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Forced Migration Studies Programme

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**Title: The Ties that Bind and Bond: Socio-cultural Dynamics and Meanings of
Remittances among Congolese Migrants in Johannesburg**

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by Dissertation.

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DEDICATION

To my beloved son, Gold Kankonde, I dedicate this thesis.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts in Forced Migration Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Kankonde Bukasa Peter, February, 2010

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ABBREVIATIONS

DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo
WITS: University of the Witwatersrand

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ABSTRACT

The thesis investigates how transnational familial ties and socio-cultural dynamics shape migrants' remitting behavior and inform their relationships. It shows that most research on remittances fails to capture the personal and social significance remittances have for migrants, embedded not only in their transnational social relations, but also in cultural contexts. Drawing on empirical qualitative and quantitative research amongst Congolese migrants in Johannesburg, the study argues that migrants remit mainly in a bid to escape social death by fostering familial belonging and sustaining social status. It shows that socio-cultural influences and internalized social stereotypes about the economic effects of emigration shape migrants' awareness of the role expectations their communities of origin hold in relation to them. This internalization of role expectations subjects migrants to such a social pressure that they often feel a compelling need to be perceived as financially "successful" as well as "valid" and "good" family members – not only in their communities of origin but also among other migrants. In this context, remittances become a fundamental measure and criterion that shapes migrants' sense of belonging and social and familial inclusion or exclusion. For individual migrants, remittances play an essential instrumental role portraying positive images for themselves and, at the same time, are seen as a means to avoid social stigmatization and exclusion.

Key-words: transnational families, remittances, socio-cultural dynamics and meanings, identity, belonging, social death

I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL DISCUSSIONS

In today's ever restructuring and globalizing world, the search for economic opportunities abroad, and of protection against persecution, have made migration a major strategy to safeguard individual migrants and their families against economic, financial and life-threatening circumstances (Conway and Cohen, 1998: 32). It is generally estimated that 200 million people – about three percent of the global population – live and work, for relatively long periods, in countries other than their countries of origin (World Bank, 2008). Though this is an underestimated figure, as it does not include the large population of refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants (Page and Plaza, 2005: 3), three percent of the global population represents more than the combined populations of Nigeria and South Africa (Page and Plaza, 2005: 2). One of the most perceptible effects of this increased migration is the magnitude of remittances to migrants' countries of origin. The global volume of remittances, as a source of foreign exchange for developing countries, has grown significantly, outpacing private capital and public development assistance flows over the last decade (Page and Plaza, 2005; World Bank, 2006). In as many as 28 developing countries, money or materials migrants send back home to their relatives are larger than earnings from the most important commodity exports – for instance, in Mexico, remittances are larger than foreign direct investment, in Sri Lanka, they are larger than tea exports; and in Morocco, they are larger than tourism receipts (World Bank, 2006). Despite the impressive availability of data on the developmental impacts of remittances in migrants' sending countries (Conway and Cohen, 1998:32), there is no consensus among scholars on what motivates migrants to remit (Horowitz and Agarwal, 2002; De Bruyn and Wet, 2006). This thesis contributes towards this debate in proposing a socio-cultural analysis of remittance motives. In fact, while embedded in, and informed by, social relations negotiations and cultural contexts, most research on remittances explores the economic aspects of remittances from labour migrants in particular, and especially their economic effects in migrants' countries of origin (Muteta, 2007; De Bruyn and Wets, 2006). Much less is known about how migrants' socio-cultural dynamics shape their remitting decisions and behaviours, and how the fact of remitting or failing to remit affects them socially. The thesis contributes towards filling this gap by attempting to capture the personal and non-fungible familial and social meanings migrants assign to remittances in transnational settings.

Through empirical research amongst Congolese migrants in Johannesburg, I found that the majority of respondents consider remittances as constituting a strain on their livelihoods in host settings and causing a major setback to the realization of their initial migration projects (e.g. to start or expand their businesses, further their studies, travel to other destinations, etc.). They allege that remittances contribute not only to protracted migration, but also to inability to invest material and social resources for local integration or onward movements (Landau and Kankonde, 2008). However, a significant number of respondents who feel that remittances cause a setback still remit, and do so despite circumstances of economic hardship in the host society. What social and familial significance do remittances hold that might explain such a social pressure? To answer this question I propose a socio-anthropological analysis of remittance motives disentangled from their economic utilities.

The remainder of this thesis explores how familial and social belonging is being (re)negotiated and contested in transnational settings, in order to explore the socio-cultural grounds of the social pressure on migrants to remit. More precisely, I explore how transnational family ties and socio-cultural dynamics shape migrants' remitting behaviours and inform their familial relationships. I argue that influenced by an economic utilitarian conception of money, most research on remittances fails to capture the personal and familial significance that remittances hold for migrants, embedded not only in their transnational social relations, but also in cultural contexts. Given the fact that human beings' search for familial and social identity is the most significant factor in both behaviour and the negotiation all other identities (Boulding, 1983: 261), I show that in family and social relations remittances are always more than remitted legal tenders. To analyze the socio-cultural motives underpinning remittances, I make a distinction between the subjective and objective components of remittances, conceptualizing them as a bridge between individual migrants' own self-perception and the implied socio-cultural valuation within a society. Within this theoretical framework, I provide an explanation of how remittances can contribute toward the social objectification of migrants' subjective qualities.

I argue that it is migrants' conformity to family and social norms which define one's family belonging. Drawing on quantitative data from a survey in Johannesburg and new qualitative research amongst 60 Congolese migrants in Johannesburg, I argue that migrants remit mainly in a bid to foster familial belonging, to escape social death, and to buy and sustain social status. I

show that socio-cultural influences and internalized stereotypes about the economic effects of emigration shape migrants' awareness of the role expectations that bear upon them in communities of origin. These expectations exercise on them such a social pressure that migrants often feel a compelling need to be perceived as financially "successful" as well as "valid" and "good" family members – not only in their communities of origin but also among other migrants. In such a context, remittances become the measure and criterion that shape migrants' sense of familial belonging or exclusion.

The metaphorical concept of social death was initially used in the literature on slavery as characterizing the social and legal conditions of being a slave (Mason, 2003). To be enslaved, this literature contends, was to be socially dead as slavery was a conditional commutation of a death sentence (Patterson cited in Mason, 2003). Slaves, as far as slave-owning societies were concerned, did not, on their own, belong to any legitimate social order (Mason, 2003). They had been stripped of all rights and claims (Mason, 2003: 7). In social sciences, the concept of social death is now being used (Vigh, 2006) in a broad sense to mean the social condition of being socially without rights; utterly marginalized; socially degraded to the point of being deemed subhuman (Vigh, 2006). Social death alienates social existence, disconnects the affected person from other family members, and effects a dehumanizing marginalization that makes normal social interactions impossible.

In this study the concept is used as characteristic of the social condition implied in the familial and social exclusion resulting from deviance in the failure to fulfill social roles by migrants. I use the concept as characteristic of the psychosocial consequence and reality of denigrating social labels that are used to qualify migrants who do not remit. In many societies negative social labels or stigmas are often used to qualify negatively marked individuals as socially and irreversibly abnormal (Gramling and Forsyth, 1987). To understand the social force of social stigmas, one has to consider the fact that in many societies, they operate as irreversible social markers (Gramling and Forsyth, 1987) characteristic of social death. This prevents negatively labeled individuals from having normal family or social interactions as they are themselves perceived as potentially stigmatizing to whoever interacts with them (Gramling and Forsyth, 1987). It is the possibility of being socially excluded and the marginalization implied in being stigmatized as deviant family members that may subject migrants' lives to what Ritzer (1996: 585) terms

‘cultural colonization.’ Cultural colonization, in Ritzer’s (1996: 585) terms, is characteristic of a situation whereby individuals, as a result of cultural socialization, become so preoccupied with avoiding negative social consequences that they can undermine their own material promotion in the process. In order to induce migrant members to perform their social duties, families sometimes resort to strategies ranging from informing migrants about the word being spread by gossips within their communities, to the extreme use of supernatural devices (Witchcraft).¹

The point I want to make is that the ultimate goal of every cultural system is to ensure that its members carry with them and behave in a manner consistent with its values regardless of where life circumstances may take them. Family units (as representatives of the cultural system) are conditioned to ensure that they produce valid community members by translating the best cultural education to members of their families. As a form of social sanction of the fulfillment of their social duties or failure by their members, families and communities use social labels or stigmas to qualify those considered non-valid members. It is the appraisal or social alienation attached to different social labels that often plays the function of drawing people, sometimes against their own individual interests, into mainstream socio-cultural behaviours (McKinnon and Langford, 1994: 218). However, a community member’s culturally deviant behaviour (for instance, failure to remit) is also generally attributed to the failure of their family in fulfilling their educational role: this is often disgraceful for his or her family as well. In this sense social labels play essentially the function of control in ensuring that family and community members are induced to perform their family and social duties (see Davis and Moore cited in Lin, 1999: 468). In principle the shame and alienation embedded in being stigmatized exercise enough pressure on the individual to compel him or her to conform to social rules. However, depending on the kind of social goods one fails to provide, social sanction can literally consist in members being excluded from a family and stripped of all social rights and claims. As a respondent in this study explained:

“I can give you the example of my cousin in Belgium. The Catholic Church sent him to study and he got a good job after completing his studies. After his father got pension, he asked him to assist him as their family had to leave the company house. But he was lying that he does not have money. The family knew from his friends that he had a good job and was earning a lot of money. But they didn’t say anything. After some years, he found a wife

¹ Such devices are faith-based rather than objectively real

and asked the family to pay the dowry for him. The family refused and told him to pay himself as he was thinking that he is alone. He apologized and then tried to send money but the family returned it. You see...now he divorced twice already and his third marriage is not working... you see... When you remember things like that, you wouldn't want they happen to you"²(Respondent 51)

In many Congolese and other cultural systems, a wife belongs to her husband's large family. To symbolize her new family belonging, it is her future husband's family (and not the husband, however rich he may be), that pays the dowry for him. And it is often the paternal uncles' duty, and not the father of the future husband, who pay dowries for their nephews. This institution was designed to ensure the stability of marriages and families in general. The consecutive logic of such cultural systems is that a husband is not allowed to divorce his wife unless the family also considers the reason for the divorce to be valid.³ In such cultural systems, it is also young adults' cultural right to have their wife's dowry paid by the family, and at the same time, this right generates their future obligation to pay dowry for their nephews. In the above quote the family's refusal to receive remittances plays the function of social sanction depriving a migrant of the social ground to claim socio-cultural rights for having failed to remit.

Generally we assume that one's family membership status is defined at birth or adoption, or marriage, and lasts throughout one's lifetime (S.I.R.C., 2007). I argue that this is in fact an exception and that the rule is rather that family membership status depends on how best one conforms to the 'rules' or normative framework of the family, and sometimes on one's personal achievements. In fact, depending on the specificity of their societies of origin, migrants work (for instance by remitting) to keep their familial and societal membership, as leaving a family⁴ involves crossing the 'gulf' of belonging, and such an act may involve marginalization as social sanction (S.I.R.C., 2007: 11). In this specific sense, it then becomes possible to measure the importance or social salience of one's familial belonging by the severity of social alienation involved in leaving it (S.I.R.C., 2007: 11). My point here is that when migrants are physically separated from their family members for long periods of time, they often have to actively work to remain connected for their intrinsic sense of belonging and structural familial and social

² Note how the divorces are seen as resulting from the absence of agreement of the family which further separate the man from the socio-cultural community which constantly reinforce one's social exclusion.

³ In many African cultures it was inconceivable for a woman to divorce her husband.

⁴ To depart from a family's normative framework

balance (Bollen and Hoyle, 1990; Orellana, Thorne, Chee, Lam, 2001: 586). Alternatively, they may lose touch and establish separate lives (Orellana, Thorne, Chee, Lam, 2001: 586). In this sense, remittances play the role of medium allowing migrants maintain family ties.

Societies are generally organized in such a way that their members are distributed into social positions on the basis of birth, occupation or performed behaviours, and induced to perform the duties of such positions (Davis and Moore cited in Lin, 1999: 468). Designations or identities are generally attached to individuals who possess particular socio-cultural attributes or display socially expected and valued behaviours. When given to individual community members, such acquired social designations or identities, as social objects (Med, 1994: 218 cited in McKinnon and Langford, 1994), not only have social market value, but are also established and sustained through participation in familial relations and the continued display of socially expected behaviours (McKinnon and Langford, 1994: 218). Families in Africa, as elsewhere, are goal directed and have tacit codes of conduct transmitted to their children through socialization, which define their family roles and expected behaviours. In this sense, for family or community members, demonstrating one's life skills or contributing towards the socio-economic upliftment of other family members, for instance, become different kinds of expected behaviours and roles which take the form of "social goods" or exchange commodities that people provide to deserve familial and social membership.

