), Nzayabino (2005) and Phakathi (2010) attempted to examine human migration from the perspective of religion – although not enough attention was given to the ecclesiological and missional aspects of the experience of migration, particularly from a southern African Christian perspective. Heeding the call of the Second Vatican Council for churches to consider human migration as a “sign of our times,” (Blume, 2002:46) more theological reflections have emerged alongside the sociological, economic and politically motivated debates on migration in Europe- laying the foundations and providing lenses which could be helpful for an African perspective on the subject.

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(SAMP) is an international network of organizations founded in 1996 to promote awareness of migration-development linkages in SADC with offices in Canada and Cape Town. According to information available on their website ([www.queensu.ca](http://www.queensu.ca)) SAMP conducts applied research on migration and development issues, provides policy advice and expertise, offers training in migration policy and management, and conducts public education campaigns on migration-related issues.

<sup>39</sup> The Southern African Missiological Society ([www.http://missionalia.wordpress.com](http://missionalia.wordpress.com)) posted an invitation for proposals in research aimed at addressing migration issues in Africa. The dead-line for these submissions was 15 March 2012 which had to be extended to June 2012. In my opinion, this extension was due to limited scholarly work or people interested in dealing with matters related to migration and mission.

There are also studies that have focused on the role of churches in the lives of migrants with some examining issues relating to integration in South Africa (Hlobo, 2004; Nzayabino, 2010; Khumalo, 2009; and Jeannerat, 2009). As already alluded to; the work of Bishop Paul Verryn of the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg stands out as a reference model with regards to practical support that churches can offer to migrants and refugees.

Considering that statistics on migration (IOM, 2010) point to an increasing number of people moving globally, with challenges encountered by both receiving and sending countries, it is important to explore the role and mission of the church with regards to this phenomenon. We will gain insights not only as a community that helps and sustains migrants, but most of all, to use the words of Stephen Bevans (2008), “as a community with and of migrants.”<sup>40</sup> There is a need for further examination of the spiritual and psychological dimensions of the migrant’s lives particularly from a theological and missional perspective.

As Keum (2013:15) in the *WCC Together Towards Life* publication suggests, migration and migrants constitutes a key missional phenomenon for understanding the global spread and renewal of Christianity;

Mission from the margins seeks to counteract injustices in life, church, and mission. It seeks to be an alternative missional movement against the perception that mission can only be done by the powerful to the powerless, by the rich to the poor, or by the privileged to the marginalized. Such approaches can contribute to oppression and marginalization. Mission from the margins recognises that being at the centre means having access to systems that lead to one’s rights, freedoms, and individuality being affirmed and respected; living in the margins means exclusion from justice and dignity (Keum, 2013:15).

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<sup>40</sup> See Stephen B. Bevans (2008). “*Mission among the Migrants, Mission of the Migrants: Mission of the Church*,” in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey* 89-106



Therefore, in the light of growing tensions and competition for jobs between local South Africans and foreign migrants, there is a need for an informed understanding of the current social and economic issues at the heart of the South African social unrest, strikes and violent protests through a theological lens as part of the interdisciplinary discourses seeking to explore the urban spaces of Johannesburg.

*Transnationalism - as lenses for understanding migration*

Exploring the Western debates on presence of Muslims in the world stage and the increases in the unstable African states Zan Abdullah (2012:7) unpacked the concept of transnationalism and defines it as “the multiple processes that allow people to live in ways that span two or more societies simultaneously, essentially merging these multiple locations into a single field of activity’ (Abdullah, 2012:10). He further laments how;

[T]ransnational studies have virtually ignored religion and African migration, including the role they play in our understanding of this research area, as African Muslims integrate into Western nations and negotiate their unique sense of belonging (Abdullah, 2012:1).

Abdullah explores three subject areas in an attempt to provide a way of thinking about how African Muslims are engaged in transnational processes that he identifies as transnationality and the African Muslim Diaspora; a transnational African Islam from below; and Africa and transnational Muslim networks (Abullah, 2012:10).

Scholars like Levitt (2001; 2003, 2007); Vertovec (2009); Schiller (2003, 2005) and Horevitz (2009) have also done extensive scholarly work advocating use of transnational optic as an effort to understand migration. They agree on the definition of Transnationalism as multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation states and have noted that “transnationalism provides a much-needed, single, clear and condensed text concerning a major concept in academic and policy discourse today” (Vertovec, 2009). In his work on Transnationalism, Vertovec explored meanings of transnationalism within the context

of globalization critically assessing migrant transnational practices and demonstrated ways in which new and contemporary transnational practices of migrants are fundamentally transforming social, political and economic spheres of the lives of migrants.

Another significant contribution to this debate has been offered by Levitt (2007)

Understanding migration as a transnational process, and that people will simultaneously belong to this country and their homelands for the long haul, reveals several important things. For one sometimes migration is as much about people who stay behind as it is about people who move. In some cases, the ties between migrants and non-migrants are so strong and wide spread that migration also radically transforms the lives of individuals who stay home. They don't have to move to participate across borders. People, money and what I have called social remittances- the ideas, practices, social capital, and identities that migrants send back into their communities of origin- permeate their daily lives, changing how they act as well as changing their ideas about gender, right and wrong, and what states should and should not do. In response, the religious and social and political groups, they belong to also begin to operate across borders...What happens to those in the United States cannot be disconnected from what happens to people who stay at home because their fates are inextricably linked (Levitt, 2007:23).

In her work, *God needs no Passport* Levitt (2007) chronicles the religious experiences of migrants in America to demonstrate how America is shaped by what happens outside America advocating the need for a wider transnational lens that recognises the multi-layered processes which constitute the transnational lives of migrants. For her, mosques and churches are part of the multi-layered webs of connections where religious goods are produced and exchanged around the globe. This is a significant contribution to the understanding of transnational migration given the complexities of the migrants' activities and that the world is too large to be captured only by lenses that focus on a single level of experience. As Levitt (2007) also notes; a transnational gaze begins with borderless world and explores what kind of boundaries exist and why they arise at specific times and places.

In her book; *Between God, Ethnicity and Country: An approach to study of Transnational Religion*, Levitt (2001) demonstrates how:

“[b]y focusing on transnationalism as networks and exchanges of goods we miss the fact that transnational religious practices also involve the transformation of identity, community and ritual practices” (Levitt, 2001:6).

It is therefore important for research on globalisation and migration to consider the role of religion and the complex realities that arise from the encounters between people across borders.

Theoretical and conceptual developments around the migration theory have included early debates on how the United States made Americans out of migrant new comers, with later assimilation theory shedding light on how, over time most migrants achieve socio-economic parity with the native-born and arguing that ethnicity and race matter highlighting the fact that the impact is experienced by both the native born and the immigrants who change along the way (Alba & Nee 2003, Jacoby 2004, Kivisto 2005). Emerging themes like that of segmented assimilations have also been explored suggesting several possible trajectories for migrants towards incorporation (Levit & Joworksy, 2007). According to Levit and Joworksy, (2007:130) these routes include, [but are not limited to]<sup>41</sup> becoming part of the (white)<sup>42</sup> mainstream, remaining ethnic, or becoming part of the underclass and experiencing downward mobility (Portes & Rumbaut 2001, Portes & Zhou 1993 in Levit & Jaworky, 2007:130). As Levit and Joworksy further note, both perspectives acknowledge that patterns of assimilation, acculturation, and integration vary depending on the country and context of departure, immigrant characteristics, immigrant enclave capacities, and political, social, and economic context of the sending and receiving communities (Portes et al, 2007:130).

Transnationalism is the most prominent immigration-migration theory to emerge from the field of anthropology (Horevitz, 2009). In its broader context, the transnational theory involves several other conceptual frameworks such as diaspora theory and

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<sup>41</sup> In my view, there are emerging forms of incorporation that we continue to witness in different communities as new comers interact with the receiving communities

<sup>42</sup> In the context of the United States of America

border theory. The transnational theory emerged as an alternative to dependency and world systems theories and includes the “cross border relationships of many migrants, enabling researchers to see that migration can be a transnational process” (Glick Schiller, 2003:100).

This new paradigm for approaching migration and immigration was developed by anthropologists Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton in the early 1990’s and “is based on the notion that globalization makes borders obsolete” (Horevitz, 2009). Unlike other theories, transnational theory encompasses more than political and economic processes to the experience of migration and immigration; placing the social, cultural, and identity processes within the new paradigm. The significant contribution made by this study to this theory is that it brings the ecclesiological and missiological implications of the experience of migration and immigration into the core of the paradigm.

However, critics of this theory argue that migrants and immigrants have always maintained ties with their homelands for centuries and therefore nothing is new about the so-called new immigration-migration concept, other than an increased ability to communicate and easy travel to one’s homeland (Horevitz, 2009:754). Contrary to these claims, gender theorists have taken advantage of the paradigm ‘understanding that women immigrants-migrants may maintain more than one gender role, inhabiting multiple spaces at a time (Pessa, 2003 in Horevitz, 2009). Such engagement of gender theorists with the transnational theory chosen for this study will provide a leverage to critically examine the experiences of female migrants.

### *Simultaneous embeddedness*

One of the significant contributions to emerge out of the theoretical developments regarding the different ways in which scholars have approached transnational migration has been the concept of simultaneous embeddedness. As Levit and Jaworky (2007) observe, another perspective was added to the conversations around the transnational migration theory which argued that some migrants continued to be active in their homelands at the same time that they became part of the countries that

received them. This approach explored how migrants and their descendants participate in familial, social, economic, religious, political, and cultural processes that extend across borders while they became part of the places where they settle (Levit and Jaworky, 2007). What emerged out of these conversations was a common theme of simultaneous embeddedness. As Faist (2000) argued, he noted that variations in spatial extension and temporal stability produce different transnational topographies as follows:

- a). dispersion and assimilation – weak embeddedness in sending and receiving countries and short-lived transnational ties
  
- b). transnational exchange and reciprocity- strong simultaneous embeddedness but rather short lived social ties.
  
- c). transnational networks – weakly embedded and long lived
  
- d). transnational communities – strongly embedded in at least two countries and enduring

The concept of embeddedness from Granovetter (1985:192 in Vertovic, 2009) states that economic action, like all actions; is socially situated and cannot be explained wholly by individual motives. For him, embeddedness refers to the fact that economic action and outcomes, like all social action and outcomes, are affected by actors' dyadic (pairwise) relations and by the structure of the overall network of relationships (1992:33). Vertovec (2007) employs Portes (1995) to show how this idea is further developed into two kinds of embeddedness, the first being *relational* embeddedness, which involves actors' personal relations with one another, including norms, sanctions, expectations and reciprocity. The second is *structural* embeddedness which refers to different scales of social relationship in which many others take part beyond those actually involved in an economic transaction. Transnationalism is an important concept in migration studies, and the section below highlights some concepts that have been developed to approach human migratory patterns.

## 2.3 Other frames/ approaches for understanding human migration

### *Three-fold classificatory framework of migration theories*

This section examines the historical three fold classificatory framework of migration in light of the contemporary trends of migration in Southern Africa. Migration literature in developing countries is classified according to the theoretical model to which it adheres. Models are distinguished by the extent of determination accorded to human agency in relation to that given to social structure.

### *Neo Classical Model*

In this model the agency of the individual migrant is considered key explanatory factor. The Neo-Classical Model is based on the understanding that labour demands and rewards result in a transfer of labour from the non-capitalist sector of an economy to the capitalist sector (Meir, 1989:1234). Other scholars<sup>43</sup> have cited rural-urban migration as an example for this approach. Locating this Model within a Southern African context, the early work of Houghton (1964:79) suggested that “Population movement is to be understood as a rational and individual response to the disparities in labour productivity and labour returns, between the subsistence economy of tribal areas which have failed to adapt and ‘the mines and industries which form the core of the modern exchange economy of the nation.’ Although Houghton’s understanding was unique from the general neo-classical models in that he ‘acknowledged that there is no tendency towards labour productivity equilibrium, because African urbanization is not permanent (Houghton, 1964:80); he ignored the structural factors and legislative constraints which enforce migration and could not account for forced removals and displacement which were a result of colonisation and liberation struggles before the dawn of democracy and the fall of apartheid in South Africa.

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<sup>43</sup> For example Byerlee (1974) explains that rural urban migration in the context of urban unemployment is ‘determined by rural urban differential in the present value of expected earnings, computed from the probability that a migrant will be unemployed in the urban area’ (Byerlee, 1974:550)

There is a need to acknowledge that African societies have gone through and continue to undergo socio-economic, political, cultural and religious transformation of a scale that has a considerable impact. Although economic disparities are still prevalent, factors that led to migration during the colonial period are not the driving factors for migration in Southern Africa in the post-colonial period.

### *Structural Model for understanding migration*

This model for understanding migration developed recently; privileges neither structure nor agency as explanatory factors, but considers their complex interaction. This name is drawn from contemporary sociological theory. Structuration is a theory employed by Antony Giddens (1976, 1977, 1979) to express the mutual dependency, rather than opposition of human agency and social structure. According to Blackburn (2008), Structuralism is a theoretical paradigm that emphasises that elements of culture must be understood in terms of their relationship to a larger, overarching system or structure. It is 'the belief that phenomena of human life are not intelligible except through their interrelations' (ibid). These relations constitute a structure, and behind local variations in the surface phenomena there are constant laws of abstract culture.

In the light of the weaknesses for a Neo-Liberal Model, the Structural Model based on the level of structure, and in terms of the organisation and re-organisation of the capitalist development has been proposed. According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2000)<sup>44</sup> Structuralism is a method of analysing phenomena as an anthropology, linguistic, psychology or literature characterised by contrasting the elemental structures of the phenomena in a system of binary opposition.

The Structural Model of Southern African migration interrogates the relationship between the capitalist and the non-capitalist sectors of the economy. This approach was developed by '(neo) Marxist theorists' led by Wolpe (1972) and Legassick (1975)

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<sup>44</sup> Available from: <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/structuralist>

and has been described as the ‘Africanisation’ of the Neo classical approach (Cooper, 1982:169). In unmasking the structural practices that were employed by the Apartheid regime to frustrate permanent urbanisation and maintain the supply of cheap labour, Wolpe (1972:434) cited evidence of such endeavours from the mining industry – policy statements, that of the Mine Natives’ Wages Commission of 1944:

It is clearly to the advantage of the mines that native labourers should be encouraged to return to their homes after the completion of the ordinary period of service. The maintenance of the system under which the mines are able to obtain unskilled labour at the rate less than that ordinarily paid in the industry depends upon this, for otherwise the subsidiary means of subsistence would disappear and the labourer would tend to become a permanent resident upon the Witwatersrand, with increased requirements (Wolpe, 1972:434).

The shift in these approaches demonstrated recognition for the influences of the structural policies so that migration was no longer to be understood in the light of individual attributes perceptions and calculations. There is a link between the rural and urban economies, between developed and developing economies and it should be acknowledged that there are complex forces and dynamics that lead to migration. Migration is to be understood not just through individual agency, but also through the balance of forces that influence globalization. Therefore, the structuralist model is another important lens with which to examine migration because it helps to shift from blaming individuals to a more critical reflection on social, economic and political structures that sustain globalization. Given this realisation, the interdisciplinary nature of this study is most appropriate as it provides the tools to broadly examine the dynamics that influence or affect migration and policy formulation.

#### *The Gender limitations of the migration models*

In keeping abreast with the academic debates around gender, race, class, age, sexuality, and nationality; gender dynamics have been considered in this study. Analysing the data that emerged from this study was centrally located within the relational dynamics that emerge out of these discourses. It was important to pay particular attention to how the researcher’s positioning in relation to intersecting locations of power impacted upon research findings as noted by scholars (e.g.



Bhavani, 1988; DeVault, 1999; 1994; Harding, 1987; Min-ha, 1989; Oakley, 1981; Williams 1996) in Hoel N. (2013). For purposes of this study, it was important to acknowledge that the experiences of women and children were previously not considered in to the development of migration models due the fact that most migrants in southern Africa were male labourers seeking employment in the mines.

Therefore, as Chant (1992) has noted;

Migrant miners were an integral part of the early anthropological works on the development of migration models/theories within the South African context. Miners were male labourers at that time and women only provided catering and laundry services. As a result, both neo-classical and structuralist theories of migration neglected the experiences of women and children, who now form a reasonable number of displaced populations and migrants in the region. Another weakness of these theories is that it assumed that both men and women have similar motivation for migration although some models add the availability of marriage partners as an extra factor influencing female migrants. This elaboration is limited in the context of southern Africa as it fails to account for the domination of male migrants (Chant 1992:20).

## **2.4 Types and causes of migration in Southern Africa**

Although there have been a shift in understanding contemporary migration patterns as demonstrated in the models discussed above, suffice to say the observations made by Kovacks and Cropley (1975:29 in Mnyaka 2003:10) are helpful as they distinguish between two types of factors involved in causes of migration;

And these may be usefully thought of as push versus pull. The pull factors tend to derive from the attractions of the receiving society as perceived by the would-be immigrants while they are still in the homeland. The push factors are generated in the personal everyday life of the future emigrants, and in their socio-economic surroundings in the homeland (Kovacks and Cropley 1975:29).

The above observations imply that there are various reasons and causes of human mobility in southern Africa. The most common are migrant labour, economic and

political instability in the region, poverty and positive factors such as studying and trading or holiday making. The following section highlights of some of these factors.

#### *Migrant labour system*

Johannesburg has a history of migrant labourers coming into the country to work in the mines. According to Muller (1999:68) people from African countries have been migrating to South Africa and most of migrants were initially brought in as cheap labour to sustain the mining industry, a sector that has historically relied on migrant labour to grow. Although the migrants were issued work permits to take up employment in the mines, they did not qualify for permanent resident status under the apartheid policies because they were black. Over a period of time, this resulted in the accumulation large numbers of undocumented migrants as family members joined the migrants who permanently settled in the country.

#### *Economic instability*

One of the important factors driving the influx of migrants into Johannesburg is that the city is the economic hub for most migrants seeking greener pastures from some of the impoverished African communities. Drought and famine drives people in the affected countries and the most preferred destination for migrants fleeing starvation has been Johannesburg, although migrants are now spreading throughout the many cities of South Africa.

#### *Political instability, wars and conflict*

Africa is a continent that has been riddled with wars and political instability since colonial and post-independent era generating millions of refugees fleeing conflicts. According to the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCF, 1999) by 1999 just four years into democracy in South Africa, Africa had seven million of the world's 22 million refugees. Political instability, coups, wars and conflict are still a challenge in places such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Somalia; with some

of the displacements of people resulting from religious tensions as characterised by the ongoing threats posed by Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Shabaab<sup>45</sup> in Kenya and neighbouring states. These combined threats to security generate migrants and refugees as locals run away from home.

### *Other contributing factors*

In summary, some of the contributing factors that lead to growing numbers of migrants include cross-border trading, seeking opportunities for study and tourism visits. While most the people in these categories usually travel on short term visas and permits, there is a growing trend for some visitors over staying as a result of perceived threats and reluctance to return to home countries or when they find better working and living opportunities.

## **2.5 The Network approach to Migration**

As a conceptual framework for understanding the connections between the social, economic and political dynamics for migration, this study employed the social networks theory initially pioneered by Elizabeth Bott (1957) in her book *Family and Social Networks*<sup>46</sup> and further developed by Manuel Castels (in Blackwell, 1996, 2000 and 2004). According to a publication by Willey Blackwell (2004 in [www.academia.edu/the-power-of-identity](http://www.academia.edu/the-power-of-identity), Accessed 16 May 2015), in the discussion on *Networks, Powered by Information Technology* it is suggested that these networks have critical implications for processes of alternative identity formations through the following:

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<sup>45</sup> These are Islamic fundamentalist groups linked to AlQaeda and have seen the rise of terror attacks after the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan by the American government after 9/11 attacks.. Recent developments from the war in Syria which started in 2011 have increased the complexity of these groups networking through a network known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) also known as Islamic State.

<sup>46</sup> Instead of examining the world in terms of structures, mainstream sociologists have tended to explore categories of social actors who share similar characteristics such as women, the elderly and children. There is an assumption that 'underlying every dichotomy, there is a continuum'. The approach suggests that we must treat relationships with suspicion because they are a result of underlying circumstances, the social reality that underpins the social world.

- Nation states, as enshrined in the ideologies they pursue-coin the identity of the people
- Availability of information makes people distrust nation states and multi-nationals and to reject identity imposed on them
- Social movements network people and influence identity. Resistance and project identity now takes place. Examples of these movements include fundamentalism, local nationalism, gangs, ethnicity, and social movements such as feminism and ecology groups.

These observations were instrumental in unmasking the processes that undergird the dynamics and processes of developing relationships or networks for selected migrants within the congregations subject to this current study.

As Goldenberg (1997:169) further notes;

“The principal theoretical premise of network theory is that modern society is not disorganised, nor is it becoming so. On the contrary, though there has been significant change in the fundamental character of society, it is adaptive change in the nature of social order rather than mere disruption of an earlier order with no replacement” Goldenberg (1997:169).

This concept is critical to this study because it aids an understanding of the new migrant communities in Johannesburg as emerging social networks and order, as opposed to a view that relegates migrants to disruptive individuals and communities. Exploring migratory patterns in the light of Network theory offers great opportunities for coherent and constructive scholarly work that generate new and testable hypotheses about the functioning of the social world. It also provides explanatory hypotheses for understanding causes of connectedness, economic interdependence, social and geographic mobility.

Although Bott (in Goldenberg, 1997:169) was not the pioneer of the Network Analysis, she no doubt provided insights that are fundamental to questions raised in this study. Building on the work of other scholars such as Katz, Lazarsfeld and Merton (Goldenberg, 1997:171) who conducted studies on mass communication testing the idea that the mass media had a direct effect on individuals who were part of the mass audience, that is unconnected to and unaffected by one another. These empirical findings demonstrated that messages of the mass media were “selected, interpreted, believed or rejected within an active social context of friends and family, co-workers, peers, and other influential persons.” This was contrary to the disorganisation theorists who suggested that individuals in the modern era were the rootless, anomic, and isolated members of a lonely crowd. Therefore, the effects of mass media on individuals was seen to be, in part, a function of their connections to others; and it is only through analysing the social context and these connections that we can understand or predict what information people might obtain and how they might react to it.

Secondly, developments in the studies of Urban Sociology on the vitality of social life in the cities has provided helpful insights on what previously was predicted by disorganisation theorists as the “existence of pathology, alienation, and estranged individuals remote and unconnected to one another” (Goldenberg, 1997:171) . As part of growing enlightenment in the social world order, the studies of British Social Anthropology were “perhaps the clearest forerunners of an evolving network approach” (Goldenberg, 1997:171) as Elizabeth Bott and other scholars<sup>47</sup> sought to explain behaviour in terms of certain structural characteristics of the kind of connections people had with one another.

The other important field of study that informed the development of network analysis was Sociometry which saw social scientists in the United States from the 1930s ‘mapping behaviours of individuals in relation to one another within spatial boundaries’ (Goldernberg, 19997:171). Through this technique, researchers designed

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<sup>47</sup> Among them, John Barnes in Norway and Clyde Mitchell in Africa (Goldenberg,1997:171).

questionnaires asking respondents who they disliked, wanted to associate with or not and drew socio-metric maps or socio-grams representing the number of selections and the person with whom they were connected and whether they were reciprocated. As Goldenberg notes, methodologically and conceptually, socio-metry was an antecedent of network analysis.

The basic premise of network theory is that this aspect of variation in connectedness to others is a fundamental structural condition that affects many dependable variables that interest us. For example contemporary talk of ‘networking’ in attempts to make ‘connections’ for job searches, or more corporately, ‘sponsorships’ and ‘mentoring’ are recommended by consultants as a strategy to use connections with others in the cooperate world. Attention will next be given to examining the key contentions from Elizabeth Bott, especially the aspects that are relevant to this study.

### *Critique of modern networks in the light of African traditions*

It is important to note that network changes force people to interact in new ways especially in this age of technological advancement where people rely on Facebook, skype, emails and other forms of communication technology to maintain relationship connections. Traditional forms of closely knit family networks are broken down when people move to new communities and loss of personal contact erodes cultural and traditional family values and support systems.

*Ubuntu*, is a concept that informs an African understanding of a person developed by John Mbiti<sup>48</sup> and places emphasis on the “communal life” that derives from an ontological precept; “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” (lit: ‘a person is a person because of other people’), a construction that views people not as individuals, but individuals only in relationship to the community and the world of nature around them.

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<sup>48</sup> In Mtata K. (2011). *African Theological Anthropology: The place of children*. Journal Of Gender and Religion in Africa, Vol 17.1 July 2011

Physical contact with family and community, defines a sense of belonging together in a closely knit society where there are shared values, goals and interests. Family support systems maintain healthy marriage relationships and individuals are guaranteed immediate support and care in times of distress. In contrast, people who find themselves with loose knit networks as a result of migration often lead lonely and sometimes challenging lives. Many marriages have broken down due to separation of spouses as men have to move into cities like Johannesburg in search of better employment opportunities leaving their wives and children in their home countries.

### *Ideology*

Ideology, as Bott identified it, relates to political or personal choices that people make. According to Bott, there are decisions that have a direct effect on networks but are not selected because of this particular effect. For example, a family can be forced to move into a new city as a result of promotion. This move impacts on family decisions but as Bott notes, 'rarely do these decisions consciously include evaluation of possible effects on one's social networks' (in Godelberg, 1997: 185). However, when people move into new communities and existing networks are disrupted, some networks are maintained in altered form where for example, telephone conversations replace personal visits. As a result, close knit networks are loosened while at the same time, new networks can be established in new communities as Bott suggests. These network dynamics affect the identity of individual migrants, families or communities, and for purposes of this study, it may be important to briefly reflect on the concept of identity.

### *Migrants' search for identity*

According to Leary and Tangney (2003:262) identity may be defined as the distinctive characteristic belonging to any given individual, or shared by all members of a particular social category or group. As the authors further explain; identity may be distinguished from identifying; the former is a label, whereas the latter refers to the classifying act itself. Identity is thus best construed as being both relational and contextual, while the act of identification is best viewed as inherently processional.

Elizondo (2009:262) underscored the significance of identity in theological reflection when he used Galilee and the Jewish identity of Jesus as fundamental reference points in his theological work. For Elizondo (2003:263) theological reflection, consciously or not, is socially and culturally situated and our social situation gives us a unique perspective; our social and cultural situation informs our reflection. This is important in that as a Zimbabwean citizen now resident in South Africa, the researcher's identity is a result of multiple cultures whose identity has been shaped through the years lived in the cities of Bulawayo, Johannesburg and now Durban.

In describing the challenge that contemporary communities have to contend with in the face of intensified migration, Adam Strom, Director of Research and Development with Facing History<sup>49</sup> reminds us:

Sociologist Manuel Castells has affirmed the modern need to investigate our very selves, explaining, "In a world of global flows of wealth, power, and images, the search for identity—collective or individual, ascribed or constructed—becomes the fundamental source of social meaning." Glimpses of these "global flows" have underscored the questions about identity and belonging that begin every *Facing History and Ourselves* study and help to illuminate the challenges that young adults encounter. How can the world's teachers help students deal with the new, the unfamiliar, and the complex? How will students learn to take the perspective of another in order to understand whether the newly arrived and the long ensconced have to compromise their core values? What can educators do to promote tolerance, respect, and understanding? (in *Facing History and Ourselves*, 2008 publication).

The above questions raised by Manuel Castells are critical for this study. As Adam Strom (Suarez, 2008:4) further explains;

"Although it once was possible to imagine our communities as distinct and autonomous, the flow of people, ideas, goods, and money leaves little doubt that no part of the world is untouched by the powerful forces of globalization. One of the

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<sup>49</sup> According to information available on their website ([www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org)) Facing History and Ourselves is an international and professional development organization which aims to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and anti-Semitism in order to promote the development of a more human and informed citizenry.



most visible aspects of globalization is migration—from rural areas to cities, from one region or country to another, or from a familiar country to a quite foreign one. As people cross national borders, they carry with them their identities—their culture, religion, and values” (Suarez, 2008:4 in *Facing History and Ourselves*, 2008).

In the light of the global development, the questions around human dignity or identify become very pertinent and urgent to address. Movement of people is not a new phenomenon. Human history is a story of communities and small tribes of people encountering one another. To use Journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski’s words (Suarez: 2008:10), “encounter with other people, has always been a universal and fundamental experience for our species.” We have always had these encounters and will continue to experience encounters with others, strangers who look different from us. The challenging question that Kapuscinski throws at us is, “Do those encounters lead to violence or to cooperation, to bridge building or to the building of the walls?”

There are no easy answers to these critical questions raised. However, they offer some lenses through which an examination of the situation of contemporary migration can take place in the light of renewed quest for cultural preservation and upholding of human identity and dignity. In a context where most communities are no longer isolated from the rest of the world, there are emerging forms of identity and cultural diversities. Some important questions which must be interrogated are: How can we manage diversity and translate it into a resource for improved cooperation, dialogue and human development? How should we act towards others? And what kind of attitude should we have toward one another as diverse individuals or communities?

According to Kapuscinski (2005:45) there is evidence of different human encounters scattered across the planet as proof of cooperation;

“remains of market places, of ports, of places where there were agoras and sanctuaries, of where the seats of old universities and academies are still visible, and of where there remain vestiges of such trade routes as the Silk road, the Amber Route and the Trans-Saharan caravan route” (Kapuscinski, 2005:45).

Challenging us to see diversity from an enhanced cooperation perspective he further explains that;

“All these were places where people met to exchange thoughts, ideas, merchandise, and where they traded and did business, concluded covenants and alliances and discovered shared goals and values. The “Other” stopped being a synonym of foreignness and hostility” (Kapuscinski, 2005:45).

The significant observation that Kapuscinski makes is that people had three choices when encountered with the ‘Other’:

1. They could choose war
2. They could build a wall around themselves
3. Or they could enter into a dialogue

For purposes of this study, these three choices will be utilized as an additional framework for assessing the approaches that the South African government has engaged to address the challenges related to the influx of migrants, particularly in Gauteng province.

At this stage, it is important to stress that since strangers are asserted to be different from local South Africans and their presence leads to suspicion, mistrust and insecurity; questions such as: who are “these people?”<sup>50</sup> And what do they want in our country or community? These are important questions which need to be examined because it is these differences and mistrusts that lead to tensions between local people and migrants. As Fatema Mernissi<sup>51</sup> (in Suarez, 2008:13) points out; “The most baggage carried by strangers is their difference. And if you focus on the divergent and the dissimilar, you get flashes.” Fatema Mernissi’s believed that “the more you

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<sup>50</sup> Through some programs that I have been involved in, we have grappled with the term ‘these people’ or ‘those people’ through addressing HIV and AIDS related stigma and discrimination. We have challenged these words and advocated use of words like ‘some of us’ to encourage inclusive language that does not discriminate so that nobody feels they do not belong to any community or group of people as a result of their race, tribe, nationality or human condition. I am borrowing this term to show that this is how migrants are labeled in most communities. They are not viewed as part of those communities in which they live and that is a challenge that must be addressed.

<sup>51</sup> Fatema Mernissi was a Moroccan Scholar whose grandmother helped him to understand that the more you understand a stranger, the more power you will have.

understand a stranger... the more power you will have” and went to discover that “to travel is the best way to learn and empower yourself,”and considers this as some advice that he got from his grandmother Yasmina (in Suarez, 2008:13). There is much wisdom in the philosophy of Yasmina to help us address the challenges of relating with others in the African context of Johannesburg.

Anthropologists and cultural psychologists have also grappled with globalization and its impact on human relations and values. For example, Marcelo Suarez-Orozco defines globalization as the “movement of people, goods, or ideas among countries and regions.”(Suarez, 2008:14). The impact of migration is a key factor in the understanding of globalization which is characterized by intensified movement of goods and people across regions and nations. It is therefore important to reflect on the questions that have been raised by Suarez (2008) in the light of globalization: how should societies integrate new comers? How do new comers develop a sense of belonging to the places where they arrived?

Through his book, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration: Pilgrims in the Wilderness* Gemma Tulud Cruz (2010) explores ‘the dynamics of an intercultural theology of migration as illustrated in the theological possibilities, relevance, and challenges of the struggle of the Filipino Domestic Workers in Hong Kong’(Cruz, 2010:7). Under the sub-theme *[A]n Expanded Category: Shifting Identity and Subjectivity as Challenges for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Theology* Cruz introduces his reflection on identity by asking questions; Who am I? Who are you? Who are we/they? And suggests that these seemingly simple questions have taken center stage in this era of globalization characterized by global economic and cultural integration, unprecedented migration, and state of the art technology, which has left most people with no choice but “to share shrinking spaces” (Cruz 2010:152).

Writing from the context of Filipino Domestic Workers in Hong Kong, Cruz makes significant observations on the impact of globalization on human identity as he observes that;

“[t]he inevitable interaction of contexts that ensue from this [process of globalization] are putting traditional and cherished markers of identity to the test and are forcing

people to either preserve, relinquish or transform their identities in the process. Whatever the case may be, one thing remains certain: a crisis of identity is confronting migrant humanity” (Cruz, 2010:153).

The important questions raised by Cruz as his contribution to the debate on identity in the context of modern societies are worth mentioning as they resonate with the questions raised in this study:

- What could be the Christian contribution to this more pronounced reality of changed and changing identity and subjectivity?
- In the same way, how do these definitive changes challenge the method and content of Christian theology?
- What could be the face or contours of a Christian theology that takes these developments seriously (Cruz, 2010:153).

A Cultural psychologist with interest in matters of identity Carola Suarez-Orozco (2004:15) writes that for children “the task of immigration is creating a transcultural identity” and explains that “[t]hese youth must creatively fuse aspects of two or more cultures-the parental tradition and the new culture or cultures” (Orozco, 2004:15). Like most parts of the modern world, many immigrants live in constant fear and cultural shock, uncertain about whether their offspring will properly assimilate into host communities and lose their connection with the cultural place of origin.

In this regard, there is a need for the South African government to re-think its position on national identity, and explore new ways of being a “rainbow nation” in the context of migration. As cultural psychologist Carola Suarez-Orozco (2004:17) warns:

“Increasing globalization has stimulated an unprecedented flow of immigrants worldwide. These newcomers- from many national origins and a wide range of cultural, religious, linguistic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds- challenge a nation’s sense of unity”( Orozco (2004:17).

Having grown up in Zimbabwe and moved to Johannesburg after getting married, raising my two girls in a multicultural suburb of Witfield in Boksburg has been a

major challenge. My wife has always expressed concerns that our daughters will lose their sense of identity and may never get to learn the values from our own culture that and left us wondering whether our children will ever learn the history of our parents. As Saria Sha (2003:12) asks; how do people learn the history of their group and culture when the group is spread around the world? Can rituals, memories and stories replace a physical community?

Sha responds to the above questions by drawing from her personal experiences and sharing stories that her father used in the hope that the children will keep family cultural values alive while growing up as Afghan children in the U.K. In the memoir, *The Story teller's Daughter* (2003:49 in Facing History and Ourselves Publication, 2008), Saria Sha asks; “How could my father expect us to be truly Afghan when we had grown up outside an Afghan Community? When we went back home, wouldn't we children be strangers, foreigners in our own land?”

As she articulates her experiences, Sha writes:

“Like many immigrant offspring I felt intense pressure to be two things, loyal to the old world and fluent in the new, approved of on either side of the hyphen...I also entered a world my parents had little knowledge or control of: school, books, music, television, things that seeped in and became a fundamental aspect of who I am” (Sha, 2003:13).

In the midst of such intensified confusion and search for her cultural identity or self-understanding, her father's response was: “I've given you stories to replace a community. They are your community.” (Sha, 2003:49, in Facing History and Ourselves Publication, 2008).

Sha's personal encounters demonstrate a process of constructing a *transnational identity* and this point to the psychological and social tensions that migrant families face in host communities. It is a battle field that few reporters have been able to cover

in their news stories<sup>52</sup> and the painful struggle rages on in the isolated world of so called “*private life*” of the modern era. Alluding to the dilemma experienced by the children of migrant families living abroad, Suarez (2008) also states that;

“[a] crucial part of adolescence is a search for identity. Many adolescents have to endure the pressure within and outside of their host communities and face tough choices as they construct intercultural identities” (Suarez, 2008:10).

Religion is an important and often positive component in developing a sense of belonging and identity for people on the move. It can provide a framework for values, a sense of belonging and direction for many adults and adolescents as they navigate life in the new communities where they find themselves.

Adding his voice through a book entitled *Preventing Violence: Prospects for Tomorrow*, psychiatrist James Gilligan (1996:110) responds to a question of what happens to young people who feel their identities are rejected by the larger society and suggests that feelings of *shame* and *humiliation* are key factors in understanding violence that is so prevalent among displaced population groups of people. This leads us to an important question regarding the difference between integration, assimilation and cohesion. How can these concepts be engaged to address the challenges encountered by migrants and their children in host communities? For purposes of this study it is pertinent to briefly attend to these concepts as they provided a key understanding towards developing the themes of church as *hostile*, *host* and *home*, which emerged out of the study in chapters four and five.

## **2.6 Integration, Assimilation and Cohesion**

It is a generally held view that models that focus on providing care and support to migrants have to focus on integration, assimilation or cohesion but just what are the

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<sup>52</sup> The metaphor of the media is employed to highlight the need for further academic research on the psychological and spiritual experiences of migrants. This is critically urgent given the high numbers of parents raising children in foreign countries, especially those who are determined to develop a cultural legacy of values for their descendants.

implications of these concepts for this current investigation? The work of Sacks (2008:14) has provided some significant inputs in this regard.

Jonathan Sacks (2008:14) the Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth, reflected on these concepts in his book *The home we Build Together* (2008) in a subtle and yet significant way. Sacks; a political advisor, policy maker and leader of the Jewish Community in the United Kingdom develops three parables as a framework for understanding the relationship between newcomers and local citizens, laying what can be considered to be a foundation for a discussion on understanding the differences between assimilation, integration and cohesion of new comers into communities.

The first parable tells the fate of hundred strangers who have been wondering around the countryside in search of a dwelling place and eventually find themselves at the gate of a large country house. They are greeted by the owner at the gate who asks for their names and responds to their search for a place to stay with a warm welcome. He has a big house with many empty rooms; so they are welcome to “stay as long as they like.” They are guests who can stay for as long as they want but the *host* remains the *host* and they are his guests (Sacks, 2008:14).

In the second parable, a hundred strangers are searching for a place to stay and find themselves in the middle of a city. They see a large and comfortable hotel with all amenities. They have enough money to pay for their bills, so they check in and stay. For Sacks, their relationship with the hotel is a contractual one, they pay money in return for their services and will remain there for as long as they can afford to pay. In the wisdom of Sacks’ understanding, treating migrants as strangers in South Africa is nothing but society as a hotel (Sacks, 2008:15).

In the third parable a hundred strangers are met by the mayor, councilors and residents of the city to a warm welcome. The mayor addresses them and explains that there is no town house to accommodate them. However, the city leaders and residents have land to accommodate all of their guests. The city has town planners, engineers, builders and experts who can help them work together to design and build homes for

the new citizens. *They do it together*. Unlike in the country house or hotel, the new comers have to invest their energy to build their own long term houses. They play an active role, and get an opportunity to work with their newly found citizens in building their permanent dwelling place (Sacks, 2008:15). These three parables serve as an important signpost of the kind of hospitality that migrants and refugees should experience. They will be discussed further in chapter five and their implications identified within the context of the findings for this study.

The challenges presented by migration are very complex and as Sacks explain, building such an ideal society (based on the model of the last parable) as home won't always be easy and requires commitment and concerted efforts because:

The newcomers still occasionally seem strange. They speak and act and dress differently than the locals. But those long sessions of working together have had their effect. The locals know the newcomers are serious, committed, dedicated. They have their own ways, but they have also learned the ways of the people of the town, and they have worked out . . . a rough and ready friendship. . . Making something together breaks down walls of suspicion and misunderstanding. . . That is society as the home we build together (Sacks, 2009:29).

Adding his voice to the debate on differences that foreigners bring to their host nations, Riem Speilhaus (in Suarez, 2008:70) a scholar on Islam based at Berlin's Humboldt University, also observes that "[n]ew comers bring with them ideas, customs, and traditions that may be unfamiliar to their host communities." For Speilhaus, one of the most visible symbols of these traditions is a house of worship where migrants gather to retain their sense of identity and pass on their culture to the next generation. In the light of this symbolic significance of the construction of houses of worship, he argues that building of mosques in Europe has become controversial because houses of worship have powerful symbolic value. Religious identity is therefore one of the means through which migrants retain contact with their cultural values from the homelands. As Speilhaus rightly puts it; "[n]ew houses of worship are public reminders that new comers intend to stay" (Suarez, 2008:70).



