Perceptions of immigrant Nigerian women in South African Higher Education about social change[1]

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Abstract

The focus of this article is immigrant women's perceptions of social change, and how they respond to it. In the article, social change refers to the fact that more people than ever before are engaged in different activities that lead to alterations in the norms and behavioural patterns of people as individuals or as a group in society. The study analysed social change via the perceptions of individuals—immigrant Nigerian women in South African higher education. In line with phenomenological research with which this article is aligned, an intrinsic qualitative case study approach—interviews—was employed to gather data. The cases involved four Nigerian women who are currently residing in South Africa and studying at higher education institutions in the country. Snowball sampling was used to select participants. Social change, as revealed in this article, is a lens that can be used to better understand individuals as a society or people. Furthermore, and in terms of materialist social theory that was utilised, this article reveals that social change relates to economic relationships between self (individuals or group) and society where survival of people is linked to surplus economic goods and the acquisition of tangible and intangible wants in order to deal with the fear of an unknown future. The article concludes that the understanding of self as a fallout of social change is a means of understanding others and vice versa, which can help people—especially locals or indigenes—conquer their fear of foreigners or immigrants.

Keywords: social change, migrants, Africa, qualitative study, women, conflict, higher education

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[1] For ethics, signed letters of consent are available.

Introduction and Background

A society is synonymous with an organisation with differentiated elements fulfilling the needs for subsistence, reproduction, regulation, and decision making (Peil, 1977). Also, a society is a political, independent entity referred to as a nation state. In this study, the participants are from a nation state, Nigeria. According to Wetherell (2006), society has a set of effects that cannot be "wished away" and that to understand someone's life history, their social position must be taken into consideration. On the other hand, one cannot simply state that society determines an individual's life history (Connell, 1995). A society involves people who are functionally integrated to ensure the progress and survival of the whole. The nature, development, and growth of any society thus depends on its citizens—their acquired skills, political atmosphere, co-existence, tolerance, social characteristics, and environment (Singh, 2007). This implies that the composition or characteristics of people largely determine the progress or regression of societies. At the same time, as Wetherell (2006) argued, societies make and change people because societies evolve through different stages of development that run parallel with social changes. Therefore, social change helps people to understand, discover, and construct ideas and actions, which in turn, form the basis of culture and tradition, social control, and social order (Pareto, 1916/1963; Singh, 2007).

Change is everywhere: "births, marriages and deaths of friends and relatives, migration, the crisis of schooling or the stages of a career make up the fabric of our individual life-worlds" (Noble, 2000, p. 1). In this study, change is viewed as uncertainties in the certainties among and within people. The desire for change among people makes them insatiable social and political beings whose wants are unlimited despite limited resources.

The globalisation of today's world is a manifestation of provoked change among people, and reflects people's refusal to be confined to a particular task, geographical location, language, culture, music, and so forth. Usually these changes, as Perez (2004) noted, are socially constructed and naturally influenced, leading to individuals' socialisation by their similar experiences, similar materials, and similar opportunities and resources which, in turn, lead to everyone arriving at similar views, similar opinions, and acting in similar ways as a people. This was evident in the presidential elections in the United States of America when Barrack Obama, the first black president, was voted into power. The people of America were able to achieve this unique and memorable outcome with the power of change—not as individuals but as a people. Their slogan for the election was "Change We Can!" In the light of changing circumstances, social change can be regarded as a reaction to societal events via vocal attitude and change in beliefs and behaviour among citizens.

According to Singh (2007), social change refers to the fact that larger numbers of people than ever before are engaged in different activities. Social change sharpens our understanding of different strands of complex subjects associated with people in a society. Understanding people is no small task given differences in religion, traditions, beliefs, family background, and so forth. However, social change can be used to gain a better understanding of individuals as a people. Social change among people and within societies arises as a result of feelings that emerge from being oppressed or trying to persist in oppressing others. While the oppressed are always angry, the oppressor remains

exploitative. Given this situation in most societies of the world, there will be continual fighting, discrimination, racism, and class creation—even among members of the same society. However, we are only what society has made us; we are the creatures of our era, of our class, our culture, our gender, and place (Archer, 2000) and vice versa—people make societies. In studying societies and people, it is necessary to include structural and functional aspects as well as the factors that cause change (du Toit & van Staden, 2009). Thus, this study examines social change with intention of understanding it from the perspectives of research participants who are Nigerian immigrants in South Africa.

Motivation for the Study

Happenings in Nigeria, especially in the last two decades or so, have called to question the social change patterns: shifts in values, behaviour, attitude, norms, beliefs, and struggles (Oderinde, 2005). At micro level, particularly in the home and at school, values have degenerated in parents as well as in children. At macro level, there appears to be a lack of sincerity of purpose on the part of government towards citizens. Writers like Ngwodo (2005), Achebe (1984), and Ogbeidi (2012) believed that the major challenge facing social change in Nigeria is poor leadership. Ngwodo (2005) in an article entitled, "System Failure, Religion, Corruption and Violence," pointed out that the Nigerian system has been set loose from conventional moral assumptions and so mediocrity has been enthroned while excellence and integrity are lightly esteemed. Chinua Achebe mentioned in his book, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1984), that the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. He pointed out that "there is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character, there is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else, but leadership" (Achebe, 1984, p. 1), and challenged leaders as well as citizens to reject old habits that inhibit Nigeria from becoming a modern and attractive country. According to Dike (2014) and Ogbeidi (2012), the lack of selfless, non-corrupt, and committed leaders has contributed immensely to the sociopolitical and economic changes and predicaments facing Nigeria today.