I argue that in transnational settings, not only are remittances the only disposable social goods through which migrants can express their family membership, but their social-cultural value also multiplies as a result of the social, cognitive and affective meanings (McKinnon and Langford 1994: 216) assigned to remitters and recipients. However, migrants are also able to use remittances as symbols of socio-economic status in the host country (regardless of whether such status has in fact been achieved), and in so doing, they acquire new social designations in communities of origin. Accordingly, they may disguise actual social lines and make class values and social status illegible (Gondola, 1999; wa Kabwe and wa Kabwe-Segatti, 2003). That is to say, in some cases individual migrants use remittances as symbols to portray false images of themselves and their occupational achievements to family or community members in their communities of origin, sustaining illusions that secure a greater degree of human dignity for the migrant. Contrary to the notion in family studies that migration weakens the family (Boulding,

1983: 259), this thesis shows that migrants' families can exert social control over their migrant members irrespective of geographical distance.

In order to set the stage and understand the force of social stigmatization in drawing migrants to conform to social norms for the purpose of escaping social death, the first two chapters of this thesis are devoted to conceptual and theoretical discussions that nest the study within the broader migration, belonging, and remittances debates. The third chapter provides the research design and methodological approach of the study. The fourth chapter examines the socio-cultural contexts of the pressure on migrants to remit, and incorporates a review of relevant theoretical perspectives on the determinants of human social actions in relation to societal valuation of the individual. The fifth chapter explores the social visibility tactics migrants adopt in communities of origin and migration settings as a form of social death resistance. It also examines remittance motives of a coercive nature, resulting from transnational family control over their migrant members. This is followed by the final discussion and conclusion.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Determining the role of remittance in transnational relations between migrants and their families required the use of qualitative methods. But in order to frame my qualitative findings on respondents' livelihood in Johannesburg, I used mixed quantitative and qualitative methods. Given the fact that the aim of this study was to engage in qualitative research that would probe for deeper understanding rather than examining the surface features of migrants' remitting behaviours, I adopted a constructivist approach as my theoretical position (Johnson, 1995: 4 as referred to by Golafshani, 2003: 604). Because social research is always done with the aim "to find out what has happened, how it has happened and as far as possible, why it has happened" (Breakwell and Rose, 2000: 5), qualitative research methods are very effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, whose role in the study issue may not be readily apparent (Breakwell and Rose, 2000; Golafshani, 2003; Smith, 1998). The strength of qualitative research is also in its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue and provide information about the human side of social dynamics, that is, the often contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of respondents (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992; Henwood, 1996, cited by Lyons: 2000: 268).

To understand the familial and social significance remittances hold in order to explain the social pressure on migrants to remit required interrogating the holistic motives, issues and perception of remittances and their social consequences in transnational family and social relations and perceptions. To this end, I needed four categories of questions: The first category inquired about the demographics of respondents, to assess whether there would be remitting behaviour variations owing to gender, age, community of origin or residence, occupation, etc. The second category assessed whether respondents remit, the motives, frequency and volume of remittance if so, and whether there has been any change in family expectations since migration as compared to the period prior to migration. The third category assessed respondents' perceptions of the impact of remittances on their livelihoods and investments in the host setting, and the source of social pressure. This category interrogates in particular the socio-cultural understanding of participants and their opinions of socio-cultural role expectations and the system of social sanction. The

fourth and final category assessed respondents' perceptions of other migrants' remitting behaviours.

2.1. Population of the Study

My target group is Congolese migrants in Johannesburg. I came to decide to research on the cause of social while researching on behalf on the Department of Forced Migration at Wits University on the nature transnational relation between Congolese migrants and their families. It was the manifest degree of pressure to remit amongst respondents in this study which prompted my interest to explore the phenomenon further at masters' level. The fact that I speak the respondents' language and have a lot of cultural capital to assist in gaining the confidence of respondents proved to be a crucial advantage.

There exists a debate around the distinctions between different generations of transnational actors, and the dominant argument is that, given the patterns of interactions involved, only first generation migrants can meaningfully be considered transnational actors (Levitt and Waters, 2002). While some authors argue for the salience of a small minority of second and third generation migrants engaged in what is a fairly limited range of transnational practices within the context of a mostly linear assimilation process, this argument is generally made with regard to the cumulative impact of these minority practices (Levitt and Waters, 2002). In this study, however, the focus is qualitative rather than quantitative, and the dynamics of belonging with which the study is concerned are clearly more applicable to first generation migrants than subsequent generations.

Thus, I deliberately excluded second generation migrants. Congolese migration to South Africa is a relatively new phenomenon (Steinberg, 2005, Morris & Bouillon, 2001: 73), and it is my contention that the study of second generation migrants forms part of a problematic different of that of their parents. Even if second-generation migrants face exclusion and xenophobia alongside their parents, their cultural assimilation precludes use of the same analytical instruments: they often have less, if any, contact with family members in their home country (Petty, 2004). And where they do have contact, its nature and context is likely to be both qualitatively and quantitatively different.

I did not consider the duration of respondents' stay in South Africa as particularly important, as I wanted to assess migrants' socio-cultural influences and stereotypes about the economic effects of emigration. My respondents consisted of males and female aged between 19 and 40 years old. The number of years spent in South Africa ranged from one month to 12 years. Initially, in order to test whether there would be similarities of socio-cultural remittance motive patterns across different cultures, my colleague Haupt-Freemantelle (who at that time was researching cosmopolitanism in the same sites) and I, attempted to include one another's questions in our respective interview schedules in order to obtain a control group for comparative purposes. This would have been interesting, as her target population comprised migrants from other African countries. But as, over time, we both turned to unstructured questioning strategies to probe responses further, this strategy proved practically difficult to pursue.

2.2. Research Sites and Selection Strategies

The sample for qualitative interviews consisted of 60 respondents. I did not predetermine the number of 60 but kept going until I felt I had sufficient material. As stated by Marshall (1996: 523), "the appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that allows the researcher to adequately answer the research question." As stated earlier, I also used quantitative data from the Johannesburg City Survey⁵ conducted in 2006 by the Forced Migration Studies Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand. In the Johannesburg Survey the target population sample was 846 respondents comprising 253 Congolese respondents, 186 Somali, 201 Mozambican, and 191 South African, as well as 15 respondents of other origins. But in the current study I used only include findings on Congolese respondents' livelihood.

I conducted my fieldwork in Johannesburg's suburbs of Yeoville, Bruma, Berea, Rosettenville, and Kenilworth. These areas were selected because they host – or are surrounded by areas that host – the highest number of Congolese migrants in Johannesburg (Vigneswaran, 2007). Congolese migrants tend, in Johannesburg as in other places, to meet around designated places (Vigneswaran, 2007 and Gondola, 2003): for instance, the Junction Mall in the Rosettenville area

⁵ For further details on the Johannesburg City Survey, see Vigneswaran's Field Notes on residential sampling problems. The Paper extensively discusses various methodological problems experienced during the 2006 Johannesburg phase of the African Cities Project. More particularly the paper explores the theoretical and practical limits of the data collection approach and difficulties involved in generating a representative sample in a Southern African city.

and around Kin Malebo, La Reference Bar, and the market and businesses in Yeoville. Given the fact that my aspiration was to capture as broad a range as possible of migrants' remittance-related experiences, perceptions, socio-cultural knowledge, opinions, attitudes, and so on, I used ad hoc strategies to ensure that the sample provided a cross-section of ages, genders and economic occupations. This required a very diverse sample.

It is particularly difficult to obtain a representative sample in Johannesburg (See Vigneswaran, 2007); which explains my initial choice to use convenience techniques and ad-hoc strategies. To get a viable sample I applied Stephan's (1950: 373) general advice on selection led by common sense on what range of respondents would constitute a group similar in nature to the entire target population. I started from convenience sampling but later used a purposive snowball sample from those initial convenient leads. From each area I selected respondents based on my practical knowledge of the places where Congolese migrants gather in their everyday activities in the research sites – such places of work and business, sporting events, bars, church meetings, and so on taking into account important variables such as the demographic stratification of age, gender and, as far as possible, apparent social class among the migrants in attendance.

The challenge was that these meeting points tend to be male-dominated places where women do not feel comfortable. Thus, I used snowballing techniques to identify female respondents: I would request male respondents to nominate and facilitate introductions to women who might be willing to participate in the research. I then contacted the nominees and interviewed them where possible. I made every effort to achieve representative numbers of male and female respondents (45 males to 15 females given the smaller number of Congolese female migrants in South Africa). This is what explains that in some instances, interview sessions took place at the respondents' residence. However, in the Yeoville area, female respondents were interviewed primarily inside the market.

2.3. Data Collection Technique: In-depth Interviews

I collected the all data myself through in-depth face-to-face interviews between October 2007 and September 2008 in Lingala, Swahili, French and one in English. I did not need the service of an interpreter, as I speak all these languages. My knowledge of the languages proved to be a useful asset as it allowed me to conduct interviews in respondents' chosen languages, improving

levels of comfort in the interview and freeing respondents to express themselves without the constraints imposed by a second or third language. But qualitative approaches to data collection also allow for bias to enter into a project through the involvement of the researcher in the process. I attempt below to examine the effects of my personal characteristics on the current study and the ways I tried to minimize these.

2.4. Reflecting on myself as a research instrument

A qualitative researcher necessarily remains an important part of the process of scientific knowledge production, bringing to it his or her own understanding, conceptual orientation and a stock of cultural knowledge (Lyons, 2000: 270). But in order to minimize my own impact on the findings, I made constant efforts to allow each interaction to take its own direction according to respondents' responses. The use of digital recording was also effective as it allowed me to collect data without selection at such early stage. However, my academic training and general knowledge of many Congolese and other socio-cultural systems remained instrumental in the way I formulated questions and probed for answers.

2.4.1. Researcher-Respondents' Effects

As supported by literature, a researcher's effects (otherwise labeled "experimenter effects"), affect any data collection method where respondents have overt interactions with the researcher (Breakwell, 2000: 247). During an interview session, a researcher's characteristics (e.g. demeanour, accent, gender, age, national or ethnic belonging, and so on) will always influence a respondent's willingness to participate and to answer questions accurately or otherwise (Breakwell, 2000: 247).

Some of these effects were obvious in my research. For instance, I had difficulty classifying respondents according to specific socio-professional categories, which could otherwise have helped me assess the relative livelihood standards and remitting behaviours of respondents. Most respondents, when asked about their professions, cited the profession they exercised in DRC many years ago, or claimed that they were students. This was particularly the case of respondents who hold a tertiary education degree, but who work as car guards or other "degrading" activities for survival. I often had to specify my wish to know the profession exercised in South Africa to

earn a living, and even then, respondents would say they worked as “security”, which they perhaps deemed to be a less shameful occupation than that of car guard⁶.

At times, inquiring about economic activities appeared to be a sensitive question. For example, a woman in the Yeoville market ended our interview after I asked her to give her husband’s occupation.⁷ In some instances where respondents claimed to be students, I discovered during the course of the interview that they only had the intention to study, as they began asking about the application and registration process. Indeed, not all Congolese migrants hold a tertiary degree, but the temptation to hide one’s socio-professional category seemed very high in those involved in the kinds of activities that they consider as temporary, or would make one consider them as failure. The only way to resolve these problems seemed to be coming back to certain sensitive issues once the interview was well underway and trust clearly established.

The last example concerns the ability to speak French. In Congo, as a result of the Mobutu’s regime “authenticity policy” requiring people to use national languages and traditional clothing, the use of French does not play a major integrative social function and is generally confined to the official, formal contexts of business, government, and education, or where non-speakers of Congolese national languages are involved. Generally Congolese who are able to speak fluent French are those who went to school. As such, the ability to speak the French language fluently often symbolizes one’s educational background. The fact that I am a student and embarked on an academic enterprise therefore had an effect on respondents’ choice of language for the interview. The majority expressed a desire to be interviewed in French, but could not speak it fluently. The explanation is likely to be that respondents wished to prevent me from assuming that they were illiterate or less educated.