Through the reflections<sup>53</sup> on the struggles experienced by Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong Cruz (2010:6) echoes similar sentiments about religious experience for migrants:

Religious discourse and religious means provide the domestic workers the much-needed courage, hope, and faith in the struggle. Religious services, for instance, provide spiritual strength, solace, and a link to the homeland. Religious groups and/or fellowships are established as instruments for forming ties between old and new societies, and to help them (domestic workers) deal with and/or resist the ambiguities, discontinuities, and difficulties, that arise from being Filipino women migrant domestic workers (Cruz, 2010:6).

Migrants will always rely on their spirituality as means to cope with the challenges they face in Johannesburg and local South Africans will make life easy if they accept that Johannesburg is a home that migrants also participated in building during the gold-rush epoch. This implies that Johannesburg will continue to be “*a home we build together*” (to use the concept that was constructed from the third parable above). For example, the fact that the South African immigration laws recognize that migrants with a permanent resident status can own properties and buy houses should be a clear reminder that some migrants are here to stay.

Contributing to the debate on community cohesion in Britain, the Commission on integration published a report entitled ‘*Our shared Future*’ (June 14, 2007 Accessed from [http://www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/upload/assets/www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/our\\_shared\\_future.pdf](http://www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/upload/assets/www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/our_shared_future.pdf), on the 16th April 2013). According to this report, “cohesive communities are places where [t]here is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and communities to a future vision for a neighborhood, city, region or country.” This definition of community cohesion is compatible with the third parable offered by Jonathan Sacks as the best approach to integration. Its key elements are *human dignity*, *participation* and *building of long*

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<sup>53</sup> This book explores the dynamics of an intercultural theology of migration as illustrated in the theological possibilities, relevance, and challenges of the struggle of the Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong and aims to detect, describe, and explore the theological relevance of this salient role of religion that is woven into the dialectic between oppression and liberation in the struggle of the Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong in view of identifying the features of a theology that arises from their struggle.

*term relationships*. These are important conversations in the light of increased immigration and migration. Many political and even church and community leaders fear that increasing numbers of migrants will lead to “*parallel societies*” divided along tribal, ethnical or national lines but this alternative understanding of the emerging communities in the context of intensified human mobility provides an alternative way of embracing the new migrant communities and transnational identities that arise out of the phenomenon of migration.

## **2.7 Theology and Migration**

The subject of migration has not developed into a recognised theological discipline that forms much focus in the academic arena, despite evidence for growing numbers of ‘migrant churches’ throughout the world. The report by the World Council of Churches,<sup>54</sup> notes that there is no overall master plan or comprehensive strategy yet, for dealing with the increasing demands for theological education of migrant churches in Europe.<sup>55</sup> However, according to the same report, there are clear indications that most European churches and faculties have entered in a learning journey with regard to appropriate forms of theological education for migrant churches.<sup>56</sup> The same can be said about South Africa, where according to a study conducted by Nzayabino (2005: 57) there are a growing number of refugee established churches existing alongside local churches because refugee churches are more integrative than local churches. These congregations are constituted by worshippers who share similar national, tribal, or ethnical backgrounds as a way of maintaining their cultural identities.

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<sup>54</sup> The World Council of Churches (2010). Programme on Ecumenical theological education initiated a study entitled; Theological education with migrant Christians in the changing landscape of World Christianity-Crucial issues from WCC/ETE perspective.

<sup>55</sup> There are emerging migrant churches in Africa or specifically in Johannesburg, and these activities are yet to be documented. They are in part, a response to the growing needs of migrant worshippers where they create support systems and attempt to re-discover and maintain their cultural values. Worshippers are grouped according to their places of origin, for example; Mayfair UPCSA congregation outside Johannesburg has become a popular place for Presbyterian migrants from Malawi who come to Johannesburg.

<sup>56</sup> This indicated that the migration agenda was one set by the political agenda of the North because it was limited to seeing the people from the South moving to the North. In reality more migrants move from South to South than from South to North

The work of Luis Rivera (2012) *Xenophilia or Xenophobia: Towards a Theology of Migration*, a paper delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October in 2012 provides a balanced hermeneutical approach in attempting to develop a theology of migration and warns;

Migration and xenophobia are serious social quandaries. But they also convey urgent challenges to the ethical sensitivity of religious people and persons of good will. The first step we need to take is to perceive this issue from the perspective of the immigrants, to pay cordial (that is, deep from our hearts) attention to their stories of suffering, hope, courage, resistance, ingenuity, and, as so frequently happens in the wildernesses (Rivera, 2012:4).

This observation is in line with Laterty's (2013) argument that scholars need to give recognition and voice to the sayings of Africans themselves and to build a theology from below which is based on such sayings. For Riveira (2012:9) some theological reflections on the situation of migrants in the US and Western nations tend to employ a hermeneutical strategy which evades completely and intentionally those biblical texts that might have xenophobic connotations and he proposes an alternative lens to the challenge of migration;

We need to countervail the xenophobia that contaminates public discourse in the United States and other Western nations with an embracing, exclusion-rejecting, perspective of the stranger, the alien, the "other," one which I have named *xenophilia*, a concept that comprises love, hospitality, and care for the stranger. In times of increasing economic and political globalization, ...*xenophilia* should be our duty and vocation, as a faith affirmation not only of our common humanity, but also of the ethical priority in the eyes of God of those vulnerable beings living in the shadows and margins of our societies. There is a tendency among many public scholars and leaders to weave a discourse that deals with immigrants mainly or even exclusively as workers, whose labour might contribute or not to the economic welfare of the American citizens. This kind of public discourse tends to objectify and dehumanize the immigrants (Rivera, 2012:7).

For Riveira (2012), a balanced biblical approach is critical to promoting love, tolerance and acceptance of strangers and this requires that we equally pay attention to the biblical texts that seem to promote intolerance because people that promote xenophobic tendencies appeal to such texts. There is a need for a separate study which pays closer attention to how scriptures are selectively used to address the situation of migration with a view to ensuring a balanced theological approach. Although scholars like Groody (2008) have offered significant insights on the subject of theology and migration, they have tended to completely ignore those biblical texts that might have ecclesio-misional and xenophobic connotations choosing rather, to focus only on texts that promote love and tolerance towards strangers.

In laying a theological foundation for unpacking the sociological and economic implications of migration from the perspectives of human identity and/or dignity, citizenship and belonging the following key texts have been examined for this study: *Citizenship Acquisition and National Belonging: Migration, Membership and the Liberal Democratic State* edited by Calder, Cole and Seglow (2010); *Global Migration, Social change and Cultural Transformation* edited by Emory Eliot, Jasmine Payne and Patricia Ploesch (2007); and *Stories of Identity, Religion, Migration and Belonging in a Changing World- a Facing History and Ourselves Publication* (2008).

In particular, given the diversity of perspectives regarding studies on migration, the following key texts provided insightful reflections on theology, ecclesiology and mission from the perspective of migration concepts of interest to this study:

Cruz (Cruz, G.T. (2010). *An Intercultural Theology of Migration: Pilgrims in the Wilderness*. Leiden: The Netherlands; Groody, G.D. & Campese, G. (Ed) (2008). *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press; Gioacchino, C. and Pietro C. (eds). (2003). *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization*. New York: Center for Migration Studies; Cerney P. (2010). The Relationship between Theology and Missiology: *The Missiological Hermeneutics. European Journal of Theology* 19;2, 104-109. Article based on a paper delivered at the International Conference of the Central European Centre for Mission Studies, Prague, Czech Republic, in 2007; Orobator, A. (2005). *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV/AIDS, Refugees and Poverty*. Nairobi: Pauline; Phakathi, S. (2010). The response

of churches to May 2008 xenophobic violence. *In South African Civil Society and Xenophobia*, (ed.) by D. Evarett *Collection of case studies and reports*.

### *Theological Implications for human mobility and developing themes*

Theological implications for human migration were noted during the attempts to develop a theology of migration at the Tijuana conference on migration where Peter Phan (2008) suggested that migration is one of the essential sources of an intercultural theology and proposed both method and resources for this reflection<sup>57</sup> with Jorge Calisto<sup>58</sup> also emphasizing a similar approach. Following these observations, a few themes have been explored in the area of theology and migration, among them; communion in diversity and examining Holy Communion from the perspective of a migrant (Groody, 2008) and exploring Trinity as themes for a theology of migration.<sup>59</sup> Daniel Groody (2008) built on the insights from the Tijuana conference, engaging the New Testament's theological notion of "incarnation" to highlight that in incarnation, we see God migrating to the human race. He employed Karl Barth to emphasize that in Jesus Christ, God "makes his way into the far country" (Groody, 2008). For him, Jesus was on a pilgrimage to a foreign land of human discord and disorder, a place of pain and isolation, a 'territory marked with death and the demeaning treatment of human beings.'<sup>60</sup> This observation draws from texts on incarnation such as the gospel according to Matthew (2:13-15), where it claims that God takes the form of a human being through Jesus and migrates into human environment and physical world becoming a child refugee himself when he and his family fled political persecution to

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<sup>57</sup> Phan insisted that the great resource and starting point for theological reflection on migration is the experience of the migrants themselves.

<sup>58</sup> Cited in Donald Kerwin and Jill Marie Gerschutz, eds., *And you Welcomed Me: Migration and Catholic Social Teaching*; Lanham, Md.: Lexington, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> See Fabio Baggie, *Diversity in Trinitarian Communion: Pointers toward a Theology of Migrations, in Migration in a Global World*, ed. Sloane Lefebvre and Luis Carlos Susin. (London: SCM, 2008), 74-85.

<sup>60</sup> Groody G. D. (2008) argues that the Christian story was founded on migration, and yet very little has been written from a theological perspective while in contrast, much work has been done about the social, political, economic and cultural dimensions of migration. Daniel G. Groody is a Roman Catholic priest, scholar and film producer with extensive experience on working with migrants in the Mexican border with the United States. He has proposed four conceptual foundations for a theology of migration: *Imago Dei* (the image of God), the *Verbum Dei* (the Word of God) and the *Missio Dei* (the Mission of God) and the *Visio-Dei* (the vision of God). This allows for a reading of human mobility starting from the fundamental humanity of migrants being created in God's image, first and foremost. *Verbum Dei* attests to the experiences of the "migrant Son of God", who, in the mystery of incarnation, crosses the body between human and divine worlds. *Missio-Dei* indicates participation in God's universal mission through which God wills that all human beings (especially the vulnerable such as refugees) be treated with dignity as children of God.

Egypt.<sup>61</sup> These are some of the creative ways by which theological scholars have attempted to provide alternative lens to view migration as opposed to approaches that view migrants as criminals and disruptive individuals or communities.

According to a study conducted by McDonald (2000:29), cross border migration into South Africa from elsewhere in the continent is an ‘eminently manageable process,’ as opposed to the popular stereotype of an uncontrolled flood of migrants sneaking under fences and fording crocodile-infested rivers to get into country.<sup>62</sup> He notes that a few of migrants are illegally residing in South Africa as a result of expired documents. Some of the people facing challenges with documents attend church services as members of the Christian faith hoping to get support.<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately, there appears to be very little that churches are doing in response with no programs aimed at welcoming and providing support to people from outside Johannesburg. Instead, there is a growing perception among local people in South Africa that migrants are ‘criminals who take their women and jobs,’<sup>64</sup> resulting in xenophobic attacks.

Therefore, there is a need to theologically examine globalization, not just as the movement of goods and information, but more importantly, in the light of the movement of people. Responses to such challenges require the development of strategies which will promote respect for the dignity and integration of people from outside South Africa. As Fonet-Betancourt’s work - the “intercultural convivencia” (in Groody, 2008:102) has convincingly argued, there is a need for hermeneutics to be

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>62</sup> Similar observations have also been made in a study on perceptions of migration and immigration conducted by Crush and Pendleton (2004) who note that South African citizens’ perceptions are ‘a mixture of half-truths and misleading stereotyping’.

<sup>63</sup> The researcher has attended worship services in Mayfair and Kensington and held conversations with migrants. On one occasion, I was asked to write a falsified letter stating that one member was employed by the church so that he can process an asylum permit. I explained that it was not possible to do that as it is a criminal offence. However, this experience left me wondering what it is that the church is doing to address these challenges.

<sup>64</sup> This is according to a study conducted by Jean D.P. (2008). *The Social Networks of Migrants and their Negotiation of the City of Johannesburg*. Research Report Submitted to the University of Witwatersrand as a requirement of the Masters in Forced Migration Studies.

liberated from the habits of parochial thinking to enable the Church to practice what he calls; “civil courage that welcomes strangers as citizens who must be protected.”<sup>65</sup>

Min (2004) expresses his concern about the presence of unwelcome strangers and divisions in society arguing that authentic theological reflection must address all forms of tribal, ethnical and national divisions and promote relationships through acknowledging diversity; what he calls the “solidarity of others.”<sup>66</sup> Young (2008) points to the need for cross cultural mission and development of new models of “neighbourhood” built on dialogue and hospitality (Groody, 2008:97).

At the heart of this study is Sol’s (1982:38) observation that “*when the people move, the church moves,*” this is an assertion that the church is not the temples built in local communities, but it is a lived religious experience embodied in people who, after all, move from one place to another. As people move, they do not leave behind their religious experiences; instead, they move with them and articulate their migration experiences in the light of personal theological reflections on the journey. According to Nzayabino (2005:25), religion plays an important role in shaping the identity of individuals and “as identity, religion is less a matter of theological beliefs than it is an issue of family, culture, ethnicity, and nationality” (Gunn, 2002:16). Therefore, in seeking to examine the implications of migration as a social phenomenon for the Church’s mission, this study examined the religious experiences of migrants before, during and after their journey to draw insights on their needs and the role that Christian mission should play.

Considering that statistics on migration (IOM, 2010) point to an increasing number of people moving globally, with challenges encountered by both receiving and sending countries, it is important to explore the identity and mission of the church with

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<sup>65</sup> See Raul Fornet-Betancourt, “*Hermeneutics and Politics of Strangers: A Philosophical Contribution on the challenge of Convivencia in Multicultural Societies,*” in *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey* 89-106.

<sup>66</sup> For a deeper reflection on this notion, see Anselm K. Min, (2004). “*From Autobiography to Fellowship of Others: Reflections on Doing Ethnic Theology Today,*” in *Journeys as the Margin* 135-59. See also Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a divided World: A Post- modern Theology after Postmodernism.* New York: T. & T. Clark International.

regards to this phenomenon, not only as a community that helps and sustains migrants, but most of all, to use Stephen Bevans' words; "as a community with and of migrants."<sup>67</sup> There is a need for social inclusion for migrants and the church can provide uncontested and safe spaces through community development initiatives for all people. Failure to realise this could lead to tragic events such as the history of Asian immigration in the United States, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the infamous Executive Order 9066 of 1942 that ordered the internment of some 120 000 Japanese Americans during World War 2.<sup>68</sup>

In view of this, it is encouraging to learn that some churches in Europe are working with migrant communities<sup>69</sup> to promote 'respect, dignity and equality' of all people, although we are yet to see how European churches will handle the current migration crisis in the face of the ongoing war in Syria, Libya and other parts of the troubled world. We need to see more similar and concerted efforts within the African context. Justice plays a key role in the mission of European churches with migrants and they view this ministry as a '*transforming and redeeming deed*' which brings new cultural, economic, political and social benefits to all. However, the current crisis on migrants and refugees in Europe<sup>70</sup> will test these convictions and the readiness of the European churches' commitment to stand up for justice and promote *respect, dignity and equality* in the face of current counter terrorism efforts versus the influx of refugees and migrants.

In the Old Testament book of Exodus (6:13), the Bible records that "the Lord spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge to the children of Israel, and to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt" (3:7,

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<sup>67</sup> See Stephen B. Bevans, "*Mission among the Migrants, Mission of the Migrants: Mission of the Church*," in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey* 89-106

<sup>68</sup> See William O' Neil, S. J., "*Rights of Passage: Ethics of Forced Displacement*," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27 (2007) 113-36, at 115-15.

<sup>69</sup> Trotman (2009). *European Integration. A way forward? Churches in Europe contributing to Europe's future: framework and issues*. Church and Society commission, Conference of European Churches

<sup>70</sup> At the time of writing this thesis (19, November 2015) Europe was on alert after Paris terrorist attacks (Friday, 15 November) left 129 people dead and more than 300 injured. This a few days after 43 people were left dead in Lebanon after similar attacks attributed to the Islamic State (ISIL) a group fighting to establish an Islamic State in countries such as Syria, Iraq, Libya- all of them currently unstable and fuelling growing numbers of refugees fleeing to Europe.



10). The story line in the books of Exodus, Leviticus through to Numbers, reflects the encounter of God with ‘the children of Israel’ rescued from bondage in the hands of Egyptians and migrating with them through the desert to ‘the promised land’ of their fore-fathers (Genesis 15: 13-16, 46: 3-4), a migrant God journeying with his people. God’s movement towards human race and his desire to ‘walk with humanity’ in this life and beyond, towards a promise of a better life, is a story that Christian migrants can identify with as they cross borders in search of a better life.

In seeking answers to questions raised on the theological implications for the experiences of migrants, Groody (2008) observes that people who cross the deserts in search of more dignified lives, “see in the Jesus story their own story: he opens up a reason to hope despite the most hopeless of circumstances.”<sup>71</sup> People migrate in search of employment because they want to provide for their families, they know the scripture; “anyone unwilling to work should not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work” (2 Thes 3:10-12), a text where there is an emphasis on the obligation to work, as a means for making provisions; so people in poverty stricken communities feel obliged to move in search of employment to fulfil this obligation to provide.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, what ministry should the church provide for a person who has decided to move? This question was raised by John Baptist Scalabrini (1839-1905) in Groody and Campese (2008:127) as he described his encounter with a person who was preparing to leave his parish and migrate:

One day a wonderful man, an exemplary Christian, from a little mountain village where I was making my pastoral visitation came to see me and ask for my blessing and a memento for himself and his family on the eve of their departure for America. When I demurred, he countered with this simple but distressing dilemma: “Either you steal or you emigrate. I am not allowed to steal nor do I want to, because God and the law forbid it. But in this place there is no way I can earn a living for me and my children. So what can I do? I have to emigrate: it is the only thing left...” I did not know what to answer. With a full heart, I blessed him and entrusted him to the

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>72</sup> Brocke C. (2011). *Work in the New Testament and in Greco-Roman Antiquity*. Lutheran World Federation, in *Dignity of Work-Theological and Interdisciplinary Perspectives Documentation 56/2011*

protection of God. But once more I became convinced that emigration is a necessity, a heroic and ultimate cure one has to accept, just as a sick person accepts painful surgery to avoid death (Groody and Campese, 2008:127).

These observations demonstrate that migration is a complex phenomenon and can only be better understood from the perspective of migrants themselves. The misleading stereotyping and a mixture of half truths about migration and immigration noted by Crush and Pendleton (2004:104), fuel wrong perceptions on African migrants, as this approach does not consider the situation of migrants affected or the situation in the sending and receiving countries. For example the South African economy is considered the strongest among economies in southern African nations and the government has an ambitious plan to create more employment opportunities, although ‘implementation and capacity is often where ambitious government plans stall’ (Vollgraaff, 2012).<sup>73</sup> People are attracted to Johannesburg at a time when global factors like the on-going fallout from the 2008 financial crisis and the current European market crisis have weakened the South African economy and its ability to create new jobs and absorb new people. As a result, these perceived economic opportunities are not enough for all people searching for jobs, resulting in tensions between locals and foreign migrants.

Stephen Bevans (2008) proposed that local churches should always view themselves “as a community with and of migrants”<sup>74</sup> suggesting that there is a need for social inclusion (cohesion) for migrants and the church can provide uncontested space for the marginalised people such as refugees and migrants. According to him, failure to realise this could lead to tragic events such as the history of Asian immigration in the United States, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the infamous Executive Order 9066 of 1942 that ordered the internment of some 120 000 Japanese Americans during World War 2.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Cited from the Sunday Times, February 12, 2012; Zuma sings familiar song

<sup>74</sup> See Stephen B. Bevans, “*Mission among the Migrants, Mission of the Migrants: Mission of the Church,*” in *A Promised Land, a Perilous Journey* 89-106

<sup>75</sup> See William O’ Neil, S. J., “*Rights of Passage: Ethics of Forced Displacement,*” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27 (2007) 113-36, at 115-15.

At a conference organised by the World Council of Churches in 1961 Protestant Theologian Pieter de Jong (WCC, 2010) made an attempt to lay the foundation of a theology of migration suggesting that the development of such a theology should start with a ‘scientific’ study of the phenomenon of migration.<sup>76</sup> The events that followed such as the 2002 congress of Tijuana in Mexico, which was organised by the Scalabrinian missionaries (Groody, 2008) and the Transborder Institute of the University of San Diego enriched theological reflection on human mobility, placing emphasis on the interdisciplinary nature of the discipline as well as the significance of dialogue with migrants, sociologists, anthropologists and theologians.

Further to these considerations, the multiplicity of contexts and other factors such as the economic and political circumstances of the sending and receiving countries, bring another dimensional enrichment into the study. The researcher’s postulation therefore is that there can be no single theology of migration, but there can be as many as there are different contexts and approaches. For example, while Antonio Martinez Diez (2008)<sup>77</sup> worked in Latin America ministering to homeless migrant minors in Spain, he employed the method “see-judge-act” to reflect on what he calls a *political theology of migration*.

Robert J. Schreiter’s (2004) contributions in the field of mission studies and intercultural theology have offered critical analytical lenses for the experiences of migrants. In particular Schreiter’s insights on “*Constructing Local Theologies*” (2004) and his creative work on how theology can respond to the challenges of globalization encapsulated as the model of a “new catholicity” in his work, ‘*The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local*’ (1997). Schreiter suggests that theology should attend to both its contextual and universal dimensions, thus defending the universal claim of theology; God’s mission to the World, understood as a universal and collective endeavor- an affirmation which is central to Christian faith. Therefore in attempting to develop intercultural theologies there is a need to transform one’s understanding of theology from the local (*contextual*) to the universal

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<sup>76</sup> The fact that this study examined the lived experiences of migrants is one of the major reasons behind its interdisciplinary nature. It had to be ‘scientific’ about the reality of the migrants’ lived experiences and this meant employing sociological tools in conducting field work and in data analysis. Only when these findings had been analysed did the researcher engage the outcomes theologically, in chapter five.

<sup>77</sup> Cited from <http://www.livedtheology.org>

(*transnational*) and for Schreiter (1997) this is critical. Such theologies are characterized by their ability to address the global systemic problems while at the same time engaging in intercultural dialogue, and thereby transcending the local circumstances/ situation.

In his book titled; *An Intercultural Theology of Migration: Pilgrims in the Wilderness*, Gemma Tulud Cruz (2010), also offers a theological framework for developing an intercultural theology. In particular, his reflection on Dolores Williams's Theology of survival quality of life- womanist God-talk and Jung Young Lee's theology of Marginality, examining the struggle for survival quality of life by black women through an interrogation and reflection on the struggle for survival of black women and how they survive the threats to their well-being in the face of surrogacy. The migrants' struggles in Johannesburg and how they survive the threats to their well-being from the margins of the social, economic and religious diversity offer a nexus for the application of Williams' and Lee's theology towards developing an intercultural theology based on African experience. Williams' theology of survival quality of life and Jung Young Lee's theology of Marginality resonate with the theological attempt of understanding the experiences of migrants in selected congregations for this study. The application of the concepts emerging out of these two theologies will be explored further in chapter five, but they deserve little treatment as part of literature review in the section that follow.

#### *Dolores Williams's Theology of survival quality of life*

Within this womanist God-talk (as Williams calls her theology), the struggle for survival quality of life by black women is a dominant theme (Cruz, 2010:182). Embedded in her theology of survival quality of life is Williams' interrogation and reflections on the struggle for survival of black women and how they survive the threats to their well-being and/or the ethic of survival in the face of surrogacy.

As an African American, Dolores Williams' thought offers a gender sensitive approach to the experience of migration in an African context, something in between

Black liberation and feminist theology. Her “powerful critique of the biblical, social, cultural and the political constraints about the nature of God and what such ideas about God mean for human agency and human relating”<sup>78</sup> and her theological thinking offered alternative views “[a]gainst the traditional standards of the history of Christian thought”<sup>79</sup> as she made significant contributions to “expose and repair major cleavages between theory and method, faith and reason, race and gender, and history and culture in Black theological scholarship” (Stewart, 2004 in Cruz, 2010).

Growing up in southern part of the US she witnessed the violent discrimination of Blacks by whites and her theological thinking is widely influenced by these repressive practices which, according to her, are still prevalent in different forms. Her theological thinking is largely informed by her African-American experience and her theological thoughts were influenced by Paul Tillich<sup>80</sup> and Alice Walker.<sup>81</sup> Her contextual background resonates well with the apartheid and colonial experiences of the Black Africans who still have to endure the neo-liberal and post-colonial realities.<sup>82</sup> Williams’ theological thinking made contributions in this study through the five major themes:

1. Womanist approach to God talk
2. Use of Hagar as a biblical narrative of hope and survival
3. Womanist approach to the problem of theodicy

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<sup>78</sup> Joan Marie Terrell, “Something of God in Dolores Williams: Poet, Prophet, Premier womanist,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review: Festschrift for Dolores Williams Vol. 58, Nos. 3-4 (2004): 1* in Cruz (2010).

<sup>79</sup> Diane M. Stewart, “Womanist God- Talk on the Cutting Edge of Theology and Black Religious Studies: Assessing the Contribution of Dolores Williams Vol. 58, Nos. 3-4 (2004) in Cruz (2004)

<sup>80</sup> For details on Tillich’s influence in her thinking refer to Stephen Butler, *Socially Relevant Theology and the Courage to Be: The Influence of Paul Tillich on the Womanist Theology of Dolores S. Williams*,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review Vol. 58, Nos. 3-4 (2004): 95-111*.

<sup>81</sup> Walker’s influence on her had to do with the definition of womanist in Alice Walker, *In search of Our Mother’s Gardens*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), xi as cited in Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 243 (foot note no. 5).

<sup>82</sup> These include the new forms of oppression and discrimination of Blacks that is still prevalent in post-Apartheid South Africa. Although the country is politically free from colonialism, economic wealth is still managed by white owned corporations through transnational corporations that keep the capital floating in the global markets, making it almost impossible for national governments to effect economic transformation that transfers economic wealth to the Black majority.

4. Deconstruction of theological invitation to partake in suffering within Christian traditions (atonement theory) and,
5. Attention to the motif of Africa in African-American religion and culture.

It is the above marks for Williams that made her theological thought relevant for this study, as a gender sensitive lens to gaze at the experience of migration not just as an African endeavour, but also at a transnational or global level where we see intensified relocation of people at an alarming rate.<sup>83</sup> In particular, this study is interested in Dolores Williams's work, the "womanist God-talk" focusing on the struggle for survival quality of life by black women as a dominant theme. It is also her interrogation and reflections on the struggle for survival of black women and how they survive the threats to their well-being and/or the ethic of survival that provided a theoretical framework for the examination of the experience of migration in this study. Although this study is interested in 'resistance' as a survival strategy for African women, the following key concepts undergirds her method of doing theology:

*Key themes for Williams's theology:*

- The cross and atonement
- Wilderness
- The Black church

The method that Williams employs in doing her womanist theology has four salient features, namely;

- 1) It is multi-dialogical- drawing not just from her experiences as an African-American woman but also derives from a diversity of sources such as "novels, plays, spirituals, slave narratives, poems, autobiographies, testimonies, blues, jazz. She engages not just the classic sources, e.g. Scripture and Christian

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<sup>83</sup> At the time of writing this thesis, (September, 2015) the European Union was coordinating a unified response to the crisis of migrants that were fleeing wars in Syria, Libya, Afghanistan and some parts of the world where there is economic and political instability. A response, which was triggered by the alarming rates of deaths of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea and else-where, aims at addressing the plight of refugees and economic migrants who are risking their lives in search of security and better living conditions. This, just a few months after South Africa experienced a wave of xenophobic violence directed to foreign migrants in March, an indication that the crisis of migration is a global challenge that has not previously received the attention it deserves.

tradition, but non-traditional ones, as well, particularly folk religion and culture. Moreover, she utilises biblical texts or personalities, that are not often discussed or never used as sources, particularly in feminist theological discourses, and engages other hermeneutical theological frameworks within the field of theology, and those outside the theological discipline, e.g. sociology, anthropology, history, literature, and even music” (Cruz, 2010: 176).

- 2) Secondly, as Cruz states with clarity, “Williams theologizes with liturgical intent. She does the theology in a way that it saves a critique of the thought, worship, and action of the church, particularly African-American churches” (Cruz, 2010:177). For her, it is crucial for theology to “search for new interpretations that can honour oppressed people’s experiences and struggles, particularly in identifying and elaborating justice based or justice oriented approaches to worship and praxis.”
- 3) Thirdly, Williams does her theology didactically, aiming at making sure that her theological reflections are not only descriptive but also transformative in nature, as she focuses on ethical and moral issues around on her popular themes; of justice, survival and quality of life. She views theology as a vehicle for learning and developing new life enriching insights for the Christian communities.
- 4) Lastly, as a creative scholar, Williams does her theology imaginatively, convinced that theology must be done in a way that demonstrates a commitment to both reason and validity of female imagery and metaphorical language.

It is important to state that the multi-dialogical nature of Williams’ method made it appropriate for an interdisciplinary study like this one as it combines theological and sociological data in its analysis and reflections. It is also critical to mention that Williams has been credited for being the first to use the word, ‘womanist’ in

theological reflections<sup>84</sup> and her womanist theology “emerged as both an affirmation and a counter narrative to Black liberation theology and feminist theology. Thus it is originally related to both” (Cruz, 2010:178). As Cruz further explains, in her work on womanist God talk, Williams challenges Black liberation theology’s understanding of incarnation, revelation, Jesus Christ, and reconciliation. For example, regarding incarnation, she contends that if Black liberation theologians remove their sexist lens, they can see that God’s self-disclosure happened not only in Jesus Christ, but also through a woman that is Mary. This view is critical for helping us appreciate that both women and men on the move, just like women and men in host communities, are also created in the image of God and therefore deserve to be treated with the same human dignity.

The migrants’ struggles in Johannesburg and how they survive the threats to their well-being and/or the ethic of survival in the face of social, economic and religious diversity present tools for the application of Williams’s theology towards developing an intercultural theology based on African experience.

#### *Jung Young Lee’s theology of Marginality*

In this study migrants are considered to be people living on the margins of communities in a number of ways; economically, socially, politically, culturally and even religiously. According to Cruz (2010: 209) one of the strengths of Young Lee’s theology is the way he simultaneously negotiated cultural and social aspects of migrants as he considers them to be on the margins and believed that ‘*marginal people*’ could be instrumental in a new way of doing theology and suggesting that ‘*marginality*’ should be the “*hermeneutical principle*” and the “*creative core*” for doing theology in the context of multicultural society.

One important concept in the development of a contextual theology of migration for this study has been the basic features of Jung Young Lee’s theology of marginality. His theological method is contextual and is premised on conceptualization of

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<sup>84</sup> This is according to Dwight N. Hopkins, *Introducing Black Theology of Liberation*, New York: Orbis books, 1999), 133 in Cruz (2010).



marginality as “in between,” “in both” and beyond” and Lee develops his arguments to demonstrate how and why Jesus is the marginal person “*par excellence*.”

As one of the most published Asian-American theologians, Jung Young Lee’s theological thoughts are critical for this study as indicated in the methodology section in Chapter three. His theology explores the implications of marginality to following Jesus in relation to the church and what it means to be a marginal church. Specifically, Jung Young Lee’s theology of Marginality is based on the conviction that marginal people could be instrumental in a new way of doing theology and suggests that ‘marginality’ should be the “hermeneutical principle” and the “creative core” for doing theology in the context of multicultural society.

As Cruz (2010:209) further observed, one of the strengths of Young Lee’s theology is the way he simultaneously negotiated cultural and social aspects, the application of this model has been relevant for a socio-culturally diverse context like Johannesburg. Key themes identified in this theology are all relevant to this study;

*Key themes for Lee’s theology:*

- The marginal person
- Jesus Christ as the margin for Marginality
- The Church and Marginal Discipleship

Lee’s theology has been branded “the liberal dialogical method” which pursues “new truth” through “*non –disputational dialogue*” which he refers to as a ‘*trilogue*’ (Cruz, 2010:204). Like, Williams, Lee values the role of experience in the theological task and believes that theological statements are born out of the correlation between human experience and imagination, the two working hand in glove.<sup>85</sup> He was largely

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<sup>85</sup> Emphasis is the researcher’s.

influenced by his Confucian background but managed to engage Western scholars while developing his own method located within his context. One of his important arguments against the influence of the western thought in Christian theology was that it tended to “stress conversion of non-Christians rather than cultivation of goodness in whatever guise, and to stress expansion at the expense of other religions rather than cooperate and dialogue with them” (Cruz, 2010:207).

### *The marginal person*

Having been a migrant himself in US, Lee had first- hand experience of how the prevailing views of multiculturalism were reinforcing racism and making him feel disoriented. He knew what it felt like being a stranger in the US due to language and cultural barriers and so used “ethnicity and/or racial origin and cultural preference, which he believes are that most important determinants of immigrant marginality and based on his experience, Lee adopted the term “marginality” and re-interpreted it from faith perspective” (Cruz, 2010:210).

For Jung Young Lee, marginality from a faith perspective has three dimensions;

### *In between*

- 1) In between condition- experienced by migrants through racial discrimination

According to him, this condition creates excessive self-consciousness and race consciousness, ambivalence, pessimism, sentimentalism and consequently, self-alienation. Another dimension of this ‘in between’ condition is symbolised by the suffering of Jesus on the cross and for Lee, suffering is inevitable for all Christ’s followers and especially those living on the margins of society or what he refers to “in between world.”

### *In both*

- 2). In both implies that migrants live in two worlds without belonging wholly to the other, what this study refers to as transnationalism. As Lee views it, suffering is a part of faith but it should not be glorified and sadly, being a marginal person implies that there is bound to be increased suffering due to

up-rootedness and cultural barriers among other factors. To live in between worlds means affirming both the dominant culture of residence while at the same time holding on to the ancestral culture.

### *In beyond*

3). According to Lee, in beyond refers to one who is in-both worlds but also in-between them at the same time, without being bound by either of them. One who is able to bring together the experience of being “in between” and “in both.” One who overcomes marginality without being a marginal person?

These concepts can easily dialogue with the features of Williams’ theology.

### *Jesus Christ as the margin for Marginality*

According to Lee, Jesus is the marginal person *par excellence* and embodies the experiences of all marginalised people in society. Jesus’ incarnation was divine emigration and this divinity demonstrates how Jesus became marginal by taking human form:

- 1). Conceived by unwedded woman
- 2). Born far from his town
- 3). Sheltered in a manger
- 4). Visited by Eastern wise men rather than the elite of his nation
- 5). Forced to escape into Egypt

As already alluded to, Jesus experienced homelessness, loneliness and rejection like migrants. He was a stranger (even to his own people), the marginal person and embodied the experience of migrants. Therefore, according to Lee, the role and image of Jesus as a Suffering Servant is essential to Jesus’ “*in-betweenness*,” and this implies that servanthood is a part of marginalization.

### *Ecclesiological implications for human migration*

In the African situation, Orobator (2005) conducted pastoral reflections on human mobility and the situation of refugees and underscored the ecclesiological relevance of this phenomenon, developing various images of the church from the perspective of mobile populations. He also asserts that empirical enquiry has to be the starting point of an African ecclesiology, concurring with the view that church attracts the attention of more than one discipline due the depth of its symbols and rituals, the vitality of its celebrations and members, and the complexity of its organisation and doctrinal outlook. For him, the church constitutes the theological and social, what he refers to as “a double dimension” with an identity simultaneously related to God and at the same time, to the world (Height in Orobator, 2005:25).

Studies conducted by Gemma Tulud Cruz (2010) on an *Intercultural Theology of Migration*; Raúl Fornet-Betancourt’s edited work on *Migration and Interculturality: Theological and Philosophical Challenges* (2004); Jorge E. Castillo Guerra, “A Theology of Migration: Toward an Intercultural Methodology,” in Groody and Campese (2008), *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey*, 243-270; are some of the key scholars whose theological contributions and thinking on theology and migration provided methodological concepts that helped unpack the ecclesiological aspects for this study.

The report by the World Council of Churches (2010) titled; *Theological education with migrant Christians in the changing landscape of world Christianity- Crucial issues from WCC/ETE perspective* notes that there is no overall master plan or comprehensive strategy yet, for dealing with the increasing demands for theological education of migrant churches in Europe.<sup>86</sup> Although, according to the same report, there are clear indications that most European churches and faculties have entered in a learning journey with regard to appropriate forms of theological education for migrant

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<sup>86</sup> Such a strategy is urgent, given the current the migration crisis in Europe as most refugees flee the war in Syria. There are emerging migrant churches in Africa or specifically in Johannesburg, and these activities are yet to be documented. They are in part, a response to the growing needs of migrant worshippers where they create support systems and attempt to re-discover and maintain their cultural values. This study found that worshippers are grouped according to their places of origin, for example; Mayfair UPCSA congregation outside Johannesburg has become a popular place for Presbyterian migrants from Malawi while Yeoville is dominated by migrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other French speaking African countries.

churches. This report sheds some light on the academic developments around the themes of migration and theology.

As a result, there has been a growing interest in southern Africa as African scholars concerned with the religious experiences of migrants; Mnyaka (2003), Nzayabino (2005), Orobator (2005), and Ohajiriogu (2009), who have attempted doing theology from the perspective of migration- interrogating the role of religion on human mobility and have variously concluded that religion plays a central role in shaping and maintaining identity among migrant populations.

The work of Scalabrini (in Groody and Campese, 2008) *A Living Voice*, 379-80 also offered additional resources for this study as it grapples with the kind of ministry suggested for a person who has decided to move. The challenge of pastoral care and migrants were a major concern for John Baptist Scalabrini (1839-1905). John Scalabrini had an encounter with a parish member who sought blessings to migrate to the United States of America as a result of unemployment within a poor community in Mexico. These experiences led to the development of a pastoral ministry for migrants which would later become a global movement within the Roman Catholic Church.

### *Mission and Migration*

Relevant reflections on missiology have been drawn from scholars such as Timothy Yates (2009), Parvel Cerny (2010) and Adam Dodds (2011) who offered additional resources for this study. In particular, Pavel Cerny's work (2010) titled '*The Relationship between Theology and Missiology: The Missiological Hermeneutics*' offered a helpful leverage for exploring the interface between theology and mission- as the experience of migration.

In the Southern African context, the contributions in missiological thought were drawn from David Jacobus Bosch (1921-1991) who provided a contextual working definition for mission in this study. David (1991) states very clearly in *Transforming*

*Mission* that the only adequate way in which we can define mission today is a mission in many modes, and therefore ‘*mission as’...*” For Bosch (1991:519) a broader definition of Mission as “the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to belie, is the good news of God’s love, incarnated in the witness of a community for the sake of the world.”

## **2.8 Power Dynamics and Positionality in the research process**

In order to allow for the voices of women to shed light in the experiences of the migrants considered for this study, attention was paid to the power dynamics and the position of the researcher, particularly because of being male, pastor and a legally resident South African citizen. The researcher’s privileged position and status as a male member of the clergy of a mainline church was taken into consideration to ensure intentional gender sensitivity that allowed women to express some of their views on the subject through a self-administered questionnaire and employing a gender sensitive framework in the form of Dolores Williams’ theology of survival quality of life. In dealing with this challenge the concepts developed by Donna Haraway’s (1988 in Hoel, 2013) insights were very helpful. Haraway provides the following three concepts in a framework that can help the researcher to take gender dimensions into account for any research project; *accountability*, *positioning* and *partiality* as outlined below:

- *Accountability*: by which she refers to the researcher’s commitment to not reproduce the divisions of gender expressed within the dominant paradigms, consequently reinforcing stereotypes about a particular group of women. This does not mean, however, that the researcher should avoid writing about experiences of marginalization or experienced power imbalances that the respondents express. Rather, *accountability* refers to the researcher’s commitment *as a feminist to reflect* on these matters in her research report, so as to make explicit the contextual relations of power operating when producing situated knowledges.

- For Haraway, emphasis on *positioning* refers to the varying levels of micro-politics that occur during research encounters. She argues that the research report should include a discussion of, or at least make reference to, the relationship between the researcher and the researched that foregrounds how various power relations might have influenced the research interaction.
- Lastly, *partiality* refers to questions of difference. It is salient that the researcher reflects on the possibility of multiple subjectivities present within a research encounter and also the plurality of views expressed in the total research sample so as to avoid generalizations and monolithic representations (Haraway, 1988). These three key concepts, accountability, positioning and partiality, provide us with important epistemological keys for ways in which to think about the research material and the process of analysis, as well as to cultivate reflexive ethnography.