As the aim of qualitative research is to gather an ‘authentic’ understanding of people’s experiences and perceptions (Seale and Verman, 1997: 380), the use of a respondent’s first languages can be crucial to the validity of their account. Thus, to minimize problems related to language and allow self-conscious respondents to be as relaxed as possible and able to expand their introspective responses, I often resorted to prolonging the part of the interview dedicated to

⁶ As often discovered during the course of interviews

⁷ This may have also been a gender issue

simpler questions on demographic attributes, adding questions on unrelated issues, to set a scene of informal discussion in which I would switch between French and Lingala or another language. This would prompt the respondent to mix languages in his or her responses, so that he or she was comfortable by the time I began conducting the conversation totally in Lingala or Swahili. The strategy seemed to work as expected.

2.5. Limitations of the Study

Although previous quantitative research in the research sites, and guidance from the literature on ad hoc sampling strategies, helped me in foreseeing and overcoming potential difficulties involved in accessing respondents, some limitations remained. As stated above, Congolese migrants tend to meet around designated places (Vigneswaran, 2007; Gondola, 2003). But it is common knowledge that places of residence, places of leisure, membership of churches, and the kind of business people engage in, are often related to wealth, age, religious beliefs, and other complex human interaction preferences. Thus, my selection methods may have led to the exclusion of certain age groups and people with certain religious beliefs.

Apart from the above problems, identifying respondents at specific Congolese meeting places (where most migrants generally go to get news from or call Congo, or buy Congolese food) may have resulted in accessing Congolese migrants who already had a strong sense of national belonging. Thus, the findings of this study may relate primarily to the socio-cultural meanings of remittances for those with a strong sense of or desire for national belonging, and may shed little light on those who remit but have little socio-cultural attachment to the country of origin or social networks that exist in Johannesburg.

However, analytical accounts given here are, by definition, not suited to the drawing of conclusions particular to a Congolese ethnic group or cultural reality. Myself being Congolese, it was just not appropriate to ask respondents about their ethnic group.⁸ This is to say that conclusions presented in this study are generalized at a national level, though there is no such thing as a single “Congolese Culture”. The DRC has more than 10 ethnic groups and about 450

⁸ Ethnic identity is usually a politically and emotionally charged one for one Congolese person to ask another as a result of different ethnic conflicts the DRC as witnessed.

different tribes. Thus, the question of whether there may be variations owing to geographical and ethnic origin requires more targeted and localized studies to be answered.

This chapter brings us to discussion on research design and methodology in the next chapter.

III. SETTING THE STAGE: LITERATURE REVIEW ON MOTIVE TO REMIT

As monetary entities, and especially due to their socio-cultural significance, remittances are probably the most emotionally meaningful objects in contemporary transnational familial relations. In fact, as an embodiment of migrants' human values in transnational family and social relations, remittances do not have close competitors as carriers of such strong and diverse feelings, significance, and strivings (Krueger, 1986: 3 cited in Mitchell and Mickel, 1999: 569). In the existing literature, migrants' motives to remit are mainly explained in terms of five theoretical approaches: altruism; self-interest; mutual beneficiary arrangements; perceived obligation; and prestige (De Bruyn and Wets, 2006; De Bruyn and Kuddus, 2005). While the theories outlined above are useful in their respective attempts to capture and explain different determinants of or motives to remit, the current study attempts to demonstrate that this existing typology provides only a limited picture: they describing primarily the life circumstances that bring migrants to remit, and fail to critically analyze the underlying social and cultural dynamics that shape remittances as symbols of the remitter's inner self. This may be due to the fact that patterns of migration and remittances continue to be framed by an emphasis on their material and developmental impacts for developing countries and households, the divisions of labor, the use of migration as a way of escaping economic hardship and seeking new opportunities, etc (Orellana, Thorne, Chee and Lam 2001: 578). This study demonstrates that none of the existing theories of motivation to remit satisfactorily explains the empirical observation that, even in absence of any immediate necessity in the family, some migrants deprive themselves or delay the realization of their initial migration projects (which might have offered more sustainable and better financial prospects for both the migrant and the family) in order to maintain their remittance behaviour. In fact, previous research has overlooked many paradoxes and contradictions in the patterns of migrants' remitting behavior in the light of their actual economic conditions in host settings. I discuss below each motive.

3.1. The Tacit Contractual and Inheritance Models

De Bruyn and Kuddus (2005) and Muteta (2007) contend that migrants remit by self-interest. According to this model, through remittances, a migrant enters into tacit contractual arrangements with non-migrant family members; for instance, to increase his or her prospects for inheritance or to prepare for his or her return to the country of origin. For Lucas and Stark (1985,

cited in De Bruyn and Wets, 2006: 9), migrants remit in arrangements of mutual benefit with their families. In this model, remittances serve as a repayment for past expenses by the family in financing the migrant's journey or serve as a diversification or risk-sharing strategy. The family of the migrant and the migrant him- or herself work in different areas, thus providing alternative sources of income. At the face of things, a misleading factor in the contractual and inheritance models seems, in my view, to be their attempt to understand the remittance relationship wholly in terms of the economic priorities of the migrant's family. I did not find evidence to support the historical stereotype of migrants as young, unmarried persons sent out to obtain revenue for the household (SAMP, 2006), or suggesting that some respondents remit in prospect to inherit.⁹ To the contrary, respondents' accounts suggest that their migration was part of a long-term strategy to realize ambitions they could not achieve at home – migration is thus merely a passing life phase activity undertaken with a view to returning better off the limited range of opportunities offered by “home”. As found elsewhere by Sumata (2002: 622), although Congolese migrants fulfill family obligations from the host society, the primary reason for their migration – albeit economic – is to satisfy personal ambitions. But most importantly, although the majority of respondents said that family members had helped them in making the migration project materialize, their decision to emigrate was first an individual venture for the sake of personal aspirations and no direct link was made between the assistance they received and their current remitting motives. This suggests that the specific assistance people receive toward their migration project is not usually conceptualized as distinct from any other financial support migrants received from family during the course of their lives. Though respondents see themselves as family members, I did not find any indication that respondents continue to view themselves as members or breadwinners of the restraint family household they left. Besides, the fact that many respondents emigrated as a result of the worsening political and economic environment in DRC (Sumata, 2002) might of necessity have significantly reduced their inheritance or financial expectations from their families.

⁹ Lucas and Stark (1985 cited by Sumata, 2002) found such patterns in Botswana

3.2. The Prestige Model

Drawing from the social status theory, proponents of the pride or prestige suggest that sometimes migrants explicitly seek to display their ability to provide financial resources (de Bruyn and Wets, 2006: 9) to relatives in both destination and home countries. In my view, the use of the concept of social status in remittance motives literature should not be taken to imply that remittances are generative of any kind of prestige. In fact, inasmuch as the concept of prestige is used to refer to individuals' social rank within a society, it means the moral authority of a person (Wegener, 1992). In stratification theories that emphasize order in a society (for instance, functionalist theories), prestige is conceptualized as an attribute of individuals' social positions that contributes to social hierarchy (Wegener, 1992: 258). In this sense, David and Moore (1945, cited in Wegener, 1992: 255), in their formulation of the functionalist theory of stratification, argue that "prestige is what we get for achievements that are in line with societal needs", and that "prestige differences constitute the system of social inequality." Proponents of the rational-conflict theories straightforwardly argue that prestige is a commodity that can be exchanged in transactions like money (Coleman 1990: 129-31, cited in Wegener, 1992: 256). They argue, however, that prestige is "produced" through processes of asymmetrical exchange, that is, whenever benefits an individual A received from individual B cannot be reciprocated (Blau 1964 cited in Wegener, 1992: 256).

As demonstrated below, a vertical conception of the concept of status may be misleading when applied to remittance motives and that the horizontal concept of inclusion or exclusion is more useful in accounting for remittance behavior. The social status theory I advance differs from the prestige model in that it describes social importance, that is, respect and social opinion related to the display of a high-ranking social behavior by a person, as a valid product of family and cultural education within a society. Rather than attracting a surplus of social status, remittance behavior simply fulfils the demands of social goods in terms of belonging criteria and fundamental role systems that define a migrant's familial inclusion. Migrants are thus expected to conform, through specific behaviours they display (such as remitting), to socio-cultural norms in a society. It is not that those who fulfill these expectations are rewarded with prestige, but rather that those who do not conform constitute a deviant cluster of the community, often considered undeserving of membership in it or deemed sub-human.

In fact, in order to adequately apply the concept of prestige to remittance motives theories, we should ask a fundamental question: “is prestige the product of an individual’s subjective evaluation or is it an objective and structural reality? (Wegener, 1992: 255). Because, contending in line with Wegener’s (1992: 258) point, to conceive prestige as a purely subjective phenomenon will be of little sociological relevance. That is, if an individual’s judgment of his or her prestigious social standing does not mirror an objective social reality to some extent, as researchers, we are left with only assumptions of psychological effects (Wegener, 1992: 258). In fact, while an individual may engage in social action out of rational motive to maximize returns in social considerations, societal recognition systems are based on functional prerequisites that determine what rewards one gets for the fulfillment of certain essential duties (Wegener, 1992: 256).

As motive for remittance, the weakness of the prestige theory lies mainly in its assumption that remittance behaviour amounts to the conspicuous display of wealth and success, explicitly designed to impress people in migrants’ communities of origin. Indeed, the concept of “status” in status theories of remittance motives is problematic because it implies a graduation or vertical ranking of individuals (Ossowski 1963 cited in Wegener, 1992: 256). The gradual notion of the social status concept is further misleading because, as research on prestige and prestige measurement has constantly demonstrated, there is an inferior role of prestige in status attainment models (Wegener, 1992). And as Featherman et al and Featherman and Hauser (1976 cited in Wegener, 1992: 254) convincingly demonstrated in a series of studies, the notion of prestige is not particularly relevant to migrants’ status theory as “human mobility transmits socioeconomic status rather than prestige.”

To illustrate my point, while people can buy a prestige car and its price reflects that, for instance, nobody would argue that people pursue higher studies for prestige, even though the ultimate acquired status can be prestigious. This is to say that there are highly regarded activities that people pursue for superior motives based on their world view and personal ambition irrespective of the fact that they can cause prestige. One of such activities is migration. In migrants’ sending communities, the migration enterprise is almost a coveted religious pilgrimage (WA Kabwe and WA Kabwe-Segatti, 2003). It is prepared for over months, even years, and takes money and skills to materialize. Sometimes it materializes only after several perilous attempts. Taken in this

context, remittances are often the only (seemingly) objective medium to mark the success of the enterprise and by extension symbolize a migrant's inherent character traits. Migration is thus experienced as an initiation process or "rite of passage." In fact, as evidenced in this thesis, migrants remit primarily out of internalized socio-cultural duty-valuation systems in order to ensure that their families and community of origin render positive judgments on their membership status in accordance with social norms. Given the fact that society's and family members' opinion or judgments on one's valid membership have permanent symbolized social meanings and values than the temporal material assistance they provide, it becomes inconceivable for migrants to get prestige from remittance. In other words, this is to argue, that on balance, the social goods migrants "buy" or expect to get from family and society through remittances are more important than what they provide as they can not reciprocate. As shown below, I conceptualize remittances as stemming primarily from migrants' inherent need to ascertain positive opinion or judgments on their family or social membership.

3.3. The Altruistic Model

For Van Wey (2004), Lindley (2007) and De Bruyn and Wets (2006) migrants remit altruistically – providing additional income due to moral concerns to improve the well-being and living conditions of their family members remaining in the country of origin. There is no need to demonstrate that individuals can sometimes act out of a moral disposition to do good for others. In relation to remittances motives, the altruistic hypothesis is best evidenced in the literature on the counter-cyclical nature of remittances linked to the macroeconomic environment of remittance source and receiving countries: that is, remittances tend to increase when a receiving country or community faces adverse events, and decrease later (Conway and Cohen, 1998: 27; see also Uy, 2008; World Bank, 2006). But as a scientific model, the altruistic motive theory seems to proceed from the altruism model in family studies. This school of thought not only conceptualizes the extended family as the basic economic decision-making unit, but also sees extended family members as linked through altruism, which explains the sharing of resources between them (Altonji and Hayashi, 1993). In other words, remitting by altruism is just an extension of such disposition.

I argue, however, that as a tool for analysis, altruism is a limiting concept for transnational and remittances studies in its traditional assumption of consensus and love and in its implicit invitation to minimize the diversity of family experiences and the often ambivalent and conflicting interests of family members (Connidis and McMullin, 2002: 560). Following, McMullin and Marshall (1999, cited in Connidis and McMullin, 2002), my point is that social roles must be seen as grounded in structured sets of power relations characterized more by conflict than consensus. In this sense, the concept of altruism does not, in any meaningful way, allow the exploration of the ways in which transnational family relationships are negotiated through remitting behaviour.