In conducting field work these three concepts were taken into account and the researcher's position as a minister within the Uniting Presbyterian Church and a male researcher and privileged to be now South African permanent resident when most migrants struggle with processing documents for living and working in South Africa. To use Amina Mama's words;

I t[ook] the epistemological position that all knowledge is socially situated. Therefore there is no such thing as value-free social theory, and the goal of intellectual rigour can best be served not by claiming objectivity and ignoring the values underpinning one's intellectual work but rather by acknowledging the commitments, motivations and conditions that are likely to have played a part in its production (Mama, 1995:2).

Admittedly, the study was inspired by my own experiences as a migrant in Johannesburg. This is basically the reason I issued a personal statement in the introductory chapter so that I outlined my experiences and provided a brief personal background to ensure that I acknowledge "*the commitments, motivations and conditions that are likely to have played a part in*" this project.

## 2.9 Conclusion

This chapter was dedicated for literature review on the trends of migration and employed a thematic approach to discuss statistics in contemporary human migration, particularly paying attention to scholarly developments in the field. The complex nature of global and regional migratory trends were highlighted and acknowledged that migration is a multifaceted phenomenon that comes with complex challenges. In order to dissect this complex reality, the study engaged sociological concepts of transnationalism, social networks theory, and simultaneous embeddedness as lenses for understanding migration and highlighted that by focusing on transnationalism only as networks or exchanges of goods; we miss the fact that transnational religious practices also involve the transformation of identity, community and ritual practices.

As the chapter unfolded, frames or approaches for understanding human migration were outlined together with the types and causes of migration in Southern Africa and also sought to identify the challenges that migrants face with regards to search for identity by examining the concepts of integration, assimilation and cohesion as a key to unlocking the themes on church as *hostile*, *host* and *home*. This task was possible thanks to Saria Sha's (2003) personal encounters which offered a process of developing a transnational identity along-side Jonathan Sacks' (2009) three parables as a model for integration, and an alternative way of viewing Johannesburg as '*a home we build together*' in the context of migration.

The chapter concluded with additional literature review and reflection on scholarly perspectives on theology and migration; the interface which this study claims to pay attention to. It is for this reason that the rest of the chapter was dedicated to a deeper theological reflection on the subject of migration, a theological discipline that forms much focus in contemporary academic arena because of the current global focus on the Syrian, Iraqi, Afghanistan and African refugee crisis that is impacting on the global North's perception of religion and security.



Lastly, Dolores William's *Theology of survival quality of life* and Jung Young Lee's *Theology of Marginality* took the centre stage in the concluding sections of the chapter as they provided a launching pad from which study sketched the contours towards developing a theology of migration in Southern Africa which slowly emerges in chapter four (sociological focus) and takes its final shape in chapter five, a chapter dedicated to theological reflection.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the research design and methods employed in conducting this study. Quantitative and qualitative research techniques have been used due to the nature of the study. Data was collected from members of the participating congregations and the local leadership through the aid of questionnaires, focus group discussions and structured interviews.

### **3.2 Profile of congregations selected for the study**

#### *Yeoville UPCSA congregation*

Yeoville is a densely populated suburb on the outskirts of the Johannesburg CBD and easily accessible from the city centre and popular drop off point like the transportation hub of Park Station. Most migrants arriving in Johannesburg find easy access to the suburb which, together with surrounding areas like Hillbrow and Berea hosts the majority of foreigners in the overcrowded flats popular for violent criminal activities and overcrowding ([www.gautengcc.co.za/jhb-history.htm](http://www.gautengcc.co.za/jhb-history.htm), Accessed 27 May 2015).

This is now a predominantly black community but prior to 1994 there were whites living in the area. White people have moved out of the community and the congregation is now dominated by migrants from African countries.

#### *Mayfair UPCSA congregation*

Mayfair is also a former white suburb close to the city of Johannesburg. It is now predominantly black with Somali migrants and Indians running businesses in the area extending to Fordsburg.

According to information available from the website ([www.enWikipedia.org/wiki/Mayfair](http://www.enWikipedia.org/wiki/Mayfair), Gauteng accessed on the 15 July 2013) Mayfair is a suburb of Johannesburg which was designated a white area under apartheid, although Indians started moving into the suburb “sometime before the end of Apartheid. As a result, Indians constitute a large population in Mayfair to date, with a significant number of Muslim immigrants from different parts of Africa. Census 2001 data confirms these demographics with the highest number of Indian or Asian population recorded at 5, 888 (62.14 %) compared to Black African (2,579), Coloured (559), and white (450) as reflected below.

Gender	People	Percentage
Female	4,844	51.12%
Male	4,631	48.88%
Population Group	People	Percentage
Indian or Asian	5,888	62,14%
Black African	2,579	27,22%
Colored	559	5,90%
White	450	4,75%

First Language	People	Percentage
English	6,755	71,29%
Setswana	464	4,90%
isiZulu	360	3,80%
Afrikaans	432	4,56%
Sesotho	336	3,55%
isiXhosa	217	2,29%
Sepedi	180	1,90%
Xitsonga	93	0,98%
Tshivenda	78	0,82%
siSwati	45	0,47%
isiNdebele	33	0,35%

#### Mayfair

Population: 9,475 (5,159.35 per km<sup>2</sup>)

Households: 2,786 (1,517.04 per km<sup>2</sup>)

*Source: Census 2001*

Surprisingly, although the community of Mayfair is dominated by Indian/Asian population groups, the Malawians are now the majority at Mayfair congregation with only a few Indians and no whites at all.

According to the Mail and Guardian Newspaper (3, September 2012), the migrant communities of Mayfair and surrounding areas received ‘threats of war’ from a group calling itself South African Black Association (SABA) through letters threatening violence against foreign nationals. These pamphlets were slipped into letter boxes and posted on lampposts declaring war against refugees and warning foreigners, “we are coming for you”, reported the paper.

Somali refugees constitute the bulk of migrants in Fordsburg and Mayfair communities and have grouped themselves into clusters.

### *Kagiso UPCSA Congregation*

*Kagiso* is a black township in the West Rand area of Johannesburg, the name of the urban western part of the Witwatersrand that is functionally part of the Greater Johannesburg area under the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. Like the East rand, this area became settled as part of the Gold reef following the discovery of gold in 1886 ([www.joburg.org.za/index.php](http://www.joburg.org.za/index.php), Accessed 17 May 2015) which sparked the popular “gold rush” that gave rise to the establishment of Johannesburg.

The West Rand extends from Randfontein in the west to Roodepoort in the east, and includes the town of Krugersdorp under which the township of *Kagiso* falls. Carletonville and Westonaria in the Far West Rand, are included as part of the West Rand and form areas that are economically linked to the city of Johannesburg through the gold mining industry. During the creation of the Greater Johannesburg Municipality in 1999, Roodepoort and the surrounding western parts of Johannesburg merged to form the West Rand Municipality, although they form part of Greater Johannesburg metropolitan area.

### **3.3 Research paradigm and design**

According to Christensen (1985:155) research design refers to the outline, plan, or strategy specifying the procedure to be used in seeking an answer to the research

question. It specifies such things as how to collect and analyse data. This section outlines the research design employed in conducting the study.

This study is phenomenological and interdisciplinary and employed the transnational theory of migration as an approach to globalization while utilizing qualitative approaches within a constructivist paradigm; a belief that the world we experience is constructed by each of us and together (Guba and Lincoln, 2005:197). Drawing on the extensive work of scholars and organisations, among them; Loren Landau and Aurelia Seggati with the Africa Centre for Migration and Society at the University of Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg and Peggy Livitt, this study overlaid sociological data on the experiences of migrants with demographic data and incidents reports from local communities within the four selected congregations. Primary data was drawn from local community newspapers, South African Police Services (SAPS) quarterly incidents reports, Department of Home Affairs (DoH); NGO's working with migrants and statements issued on xenophobia.

According to Larry Christensen (2007:39) qualitative research study is one that collects some type of non- numerical data to answer a research question. Non-numerical data consists of data such as the statements made by people during interviews, written records, pictures, clothing, or observed behavior.

As a multidisciplinary study, this research utilised both qualitative and quantitative approaches because they take the experiences of migrants seriously and sought to explore how these experiences have shaped constructions of their world view and religiosity. Profiling congregations determined demographic information and quantified movement of people within the selected congregations. As Newman (1997:336) notes, "quantitative data can be a source of information which compliment qualitative data" on a process he calls triangulation strategy. According to Newman, triangulation strategy refers to combining of different methodological techniques to overcome weakness in a specific technique. Within the qualitative methodology, triangulation increases the sophisticated rigor of their data collection and analysing and diversity of social changes. Having conducted a desk top analysis of literature that exists on theology and migration, this research further employed the modified tools of

discourse analysis<sup>87</sup> to critically examine data collected from the key informants and applied the conceptual frameworks identified for the study. This led to testing of the hypothesis and answering the research questions.

Analysing data in the light of the findings from other studies helped to determine whether;

- (a) By strengthening the church's ministry and mission with migrants and promoting social integration of migrants we can affect the role of religion in social cohesion.
- (b) A community mobilization approach can help the church promote stability, peace and social cohesion with migrants in diverse constituencies.

Therefore this study utilised available data from sociological and economic studies on migration conducted by, among others, the African Centre for Migration and Society's Religion and Migration Research Initiative<sup>88</sup> to explore the interface between Theology and Migration through a missiological study of selected congregations within the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa in Johannesburg. The main aim of the study was to contribute to the debate concerning Christian ministry and Mission in the wake of increasing migration in Southern Africa and it articulated the following hypotheses:

1. If we examine the material from the field work conducted for this study and explore spiritual dimensions of migration, we can develop interventions and theological insights that lead us to new frontiers in Christian mission. For example, Roderick Hewitt (1996:12) proposes an "action-reflection learning process" as a transformative model for leadership development and notes that this process involves the consideration to opt for an understanding that is through mission obedience in concrete situations, which is rooted in the everyday lives of people, that gives rise to new theological insights about how and where God is at work in the world, what he calls 'new frontiers in

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<sup>87</sup> According to Sacks et al (1974, in Traynor, 2004) discourse analysis is the term used by linguists to describe the close reading of naturally occurring conversations (sometimes referred to as conversation analysis) in order to discover the underlying rules and norms that govern a conversation. Discourse analysis was born 'when scholars began looking beyond grammar and what was being said, and started looking at what was not being said, how ways of talking and acting are created and shared, the dialogic nature of meaning, and power dynamics that run through these practices' (Saccaggi, 2007).

<sup>88</sup> Refer to <http://www.migration.org.za/project/religion-and-migration-research-initiative>

mission.’ Intensified migration presents the church with an opportunity to explore some of these new mission frontiers.

2. If we strengthen Christian involvement in promoting tolerance towards and social integration of migrants we can effect the role of religion in social cohesion.
3. If we use a community mobilization approach to social cohesion, to promote stability, peace and social development it will result in productive relationships between the church and its diverse constituencies.

### **3.4 Research Procedures**

#### *Sampling*

A purposive sampling method was used in this study to select subjects. In conducting research, some authors have referred to sampling methodology as a destiny of the study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The researcher was aware of the limitations caused by use of purposive sampling methodology and sought to address these by encouraging participants to be open during the discussions and use questionnaires to provide information that they were not comfortable to openly discuss.

A sampling strategy is usually employed as a control technique for variables and (Curtis et al, 2000 in Christensen, 2007) suggested that a it should be based on the following guidelines;

1. A sampling strategy should stem logically from the conceptual framework as well as from the research question being addressed by the study. In choosing the appropriate sampling strategy, the researcher was guided by the question; will the sampling frame logically assist in gathering data focused on the hypothesis under investigation?
2. The sample should be able to generate a thorough data base on the type of phenomena under study.
3. The selected sample should also at least allow the possibility of drawing clear

inferences from the data, allowing for credible explanations. From a qualitative design perspective, these inferences are referred to as internal validity or the degree to which one can be confident that changes in an outcome variable (*effect*) can be attributed to a preceding variable (*cause*) rather than to other potential causal factors. In this inquiry, the sampling choice and decision facilitated the elimination of other potential causal factors.

4. The sampling strategy must also be ethical. Meeting this requirement for this study included seeking informed consent regarding participation from the subjects; explaining the risks and benefits of the study to the participants, their right to withdraw from participation at any time and the assurances that confidentiality was maintained.
5. Lastly, according to these guidelines, a sampling plan should be feasible. Will the researcher be able to access all of the data that will be necessary for the study? In ensuring that required data is collected within the scheduled time frames, the researcher made prior arrangements for each visit to congregations and secured appointments at least three weeks before the investigation. Flexibility was allowed for questionnaires and a focus group sequence to ensure that collected data was relevant to the current situation as the fieldwork was conducted at a time when the government was working to curb ongoing xenophobic attacks which had spread nationally.

As I have indicated, the selection of key informants for the study also employed purposive sampling<sup>89</sup> methodology to identify key informants from the selected congregations because this was based on their experience of migration, their gender, age and membership within the UPCSAs congregations. Although the interviews were scheduled to be conducted in all selected congregations, most people who cooperated were from one congregation which has 90% of its members being the migrant population. Key informants were people who either kept church records or were actively involved and proved to have information and experience regarding demographic profiles, cultural and linguistic challenges faced by migrants, style of

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<sup>89</sup> Also known as judgmental sampling, the purposive sampling technique is a deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses. It is a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set of number of informants. As Bernard (2002) further explains, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide information by virtue of knowledge or experience.



worship and how the ministry of these congregations has been shaped by the presence of migrants. The developments that led to these changes are noted in the section that follows.

### *Process and challenges encountered*

In scheduling appointments for the interviews and focus groups the researcher took advantage of the holidays with long weekends and adjusted the schedules to fit into the convenient times of the selected congregations. I also had an opportunity to visit displaced migrants at the grounds adjacent to Primrose Methodist church and opposite the police station. Youville congregation had collected clothing and food in response to the crisis following the xenophobic attacks and this initiative provided more interaction with members of St. Marks Yeoville as they conducted their ministry of caring for migrants, before we later held interviews. Similar opportunities were presented in Mayfair and Turfontein congregations although this was within their local church activities.

The process of conducting fieldwork unfolded through the following stages:

- 1). Negotiation of access to the field was done through correspondence and visits to explain purpose of the study. During each visit to congregations I had opportunities to preach and used part of this time to explain the purpose of the study and invite participants to take part.<sup>90</sup>
- 2). Scheduling appointments for interviews and identifying participants for focus group discussions also took part during the preliminary field visits.
- 3). And finally, two by two weeks periods were spent in Johannesburg in April and August 2015 to conduct focus group discussions and interviews. I had to use Sunday after worship times because most participants could not be available outside of the normal times of their church activities.

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<sup>90</sup> Preaching during field visits tended to be challenging because researcher preached on themes around hospitality to strangers and promoting tolerance. This called for careful consideration not to pre-empt the study. Preaching on these themes was necessary given the tensions and anxiety after the xenophobic attacks that had just taken place. In order to avoid unpacking issues that the study sought to address, brief sermons were presented.

Initially the research proposed to conduct the study in four selected congregations; Kensington, Mayfair, Yeoville and Kagiso. However, during the process of negotiating access to these congregations there were several developments that impacted on the proposal. Firstly, at the time of initial contacts three of the proposed congregations were vacant and had no ministers in charge. Researcher worked with the Session Clerks<sup>91</sup> and local elders who kept the interim moderators<sup>92</sup> informed. These lay leaders proved to be cooperative while I lived in Johannesburg from 2012 but by the time I conducted field work in 2015, there were new ministers and in some cases, Session Clerks who did not understand the purpose of my study. Although the researcher repeatedly explained the study to new officers, I did not receive the cooperation that I had enjoyed during the initial phase; this worsened by the tense situation in South Africa after a second wave of xenophobic violence which swept across the country in March, 2015. At the time of conducting interviews the nation was on alert and there were suspicions around issues relating to migrants with a national campaign duped “Say No to Xenophobia” on the run. While the campaign was widely televised and marches organised nationally, some leaders within the church were not comfortable with conversations or questions around migrants, preferring that the researcher speaks directly to them than engage migrant congregants. In some cases leaders were even denying that there are migrants in their congregations.

The consequences of these developments were that I did not receive full cooperation from all congregations. This was reflected in poor responses on e-mails, un-answered and un-returned telephone calls. Two congregations fell off the study, i.e. Kensington and Kagiso since the researcher received no response in one congregation and was told by the resident minister in another, that they do not have a lot of migrants. In order to address this challenge; arrangements were made to include St. Johns Turfontein so that there were three congregations involved in the study. Therefore the data being analysed in the

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<sup>91</sup> Session Clerks are officers who keep church records and usually play a leading role in congregations that are without ministers. They often end up exercising the power beyond that of keeping records in congregations that are vacant for too long and this creates a challenge in the system as some people manipulate procedures to suit their own needs.

<sup>92</sup> Interim Moderator is a minister who is appointed to oversee a congregation without a minister. Usually this is a minister with a full pastoral charge elsewhere and is not always available to the congregation except during quarterly or monthly visits to conduct Holy Communion or Moderate session meetings. Given the fact that most congregations are not financially able to pay full emoluments, they rely on interim moderators for longer than anticipated, a situation that sees them function through absent leaders.

next chapter emerged from;

- Three focus group discussions held at Yeoville, Mayfair and St John's Turfontein
- Five interviews from key informants drawn from Youville, a congregation with 90% of migrants making it the biggest in numbers of migrants among congregations selected for this study.
- One written interview with a key informant from St John's Turfontein UPCSA congregation
- 29 self-administered questionnaires completed by participants in all three focus group discussions

### **3.5 Data Management**

The process of managing data involved recording through an audio, safe storage with backups, then transcribing the data from the interviews and focus group discussions. Filing of data and transcribing allowed for repeated listening and reading of the participants' contributions something which made it possible to identify the emerging themes and use color coding technique to isolate statements according to themes.

The focus group discussions were held in Youville UPCSA (26 April 2015, 10:00 to 12:00 p.m), Mayfair UPCSA (30 August 2015, 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.) and St Johns Turfontein UPCSA (30 August 2015, 12:00 to 12:40 p.m., focus group only, no service or preaching). The focus group sequence was designed to engage participants through five questions and the meetings began by explaining procedures (as outlined in the methodology section) and allowing the subjects to get time to read and sign consent forms. Participants' rights to withdraw from the study were highlighted and permission to record the discussion on audio sought.

As already pointed out, during the initial design of the study the subjects were meant to be drawn from four congregations around Johannesburg, namely; Mayfair UPCSA,

Kensington United Congregation, Yeoville UPCSA and Kagiso UPCSA.<sup>93</sup> However, owing to poor responses and cooperation from other congregations, the researcher had to purposely replace Kagiso UPCSA congregation with St Johns Turfontein UPCSA.<sup>94</sup> According to Bernard (2002), purposive sampling technique is a type of non-probability sampling that is most effective when one needs to study a certain cultural domain with knowledgeable experts within and may be used with both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

### **3.6 Data Collection instruments and methods**

#### *Mapping and Profiling*

The initial phase of negotiating access to the field was done through mapping of the selected congregations and categorising that data that will be collected. It was envisaged that this category of data will establish the following:

- Details of congregants' membership; nationality, ethnicity, socio-economic status and how they message about nationality, ethnicity, social and economic issues
- Establish any attempts to promote tolerance, how the elders and ministers message on matters around ethnicity, nationality, social and economic issues
- Establish programs and how congregations are dealing with matters around language, ethnicity, nationality, social and economic issues
- Head counts- for number of members and the number of migrants according to gender, age and nationality
- Frequency of attending worship
- Level of involvement of migrants in the life and work of the congregation

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<sup>93</sup> These congregations were chosen because they are the closest to the Johannesburg CBD and Park station, through which buses, trains and taxis bring travellers into the city of Johannesburg.

<sup>94</sup> These two congregations have a migrant population of over 90 % each and they proved to be the best sites for this study given the transformation that they are undergoing.

### *Participant observation*

According to Christensen (2007: 63) “[p]articipant observation is a research approach in which the researcher becomes an active participant in the group he or she is investigating.” During field visits, the researcher observed congregants’ styles of worship, articulations of local and foreigner, insiders and outsiders, scarcity and abundance, employment and unemployment. Paying attention to race and ethnicity the researcher also employed discourse analysis tools to examine attitudes that are expressed by participants through language and actions in relation to group dynamics in order to establish any efforts aimed at promoting tolerance and integration of migrants within the local congregations under investigation.

### *Focus group discussions*

In each of the selected congregations, one hour focus group discussions were moderated with migrants (6-8 participants for each session), in selected congregations to complement data collected through interviews and questionnaires. Additional data collection allowed for flexibility in that subjects openly shared their experiences through self-administered questionnaires. Conducting three focus group sessions allowed for different voices to be heard, especially those of youth and women who offered a gendered perspective of the experience of migration.<sup>95</sup> The researcher moderated these sessions through questions prepared in advance. Focus groups are important for informing the design and development of interventions. For this reason, the application of this data collection technique in the study allowed the researcher to deeply explore emerging issues around migration and thereby facilitate the design of appropriate models of intervention.

In order to ensure confidentiality on responses to information which participants may deem sensitive to openly share during the focus group discussions, the focus group

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<sup>95</sup> This will provide another variable given the fact that the researcher is a male. As a further precaution to create a safe space for women to openly share their experiences, the researcher will ensure that women are not dominated by men during the discussions.

sequence has been designed to provide confidential space to elicit complimentary data from migrants.

#### *Semi-structured interviews with key-informants*

In order to collect additional data about the situation of migrants in the congregations under review, semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data from the key informants (one Session Clerk {elder}, one minister per congregation and selected youth or women). According to Dawson (2007:30) interviews are flexible tools that can lead to more important information. The number to interviewees was limited to key people for purposes of data management.

#### *Self-Administered Questionnaires*

The researcher designed questionnaires for the subjects who participated in the study to elicit data on their experience of migration to measure their attitudes and determine their reactions to the church's response towards the challenges they face in Johannesburg. According to Numan (1982) in Kastande (2009), the questionnaire enables the researcher to collect data in field settings where data can be quantified to produce the responses required for analysis. In this study the questionnaire was administered to focus group participants to compliment data from the focus group discussions and interviews.

### **3.7 Thematic and critical discourse analysis of data**

The researcher chose to combine thematic and critical discourse analysis as methods of analysing data due to the nature of the study. According to Adogame and Spickard (2010) discourses are structured sets of social practices and representations. They base their construction on Michael Foucault's (1971) theory of discourse and Luckmann's (1966) interpretive paradigm and for them, these practices and representations can be gathered under the generic term of "performances" which constitute a meaningful social reality for a particular set of actors.

The above construction was used to examine how the migrants use biblical texts, meditations, hymns, sermons and other biblical material to draw from divine power in seeking to understand their reality of migration. It is the researcher's contention that Presbyterianism is a form of identity that helps foreign migrants to find a home in the host congregations, thus creating a social space for networks that facilitate belonging within South African communities.

The data collected from the focus group discussions, interviews and self-administered questionnaires were transcribed, coded and analysed thematically. In order to ensure that confidentiality was maintained, names of subjects, places and positions were anonymised and data was analysed in the light of Delores Williams' theology of survival quality of life and Kim Lee's theology of Marginality and transnational theory of migration. The researcher relied on field notes (observations, feelings and opinions) to validate and analyze collected data through a three step process of data analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) as follows:

1. Familiarizing with data- transcribing the data from the interviews allowed for repeated reading that ensured identification of emerging themes.
2. Generating codes- different colors were used to highlight sections of transcripts with topics that emerge and isolated in columns that identify various themes.
3. Defining and naming themes- through the use of color codes data was extracted from the transcripts to identify emerging themes in two major categories namely; emerging theologies and biblical imperatives. These two were further expanded and subdivided into missional and ecclesiological sub themes.

According to Dawson (2007:31) data analysis is an on-going process in which the researcher may even adapt new methods depending on emerging themes. Thematic data analysis allowed this study to identify emerging themes in the light of the concepts and key terms from the literature review. Secondly, a comparison was

drawn between the data from literature review as contrasted with data from the participants through a synthetic critique, in order to draw valid and reliable conclusions.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

#### *Informed consent*

Informed consent forms were distributed during each contact with the participants as mentioned in the section on procedures and methods that were followed.

#### *Confidentiality*

Similarly, confidentiality was ensured during data collection and analysis by anonymising names, places and positions. Privacy, justice and seeking permission for the recordings was ensured at each stage of the investigation. Audio and written records have been made available with the supervisors as required and for the attention of the examiners as proof for compliance, if deemed necessary.

#### *Positionality*

In ensuring the rigor and validity of the findings from this study, I have also provided a personal statement acknowledging that my personal experiences motivated me to conduct the study and that my position as a minister was likely to undermine the supposed intent. Therefore the researcher had to demonstrate how he will guard against his position and experience to avoid undermining or impacting negatively on the research.

#### *Reflexivity*



In guarding against the above limitations, the researcher had to be self-critical and employed gender sensitive approaches to migration as an ongoing process and kept on reflecting on the process of data collection and made adjustments (where it was necessary). This allowed for flexibility during the interviews and focus group discussions to improve the integrity and validity of data. The researcher also had to conduct mock interviews during preliminary field visits and this allowed for refining of procedures and techniques employed. Major lesson from the field visits was that the researcher will be consistently learning new things as long as more time is allowed on the field and be on the ground, living and spending quality time with the subjects.

#### *Validity/ Rigour and Reliability*

The researcher has already alluded to the issue that considerations were made on positionality and flexibility ensured the validity and reliability of the data collected for the study. Given that a valid research study is one that produces results that are both reliable and valid (Christensen 2007:206), validity in this study interrogated the accuracy of inferences made at the conclusion of the study and ensured correctness of the procedures followed to arrive at such conclusions. Experimental validity is the correctness of an inference that is made from the results of an experiment. As Christensen (2007) further explains, reliability refers to consistency, stability, or repeatability of the results from the study. Therefore reliability and validity are two prerequisites necessary for conducting a valid experimental research.

In ensuring rigorous validity and reliability for this study, the preliminary focus group sequence and the interview guides were piloted in one of the congregations (Yeoville UPCSAs) and consultations were held with the supervisors. The process of preliminary field visits provided the researcher with an opportunity to refine the questionnaires and test their reliability during the preliminary data collection stage. At the secondary level, the use of multiple methods of data collection (interviews, observation and focus groups) enhanced the validity of the findings from the study.

### *Delineation and limitations of the study*

Theological reflections on migration need further investigation and refinement of terminology, methodologies and themes because this discipline has not been given adequate scholarly attention.<sup>96</sup> The current migratory patterns and frameworks have evolved over a period of time and sociological scholars have approached the phenomenon of migration from varying perspectives. Therefore, one of the limitations of this study is that it is based on the concepts that are evolving and constitute current debates; some have not been adequately developed or tested.

As a result, there is a need to examine the kinds of theologies that emerge out of the experiences of other migrants who are not economically challenged, such as highly skilled professionals and business investors. Secondly, key informants were drawn from Christian communities and the study did not engage voices of migrants and people of other religions. The researcher has alluded that the field of Theology and Migration has not yet developed into a recognised discipline. In this regard, this study is therefore limited in two ways:

1. Theological reflections on migration need further investigation and refinement of terminology, methodologies and themes because this discipline has not been given adequate scholarly attention.<sup>97</sup> As a result, this study is based on the concepts that have not been adequately developed.
2. Secondly, the subjects were drawn from Christian communities and the study did not engage people of other religions/faiths. Further studies need to target non-Christian groups of migrants in order to interrogate their migration and immigration experiences in the light of their religions.

### **3.9 Theoretical frameworks for the study**

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<sup>96</sup> This observation was made by Olivia Ruiz Larrujo, in *“The God of Risk: Sexual Violence against Undocumented Women,”* in *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey* (at 228, 232).

<sup>97</sup> This has also been noted by Olivia Ruiz Larrujo, in *“The God of Risk: Sexual Violence against Undocumented Women,”* in *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey* (2008 pages 228- 232).

Given that this study is eclectic and draws on the various socio-cultural works<sup>98</sup> and academic disciplines, it was important to note that human migration has drawn interest from various fields. Several prominent explanatory theories of immigration have emerged, among them the modernisation theory, dependency theory, the world systems theory and the transnational theory (Horevitz, 2009). These theories have been shaped and implemented from various perspectives in an attempt to explain the movement of people within and across borders. Anthropologists, sociologists, demographers, geographers and even economists and politicians have all contributed to the current migration theories. As a result, the field has become multidisciplinary in nature.

### *Theoretical developments and Transnational Theory of migration*

According to Levitt and Jaworsky scholarly efforts have evolved by using transnational optic as an effort to understand migration. For Vertovec S. (2009) Transnationalism refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation states. Vertovec adds that transnationalism provides a much needed, single, clear and condensed text concerning a major concept in academic and policy discourse today. In his excellent work on Transnationalism, Vertovec (2009) explores meanings of transnationalism in within the context of globalization critically assesses migrant transnational practices demonstrating ‘ways in which new and contemporary transnational practices of migrants are fundamentally transforming social, political and economic.

Another profound contribution to this debate has been offered by Levitt (2007:23)

Understanding migration as a transnational process, and that people will simultaneously belong to this country and their homelands for the long haul, reveals several important things. For one sometimes migration is as much about people who stay behind as it is about people who move. In some cases, the ties between migrants and non-migrants are so strong and wide spread that migration also radically transforms the lives of individuals who stay home. They don’t have to move to participate across borders. People, money and what I have called social remittances- the ideas, practices, social capital, and identities that migrants send back into their communities of origin- permeate their daily lives, changing how they act as well as changing their ideas about gender, right and wrong , and what states should and

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<sup>98</sup> Among them, the Africa Centre for Migration and Society at the University of Witwatersrand, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Southern African Migration project (SAMP).

should not do. In response, the religious and social and political groups, they belong to also begin to operate across borders...What happens to those in the United States cannot be disconnected from what happens to people who stay at home because their fates are inextricably linked (Levitt, 2007:23).

In her work, *God needs no Passport* Levitt (2007) chronicles the religious experiences of migrants in America to demonstrate how America is shaped by what happens outside America advocating the need for a wider transnational lenses that recognises the multi-layered processes that constitute the transnational lives of migrants. For her, mosques and churches are part of the multi-layered webs of connections where religious goods are produced and exchanged around the globe. In my opinion, this is a significant contribution to the understanding of transnational migration given the complexities of the migrants' activities; the world is too broad to be captured only by lenses that focus on a single level of experience. As Levitt (2007:24) notes a transnational gaze begins with borderless world and explores what kind of boundaries exist and why they arise at specific times and places.

In her book; *Between God, Ethnicity and Country: An approach to study of Transnational Religion*, Levitt (2001) demonstrates how “[b]y focusing on transnationalism as networks and exchanges of goods we miss the fact that transnational religious practices also involve the transformation of identity, community and ritual practices”. It is therefore important for research on globalisation and migration to consider the role of religion in the complex realities that arise from the encounters between people across borders.

Theoretical and conceptual developments around the migration theory have included early debates on how the United States made Americans out of new comers, with later assimilation theory shedding light on how, over time most migrants achieve socio-economic parity with the native-born and arguing that ethnicity and race matter adding that the impact is experienced by both the native born and the immigrants who change along the way (Alba & Nee 2003, Jacoby 2004, Kivisto 2005). Emerging themes like that of segmented assimilations have also been explored suggesting several possible trajectories for migrants towards incorporation (Levitt & Joworksy, 2007). According to Levitt and Joworksy, (2007:130) these routes include, [but are

not limited to]<sup>99</sup> becoming part of the (white)<sup>100</sup> mainstream, remaining ethnic, or becoming part of the underclass and experiencing downward mobility (Portes & Rumbaut 2001, Portes & Zhou 1993 in Levitt & Jaworky, 2007:130). As Levitt and Joworky further note, both perspectives acknowledge that patterns of assimilation, acculturation, and integration vary depending on the country and context of departure, immigrant characteristics, immigrant enclave capacities, and political, social, and economic context of the sending and receiving communities (ibid).

Transnationalism is the most prominent immigration-migration theory to emerge from the field of anthropology (Horevitz, 2009). In its broader context, the transnational theory involves several other conceptual frameworks such as diaspora theory and border theory. The transnational theory emerged as an alternative to dependency and world systems theories and includes the “cross border relationships of many migrants, enabling researchers to see that migration can be a transnational process” (Glick Schiller, 2003: 100).

This new paradigm for approaching migration and immigration was developed by anthropologists Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton in the early 1990’s and “is based on the notion that globalization makes borders obsolete” (Horevitz, 2009). Unlike other theories, transnational theory encompasses more than political and economic processes to the experience of migration and immigration; placing the social, cultural, and identity processes within the new paradigm. The significant contribution made by this study to this theory is that it brings the ecclesiological and missiological implications of the experience of migration and immigration into the core of the paradigm.

However, critics for this theory argue that migrants and immigrants have always maintained ties with their homelands for centuries and therefore nothing is new about the so-called new immigration-migration concept, other than an increased ability to communicate and easy travel to one’s homeland (Horevitz, 2009:754). Contrary to these claims, gender theorists have taken advantage of the paradigm ‘understanding

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<sup>99</sup> In my view, there are emerging forms of incorporation that we continue to witness in different communities as new comers interact with the receiving communities

<sup>100</sup> In the context of the United States of America

that women immigrants-migrants may maintain more than one gender role, inhabiting multiple spaces at a time (Pessa, 2003 in Horevitz, 2009). Such comfortable engagement of gender theorists with the transnational theory chosen for this study will provide a leverage to critically examine the experiences of female migrants.

### *Simultaneous embeddedness*

One of the significant contributions to emerge out of the theoretical developments regarding the different ways in which scholars have approached transnational migration has been the concept of simultaneous embeddedness. As Levitt and Jaworky (2007) observe, another perspective was added to the conversations around the transnational migration theory which argued that some migrants continued to be active in their homelands at the same time that they became part of the countries that received them. This approach explored how migrants and their descendants participate in familial, social, economic, religious, political, and cultural processes that extend across borders while they became part of the places where they settle (Levitt and Jaworky, 2007).

What emerged out of these conversations was a common theme of simultaneous imbeddedness. As Faist (2000:29) argued, he noted that variations in spatial extension and temporal stability produce different transnational topographies as follows:

- a). dispersion and assimilation – weak embeddedness in sending and receiving countries and short-lived transnational ties
- b). transnational exchange and reciprocity- strong simultaneous embeddedness but rather short lived social ties.
- c). transnational networks – weakly embedded and long lived
- d). transnational communities – strongly embedded in at least two countries and enduring

In clarifying the concept of embeddedness further, Granovetter (1985, 1992 in Vertovic, 2009) states that economic action, like all actions, is socially situated and cannot be explained wholly by individual motives. For him, embeddedness refers to the fact that economic action and outcomes, like all social action and outcomes, are affected by actors' dyadic (pairwise) relations and by the structure of the overall network of relationships (1992:33). Vertovec (2007) employs Portes (1995) to show how this idea is further developed into two kinds of embeddedness, the first being *relational* embeddedness, which involves actors' personal relations with one another, including norms, sanctions, expectations and reciprocity. The second is *structural* embeddedness which refers to different scales of social relationship in which many others take part beyond those actually involved in an economic transaction.

### *The Networks theory*

As a conceptual framework for understanding the social, economic and political implications for migration, the study employed the social networks theory initially pioneered by Elizabeth Bott (1957) in her book *Family and Social Networks*<sup>101</sup> and further developed by Ulf Hannerz (1980:181)<sup>102</sup> and Manuel Castels (in Blackwell, 1996, 2000 and 2004). According to Wiley Blackwell (2004), in the discussion on Networks, Powered by Information Technology he suggests that these networks have critical implications for processes of alternative identity formations through the following:

- Nation states, as enshrined in the ideologies they pursue-coin the identity of the people

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101 Instead of examining the world in terms of structures, mainstream sociologists have tended to explore categories of social actors who share similar characteristics such as women, the elderly and children. There is an assumption that 'underlying every dichotomy, there is a continuum'. The approach suggests that we must treat relationships with suspicion because they are a result of underlying circumstances, the social reality that underpins the social world.

102 Ulf Hannerz (1980: 181) suggested that social network analysis probably constitutes the most extensive and widely applicable framework we have for the study of social relations'

- Availability of information makes people distrust nation states and multi-nationals and to reject identity imposed on them.
- Social movements network people and influence identity. Resistance and project identity now takes place. Examples of these movements include fundamentalism, local nationalism, gangs, ethnicity, and social movements such as feminism and ecology groups.

These observations were instrumental in unmasking the processes that undergird the dynamics and processes of developing relationships and networks on selective migrants within the congregations subject to this current study.

As Goldenberg (1997:169) further notes,

“The principal theoretical premise of network theory is that modern society is not disorganised, nor is it becoming so. On the contrary, though there has been significant change in the fundamental character of society, it is adaptive change in the nature of social order rather than mere disruption of an earlier order with no replacement.”

This concept is critical to this study in that it aids an understanding of the new migrant communities in Johannesburg as emerging social networks and order, as opposed to a view that relegates migrants to disruptive individuals and communities. Exploring migratory patterns in the light of Network theory offers great opportunities for coherent and constructive scholarly work that generate new and testable hypotheses about the functioning of the social world.

Vertovec (2007) has observed that the advantage of the social network perspective lies in its ability to allow us to abstract aspects of interpersonal relations which cut across institutions and the boundaries of aggregated concepts such as neighbourhood, workplace, kinship or class (Rogers and Vertovec, 1995).



However, this framework is not without its limitations. For example Vertovec (2007) cites Dicken *et al* (2001:92) to state that [N]etwork analysis itself has been a much abused concept. Vertovec refers to the work of the anthropologist J.A. Barnes' analysis of the Norwegian fishing community who 'complained that the notion of social networks had created a terminological jungle, in which any new comer may plant a tree' (ibid). It has also been noted among the social scientists 'that the structure of a network in itself says very little about the qualitative nature of relationships comprising it- not least concerning the exercise of power (Doreen Massey 1993, 1999, Dicken *et al* 2001). Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994) are critical of the problems that the social networks perspective has with questions of cultural content and individual agency.

#### *Theoretical framework for an Intercultural theology of Migration*

In the literature section mention was made that the study is based on a hermeneutical approach to Biblical analysis to offer a balanced approach to migration issues viewed from theological lenses, and draws on the work of Gemma Tulud Cruz (2010), titled; *An Intercultural Theology of Migration: Pilgrims in the Wilderness*, for a theological framework as an attempt towards developing an intercultural theology of migration based on African experience. Central to this framework will be Dolores William's *Theology of survival quality of life* and Jung Young Lee's *theology of Marginality* which will provide lenses for interpreting and analysing the experiences of migrants in the light of a balanced biblical critique suggested by Rivera (2012).

Dolores William's work is "womanist God-talk" focusing on the struggle for survival quality of life by black women as a dominant theme (Cruz 2010: 182). Williams interrogates and reflects on the struggle for survival of black women and how they survive the threats to their well-being and/or the ethic of survival in the face of surrogacy and it has the following key concepts:

*Key themes for Williams's theology:*

- The cross and atonement
- Wilderness
- The Black church

The migrants' struggles in Johannesburg and how they survive the threats to their well-being and/or the ethic of survival in the face of social, economic and religious diversity offer a nexus for the application of Williams's theology towards developing an intercultural theology base on African experience.

Jung Young Lee's theology of Marginality is based on the conviction that marginal people could be instrumental in a new way of doing theology and suggests that 'marginality' should be the "hermeneutical principle" and the "creative core" for doing theology in the context of multicultural society. According to Cruz (2010: 209) one of the strengths of Young Lee's theology is the way he simultaneously negotiated cultural and social aspects, the application of this model will be helpful in the context of a socio-culturally diverse context of Johannesburg.

*Key themes for Lee's theology:*

- The marginal person
- Jesus Christ as the margin for Marginality
- The Church and Marginal Discipleship

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the location of the study and profiled the selected congregations before describing the research design and methods employed in collecting data. Sampling, data collection and analysis procedures, instruments and ethical considerations were discussed before delving into the theoretical frameworks and concepts that were key to this investigation. The method for developing a theology of migration was premised on Robert Schreiter's framework of constructing local theologies as it places emphasis on the experiences of migrants being a starting point

for any attempt to develop a theology of migration. This section conceded that such an enterprise will have to depart from the understanding of the social, spiritual, psychological and economic dimensions of human mobility and the findings from lived experiences of migrants were then examined through the lenses of the concepts developed by Dolores Williams and Young Jung Lee in the chapters that follow.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **SOCIOLOGICAL DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter three outlined the research design and described the research techniques and procedures followed in conducting this study. The current chapter is a presentation of the data collected through field work conducted within a period of four months. The sources of field data presented in this chapter included focus group discussions, interviews with key informants and self-administered questionnaires. Chapter three also outlined the challenges that impacted on the planned procedures and how these led to changes in the selected congregations resulting in three and not four of the selected congregations taking part in the study.

Therefore the data being analysed in this chapter is from the following sources: three focus group discussions, five interviews with key informants and 29 self-administered questionnaires.

#### **4.2 Demographic profiles of informants and participants**

For purposes of protecting the participants in this study the researcher anonymised the names of the participants and will not be explicit about their positions and places. Further to the information below, demographic details of the participants in the focus groups are provided in the beginning of the chapter.

##### **John**

John is a male participant aged 46 is one of the elders and he is responsible for keeping church records and providing leadership in the absence of a minister. He is a local South African and works as a manager in one of the companies. John has been a

member of this congregation since 2001 when he moved to Yeoville after getting married. At that time the church was predominantly white.

### **Eddie**

Eddie is a 39 year old male participant responsible for church administration and works as a manager with a debt collections agency in Johannesburg. He grew up in Zimbabwe and has been a member of one of the congregations since he came from Zimbabwe in 2004 and has served as a Sunday school teacher and elder before taking charge of the financial affairs of the congregation.

### **Ruth**

Ruth is a 19 year old female participant who came to South Africa from Ivory Coast at the age of five. She was born in Ivory Coast to Ghanaian parents who moved with her to South Africa 15 years ago. Her parents have not been able to process permits or identity documents for her because she does not have a Ghanaian birth certificate and as a result, she could not be admitted to study at University despite passing matric.

### **Don**

Don is a 40 year old male participant from Cameroon and has been resident on Johannesburg for the past 9 years. He works in one of the congregations as a Care taker. He got married to his Cameroonian wife here in Johannesburg and during the conversations we had, he shared the challenges and frustrations he has encountered while visiting the Home Affairs Department to register his marriage.

### **Rob**

Rob is one of the few remaining white people in one of the congregations and he is an elder responsible for keeping records in one of the congregations. His wife is also very involved in the congregation. Although they have a Scottish background, they are both local South Africans and they took part in one of the focus group discussions making it possible to understand what the congregations used to be like in the past.

### **Rachel**

Rachel is a 37 year old female participant who is from Cameroon and has been in

South Africa for the past 15 years. She runs her own hair saloon shop in Johannesburg where she employs local South Africans.

### **Abdul**

Abdul is a Somali male participant aged 42 who had a business in Soweto before it was burnt down early in March 2015 during the xenophobic violence. He now lives with his Somali Muslim brothers in Fordsburg who are taking care of him. In order to keep his relationship with fellow Somalis, Abdul has to hide his Christian identity and secretly attends worship in one of the selected congregations.

## **4.3 Brief description of focus groups**

### **Focus Group 1**

The first focus group was comprised of participants from a congregation with 90 % migrants. 9 of the participants were from Cameroon, 1 from Zimbabwe, 2 from the DRC and 1 local South African. 5 of these participants were female. There were 12 participants in total for the first focus group discussion held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2015. 5 of these participants agreed to attend interviews on allocated slots scheduled for the 27<sup>th</sup> of April, a holiday.

### **Focus group 2**

Most of the participants in the second focus group were from Malawi. There were 7 males and 4 females, 9 of them Malawians and 2 local South Africans. The second focus group took place in a congregation located in the predominantly Muslim area in Mayfair. This congregation was also dominated by white congregants in the past but now has a few Indians and mostly black members. This discussion took place in the morning of Sun the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2015.

### **Focus group 3**

Given that the third Focus group discussion took place in the afternoon of the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2015, 6 participants took part in this study. Some members of the congregation could not stay after the morning service. This congregation is mixed with people from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Malawi and

Zimbabwe. Like in all selected congregations, migrants were in the majority. The 6 participants comprised 2 females, 2 males and 2 youth; 4 of them of them migrants from Malawi and Zimbabwe and 2 local South Africans (a couple).

#### **4.4 Demographic profile of selected congregations**

Data regarding the demographic profiles of migrants who took part in this study from the selected congregations was collected through a pre-designed questionnaire for 29 subjects (13 females and 16 males) who took part in the focus group discussions. The questions were designed to gather information about age, length of stay in Johannesburg, economic status, living conditions, their experiences and perceptions about the church in their lives. The data presented below combines what came out of questionnaires and interviews and focus groups.

The data collected indicated that there were more foreign migrants than local South Africans in all three congregations. Yeoville had the highest number of migrants at 90%, most of them being migrants the majority of which comes from Cameroon. This was according to an estimated figure given by the Session Clerk during the interviews and confirmed by the information on the questionnaires:

*The number of locals, I would say at the current stage I would say it's about 10 to 15 % of the congregation, it's a few, they are in the minority, majority comes from Cameroon, Out of a membership of 112 of congregants, the white people that we have in our congregation is about 6 or 7 (Interview with John, 27 April 2015).*

In the above statement the local leader estimated the number of foreign migrants to be between 85 and 90% with a few locals and majority of them coming from Cameroon. Yeoville UPCSAs was previously dominated by whites and given its location in the areas dominated by foreigners in Johannesburg, now has mostly African migrants. The figures presented by the Session Clerk (records keeper) of Turfontein UPCSAs also indicate that migrants are in the majority. They recently did a membership profile and established that 59 out of 80 members were migrants. Of these figures 15

members were from Cameroon, 13 Zimbabweans, 16 from DRC, 11 from other French speaking countries, and 4 from Malawi.

According to Nzayabino (2005) Yeoville is reputed for huge numbers of migrants in Johannesburg and it is therefore no coincidence that this congregation is dominated by foreign migrants as it proves to be the ideal place for Presbyterian migrants in the area. As John mentioned during the interviews, migrant net-work to locate the nearest Presbyterian church to them;

*we have the majority of migrants coming to Yeoville and due to their allegiance to the Presbyterian they will always look for a church that is relevant to their style of worship like back home. I would say those who come they network with local brothers (Interview with John, 27 April 2015).*

John pointed out that ‘allegiance to the Presbyterian’ church is one of the reasons for most migrants choosing to attend worship in Yeoville. This reflects that Presbyterianism is a form of religious identity and their nationality helps them to ‘network’ and identify each other in the new community. It seems that the migrants tended to be grouped according to country of origin so that Cameroonians were the majority in Yeoville and Malawians dominant in Mayfair. In Turfontein there was a combination of Cameroonians, Democratic Republic of Congo and migrants from other countries in a balanced outlook. Turfontein was the most diverse in terms of country of origin drawing migrants from North and Southern Africa but also retaining the most number of local South Africans.

Association by religion and denominationalism among migrants has been observed as a global trend and as Gozdziaak (2002:130) has pointed out “for most refugees and immigrants, religion helps define their identity.” A similar phenomenon was observed from an African perspective through a study conducted by Nzayabino (2005:57) who noted that there are a growing number of migrant established churches existing alongside local churches because such churches are more integrative than local churches. These congregations are constituted by worshippers who share similar



national, tribal, or ethnical backgrounds as a way of maintaining their religious, cultural and national identities. But in this case, migrants have not instituted new churches; they are coming into already existing churches and dominating some congregations numerically, as reflected by the three congregations under review.

The table below is a summary of the demographic data of participants, collected through a self-administered questionnaire. The response rate for questionnaires was 29 out of 30 (96.7%) with one of the subjects handing in an incomplete form because he was local and most sections were not relevant to him. The response rate made it possible for the study to continue given the fact that collected data was more likely to provide objective and diverse information, as required for the validity and reliability of any scientific social study (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993 in Kastande, 2003).

**Table 2: Summary of demographic information of participants**

*Mean Age of the participants: 34.1 years*

Respondent Number (RN)	Age	Gender (G)	Year of entry into SA	Legally Documented to live in S.A.	Economic Status (ES)	Accommodation Status (AS)		
						Live by self	Sharing with Relatives	Sharing with friends
1	40	M	2010	No	Employed	–		
2	26	M	2010	No	S-Employed	X		
3	18	F	2013	Yes	N-Employed		X	
4	19	M	2006	Yes	N-Employed	X		
5	18	F	2001	Yes	N-Employed		X	
6	34	F	2011	Yes	S-Employed	X		
7	49	M	1998	No	N-Employed	X		
8	22	F	–	–	S-Employed		X	
9	28	M	–	Yes	N-Employed		X	
10	19	F	2001	Yes	N-Employed		X	
11	32	M	2012	No	S-Employed	X		
12	53	F	1999	Yes	Employed	X		

13	41	M	2010	No	Employed	X		
14	33	M	2001	Yes	Employed	X		
15	30	F	2005	Yes	Employed	X		
16	30	F	2008	Yes	_		X	
17	34	M	2004	Yes	S-Employed	_		
18	30	F	2009	Yes	Employed		X	
19	25	F	2012	No	S-Employed		X	
20	61	F	1970	Yes	Employed		X	
21	19	M	2008	Yes	N-Employed		X	
22	37	M	2004	Yes	S-Employed		X	
23	54	F	1998	Yes	S-Employed	X		
24	33	F	2008	Yes	Employed	X		
25	34	M	2009	Yes	S-Employed	X		
26	50	F	2001	Yes	Employed	X		
27	43	F	2005	Yes	S-Employed	X		
28	39	M	2003	Yes	Employed			X
29	37	M	2013	Yes	Employed	X		

*E/S= Economic Status; AS=Accommodation Status; RN=Respondent Number; G= Gender; S-Employed=Self-Employed; N-Employed=Not-Employed*

As the table above reflects, the mean age of the participants was 34.1 years and 16 (55%) of these were female, while youth were represented by four, two males and two females. The longest resident male respondent reported having been in South Africa since 1998, making it 17 years since he has been in Johannesburg. The latest arrival came to South Africa in 2013. Of the 29 participants, 11 (37.9%) reported being gainfully employed, 6 (20.7%) self-employed while 7 (24.1%) were not employed. Most of the migrants were legally documented to live and work in South Africa, with only 6 out of 29 (20.7%) reporting being undocumented legally.

As the IOM (2013) has noted, there are increasing numbers of displaced women fleeing wars and poverty alone side male migrants globally. According to a study

conducted by McDonald (2000),<sup>103</sup> cross border migration into Southern Africa from elsewhere in the continent is increasing although it remains an ‘eminently manageable process’, as opposed to the popular stereotype of an uncontrolled flood of migrants sneaking under fences and crossing crocodile-infested rivers to get into country.<sup>104</sup> Statistics in this study show that 6 out of 29 (20.1%) did not have legal documents to be resident in South Africa and some of the participants indicated that they were facing challenges with processing of documents, so when they come to church they were hoping to get support and assistance.<sup>105</sup> The findings of this study confirm the perception that churches are not doing anything noticeable in providing support for migrants to process documents for living or working in South Africa.

It also emerged that some migrants were self-employed and running their own businesses although some of these businesses were directly affected by the xenophobic violence.

*I'm one of the people who was affected with that xenophobic thing we were having a shop in Soweto, we lose the shop, we lose everything you know simply because of the name of the foreigner, nothing else, simply because you are a foreigner (Abdul, Focus group Participant 30 Aug 2015).*

In the statement above, Addul felt that his business was targeted for xenophobic violence because he is a foreigner and he was forced to shut his business down. Similar comments were shared by other participants as they described how they have been economically affected by violence targeted at foreigners; a challenge which most participants felt the government was not doing enough to address. For the migrants, being a foreigner is a huge disadvantage and poses a security risk in Johannesburg as

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<sup>103</sup> Cited from McDonald, D.A (ed). (2000). *On Borders: Perspectives on international Migration in Southern Africa*. New York: St Martin's Press

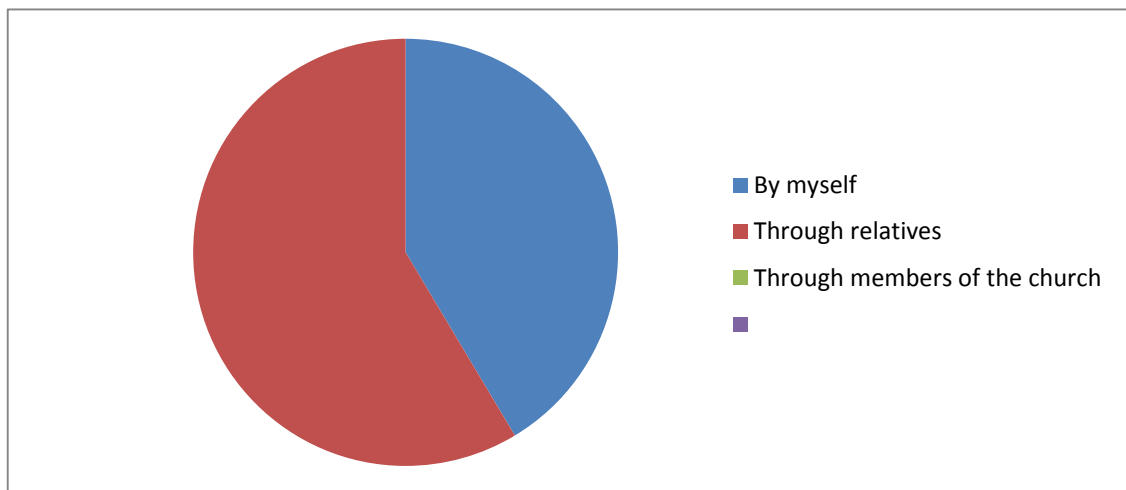
<sup>104</sup> Similar observations have also been made in a study on perceptions of migration and immigration conducted by Crush and Pendleton (2004) who note that South African citizens' perceptions are 'a mixture of half-truths and misleading stereotyping'.

<sup>105</sup> The researcher has attended worship services in Mayfair and Kensington and held conversations with migrants on various occasions, as a member of the church. On one occasion, I was asked to write a falsified letter stating that one member was employed by the church so that he can process an asylum permit. I explained that it was not possible to do that as it is a criminal offence. However, this experience left me wondering what it is that the church is doing to address these challenges.

they are often an easy target, and they pointed out that they ‘are living in fear’ because they are foreigners.

#### 4.5 The Lived Experience of Migrants in selected congregations

This section will discuss the findings from the study with regards to the material needs of the migrants under the themes; housing and accommodation, food parcels and school fees and social networks as means of survival for the lives of migrants in selected congregations.



**Figure 1: How did you get accommodation?**

##### *Housing and accommodation*

In the table above 15 (51.7%) of the participants reported having own accommodation while 11(37.9%) were living with relatives and/ or friends and one sharing accommodation with a friend.

This data collected through a questionnaire also indicated that 12 out of 29 (41.4%) of the participants got accommodation by themselves and the majority of the respondents (58.6% or 17) were assisted by their friends or relatives. None of the respondents reported the church being involved or offering assistance in seeking

accommodation. This indicator suggests that the selected congregations are not providing shelter to migrants as a form of assistance when they settle in Johannesburg. Although some participants mentioned that they were provided temporary shelter during the period of xenophobic violence there were participants who felt that the church is not doing enough to address migration issues and has failed in many ways.

*I think the church does not address these migration issues, they don't, or if they do they don't do it enough... What I want to say is that the church has failed in many ways and our leaders, our politicians as well, our community leaders also have failed in many ways that they have not taught our people (Steve, Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).*

The above statement from one of the participants expresses frustration at the incompetency of the congregation in providing a ministry to migrants. The statement also expressed the disappointment of the participant of all the leaders in the church and communities who seem to have ignored the needs of the migrants, according to the participant.

*Food parcels and school fees*

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Support from congregation</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>

**Table 3: Assistance with school fees and food parcels**

*the church has been helping a lot through my school fees so that my parents can have a bit of the financial burden taken away from them...the church has helped us a lot even in food parcels they have given us before at a time where we could not even afford food (Focus group participant Mayfair, 30 Aug 2015).*

Question 7 sought to establish whether the participants had received any support from

the congregation and the questionnaire was designed to provide space for any details in that regard. As demonstrated by one of the participants in the above statement, 14 out of 29 respondents (48%) reported that they had received support from the church while 15 (52%) reported that they had not received any support. Those who indicated receiving support used the space provided in the questionnaire to explain that most of the support came through food parcels (once in a while) and the school fees paid for children going to school through the Presbyterian Educational Fund (PEF). 4 participants did not report any data on this variable.

*Social networks*

<b>Closest people in contact</b>	<b>Friends</b>	<b>Relatives</b>	<b>Church Members</b>
	<b>15<sup>106</sup></b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>

**Table 4: Responses for social networks: (Who are the closest people you contact?)**

One variable considered was the social networks' status of the participants. Question 5 was designed to determine the closest contacts to respondents between friends, relatives and church members in their order of priority. As Table 4.4 above shows the 15 (51.7%) reported being in close contact with both friends and relatives while 9 (31%) of the respondents were in close contact with relatives and only 5 (17.2%) reported being in close contact with church members. These statistics show that most respondents prioritized or preferred friends and relatives as close contacts in their networks, than local church members.

Goldenberg (1997:169) has alluded to the significant role that networks play in society pointing out that the network theory itself is premised on the fact;

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<sup>106</sup> Note that some respondents appear in both sections between relatives and friends as they are in close contact with both. So the numbers may not add up to 29, the total number of participants.

“...that modern society is not disorganised, nor is it becoming so. On the contrary, though there has been significant change in the fundamental character of society, it is adaptive change in the nature of social order rather than mere disruption of an earlier order with no replacement.”

In this regard, the new migrant communities in Johannesburg are not disorganised communities, but they should be viewed as emerging social networks and order instead of considering these emerging transnational societies as disruptive individuals or communities.

Katz, Lazarsfeld and Merton (in Goldenberg, 1997:171) conducted studies on mass communication testing the idea that the mass media had a direct effect on individuals who were part of the mass audience that is unconnected to and unaffected by one another. Their findings demonstrated that messages of the mass media were ‘selected, interpreted, believed or rejected within an active social context of friends and family, co-workers, peers, and other influential persons,’ contrary to the disorganisation theorists who suggested that individuals in the modern era were the rootless, anomic, and isolated members of a lonely crowd. The effects of mass media on individuals was seen to be, in part, a function of their connections to others; and it is only through analysing the social context and these connections that we can understand or predict what information people might obtain and how they might react to it. The migrants in this study demonstrated that they keep close ties with one another and their families back home.

#### **4.6 Lived experiences of Migrants within the church**

This section discusses the data and the findings from the study with regards to the lived experiences of the migrants within the church. This data is thematically presented through the following subthemes; *‘us and them’*, *worship and liturgy* and *church and diversity* as means for understanding the lived experiences of migrants in selected congregations.

*Us and them*

*...these are people that we worship with and we regard them you know as brothers in Christ and we don't ever think that they are going through such because myself being a local person I don't experience it and we take it for granted that these people are treated the same (Interview with John, 27 April 2015).*

A local participant who is a leader used words such as “*these people*,” and “*them*” to refer to foreigners while using “*we*” to refer to local South Africans. In some cases participants themselves spoke about themselves and the church as if they are not a part of South African communities and church.

The use of the terms; “*these people*,” “*we*” and “*them*” sometimes used in the same sentence with “*us*” are not inclusive language and worsen the exclusion of foreign nationals in local communities. The participants kept saying ‘*they*’ or ‘*them*’ to refer to the church and as Spielhaus (2006:67 in Facing History and Ourselves, 2008) rightly observed, “[t]he increasing use of antagonistic categories such as ‘you’ and ‘we’, ‘our culture’ and ‘your community’ did not support integration in Germany” and although he was referring to the German context, Riem Spielhaus’ observations are true for the South African context because it cannot be expected that migrants will fully integrate and feel welcome in congregations or communities terms such as, “*them*” , “*those people*” are used as if they do not belong.

*Even when you are speaking your language it's not seen good, it's seen like kwerekwere, something that is not seen as good like a foreigner can never be good like a South African, it's a kind of complex superiority (Focus group participant, 26 April 2013).*

As if to confirm Spielhaus concerns, participants alluded to language barriers and how they perpetuate discrimination and often used of derogatory names they are given by locals because they cannot speak local South African languages. It was confirmed that the use of a derogatory term *makwerekwere*,<sup>107</sup> a name given to foreigners due to the

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<sup>107</sup> *Makwerekwere* is a derogatory term used by local South Africans to refer to people who are from outside South Africa. The word is taken from the poor pronunciation of words.



inability of foreign migrants to speak local languages is a popular label given to African migrants in Johannesburg. Examining Xenophobia as a response to foreigners in post-Apartheid South Africa, Mluleki Mnyaka (2003:36) also alluded to this when he noted, “many aliens do not speak local languages. This creates a communication barrier and often militates against them...even when police are looking for illegal African aliens to apprehend, they do so by checking the language they speak.”

This creates feelings of cultural disorientation for migrants and perpetuates miscommunication between migrants and locals when they go to the shops, schools, work, restaurants and other places of social services. As a result, unscrupulous employers, insensitive public officials and opportunistic locals take advantage of these language barriers and exploit foreigners. Language is an important part of cultural identity and pride, so when it cannot be expressed in the public space this causes a loss of sense of identity.

As I already indicated, local leaders do not seem to understand how they contribute to the exclusion of migrants by using language that discriminates between locals and foreigners. This lack of sensitivity and the failure of leaders and public officials to recognise that hatred of foreigners is fuelled by the insensitivity to language and cultural diversity in Johannesburg is a cause for concern.

*Worship and liturgy*

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Feel welcomed by local church</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Find it easy to relate and worship with locals</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>93.1%</b>
<b>Talk openly about country of origin</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>93.1%</b>

**Table5: Responses for statements 6-10 in section B: (Worship and liturgy experiences)**

Further to the socio-demographic variables that were measured, Questions six to 10 sought to determine the experiences of the respondents within the church context with regards to liturgy and worship and whether they felt welcomed and involved within the selected congregations. As reflected in Figure 4.5 above, 29 of the respondents (100%) indicated that they feel welcomed in the congregations, 27 (93.1%) reported that they find it easy to relate and worship with local South Africans and the same number of 27 (93.1%) of respondents pointed out that they talk openly about their country of origin within the church than outside the church.

The category of participants reporting that they do not find it easy to talk openly was young people. As reflected in the comment provided by one young participant below:

*It is easier to be surrounded by South African who have the same faith as you, than those who don't*" (19 year old female participant, response on a questionnaire, 26 April 2015).

Although the migrants within the selected congregations feel welcomed and find it 'easier to be surrounded by South African who has same faith as you,' there was no evidence to show that the style of worship has been developed to integrate or reflect the presence of migrants. During the field visits to the congregations, the researcher noticed that hymns, the order of service and the style of worship were western and representative of the previously dominant white population in all the congregations that were investigated.

Another important observation made by the researcher in one of the congregations where the migrants had the opportunity to lead worship and preach, were the themes of the sermons and hymns. A sermon preached on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August by a migrant participant was entitled 'Living in fear' and drew from Isaiah 41:10 which states, 'fear not for I am with you...' and one of the hymns sung was 'yes I know it' - a song about challenges on the way to heaven – which migrants sang to encourage one another. It was clear that the hymns and scriptures were carefully selected to address the needs of migrants and this indicates that religion is a means for most migrants to cope with the challenges they face in their daily struggle to survive in Johannesburg.

*Church and diversity*

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	–
<b>Disagree</b>	–
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	–

**Table 6: Responses to statement on welcoming of strangers**

*The Church is culturally diverse and promotes acceptance of strangers. Do you agree with this statement?*

As the table above shows, this question sought to determine whether the subjects felt that the church was culturally diverse and promoting acceptance of strangers. It measured their attitudes through a ricket scale: strongly agree, somewhat agree, not sure, disagree, and strongly disagree. 2 people did not complete this question and 27 (93%) indicated that they strongly agree with this statement. Only 1 respondent reported somewhat agreeing.

Although the majority of participants strongly agree that the church is culturally diverse and promotes acceptance of strangers the reality on the ground told a different story. The congregations are now predominantly foreign migrants grouped according to country of origin. Even some locals are not comfortable being in such congregations as stated by the local leader during one of the interviews:

*Because even black South Africans who used to come every sun we have noticed that some of them they are not as regular and that might be speaking to change of worship styles or the kind of influence the Cameroonians have on how we should be worshipping (Interview with John, 27 Nov 2015).*

The evidence from field research conducted by Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator (2005:168) in East Africa shows that refugees are excluded from local churches and in many instances, none of the town parishes had any effective pastoral connections

with the Christian Community in exile, a situation he suggests negates the pastoral principle that “the responsibility to offer refugees hospitality, solidarity and assistance lies first of all with the local church.” If local South Africans move out of the congregations as migrants come in, this weakens the response of the local church in addressing their needs as new comers often have limited capacity to mobilise resources.

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	–
<b>Not sure</b>	–
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	–

**Table 7: Summary for responses to question 15: (Diversity)**

*It is possible that people from different nations can live together in peace and harmony. Do you agree?*

Question 15 sought to further determine the perceptions of participants regarding diversity in the light of people from different nations living together. 3 people did not complete this question and 25 (86%) indicated that they strongly agree with this statement and 1 (3%) respondent reported disagreeing with this statement.

Similarly, most participants strongly agreed that people from different nations can live together in peace and harmony but in reality, there were divisions according to country of origin even in the activities within the church. For example, one local leader reported;

*We have allowed the group of Cameroonians to set up a group of men and women and they have made it clear from the onset that it's not necessarily supposed to be comprised of Cameroonians they are open to anyone who wants to be part of the fellowship groups (Interview with Session Clerk, 27 April 2015).*

Cameroonians have been allowed to ‘set up a group’ of fellowship despite the congregation having other nationalities who may not understand their culture. Instead of seeking a culturally diverse style, the practices employed tend to perpetuate discrimination. The participants were oblivious of the discriminatory tendencies of such practices and even claim that the church does not discriminate as reflected in the statement from one focus group participants below;

*...in the church there is nothing such as discrimination and all that stuff. You are actually, you actually feel at home and I've been in the church for the whole time that I've been in South Africa 15 years (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).*

These responses demonstrate contradictions. During the focus group discussions it emerged that some participants feel welcomed in the church although but the challenges related to integrating foreigners into local congregations and communities had to do with the diversity of cultures and language barriers and these can be overcome. Participants shared their experiences around how foreigners have been threatened and sometimes told to leave South Africa as the participant cited below lamented;

*I had a situation last year here and they say don't worry, you bloody foreigners, Mandela will die and they say makwerekwere, you guys will all leave. Even when you are speaking your language it's not seen good, it's seen like kwerekwere, something that is not seen as good like a foreigner can never be good like a South African, it's a kind of complex superiority (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).*

Findings from this study also show that local South Africans move out of the congregations that are receiving more foreigners. This is paradoxical in that contrary to the trend of local South Africans moving out of congregations where migrants are coming in, local South Africans prefer to employ foreigners at home than their local brothers and sisters as reflected in the statement that follow.

*...we tried to work with our South African people and it just wouldn't work. The reason being people feel entitlement when you say I need help from you, this is the role you will play within the family, the first thing that jump into their mind is money, what can they get out of you, and it just destroys the value system (Focus group participant 5, 30 Aug 2015).*

Although loyalty and honesty has been cited as some of the virtues that foreigners possess strongly against their local counterparts in the job market, there seems to be more cooperation between migrants and locals at the level of individual than group encounters. This is an interesting phenomenon and it deserves a deeper investigation in a separate study so that we can shed light on the complexity around this phenomenon.

According to Kapuscinski (2005)<sup>108</sup>, there is evidence of different human encounters scattered across the planet as proof of cooperation- “remains of market places, of ports, of places where there were agoras and sanctuaries, of where the seats of old universities and academies are still visible, and of where there remain vestiges of such trade routes as the Silk road, the Amber Route and the Trans-Saharan caravan route”. He further explains that “All these were places where people met to exchange thoughts, ideas, merchandise, and where they traded and did business, concluded covenants and alliances and discovered shared goals and values. The “Other” stopped being a synonym of foreignness and hostility.”

The significant observation that Kapuscinski makes is that people had three choices when encountered with the ‘Other’: (1) They could choose war, (2) They could build a wall around themselves, (3) They could enter into a dialogue. Although these findings point to negative reception and treatment of foreigners by local South Africans, it is important to point out that not all South Africans are unwelcoming. There are South Africans who have not chosen war or building walls around themselves, instead they engage; as participants confirmed in the statements below;

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<sup>108</sup> Ryszard Kapuscinski, (2005). Encountering the other: The challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” New Perspectives Quarterly, vol. 22# 4 (Fall 2005). Accessed April 11, 2013 from [http://www.digitalnpq.org/archive/2005\\_fall/02\\_kapuscinski.html](http://www.digitalnpq.org/archive/2005_fall/02_kapuscinski.html)

*If we interact with people that are at least learned their perception is different but if you get people on the ground are not as learned as other people then you get to hear resistance the attitudes tend to be negative (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).*

The statement above demonstrates that participants find it easier to ‘interact’ with educated South Africans than the less educated ones. The findings show that the attitudes of educated South Africans towards non-South African residents are more positive by comparison. It is my personal experience as well that I felt more accepted by educated locals, who in most cases, are open for dialogue and even willing to learn more about my country Zimbabwe, sometimes expressing their wish to confirm what they hear in the media about the situation in Zimbabwe. It is also important to note that children of migrants find South Africa to be a “*cool vibrant type of place*” (Interview with Ruth, 27 April 2015) and enjoy growing up in Johannesburg despite the challenges they have to endure. This poses a serious question around the identity of such individuals, who live in between two countries.

*...my closest friends to me, one is a Zimbabwean and the other one is a Congolese. We bond very well and despite the fact that we do not come from the same place and we learn we learn each other’s cultures, it’s fun to actually learn from each other because I don’t have many Ghanaians friends and the few that I used to have they did not consider me as Ghanaian because they said I look too South African...it’s confusing but I would say that I’m more South African than Ghanaian (Interview with Ruth, 27 April 2015).*

This female youth participant has friends from different countries and has developed a culturally diverse identity. This is transnationalism from below, an emerging new form of identity in the face of a diverse context.

#### **4.7 Emerging key themes for the study**

This section outlined themes that emerged from the study. Data collected for this study demonstrated that the lived experiences of the migrants can be grouped in two

themes, *the church's engagement with migrants* and *the church's incorporation of migrants*. This section highlighted data as categorised in these two main themes. Thematic analysis focused on those themes that (a) emerged in relation to social engagement with migrants, and those themes that (b) emerged out of church practices of incorporation of migrants.

#### ***4.7.1 Engagement with migrants in public places- social engagement***

##### *Recognition and dignity*

One of the key themes that emerged from the interviews was the need for recognition. In the statement below, Don demonstrates feelings of excitement about being recognised as a human being and being valued. This is an expression of feeling respected and given attention after feeling rejected and unwelcome; an affirmation of human dignity, a feeling of being valued and recognised after enduring rejection and loss of human dignity to a point of losing hope about being in Johannesburg.

*I'm very happy with this topic when we are talking like this, really I can feel like uuuh people now, they want to know who am I, people are coming to me. Because really before I was feeling like no, it's not important for me to be in South Africa (Interview with Don, 27 April 2015).*

The statement was pointed out by Don when he was interviewed at the church office where he usually works as a caretaker and cleaner in the congregation, for the first time he felt that he was more visible and valued. This turned out to be a special day for him as he reported to the church office, not as a cleaner; but wearing a suit and coming for an interview appointment which made him feel recognised and dignified. This suggests that the experience for ordinary migrants in Johannesburg is one of indignity and living on the margins of society. More participants echoed similar sentiments and shared experiences of indignity in their struggle for recognition and acceptance in the new societies where they belong.



However, there were migrants who have experiences that made them feel dignified and recognised. For example Ruth mentioned that she enjoys being in South Africa and emphasized that this is her home;

*I see South Africa it's still a good place to be in and I really enjoy being here It's actually my life now. This is where I live, this is where I breathe, this is where I eat and sleep (Interview with Ruth, 27 April 2015).*

The above statement, '*this is where I live, this is where I breathe, this is where I eat and sleep*' speaks about location (live), health (breathe), safety (sleep), the elements that are important needs for humans to survive. Ruth demonstrates some form of resistance against xenophobia and life threatening tendencies to marginalise the '*other*.' She does this through an affirmation of being alive and in existence at within a period of time and space. As mentioned on the profile of the participants, Ruth has been in South Africa from for the past 15 years and came with her Ghanaian parents when she was aged five. During the interviews, she shared frustrations with the South African Department of Home Affairs for their failure to process her permits despite her having been in the country for 15 years; and as a result, she cannot register to study at University even if she passed her matriculation examinations and that makes her feel unrecognised or denied an opportunity to pursue a dignified life.

In another profound statement which demonstrated the lived reality of migrants engagement with local South Africans in public spaces and how they feel unrecognised or undignified, one focus group participant drew from the metaphor of a tree and its fruits to drive the point home;

*I'm not a fruit that fell from a tree and they must come and eat. I have a father, I have a mother, I have friends, I have a family, I have a country, and I have a home also. So people must not look at us like I'm coming from nowhere, I didn't fall from a tree. (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).*

This is a cry for recognition as a dignified human being, worthy of respect and value. The statement was cited in response to the corrupt activities by the police who demand bribes from migrants and threatening to arrest them.

As I have noted, Don, also exclaimed, “*I am realising that in South Africa I’m nothing*” to express his disappointment at the lack of value for his human dignity in South Africa with similar concerns raised during the focus group discussions as most participants called on the church to act;

*...church should be the moral voice of society, from where I stand church should be saying, it should be the one that says to government, if we don’t address this it’s going to become a problem* (Interview with focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).

Participants noted the absence of the voice of the church on matters concerning the challenges that migrants face in communities where they live.

### *Shame and vulnerability*

When migrants feel *unrecognized* and *undignified*, they often have to endure hardships on the peripheries of society in circumstances that make them vulnerable. One of the themes that engaged in the light of social engagement with migrants was shame and vulnerability as the words which were used by migrants to describe their feelings regarding how they felt treated in South Africa<sup>109</sup> as foreigners. As Don expressed his disappointment during the focus group discussions ‘*I feel sad, and ashamed* because this is not the image that when I’m in SA I want portrayed’ (Focus group participant, 26 April 2015). Most participants shared their experience of living in fear after the violence against foreigners that broke up in Isipingo in Durban during March 2015 and indicated that they felt unwelcome in South Africa and even “ashamed” they were

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<sup>109</sup> I am aware that the subjects in this study were drawn from Johannesburg, but I am intentionally using the broad term South Africa to acknowledge that migrants have the freedom to travel nationally and therefore the experiences they shared are not particularly confined to Johannesburg.

here. However, others noted how lucky they were at church, like Don who pointed out during the interview;

*Thing is it's very bad outside of the church. For us we are lucky because when we are at the church here and then the church is looking after us...like I told you really we found the love in the church (Interview with focus group participant, 27 April 2015).*

By comparison, participants found being at church better than living in the public psyche within the Johannesburg communities and indicated that they feel safer while at church as one of the participants added, “*I don't feel safe*, and sometimes I use public transport when going to work, you can't even talk, you can't even speak your own language (Focus group participant, 26 April 2015).

*...we lose everything you know simply because of the name of the foreigner, nothing else, simply because you are a foreigner (Abdul, Focus group Participant 30 Aug 2015).*

In the statement that I have already referred to, Abdul felt that his business was targeted for xenophobic violence because he is a foreigner. Similar comments were shared by other participants as they described how they have been economically affected by violence targeted at foreigners; a challenge which most participants felt the government was not doing enough to address. For the migrants, being a foreigner is a huge disadvantage and poses a security risk in Johannesburg as they are often an easy target, for example one participant commented;

*We really feel unsafe because when a foreigner dies there is no investigation ever carried out but if it's a South African something is done about it, so we don't feel safe (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).*

Most participants expressed concerns at the selective application of law by public law enforcements agents and felt that foreigners are not protected against violence and crime in South Africa, a country that prides itself as a 'rainbow nation.' When it comes to migrants, we are yet to see justice for all 'who live in it' as the freedom charter states. There should be compliance with the laws and international regulations which govern the movement and people (these were discussed in Chapter 2), and especially relating to the treatment of migrants and refugees.

Movement of people is not a new phenomenon and as the Journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski's has argued, our history is a story of communities and small tribes of people encountering one another; "encounter with other people, has always been a universal and fundamental experience for our species" (in Suarez: 2008:10). According to Mnyaka(2003), the presence of the 'other' (the foreigner) is often understood and experienced as a security issue, the 'other' is seen as a threat to the well-being of a person and to his or her cultural, religious and social life.

Being a foreigner and living in Johannesburg is no easy life. It is a life riddled with fear, vulnerability and indignity. Reflecting on the South African prejudice against foreigners Myaka (2003:107) made the following observations:

Frustration because unemployment, shortage of housing, and other social needs and services has led to African immigrants in South Africa being perceived as having a negative impact on the socio-economic sphere. They are referred to as plunderers of resources because they compete with hawkers, allegedly take jobs, make use of hospitals and schools and some of them commit crime. They are, therefore, seen as bringing about a decline in the newly found democracy (Myaka, 2003:107).

Crush (1998:41) attests to this when he says,

'For some, the newly perceived threat to the rights and entitlements of citizenship is the foreign "other" who does not share their citizenship and is therefore not legally entitled to these rights and entitlements.'

With regards to migrants' experience of xenophobia and discrimination, it emerged that migrants are living in fear<sup>110</sup>, as this was confirmed during all three focus group discussions and interviews.

*We really feel unsafe because when a foreigner dies there is no investigation ever carried out but if it's a South African something is done about it, so we don't feel safe. We are living in fear just like we are foreigners (Matthew, Focus group participant 1, 26 April 2015).*

Feelings of insecurity were expressed more than once and Mathew in the statement above, shared sentiments that were echoed by the majority of participants who blame the South African justice system for lack of criminal investigations when foreigners are attacked. They attributed this selective application law by local South African security officers to their "otherness," being foreigners. Even worse, for migrants like Abdul, they have to endure discrimination and marginalisation two fold;

*...bad enough I'm Somalian and I'm Christian and all those times I was hiding myself because those Somalians were the ones who received me and taking care of me (Abdul, Focus group Participant Mayfair, 30 Aug 2015).*

While contending with the hostility from local South Africans, Abdul also has to deal with rejection from his Somali Muslim brothers and sisters because he converted to Christianity, he must face up with both challenges as a harsh reality of living on the margins of society in Johannesburg. During the focus group discussions Abdul shared his experiences as a migrant living in Johannesburg and worshipping in one of the UPCSAs congregations. Having lost his business during the xenophobic violence, Abdul feels vulnerable, dislocated, prejudiced and even faces tensions with his religious and national identity as he struggles to live with Muslims and Christians in an environment that is becoming increasingly intolerant. He feels bad because his life is hard as a result of his conversion to Christianity and faces challenges living with

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<sup>110</sup> In one of the visits to the selected congregations, one of the migrants who is an elder preached a sermon titled "living in fear." The message encouraged vigilance and called on the migrant communities to stand together and repel attacks peacefully. This was just a few months after the xenophobic violence and I recorded details of this message in the field journal.

Muslims from his home country. As he pointed out, Abdul must hide his Christian identity so that he will not lose ties and support from his people; *“I decided to come to church but even coming to church I had to hide. Even going out I must hide, I have to make sure that no one can see me, you see”* (Abdul, focus group participant; 30 Aug 2015).

The statement, *“bad enough I’m Somalian and Christian,”* implies that he is aware of the cost he has to pay for being a Somalian (a country predominantly Muslim) and find himself living with other Somalis but having converted to Christianity. Abdul’s experience sheds light on the challenges that migrants have to endure in preserving their identity and human dignity in a multi-cultural context characterised by rejection and a struggle to survive. These feelings of vulnerability could also be discerned in the tone of the statement that we referred to below;

*I’m not a fruit that fell from a tree and they must come and eat. I have a father, I have a mother, I have friends, I have a family, I have a country, and I have a home also. So people must not look us like I’m coming from nowhere, I didn’t fall from a tree* (Sam, participant in the focus group, 26 April 2015).

In the above statement Sam depicts some kind of resistance to the injustices that strip migrants of their human value and dignity. By declaring, *“I’m not a fruit”* Sam affirms his self-worth and is conscious of an ongoing struggle for human dignity and identity in the context of rejection and exploitation. In this statement Sam vehemently challenges practices that reduce migrants to fruits, and contends that migrants are human beings; they have a human dignity and deserve respect. Therefore they should not be dehumanised and all forms of social and economic injustices that do not promote their search for such values must be rejected. Many migrants live with a sense of despair and this can be discerned from the statement below;

*...there is nothing that I will do because I’m not South African* (Focus group participant, 26 April 2015).

This above statement reflects a sense of hopelessness, a giving up facing up because the participant is a foreigner. Participants of the focus group discussions shared their experiences with regards to treatment they receive at work places citing disorientation and feelings of isolation as most South Africans tend to be intolerant and unwelcoming to people who do not speak their language. Even if there are laws which govern how migrants and refugees should be treated, many participants demonstrated a loss of trust in public officials as the comments from one of the focus group participants show; “The security put you in the queue and sometimes they are asking you money, even the officials themselves those working at home affairs, just for you to get to sign the document, they need money from you” (Interview with Don, 27 April 2015).