The last determinant advanced by De Bruyn and Wets (2006: 9) is the social pressure exercised by the family in the country of origin, by which the migrant feels obliged to remit to satisfy the needs of his or her family in the country of origin. In my view, this social obligation model is not very different from other approaches. In fact, in all other models, people are assumed to be socially obliged to act.

3.4. Gaps in Existing Models: Remittance and Transnational Ties

Juxtaposed with empirical realities, a number of questions remain unanswered by existing models of motivations to remit. How can altruism explain remittance of cash or materials to relatives in good financial standing by a migrant who is still struggling economically to find his or her way in the host country? Why would a migrant be concerned about his or her future inheritance and become suddenly preoccupied with securing his or her future bequest only once in a migration setting? While families generally offer an extremely compelling and positive basis of identity, they may also be a deep source of stress and alienation leading to internal struggles and conflict relationships. Why would migrants suddenly become concerned about honoring tacit contractual obligations towards family members, while they acknowledge that their economic situation has, in fact, worsened as a result of migration? And finally, why would Congolese migrants, for example, send money to people who do not know them?¹⁰ Given the fact that it is primarily within transnational family and social relations that remittances derive their meaning, I

¹⁰ As shown below, Congolese migrants sometimes send money to musicians, journalists or theater actors in their home country to be sung or having their names mentioned during TV programs in absence of any previous relationship.

argue that an adequate answer to the above set of questions requires a scholarly, socio-anthropological understanding of the socio-cultural perceptions and belief systems that determine human action. Only such a thorough examination of the interplay of socio-cultural dynamics within migrants' communities of origin can explain the why, when, how, how often, and to whom migrants remit. This is the thrust of the thesis that I develop in the subsequent chapters.

Proponents of the social belonging theories contend that social belonging is a state in which an individual, by assuming a role, is characterized by his or her inclusion in the family or social group (S.I.R.C., 2007). According to this model, the need to feel one belongs and maintains a given social group membership is simply a basic aspect of being human (S.I.R.C., 2007). The consecutive assumption is that every human being, wherever life circumstances may take him or her, is preoccupied by the need to feel he or she belongs to a social group and expresses it through exhibition of socially expected behaviours. In this sense belonging or social identification becomes the basis of human motivation (McKinnon and Langford, 1994: 218). It is in this sense that one needs to contextualize Congolese migrants' compulsion to remit. This is essentially a form of belonging designed to describe individual migrants' remitting behaviour in accordance with family or social norms. Individuals are thus conceptualized through specific remitting behaviours they display, to conform to socio-cultural norms in a society. In this chapter I examine the contexts and basis of why familial belonging and social status matter so much for Congolese migrants that they would prefer to sacrifice their personal social and material advancement in host settings than fail to remit.

3.1. The Salience of Transnational Family Belonging

In the literature on belonging, authors tend to see the link between migrants and geographical places as a function of imagined processes or memories (Nzoyabino, 2008: 6). However, the ways in which people claim identity and belonging are various, complex, sometimes contradictory, and thus, do not allow for simple definition or analysis (Brown 2006:1). In the current study belonging is understood as defined by Helgesson (2006: 36), as meaning "a continuous process between 'being' and 'nothingness', between being active and passive, to reach a state of balance where one is in control, and at-home-in-the-world." As Bollen and Hoyle (1990: 480) rightly advance, an individual's perception of their own cohesion to a group

has two dimensions: a sense of belonging and a feeling of morale. This is to say that not only does the need to belong stem from an individual's personality system as shaped by their socio-cultural belief system, but also that family cohesion becomes the force holding the family unit together (Bollen and Hoyle, 1990: 481).

Drawing on this, I argue, following Bollen and Hoyle (1990) conceptualization of social cohesion, that in migration settings, the intensity of the need to belong proceeds primarily from loneliness and become so salient that it may trap migrants in a compulsive desire to maintain the feeling of belonging (Moody and White, 2003). Migration leads to the establishment of social relations nested and stemming from familial cohesion and social embeddedness (Moody and White, 2003). In this context, migrants and their relatives belong to networks of social relations whereby cohesion is based on the networks' node connectivity¹¹ (Moody and White, 2003:1). This is a structural cohesion which functions in such a way that each family member is, irrespective of his or her geographical location, part of the minimum number of actors who, if removed from the group, would disconnect the group (Moody and White, 2003:1). And lose family membership.

As attested through history around the world, in various ways and to different degrees, dispersed populations always maintain networks of interconnection with their societies of origin (Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc, 1995: 51). In fact, though migrants settle and integrate in their host country and invest themselves socially, economically, and sometimes politically in their new society, they may continue to participate in the daily life of the societies from which they emigrated but which they did not abandon (Schiller, 1999: 94). For many years, however, migration scholars and political actors viewed migrants as peoples who uprooted themselves, left behind home culture and country, and embraced the process of incorporation and assimilation into a different society and culture (Takaki 1993 cited in Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc, 1995: 48). Migrants' ties with their communities of origin were mainly discounted and obscured by the narratives of nation building that prevailed in many countries until the current globalization period (Schiller et al., 1995: 48).

¹¹ Family unit cohesiveness

McCall & Simmons (1966 and 1979, cited by Lin, 1999: 468) suggest that the prominence and salience of an identity is determined by “a person’s commitment to and investment in a particular role-identity, as well as the intrinsic and extrinsic gratifications derived from related performances.” Added to the notion of gratifications as incentives, should be the role of social pressures which constitute a disincentive factor to departing from a particular identity. Societies often use social labels or stigmas to qualify those considered non-valid members. As stated above, in migrants’ sending communities there are designations or labels for those migrants perceived as unsuccessful or as failures, and generally migrants remit to avoid being socially marked as such. As a respondent said:

“It is my responsibility to take care of the family. I am the only boy in our family and I am not ‘koy-koy’ (Incapable of work/Lazy). I have three sisters who are married already. They sometimes help, but the father cannot ask their husbands money you know. It is not respectful” (Respondent 56).

One needs here to understand the socio-historical meaning and implication of the respondent’s choice of the “koy-koy” in the above quote in order to grasp its status as a social marker. The historical use of the word goes back to the colonial period. While people would generally use the Swahili word “muvivu” to mean a lazy person, Belgian colonial officials and employers used the word “koy-koy” to qualify those unable to work. Given the fact that Belgian employers often had to go to remote villages to recruit people, as indigenous populations did not have the freedom to move freely and seek employment in the cities, to be deemed koy-koy as an irreversible stigma on one’s masculinity as it meant remaining in the village while all the “valid” young men of the community left to work to the cities. Given the fact that due to the expansion of the colonial enterprise, in many indigenous societies animal hunting had lost its place in the practice and construction of masculinity, to be qualified “koy-koy” meant to be deemed lazy not by choice but by natural abnormality.¹² Hence the word’s degrading connotation. Nowadays, some parents invoke the designation “koy-koy” to induce children to behave in a desired way.

Many cultural systems socialize people to believe that it is shameful not to be able to honour one’s social duties, especially providing for one’s parents (Arnet and Galambo, 2003).

¹² Originally it meant incapable of work - almost disabled. In this sense, the type of laziness it now implies is equivalent to a kind of fundamental uselessness for the task of adulthood generally; not so much a choice not to work, but as a state of being naturally defective.

Accordingly, in many Congolese societies (unless male family members are manifestly unable to provide for their parents, for example due to sickness, disability, or other incapacitating circumstances, etc), allowing one's parents to depend on in-laws for basic necessities is perceived as disgraceful. It is the responsibility of sons to prevent this eventuality by providing the necessary support to their families, as daughters are considered to belong to their husbands' families after marriage. The social pressure on migrants is even stronger as in the DRC; migration is strongly associated in the public imagination with easy access to money and other materials. Thus, failure to remit gives an impression of bad faith.

The centrality of familial cohesiveness as a mediator of family unit formation, maintenance and productivity is the most important value of family belonging (Lott and Lott 1965, cited in Bollen and Hoyle, 1990: 479). In most African cultural systems, familial belonging and cohesion are so important that to be without a family always involves social disgrace (Mungazi, 1993). As I found through empirical research, respondents are very much aware of their role in maintaining family cohesion, and thus influencing its strength or decline. The cultural conception of family and familial roles incorporates each family member's personal judgments of his or her own closeness to each of the other family unit members. It also fosters an awareness that the strength of a family depends on mutual positive attitudes among the members of the unit (Bollen, 1990: 480). How the establishment of a separate life affects individuals depends on the context in which they were socialized. The assumption here is that for individuals from collectivistic and individualistic society of origin, the effects will be different.

In this sense remittances mainly serve as a medium for the negotiation of family belonging, allowing migrants to ascertain closeness and sustain the positive feelings of non-migrant family members toward them, while negative feelings would equate to exclusion. In this way, remittances become an expression of migrants' good and valid standing as family members within existing familial relationships that would otherwise weaken. Remitting thus translates directly into the acknowledgement of migrants as valid members – not only by their family, but also by the wider community of origin. In this sense, migrants' ability and "willingness" to fulfill familial and social roles objectively determines the acknowledgement and acceptance of their familial membership, while also subjectively satisfying their own intrinsic sense of belonging.

This point is consistent with social belonging theory, which argues that social belonging means inclusion in the social community by assuming social roles (S.I.R.C., 2007).

To capture how the need for family belonging operates to influence the social actions of migrants – or, specifically, how it influences their remittance activity – one requires an understanding of the broad theoretical frameworks that explain how human beings generally claim family and social identities. In fact, the use of the concepts of familial belonging and status to understand and explain the determinants of migrants' remittances links these theoretical approaches directly to broader theoretical perspectives on identity; social identity and social belonging; social membership status; social stigma; psychological behavioural models; and social anthropology theories. These different theoretical perspectives help in understanding the determinants of human social actions and decisions.

The theory of identity in sociological social psychology operates on the assumption that human societies have always maintained a hierarchy among their members – between youths and adults for example (S.I.R.C., 2007: 26). It is generally the system of social mobility in a society that helps individuals to navigate between available social statuses. The social identity theory draws from identity theory to argue that human societies often use symbols to designate their members within the social structure, usually by granting them 'designations.' It is these designations which carry the shared behaviour expectations that are generally referred to as 'roles' (Stryker, 1968: 559, cited in McKinnon and Langford, 1994). Through the symbolization afforded by language, familial or social designations become personal identities (McCall & Simmons cited in McKinnon and Langford, 1994). That is, familial or social designations carry meanings and create internalized expectations with respect to individuals' own behaviours toward the family or society (Stryker, 1968: 559, cited in McKinnon and Langford, 1994).

3.2. Remittances as Transnational Social Goods

As stated earlier, families in Africa are goal directed and have tacit codes of conduct transmitted to children through cultural socialization, which define their family roles and expected behaviours. Thus, showing one's sociability – for instance through regularly visiting family members, the sick, attending to mourning – showing courage and intelligence, and contributing towards the social upliftment of other family members, and so on, become different kinds of

expected behaviours and roles, or social goods that people provide not only to remain members, but also in exchange for the entitlement to claim social rights. In return for fulfilling one's family role or displaying expected behaviours, one receives positive normative judgments on the social goods provided. In most societies, the social goods people get in return always correspond with social inclusion and distribution in social positions or status (Weber, 1946, cited in Lin, 1999: 467). However, in such social exchange relations, a reward one gets by providing social goods can also consist in simple avoidance of social sanction such as a shameful social categorization (Gramling and Forsyth, 1987).

As a departure point of transnational family and social relations, migration's first social consequence is a fundamental reduction of the social-goods options one can deploy. In the context of physical separation, remittances become the only significant social good to fulfill not only an array of expected social roles, but also the only significant medium through which to display expected behaviours and negotiate belonging. This is to say that migration leads to transnational situations whereby remittances, notwithstanding their economic value and temporal and consumptive utility, become the only disposable social goods through which migrants express and foster familial belonging. While prior to migration visiting a family member in hospital, for example, would have been a sufficient social good to express one's good familial belonging and compassionate feelings, after migration, remittances become the only medium to express such qualities. As a male respondent explained:

“Yes I send money to Congo. I need to send to show respect to my father. Otherwise our neighbours will make fun of him, you know...” (Respondent 45).