Changing demographics in the South African communities due to the ‘influx’ of migrants mean that the church membership or identity will be transformed into a culturally diverse community. During the interview with one of leaders it came out that migrants were coming to communities where there were people from their home countries and tended to attend worship in congregations that share a denominational background with those at home. Incorporating new comers into the church will require a new understanding of South African communities and how these changes are impacting on the identity of the church.

### *Competition*

Another theme that was consistent with the lived experiences of migrants within the selected congregations investigated during this study was competition. As John pointed out;

*I will say because of the competition in Johannesburg and anger everybody will agree with me that foreigners in Johannesburg are definitely not welcome like you should expect (Interview with John, 27 April 2015).*

As one interesting theme that emerged from the study with regards to engagement with migrants in their lived experiences in public spaces, competition for jobs and scarce resources between locals and foreigners were identified by the participants as one of the reasons for tensions between foreigners and migrants in Johannesburg. During the interviews and focus group discussions, respondents complained about how unfairly they were treated at work places even despite the fact that most foreigners work harder than local South Africans, to a point of reporting at work even when they are not feeling well. They attributed this commitment to the scarcity of jobs and the challenges that foreigners have to endure in the event that they lost jobs.

*...you see a foreigner who is sick, they will try as much as possible to go to work, ..do their work diligently, they want to put in their all and their best, they want to keep their jobs because they know how difficult it is to get a job... but South Africans will be saying its weekend they want to socialise (Rachel Focus group Participant, 26 April 2015).*

In the statement above, Rachel argues that foreign migrants are more committed to working hard and always ready to face competition as they honestly seek to earn a living than their local South African counterparts. This implies that they understand the challenges they have to overcome in order to keep the jobs. As we can also see in the comments below, one local South African participant confirmed that foreigners are hardworking compared to fellow South Africans.

*...as I know in my area most of the people that do those services its people from outside,...But our own guys they come and loaf around and if someone gives you a service for an hour the next think you hear is can I have my money or you find some things missing (Focus group male participant, 30 August 2015).*

According to this focus group male participant, local South Africans “*come and loaf around*” instead of providing the services they are hired for. This suggests that there are local South Africans who consider foreigners to be more hardworking,



trustworthy and loyal than local South Africans. Other studies have also confirmed, (for example Crush, 2010) that indeed, some South African employers prefer to hire non-South Africans. Given these findings, it is easy to understand why some South Africans feel threatened by the presence of foreigners at work places around Johannesburg. Instead of competing through hard work and honesty they accuse foreigners of taking their jobs and target them for xenophobic attacks. Competition for job opportunities creates anger against people from outside South Africa and this results in animosity and tensions as reflected in the statement below;

*...because I'm not a South African and the question will always be; if your country was nice why did you come here in South Africa so I hate that question too much (Focus group participant, 26 April 2015).*

Many participants also felt that they are always treated unfairly by local South Africans because they are not South African. This is despite the fact that some foreigners are running their own businesses and provide employment opportunities for local South Africans. This was reflected in the statement by Rachel below;

*I'm having that saloon I'm the only foreigner in that saloon...And sometimes they will be busy; I will sit alone like there is nobody to communicate with. You know when they talk the language and going on and sometimes if a customer comes looking for me, they will divert the customer with their language and there is nothing that I will do because I'm not South African (Rachel, Focus group participant, 26 April 2015).*

The above section highlighted the outcomes of the study with regards to the lived experiences of migrants in the social sphere of life, outside the church. The section that follows presents an analysis of the outcomes from the perspective of incorporation of migrants into congregations.

#### ***4.7.2 Incorporation of migrants into the church***

### *Family of God*

The second major theme that emerged from this study was incorporation of migrants into the church and embracing foreigners as a part of *the family of God*. According to UPCSAs, “the Church is the Family of God. All people born of the Spirit are children of the Father; and so brothers and sisters of Christ and of one another” (UPCSA, Manual of Faith and Order, Section 22.5). So being a Christian and a member of the UPCSAs congregation implies becoming a part of the family of God and in fellowship, not just with the Father through the Son, but also with one another as we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

*I found family here, brothers and sisters they are really treating me like a human being and I can feel like I'm someone who people can meet also (Interview with Mathew, 27 April 2015).*

Although respondents, like Mathew above stated “*I found family here*”, I observed that most migrants prefer to take the back seats in the pews, even when the chapel is not full; they occupy the seats from the back while local South Africans are comfortable sitting in front and sometimes leaving spaces between locals and migrants. This points to the suspicion between the two groups, especially given that the leadership and the style of worship reflects that of the local South Africans despite them being the minority.

*I see South Africa it's still a good place to be in and I really enjoy being here It's actually my life now. This is where I live, this is where I breathe, this is where I eat and sleep (19 year old female participant, focus group and interview, 26 and 27 April 2015).*

The tone of the above statement is an expression of some protest at those who view Ruth as a foreigner and for her South Africa is now home. It points to an identity crisis, a claim to nationality and citizenship in the face of rejection. If she has lived here for most of her life, South Africa should be home to her, she loves living here. As mentioned earlier, during the focus group discussions Ruth, a 19 year female

participant shared her experience with the South African Department of Home Affairs and explained how she has struggled to get documents and was told by the officials to go back to Ghana. In my view, this is probably the tip of an iceberg as I am convinced that there are young many people trapped in a similar situation.<sup>111</sup> What does it actually mean to be a 19 year old female born in Ivory Coast, from Ghanaian parents who brought you in South Africa at the age of five years?

*I have cool friends which are South Africans, they are very accepting.... but on the other side there are those who also don't understand why I am here and...South Africa, well it's a very, very cool vibrant type of place especially if you hang around with the educated part of South Africans (Interview with Ruth, 27 April 2015).*

Like many youth who participated in the study young people enjoy being in Johannesburg despite the challenges they have to endure and so Ruth does not understand why someone would tell her to go to Ghana. The experience of this young lady points to the challenges that many children of migrants could possibly find themselves in a similar situation<sup>112</sup> and struggling to get identity documents or permits. There is a need for South Africans to embrace African brothers and sisters, especially those who have lived here for long. This desire to see Africans united and living together in harmony was strongly expressed by one of the male participants;

*...historical fathers like Mandela like Nkurumah, like Nyerere, like Patrice Lubumba, those people were able to stand even to liberate their countries because of the spirit of ubuntu, they didn't see themselves like South Africans or like Ghanaian they saw themselves as Africa, you see. But what I see today in South Africa in Johannesburg it's not that spirit, it's something else (Abdul, Focus group male participant 30 Aug 2015).*

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<sup>111</sup> During my stay in Johannesburg I listened to gruelling encounters of women crossing the border from Zimbabwe between Messina and Beitbridge. Most young girls have been sexually abused in these encounters by individuals who make a living out of the illegal activities helping people cross the border without proper travelling documents. Some of these stories have been aired on SABC through documentaries such as Interface, a reality program.

<sup>112</sup> During my stay in Johannesburg I listened to gruelling encounters of women and children crossing the border from Zimbabwe between Messina and Beitbridge. In these encounters some young girls have been sexually abused by smugglers who make a living out of the illegal activities helping people cross the border without proper travelling documents.

In the statement above, Abdul expresses disappointment with the current generation of Africans and their failure to live together in harmony as one united family seeking to address contemporary challenges collectively as the historical fathers did during the struggle against colonialism in Africa. It is a call to unity through the spirit of Ubuntu that can unite Africans in the face of divisions in society.

### *Compassion fatigue*

One of the sub-themes that emerged from the study under the theme of incorporation of migrants was the fatigue that characterises local South African communities with regards to traditional practices previously rendered to strangers in the past. When Abdul speaks of the “*spirit of Ubuntu*” (Abdul, Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015) he draws from the concept of African communal life which is based on an African worldview which places emphasis on “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” (lit: ‘a person is a person because of other people’), a construction that views people not as individuals, but individuals only in relationship to the community and the world of nature around them. This concept derives from the readiness to share and care for one another, and as Dion Foster has noted, “the essential unity between self and others, as well as the self and the entire Kosmos, is a vitally important aspect in relating the African world view to an integrated approach to consciousness (Foster, 2010).

*I'm not trying to be racist or what, to be honest, the church has a lot of duties and we can't keep putting more duties for the church and the church becomes so full with duties, that we can't possibly handle it because we don't have manpower (Steve, focus group participant, 26 April 2015).*

This statement was a clear defence of the church by a local South African, a feeling of being burdened and threatened. Similar sentiments were echoed by other local South Africans during the focus group discussions and this raises questions about what the participants understand to be the role or identity of the church in caring for migrants. Surprisingly, I also noticed the migrants themselves talk about the church as if they

are not a part of it. These findings suggest that local South Africans feel overburdened by the responsibility to care for migrants.

Just as we are seeing the same fatigue in Europe where migrants fleeing wars in Syria are stranded in borders as the leaders avoid responsibility to care in defiance with the international law, similar fatigue has also been confirmed by Orobator (2005:167) during his field work in East Africa when he postulated that;

Refugees are rejected by host communities for whom their presence portends disaster for their already strained economic and ecological resources. Quite clearly, for “many Third World Countries...refugees (and migrants)<sup>113</sup> represent an unacceptable strain on their limited resources.” This situation has severely compromised the much-vaunted African spirit of solidarity, generosity and hospitality. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was reasonable to promote these virtues...As Jonathan Bascom has argued, “Today supportive evidence of ‘African hospitality’ for refugees has become harder to find.”

It is also important to point that in instances where comments were made by local South Africans regarding the church being ‘overburdened,’ this did not go well with the foreign migrants. In the first focus discussion it became so tense that the researcher had to intervene by asking participants not to get personal about the views and opinions expressed. This shows that the tensions between foreigners and local South Africans are not just in the public arena, they extend to the church as well. Therefore, findings of this research confirm what other studies have found out, for example that by SAMP (2006) examining South African citizen’s attitudes to migrants which concluded that South Africa continued to be a society in which xenophobia remained deeply entrenched. The results showed that many South Africans wanted to give “limited or little rights to migrants, [and] even benefits they were legitimately entitled to (Crush et al. 2013:10).

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<sup>113</sup> Emphasis on migrants is mine because in this study the terms ‘refugees’ and ‘migrants’ are use interchangeably. This is because in South there are no clear distinctions between refugees and migrants as they are all categorised in the same bracket. Although this was initially a gesture to Africans who supported South Africa during the struggle against colonialism and apartheid, the system has proven to be a challenge in the light of growing intolerance and increasing numbers of foreigners in the country.

### *The (in)visible church*

Another sub-theme that emerged from this study in the light of incorporation of migrants into the church was the *(in)visible church*.

*if they can have a space and use that space to talk to the government and say, Please we like you to listen also these people because sometimes it's very very difficult for us for them to listen to us, because they know very well that these people are foreigners* (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).

Like the participants above, most migrants cited the lack of 'space' for the church in the public sphere of life, a space that would enable the church to be the mouth piece for their plight. As indicated in the statement; '*the church* should have the means to support its members. It might be possible that *the church* has other facilities which *they* can also use to support other people,' (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015). The migrants spoke of the church as if it is an institution that exists 'out there', without them, and in most instances they used terms like '*they*', '*the church should*' to refer to the community called church. Theologically and institutionally the migrants themselves are the church and their agency in transforming the communities in which they live should be recognised, but perception seems to have more influence than the reality.

Therefore, there are tensions between what the participants perceive as Christian practice and the reality regarding their experiences. Even more interesting, by associating on the basis of country of origin,<sup>114</sup> migrants selectively engage in discriminating against each other on the basis of their country of origin and paradoxically do not see that as discrimination. This study has therefore identified and exposed the deep complexities of the experience of migration. Migrants struggle to maintain ties with people from their own cultural backgrounds while simultaneously

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<sup>114</sup> The demographics in this study show that migrants in the selected congregations are grouped according to their country of origin.

attempting to integrate into new communities and assimilate other people of different cultures and nationalities, towards the ideal of a family of God. And all this takes place within the church that is invisible or not clearly understood or defined.

*The church should have means to support its members; it might be possible that the church has other facilities which they can also use to support other people* (Focus group male participant, 30 Aug 2015).

Like most of the participants who took part in this study, in the above statement the participant speaks of the church as if he is not a member, and as if the church exists somewhere ‘out there’ in some unreachable place. This suggests that many migrants have mixed views about whom or what constitutes the community called church.

According to Orobator (2005:169);

‘...the church in the context of refugees (and migrants) represents an inclusive community. Inclusiveness is the direct antithesis of any attitude that considers the refugees (and migrants) as a nuisance. It looks beyond immediate needs of the local community, no matter how impoverished, and reaches out to the displaced...Being the church in the context of refugees (and migrants) presumes a commitment “to create community with uprooted people.”

At the core of migrants’ understanding of church is an identity and vocation that revolves around a welcoming and hospitable faith community with life affirming relationships. Where such values or agency does not exist, the institutional church is viewed as a far removed and irrelevant system/institution, what the study identifies as an *(in)visible church*. Such invisibility is behind the perceptions from the statements such as this one below;

*We have to help the church to help us by giving them ideas...I think the church does not address these migration issues, they don't, or if they do they don't it enough... (Participant 10 Youville, 26 April 2015).*

The above reflection demonstrates how the identity of the church is unclear to the migrants. There are tensions between the church as an institution or people and in some instances migrants demonstrated an awareness of being the church themselves, or a part of it.

### *Transnational God*

One of the significant sub-themes that emerged from the investigation of lived experiences of migrants from the perspective of incorporation within the church was the *transnational God*. Respondents also indicated a view of God who is universal and brings all people from different nations to live together and worship together in the midst of their diversity across language, ethnicity, gender, race, colour, social, political and economic differences, as one participant observed;

*diversity helps us to understand that God is universal, because the same God they are bringing from Cameroon is the same God whom we are worshipping here, same God for a person who has come from Zimbabwe and the same God for a person who is originally from here so it teaches us that God is God everywhere (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).*

This demonstrates that the experience of migration shapes the images of God in the lives of migrants. He is not just a God who is confined to one location, but he transcends space and is concerned about the spiritual needs of his people, and he is with them in their daily struggle to survive and search for better living conditions. There were respondents who indicated that their spirituality in the form of God's word is a resource for coping with the challenges which they have to endure, together with prayer as important for their daily sustenance;



*...we still need to vigorously preach the word of God if we understand the love it doesn't matter where I sleep or where I live should understand that love and the word of God doesn't have boundaries. The bible is all over the world (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).*

### *Incompetence*

Another sub-theme that emerged in the light of incorporation of migrants was *incompetence*. This observation demonstrates how local churches are ill prepared to address the needs of migrants as one participant noted;

*For me I think the church has not uh developed a strategy on how to deal with migrants in the different congregations, I can site in John 3:17 ...people are moving away (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).*

Participants lamented the lack of a clear strategy for the church to deal with issues related to migration. In the recent months from June 2015, the world has experienced mass movement of people because of failed or failing states unable to provide for the basic needs of their people and hundreds of thousands of migrants crossing rough seas and walking for hundreds of kilometres to make the journey into developed countries. Europe is battling a worsening crisis of the refugees and migrants without a clear strategy and sometimes even lack of cooperation from other governments within the European Union (EU). A strategy to deal with these challenges is an urgent necessity for both church and state not just in South Africa but globally.

According to reports on AlJazeera, TV channel (News bulletin, 23 October 2015) under their feature, *Desperate journeys*, there has been growing numbers of people dying in an attempt to cross the seas to Europe and seeking for safety from wars. These repugnant images in the international media reflect poor leadership on a global scale. The effects of Western supported air strikes, campaigns for so called “regime change agendas” and funding of terrorists organisations seeking to overthrow governments have contributed in creating the upheavals that are harming the lives of

ordinary people in Syria<sup>115</sup> and some parts of the world, forcing most people to flee. The South African government has just acted like European leaders by failing to have a long term strategy to address challenges faced by migrants and refugees as they have acted decisively only when there is a crisis and people are being killed. Sadly, the church leadership seems to be singing from the same hymn book with politicians; providing some kind of ‘ambulance ministry,’ responding to the needs of migrants only when there is an emergency.

It is important to point that participants made suggestions and noted that the church does not always need money to assist migrants and refugees. Church can (1) assist with information regarding processing of documents such as work and study permits, (2) educate locals on the role that migrants can have in the development of communities, (3) teach its members and local South Africans to love one another and embrace diversity, (4) teach communities about love and tolerance and (5) work with the government to promote tolerance and integration of migrants into society.

*Church was responsible for making sure that uh the inequality in sending people to school there addressed that by making sure people are sent to school, giving scholarships, build schools in communities, most of the schools in when you look at South Africa were built in the Colonial era, they were built by church and it was that voice of saying we don't agree with the inequality but now post-independence church has forgotten its role (Interview with local leader, 27 April 2015).*

While there were people that felt that the church was overburdened, there were a number of participants who strongly felt that the church could do more and noted that the church was failing in its role and witness.

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<sup>115</sup> Syria is currently experiencing air strikes by western nations as they seek to weaken Assad’s regime in a war that has been going on from 2011. As an article by Barney Mthombothi (Sunday Times Nov 1, 2015) points out, ‘The instability has led to an unprecedented flood of refugees seeking safer and greener pastures in Europe, catching its leaders totally unawares.’

*...for example church can organise some other activities in which youth can participate for example sport and other things which according to the youth...especially women who cannot find means to support themselves, for example uuuh, we are having a hall that side (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).*

By suggesting that ‘*church can organise some other activities*’ the participant who echoed the above sentiments implies that the church is not competent and active enough. There are facilities that can be better utilised for the programs aimed at improving the lives of migrants. In my view, migration is one of the factors that make it imperative for the church to seek a new way of doing mission in response to its complexities as a “*a sign of times.*” The struggle for the church to survive in the face of limited resources and the tensions between *praxis* and teachings were visible in the lives of the migrant participants in all three focus groups as most participants lamented lack of action by the church towards addressing the needs of migrants:

*I think the church is becoming less and less involved in individual personal lives. I think the church is trying to survive, so in my experience I think to expect the church to help them personally is asking too much. Money, resources, people, involvement yes, I think the church is struggling financially and with manpower (Participant 6, Mayfair 30 Aug 2015).*

As already tabulated, some respondents felt that it is the obligation of the church to respond not just by providing care to migrants, but also work with the community to instil values which promote tolerance as this participant pointed out, “I personally feel that *the church has got an obligation* to instil from grassroots level the fact that we are all human beings irrespective of the nationalities that we hold... *the church must do community outreach* to teach the people how they can tolerate one another (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015). In one of the meetings, I observed that the local minister defended the church and pointed out that the congregation was doing its best to care for migrants. This was despite the fact that one participant shared his struggle of living with Muslims and having to hide his Christian identity because they are providing care to him, and not the local congregation. This particular participant did not indicate receiving any form of support from the congregation. In one focus group

discussion, the local minister attended the discussion and researcher is aware that this may have compromised the full participation of the migrants. Similarly, in all three focus group discussions, local South Africans tended to defend the church and cited lack of resources and many duties as reasonable challenges that the church is grappling with. For the locals, church cannot therefore afford to take care of migrants or provide support as this requires additional resources which are not available.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

This chapter presented data collected through field work and drawn from focus group discussions, interviews with key informants and self-administered questionnaires. These findings confirm that migrants in Johannesburg live in '*fear*' and even feel '*ashamed*' as they cited unjust economic practices from corrupt public officials and lack of protection in the face of violence, dislocation and rejection in a culturally diverse society around Johannesburg. Although the migrants indicated that they felt welcome with the UPCSAs congregations, there was enough evidence to conclude that the congregations are not competent and do not have a strategy to minister to the now predominantly migrant congregations.

Understanding these realities was helpful in sketching the details for emerging theological themes towards a theology of migration in the chapter that follows. Specifically, this chapter discussed the findings thematically into categories (a) themes that emerged in relation to lived social experiences of migrants with regards to engagement with society, [*Recognition and human dignity, Shame, vulnerability, and Competition*] and (b) those themes that emerged from church practices with regards to incorporation of migrants into the faith communities within the selected congregations [*Family of God, Compassion fatigue, (In)visible Church and Transnational God*].

## CHAPTER 5

### REFLECTIONS ON THE FINDINGS-TOWARDS A CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY OF MIGRATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter employed a combination of thematic and discourse analysis approaches to analyse data collected for the study in the light of the literature review findings from a sociological perspective and engaged migration concepts to make inferences on the findings. This chapter engaged the outcomes of the study from a theological perspective and explored the ecclesiological and missional implications of the themes that emerged out of the lived experiences of the migrants.

With intensified displacement of persons adding to the rise in forced migration, dominant interpretive frames influenced by globalization frequently distort the motives and situation of the people on the move. Therefore the phenomenon of intensified migration presents a theological opportunity to offer alternative lenses to view the reality of migration. This is essentially critical in the context of conflict, poverty and political instability that have affected many Africa nations with perceptions of displacement obscuring the rights and aspirations of the people involved. Such tendencies have ignored the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948 in Paris, as a direct response to the Second World War which represents an expression of rights to which human beings are inherently entitled (UN, 1948).

This chapter argues that the different discourses should work along each other and appreciate that migration is a complex phenomenon which can only be understood from the perspective of migrants themselves and the study suggested that each approach should restore the human dignity of migrants and appreciate their agency in the developmental agenda. Further to that, misleading stereotyping and a mixture of half truths about migration and immigration noted by Crush and Pendleton (2004)

also to be addressed. These unfounded claims fuel wrong perceptions on migrants and should be treated with the rejection they deserve. A study by the International Organisation on Migration (IOM:2010) alluded to the complexity of migration or immigration and highlighted the “push – pull factors” such as attraction of skilled labour by developed or receiving countries and poverty or economic instability as push factors for the sending countries. These studies have demonstrated that there are positive and negative effects to receiving for sending countries with regards to migration. However, this study argued that little or no attention has been given to the spiritual and psychological aspects of the experience of migration, particularly from an African theological perspective. The current developmental agenda and discourses in the South African economic planning do not take the challenge of migration into consideration. The agency of migrants is changing Johannesburg into a multi-cultural and pluralistic city. Theologically speaking, there can be a hermeneutical deficiency in the developmental agenda that aims at promoting human dignity unless the experiences of migrants are at the centre of such discourses.

Therefore this chapter begins with a theological reflection on the lived experiences of migrants in society and church through the themes of *recognition, human dignity, shame, vulnerability and competition, family of God, compassion fatigue, (in)visible church* and *transnational God* as they emerged from chapter four.

Theological reflection is defined as “the artful discipline of putting our experiences into conversation with the heritage of the Christian tradition” (Killen and De Beer, 1997:2). The word *conversation* expresses the possibility of examining the relevance or irrelevance, but also to evaluate why some aspects are relevant or irrelevant in both, Christian missional tradition and life experience. This definition of theological reflection involves a dialogue between the heritage of Christian tradition and the experiences of people that “invites us to reflect” (Killen and De Beer, 1997:1) through our experience and ask questions for clarification and understanding. Theological reflection is an indispensable requirement in the process of constructing any

contextual theology. A contextual theology of migration therefore necessitates conversing with theological reflections of migrants on their lived experiences.

De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio have also observed;

Central to the task of constructing a contextual theology, therefore, is local theology: the scattered reflections by local base communities, which are the way they think about the meaning and significance of their faith in relation to the struggles and hopes of their daily lives, and the practices which communicate these reflections (including ritual and symbolic practices). But this local theology is only a beginning point. A 'local theology' will be cut off from the larger Body of Christ unless it enters into conversation with others by which it may edify the church and be edified by its relation to the wider community (De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, 1994:35).

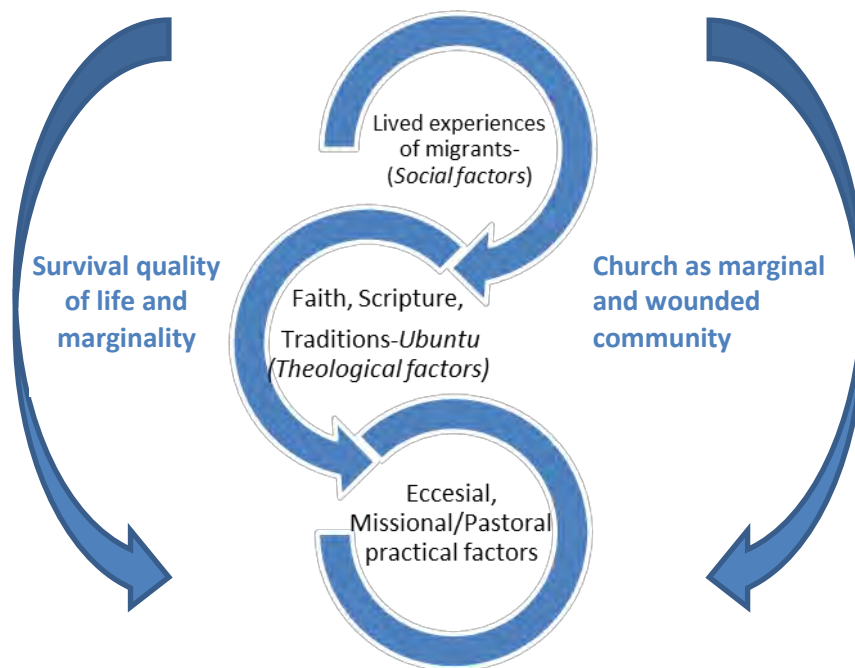
Given these observations, the process of theological reflection in this study unfolds from unpacking of the social, then ecclesial and missional implications of migration based on the themes of *recognition*, *human dignity*, *shame* and *vulnerability*, which emerged from the lived experiences of migrants towards a contextual theology of migration. The formulation of this contextual theology is premised on the theoretical framework developed by Dolores Williams' concept of *survival quality of life* (2002) and Lee Young's *theology of marginality* (1995) and identifies two concepts; *the church as a marginal and wounded community seeking healing* and *people without borders for a God without boundaries (transnational God)*.

In essence, the contextual theology that emerged out of this study is a form of liberation theology that advocates a culture of life for vulnerable people living on the margins of communities in foreign context in search of quality of life. It is important to note that;

“Scripture and tradition are essential elements of any Christian theology. Without the stories, symbols, images, and sayings linked to the origin of Christian understandings of the world, and without the subsequent history of those who have sought to demonstrate in word and deed what difference these understandings make in life, there is no Christian identity at all and thus no need for Christian theology” (De Gruchy and

Villa-Vicencio, 1994:37).

The figure below shows the process through which this chapter unfolds, and brings the lived experiences of migrants (*social factors*), African Christian Traditions and values (*ubuntu*) into dialogue with what emerged from migrants in the light of their faith, scriptural interpretations (*theological factors*), and how these dynamics impact on the church's ecclesial and missional (*pastoral practical factors*) practices and implications.



**Figure 5.1: Diagrammatic process of the discussion flow**

### ***5.1.1 Three important factors for understanding migration from a theological perspective***

As part of the process outlined above, the study employed the three important factors to be considered in dealing with migration from a theological perspective as a thematic framework for the discussion on the outcomes of this investigation so that there is a distinction between the social, theological and pastoral/practical factors regarding the lived experiences of migrants.



*The first theological factor is what can be called a “social factor”*

According to Castles and Miller (2009:29) the social factor of the experience of migration refers to the interpretation that some sociologists have given of the modern era as the age of migration. Of course, migration has always been a part of humanity; but in this globalized world, improved transport and communication networks have facilitated rapid movement of goods and people resulting in multicultural and diverse communities. These developments represent a fundamental changing landscape that demand a shift in understanding of the pluralist construct of communities in urban contexts.

*The second factor is the “theological”*

According to Castles and Miller (2009: \_), another important factor regarding the situation of migrants and refugees concerns the fundamental importance that human tradition and experience, considered in the diversity of geographical and cultural contexts should be essential loci for reflecting on Christian faith. In Roman Catholicism the two ‘*loci theologici par excellence*’ have conventionally been Scripture and Tradition. The reality of people’s experiences and history especially in the context of extreme social, economic, and political hardships, has led to contextual methods of doing theology that are “*praxical*” in dimension. In other words, the goal of theology is not simply to understand, but to also transform the reality of oppression, violence, and sin in which people live as they journey toward the realization of the reign of God. As Stephen and Bevans (2002: \_) also observed, it is precisely in this sense that the term “*praxis*” has taken on an ever-growing significance in theological thinking.

Such shifts in theological reflection have opened up opportunities for issues such as what it means for migrant Christians from other African countries to live and express their faith in South Africa. Addressing this question may require consideration of the rapidly changing social, political and geographical realities and how these have impacted on faith seeking understanding.

*The third factor is “pastoral-practical”*

The third factor is “*pastoral practical*” and it refers to the experience of pastoral human agents and agencies engaged in the work of ministering to migrants. This factor also encapsulates the concerns of believers who take questions around human mobility seriously. These include questions about the identity and vocation of the church in the context of migration with all of its complexities, contradictions and missional opportunities. Within the context of Johannesburg theological reflection of migration brings into conversation issues of compassion, the need for security, suspicion and hostility, challenges of living in harmony with local population and migrants from other nations. In this study, the pastoral and practical factors are also missio-ecclesial issues which arise from the kind of spiritual and theological resources that are needed to equip pastoral formations to minister in multicultural societies that are rapidly changing from the impact of migration. Migrants are grappling with their own experiences in the light of their faith and there is a need to give theological meaning to the challenges that they face. In line with the methodology proposed by Lartey (2013) it is suggested in this study that the experiences of migrants should become the focal points for theological reflection on migration as a way of developing life giving and mission transforming practices.

These three factors help to explain, even if not entirely, the current theological interest in migration and also provide hope that such reflection will attain greater prominence in tackling the complex challenges faced by migrants and refugees in different communities. African Christian migrants in particular understand their experiences in the light of biblical encounters. For example, ‘*wilderness*’ experiences in the perilous journeys across contemporary borders can be associated with the story of the Israelites as migrants settle in strange and often hostile and unwelcoming host communities that condemn them to live on the fringes society. Their hope of making a journey towards a promised land, where they can live a better life that is different from what they had in their home context is often thwarted with intractable challenges. But most of all, migrants are conscious of God who journeys with them along their path in a quest for a safe and life affirming place to belong. The three factors highlighted above undergird these realities as this chapter unpacks the

sociological, theological and pastoral-practical (ecclesio-missional<sup>116</sup>) implications of the outcomes from the investigation.

## **5.2 Lived Experiences of migrants in a theological perspective**

### ***5.2.1 Theological engagement with migrants in wider social context***

As already noted, chapter four identified *recognition, human dignity, shame, vulnerability* and *competition* as themes that emerged out of this study in the light of the lived experiences of migrants; the social factors of the experience of migration. It was observed that migrants *live in fear, shame, and feel vulnerable* as they pursue *recognition for human dignity* in the highly *competitive* and hostile environment within the city of Johannesburg. However, it should be noted that some migrants '*feel safe*' within the church space, as Colin mentioned during the focus group discussions;

*I'm being persecuted here as a foreigner but in the eyes of God when I'm here I feel safe... I would rather stay at the house of the Lord all the time and have faith all the time (Colin, Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).*

The statement "*but in the eyes of God when I'm here I feel safe*" above indicates that migrants interpret the reality of their lived experiences in the light of their faith in a God who protects them and demonstrates a strong sense of awareness that they are the people of God in exile. During the interviews one of the local leaders also confirmed that migrants "*feel that they have been accepted, they have been welcomed and they feel that they are part of the congregation that's what we have noticed*" (Interview with John, 27 April 2015).

On the contrary however, although most migrants indicated that they feel safe within the church it is important to note that migrants find the South African public communities hostile towards them as one participant pointed out below;

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<sup>116</sup> This refers to the dynamics in which the faith identity of the Christian community engages with intrinsic vocation and witness within its contextual setting

*...they were there just telling us you people we don't want you to send your papers because we want you all of you to go back to your country. We don't want you in South Africa here so thing is it's very very different out there than here in the church* (Interview with Don, 27 April 2015).

Like Don, most migrants agreed that it is “*very different out there*” because they experience *rejection, fear, shame, and competition* as they struggle to survive in a hostile environment characterised by violence and xenophobia. In proceeding, it is important to elaborate what the situation of a transnational migrant is like. What is it like to be originally from another country and find yourself living in Johannesburg, South Africa? The features of the existentialist reality of migration are summed up by Teresa Okure (1993:22) who observes these characteristics;

[V]iolent up-rootedness/ displacement, economic poverty, anxiety about the future, and the loss of national identity, political freedom and personal dignity.

Teresa Okure's (1993:22) observation of the situation of African refugees applies to migrants in Johannesburg as well, given that migrants and refugees basically seek safety in their lives, survival, food and shelter. Just like elsewhere, the experiences of migrants and refugees in South Africa involve displacement, economic deprivation, loss of identity, lack of freedom and undermining of human dignity, as pointed out by Peter Phan (2008:18);

Refugees basically seek safety in their lives, survival, food and shelter. They nourish a strong hope of returning one day to their homes or homelands. In refugee camps, they encounter hunger and disease, poor sanitary conditions, cultural alienation heightened by ignorance of the language of the host country, the loss of a sense of identity, rejection of the host country or confinement to camps, and exploitation in terms of hard labor for low pay. Children are separated from parents, husbands from wives; women are exploited and violated, often by the very persons who are expected to be their saviors. Children grow up without a sense of identity, roots, culture. They have poor educational facilities, if any. Confined to camps, if they are lucky to be in

one, like animals in a cage they grow up in an artificial context. This leaves a negative psychological impact on them, sometimes' for life. Refugees experience uprootedness, the lack of a sense of belonging, abuse, ignominy and general dehumanization.

As they live in exile, migrants nourish a strong hope of returning home one day. In refugee camps, they encounter hunger and disease, poor sanitary conditions, cultural alienation heightened by ignorance of the language of the host country, the loss of a sense of identity, rejection of the host country or confinement to camps, and exploitation in terms of hard labor for low pay.

The separation of children from parents, husbands from wives; leads to exploitation of women and children, often by the very persons who are expected to be their saviors.<sup>117</sup> Children grow up without a sense of identity, roots, culture and poor educational facilities condemn them to a cycle of poverty as they grow up uneducated and end up taking menial jobs in host communities. This is the existential reality of migration, the real life situation of migrants from which theological reflection must spring. Migrants in Johannesburg expressed anger towards the lack of political will to address these challenges in the face of hostile tensions that they endure daily;

*...they were there just telling us you people we don't want you ...*(Interview with Don, 27 April 2015).

The statement; *'you people we don't want you,'* is very *hostile* and instils a sense of fear and insecurity among the migrants. The challenge in the construction of any contextual theology of migration is to address these negative attitudes and perceptions of local South Africans towards foreigners. The data from the Johannesburg study concurred with the findings from other studies that South Africans have negative attitudes towards foreigners and accuse them of crime, stealing their jobs and taking their women, this is according to Crush, Ramachandran, & Pendleton (2013). Other

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<sup>117</sup> Findings of this study show that migrants in Johannesburg constantly live in fear and are subjected to corrupt activities by the officials from the Department of Home Affairs and the security clusters.

scholars note that the country is struggling with a high levels of unemployment and warn that this, combined with a high influx of refugees and migrants seeking better employment opportunities will often lead to disturbances amongst the low income level local population groups (Bond, 2010). Unfortunately, as these scholars have also confirmed, very little change has happened since May 2008, a year in which foreigners were killed by local South Africans in a series of events that sparked international condemnation. Little attention has been given to the theology that undergirds the Christian faith and practice towards issues on migration for South Africans that claim to be Christians. How can their faith that confess and pledge allegiance to Jesus who was once a refugee allow them to turn against African migrants in their country? This raises a question concerning the powerful influence of fear over ones' social wellbeing, with consequences which make faith confessions impotent.

It is therefore important to acknowledge the urgency of alternative responses to the challenge of migration given the repeated incidences of hostility and growing anger towards foreigners, not just in South Africa but globally.<sup>118</sup> Theology must pay attention to this challenge and in doing so within the South African context; the following observations from other studies need to be taken into account especially when dealing with the challenge of violence against foreigners;

- In South Africa there is a link between xenophobia and conflict as the collective fear of a struggling local population for their future, as revealed in the work of Lake and Rothschild (1996:23) this led to the themes of *vulnerability, shame and lack of recognition for human dignity* emerging out this investigation.

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<sup>118</sup> At the time of writing this thesis (15 Nov 2015) the world was in a state of shock following Friday night terrorist attacks which left 129 people dead and over 300 injured in Paris. As the BBC reports (18 Nov 2015), a Syrian passport was found next to the body of one of the attackers and this has prompted fears that terrorists are using the migrant crisis to enter into Europe. Sadly, most countries have announced immediate changes to the migration policies and will intensify border security using this crisis to violate the rights of innocent refugees fleeing wars in Syria, Afghanistan, Libya and other war torn countries. France, United States and their allies have already started air strikes in Syria as a response to the attacks, but questions have been raised on why the West exercises selective justice; when people are killed in other parts of the world there are no such immediate responses to terror. All lives are important irrespective of nationally or religion and they all deserve recognition and human dignity.

- South Africa is a country struggling with high levels of unemployment. The foreigners thus become an easy target for problems within society, such as crime and unemployment. They become competitors in an already struggling economic system; hence the theme “*competition*” emerged out of this study.

### ***5.2.2 Theological engagement with migrants in the church***

*Jesus Christ also was a refugee in Egypt when he was a baby, he ran away for his life. We can also understand that God’s people went away from country to country and how they were treated in those lands, and these people are our own people, we are a body of believers so we have the blood of Christ flowing through us and we should take care of each other (Focus group participant Mayfair, 30 Aug 2015).*

The conscious realisation by the migrants that *Jesus Christ was a refugee in Egypt when he was a baby*<sup>119</sup> and the New Testament’s theological notion of “incarnation” in which the study suggested that through Jesus, migrants see God migrating to the human race; we developed an understanding which provided a theological foundation for a contextual theology of migration. As Karl Barth (in Groody, 2008) puts it, through Jesus Christ God “makes his way into the far country” and the migrants “see in the Jesus story their own story” because he opens up a reason to hope despite the most hopeless of circumstances.

In seeking answers to questions raised by the theological implications from the experiences of migrants, Groody (2008) affirmed that people who cross the deserts in search of more dignified lives, “see in the Jesus story their own story: he opens up a reason to hope despite the most hopeless of circumstance. According to Groody (2008:19) the New Testament’s theological notion of “incarnation” implies that God

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<sup>119</sup> And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him (Matthew 2:13).

migrated to the human race. Jesus was therefore on a pilgrimage into a human context filled with discord and disorder, a place of pain and isolation, a ‘territory marked with death and the demeaning treatment of human beings.’<sup>120</sup> This biblical understanding is essentially intrinsic with the experience of migration in an African context and such consciousness lays a foundation towards an African Christology and or Theology of migration.

In order to appreciate the theological implications of the challenges faced by migrants and refugees, it must be remembered that human migration is a part of the Christian narrative. Biblical stories are rich with chronicles of geographical movements of the patriarchs such as Moses (Exodus 4:18), Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 13:1); Joseph (Genesis 39:1), his brothers and their descendants (Genesis 42:3) who later became immigrants in Egypt; Ruth, the foreign and immigrant woman whom Matthew's Gospel lists among Jesus' ancestors (Matthew 1:5).

For the migrants who participated in this study, they understood God to be with them in their struggles. These findings concur with what Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator established in East African refugee communities as he observed that, “they hold tenaciously to the view that uprootment, displacement, and exile do not dispossess them of the presence and protection of God. This awareness motivates them to create a living Christian community in exile” (Orobator, 2005:172).

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<sup>120</sup>Groody (2008) argues that the Christian story was founded on migration, and yet very little has been written from a theological perspective while in contrast, much work has been done about the social, political, economic and cultural dimensions of migration. Daniel G. Groody is a Roman Catholic priest, scholar and film producer with extensive experience on working with migrants in the Mexican border with the United States. He has proposed four conceptual foundations for a theology of migration: *Imago Dei* (the image of God), the *Verbum Dei* (the Word of God) and the *Missio Dei* (the Mission of God) and the *Visio-Dei* (the vision of God). This allows for a reading of human mobility starting from the fundamental humanity of migrants being created in God's image, first and fore-most. *Verbum Dei* attests to the experiences of the “migrant Son of God”, who, in the mystery of incarnation, crosses the body between human and divine worlds. *Missio-Dei* indicates participation in God's universal mission through which God wills that all human beings (especially the vulnerable such as refugees) be treated with dignity as children of God.