And, as a woman explained:

“What will happen if I do not send money? They will forget me... The family cannot count me if I do not contribute when there is a problem... In Congo people think we have a lot of money here. Like recently, my cousin told me that she was getting married. I had to send her money to show her parents that I am not jealous even if I am not yet married (smile). There are many interpretations in families...we need to avoid them” (Respondent 38).

To be forgotten or not counted should not be taken in its literal meaning. To be social discounted in a family involves experiencing extreme alienation as it means absence of valuation of one's valid membership. However, some migrants are not just preoccupied with their own familial

belonging, but understand that their behaviour will determine the inclusion or exclusion of their children as well. A respondent expressed this as follows:

“Not only me but for my children as well. We must see far, I have to show my daughters where we come from and our culture” (Respondent 50).

The display of one’s respect to parents, the avoidance of a misunderstanding of one’s feelings about a cousin’s marriage, or the cultural education of children¹³ through remitting aim primarily at showing one’s life skills, one’s valid membership in the family. Therefore, for these respondents, any other remittance motives as outlined earlier (contractual, altruism, prestige, etc) become secondary life circumstances allowing these migrants to provide such intimate and superior social goods. The gratification becomes the insurance that other family members will issue positive judgments on the migrant’s familial membership. The threat of social sanctions and stigmatization operates the same way in migration settings as in the community of origin, inducing migrants to perform their social duties in order to avoid negative social stigmas.

Based on the above evidence, it becomes clear why, in order to maintain membership, individual migrants will do whatever they can in order to remit, even if it is obviously against their own apparent interests. As suggested by psychological behavioural theory, human beings will always seek to remain in social situations that appear to offer the best outcomes (Gramling and Forsyth, 1987). Even if the alternatives are all obviously “bad”, it is assumed that individuals will gravitate to the least painful of available exchange situations (Gramling and Forsyth, 1987: 402). To comprehend this, one needs to consider that remittances always represent a social exchange situation between migrants and their families. A migrant provides remittances as symbolic (and not just material) goods to express membership and, in return, gets explicit positive normative judgments on his or her valid membership status from his family. I argue that in such exchange situations, all parties are getting something, even if, on the part of migrants, it may only be the avoidance of a socially more degrading stigma (Gramling and Forsyth, 1987: 403) or social exclusion. Thus, the performance of individuals’ roles not only become the criteria of their familial and social inclusion, but also push them to continue displaying socially and culturally

¹³ By trying to teach the child a life skill and how to be a valid family member in accordance with socio-cultural expectations

approved behaviours, thus securing their familial and social membership and hence avoiding exclusion or the stigmas attached to deviant designations within a society.

IV. REMITTANCE AS A SOCIAL DEATH RESISTANCE PRACTICE

In the current chapter I provide theoretical perspectives on how family stress is operationalized in migration settings and show how, in most social contexts, negotiations around familial belonging, interactions between transnational family networks, and motivations for remittance are culturally determined. This chapter shows particularly that migrants, as prior to migration, do not always freely choose which family roles to pursue or how to pursue them. In order to ensure that their family members will always fulfill their family roles, societies in general and families in particular resort to various kinds of social sanctions, and, depending on family realities, some families may even invoke supernatural resources to oblige their migrant members to perform their family duties.

To resist social death, some Congolese migrants resort, as illustrated by the evidence below, to tactics of social visibility. This is to say that remittances can fulfill the function of autonomous social death "resistance" actions and mediums to buy membership status in familial and social structures where human value is recognized (or not) based on people's role performances. Given the potential denigrating marginalization that may accompany failure to remit in some migrants' sending communities, such culturally purposive remitting behaviour, even by those migrants with little space to maneuver economically in host settings, becomes empowering.

4.1. Tactics of Social Visibility: Remittance and Status

In many societies, the idea of social status was almost exclusively defined at birth and would remain the same throughout one's lifetime (S.I.R.C., 2007: 26). While this may still be the case in some indigenous societies, in modern societies social status now corresponds more with one's own achievements, including education, occupation and income (S.I.R.C., 2007: 26). The literature on social status distinguishes two categories of status: ascribed (e.g. parental status, monarchical status, etc.) and achieved (physician, businessman, etc.). However, as Lin (1999: 468) convincingly argues, "even accounting for both the direct and indirect effects of socially ascribed status, achieved status (that owing to education and occupation) remains the most important factor accounting for the ultimate attained status." Previous discussion has already established that adulthood is an achieved rather than ascribed status in DRC. However, a further

source of achieved status for migrants lies in the perception, in their community of origin, that they hold high rank occupations in the host setting (though that is not often the case).

As contended by Brown (2006:1), ways in which people claim identity and belonging are various, sometimes complex and contradictory, and do not allow for a simple definition or analysis. And, while social belonging and social status concepts are as old as human society itself, the ways in which one satisfies such needs have significantly changed over time (S.I.R.C., 2007: 6). One contemporary tactic of social visibility that is used to symbolize the attainment of adulthood and to resist social death is referred to as “phénomène Mabanga.”¹⁴ The practice consists in migrants’ sending money to musicians who then sing their name and magnify their courageous character and achievements by adding attributes and epithets to their names (Mbu-Mputu, 2006). A good account of this tactic of social visibility in Congolese migrant communities is provided by Mbu-Mputu (2006) who writes:

“The story was reported to us by a priest working with the Congolese community in London. It was shortly after the launch, by Koffi Olomide, of a new album. He was in a Congolese restaurant when they found themselves invaded by joy screams of a young man to whom Koffi has dedicated an entire song in that album. The happy gentleman did an irruption into the restaurant with a case of champagne distributed freely to celebrate the event. The gentleman, according to him, spent no less than hundreds of pounds for seeing himself sung so by Koffi. Listening to the album, it is full of people so selected or ‘dedicated’.” (Personal translation)

The demand for this form of praise-singling – where praises are commonly sung despite the absence of any previous relationship – has created a very lucrative business for prominent Congolese musicians in Congo. Depending on the musician used, Congolese migrants can sometimes spend thousands of US dollars. But music is not the only medium used by migrants. Similar glorifications can be seen on Congolese comedies or simple TV programs. Whereas Mbu-Mputu suggests that this practice, and the manifestations of joy on being sung, should be understood as a simple manifestation of pride or prestige, I would argue that the cultural meaning of this remittance practice is one relating to the attainment of social adulthood.

¹⁴ The metaphor *Mabanga* is the plural of the word *libanga* meaning “stone” in Lingala. The idea here is that when a stone is thrown to someone the people around will turn to see the person. In a similar way when a musician sings someone, everybody will be interested to know him.

The degree of economic hardship in DRC has made migrant members the only economic providers for many households. In order to induce them to provide social goods, popular culture has invented new social strata among migrants (*mikilistes* in Lingala jargon): the class of “*vrais mikilistes*” (meaning real migrants) and the one of “*faux mikilistes*” (fake or unsuccessful migrants). The upper class of “*vrais mikilistes*” is essentially defined as constituted of migrants who are able to assist their families at home (Lanquetin, 2006; Mowoso, 2007), while that of “*faux mikilistes*” is defined as economically “unsuccessful or useless migrants”, or those unwilling to assist their families. To qualify as “*vrais mikilistes*”, remittances (money and other material such as clothes) are specific items one absolutely has to send home (Mowoso, 2007). Otherwise, to use Congolese jargon “*bako pimela ye bileyi*”¹⁵ meaning one’s “real migrant” status will not be acknowledged (Lanquetin, 2006). These socially constructed migrant identities are the basis of not only individual migrants’ social dignity, but of their families’ dignity as well. The consecutive social effects of remitting or not, are to be classified in either one of the two social classes. However, the social category of “*faux mikiliste*” is so socially stigmatizing that Congolese migrants would resort to remittances at all costs to escape the stigma attached to it, even by sending money to musicians who sing about them. As a respondent explained:

“I cannot lose my medal¹⁶... even if I do not have enough means I will make sure that I remit. You know how the Kinois (Kinshasa inhabitants) are: they will be saying, ‘ah, your brother does not have anything, he is a lazy boy’” (Respondent 35)

In DRC, as in many societies, adulthood remains a social construct and not a chronological fact (Vigh, 2006). Historically in Congo, as in many African societies, young women were generally socialized and prepared for their future roles in a family household. Young women’s attainment of adulthood in such societies was thus consecrated by natural and social events like marriage and giving birth. But due mainly to the deterioration of the economic fabric, young men and women are now equally expected to provide for their families by engaging in the same economic activities. Thus Congolese young women also engage in migration as a personal adventure and resort to the same strategies to attain adulthood. Hence in Congo, people are familiar with women such as Safi Ndomba, to whom the song “from generation to generation” is dedicated, implying that her reputation will pass from generation to generation (Mbu-mputu,

¹⁵ Literally “one would be denied stuffs to eat”

¹⁶ This word is often used in popular Lingala to mean generally social recognition

2006). The same applies to Jojo Dona Gracia, known as “the first lady of Johannesburg” and Mama Sharufa, “the first lady of Belgium” (Mbu-Mputu, 2006). The social stigmas here essentially serve the function of social control. And families often draw on them to remind migrants of their family duties. As another respondent said:

“Often my young brothers call me to inform me of the gossip people tell about me and the family. I know that sometimes they lie. But if you hear that, you have to send to avoid that people laugh at them.” (Respondent 40)

As supported by empirical evidence, some migrants use remittances to perform the function of concealing their social failure in host settings and transform it into an apparent success in their society of origin (Gondola, 1999; Wa Kabwe and Wa Kabwe-Segatti, 2003). In a host setting, however, it is difficult to disguise one’s true social status from other migrants. Thus remittances, and especially their amounts and frequency, become important symbolic currency among migrants in a host setting, who draw attention to their remittance practices in order to foster good opinions of their human qualities and sense of family responsibility among fellow migrants. As one respondent reported:

“I see it with my friends. They often come and pretend to inquire about currency exchange rates to let you know how often they remit. Sometimes they do not even remit. The currency rates are broadcast every day on TV. They just want to show that they care more about the family than you.” (Respondent 36)

Congolese migrants’ quest to attain adulthood is consistent with patterns of adulthood attainment elsewhere. In fact, worldwide, societies’ conception of symbols of youth’s transition to adulthood depends on objective natural and social events such as the completion of schooling, chronological age, marriage, giving birth, etc. However, as Arnet (2003; see also Arnet & Galambos 2003) demonstrated, when interrogated about what they themselves consider as the most important symbol of their own adulthood attainment, youths worldwide refer to the displaying or possessing the most valued social goods as the ultimate fact. In societies where security is a major concern, like in Israel for example, it is their military conscription that youths consider to be the important symbol of adulthood (Arnet, 2003). In Western societies (where adulthood is to a large extent ascribed by chronological age) the cultural value of individualism is nevertheless represented in the fact that youths consider becoming independent from one’s parents as the most important symbol of adulthood (Arnet, 2003; see also Arnet & Galambos

2003). However, in African and other societies where young people are socialized into a collectivistic way of life, young people consider being able to take care of one's family as the most important symbol (Arnet, 2003; see also Arnet & Galambos 2003). Therefore, remittances – the key symbol of ability to support one's family – can be used by migrants to conceal forms of social failure in the host setting (Gondola 1999), such as poverty and failure to obtain employment equal to one's qualifications.

Thus, in transnational settings not only does the value of social goods (that is, remittances and the reciprocal social status they help migrants to acquire) multiply as a result of the social cognitive and affective meanings (McKinnon and Langford 1994: 216) that remitters and recipients attach to them, but migrants are also able to use them as symbols of supposedly achieved status and, in so doing, acquire new social designations in communities of origin. In this sense, migrants blur social lines and make class values and social status illegible (wa Kabwe and wa Kabwe-Segatti, 2003; Gondola, 1999). This is to say, in some cases, individual migrants use remittances as symbols to portray false images of themselves to family or community members and, in so doing, sustain the illusion, in their communities of origin, of their false achieved social status in host settings.¹⁷

The social status migrants acquire or seek to sustain by remitting refers to the dignity attached to being recognized as a valid adult family member, and as such, has less to do with migrants having effective authority that they can claim over those they remit to, or having effective influence in decision-making in their family per se (although it may be true in some cases). In fact I did not find any evidence suggesting that migrants are able to influence the day-to-day decision-making in their family. I argue that the act of remitting is therefore perceived, from the perspective of family members and migrants, simply as fulfillment of one's family and social duties, and does not generate any prestige or power relations in the favour of migrants.