The participants in this study were aware of how their exodus journeys and wilderness encounters connect and relate with what Jesus himself experienced. For many of the migrants, they escaped *persecution* and even death in their home context and found themselves in their place of exile facing *rejection, shame and being vulnerable*. Migrants are however eternal optimists and some of the interpreted the hurdles that they have encountered along their journey of pilgrimage as stepping stones that will one day result in their realisation and recognition of their human dignity. Therefore the migrants' experiences of living in a foreign land have equipped them theologically to talk about God and their faith experience is a unique way as expressed in the words of one of the focus group participants:-

*Jesus Christ also was a refugee in Egypt when he was a baby, he ran away for his life. We can also understand that God's people went away from country to country and how they were treated in those lands, and these people are our own people* (Focus group participant Mayfair, 30 Aug 2015).

“*Jesus Christ also was a refugee*” is a conviction based on the gospel according to Matthew (2:13) which records that Jesus and his parents fled political persecution to Egypt when he was a very young child. As this biblical text shows, Jesus himself experienced the harsh realities of being a foreigner;

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him (*Matthew 2:13*).

In the above biblical quote, the phrase, “the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph” designates a supernatural motive and intent to the experience of migration. Human mobility is not just the choice of an individual, but it is utilised in God's plan for protection of his children against political tyrants like “*Herod*”, that seek to destroy people. When the participant mentions that “*We can also understand that God's people went away from country to country and how they were treated in those lands,*”

the participant is engaging in theological reflection that articulates migration experience through the lens of the biblical narratives and pays particular attention to the suffering experienced by the Hebrew people in Egypt. Paradoxically it was this nation that oppressed the Hebrew people where Jesus and his parents sought refuge when they were fleeing persecution: *the place of bondage becomes a place of safety!* This paradox resonates well with the South African situation, a context in which communities are grappling with historical consequences of oppression and enslavement under the colonial and Apartheid systems that forced many of the black citizens to flee to neighbouring states for refuge. In the post-Apartheid era South Africa has become a place of refuge for many migrants and refugees fleeing wars and poverty from their home countries.

Therefore, as some scholars have observed, theologians speaking out of the migration experience must “see” for themselves this “underside of history” (Gustavo Gutierrez), “listen” to the “stories” of these victims (Choan-Seng Song), preserve their “dangerous memory” (Johann Baptist Metz), and to the extent possible, “accompany” them in their struggle for liberation and human dignity (Roberto Goizueta).<sup>121</sup>

In *listening* to these stories and *accompanying* migrants in their struggle for human dignity, the Bible is an invaluable resource and provides alternative lens for addressing the challenges related to migration issues. For example, in the narrative of Exodus (6:13): “*the Lord spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge to the children of Israel, and to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt*” tells the story of a people rescued from bondage in the hands of hostile Egyptians and embarking on a long migratory journey to a different land of hospitality that was promised. God is described as one who journeys with people and therefore also becomes a migrant alongside his people.

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<sup>121</sup> Researcher is indebted to the insights migration on project the migration project retrieved from <http://www.unitedway.org/pages/diversity-and-inclusion> on the 24th of August 2015

When a participant says, “*this is where I live, this is where I breathe, this is where I eat and sleep*” (Focus group participant, 27 April 2015), this claim to belonging demonstrates that contemporary African Christian migrants understand their belonging (home) to be a God given gift and can see their exodus journeys across borders in search of safe communities in the light of God’s liberative action where migrants are led to a better home with a life of hospitality and *recognition of human dignity* as opposed to *hostility, shame and vulnerability*.

The theological perspective informed by the understanding and experiences of migrants identifies with Biblical narratives of peoples’ experiences of crossing borders and settling in sometimes *hostile* and unsafe communities. As pointed out by John during the focus group discussions, it is this connection with God in the experience of migration that inspires the migrants to seek his wisdom;

*We have to get wisdom from God. We need to spread the word of God to our people, when the person trusts our Lord Jesus Christ through that people can have wisdom...This is a time for us to pray,* (John, Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).

As the above statement shows, some respondents also consider preaching and praying to be a reliable source of building up the spiritual resources of faith and hope within the lives of people on the move.

### ***5.2.3 Church as Host or Home: The Missio-Ecclesial implications***

There is a need for a deeper exploration of the mission-ecclesial implications of how migrants are accommodated in the context of Johannesburg.

Swart and de Beer argue that:

What further illustrates the vacuum in South African theologies, and particularly in public theologies, with regard to the urban, is that one of the most significant reflections in recent years on a local urban church was a non-theological, non-

fictional publication, *Sanctuary* (Kuljian 2013), on the work of Paul Verryn and the Central Methodist Mission in Johannesburg, in response to the massive challenges of migration (Swart and de Beer, 2014:7).

The above observation highlights the contemporary urban challenges of migration. For example, the Roman Catholic Church has always grappled with the question of what kind of ministry can be provided to a person who has decided to move and as already pointed out, this question was raised by John Baptist Scalabrini (1839-1905)<sup>122</sup>as he described his encounter with a member of his parish who was preparing migrate:

One day a wonderful man, an exemplary Christian, from a little mountain village where I was making my pastoral visitation came to see me and ask for my blessing and a memento for himself and his family on the eve of their departure for America. When I demurred, he countered with this simple but distressing dilemma: “Either you steal or you emigrate. I am not allowed to steal nor do I want to, because God and the law forbid it. But in this place there is no way I can earn a living for me and my children. So what can I do? I have to emigrate: it is the only thing left...” I did not know what to answer. With a full heart, I blessed him and entrusted him to the protection of God. But once more I became convinced that emigration is a necessity, a heroic and ultimate cure one has to accept, just as a sick person accepts painful surgery to avoid death (Scalabrini, in Groody 2008:127).

Dealing with this challenge will require an alternative vision ‘*from below*’, where the voice of the migrants forms the basis for theological articulation and mission *praxis*. In South Africa there is a tendency to rely heavily on the statistics and delegate matters of migration to the Department of Home Affairs as if the department’s activities will address challenges around human dignity. Theology has a critical role to play as a deliberate agenda towards contributing to addressing the plight of foreign migrants in Johannesburg.

Stephen Bevans (2008:89) views the church “as a community with and of migrants” and therefore the community that is called church must be located within the wider context of God’s action and plan for humanity. This implies that the church is a community of *pilgrims*; a people who are on a ‘God directed journey’ and as such, a community that has no option but to understand and identifies with the migrants and refugees in the face of *hostility* and all threats to life. The section that follows discusses the sociological themes that emerged from the findings of the study in chapter four in a broader theological perspective.

### *Church as (in)visible Family of God*

The thesis of this study, argue that, ‘*when the people move, the church moves*’, as an assertion that the church is not the temples built in local communities, but it is a lived religious experience embodied by people who belong together through a family or community called church. As people move, they do not leave behind their religious experiences (*church*); instead, they move with them (*they are the church*) and articulate their migration experiences in the light of personal theological reflections on the journey. Local churches should not treat migrants as ‘*host*’ or people who are temporal guests and need to be take care of; rather they are partners and contribute to our understanding of the church through their enriching experiences and offer new lens for understanding the church. According to Nzayabino (2005:27), religion plays an important role in shaping the identity of individuals and “as identity, religion is less a matter of theological beliefs than it is an issue of family, culture, ethnicity, and nationality” (Gunn, 2002:16). Therefore, migration as a contemporary social phenomenon has huge implications for the Church’s identity and mission.

Secondly, the quotation; “*when the people move the church moves*” identifies a missional ‘umbilical cord’ kind of relationship between movement of people and movement of church (its ecclesial and missional identity). It is this movement of people in and out of different communities that holds the transformative power for the church to be dynamic, to move ecclesiastically and missionally. The study shows how migration (like any other phenomenon) gives birth to hybrid contextual theologies as

congregations are constructed or de-constructed by missio-ecclesiological and intercultural forces of migration calling into question their identity, vocation and witness.

Participants in this study demonstrated a strong sense of awareness that they are the people of God in exile although they fell short of appreciating that they are the church, an observation which led to the theme of the '*(in)visible church*' applied in this study to allude to tensions observed through the inconsistent uses of terms such as '*they,*' '*them,*' '*us*' and '*we*' by the participants when they made reference to the church. It was not clear if migrants perceive themselves to be the church or they viewed the church as an institution or someone 'out there.'

The findings regarding migrants' view of their experiences in the light of God's people in exile concur with what Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator (2005) established in East African refugee communities as he observed that, "They hold tenaciously to the view that uprootment, displacement, and exile do not dispossess them of the presence and protection of God. This awareness motivates them to create a living Christian community in exile" and for him, "To characterise the church in such terms has implications for our understanding of the function, meaning and theology of the church." (Orator, 2005:172). These Implications for understanding theology and the church include:

- Deterritorised ecclesiology: For example the Catholic Church places emphasis on the responsibility of territories to emphasize that refugees become the responsibility of local territories when they move into those territories.
- Pastoral accompaniment: build on the pilgrim community in exile and addresses pastoral concerns for the needs of refugees and migrants to be translated into reality through visits and physical care.

- Advocacy as a voice in the wilderness: As a voice, the church would speak out against the causes of displacements for refugees and migrants and advocate humanly dignified treatment.

The UPCSA understands the Church to be “*the pilgrim people of God, the Israel of God, journeying toward the fulfilment of God’s promise that in Abraham all nations of the earth will be blessed*” (The Manual of Faith and Order of the UPCSA, section 22.4). Being a regional and transnational community of believers gives the UPCSA congregations a unique missional identity, and presents an opportunity for each community of faith within each nation to offer hospitality to each other. The awaited blessings that have been promised through Abraham to all nations (Genesis 12:2-3) are an important mark of the Church. Through the Church, all forms of boundaries are crossed as humanity view itself in the image of God (*Imago Dei*) and they can come together across borders to share the word of God (*Verbum Dei*) as they take part in the mission of God (*Missio Dei*).<sup>123</sup> This understanding of the church and its mission is consistent with the definition cited above and it is this identity of the church that compels people to come together because they feel welcomed, or at least, expect to be welcomed and treated with love and human dignity as one of the leaders in pointed out during the interviews:

*...they will always call on each other, and say come, there is a room for us here. People feel comfortable when they feel that they have been accepted, they have been welcomed and they feel that they are part of the congregation* (Interview with John, 27 April 2015).

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<sup>123</sup> Groody G. D. (2008) Daniel G. Groody is a Roman Catholic priest, scholar and film producer with extensive experience on working with migrants in the Mexican border with the United States. He proposed four conceptual foundations for a theology of migration: *Imago Dei* (the image of God), the *Verbum Dei* (the Word of God) and the *Missio Dei* (the Mission of God) and the *Visio-Dei* (the vision of God). For him, this allows for a reading of human mobility starting from the fundamental humanity of migrants being created in God’s image, first and fore-most. *Verbum Dei* attests to the experiences of the “migrant Son of God”, who, in the mystery of incarnation, crosses the body between human and divine worlds. *Missio-Dei* indicates participation in God’s universal mission through which God wills that all human beings (especially the vulnerable such as migrants and refugees) be treated with dignity as children of God.

As pointed out by the participant, the above statement implies that migrants ‘*feel comfortable*’ when they come into the presence of fellow believers (*God’s family*) where ‘*there is a room*’ for them. Contrary to this preaching and understanding of the church and its mission, this study demonstrated another aspect of *(in)visibility of the church*; in that it found that some local South Africans are not comfortable worshipping with people from other nations, so they slowly drift out of the communities that are receiving foreign migrants and change places of worship and residence. This is demonstrated in the views expressed by one of the local leaders below;

*even black South Africans who used to come every sun we have noticed that some of them they are not as regular and that might be speaking to change of worship styles or the kind of influence the Cameroonians have on how we should be worshipping* (Interview with John, 27 April 2015).

Some black and white South Africans find it difficult to welcome the company of fellow African migrant brothers and sisters because of their socially constructed prejudicial fears. This fear is so entrenched that it is still present in faith communities despite the UPCSA teaching that;

*The Church is the Family of God. All people born of the Spirit are children of the Father and so brothers and sisters of Christ and of one another”* (UPCSA, Manual of Faith and Order, Section 22.5).

Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that there contradictions between what the UPCSA selected congregations teach and what members of the church practice. This has deep theological and missional implications for the church as it points to inconsistency and incompetency. The presence of migrants has exposed the missional weaknesses of the selected congregations and in particular, their understanding of the church and the role of the local church in the context of migration. Participants alluded to this *incompetency* and a lack of ecumenical engagement on issues affecting



migrants and contrasted this current weakness with how the church was a unified force in the past, as reflected by the statement from one participant below:

*...in the old days the South Africa Council of churches used to voice out but nowadays you never see the SACC on issues that are affecting us. It's very quiet but in the olden days in apartheid they came forward and pushed the other governments to bring sanctions (Interview with John, 27 April 2015).*

Restoring the dignity of migrants will require the church to be more competent and speak out against injustices that migrants face so that they are recognised as agents of their own change, a part of the family of God and not people who are ‘*nothing*’ as one participant cried out; “*I am realising that in South Africa I’m nothing, I’m nothing what am I going to do*” (Interview with Don, 27 April 2015). This statement shows a sense of hopelessness and loss of human value and dignity. These are feelings of abandonment, isolation and despair, and they resonate with those observed by Orobator among the refugees as he noted that “belonging to a Christian community very often serves as an antidote to the assault on faith by the conditions of displacement” (2005:167).

#### ***5.2.4 Church as home: Missio-ecclesial issues regarding incorporation of migrants***

One of the objectives of this study has been to attempt understanding missional and ecclesial or pastoral issues which arise from the experiences of migrants. Such an understanding should appreciate the role of religion in shaping the identity of people on the move through their lived experiences of migration, something which has been widely ignored by most scholars exploring the discipline of religion and migration, as Hegan and Ebaugh (2003:39) have rightly noted:

Despite the diversity and prominence of religious beliefs and practices among contemporary immigrants in the United States, scholars of both immigration and religion have tended to neglect the role of religion and spirituality in the process of international migration. With the exception of historical (Dolan, 1975; Bodnar, 1985; Dolan, 1985) and recent case studies (e.g., Orsi, 1985; Mullins, 1988; Hurh and Kim, 1990; Leonard, 1992; Min, 1992; Waugh, 1994; Lin, 1996; Numrich, 1996; Warner

and Wittner, 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000) that focus on the functions of the church in immigrant settlement and the emergent literature on the role of religion in the development of transnational activities (Casanova, 1997; Levitt, 1997; Rudolph and Piscatori, 1997; Levitt, 1998a, b), the role of religion in other stages of the migration process, especially in decision-making and the journey, has been generally overlooked by social scientists and policymakers alike.

Participants in this study underscored the need for the church to get involved in addressing the challenge of migration even outside of the church, citing the fact that migration is not just a challenge for the church but also for the communities or a ‘*national problem*’ as one participant observed;

*I think, it's a...it's twofold, it's not just the churches problem, it's also a national problem* (Focus group participant, 27 April 2015).

The Church should be concerned with the presence of unwelcome strangers within any community in which it engages in ministry or mission because the content of its Judeo-Christian faith is informed by scriptural perspectives of treating strangers with love; ‘*but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shall love him as thyself*’ (Leviticus 19:34-35 KJV). Therefore, any authentic Christian theological reflection must address all forms of tribal, ethnical and national divisions and promote relationships of love and tolerance through acknowledging diversity; what Min (2004) calls the “solidarity of others.”<sup>124</sup> The presence of migrants within the City of Johannesburg constitutes a challenge to Christian mission and points to the need for cross cultural mission and development of new models of “*neighbourhood*” built on dialogue and hospitality with migrants. Lessons can be drawn from churches such as the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg to explore new models of community relationships that promote tolerance and hospitality for people coming from outside South Africa.

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<sup>124</sup> Cited from Anselm K. Min, (2004). “*From Autobiography to Fellowship of Others: Reflections on Doing Ethnic Theology Today,*” in *Journeys as the Margin* 135-59. See also Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a divided World: A Postmodern Theology after Postmodernism*. New York: T. & T. Clark International.

It is in this regard that notable efforts to understand the role of spirituality in the lives of refugees and migrants from the African perspective need to be commended. In addressing this knowledge gap, Orobator (2005:164) raised a question; “[w]hat is the Church on a continent where 20 million people live in exile?”<sup>125</sup> And went further to rely on the data from his field work and examined the lived experiences of refugees to show that refugees have a widely held view which portrays “*refugeeness*” as a test of faith and employed Catechist Niboye to elaborate:

There are three categories of Christians in the camp: those who have persevered in the faith in the midst of trials and tribulations, those who have abandoned the faith, and those who have discovered God as their only help and comfort in exile. All three categories face a difficult test of faith triggered by feelings of abandonment, isolation and despair. Thus Fr Gherri explains, “The more the refugees live here, the more difficult it is for them to live out the virtues of their Christian faith. After a while enthusiasm gives way to apathy, egoism and individualism. The overriding priority is to survive” (Orobator, 2005:164).

The survival tendencies of the experience of refugees observed by Orobator among the refugees in East Africa are reminiscent of the spiritual realities among the migrants in Johannesburg. There are migrants who have persevered in the faith in the midst of trials and tribulations; there are those who have abandoned the faith, and there are some who have discovered God as their only help and comfort in exile. These revelations challenge us to think differently about the mission of the church. The selected congregations should rediscover their sense of mission in the context of migration as one participant pointed out; ‘*We have to help the church...by giving them ideas...I think the church does not address these migration issues, they don’t, or if they do they don’t do it enough*’ (Focus group participant, 26 April 2015).

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<sup>125</sup> Cited from, Peter Kanyandago, “Who Is My neighbour?: A Christian response to the refugees and the displaced in Africa,” in J.N.K. Mugambi and A. Nasimiyu-Wasike, eds., *Moral and Ethical Issues in African Christianity: Exploratory Essays in Moral Theology* (Nairobi: Initiatives Publishers, 1992), 178

The church can only address migration issues if there is an informed understanding of these challenges and what their mission implications are. For example if the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC, 2010b:164) understands mission as the crossing of all borders (*transnationally*) that separate people (*boundaries*) from God, one another and creation. It is only by crossing *borders (boundaries)* that reconciliation through Christ becomes a reality (WCRC 2010b:164). This definition of mission takes people moving across borders seriously and notes that, “[t]he missional church is *transformational*. It exists for the transformation of the community that it serves, through the power of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit” (WCRC, 2010b).

Missional church conversation presents a different way of thinking about the church and also offers an alternative hermeneutic to reading and interpreting the Bible in the light of the experience of migration. Christopher Wright has warned in his book, *The mission of God (2006)*<sup>126</sup> that reflecting on mission demands that we pay attention to ethical issues, arguing; “there is no biblical mission without ethics, and God’s mission calls for human response and that includes ethical dimensions (Wright, 2006:358). For purposes of this study, the current reflection on mission will not delve on the deeper ethical implications for mission.

Another contributor in missiological thinking in Southern Africa was David Bosch. In his seminal work, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (1991) in which he sketches a historical and theological review of the different paradigms of mission from the early church through to what he refers to as “*the emerging ecumenical paradigm*.” The following are the six historical paradigms of mission that he identified; (1) *The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity*, (2) *The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period*, (3) *The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm*, (4) *The protestant (Reformation) paradigm*, (5) *The modern enlightenment paradigm and finally*, and (6) *The emerging ecumenical paradigm*; which is of interest and relevant to this study.

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<sup>126</sup> I am indebted to the WCRC for a brief reflection on this book.

Bosch believed that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will see developments that will push the Church to seek a new paradigm, what he calls *the emerging ecumenical paradigm*. He cites the following factors behind the emergence of this new paradigm:

- West losing its dominance in the world<sup>127</sup>
- Unjust structures of oppression and exploitation being challenged today as never before in human history
- Western technology and the development agenda being suspect<sup>128</sup>
- The need to work for peace and justice given the reality that for the first time in human history we are capable of wiping out human kind
- European theologies can no longer claim superiority over other parts of the world given that culture shapes the human voice that answers the voice of Christ
- Freedom of religion is now considered a human right, forcing Christians to re-evaluate their attitude toward and understanding of other faiths

Despite the local leaders<sup>129</sup> expressing confidence in the role of the church regarding the care of migrants, respondents only mentioned school fees and food parcels as means through which they had received support from the church. It was not clear whether the local leaders consider such activities to be adequate but participants suggested that more needs to be done if the mission of the church is to change the situation of the migrants. The statement, '*we don't have funds, but we are doing much*' (Local leader, 30 August 2015) suggested that leaders are quick to defend

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<sup>127</sup> For him, the world is in fact seeking liberation from the stranglehold of the West. This is one important reason for the emergence of new alternatives in most spheres of life that were previously dominated by the western world view.

<sup>128</sup> For Bosch (1991) technology, development and the idea of progress have in fact proven to be false gods of the Enlightenment

<sup>129</sup> One of the local ministers attended the focus group discussions and pointed out that his congregations were doing the best to care for migrants. I have alluded to challenges that led to these developments and noted how they have impacted the findings of the study.

themselves and not willing to admit that the church '*is failing in many ways*' as some participants pointed out.

The presence of migrants in Johannesburg presents the church with opportunities to engage in transformative Christian Mission in ways that promote dialogical-cultural enrichment and new learning opportunities for both migrants and locals. But developing such experience enlargement programmes will require alternative theological thinking that draws on the interface between theology, migration and cultural diversity created by the movement of people. As is widely acknowledged in doing theology today and something that I have reiterated; such theology is contextual and draws from the existential condition of the migrants.

It appears like the church in Africa is still not free from colonial mentality that it inherited from missionaries. The fact that former white congregations still use Western style of worship and English as a language of communication at a time when African migrants are now in the majority, fails to realise the important factor defining the contemporary times; that 'western theologies can no longer claim superiority over other parts of the world,' (Bosch, 1991:34).

According to Bosch (1991:34) the unjust structures of oppression and exploitation are today challenged as never before in human history. As the findings of this study demonstrate, migrants used focus group discussions and interviews as an opportunity to express their outrage at the injustices they experience as foreigners living in Johannesburg and they felt the church was silent and not doing enough to address their struggles. As one participant noted, '*the voice of the church is very silent*' and compared to the role of the SACC in the fight against apartheid with that of the post-Apartheid South Africa (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).

The experiences of the fore-runners in the Judeo-Christian tradition portray the Triune God as the sovereign owner and ruler of all creation and who as creator, redeemer,

and sustainer of all life sustains and empowers life and renews the whole creation (Gen. 2:7; John 3:8) (Keum:2013). According to the World Council of Churches 2013 mission statement:

Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation. The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God's people (John 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope.

Consistent with the missional character of this Triune God, people are persistently invited to also receive, respect and love others especially those that are at risk such as migrants, "for you were *immigrants* in the land of Egypt" (Lev 19:33-34). The New Testament gospel of Matthew (2:13-15) details the story of new born Jesus as a refugee, taking refuge in Egypt with his family to escape the violent persecution of King Herod. Jesus is described as one who identifies with the stranger and indicates the attitude of welcoming as one of the main criteria of the "*final judgment*" (Mt 25:35). The first Christian communities were composed also of strangers and immigrants who had welcomed the good news proclaimed by Jesus' disciples and were striving to live it out in an urban environment that was often hostile to them and they were exhorted to "live in reverent fear of him during your time *as foreigners* in the land"<sup>130</sup>(1 Peter 1:17). These biblical references show how important matters around human mobility have shaped the story of Christian faith and indeed how critical it is for theological reflection to include the phenomenon of human mobility as part of its core agenda.

This research also suggested that the role played by congregations in the life and wellbeing of migrants should move from emergency provision of shelter and food during times of crisis to development of sustainable programmes which appreciate the agency of migrants. Dominant ideologies around the experience of refugees and

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<sup>130</sup> The first Christian community embrace people of other nations (not ethnic Jews) as the church move from community to community. The reference to foreigners refers more so to the "spiritual identity" of Christian living a different lifestyle and whose allegiance was not to the kingdom of the Emperor but only to the Lordship of Jesus

migrants need to be exposed through the alternative lens of the Christian narrative as a story of pilgrims and the people of God on the move. It is therefore important to recognise that migration has led to transnational communities as emerging forms of contemporary societies. Concurring with this approach Landau (2009:25) and the Africa Centre for Migration have timely advised;

- There are emerging forms identity as migrants leverage survival strategies in host communities.
- There are new forms of exclusion and Landau suggests that religion is one of a number of strategies for negotiating inclusion and belonging, while transcending ethnic, national and transnational paradigms.
- Contested space and *competition* for resources in the absence of a self-defined and dominant *host* community.
- Strategies for becoming both part of and apart from the Johannesburg City or local communities (*transnationalism/simultaneous embeddeness*).

Therefore, the incorporation of migrants should also consider the transnational identities, multiple cultures and different languages which characterise the communities of migrants. Given the definition of ecclesiology to be a “theological discipline that seeks to understand and define the church”, it follows that mission and ecclesiology do overlap in most instances. The church *does* what it *is* then *organises* what it does. In some academic circles there is even some reference to “missional ecclesiology.”<sup>131</sup>

What also emerged from this study is that migrants consider coming together from different cultural backgrounds as an enriching experience reflecting the kingdom of God, brought together by the common love of Jesus Christ. As noted by the respondent below, this is a family of God which reflects a;

*Christian experience where we are able to share together the common love that Christ died for all of us and that love binds us all together as human*

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<sup>131</sup> According to Niemandt, (2012) Missional ecclesiology emerged as one of the significant trends in mission studies and ecumenical discussion in the last couple of years.



*beings, and because he died for us and rose again for us that brought us together as brothers and sisters and we belong to the family of God* (Focus group participant, 30 August 2015).

Although most respondents held the strong view about the family of God living together where they *'are able to share together the common love that Christ died for all,'* it was clear that in practice; this reality still remained a challenge. This was evidenced by the tensions regarding the role of the church in caring for migrants. In order to encourage the reception of refugees and migrants in local communities, Orobator (2005:172) cited what he calls *'Deterritorised ecclesiology'* to show how the Catholic Church places emphasis on the responsibility of local territories into which the migrants and refugees find themselves. According to him, refugees (and migrants in the case of this study) become the responsibility of local territories when they move into those local UPCSAs congregations.

Therefore, the tensions between the locals and foreign migrants demonstrate that the local South Africans within the selected congregations do not clearly understand their role and responsibility in the lives of migrants. However, although Orobator's concept of *'Deterritorised ecclesiology'* is helpful, local congregations should not be delegated full responsibility of migrants as if they are hosting them, but there should be mutual engagement (at an equal level partnership) and a readiness to learn and discover new things together (as a Family of God) through an enriching exchange. Such an understanding introduces *'accompaniment'* as another important *'pastoral practical factor'* in the incorporation of migrants.

### ***5.2.5 Church as home in time of crisis***

*I'm very happy with this topic when we are talking like this, really I can feel like uuuh people now, they want to know who am I, people are coming to me.* (Interview with Don, 27 April 2015).

The statement: “*now, they want to know who am I, people are coming to me*” is profound in that it is an affirmation of *human dignity*, a feeling of being valued and *recognised*. This shows that even if there is no money to provide school fees, food and shelter; Church leaders can change the feelings of migrants by visiting them to spend time listening to their stories and by receiving such a pastoral ministry, migrants feel welcomed. Secondly, the statement also demonstrates that even providing a safe space for migrants to express themselves is some form of solidarity which makes them feel valued and dignified. This introduces a new pastoral concept which has been developed by ecumenical bodies seeking to empower churches to respond to contemporary challenges; *accompanying churches in difficult situations*.

The researcher had the privilege of working as the UPCSA HIV and AIDS Coordinator between 2007 and 2012 and got involved with the African Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC)<sup>132</sup> through a program that was designed to accompany and assist churches in difficult situations. During some of these consultations, it was noted that member churches in Africa are struggling inter alia with the following issues: tribalism, intolerance, violence, corruption, HIV-Aids, poverty, terrorist attacks, ordination of women, issues regarding sexuality, violence against churches (religious violence), and questions were raised on how the church should raise its voice against corruption, crime, violence and against law enforcers who abuse power. There were consultations held to facilitate the accompaniment process through education, empowerment as a way of;

(1) Being in solidarity with a church (walking alongside a church in prayer and support) and/ or (2) Exercising a prophetic witness towards a church or society (speak the truth to powers).

Drawing on this concept of *accompaniment*, the local South African church and specifically the selected congregations can be *visible* by following the two routes suggested above, towards a mutual journey with migrants in their suffering. It was

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<sup>132</sup> Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC). *Communiqué to member churches from an ACRC Regional Consultation meeting in Nairobi, 27-28 November 2012*. ACRC is the African Chapter of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

disturbing to note that when the UPCSA Mission and Discipleship Committee declared the month of October 2015, as a “*Mission Month*,”<sup>133</sup> there was no mention of the challenges that migrants and refugees face within the UPCSA congregations. Given that the year 2015 had the highest global statistics indicating that the world experienced the worst migrant or humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, one would have hoped that this reality will be taken into consideration when mission programs are designed. Even in South Africa the year 2015 was defining in that the crisis of xenophobic violence directed to migrants was at its peak, calling into question the government’s migration policies and its readiness to address the challenges related to the influx of migrants.

At a paper<sup>134</sup> presented during the global consultation for theological students at WCC Assembly in Nov 2013, I identified the challenge of migrants as an emerging ecumenical challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and warned churches to prepare for a coordinated response. What we have seen in South Africa and Europe in 2015 is a confirmation of the concerns which the researcher raised two years ago in a paper that highlighted the catastrophic implications for intensified human mobility.

In the literature review section, the study reflected on the parables developed by Jonathan Sacks (2009) to metaphorically explore the themes of assimilation and integration of new comers into host communities presented in the book *The home we Build Together* (Sacks, 2009 in *Facing History and Ourselves* 2008:15). The findings of this study show that although migrants face *hostility* in the public sphere of their lives in Johannesburg, they do feel *safe* and *welcome* within the selected congregations. Notwithstanding the missional and ecclesial in-competencies that came out with regards to incorporation of migrants, the parables developed by Jonathan Sacks (2009) highlight the differences between church as *host* and/ church as *home* for migrants.

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<sup>133</sup> Mission and Discipleship is one of the General Assembly Committees tasked with guiding the UPCSA in the implementation of mission programs responding to the challenges within the church and in society.

<sup>134</sup>Unwelcome strangers: *The suffering of migrants and refugees as an ecumenical global challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Paper presented by Buhle Mpofo PhD student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal South Africa, at the Global Ecumenical Theological Education (GETI) Program of the WCC Assembly Meeting in Busan and Seoul South Korea, from Oct. 25- Nov. 9, 2013

The first parable tells the fate of hundred strangers who have been wondering around the countryside in search of a dwelling place and eventually find themselves at the gate of a large country house. They are greeted by the owner at the gate who asks for their names and responds to their search for a place to stay with a warm welcome. He has a big house with many empty rooms; so they are welcome to “stay as long as they like.” They are *guests* who can stay for as long as they want but the *host* remains the *host* and they are his guests. He is in charge and they cannot do as they please and according to Sacks, that is society as a country house. For me, the mission and ecclesiological practice of the UPSCA selected congregations in this study reflect a ‘*host*’ mentality where local South Africans view migrants as *guests*, ‘*who can stay as long as they like,*’ but the host remains the host and migrants are the guests.

When a local South African says; ‘*the church has a lot of duties and we can’t keep putting more duties for the church and the church becomes so full with duties*’ (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015), this is an indication that there is an expectation among South Africans that migrants need to be looked after (*hosted*) by local people as if migrants cannot be responsible for their own lives. Such an assumption considers migrants to be a burden and people who just add ‘*a lot of duties*’ to the local congregations. This view fails to appreciate the agency of migrants and raises questions about who is the church? Is the church not the people, the migrants themselves and all of us who belong there? The data analysis section alluded to tensions between who and what is understood to be the church (*ecclesiological*) versus what and how should the church respond (*missional*) within the context of migrants in Johannesburg. There is a need for a paradigm shift, a transformation in the church’s *missional* and *ecclesial* thinking and practice which goes beyond the notion of caring for migrants to caring *with* migrants; and move from compassion for strangers to compassion *of and with* strangers. Such a shift is best illustrated in the third parable, but first; let us bridge the gap between these two perspectives.

The second parable paints a scene where, just like in the first parable, a hundred strangers are searching for a place to stay and find themselves in the middle of a city. They see a large and comfortable hotel with all amenities. They have enough money

to pay for their bills, so they check in and stay. Their relationship with the hotel is a contractual one, they pay money in return for their services and will remain there for as long as they can afford to pay. The strangers in this second parable enjoy the freedom and equality which strangers in the first parable did not have, they are ‘*guests*’ and so is everyone, after all; they are entitled to what is worth their money. However, the only problem is that a hotel is “*a place where you stay, not where you belong. You don’t put down roots there; it doesn’t become your identity*” (Sacks, 2009). Although you can get to know other guests and relate with them, the hotel remains a place for ‘*strangers, sojourners*’ and not just for everyone; but only those who can afford to pay. In the wisdom of these parables, treating migrants as foreigners who need to be *hosted* in Johannesburg and South African communities is nothing but building ‘*society as a hotel, or guest house*’ this is unsustainable and we need to work towards building communities around Johannesburg societies as a *home*, to all who live in it.

The trajectory between integration and assimilation <sup>135</sup> (*host and home*) as demonstrated in these parables come clearly comes out on the third and most intriguing parable; one I consider to be a model for transformative shift towards appreciating the agency and role of migrants in church and society. This final parable casts a hundred strangers being met by the mayor, councilors and residents of the city to a ‘*warm welcome.*’ The mayor addresses them and explains that there is no town house (or hotel) to accommodate guests. However, the city leaders and residents have enough land to accommodate ‘*all people who wish to live in the city.*’<sup>136</sup> The city has town planners, engineers, builders and experts who can help all people (locals and newly arrived city dwellers) *work together* to design and build homes for the new citizens. *They do it together.* Unlike in the country house or hotel, the new comers have an equally important role to play in the development of the city; as responsible

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<sup>135</sup> The dictionary uses words like ‘take in and understand, absorb and incorporate,’ to define the word assimilate. And employs combine, make accepted to refer to integrate. The terms do not seem to have a very clear distinction and are sometimes used interchangeably. For purposes of this study, I will consider assimilation to be a stronger word with emphasis on mutuality and equality so that integration will imply hosting migrants while assimilation entails them being at home. Given that migrants are already in Johannesburg (hosted) and the government has integrated them in various communities, there is a need to assimilate them (home) something that will require more time and concerted efforts.

<sup>136</sup> This is the researcher’s emphasis. Sacks (2009) speak of accommodating ‘all guests.’ The intention is to make researcher’s voice heard towards a theology of migration based on the findings from this study.

citizens, they have to invest their energy/resources and work alongside the locals to build their own houses. Newly arrived citizens play an active role, and get an opportunity to work with their fellow citizens as they build a permanent dwelling place. In the context of hostilities in contested spaces and *competition* around Johannesburg, this model of integration provides an alternative way of living and *working together*<sup>137</sup> in an environment where there is room and a place for all (*tolerance*) including the marginalized and strangers who are in the city searching for better lives and longing to belong (*identity*).

This concept of understanding what it means to be '*home*' for migrants who have moved into new communities resonates well with the model of Jeremiah 29:2; where the Lord spoke '*to all those carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.*'

Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Mary and have sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease (Jeremiah 29:5-6 NIV).

This Jeremiah model fits well within the proposed transformative model form the parable. The above construction of *transnational communities* may sound simplistic, as an alternative approach to the multiple challenges presented by contemporary human mobility; but it does provide a framework from which we can engage in the context of diversity and growing intolerance in communities such as Johannesburg. Indeed, these challenges are very complex and as Sacks has also rightly observed, building such an ideal society as '*home*' for everyone, won't always be easy as it will require commitment and concerted efforts:

The newcomers still occasionally seem strange. They speak and act and dress differently than the locals. But those long sessions of working together have had their effect. The locals know the newcomers are serious, committed, dedicated. They have their own ways, but they have also learned the ways of the people of the town, and they have worked out . . . a rough and ready friendship. . . Making something together

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<sup>137</sup> Interestingly, 'working together' is a brand theme for the ANC led government. It is duped, working together, we can more. Therefore, the proposed transformational model is compatible with the government policies and programmes that are already implemented in communities. This presents a window of opportunities for partnerships.

breaks down walls of suspicion and misunderstanding. . . That is society as the home we build together (Sacks, 2009:15).

The analogy of a Mayor, town planners and engineers in the last parable demonstrates that political will and leadership from the City fathers is a critical component in addressing the challenges that cities like Johannesburg face. It will not always be easy especially for the ordinary citizens as “[n]ew comers bring with them ideas, customs, and traditions that may be unfamiliar to their host communities” (Speilhaus in Suarez, 2008:70). For Speilhaus, one of the most visible symbols of these traditions is a house of worship where migrants gather to retain their sense of identity and pass on their culture to the next generation. In the light of this symbolic significance of the construction of houses of worship, he argues that building of mosques in Europe has become controversial because houses of worship have powerful symbolic value. Religious identity is therefore one of the means through which migrants retain contact with their cultural values from the homelands. As Speilhaus also puts it; “[n]ew houses of worship are public reminders that new comers intend to stay” (in Suarez, 2008:70).

In a book<sup>138</sup> on the struggles experienced by Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong Cruz (2010:6) echoes similar sentiments about religious experience for migrants:

Religious discourse and religious means provide the domestic workers the much-needed courage, hope, and faith in the struggle. Religious services, for instance, provide spiritual strength, solace, and a link to the homeland. Religious groups and/or fellowships are established as instruments for forming ties between old and new societies, and to help them (domestic workers) deal with and/or resist the ambiguities, discontinuities, and difficulties, that arise from being Filipino women migrant domestic workers.

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<sup>138</sup> This book explores the dynamics of an intercultural theology of migration as illustrated in the theological possibilities, relevance, and challenges of the struggle of the Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong and aims to detect, describe, and explore the theological relevance of this salient role of religion that is woven into the dialectic between oppression and liberation in the struggle of the Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong in view of identifying the features of a theology that arises from their struggle.

Like the Filipino women, migrants will always rely on their spirituality as means to cope with the challenges they face in Johannesburg and local South Africans will have to accept that migrants were brought into Johannesburg in the past to work in the mines and that makes the City a home we started together during the gold-rush epoch and the City will continue to be “*a home we build together, ikhaya esilakha sonke (Zulu)*,” to use the concept constructed from the parables above. For example, the fact that the South African post-apartheid immigration laws now grant permanent resident status to migrants, allows migrants to own properties and buy houses and this should send a clear reminder to local South Africans that some migrants and their families are here to stay.

### ***5.2.6 A transnational God for transnational identities and communities***

The transformation of South African communities into home (*ikhaya*) for all as the study has suggested above, is only possible if the transnational nature of God is understood in the light of the emerging *transnational communities*. It is through acknowledging and embracing diversity that participants in this study were able to express their understanding of God, and celebrated diversity as a gift which helps them discover the enriching experiences that come with crossing of boundaries. As one participant rightly pointed out;

*...diversity helps us to understand that God is universal, (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).*

By realising how diversity helps them to understand God, respondents demonstrated a view that God is *transnational* and transcends all boundaries, bringing people across nations and making it possible that they live together as family in a shared home (*oikos*). This demonstrates that the experience of migration shapes the images of God in the lives of migrants and thereby enriches theological reflection. The Christian God is not just a God who is confined to a particular place/space, but he is everywhere; moving with people even across borders and sustaining all life.



When participants indicated that *'the same God they are bringing from Cameroon is the same God whom we are worshipping here, same God for a person who has come from Zimbabwe'* (Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015), they expressed a sense of acknowledging and embracing diversity as a God given gift reflecting his *universality or transnational nature*. For them, coming together from different nations is symbolic of the kingdom of God through which he gathers all nations across borders and cultures. The Bible is rich with texts describing God's actions in this way, for example the following scriptures all point to the day when God will gather all his people together;

*I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Johashaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land (Joel 3:2).*

*And he shall set up an ensign for all nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth (Isaiah 11:12).*

These biblical texts reflect the vision of the people of God coming together through shared identity, that which transcends their nationalities. For the participants in this study, being Presbyterian also brought another common element in their identity of a transnational community drawn together to be a family that worships a God who knows no boundaries. Through Christ, migrants see themselves as bound together and share common values such as love, forgiveness and a call to live in unity and peace with one another;

*...we are able to share together the common love that Christ died for all of us and that love binds us all together as human beings,..and we belong to the family of God* (Focus group participant Yeoville, 26 April 2015).

Raising questions around transnationalism Zan Abdullah (2012:8) asks;

Is the concept best served when we examine large-scale operations of multinational corporations and powerful international agencies? Or is it best illustrated among

migrants involved in grassroots politics or even elite individuals operating in local settings? While the former is what some may term as transnationalism from above, the latter may be considered as transnationalism from below.

Abdullah employs scholars like Michael Peter Smith and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo to argue for a midway approach or, and draws on Peggy Levitt's 'community-level analysis' as a link between "above" and "below", "high" and "low", or "macro" and "micro" to show the diverse views regarding the concept. Notwithstanding these arguments, he asserts that "transnationalism from below is a useful way of thinking through the various ways (*both micro and meso*) African Muslims are redefining race and religion in a Western context, and how they reconfigure urban space from the ground up"(Abdullah, 2012:8). Although his focus was on Muslim communities, distinctions are important in the development of a transnational theology of migration in an African context.