¹⁷ One needs to distinguish between the social status of adulthood (which symbolizes valued character traits) and other forms of social status, such as a good job or income; or between different symbols, such as the symbol of looking after one's family vs more status-oriented symbols such as type of job or amount of income.

4.2. Exerting Transnational Control: Family Stress and Resilience

Families whose members are positioned across extended distances experience extreme demands on their capabilities (Locoh, 1988). I argued above that it is migrants' conformity to family and social norms which defines their family belonging. Given the fact that human beings' search for familial and social identity is the most significant factor in orchestrating not only their behaviours, but also all other identities (Boulding, 1983: 261), they will presumably normally behave in manner consistent with family and social expectations. But as convincingly shown by Patterson (2002), there are times when families face circumstances which significantly exceed their capabilities and lead to conflict. When such disequilibrium persists, families experience crisis – a stressful period of significant disequilibrium and disorganization in family relationships and interactions (Patterson, 2002). Such stress is very often a turning point for a family, leading to major crisis and change in their structure, interaction patterns, and redefinition of membership status patterns. A “crisis or stressor can lead to a discontinuity in the family's trajectory of functioning either in the direction of improved functioning or poorer functioning” (Patterson, 2002: 351). When the discontinuity is in the direction of improved functioning, the situation is similar to the developmental discontinuities noted by Rutter (1987; Cowan, Cowan, and Schulz, 1996 cited in Patterson, 2002: 351) and others as an indicator of resilience.

According to critical theory, family stress is the ambivalence resulting from the set of socially structured contradictions made manifest in family interactions (Connidis and McMullin, 2002). To summarize Connidis and McMullin's (2002) point, ambivalent family interaction patterns are created by the contradictions and paradoxes that are embedded in sets of structured social relations through which opportunities, rights, and privileges are differentially distributed or negotiated. In this model, individuals generally experience ambivalence when social arrangements or expectations collide with their attempts to exercise agency while negotiating relationships and role expectations, including those with family members (Connidis and McMullin, 2002). In this sense, “individuals' attempts to manage family and social ambivalence in daily life shapes the very social structures that produces ambivalence in the first place, through either reproduction of the existing order or its transformation” (Connidis and McMullin, 2002: 565). In many African cultural systems obligations of familial solidarity have primacy and exercise superior force over any other obligations (e.g. those toward the church) (Barrett, 1969).

However, though very often family members engage in relatively stable patterns of interacting with their centre of authority, they may also try to balance the demands they face with their existing capabilities to achieve a level of family adjustment (Patterson, 2002: 351). This is what explains that migrants sometimes act against the expectations of their family. Families thus have the ability, even across great distances, to induce migrant members to behave in specific ways as an outcome of the complex socio-cultural dynamics into which the latter have been socialized

In the face of social valuation systems that bear upon the family unit and its members, it is not only migrants but also their families that struggle to "do family" in the face of divisive forces in host settings, such as immigration policies or socioeconomic and political hardships (Dill, 1988 and 1994 cited in Orellana, Thorne, Chee, and Lam, 2001: 586). To maintain family member compliance becomes equally a challenge to the family, as only families that successfully 'do' and maintain structural relations with their migrant members across national borders manage to build resilient transnational social ties (Orellana, Thorne, Chee, and Lam, 2001: 586) and avoid stigmatization. In this sense, the centres of family authority in migrants' societies of origin feel equally the pressure to be perceived as having produced valid family and community members. The processes by which families restore balance (reducing demands, increasing capabilities, and/or changing meanings) are called regenerative power in stress theory if the outcome is good (family bonadaptation) (Patterson, 2002: 351). Of course, families can also engage in processes leading to poor adaptation, which is called vulnerability in stress theory (McCubbin and Patterson, 1983 as referred to by Patterson, 2002: 351). Family resilience is similar to family regenerative power when good outcomes follow significant risk situations confronting a family (Patterson, 2002: 351). As shown above, in order to induce their migrant members to perform their social duties, family sometimes resort to different strategies. These range from informing migrants about the gossip going the rounds within their home communities, to the extreme use of supernatural devices, as discussed below.

4.2.1. Coerced Remittance?

There are two popular Congolese anecdotes that are illustrative of supposed supernatural inducements to remit. Nobody knows the people concerned or can vouch for the veracity of the tales, but nevertheless, the majority of people believe they really happened. The anecdotes tell of

two migrants' experiences: the first in France, and the second in Belgium. These migrants "forgot" their families at home and repeatedly ignored their financial requests, cutting off any contact with them. The first individual became socially and psychologically disturbed and began seeing his father appear on the screen whenever a television was playing. This migrant ceased seeing his father only after starting to remit.

The second one, from his bathroom in Brussels, mysteriously found himself transported to Kinshasa at the edge of Ndjili River, with his father standing ashore. It was only after begging and pleading for hours and promising to change his behaviour toward the family that his father "returned" him to Europe. It is uncertain to what extent these stories and similar ones have infiltrated the belief systems of Congolese youths. However, evidence from interviews suggests that for respondents, transnational social and supernatural fields are grounded in real social relations and not in an abstract metaphysical space (Guarnizo and Smith 1998 cited in Orellana, Thorne, Chee and Lam, 2001: 575).

Families create the necessary ties that bond and bind their members. However they can also be sites of intense conflict and contradiction, especially for migrants (Rumbaut 1997:8 cited in Wolf, 1997: 477). The family ties of African families are often praised and believed to stem from strong "African family solidarity" and "family values" (Mungazi, 1996). I suggest, however, a closer examination of family practices and the price they exact from the children upon whom they are imposed (Wolf, 1997: 477). In fact, what may appear as manifestations of solidarity at first sight may, after more detailed analysis, be revealed as the outcome of family coercion rather than of love and consensus. As a Congolese curio vendor argued:

"If I do not send money to my family they can block my business. If they are not happy even God won't protect and bless me. How can I say it...you are African, you understand what I mean... What makes me believe something bad will happen to me? (Silence) I have the example of my big brother. It's been one year now that he is sick at home. They warned him, but he did not listen" (Respondent 54)

The casting of a bad spell on kinsmen in an attempt to visit punishment upon them is a drastic punitive strategy that may be followed by social and psychological disruptions, illness and even physical death (Gulliver, 1963: 286). I consider it to be characteristic of social death because, in

its lenient form (of witchcraft) the cursed individual cannot have any meaningful relationships with other family or community members. He or she becomes a social castrato and untouchable.

The above evidence is contrary to the idea of the weakening of families (Boulding, 1983: 259; Locoh, 1988) dominating family studies. In the literature on family there is almost “a fascination with the idea of the weakening of the family, almost as if there is a longing for helplessness” (Boulding, 1983: 259). As Locoh (1988) says, families are believed to be weakened because they must bear the cost of demographic growth, migration, and economic change while they try to maintain traditional values. This is very likely due to the fact that families are more often thought of as products or victims of change, rather than producers and instigators (Boulding, 1983: 257). As seen above, the family is an enduring social institution and able to exert social control and regulate the relations between its members (Locoh, 1988) irrespective of geographical distance. Family systems are able to establish boundaries that define the nature of family membership and also have sets of expectations for behaviour, both explicit and implicit, that govern day-to-day interactions within the overall family (Henry, 1994: 447) irrespective of spatial distance. This evidence suggests that in order to comprehensively understand why migrants remit; there is a need to develop more concepts that capture the broad complexity of emotions and type of pressure involved in families’ relationships (see Marshall et al., 1993 cited in Connidis and McMullin, 2002: 561).

V. CONTEXTUALIZING THE SOURCES OF PRESSURE TO REMIT: THE SOCIO-CULTURAL PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL BEING

As argued earlier, in transnational settings, migrants have “to struggle to do families” (see Dill cited in Orellana, Thorne, Chee, Lam, 2001: 586). This chapter aims to show that in the transnational social field, remittances, whether analyzed from the receiving family’s or the sending migrant’s perspective, always mean more than the transferred legal tenders. To analyze the socio-cultural motives underpinning migrants’ willingness to remit, I make a distinction between the subjective and objective components of remittances, conceptualizing them as a bridge between an individual migrant’s self-perception of their own social worthiness, shaped by their cultural socialization, and the implied socio-cultural valuation system within a society. Within this theoretical framework, I provide an explanation of how remittances can act toward the social objectification of migrants’ subjective qualities.

I provide in the following section the background of respondents’ livelihood in Johannesburg to illustrate the paradoxical nature of remittance behaviour among Congolese migrants before examining the source of social pressure to remit in the subsequent section.

5.1. Respondents’ Livelihood in Johannesburg and Remittance Behaviour

Migration flows are often differentiated by age, gender, education and position in the household (SAMP, 2006). On the basis of these variables and drawing on findings from the Johannesburg City Survey, the Congolese community in Johannesburg is a young and male-dominated population. In the Johannesburg Survey, 206 (82%) respondents range between the ages of 18-35. It is a relatively educated population: 127 (52%) have completed secondary education and 94 (37%) tertiary education. The majority of Congolese migrants interviewed in the survey were documented: 179 [70%] of respondents were asylum seekers; 49 [20%] refugees; 20 [8%] had a South African identity book; and 20 [8%] had passports from Congo with a valid visa. However, as for all migrants in South Africa, their legal status does not necessarily protect them from police harassment, or discrimination in the job market, where employers limit their options (Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa, 2008). Congolese migrants mainly find employment in low-wage jobs: in the security industry (42; 17%) and restaurants, as casual workers (28; 12%) or as paid domestic workers and baby sitters (mainly women). Others (44;

18%), especially women, create their own income-generating activities in the informal sector by selling food stuffs from the DRC and other items within the community. However, a significant number (103; 40%) remain unemployed.

About 178 (70%) respondents reported to have been stopped at least once by the police or the military. While police stop-and-search practices are legal routines for inland immigration policing, in South Africa they put a negative strain on migrants' livelihoods. In fact, non-nationals usually struggle to open a bank account, especially with asylum seekers' permits. So many migrants commonly carry cash on them (Landau, 2005; Vigneswaran, 2007: 10). As a result not only do they become vulnerable and easy prey for criminal elements that target them, but some xenophobic and unscrupulous police officers often capitalize on this to harass and sometime extort money from them, using them as "mobile ATMs"¹⁸ (*The Star*, 20 June 2005) at month-end periods. As a respondent explained:

"There are many things here that remind you that this is not your country. Like in Yeoville here, you always need to have some cash with you in case the police stop you. It is better that they find you with something to avoid that they take you to their post where you will pay more. They just don't care whether you have papers or not." (Respondent 37)

For many migrants, socio-economic conditions in South Africa turned out to be much more difficult than anticipated: in the African Cities Survey, their weekly personal income ranged from nothing (79; 32%) to around 800 South African Rand (ZAR), with 23% (59) earning between ZAR 200 to ZAR 499 and 13% earning ZAR 500 to ZAR 799.¹⁹ However the significant share of their income is spent towards accommodation and food. In fact 120 (47%) spend between ZAR 200-499 for weekly household accommodation expenditure, and 43 (17%) between ZAR 500-799. And for weekly food expenditure, 116 (45%) spend between ZAR 100-200 and 29 (12%) between ZAR 201-300.

Comparing Congolese migrant households' living conditions with those of other migrants and South Africans living in the same area, the survey established that 79 (32%) are poorer than the average, 133 (52%) about the average and 17 (7%) better than the average. This is a major negative change relative to their income in DRC prior to migration, where numbers (ratios) were

¹⁸ Automatic Teller Machines

¹⁹ At the time of the Survey the currency exchange rate was ZAR 6.5 for USD 1.

37 (15%) poorer than average; 50 (20%) about average, and 154 (62%) better than average respectively. In order to manage the high cost of rent and living conditions, multiple families often share small houses or apartments: 105 (42%) of respondents to the survey stayed with friends, 86 (33%) with family members, and 17 (7%) with people from Congo whom they did not know before.