*I don't have many South uh Ghanaians friends and the few that I used to have they did not consider me as Ghanaian because they said I look too South African...it's confusing but I would say that I'm more South African than Ghanaian (Interview with Ruth, 27 April 2015).*

To be a migrant living in one country and having a family in another country can be 'confusing' to the migrants' identity as some participants pointed out. This is 'transnationalism from below' and this identity crisis depicts the complexities of the locally lived experiences of migrants as they leverage links with other localities. It is an illustration of how people not only maintain ties that span nations but also how they create links that foster "translocalities," in pursuance of improved livelihoods, as opposed to accumulation of wealth for an elite few served by the interests of large-scale operations of multinational corporations and powerful international agencies. This leads to the exploration of theologies of migration in the sections that follow, but first, a brief overview of the gender dimensions of migration in the context of South Africa and African traditional practices.

### ***5.2.7 Theological engagement with gender and migration (pastoral/practical)***

In traditional African culture, most men are expected to provide for their families while women stay at home to look after the children. These practices are now changing because of the changing dynamics on the global economies which demand greater presence of both the male and female workers in order to meet the increasing cost of financing the home budgets. Therefore an increasing number of women are entering the national and global labour market. Such a shift from the traditional roles between men and women creates an ethical dilemma for families who have to spend more time separated. This introduces a gender dimension on the experience of migration, with increased gender disparities at work places remaining a challenge. One female participant observed during the interviews that her gender identity does impact negatively on job opportunities and how much she could earn as an employee:

*I'm a female...even if I work hard I may not be accepted as much as a man would be accepted into a company...and on the other hand being a foreign national that just is worse* (Interview with Ruth, 27 April 2015).

Clearly, as the statement cited above reflects, Ruth is aware that as a female migrant she may have to work harder to compete with males in the job market and also facing the prospects of being rejected by companies on the basis of her gender and nationality. As a *'female foreigner,'* Ruth's sentiments bring our attention to a perspective which demonstrates a double-dimension to the encounters that female migrants experience in society and at work places in Johannesburg. Being female makes most migrants more vulnerable as they are easily susceptible to sexual and gender based abuse.

The intersection between gender and migration needs some deeper theological reflection as it finds connectivity with the biblical narratives about the early history of Israel's nomadism and pastoralism. The Israelites fought wars with tribal groups in search for better grazing land for their cattle. In Genesis 28-29 we are told that Jacob *"went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the east"* (Gen 29:1)

where he joins his uncle Laban and latter marries his daughters Leah and Rachel. This fascinating encounter with Laban is cast from the well where the flocks of sheep lay in wait *'for the stone to be rolled, for it was large, and when all flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep'* (Gen 29:3). We learn that when Rachel came with her father's sheep, *'for she was a shepherdess'*<sup>139</sup> (Gen 29:9), Jacob was presented with an opportunity to roll the stone and water the flocks of Laban.

It is this *'shepherdess'* nature of the minder of sheep that presented Jacob with an opportunity to assist Rachel at the well and ultimately introduces him to Laban. Like Ruth who participated in the study a *'female foreigner,'* who moves along her male migrant companions in search for jobs and a better life around Johannesburg, Rachel is presented as a female within the male dominated field of shepherds. Somehow, she is not confined within the homestead because of her *'femaleness'* but she is free to perform all duties including those that extend beyond the safety and comfort of home. This represents a changing landscape in the face of intensified human mobility where women are now active beyond the traditional roles. The South African experiences of the African migrants that were identified in this study also attested to this phenomenon of the challenges that female migrants face in their struggle for fullness of life.

In Africa men are known to provide human power for challenging tasks in communities, hence the popular term *"manpower"* (sic). It is always assumed that the presence of more man and women will enlighten the burden of work in the fields. Growing up in the rural community of *Ntabazinduna* outside Bulawayo in Zimbabwe, there were work related gatherings in communities (*ilima*) where beer and food will be prepared by a household that needed assistance in tilling the land. People would gather in the field in great numbers and complete the task that could have taken one

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<sup>139</sup> Although the New American version refers to her as 'shepherdess,' it is important to mention that some Bible versions refer to her as 'shepherd' or just say, 'for she kept the sheep.' The emphasis on *'shepherdess'* is a deliberate theological agenda to unmask the gender dimensions of the Biblical encounters between males and females on the move. In this text, the blood relationship between Jacob and Rachel made it possible for them to relate with ease; 'because Rachel was his cousin', (Gen 29:9).

family weeks to do, within a day and after working from morning until lunch time, the afternoon will be spent feasting and drinking together.

Drawing from the Bible and our African traditional values, is one way in which the presence of migrants can be positively seen in the South African communities. Migrants are here because they will help ‘*roll the stones*’ and provide much needed skills and additional human resources for the South African economy to grow. Based on the researcher’s experience of living in South Africa for the past eight years, there are jobs which most local South Africans are not prepared to take such as gardening, domestic work, and working in farms, hotels and restaurants. These industries are dominated by foreign migrants and participants in this study indicated that locals are not as good in providing these services as compared to foreigners, as one local South African participant pointed out;

*We tried to work with our South African people and it just wouldn’t work. The reason being people feel entitlement...the first thing that jumps into their mind is money, what can they get out of you, and it just destroys the value system* (Participant of Focus group discussion, 30 Aug 2015).

For a local South African to say; ‘*it just wouldn’t work,*’ is a clear indication that some South African employers appreciate that foreigners are more reliable in providing services than local South Africans, therefore there is a need to probe these claims further. However, there is a global trend among the developed economies of the world to rely heavily on cheap migrant labour alongside the highly skilled personnel attracted from overseas. For example the struggles experienced by Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong in Cruz (2010:6) demonstrate how religious networks are used by migrant domestic workers:

Religious groups and/or fellowships are established as instruments for forming ties between old and new societies, and to help them (domestic workers) deal with and/or resist the ambiguities, discontinuities, and difficulties, that arise from being Filipino women migrant domestic workers.

Similar to the Filipino women, female migrants in Johannesburg rely on their spirituality as means to cope with the challenges they face. Given that some local citizens in most developed countries are selective in employment opportunities, who would be pruning those crops in the fields if migrants were not there? Who would be washing those plates and cleaning those rooms in hotels and public places if it was not for the migrants? Although foreign migrants experience exploitation and abuses as a result of lack of proper documentation in most developed economies, it should be acknowledged that they contribute to the social and economic development of their host communities. Such an understanding of the experience of migration will help in the development of gender sensitive approaches to the complex challenges related to the lived experiences of migrants.

Notwithstanding these gender dimensions of migration, the contention of this study is that there is a need for an alternative understanding of the experience of migration, one that acknowledges that migrants have an important role to play in the developmental agenda while paying attention to the vulnerability of female migrants; we need a gender sensitive approach to migration. For example, the new requirements for un-abridged birth certificates and affidavits for minors leaving and entering South Africa<sup>140</sup> mean that women can no longer travel easily with children unless consent has been obtained from their husbands (or fathers of the children, in the case of single mothers). This presents new challenges in the struggle for survival quality of life for African women coming to South Africa or leaving the country, given that in the African culture most children are always in the company of their mothers or other women within the extended family. There are fewer men who travel with children, and laws regulating the care of children in most African countries, grant women the custody of children unless there are extreme circumstances where the mother is deemed irresponsible.

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<sup>140</sup> From June 2015 the South African department of Home Affairs brought into effect a law which requires that all children below the age of 18 should travel with birth certificates which show the names of both parents. Further to that, in cases where one of the parents is travelling with children, they should produce an affidavit and copies of the Identity Documents confirming the consent of the parent who is not travelling with them.

African traditional roles consider women to be primary care givers to children and this implies that there are additional burdens to women on the move (the majority of them abandoned by their husbands or widowed) as they have to make arrangements for children left at home or meet the demanding requirements of travelling across borders with their children. God cares about orphans and widows and the Bible states that, “*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself (sic) unspotted from the world*” (James 1:27).

Given the increasing numbers of women fleeing wars and poverty and searching for better living conditions, there is a need for innovative intervention strategies to counter the current migration policies which diminish survival quality of life strategies for women. Single mothers also seek to survive in the face of economic hardships and instead of supporting their struggles; the South government has developed policies that have failed them ‘*in many ways*’ and according to one participant in this study; all leaders are responsible;

*I want to say the church has failed in many ways and our leaders, our politicians as well, our community leaders also have failed in many ways*  
(Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).

By pointing out that ‘*leaders also have failed in many ways*’ the participant lamented the loss of the African spirit of hospitality to strangers and the traditional care accorded for women and the most vulnerable in society. In the past African men went out to work while women stayed at home to look after the children and elderly, the changing landscape in the face of increased global migration presents a new phenomenon in which more women have to fend for themselves in a context where host communities are becoming more hostile and intolerant towards strangers. This signals a shift from the traditional norms and demands innovation towards interventions which will ensure that the selected congregations match the task of creating life giving and sustainable communities, and ensuring that congregations are

welcoming and safe spaces for migrants (especially women and children) in Johannesburg.

William Dolores' *'womanist God talk'*, (1993:927 in Cruz 2010) is a theology of survival quality of life premised on African traditional practices and the unmasking of the problematic interpretations and wrongful reliance on the cross and atonement. It is Dolores' themes on survival strategies, particularly how women develop and use such strategies to govern their lives according to their mother's counsel (what they have been taught back home), and the search for religion, that demonstrate resistance activities among migrant women. She chronicles how during slavery, the mothers passed on the "doctrine of resistance" embodied in the doctrine: "Fight and if you can't fight, kick: if you can't kick then bite." According to her, African mothers still pass on the doctrine of resistance today in the form of particular and consistent advice or words of wisdom, e.g. that they would have "nobody in the world to look up to but God"<sup>141</sup> The purpose of highlighting these concepts here is to underscore the theological significance of gender dimensions of migration in Africa, the study will unpack this theology in the section on theologies of migration.

### **5.3 AFRICAN CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS AND UBUNTU - AS A RESOURCE DURING THE EXPERIENCE OF MIGRATION**

The attempt to develop a contextual theology of migration should also take approaches that have been developed in African theologies into consideration, as Orobator, S.J. (2005:74) spells them out in summary below;

A critical reading of major texts of African ecclesiology reveals the shared presupposition of African theologians that the elaboration of a valid African

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<sup>141</sup> According to Cruz, (2010) footnote no 50, Williams speaks of what her own mother and grandmother passed on to her: "Wear a smile on your face, a prayer on your lips and hope in your heart." Williams, "Spiritual mentors: 'Keep on climbing up,'" *The Christian Century* Vol. 110, No. 27 (1993): 927.



ecclesiology depends on the retrieval of African traditional concepts and values. These are then co-related with received notions of the church (derived mostly from ecclesiastical statements and documents) in a theological process known as “inculturation.” From this process emerges an ecclesiological concept with an African colour or flavour (Orobator, 2005:74).

Considering that the process of developing a theology of migration has to be both contextual and intercultural, this implies that the existential condition of the migrants and their cultural values as Africans, are at the core of reflection, it is for this reason that the concept of communal life and *ubuntu* are explored below.

In attempting to develop a contextual theology of migration based on African values and concepts it is important to briefly highlight the African concept of communal life which is based on an African worldview which places emphasis on “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” (lit: ‘a person is a person because of other people’), a construction that views people not as individuals, but individuals only in relationship to the community and the world of nature around them. The word *ubuntu* basically means humanity and for purposes of this study, the concept refers to the unity of the human, spiritual and material worlds shared by a community whose lives and world exist in relation to one another. Such a relationship places emphasis on dignity and respect of humanity and all creation as Dion Foster (2010:82) has noted;

The essential unity between self and others, as well as the self and the entire Kosmos, is a vitally important aspect in relating the African world view to an integrated approach to consciousness (Foster, 2010:82).

Some scholars however, have criticised the lack of a proper understanding of humanity from an African perspective accusing the “whites” for failing “to see that in Africa a human being is an entity, not in the first instance divided up into various sections such as the physical body, the soul and spirit. When a Zulu is sick it is the

whole man that is sick, his physical as well as his spiritual being that is affected (Berglund, 1976:82 in Foster 2010).

Hence, scholars like Makhudu (1993:40) have underscored the significance of the ethics of '*ubuntu*' in the enterprise of developing identity in African communities, consider beliefs to be an integral part of African life; pointing out,

“[e]very facet of African life is shaped to embrace Ubuntu as a process and philosophy which reflects the African heritage, traditions, culture, customs, beliefs, value system and the extended family structures.”

For scholars like Kadadjie and Osei (2004:35 in Foster 2010) an African worldview has no single view of God in relation to the Universe although there is a predominant understanding that all that exists comes from the Supreme Being; it is God who sustains and provides for the created order through elements of sunshine, rain, fertility, good health and all needs for life. In this, migrants would consider job opportunities, safety and peace to be among the thing that God provides in his supreme nature, as these elements constitute what sustain good health in their lives.

The universe itself “comprising both seen and unseen reality (spirit beings, human beings, plants, animals, mountains, waters, stellar bodies, and all) is a whole, a community with symbolic influences and relationships. It is also commonly believed that, through the laws of nature and various spiritual forces, as well as human customs and institutions, God sustains and upholds the world. Thus, he maintains an orderly and harmonious world so that all can perform their own duties in it (Kudadjie & Osei 2004:36 in Foster, 2010).

Although this attempt is limited to the theology and not Christology of migration, a brief reference to the African Christology will help identify the overlaps in the formulation of a theology of migration. Suffice to say in an African world view, there

is a strong conviction that God ultimately controls the universe but ancestors and spirit powers take part in the governance and administration of the natural order and human affairs (Mbiti, 1990:40). Charles Nyamiti is one of the scholars accredited with an African Christological formulation which views Jesus Christ as an ancestor, a concept in which the spirits of elderly African departed are considered to be mediators between God and living family members of the departed. As Forster (2010) observes;

In order to maintain harmony in creation, one must seek to show respect to all living things (both those that are seen, and those that are not seen), that is, all of the created order (human being plants, animals) and the unseen world (the ancestors and spirit beings as well as God). At times it would be necessary to for a person, or group of persons, to perform some ritual action to restore the equilibrium in creation, or to influence or change a state of affairs (i.e. to seek healing , or prosperity, to ask for blessing, or guidance etc. (Kudadjie & Osei 2004:37 in Foster, 2010).

One of the participants in this study noted the role played by the concept of *ubuntu* in the development of lives for the Africans and cited unity among historical political figures as a major strength that was visible in the fight against colonialism and oppression in Africa and lamented the absence of these values in the new generation of Africans.<sup>142</sup>

*when the world is speaking about social cohesion and when Africa is speaking about ubuntu it is the two things which I have never seen since I came to South Africa, why because our grand-fathers, historical fathers like Mandela like Nkrumah, like Nyerere, like Patrice Lumumba, those people were able to stand even to liberate their countries because of the spirit of ubuntu, they didn't see themselves like South Africans or like Ghanaian they saw themselves as Africa, you see. But what I see*

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<sup>142</sup> To assume that these values are still integral in the lives of all the participants in this study will be indeed naïve since there are scholars who have alluded to the erosion of the African world view described above. Western culture, with its characteristics dominated by individualism is now dominant; particularly in urban cities like Johannesburg. Therefore these concepts are simply intended to be the basis for the formulation of a contextual framework for understanding the experiences of African migrants in Johannesburg.

*today in South Africa in Johannesburg it's not that spirit, it's something else* (Abdul, Focus group participant, 30 Aug, 2015).

Therefore, *Ubuntu* is an invaluable resource and a profound contribution to the world in seeking human and just solutions to contemporary challenges. Attention will be paid to these above notions in my attempt towards an African theology of migration. There are limitations to these African formulations and constructions because for example, although Mbiti and his generation of African Theologians have been accredited for affirming the theological role played by African cultural values and identities in understating Christianity in Africa;

They were accused for lack of critical engagement with this construct of African culture...One major criticism was that this generation paid no serious attention to the plight of African women as the African man was as the one whose personhood had been robbed by colonialism. It was accused of perpetuating sexist constructions of personhood armed with the bible and African culture (Mtata, 2011:23).

In addressing the limitations of these African constructions of personhood that initially ignored experiences of women and children, the study employed the insights of an African American womanist, Dolores Williams whose “powerful critique of the biblical, social, cultural and the political constraints about the nature of God and what such ideas about God mean for human agency and human relating” (in Cruz, 2010) offer a gender sensitive approach to the experience of migration in an African context.

#### **5.4 THEOLOGIES OF MIGRATION: SURVIVAL QUALITY OF LIFE AND MARGINALITY**

The literature review section highlighted that a contextual theology of migration must be rooted within the experiences of migrants themselves; it must begin with the condition of migration and be in solidarity with the migrants. Scholars like Robert

Schreiter (2003) proposed this contextual method and argued that the experiences of the migrants should be at the centre of theological reflection and provided approaches toward exploring a theology of and for migration and immigration. Similarly, Peter Phan (2008) and Jorge Calisto (in Kerwin and Gerschutz, 2009) suggested that migration is one of the essential sources of an intercultural theology and proposed both method and resources for this reflection and the study noted that following these observations, a few themes have been explored towards a theology of migration.

De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio (1994:35) also pointed out that;

Central to the task of constructing a contextual theology therefore, is local theology: the scattered reflections by local base communities, which are the way they think about the meaning and significance of their faith in relation to the struggles and hopes of their daily lives, and the practices which communicate these reflections (De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, 1994:35).

Constructing a contextual theology is local theology and Killen and De Beer (1997:1) suggested that theological reflection involves a dialogue between the heritage of Christian tradition and the experiences of people that “invites us to reflect” through our experience and ask questions for clarification and understanding. In undertaking this theological task, this study proposed to use the work of Dolores Williams’ theology of survival quality of life and Young Lee’s observations that living on the margins for migrants implies that they are socially and economically excluded from their communities, as a hermeneutical framework for reflecting on the lived experiences of migrants. The following section is a theological reflection on the concepts that emerged from the data through the lens of key themes from Dolores Williams’ theology of *Survival quality of life* and the overarching concept of Jung Lee’s theology of *Marginality*, as a hermeneutical path towards developing a contextual theology of migration.

Dolores Williams' method of theological reflection has been deeply explored in the literature section where we highlighted themes that inform her thinking. It has been noted that as an African American, Dolores Williams' thought offered a gender sensitive approach to the experience of migration in an African context, something in between Black liberation and feminist theology through her "powerful critique of the biblical, social, cultural and the political constraints about the nature of God and what such ideas about God mean for human agency and human relating."<sup>143</sup> Her thinking also offered alternative views "[a]gainst the traditional standards of the history of Christian thought"<sup>144</sup> as she made significant contributions to "expose and repair major cleavages between theory and method, faith and reason, race and gender, and history and culture in Black theological scholarship" (Stewart, 2004 in Cruz, 2010).

Similarly, Jung Young Lee's theology of Marginality has been outlined with the themes of *the marginal person*, *Jesus Christ as the margin for Marginality* and *the Church and Marginal Discipleship*. Having been a migrant himself in US, Lee had first-hand experience of how the prevailing views of multiculturalism were reinforcing racism and making him feel disoriented. He knew what it felt like being a stranger in the US due to language and cultural barriers and so explored "ethnicity and/or racial origin and cultural preference, which he believes are that most important determinants of immigrant marginality based on his experience, Lee adopted the term "marginality" and re-interpreted it from faith perspective" (Cruz, 2010:210). For him, marginality from a faith perspective has three dimensions; *In between, in both and in beyond*.

This section draws on the above notions to discuss the implications of the themes that emerged from the study with a view to demonstrating that for migrants, marginality and a search for human dignity are at the centre of their survival quality of life strategies.

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<sup>143</sup> See Joan Marie Terrell, "Something of God in Dolores Williams: Poet, Prophet, Premier womanist," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review: Festschrift for Dolores Williams Vol. 58, Nos. 3-4 (2004)*: 1 in Cruz (2010).

<sup>144</sup> Refer to Diane M. Stewart, "Womanist God- Talk on the Cutting Edge of Theology and Black Religious Studies: Assessing the Contribution of Dolores Williams Vol. 58, Nos. 3-4 (2004) in Cruz (2004)

### 5.4.1 *Quality of life*

Migrants' search for quality of life exposes them to shame and vulnerability as they face rejection and persecution in the host communities. As one participant observed;

*I'm being persecuted here as a foreigner but in the eyes of God when I'm here I feel safe...* (Colin, Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).

The above concept of *persecution* as expressed by the migrants, resonates with the experience of Jesus Christ who suffered and therefore his followers will interpret suffering through his experience; “*ye all that will live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution*” (2 Timothy 3:12). The suffering of African migrants, is symbolic of the Black church; whose identity is understood in the light of the *cross* and *atonement*. As a lens to gaze at the experience of migration; *persecution* and *suffering* experienced by migrants offers a transnational gaze towards a mystic understanding of intensified movement of people that seems to be growing an alarming rate.<sup>145</sup>

### 5.4.2 *Marginality*

Marginal Discipleship and the wilderness experience of African migrants should also be understood in the light of the experiences of Jesus Christ, who lived at the margins of society with no place to call his home. According to Luke (9:58); “*And Jesus said*

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<sup>145</sup> At the time of writing this thesis, (September 2015) the European Union was coordinating a unified response to the crisis of migrants that were fleeing wars in Syria, Libya, Afghanistan and some parts of the world where there is economic and political instability. A response, which was triggered by the alarming rates of deaths of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea and else-where, aims at addressing the plight of refugees and economic migrants who are risking their lives in search of security and better living conditions. This, just a few months after South Africa experienced a wave of xenophobic violence directed to foreign migrants in March, an indication that the crisis of migration is a global challenge that has not previously received the attention it deserves.

*unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man (sic) hath not where to lay his head”*

Jesus’ incarnation was divine emigration and this divinity demonstrates how Jesus became marginal by taking human form on the margins of society where he, like migrants also experienced *shame, vulnerability and even rejection*:

- 1). Conceived through an unwedded woman
- 2). Born in a secluded place, far from his town
- 3). Sheltered in a manger and denied dignified accommodation
- 4). Visited by Eastern wise men rather than the elite of his nation
- 5). Forced to escape into Egypt with his parents

Like African migrants, Jesus experienced homelessness, loneliness and rejection. He was a stranger (even to his own people), the marginal person and therefore, he embodies the experience of migrants. The role and image of Jesus as a Suffering Servant is essential to Jesus’ “*in-betweenness,*” and this implies that servanthood is a part of marginalization.

It follows that if Jesus and those he came to redeem are those living on the margins of society; the church is a *marginal community*, what Young Lee (Cruz, 2010:216) refers to as “*the community of God’s marginal people*” who draw inspiration from the *marginal* Jesus Christ. Like the children of Israel who endured oppression in Egypt (Exodus, 1:14), the church lives in the wilderness. The UPCSFA faith and order document states that, “*The Church is the pilgrim People of God, the Israel of God, journeying toward the fulfilment of God’s promise that in Abraham all nations of the earth will be blessed*” (The Manual of Faith and Order, section 22.4.)

Just like other themes addressed above, the concept of marginality resonates well with the experience of migration as most migrants in the study alluded to social and economic exclusion and ‘*living in fear*’ on the side-lines of society where they under constant xenophobic threats and experience rejection in host communities. The notion



of church as the marginal community of a transnational God offers an alternative gaze towards the formulation of a contextual theology of migration that transcends boundaries, bringing together all of God's people across nations, races and ethnic groups, as noted by participant in this study:

*Besides colour, besides race besides everything else, we are one people. God never created a foreigner, but in fact God says we are foreigners on this earth, we are moving we are supposed to go to our home in heaven of which we are supposed to start practising it here at church (Focus group male participant, 30 Aug 2015).*

### **5.4.3 Dignity**

*I am realising that in South Africa I'm nothing, I'm nothing what am I going to do (Interview with Don, 27 April 2015).*

As already indicated, the statement above demonstrates a sense of *hopelessness* and loss of human value or dignity. This study observed that migrants within the selected congregations constantly seek *recognition* for human dignity in the face of *shame vulnerability* and *fear*. Migrants have to contend for recognition of their human dignity, and experience discrimination and divisions within the church and society; despite the Scriptures teaching that human beings (both males and females) are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27) and are one in Christ Jesus;

For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many as you have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: For ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians, 3:26-28).

Human dignity is intrinsic to all human beings and is not accorded to individuals on the basis of their circumstances, nationality or status. In addressing the complex challenges related to contemporary migration, migrants within the selected congregations should be treated with the respect that they deserve as human beings.

Therefore, any mission-ecclesial activities of local congregations should seek to restore the human dignity of migrants and work towards church as a family of God for all people and provide safe space (*a home*) for the marginalised people in society, including African migrants. Such a task will require competent discipleship and sound theological reflections based on the experience of migration.

## **5.5 TOWARDS A CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY OF MIGRATION**

### ***5.5.1 Resistance as a survival strategy for migrants***

Williams' exposition of the experiences of black women explored surrogacy as Black women's oppression and she contends that the practice defiles Black women by taming, controlling and violating their bodies and undermining their sense of human dignity. Williams also pays attention to their struggle to survive, hence her theological reflections on survival quality of life; something she identifies as the basic character of Black women's lives. The contention of this study is that the lived experiences of migrants present a great challenge and undermines their sense of human dignity, particularly for women and children's status in most African communities as they are attached to their husband or father, whose surname they hold.

Even more revealing about their creativity for survival strategies in the face of migration challenges is the spirit of resilience and resistance; for example as demonstrated by a 19 year old female participant in this study as she pointed out;

*This is where I live, this is where I breathe, this is where I eat and sleep*  
(Ruth, 19 year old female participant, focus group and interview, 26 and 27  
April 2015).

Ruth was born in the Ivory Coast, of Ghanaian parents who brought her to South Africa at the age of five years, without proper immigration documents. She has been struggling to secure an official identity document without success but she declared

that Johannesburg is her home and that she has no other place that she knows as home: “*this is where I live....eat...and sleep.*” In other words, the fact that she lives, eats and sleeps in Johannesburg is an act of defiance to the dominant paradigm and resistance to any forms of rejection and treatment which denies her the right to life and a safe place to call home. She is not staying in a hotel (as a guest or at a townhouse) and therefore should not be treated as a guest or stranger. Rather, she lives in Johannesburg, South Africa, the home we built together, *ikhaya esalakha sonke*. This experience of migration from a female perspective demonstrates not just resistance and resilience, but also paints a picture of migration ‘through a struggle to survive without ‘proper’ documents in addition to the dehumanizing conditions characterized by living on the *margins* of society. As a *female migrant*, Ruth’s struggles with necessary documents or permits present a double-dimension to the lived experiences of migrants in Johannesburg. Such a context becomes a breeding ground for what Dolores Williams refers to as a “*doctrine of resistance*” (Cruz 2010:187).

The participants demonstrated this kind of resistance in a number of ways, for example this can also be observed in the statement cited from a male participant below;

*I’m not a fruit that fell from a tree and they must come and eat. I have a father, I have a mother, I have friends, I have a family, I have a country, and I have a home also. So people must not look us like I’m coming from nowhere, I didn’t fall from a tree* (Sam, Focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).

By declaring, “*I’m not a fruit that fell from a tree and they must come and eat,*” Sam also demonstrated some kind of resistance to the dehumanising practices that migrants endure in Johannesburg. He expressed a struggle for survival and quality of life in a context of *rejection* and *marginalisation*. It is also a struggle for *recognition*, *human dignity* and search for *identity*. For Sam, the message to corrupt officials who demand bribes from foreigners in Johannesburg is that migrants are ‘*not a fruit that fell from a tree*’ harvested when ready; they are human beings with a human dignity (created in the image of God) and like local South Africans, they have families here and back in

their home countries. So they cannot continue to use their hard earned money to bribe corrupt officials; instead, they also want to use their hard earned money to make a living. Therefore, all forms of social and economic injustices directed to migrants should be exposed and addressed by the relevant authorities, in line with human rights requirements and instruments governing the international movement of migrants and refugees.

These profound statements demonstrate the resistance, resilience and creativity of migrants in their struggles to survive in Johannesburg. According to Williams (Cruz, 2010:188), resistance has continued to be a part of the Black people's lives even beyond slavery. For example, she cites domestic workers' resistance strategies which include refusing to stay overnight in their employers' homes; taking frequent breaks during the day to check things at their own homes; taking food and other things from their employers arguing that this rightfully belonged to them, refusing to enter through the back or kitchen door; and resisting any kind of discipline their employers tried to impose on them.<sup>146</sup> Williams refers to these practices as "*doctrines of resistance*." For her, Black women's survival strategies display their skills of creativity through three forms of art; an art of encounter (involving resistance and endurance), an art of cunning (with use of skill and imagination), and an art of care (manifested in commitment and charity), and an art of connecting (demonstrated through networking).

When African migrants cross South African borders without visas and passports, search for jobs without identity documents and evade the police in their daily struggles to survive, there must be a distinction between people who commit crime and genuine migrants searching for a quality of life. In the wisdom of the skills and creativity noted above, migrants should not be bundled together in the category of criminals or so called 'illegal' immigrants. Instead, Williams' motif of "*doctrines of resistance*" helps us to appreciate that migrants seek to survive and they view their experiences in the light of a God who sees them through their struggles as they pursue

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<sup>146</sup> Dolores Janiewski, *Sisters Under the Skins: Southern Working Women, 1880-1950*," in Hine, *Black Women in the United States History* vol. 3, 737-8 cited in Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 128.

quality of life. Such acts of creativity are displayed in their skills through the following:

- Crossing borders through undesignated places without being detected
- Moving across borders without passports and/ visas and ability to negotiate bribes when necessary
- Seeking job opportunities without identity documents
- Sometimes using false identity to evade police detection

These are but efforts to make a living, and they demonstrate their skills of creativity through three forms of art identified by Williams as; an art of encounter, an art of cunning, and an art of care, and an art of connecting. Therefore, branding all such activities as criminal is to fail to appreciate the structural, political and economic forces that condemn most poor people to a life on the *margins* of society, struggling to survive. Just like the armed liberation movements used all means necessary to fight colonialism and oppression in Africa, poverty is one enemy that is yet to be defeated and people will resort to all means necessary to battle it. Such a battle presents society with an ethical dilemma, one where there will always be a challenge to draw a line between the legal and illegal, documented and undocumented in circumstances where people are fleeing poverty and not stealing or threatening any life.

The above observation on the ethical dilemmas that the complex challenges of migration presents to the church, can also be seen in the example of Abdul, in the statement; *“I decided to come to church but even coming to church I had to hide. Even going out I must hide, I have to make sure that no one can see me,* (Abdul, Focus group participant, 30 August 2015). Abdul has to hide his Christian identity among his Muslim brothers and also make sure they do not see him come in or out of church on Sundays. The definition of the church given by the UPCSAs asserts that;

The Church is the Family of God. All people born of the Spirit are children of the Father and so brothers and sisters of Christ and of one another. (UPCSA, Manual of Faith and Order, Section 22.5).

So being a Christian and a member of the UPCSA congregation implies becoming a part of the family of God and in fellowship, not just with the Father through the Son, but also with one another as we are brothers and sisters in Christ, the Family of God. Unfortunately for Abdul, or to use his words, “*bad enough*,” he is not just a Christian, but also Somali. For him, being a good brother requires maintaining good relations with all his family members, Muslim and Christian. But because the family is so diverse and some members may not understand him, he must be creative in order to survive in that context and ensure quality of life; such an enterprise will require a survival strategy.

So Abdul must hide his Christian identity so that he will not lose ties and support from his people from Somalia. Simultaneously, he must keep his Christian faith growing and that requires fellowship with other Christians. The statement, “*bad enough I’m Somalian and Christian*,” implies that he is aware of the cost he has to pay for being a Somalian (a country predominantly Muslim) and find himself living with other Somalis but having converted to Christianity. So for him, using the strategy of hiding his Christian identity allows him to live within the community of his fellow Muslim brothers. Therefore, when he practices his Christianity in hiding this is not hypocrisy<sup>147</sup> or the denial of his faith; it is a doctrine of resistance, a skill and imagination that ensures him the quality of life as he stays connected with family while he is in Johannesburg.

It is in such revelations that the experience of migration takes an interesting and challenging dimension; what does it mean for one to live among Muslims and be a confessing Christian in a multi-plural context riddled with intolerance such as Johannesburg? For Abdul, maintaining ties with people from home (who happen to be Muslim) and at the same time remain loyal to the Christian God who has called us

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<sup>147</sup> In most cases people who tend to hide their Christian identity are live what is contrary to Christian teaching are labelled hypocrites. Oxford dictionary defines hypocrite as a person who pretends to have higher standards or beliefs than is the case. I am making this emphasis to point that Abdul’s actions should not be interpreted in the light of this, but should be understood within the context of his migration and faith experience.

into fellowship with him<sup>148</sup> and one another; will surely require skills which do not come naturally, hence creativity and the hiding techniques that demonstrate artistic skills identified by Williams as an art of encounter, an art of cunning, and an art of care, and an art of connecting.

Social networks also play an important part in the lives of migrants. By maintaining ties and developing networks or channels to survive and send money back home, migrants creatively develop survival strategies. Surviving difficult conditions in perilous journeys and living on the margins of communities in host countries is a part of the sacrifices they make for their families left back home; who rely on them for financial support. With or without documents, they are able to survive and stay in touch, not just with one another but with their loved ones back in home countries.

As the study noted, migrants in Johannesburg see in their struggle and situation, the presence of God through Jesus Christ who also escaped persecution and became a migrant baby in Egypt (Matthew 2). The story of Moses as described in Exodus 1-2) also confirmed how his migrant parents had to conceal him in a basket by the River Nile as a method of securing his life. Similarly, when Africans cross the Mediterranean sea, fleeing wars and poverty to get into Europe, they too are searching for better lives and they too “see in the Jesus’ story their own story: he opens up a reason to hope despite the most hopeless of circumstances.”<sup>149</sup> Therefore resistance from poverty, hunger or exploitation and survival strategies employed in the search for a quality life is the basis on which the theology of the people on the move emerges.

These are deeply spiritual matters, real struggles for real people in search of a better and abundant life promised by Jesus to his followers; “*The thief cometh not, but for to*

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<sup>148</sup> Fellowship with God is very easy to maintain privately. In fact, according to Mathew 6:6, Christians are encouraged to pray to God privately, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly (Matthew 6:6, King James Version Application Study Bible, Tyndale House Publishers).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 29.

*steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10).* This is a theology of migration born out of the experience of being a migrant. It reflects God's wisdom and demonstrates how God faithfully responds to the prayers of his people, the *marginalised* as they creatively navigate the unjust socio-economic and political systems that condemn them to poverty on the margins of society.

A document entitled, *The Oikos Journey*, which focuses on a theological reflection on the economic crisis in South Africa prepared by the Diakonia Council of Churches (2006:34) identifies three levels at which the church can respond to the challenges in society and lists them as follows;

- Churches need to reflect on how God acts to promote justice in creation and in human society
- We as churches are called to create safe spaces for and become agents of transformation even as we are entangled in and complicit with the very system we are called to change and notes that;
- Resistance is important, but it is not enough. New visions are needed to support new rules, articulated by people themselves and backed by ethical challenges formulated by social movements and churches, before there can be genuine change.

*'Resistance is important, but it is not enough,'* so when migrants move into the selected congregations in Johannesburg, the congregations should create safe spaces and become agents of transformation and embrace new visions to support new rules, articulated by migrants themselves. A theology of migration is one that will move the church into action, as doctrines of resistance thrive, they stimulate mission engagement and chart a new way of understanding the community called church, a new community which brings people from the margins and identifies with them as the central agents for a vision of the fullness of life. During the apartheid era in South Africa the churches were a meeting place against colonialism and apartheid.



Therefore the post-Apartheid church must continue to take sides with the oppressed and marginalized people and be the voice to express their full humanity towards the attainment and recognition of their human dignity.

### ***5.5.2 Migrants at the margins of society but constituting centre of theology***

By focusing on the realisation that the lived experiences of migrants depict the reality of the pilgrim church, a people on the move, our theological reflections can be enriched and we can discover alternative ways of being family in transnational communities. By exploring the concept of home the study reflected on three parables about a hundred strangers and the last parable demonstrated how the mayor, councilors and residents of the city greeted the strangers to a *'warm welcome'* and called on *'all people who wish to live in the city'* to *'work together'* with town planners, engineers, builders and experts to design and build homes for the new citizens. Emphasis was made on the fact that *'they do it together'* and unlike the strangers in the country house or hotel, the new comers have an equally important role to play in the development of the city. On drawing inferences, the study suggested that the concept of understanding what it means to be home for migrants who have moved into new communities resonates with the model of Jeremiah 29:5-6; where the Lord spoke *'to all those carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon'* (vs 2) and exhorted them to;

Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease (Jeremiah 29:5-6 NIV).

It is also argued that in the context of hostilities in contested spaces and *competition* around Johannesburg, this model of integration provides an alternative way of living and working together in an environment where there is room and a place for all (*tolerance*) including the marginalized and strangers who are in the city searching for better lives and longing to belong.

In Zulu the term home, is '*ikhaya*' which derives from the Greek '*oikos*' meaning household. *Ikhaya* denotes belonging, safety, comfort, security, health, peace, prosperity and freedom in an environment where basic needs like food, accommodation, clean water and clothing are met. The Greek word '*oikos*' has its roots from the word ecology; the branch of biology which is concerned with the relation of organisms to one another and to their surroundings. The home we build together should be the African communal *ikhaya* where everybody feels welcome to belong and where human relations with one another and the surroundings point to "an ideal society where all people live together in harmony" (Mandela Rivonia Trial Speech) not just with one another, but with all of creation. Such an environment ensures equal opportunities for all and this is *the home we build together*, '*ikhaya esilakha Sisonke*' in Zulu.

The transformation of South African communities into home (*ikhaya*) for all is possible if we understand the transnational nature of God and see the emerging *transnational communities* as an act towards God's Kingdom. Placing the lived experiences of migrants at the centre of theological reflection can enrich mission and provide alternative ways of being family in transnational communities and according to Keum (2013:15);

[m]ission from the margins seeks to counteract injustices in life, church, and mission. It seeks to be an alternative missional movement against the perception that mission can only be done by the powerful to the powerless, by the rich to the poor, or by the privileged to the marginalized...People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the centre, is out of view. People on the margins, living in vulnerable positions, often know what exclusionary forces are threatening their survival and can best discern the urgency of their struggles; people in positions of privilege have much to learn from the daily struggles of people living in marginal conditions (Keum, 2013:16).

This above observations on the situation of migrants presents the church as the marginal community of a transnational God who is active in a world characterised by plurality. And as Cruz (2010:216) notes;

The church, as the fellowship of marginal people, then becomes “the community of God’s marginal people. As a community of the marginal people of God, the church draws inspiration not only from Jesus-Christ as the margin of marginality. The Trinity also plays an important role, as it is paradigmatic of plurality, difference, and community-three values that are very important in Lee’s theological constructions on marginality (Cruz, 2010: 216).

### ***5.5.3 Church as a community of wounded healers***

*...we are a body of believers so we have the blood of Christ flowing through us and we should take care of each other* (Focus group participant Mayfair, 30 Aug 2015).

Firstly, the community of God’s marginal people is a community of the wounded. For migrants, these wounds are shown in their struggle to survive on the margins of society. When one of the participants says “*we are a body of believers so we have the blood of Christ flowing through us and we should take care of each other* (Focus group participant Mayfair, 30 Aug 2015) this speaks of the pain. Migrants associate the wounds that they have with those of their saviour Jesus Christ who was “*wounded for our transgressions*’ (Isaiah 53:5), hence the notion of ‘*his blood flowing through us*’ in the quotation cited above. His were physical wounds, as he was slain on the cross, but for migrants these wounds denote a sense of ‘uprootedness or displacement, economic poverty, anxiety about the future, and the loss of national identity, political freedom and personal dignity’ as their lived experiences.

If we read the above statement from the understanding that migrants are themselves the church, the phrase, ‘*we should take care of each other*’ takes a new dimension; it implies that wounded as they are, migrants ‘should heal each other.’ They are the

church and therefore if the church will provide any care or healing, it means migrants will have to be their own healers and carers. Help will not come from somewhere ‘*out there*’, but among themselves. This brings the idea of ‘creativity’ with which migrants leverage their survival quality of life strategies as the study demonstrated above. By resorting to all possible means to survive in Johannesburg, migrants are doing what is expected of the church, caring for each other through networks of the marginalised, and some of them have come to realise that they are the agents of their own change.

Secondly, migrants are aware of the fact that just as it took African leaders to unite against colonialism and apartheid, a struggle for *recognition* and *human dignity* in the face of *shame*, *vulnerability* and *competition* will also require unity and creativity beyond the ordinary. It will call for ‘cunning’ skills, something that may be labelled rebellious or illegal, but if it not criminal and guarantees better their lives, migrants will do it anyway as they consider this to be an act of God’s plan for them.<sup>150</sup> If migrants are wounded but do not have to wait for outsiders to provide care and support for them, then this changes the way we should read and interpret the scripture narrative of the good Samaritan story in Luke (10:25-37).

In a story which is popular with children, Jesus tells of a man who was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho as follows;

A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.<sup>31</sup> “By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. <sup>32</sup> A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> “Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. <sup>34</sup> Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took

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<sup>150</sup> Note that this idea does not include elements or activities that are deemed unlawful by way of being criminal such as thefts, robberies and other white collar crimes that exclude honesty and hard work. I refer to acts such as evading arrests, moving and working without the necessary documents.

him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.' 36 "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbour to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. 37 The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same." (Luke 10:30-37).

In this parable, it was the 'good Samaritan' who provided care to the man wounded by robbers on his way to Jericho. While others passed by, including the 'priest,' and the Levite, the Good Samaritan 'had compassion on him' and 'bound his wounds' before taking him for care into the inn. The lived experiences of migrants tell the different side of the story. Everyone is passing by including priests and local South Africans, who are talking of being '*too burdened*' by migrants. In the wake of a realisation that migrants are the church and have a role to play in changing their situation; they should not look for outside help especially in congregations where they are the majority. Wounded as they are, and living "*in-between*" and "*in-both*" spaces of host and home communities, migrants should heal one another. This is *the church as the marginal community of the wounded*, inspired by the experience of Jesus Christ as noted in Lee's theology in the statement summed up below;

Despite the painful experiences of being 'in-between,' and the intricacies as well as complexities of being "in-both," Jesus, indeed, also lived as reconciler. He broke down the walls between Jews and Gentiles, between men and women, between law and grace. He sought to bring wholeness. He healed the sick, restored sight of the blind, gave hearings to the deaf and speech to the dumb, helped the paralyzed to walk, offered fellowship to women and Gentiles, fed the poor, etc. As healer and reconciler, he pioneered the new marginality, i.e., "in-beyond' marginality (Cruz, 2010:215).

#### ***5.5.4 Faces without borders for a God without borders/boundaries***

The African understanding of humanity, "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" (lit: 'a person is a person because of other people') is a construction that views people not as

individuals, but individuals only in relationship to the community and the world of nature around them. This concept of “*ubuntu*” refers to the unity of the human, spiritual and material worlds shared by a community whose lives and world exist in relation to one another, and places emphasis on dignity and respect of humanity and all creation; and Africans understand their deity and being in relation to one another.

For African migrants, crossing borders is not limited to geographical but it extends to removal of ethnical and other boundaries that limit them in home countries. We are seeing transnational communities emerging because the *transnational* God, who transcends all boundaries bringing people across nations and making it possible that they live together as family in a shared home (*oikos*) and in unity with each other and all of creation. This demonstrates that the experience of migration shapes the images of God in the lives of migrants and also enriches theological reflection. The Christian God is not just a God who is confined to a particular place, but he is everywhere; moving with people moving across borders and sustaining all life.

*I think diversity helps us to understand that God is universal, because the same God they are bringing from Cameroon is the same God whom we are worshipping here, same God for a person who has come from Zimbabwe and the same God for a person who is originally from here so it teaches us that God is God everywhere* (Noel, focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015).

When participants indicated that ‘*the same God they are bringing from Cameroon is the same God whom we are worshipping here, same God for a person who has come from Zimbabwe*’(focus group participant, 30 Aug 2015), participants expressed a strong sense of acknowledging and embracing diversity as a God given gift reflecting his *universality* or *transnational nature*. For migrants, coming together from different nations is symbolic of the kingdom of God through which he will gather all nations across borders and cultures. As I have already demonstrated, the Bible is rich with texts describing God’s actions in this way, for example in the following text;

*I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Johashaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land (Joel 3:2).*

The Family of God as a ‘*community of God’s marginal people,*’ is a *transnational community* called into being by a God who knows no *boundaries*. So when people move, the church moves because they are moving with a God who respects no borders. There is a need to re-think what it means to be neighbours in diverse communities where people from different backgrounds live together. Just as Johannesburg is a city that was started when migrants were brought from different countries and cultural backgrounds to work in the mines, the city continues to be the home we build together, *ikhaya esilakha sonke*.

As Orobator (2005:171) observes in the context of African refugees, ‘*a place to feel at home portrays a powerful ecclesial counter-witness to the politics of socio-economic exclusion and discrimination.*’ Creating such safe spaces for migrants demands a paradigm shift and transformation within local congregations’ *missional* and *ecclesial* thinking and practice, a counter witness that goes beyond the notion of providing care for migrants; to caring *with* migrants; and from compassion for strangers to compassion *of and with* strangers and from hospitality of local South Africans, to hospitality of God’s marginal people.

## **5.6 Key areas for transformation**

Migrants set the agenda for the church’s missional activities and the experience of migration constitutes the hermeneutical tool for a theology of migration. Such a theology of migration should reject simplistic notions of ecclesial communities responding to the charitable needs of migrants and present a shift towards relationships that strengthen mutuality and reciprocity through the agency of the

migrants. This is a radical shift which requires alternative theologically grounded models for missio-ecclesial engagement with African migrants. Let us locate this agenda within the significance of this study:

The study highlighted the following;

(1). Communities around Johannesburg are hostile to African migrants and they live in fear.

(2). Study also identified the selected congregations as an *(in)visible* church for two reasons:

- Members of the church do not understand the identity of the church and they speak of the church as if it is ‘out there.’ In this study, the people are on the move and therefore the church must move; transformation is not an option, but a necessary step.
- The UPCSAs are a part of a migrant church whose history and identity is located within the Scottish background and its cultural and ecclesial practices were brought by the missionaries; among them Cecil John Rhodes, Robert Moffatt and David Livingstone. This intrinsic feature of the UPCSAs history demands that the church’s identity continuously transform through reflections on its mission engagement with migrants. The study argued that the UPCSAs are a church whose missional identity has been forgotten and now functions in the maintenance mode; such transformation therefore will restore its identity.

A theology of migration should seek to address these inconsistencies and appropriate the agency of migrants towards developing transformative models of mission with migrants. This change represents a shift that is a necessary task to facilitate the integration of migrants within the selected congregations and so that African migrants will no longer be viewed as strangers who remain on the margins, placing them at the centre of theological reflection and missio-ecclesial practice.



Tsele and Butler (2000:43) identified some land challenges and the role of the church in South Africa. Some of these can be relevant the theological task suggested above:

Somewhere, somehow, the original vision and mission ...by missionary churches got lost. As they lost their innocence and fell to the temptations of power and prestige, the mission churches abandoned their converts and embraced the path of self-interest. Can something of that original vision of service to the indigenous peoples be revived? Do we have the theology and interpretative tools that can best serve us in this task?...It is our view that the Spirit never totally abandons the church of God whenever there is room to learn from God's word. Therefore, we can still seek suppressed voices and traditions even in a church that has embraced foreign teachings. This is what we call the prophetic remnants of God. But for theology to come to the aid of the church in this task, it must be ready to part ways, and even suffer abuse, from the establishment. In pursuing this task we will need to propose creative and positive ways of dealing with the issue (Tsele and Butler, 2000:43).

As a task for restoring human dignity and identity for migrants living in a multi-plural society such as Johannesburg, the contextual theology that emerges out of this study is a form of liberation theology that advocates a culture of life for vulnerable people living on the margins of communities and searching for quality of life. There is a need for South African communities and local churches in Johannesburg to avoid *hostility* towards migrants and desist from regarding them as *hosts/guests* who are temporarily visiting their communities, and rather, engage them as mutual partners (people who are also at home) with something to offer and capable to enrich the church's theological enterprise and mission. Such transformation will require appreciating the agency and contributions of migrants in the development of South Africa and a deeper understanding of how these encounters can enrich the developmental agenda.

Theological focal points for a reflection on migration in Johannesburg should consider the following;

- Use social reality of the lived experiences of migrants as a starting point

- Church's own historical identity as a church which was formed by migrant missionaries
- Tradition and practice that focuses on caring for strangers and advocates the preferential option for care with strangers in multi-plural communities
- Transformative models of providing support to migrants should value their agency and role in contributing to the development of host communities
- Undocumented movement of people in search of better living conditions is some form of survival quality of life strategy must be clearly distinguished from criminal activities.

## 5.7 Conclusion

This chapter followed a contextual method and theologically reflected on the lived experiences of the migrants. The process started by reflecting on the themes of *recognition, human dignity, shame, vulnerability and competition, family of God, compassion fatigue, (in)visible church* and *transnational God* as they emerged from chapter four and highlighted the theological, ecclesiological and missional implications of the lived experiences of migrants in Johannesburg. In order for this reality to be theologically understood, study contends that migrants and refugees basically seek survival as they search for quality of life and employed the work of Dolores Williams' theology of survival quality of life Lee's theology of marginality as hermeneutical frameworks towards sketching the contours for developing a South African theology of migration.

The contextual theology that emerged out of this study is a form of liberation theology that advocates a culture of life for vulnerable people living on the margins of communities and searching for quality of life. The chapter also identified a need for an alternative understanding of the experience of migration, one that acknowledges that migrants have an important role to play in the developmental agenda of Johannesburg communities and paid attention to the vulnerability of female migrants highlighting the "double dimension" of their lived experiences. The chapter also

suggested that a contextual theology of migration contributes to discourses that seek to understand complex challenges related to urban life or space and argued that each approach should restore the human dignity of migrants and appreciate their agency.

In summary the following points stand out and need to be highlighted;

1. Firstly, migrants are aware that just as it took African leaders to unite against colonialism and apartheid, a struggle for *recognition* and *human dignity* in the face of *shame*, *vulnerability* and *competition* will require creativity beyond the ordinary. They understand that God is behind such a struggle of *resistance* against injustices and is journeying with them.
2. Just like during the struggle against apartheid, *resistance is important, but it is not enough*, so when migrants move into the selected congregations in Johannesburg, the congregations should create safe spaces and become agents of transformation and embrace new visions to support new rules, articulated by migrants themselves as additional resources alongside their '*doctrines of resistance*.'
3. Migrants are a part of the church and have a critical role to play in changing their situation; they should not look for outside help, but wounded as they are, they should heal one another. This is the church as the marginal community of the wounded, *the Family of God as a 'community of God's marginal people,' a transnational community called into being by a God who knows no boundaries*.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

This study explored the interface between theology and migration through the mission-ecclesial examination of the lived experiences of African migrants in the UPCSA selected congregations and demonstrated the complexity of the experience of migration within the context of Johannesburg, in South Africa. The current chapter briefly highlights conclusions that came out of the study and presents the recommendations with a view to providing guidelines for local church mission engagement with foreign migrants. This section also identifies ways in which the ministry of the selected congregations can be improved and thereafter, identifies the limitations of the study and areas that need further research.

#### 6.2 Summary of chapters

**Chapter one** outlined the problem and gave a motivation for the study and presented its rationale and significance. The chapter also examined the South African context and argued that very little has happened to change the negative perception of local South African since the violent xenophobic attacks in May 2008 and suggested that the thesis; “When people move the church moves” identifies a missional ‘umbilical cord’ kind of relationship between movement of people and movement of church, whose mission needs to be constantly transformed in the light of new contextual developments necessitated by the presence of migrants. Through theological reflections on the phenomenon of migration, the thesis postulated a hybrid contextual theology emerging from the lived experiences of migrants in Johannesburg.

**Chapter two** was dedicated to literature review on the trends of migration and its causes in Southern Africa and the chapter followed a thematic approach to discuss developments in the field of theology and migration studies, particularly paying attention to the exploration of relevant literature for this study and the concepts

developed in the field of theology and migration citing new forms of identities and transnational communities as emerging forms of contemporary societies in contested urban spaces, where migrants are both part of and apart from the Johannesburg City and home countries.

**Chapter three** outlined the location of the study and profiled the selected congregations. The chapter proceeded to describe the research design and research methods and procedures that were employed and highlighted sampling and data collection procedures, instruments and ethical considerations for the study. Thereafter, the chapter presented the theoretical frameworks and concepts that were significant to this investigation.

**Chapter four** was a sociological presentation of findings from the data collected through field work and drawn from focus group discussions, interviews with key informants and self-administered questionnaires. This chapter also outlined the challenges that impacted on the planned procedures and how these were addressed and presented a summary profile of the participants for the study.

In **Chapter five** the study employed thematic and contextual methods to theologically reflect on migration through the lens of the lived experiences of the migrants in society and church through the themes of *recognition, human dignity, shame, vulnerability and competition, family of God, compassion fatigue, (in)visible church* and *transnational God* as they emerged from chapter four. The process of theological reflection in this chapter unfolded with the unpacking of the social then ecclesial and missional implications of towards a contextual theology of migration premised on the theoretical framework advocated by Dolores Williams' concept of survival quality of life (2002) and Lee Young's theology of marginality (1995) and identified two concepts that emerged; *the church as a marginal community of the wounded* and *people without borders for a God without boundaries*.

In concluding this study; **Chapter six** highlighted conclusions that came out of the study and presented the recommendations with a view to providing guidelines for local church mission engagement with migrants in Johannesburg. These conclusions were presented thematically.

### **6.3 Findings of the study**

The study examined the lived experiences of migrants in the selected congregations of the UPCSA and found that migrants are in the majority of all selected congregations but despite these demographics; congregations continue to conduct services in old liturgical fashion. Study also found that there are tensions between what the church preaches and what it practices with regards to hospitality and care for strangers and migrants are treated as hosts; as opposed to being members of God's family and kingdom.

#### ***6.3.1 Sociological findings***

The research demonstrated how migrant communities appropriate their vulnerability and marginalization to reinvent and recreate metaphors of survival through constructing or deconstructing new forms of identity in these contested spaces characterised by multiplicity, cultural diversity, crime and vulnerability within the Johannesburg CBD. The role of the church (or lack of it) in the life and wellbeing of migrants was investigated and study found that the selected congregations were not competent and identified a need for transformative models pastoral competencies aimed at developing and guiding the implementation of guidelines and ensuring that congregations are a safe spaces of safety for migrants.

This research further suggested that the role played by congregations in the life and wellbeing of migrants should move from emergency provision of shelter and food during times of crisis to development of sustainable programmes which appreciate the agency of migrants. Dominant ideologies around the experience of refugees and migrants need to be exposed through the alternative lens of the Christian narrative as a

story of pilgrims and the people of God on the move. It is therefore important to recognise that migration has led to transnational communities as emerging forms of contemporary societies. Concurring with this approach Landau (2009) and the Africa Centre for Migration have timely advised;

- There are emerging forms identity as migrants leverage survival strategies in host communities.
- There are new forms of exclusion and Landau suggests that religion is one of a number of strategies for negotiating inclusion and belonging, while transcending ethnic, national and transnational paradigms.
- Contested space and *competition* for resources in the absence of a self -defined and dominant *host* community.
- Strategies for becoming both part of and apart from the Johannesburg City or local communities (*simultaneous embeddeness*).

This study confirms findings from other studies (for example SAMP, 2006) that South Africa continued to be a society in which xenophobia remained well entrenched. The results showed that many South Africans wanted to give “limited or little rights to migrants, [and] even benefits they were legitimately entitled to (Crush et al. 2013:10) something that was also came of confirmed by this investigation. The incorporation of migrants should address these negative attitudes and perceptions and consider the emerging transnational identities/communities in context of multiple cultures and different languages which characterise Johannesburg. Given the new forms of identities and communities that emerge from these encounters, a clearer understanding can contribute immensely to the human psyche and in particular; to the church’s ecclesiological practices and mission. As migrants grapple with the complex migration challenges, the encounters with the local South African provide a nexus from which an enriching transformation through what this study locates within an emerging African contextual theology of migration.

### 6.3.2 Theological findings

Cochrane J (in De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, 1994:35) observes that;

...the “whole of theology which is greater than its parts begins with the faith of ordinary, untrained Christians who struggle in life against all those forces of death that threaten life, spiritual and bodily life. Their faith experiences and the way they think about them must be taken seriously as data for the wider theological reflection.

Theological reflection for this study examined the lived experiences of migrants in the selected congregations through the themes of *recognition*, *human dignity*, *shame* and *vulnerability*. Study found that migrants interpret their lived experiences through scripture and they understand their journeys across borders in the light of the God of the Christians. Study made reference to biblical scriptures to contend that the Christian narrative is a story of pilgrims, people who were once in the Egyptian foreign land and moved to Canaan as God led them, therefore people on the move; the economic migrants and refugees, displaced women and children seeking safety and better lives can relate with this story. As such, Christian experience can be a resource in dealing with xenophobia and intolerance not just in the church but also in communities where there are tensions between locals and foreign nationals.

The quotation; “*when the people move the church moves*” identifies a missional ‘umbilical cord’ kind of relationship between movement of people and movement of church (its ecclesial and missional identity). It is this movement of people in and out of different communities that holds the transformative power for the church to be dynamic, to move ecclesiastically and missionally. The study shows how migration (like any other phenomenon) gives birth to hybrid contextual theologies as congregations are constructed or de-constructed by missio-ecclesiological and intercultural forces of migration calling into question their identity, vocation and witness. By realising how diversity helps them to understand God, respondents demonstrated a view that God is *transnational* and transcends all boundaries, bringing



people across nations and making it possible that they live together as family in a shared home (*oikos*). The Christian God is not just a God who is confined to a particular place, but he is everywhere; moving with exiles who cross borders in search of a better life.

The findings regarding migrants' view of their experiences in the light of God's people in exile concur with what Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator (2005) established in East African refugee communities who established that, "they hold tenaciously to the view that uprootment, displacement, and exile do not dispossess them of the presence and protection of God. This awareness motivates them to create a living Christian community in exile" and for him, "To characterise the church in such terms has implications for our understanding of the function, meaning and theology of the church" (Orobator, 2005:172).

A more just and theologically sound understanding of the situation of migration can help to constructively manage and systemically harness the potential that migrants present towards a meaningful socio-economic development. When properly understood and managed, migration is a powerful means for social transformation.

### ***6.3.3 Missional findings and transformation***

According to the World Communion of Reformed Churches, "[t]he missional church is *transformational*. It exists for the transformation of the community that it serves, through the power of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit" (WCRC, 2010b). Further to that, Keum (2013:15) adds that;

Mission from the margins seeks to counteract injustices in life, church, and mission. It seeks to be an alternative missional movement against the perception that mission can only be done by the powerful to the powerless, by the rich to the poor, or by the privileged to the marginalised. Such approaches can contribute to oppression and marginalization. Mission from the margin recognises that being in the centre means

having access to systems that led to one's rights, freedom, and individuality being affirmed and respected; living in the margins means exclusion from justice and dignity. Living on the margins, however, can provide its own lessons. People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the centre, is out of view (Keum, 2013:15).

The study identifies migrants as the community of God's marginal people and notes that by focusing on the realisation that the lived experiences of migrants depict the reality of the pilgrim church, a people on the move, theological reflections can be enriched to discover alternative ways of being family in transnational communities. Johannesburg is therefore an opportunity for the local churches to engage in transformative Christian Mission through a mutual partnership with migrants. Such transformation will require appreciating the agency and contributions of migrants in the developmental agenda of Johannesburg; something which highlights the need for a paradigm shift in *missional* and *ecclesial* practice beyond the notion of caring for migrants to caring *with* migrants and from compassion for strangers to compassion *of and with* migrants.

There is a need for a paradigm shift, a transformation in the church's *missional* and *ecclesial* thinking and practice which goes beyond the notion of caring for migrants. The research found that the role played by congregations in the life and wellbeing of migrants is limited to the provision of shelter and food during times of crisis and the study suggests that lessons can be drawn from programs designed by the ecumenical bodies such as the ACRC to accompany and assist churches in difficult situations; including the challenges faced by of migrants and refugees as some form of solidarity with local churches that have migrants.

#### **6.4 Gender and migration**

For Williams, theology from Black women's perspective cannot but be "womanist." It should bring Black women's experiences in the discourse and work in the churches and into the discourse of all Christian theology, from which it has previously been excluded (Cruz 2010: 178).

Study argues that the South government's new travel requirements such as requiring un-abridged birth certificates and affidavits are policies that make it difficult for African women to move in search of better living conditions. Therefore, with regards to gender and migration, this investigation suggests that theological studies should address the complex gender dimensions of the phenomenon and the contention of this study is that more attention needs to be paid to the vulnerability of African female migrants. Given the increasing numbers of women fleeing wars and poverty, there is a need for a gender sensitive approach to migration and innovative intervention strategies are urgently necessary to counter the current migration policies which diminish survival quality of life strategies for women.

### **6.5 Ecclesial findings of the study**

In the African situation, Orobator (2005) conducted pastoral reflections on human mobility and the situation of refugees and underscored the ecclesiological relevance of this phenomenon, developing various images of the church from the perspective of mobile populations. He also asserts that empirical enquiry has to be the starting point of an African ecclesiology, concurring with the view that church attracts the attention of more than one discipline due the depth of its symbols and rituals, the vitality of its celebrations and members, and the complexity of its organisation and doctrinal outlook. For him, the church constitutes the theological and social, what he refers to as "a double dimension" with an identity simultaneously related to God and at the same time, to the world (Height in Orobator, 2005:25).

This study confirmed the view of a 'double dimension' for the view of the church as migrants in this study articulate their lived experiences in the light of their faith in

God. The identities of selected congregations resemble transnational communities that emerging along-side the *transnational* God, who transcends all boundaries bringing people across nations. The experience of migration shapes the images of the church and God through encounters that enrich theological reflection. The Christian God is not just a God who is confined to a particular place, but he is everywhere; moving with people moving across borders and sustaining all life. As Orobator (2005:171) observes in the context of African refugees, ‘a place to feel at home portrays a powerful ecclesial counter-witness to the politics of socio-economic exclusion and discrimination.’

Study also alluded to tensions between who (*ecclesial identity*) and what (*missional praxis*) the migrants understood to be the church versus what and how should the church should respond within the context of migrants in Johannesburg.

## **6.6 Recommendations**

### ***6.6.1 Theological recommendations***

There is a need for spiritual and theological resources that can equip pastoral formations to minister in societies that are rapidly changing and becoming culturally and religiously diverse. More importantly, it should not be forgotten that the migrants themselves are grappling with their own experiences in the light of their faith to give theological meaning to the challenges they face. It is for this reason that it has been suggested that the experiences of migrants should become one of the focal points of the theology of migration.

Secondly, there is a need for cross cultural mission and development of new models of “neighbourhood” built on dialogue and new models of hospitality and lessons can be drawn from churches such as the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg to explore new models of community relationships that promote tolerance and hospitality for African migrants living in Johannesburg, South Africa. Such initiatives can incorporate the following ideas;

- Introduce cultural awareness Sundays to celebrate cultural diversity and the presence of different nationalities in South African communities. Emphasis should be on demonstrating that there is richness in diversity, and prepare lessons on such themes as unity in diversity.
- Church as safety nets and a places of comfort for the community's marginalised people, including the migrants
- Move from providing temporary shelter to long term sustainable interventions such as developing communities that promote integration and cohesion

### ***6.6.2 Guidelines for local congregations***

The fact that former white congregations still use Western style of worship and English as a language of communication at a time when African migrants are now in the majority, demonstrates a failure to realise one important factor for these contemporary times; that 'European theologies can no longer claim superiority over other parts of the world: culture shapes the human voice that answers the voice of Christ' as Bosch (in Lotz, 1991:13) observed.

Therefore, the congregations need to set up pastoral committees within the to develop and guide implementation of models of mission engagement with migrants and ensure that such congregations create spaces of safety for migrants to belong, as a part of God's family (as church preaches) and fully participate in church programs and activities. It is the contention of this study that the untapped theological and spiritual dimensions of migration, if properly understood and natured; can leverage effective responses to the needs of migrants and re-position the church at its rightful and prophetic place where it takes the side of the marginalised people in society as God has commanded; 'but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one

born among you, and thou shalt love him (sic) as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God' (Leviticus 19:34).<sup>151</sup>

### ***6.6.3 A contextual theology of migration***

Survival strategies used by migrants display their skills of creativity through three forms of art; an art of encounter (involving resistance and endurance), an art of cunning (with use of skill and imagination), and an art of care (manifested in commitment and charity), and an art of connecting (through networking). Therefore when migrants cross borders without visas and passports, search for jobs without identity documents and evade the police in their daily struggles to survive, there must be a distinction between people who commit crime and genuine migrants searching for a quality of life.

The study suggests that the task of restoring human dignity and identity for migrants living in a multi-plural society such as Johannesburg should be informed by a contextual theology that liberates and advocates a culture of life for vulnerable people living on the margins of society. Such reflection should be transformative and appreciate the agency and contributions of migrants in the development of South Africa. Study identifies the following theological focal points for a reflection on migration;

- Social reality of the lived experiences of migrants as a starting point.
- Church's own historical identity as a church which was founded on the work by migrant missionaries.
- Tradition and practice that focuses on caring for strangers and advocates the preferential option for care with strangers in multi-plural communities.

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<sup>151</sup> King James Version, Life Application Study Bible (1989): Tyndale House Publishers

- Transformative models of providing support to migrants should value their agency and role in contributing to the development of host communities.
- Undocumented movement of people in search of better living conditions as some form of survival quality of life strategy which must be distinguished from criminal activities.

#### ***6.6.4 Some of the practical steps that can be taken by the church***

- Introduce cultural awareness Sundays to celebrate cultural diversity and the presence of different nationalities in South African communities. Emphasis should be on demonstrating that there is richness in diversity, and prepare lessons on such themes as unity in diversity.
- Use church premises as safety nets and a place of comfort for the community's marginalised including the migrants.
- Move from providing temporary shelter to long term sustainable interventions such as community integration and cohesion.

#### ***6.6.5 Suggestions from the migrants themselves***

- Church should assist with processing of documents such as work and study permits
- Church should educate locals on the role that migrants can have in the development of communities
- Church should teach its members and local South Africans to love one another and embrace diversity
- Church should have projects to provide care to the needy, especially; women, children and the unemployed
- Church should work with the government to promote tolerance and integration

of migrants into society

- Preach more about love and give migrants opportunities to conduct services in their own style

#### ***6.6.6 Suggestions for the South African government Department of Home Affairs***

- The government should demonstrate consistent commitment to addressing violence against foreigners and not respond only when there are attacks.
- Translate community integration and social cohesion programs into practical and visible, ongoing programs at community levels.
- Government migration framework and policies should address xenophobia through clear, and gender sensitive policies that do not discriminate against women, children and foreigners.
- The Department of Home Affairs must also ensure that Detention Centres like Lindelani comply with the international standards and protocols governing the movement, arrests and detention of people across states.

#### ***Government can also do the following:***

In line with the recommendation issues by a report that evaluated the Zimbabwean Dispensation program me (PASSOP, 2012) The South African government can consider the following;

- Use section 31(2)(b) of the 2002 Immigration Act to introduce a new "temporary immigration exemption status for eligible foreigners" (TIES) which allows migrants to legally enter South Africa, regularizes their status, ends deportations, and grants them the right to work in South Africa.
- Cooperate closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to put in place a registration system for the new arrivals.



- In accordance with the South African Constitution, ensure that all foreigners in need of emergency and basic medical care, including those in need of anti-retroviral treatment (ART) and tuberculosis (TB) treatment have access to such care.
- Ensure that the most vulnerable foreigners, such as unaccompanied children, the elderly, and the most sick (including the most vulnerable PLWHA) are provided with other forms of emergency assistance such as food and social welfare assistance and use churches as community support centers.
- Engage in a public information campaign to demonstrate to the South African people that:
  - Migrants' decisions to leave their country and come to South Africa are fundamentally involuntary;
  - the deportations are ineffective and a waste of tax payers' money;
  - the simplest, fairest, and most effective way to address the humanitarian needs migrants in South Africa is to allow them to fend for themselves through giving them the right to work; and that
  - a regulated migrant work force will not undercut wages and opportunities for South African workers.
- Officially recognize that despite ongoing reforms, the current dysfunctional state of the immigration system and deportation practices combine to create a high risk of *refoulement* for migrants and refugees.
- Use the opportunity provided by the current reforms to the asylum system to cooperate with UNHCR and South African nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure that Refugee Status Determination Officers receive regular and in-depth training on international refugee law, including ongoing on-the-job training.
- Provide financial and technical assistance to the government of South Africa to put in place systems to help implement the new status.

There is also a need to de-criminalise undocumented movement of people and instead, address the underlying socio-economic and political factors driving people from poor communities into inner cities like Johannesburg. When people move, they do so in search of a better life, they are compelled to do so by circumstances beyond themselves. The pressure in life demands that they move without following laid down rules; it is an act of resistance.

Instead of criminalising these acts of resistance, government authorities should address the underlying socio-economic challenges that drive people to move and create divisions in society and appreciate that:

- The poor cannot remain confined in poverty stricken areas while the rich live in extremes of wealth
- Communities need to be more hospitable and welcoming to strangers
- Employment creation should not be centralised or confined to urban areas, development must be spread out
- Peace building initiatives must be encouraged to address conflicts and displacement of people.

### **6.7 Areas that need further research**

1. The interdisciplinary nature of this study drew from both theology and sociology. However, there were clear tensions or paradoxes and in some cases intersections as demonstrated in the findings. Most studies are instrumentalist in approaching religion, using it only for intended purposes then abandoning it when the goal has been met. Therefore, there is a need for further studies with a view to defining theological and sociological terms that are critical to theological reflections on migration.
2. Secondly, most theologies seem to focus on migrants as victims; what kind of theology can be developed from the experiences of migrants who do not see themselves as victims?
3. The current reflection on mission did not delve on the deeper ethical implications of mission. There is a need for more studies to engage this topic from an ethical perspective. As Christopher Wright has warned in his book, *The mission of God (2006)*, reflecting on mission and ethics observed, “there

is no biblical mission without ethics, and God's mission calls for human response and that includes ethical dimensions (Wright, 2006:358).

4. Study also reveals how local South Africans move out of the congregations that are receiving more foreigners while on the contrary, preferring to employ foreigners than local South Africans. The reasons cited by local South Africans who took part in this study were loyalty, hard work and honesty of foreign migrants as compared to local South Africans. Study draws attention to this phenomenon and suggests that it deserves a deeper investigation.
  
5. According to Riveira (2012:7) "there is a tendency among many public scholars and leaders to weave a discourse that deals with immigrants mainly or even exclusively as workers, whose labor might contribute or not to the economic welfare of the American citizens. This kind of public discourse tends to objectify and dehumanize the immigrants." Therefore, a balanced biblical approach is critical to promoting love, tolerance and acceptance of strangers and this requires that we equally pay attention to the biblical texts that seem to promote intolerance because people that promote xenophobic tendencies appeal to such texts. There is a need for studies which will pay closer attention to how scriptures are selectively used to address the situation of migration with a view to ensuring a balanced theological approach.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Focus group question sequence**

In this study three types of data will be collected namely; self-administered questionnaires with migrant worshippers, in-depth interviews with local ministers in charge of the congregations, and a focus group discussion with the same group of migrants worshipping in UPCSAs congregations to allow for further inquiry on the experiences of living in Johannesburg. The focus group will place emphasis on group interaction and allow for use of local or foreign languages so that participants are open and free to engage. While building up with follow up questions, the focus group question sequence will be as follows:

#### **Moderator:**

1. So, what does it feel like to live in Johannesburg and worship in this congregation?
2. What do you think need to be done to provide care and support to migrants?
3. What should the church do to make migrants part of worship?
4. Do you feel that your Christian faith has been enriched by your experiences as a Christian living in a foreign country?
5. How can you describe your spiritual life from the time you came to Johannesburg?

## **Appendix 2: Interview guide**

My name is Rev. Buhle Mpofu a student with the University of KwaZulu-Natal conducting research entitled, “When the people move, the Church moves”<sup>152</sup> A critical exploration of the interface between Migration and Theology through a Missiological study of selected congregations within the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa in Johannesburg

In order to develop guidelines for programs aimed at promoting tolerance and cultural diversity within the church, I would like to understand the challenges that migrants from countries outside South Africa face and how those experiences have impacted on their Christian spirituality.

Thank you for consenting to be part of this study and taking time to respond to my questions.

- i. What is the percentage of foreign migrants in your congregation?
- ii. How have you adapted your ministry to cater for foreigners in your local activities?
- iii. What are the challenges that you face in ministering to foreigners in your community?
- iv. What is your opinion on the church’s response with regards to migrants?
- v. What needs to be done to improve your ministry to migrants?
- vi. What can be done to address the challenge of intolerance and xenophobia in our communities?
- vii. Do you have any other comment on this topic?

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<sup>152</sup> Cited from the handbook developed by the South African Council of Churches on the ministry to refugees (Jacobs, 1982). The handbook notes that ‘By crossing diocesan and parish boundaries, by losing baptismal and marriage certificates, if such exists, the refugee suffers many of the problems faced in crossing boundaries’ (Jacobs, 1982).

## **Appendix 3: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**TITLE OF THE STUDY:** “When people move, the Church moves”: A critical exploration of the interface between Migration and Theology through a missional study of selected congregations within the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa in Johannesburg.

As a key informant, you are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Rev Buhle Mpofo, Bachelor of Theology (Hons) University of KwaZulu-Natal, and Master of Philosophy from Stellenbosch University. The study will be conducted in partial fulfilment of a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your experiences as a migrant worshipper in this congregation.

### **1. PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The study is designed to identify experiences and needs of migrants within the Uniting Presbyterian Church. It is hoped that identification of these needs and understanding the challenges that people from other countries encounter within the church, will help us to develop a ministry to care for people from outside South Africa.

### **2. PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to come at your congregation for one day and do the following things:

Respond to a questionnaire with 16 questions on your experiences about living in Johannesburg and how perceive attitudes about yourself from local people. You will further participate in an hour session of focus group discussion on the subjects of “being a foreigner” or “stranger”, worshipping in a foreign country and how that has impacted on your faith as a Christian.

The focus group discussions will be taped and kept safely at the central office until the final research paper has been compiled, then they will be destroyed. As a participant, you have the right to have access to the transcripts so that you evaluate whether they are a true reflection of the discussions. You also have the right not to be recorded or have certain information omitted should you so wish.

### **3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

This study does not have any potential risks although emotional discomforts may be experienced during responses to some questions that relate to painful experiences. In order to address discomfort, the researcher will encourage participants to use the section on “any other comments” on the questionnaire to share information that they are not comfortable to discuss openly. Further to this, participants will not be forced to share information that they are not comfortable to disclose and have the right to ask that certain information be omitted, if they so wish.

In the event that any participant experiences discomfort, the researcher will stop the discussions and allow that such information be omitted. Depending on the circumstances, the researcher will avoid questions that may seem to cause discomfort and moderate the discussions on other questions that participants are comfortable with and allow for withdrawal of participants where necessary.

#### **4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND / TO SOCIETY**

Potential benefits for participating in this study include learning from other participants through sharing experiences and receiving counselling and guidance on personal matters of concern. Most importantly, participants will contribute to the development of a mission program for the church to address challenges related to migration and benefit from its implementation thereafter.

#### **5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

While snacks and drinks will be provided to participants for the duration of the meetings, no allowances will be provided to participants as a payment.

#### **6. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by ensuring that information collected from subjects will not be directly linked to individuals. Personal information will be obtained through anonymous questionnaires.

#### **7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

#### **8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Rev. Buhle Mpofo, Uniting Presbyterian Church Offices, 28 Rhodes Avenue Parktown; Tel. 011 727 3500, Cell: 072 305 7039 or the study leader; Dr Roderick Hewitt, Tel: 033 260 6273, e-mail: [Hewitt@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Hewitt@ukzn.ac.za)

**9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

The information above was described to.....(participant) by.....in the language I am in command of or it was satisfactorily translated to me. The participant was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to his/her satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to\_\_\_\_\_

He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions.

Signature of Investigator:

Date



#### **Appendix 4: Self-administered Questionnaire**

Your participation in this study is important to the Uniting Presbyterian Church as a contribution towards the development of a program aimed at providing support to migrants in Johannesburg. If you agree to complete the questionnaire, you will answer questions regarding yourself, your experiences and spiritual challenges related to mobility and living in a foreign country. Your responses will be kept confidential and only the researcher will have access to this information. Completing the questionnaire will take between 20 to 30 minutes.

Please sign the attached consent form to participate in the study. Then complete the questionnaire in the space provided.

Age group

<b>0-24</b>	
<b>24- 49</b>	
<b>49 and above</b>	

Gender:

<b>MALE</b>	
<b>FEMALE</b>	

#### **SECTION A**

1) When did you arrive in Johannesburg?

<b>Month</b>	<b>Year</b>

2) What are you currently doing for living?

<b>Employed</b>	
<b>Not employed</b>	
<b>Self-employed</b>	

If unemployed, please share your experiences about surviving below.

.....  
 .....  
 .....

3) Accommodation details

<b>Live by myself</b>	
<b>Live with relatives</b>	
<b>Live with friends</b>	

4). How did you get help for accommodation or employment

<b>By myself</b>	
<b>Through relatives and friends</b>	
<b>Through members of the church</b>	

5). Have you received any support from the congregation?

<b>Yes</b>	
<b>No</b>	

If you have received any support, please give details below.

.....  
 .....

5 Who are the closest people that make contact with you when you have a crisis or need support?

<b>Friends</b>	
<b>Relatives</b>	
<b>Members of my local church</b>	

List three important people in your network in their order of priority. Choose from friends, relatives, church members, work mates, neighbours and fellow countrymen and women from your country of origin.

1.....  
 2.....  
 3.....

**6 Section B**

8. How has migrating to South Africa influenced or affected your faith in God?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

1. Do you feel welcomed by the local church where you belong?

<b>YES</b>	
<b>NO</b>	

If you do not feel welcomed, what can be done to make you feel more welcomed?

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

9. Do you find it easy to relate and worship with local South Africans?

<b>YES</b>	
<b>NO</b>	

Please give details.....

10. Do you talk openly about your country of origin in church and other public places in Johannesburg?

<b>YES</b>	
<b>NO</b>	

If you do not, please explain

.....  
 .....

11. How can the local church improve its ministry towards foreign migrants? Give suggestions below.

.....  
.....  
.....

**Section C**

14. The church is culturally diverse and promotes acceptance of strangers. Do you agree with this statement? (Place a cross on the appropriate answer)

Strongly agree	Some what agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

15. It is possible that people from different nations can live together in peace and harmony. Do you agree?

Strongly agree	Some what agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Use the space provided to make any other comments or share any other personal information about your experience of being a migrant worshipper within the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Johannesburg.

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*Thank you for participating in this study and helping us to better understand the challenges migrants face in Johannesburg. This will help the Church to improve Mission with migrant populations.*

#### **Appendix 4: Letter of permission to conduct the study**

Research Ethics Committee  
Human Research (Non Health)  
University of KWAZULU NATAL  
Private Bag  
Scottsville

26 July 2012

#### **Ref: Permission to conduct a study within the UPCSA**

This letter serves to confirm that Rev. Buhle Mpofo (Std. no. 200278014) has been granted permission to conduct a study on the interface between theology and migration.

As part of developing mission intervention strategies that are relevant to our context, it is critical that we understand the phenomenal developments around issues to do with migrants and xenophobia through working with foreigners in developing and implementing programs aimed at promoting tolerance and hospitality towards strangers. It is for this reason that the Uniting Presbyterian Church encourages research particularly in areas that have not been deeply explored in the past such as migration.

Your guidance to facilitate such a study will therefore be greatly appreciated in this regard.

Grace and Peace

Rev. Dr. E. Germiquet

**MINISTRY SECRETARY**



27 June 2014

Mr Buhle Mpofo 200278014  
School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr Mpofo

Protocol reference number: HSS/1457/014D

Project title: "When the people move, the Church moves": A critical exploration of the interface between Migration and Theology through a Missiological study of selected congregations within the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa in Johannesburg

**Full Approval – Expedited**

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted **Full Approval**

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project; Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully

.....  
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Science Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc Supervisor: Dr Roderick Hewitt & Dr Federico Settler  
cc Academic Leader: Professor P Denis  
cc School Admin: Mrs Catherine Murugan

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za) / [snymanm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snymanm@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

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<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecum>

[http://www.cormsa.org.za/wpcontent/uploads/2009/05/lost\\_in\\_the\\_vortex\\_irregularities\\_in\\_the\\_detention\\_and\\_deportation\\_of\\_non-nationals\\_in\\_south\\_africa.pdf](http://www.cormsa.org.za/wpcontent/uploads/2009/05/lost_in_the_vortex_irregularities_in_the_detention_and_deportation_of_non-nationals_in_south_africa.pdf)

Parliamentary monitoring Group: [www.pmg.org.za/node/30871](http://www.pmg.org.za/node/30871)

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