These findings support qualitative accounts from respondents that remittances do not generally stem from surplus income. Rather, for many migrants it is only by cutting down on their living expenditures that Congolese migrants are able to remit. An intriguing trend in the interviews is that sometimes migrants send money or materials to people who are in comparatively better financial positions. Those who, for various reasons, are still unable to remit – often as a result of unemployment in the host society – think of starting to do so as soon as it becomes possible. In some cases, migrants not only deprive themselves in order to be able to remit, but, while complaining about it, continue to send money home even after they have learnt that the money they send is being “misused”. A woman was reported by her friends to constantly indebt herself for buying her baby’s milk each month after sending all her earnings. As a car-guard supervisor complained:

“It is good to send money home, but not the way Congolese do. How can someone who earns ZAR 1,200 per month send ZAR 700? I am telling you what I see with my guys here. One needs to invest for himself first and once stable, think about the family. Otherwise you will go back empty handed.” (Respondent 15)

Generally, individuals tend to minimize migration risk and uncertainties in host societies by choosing to migrate to countries where they have social networks (SAMP, 2006). This is also true in explaining the growing and more and more visible feminization of the Congolese migrant community in Johannesburg. As elsewhere, women usually emigrate as spouses through family reunification processes. However, on the face of things, it seems that in response to internal economic hardship and political and civil conflicts, are less and less Congolese young women prepared to wait for a future husband in DRC before they migrate: many women I interviewed, for example, said they were single, reside in shared rooms with other female friends, and came to South Africa alone, sometimes welcomed by former church members from the DRC. However this does not negate the fact that overall, the vast majority of Congolese migrants in South Africa

has been and continue to be young males (Johannesburg City Survey, 2006). An important finding from interviews is the fact that women respondents seemed to feel the pressure in similar ways as men, suggesting migration causes a shift in traditional perceptions and expectations based on children's gender difference.

In light of these findings, the following section aims to provide a better understanding of the sources of such "social pressures" to remit. I analyze remittance motives by attempting to understand their social and cultural meanings for migrants and their families, and how such meanings influence migrants' remitting behaviours.

5.2. Remittances and Familial and Social Perception

In this section I develop an explanation of why familial belonging and social status matter so much for Congolese migrants that they are willing to forego their personal social and material position in the host setting in order to remit. I argue that one needs to consider the fact that in Africa, contrary to patterns elsewhere, households encourage their first-born children (Sumata, 2003), or children perceived to be particularly courageous, to migrate. Unless one contextualizes the profound socio-cultural meanings embedded in this choice of children on the basis of birth or social perception in African societies and in metaphors used to label² those who "fail" in migration, we cannot understand Congolese migrants' longing to remit irrespective of their economic situations.

As Gondola (1999: 30) explains, African cities affect the bodies of youths in different ways. First, the cities produce youths in such a way that they delay their entry into the world of adulthood, which can be defined by two parameters: professional status, on the one hand, and marital status, on the other. The social and economic crisis which characterizes African cities grafts themselves onto the bodies of the youths (Gondola, 1999 cited by Gondola, 2002). From this perspective, emigrating, especially to developed countries, is a consummation of African youths' entrance into adulthood or, rather, provides such youths with a symbolic anticipation of being adult (WA Kabwe & wa Kabwe-Segatti, 2003; see also Mazon 1984: 8 cited in Gondola, 2002). I argue that, in this process, migration and what it represents in terms of difficulties, adaptation to the challenges of a new society, and success for Congolese migrants, comes to replace the ceremonial sites of traditional initiation from teenager to adulthood (Gondola, 2002:

45; WA Kabwe & WA Kabwe-Segatti, 2003). In many ancient African societies, young men in particular had to earn family membership and status by displaying the ability to take care of their families; demonstrating courage by the number and kind of animals they were able to hunt; showing their qualities as a combatant by volunteering for frontline positions during war; or proving their resilience by withstanding the negative forces of the ‘forbidden forests’. In a similar way, the ability to adapt to new situations and to overcome the adversities associated with migration settings nowadays allow Congolese migrant youths to earn belonging and in the process, adulthood, human dignity, thus social status.

In urban Congolese popular belief, migrating abroad, especially to developed countries, and until recently to South Africa, is to a large extent equated with easy access to money or material achievements (Lanquetin, 2006; WA Kabwe and WA Kabwe-Segatti, 2003). The simple fact of making it to these destinations is an absolute coveted social and financial promotion, no matter the time period one has spent or economic activity one is engaged in. As discovered in my interviews, rarely would family members back home ask what kind of jobs their relatives are involved in, or consider the time period they have spent there before making financial requests. The assumption is that no matter how difficult a migration setting can be, the migrant family member is well prepared to overcome adversity.

In fact, due primarily to the development of mass media and telecommunication technologies, most African urban-born youths and their families are very aware of the uncertain fate that awaits them in migration settings (Gondola, 1999: 30). In contemporary African societies, “poetic accounts” of migration no longer hold true against the invasive, brutal reality disseminated by multi-media systems (Gondola, 1999: 30). In fact, news about the targeting of migrants under the security controls and repression reinforced by the Schengen Accords; increasing levels of random deportation; the separation of African migrants from their children born in Europe; the impossibility of legal residence for spouses of European citizens and the consequent harassment by immigration officials or necessity for a retreat “underground” (Gondola, 1999: 30); and, in South Africa, harassment and abuse of migrants by police as live baits in dogs training exercises ; the brutal and xenophobic murders; and community mobilization against foreigners, resulting in displacement and the destruction of their homes and belongings (Bhamjee, 2005; Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa, 2008) ; are

realities distributed worldwide by multi-media systems with an ever increasing speed. In such a context, the simple decision to emigrate becomes a symbol of courage and one's willingness to undergo sacrifice for one's family; the ability to make it to the destination becomes proof of one's exceptional natural skills; the capacity to succeed (symbolized by remittances) becomes a proof of one's passage to adulthood; and the inclination to take care of one's family, an ultimate proof of one's character, securing sought-after social recognition and praise. This is what one respondent expressed:

“I have not been able to send a lot of money yet. At least as I remit, my mother and her brothers will see that I am courageous.” (Respondent 32)

Another said:

“I receive calls from friends telling me: “You are courageous. X and Y went before you, but they are doing nothing for their families” (Respondent 40)

This socio-cultural meaning explain why in most cases contemplating migration in Africa quickly lead to improvised forms of traditional initiation education: for weeks, even months, the young prospective migrant is surrounded by parents and elders who make sure to give him or her all the fundamental lessons of life: they recall stories invoking courage from his/her tribe or ethnic mythology and provide cultural and educative devices aimed at making his/her success in migration setting easy. As in ancient Africa, this teaching takes the form of mastery learning (Black, 1973: 30 cited in Marah, 2006) making failure virtually inconceivable (Marah, 2006: 19): every effort is made, and every encouragement given to make sure that even the most cowardly youth will successfully navigate the process (Marah, 2006: 17). The ultimate goal of this initiation process is to prepare the youth for his/her social responsibility as an adult member of the family (Marah, 2006: 17) and to induct the young person into the moral, philosophical and cultural values of the community (Marah, 2006: 19).

Hence, migrants' failures in the host setting is primarily perceived as a shameful failure for their, as it implies failure of migrant's familial education. In fact, migrants' failures are not merely associated with misfortune, but culturally symbolizes their lack of the fundamental, intrinsic character traits that make a human being a person. That is why when interrogated on the goal of their trip, most Congolese migrants would respond in Lingala saying: “na yaki ko meka nzoto,”

(Gondola, 2002: 30) which can be translated as “I came to try my body” (Gondola, 2002: 30). It is thus not surprising that Congolese migrant youths devote their money and often other materials of symbolic social visibility (e.g. clothes) to remittances, as it is the only social good that, in his or her absence, expresses to family and the greater society back home the success of the migrant in negotiating the migration “test,” thus proving the migrant’s successful entry into adulthood and securing the related human dignity. This is what explains a recurrent answer from respondents saying that “Na koli, il faut na sunga famille.” (I am grown, I need to support the family). The passage from youth to adulthood symbolized by the migrant’s economic achievements and ability to take care of his or her family is the ultimate goal of many youths who engage in the migration adventure. The eagerness of Congolese migrant to exit the identity of “youth” by remitting stems from the fact that youth identity is associated with a confining socio-political immaturity that they would seek to escape at all costs (Vigh, 2006). In addition, the social stigma attached to migrants who fail is so dehumanizing and alienating that some “unsuccessful” Congolese urban -born migrants choose, upon returning home, to settle in rural areas than to endure family exclusion and humiliation (Ey’Ekula, 2007).

This explains why some Congolese migrants display remitting behaviours that appear, at least at first sight, asymmetric with their personal interests and promotion in host settings. That is to say that the need to belong and escape social stigma and marginalization through remittances appears consistent with the cultural colonization hypothesis advanced by Ritzer (1996: 585), whereby migrant agency becomes determined by the power of cultural belief systems and social expectations. My point is that it is not only migrants’ personality systems that integrate their life-world interaction patterns and condition the way they perform culturally expected behaviours in a social context, but also the societal evaluation system to which those performances are subject, and which define the way migrants perceive their social and human worthiness. In such cultural valuation systems, external considerations may outweigh internal motivations, leading migrants to conform to the cultural context of “home” irrespective of spatial location (Ritzer, 1996: 585; Arnet and Galambos, 2003; Vigh, 2006).

5.2. Individual Valuation Systems: Remittance and Sense of Belonging

One of the most relevant psychological theories on how human beings may endure social exclusion is the parental acceptance–rejection theory. The core assertion of the parental acceptance–rejection theory is that over the course of their behavioural-genetic co-evolution, human beings have developed an enduring, biologically based need for attention and positive response from the people most important to them (Khaleque and Rohner, 2002; Rohner, Khaleque and Cournoyer, 2007). Generally, children’s need for positive perception, attention, or simply appreciation by attachment figures (primarily parents) is a powerful motivator of their social action and life satisfaction (Khaleque and Rohner, 2002: 55). In attempts to allay the feeling of social rejection and to satisfy the need for positive response, it is assumed that individuals (by behaving in socially expected ways) will always increase their bids for positive responses (Khaleque and Rohner, 2002: 55). As shown here, in transnational settings, remittances become the only instrument for bidding for positive responses in a migration setting.²⁰

The theory explains that this need during one’s childhood is essentially for parental affection, care, comfort, support, nurturance, or simply love (acceptance) (Khaleque and Rohner, 2002). But it becomes more differentiated and complex during one’s adulthood, incorporating the wish or yearning (recognized or unrecognized) for positive regard or appreciation from people with whom one has affectional bond of attachment (e.g., parents, husbands, wives, boyfriends, girlfriends, friends, employers, etc) (Rohner, 1999a cited in Khaleque and Rohner, 2002: 55). However, when this need for positive response is unmet from our affectionally significant others, that is, if they do not express appreciation of what we do, we have acquired the psycho-somatic tendency to develop a specific set of socio-emotional and cognitive dispositions leading to emotional dependency (Khaleque and Rohner, 2002: 62) which manifests in an increasing need for such affirmation. Feelings of self esteem, of social and emotional worth, may begin to hinge on receiving the desired affirmation. Our valuation of the worthiness of our human existence is thus linked to how we ascertain that other people value us. It is this emotional need for positive

²⁰ Obviously in the scope of the current study I did not explore the psychological aspects of how migrants experience social death in transnational settings which require specific professional qualification.

response – comfort, support, care, attention, nurturance, or simply love – which is a powerful determining factor of human behaviour in social relations (Khaleque and Rohner, 2002; Rohner, Khaleque and Cournoyer, 2007).

When our need for a positive response is not adequately satisfied by emotional attachment figures, our emotional response, according to the parental acceptance—rejection model, includes anxiety and insecurity. In attempts to avoid these feelings and to satisfy our psycho-somatically based need for positive responses, we often increase our bids for positive responses, but only up to a point (Khaleque and Rohner, 2002). Beyond such point, which varies from individual to individual depending on one's complex personal character dispositions, frustrations and other emotional concomitants of perceived rejection begin to interfere with our willingness or ability to continue making bids for positive responses (though the yearning for such response remains unabated) (Khaleque and Rohner, 2002).

Normally the appraisal of one's family, the need for social belonging and the desire to avoid the alienating social labeling involved in being marked as a deviant family or community member exercises sufficient pressure to draw migrants into socio-cultural mainstream activities, sometimes against their apparent interests (McKinnon and Langford, 1994). But migrants are not generally passive actors who simply conform to socio-cultural standards (Connidis and McMullin, 2002: 561). They sometimes resist in a bid to change the standards when they seem contrary to their own interest (Connidis and McMullin, 2002). As belonging theory suggests, in order for human belonging needs to determine individuals' behaviours, it is critical that those individuals infuse general cultural patterns into their social interactions and internalize cultural patterns within their personality systems (McKinnon and Langford, 1994). In this sense, although individuals can be socially positioned and expected to display and fulfill certain roles in a social system in agreement with their family system's role expectations (McKinnon and Langford, 1994), only those individuals who have actually internalized cultural patterns are likely to display certain behaviours out of the need to belong. This is to say that though migrants' need for family belonging is a strong motivator of social action, its effects on migrant behaviour varies across individuals. This hypothesis explains why some migrants, despite having the same socio-cultural background and possibly having been socialized into the same stereotypes about

the effects of emigration, would not necessarily feel equally the social pressure to remit or display the same remitting behaviour.

Nevertheless, the fact that the majority of my respondents said they remit – or will remit as soon as it becomes possible – made it difficult to explore how migrants who do not remit avoid (or resist) social death. This is a research topic that future research can explore further. However, as evidence suggests below, transnational families can exert social control irrespective of the spatial distance separating them from their members. Drawing on the above discussion, I argue that migrants' resistant or passive behaviour in the face of social pressure always depends on what they stand to lose. The salience and prominence of one's subjective self perception and sense of belonging will always determine that the majority of migrants behave in the way their families and communities of origin expect them to. In fact, individual perceptions of family strength and sense of belonging have considerable value and may be related to the cultural patterns of a migrant's family.

VI. FINAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

What I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this thesis is that what lies beneath the surface of the legal tender migrants send home is primarily the social and cultural subjective self of remitters as valid human beings and good family members. This analytical perspective intends to show the importance of studying migrants' cash or commodity transfers to communities of origin beyond their socio-economic utility, in order to capture the social, personal and non-fungible socio-cultural meanings migrants socially express through remittances.

Such an analysis requires a comprehensive examination of the nature of transnational family relations and of the broad socio-cultural frameworks in which remittances take place. As stated earlier, the ultimate goal of every socio-cultural system is to produce compliant members and ensure that, regardless of physical location, they carry with them and behave in manners consistent with socio-cultural values. Drawing on empirical evidence, my argument is that remittances are mainly social goods or transnational mediums that migrants use (sometimes instrumentally) in bids to foster familial belonging and escape social death, and at the same time, buy and sustain social status. This theoretical position is consistent with social belonging theory, which holds that the need to feel one belongs and maintains a given social group membership is a basic aspect of being human (S.I.R.C., 2007). But membership in a social group always depends on how well one conforms to group norms. A corollary assumption is that every human being needs to feel that he or she belongs to a family, and will fulfill this need through exhibition of socially expected behaviours. In this sense, belonging or social identification becomes the basic motivation of human social action (the act of remitting, for the purpose of this study) (see Foote, 1951 as referred to by McKinnon and Langford, 1994: 218).

The point I make here is that though migrants' family membership status generally stems from birth, adoption, or marriage (S.I.R.C., 2007), sustaining this membership requires conformity to family rules and the performance of expected behaviours (S.I.R.C., 2007). This is to say that, in the context of certain societies, migrants *work* (e.g. by remitting) to keep their familial and societal membership. In this specific sense, it then becomes possible to measure the importance or social salience of a migrant's family belonging by the severity of social alienation involved in leaving it (S.I.R.C., 2007: 11). Most research on remittances focuses on an economic utilitarian

conception of money, and fails to capture the personal and familial significance of remittances for migrants, embedded not only in their transnational social relations, but also in cultural contexts. Scholars generally explain migrants' motives to remit in terms of five theoretical approaches: altruism; self-interest; mutual beneficiary arrangement; perceived obligation; and prestige (De Bruyn and Wets, 2006; De Bruyn and Kuddus, 2005). I argue that, tested from a socio-anthropological perspective, these existing remittance motives models may simply be secondary life circumstances that allow migrants to provide more intimate and superior social goods (valued behaviours).

Accordingly, I draw on social stigmatization theory to show how societies - subject to local specificities – distribute their members into social positions on the basis of birth, occupation or performed behaviours, and induce them to perform the duties of such positions (Davis and Moore as referred to by Lin, 1999: 468). Thus, in every society, there are designations or identities attached to individuals who possess socio-cultural values or display socially expected valued behaviours. When conferred on individual community members, such acquired social designations or identities become social objects (Med, 1994: 218 cited in McKinnon and Langford, 1994) and not only gain social market value, but are also established and sustained through participation in familial relations and the continued display of socially expected behaviours (McKinnon and Langford, 1994: 218). I argued that families everywhere are goal-directed and transmit tacit codes of conduct to their children through socialization, which defines their family roles and expected behaviours. In this sense, for family or community members, showing one's life skills, contributing towards the socio-economic uplifting of other family members, and so on, become different kinds of expected behaviours and roles which take the value of "social goods" or exchange commodities that people provide to deserve familial and social membership. I argue that in transnational settings, not only are remittances the only disposable social goods through which migrants express their family membership, but their social-cultural value also multiplies as a result of the social, cognitive and affective meanings (McKinnon and Langford 1994: 216) attached to remitters and recipients.

Hence, a migrant's failure in a host setting is primarily perceived as a shameful failure for his/her family as it implies the failure of the migrant's familial education. In fact, migrants' failure is not merely associated with misfortune, but symbolizes a lack of the fundamental, intrinsic character

traits that make a human being a person. In bids to ensure that family and society pass positive judgments on their membership and fundamental life skills, migrants will often remit irrespective of their personal economic situations and the absence of actual financial need by the family. As suggested by psychological behavioural theory, human beings will always seek to remain in social situations that offer, at least from their perspective, the best outcomes (Gramling and Forsyth, 1987). Even if the alternatives are all obviously “bad”, it is assumed that individuals will gravitate to the least painful of available exchange situations (Gramling and Forsyth, 1987: 402). To comprehend this, one needs to consider that there is always a social exchange situation between migrants and their families through remittances, whereby a migrant provides remittances (especially for what they are meant to symbolize for remitters) to express his or her membership and, in return, gets explicit positive normative judgments on his or her valid membership status from the family. I argue that in such exchange situations, all parties are getting something, even if, on the part of migrants, it may only be the avoidance of a socially more degrading stigma (Gramling and Forsyth, 1987: 403) or social exclusion. Thus, individuals’ performed roles become not only the criteria for their family and social inclusion, but also push them to continue displaying socially and culturally approved behaviours, thus determining their familial and social membership in order to avoid exclusion or the stigmas attached to deviant designations within a society

As the departure point of transnational family and social relations, migration has the effect of reducing the social-good options migrants can draw on to deserve and claim family and social belonging and dignity. Furthermore, remittances remain the only significant disposable social goods enabling migrants to fulfill an array of expected social roles and display expected behaviours. In this sense, remittances serve as a medium for the negotiation of family belonging, which allows migrants to ascertain the degree of family belonging and sustain positive judgements of their membership among non-migrant family members (since negative feelings may lead or equate to exclusion). This point is consistent with social belonging theory arguing that social belonging is a state in which an individual, by assuming a role, is characterized by his or her inclusion in the social community (S.I.R.C., 2007).

In order to exercise social sanction upon the fulfillment or otherwise of social roles, families and communities of origin use social labels or stigmas to qualify those considered non-valid

members. It is the appraisal or social alienation attached to different social labels that often functions to draw people, sometimes against their own individual interests, into the socio-cultural mainstream of the society, thus ensuring that members perform their social duties (McKinnon and Langford, 1994: 218; see also Davis and Moore cited in Lin, 1999: 468). That is to say, as social sanctions, social labels within a society play the function of regulating the enforcement of social behaviours. However, in extreme cases, a family may even resort to the use of supernatural resources to compel their migrant members to perform the expected family and social duties. In other cases, migrants may use remittances as symbols to disguise their poor social position within the migration setting, making class values and social status illegible (Gondola, 1999; Wa Kabwe and Wa Kabwe-Segatti, 2003). In principle, the shame and alienation embedded in being stigmatized exercise enough pressure on the individual to secure conformity to social rules. However, depending on the kind of social goods one fails to provide, social sanction can literally consist in members being excluded from a family and stripped of all social rights and claims. In the final analysis, the message remittances convey becomes not “I remit, therefore I have,” but rather “I remit, therefore I am a valid and good family and community member.” This is what explains why some individual Congolese migrants display remitting behaviours that appear, at first sight, to be asymmetric with their personal interests and social-economic promotion in the host setting. That is to say that the need to belong and escape social stigma and marginalization explains why some Congolese migrants’ remitting motives are suggestive of cultural colonization, whereby agency is dominated by a kind of servitude to cultural practices and belief systems (Ritzer, 1996: 585; Arnet, and Galambos, 2003; Vigh, 2006).

However, my application of social belonging and status theories to remittance motives theory raises a fundamental issue: the extent of its theoretical application. Psychological behavioural theory assumes that there is a social meaning to every willful act of a human being. It further argues that people are generally preoccupied with the impression they give of themselves to others through everyday acts, and about how others will judge their behaviour. Along the same line, societies distribute their members into social categories and provide them with socio-cultural attributes based on every willful act they engage in. Thus, people permanently feel the force of and the apprehension emanating from family and social evaluation.

A valid question exists as to why I do not advance belonging and social status theory as a single, all-encompassing theory capturing and explaining motivations to remit. The answer is that doing so would amount to a denial of human beings' inherent qualities and natural inclinations to do good to others. It would be reductive to consider every migrant to act on the same motives in all places and at all times. This is to say, I distinguish human remitting behaviour that proceeds from genuine and inherent inclinations to assist others (endogenous motives) on the basis of individual migrants' perceived moral (or religious) worthiness (McKinnon and Langford, 1994), from those mainly conditioned by concerns to conform to the social and cultural environments to which they belong (exogenous motives).

In the hypothesis of exogenous motives, inclusion in social and cultural systems is the focus and external factors take over internal decisions (Ritzer, 1996: 585). As belonging theory suggests, in order for human belonging needs to determine an individual's behaviour, a critical element is the infusion of general cultural patterns into the social interactions of those individuals, followed by the internalization of cultural patterns by their personality systems (McKinnon and Langford, 1994). In this sense, although individuals can be socially positioned and expected to display and fulfill certain roles in a social system, in agreement with their family system's role expectations (McKinnon and Langford, 1994), only those individuals who have actually internalized cultural patterns are likely to display certain behaviors out of the need to belong. This is to say that though migrants' need for family belonging is a strong motivator of social action, it does not equally determine all migrants' behaviours. This hypothesis explains why some migrants, despite having the same socio-cultural background as others and possibly having been socialized into the same stereotypes about the effects of emigration, would not necessarily feel equal social pressure or display the same remitting behavior. I would argue, however, that in transnational settings, migrants' resistance or passive fulfillment of expected family and social roles will always depend on what they stand to lose. My point, , is that the salience and prominence of one's subjective self perception – determined by socio-cultural valuation systems which define one's very human nature – will generally have primacy, and together with the imperative to sustain one's sense of belonging will always cause the majority of migrants to behave in the way their societies expect them to.

For example, while it is generally believed that there is a negative relationship between the number of years a migrant spends abroad and his or her propensity to remit (World Bank, 2006) – that is, the propensity to remit weakens and migrants tend to remit less over the years – empirical evidence from a survey conducted in Belgium among Congolese, Senegalese, and Nigerian Diasporas did not find any significant relationship between the propensity to remit and the number of years a migrant has lived in Belgium (World Bank, 2006). But to the contrary, it found that several migrants who had lived in Belgium for more than two decades continued to send significant amounts of remittances. I argue that it is so, as Sumata (2002: 623) explains, because remittances play a crucial role in keeping kinship ties close as well providing a major channel of investment. The only observed cases of remittance decay, reported by Grieco in the case of Micronesian migrants in Guam and Hawaii (2003, cited in World Bank, 2006), were due to family reunification or the death of the beneficiaries of remittances. However, an intriguing finding by De Bruyn and Wets (2006) is the belief, in DRC, that male migrants tend to stop remitting especially when they get married to a woman of another nationality.

I am of the view that the patterns of motivation for and effects of migration, as well as migrants' socio-cultural remittance motives, are specific to particular regions, countries, local communities, and thus, culture specific. However I strongly believe that understanding the specificity of social location and the importance of cultural contexts in determining how individuals behave in migration settings should not necessarily produce the relativism that has been associated with some versions of "postmodernist" theorizing (Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, and Stewart, 2001: 294). Rather, it should direct our attention to exploring transnational social dynamics between migrants and their families elsewhere, and attempt to capture how such dynamics shape the system of social constraints under which migrants operate. This would include the tool kit of personal, cultural, and social resources they use to make certain choices about how to adapt to or resist those constraints, along with the complex interactions that produce unanticipated outcomes of such choices (Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, and Stewart, 2001: 294). In conclusion, the question of how much overlap might exist between the realities described in this thesis in relation to Congolese migrants and those of other socio-cultural settings remains a question for future specific and targeted research to answer.

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