The researchers are aware of Nigerian people accusing the military of debasing Nigerian social values and not promoting social change. Oderinde (2005) stressed that the charge against the military of the demolition of Nigerian cherished traditional values that provide an anchor for all social interactions and activities seems to give little respite to the usual scapegoat—colonial rule. Whatever the situation, the researchers believe that it is still redeemable if Nigerians are open to critical analysis and are willing to find practical solutions. Thus, in this article, two critical issues will be addressed to provide an in-depth understanding of the situation. These, as elaborated upon in the literature review section, are the factors that determine social change, and education as an agent of social change. These are followed with a review of transition from individualism to social change, which is necessary to clarify how influencing factors of social change relate to individuals—in this case, the participants—and points the researchers to the underpinning theoretical framework of this article.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

A lack of understanding among people is a major cause of conflict and most social problems (Aina, Potokri, & Akeju, 2010; Michelle & Venashri, 2006). As stated by Baron and Shane (2008, p. 3), "conflict is a process in which one party perceives that another party has taken or will soon take actions that are incompatible with its interests." This definition sits well with the assumptions of some South Africans who refer to immigrant Nigerians and foreign nationals as *kwerekwere*, and who believe that foreigners are in their country to take their jobs and wives. Conflict is also regarded as a state of disequilibrium for which a solution is desired (Aina et al., 2010). This view supports that of Michelle and Venashri (2006) who believed that there is a relationship between understanding and social problems—and which Narayan, Chambers, Shah, and Petesch (2000) further associated, largely, with

social change. The researchers opine that people and society can be understood by examining social change and identifying the factors that bring about social change—and within the context of immigrants or foreign nationals' perception of social change. As such, the focus of this research was guided by the following questions:

- What is the participants' understanding of social change?
- What are the key factors influencing social change among Nigerian women immigrants?

Literature Review

Potokri (2014) asserted that a literature review can be problematic because of the scant, irrelevant, or, at times, voluminous materials available to researchers. The researchers have thus, to avoid possible loss of direction or focus, considered an in-depth understanding of two critical issues. First, the factors that determine social change and, second, education and social change. The literature reviewed for this study is clustered around these two critical issues together with the transition from individualism to social change.

Factors that determine social change.

Change is inevitable and is a continuous process, necessitated by a number of different factors. According to Singh (2007) and Noble (2000), these factors include the environment, technology and research, interdynamics, absence of cultural inertia, disappearance of the fear of new things and the unknown, degree of isolation, industrialisation, political revolutions, civil changes, commercial development, population growth, and intellectual creativity.

The environment comprises everything on the earth's surface. Given that people live and do everything on this surface, it follows that all the activities humans do from birth to death are determined or influenced to a large extent by the environment. In a nutshell, the environment institutes pressure on people to change their behaviour and attitude towards society and vice versa (Ogunbode & Arnold, 2014). Consequently, when the environment is under pressure, issues of food supply, unemployment, pollution, excessive consumption, and so on emerge as outcomes in the society. And, when this occurs, people will also be under pressure—hence, they are forced to look for a way out (Dryzek, 2013).

Potokri (2012) wrote that globalisation promotes global citizenship, thus, people across the world are more likely to behave alike. Globalisation is everywhere and in everything, including the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the water we drink. One of the key features of globalisation is human migration. People frequently move—either within their own country, from country to country, or from continent to continent. Bottaro, Visser, and Worden (2005) highlighted that the migration of humans in most cases is voluntary, but may be forced by political conditions or natural disasters. Moreover, the vast majority of migrants are people who move from poor countries to rich ones in search of work or a better life. Bottaro et al. (2005) pointed out that there were 200 million migrants living outside their countries of citizenship in different parts of the world in 2005, compared to 75 million in 1965. Nowadays, people can move more freely in the new global economy because of United Nations and other international organisation treaties and agreements that pave the way for the eradication of (or invisible) borders. Possibly, this is why people are caught in the web of globalisation whether they like it or not.

Drucker (2011) and Ogburn (1947) identified technology as a basic cause of social change: when technology changes, societies also change. Linking this to humans, Andersen and Taylor (2008), for example, noted that the primary changes in human history are tied to the four social revolutions:

domestication, agriculture, industrialisation, and information. They noted further, as had Ogburn (1947), that the change from *Gemeinschaft* (community/organic) societies to *Gesellschaft* (modern/mechanical society), capitalism and industrialisation, modernisation, and global stratification are all examples of social change that have greatly affected our lives. Andersen and Taylor (2008) claimed that social movements, conflict, power, and global politics also contribute to social change. In sum, both Ogburn (1947) and Drucker (2011) articulated that technology changes society through invention, discovery, and diffusion. Through technology, music, language, education, currencies, and so on are transferred across societies instantaneously. Such quick transfer is capable of transforming, reshaping, and replacing the entire way of life of people through imitation products. This itself is social change and can have adverse effects on societies.

Education and social change.

Education is the lifeblood and nucleus of a nation (Potokri, 2010). When acquired, it is an asset that does not depreciate, that is, it does not suffer wear and tear. Education fulfils the needs of society and propagates ideas that promote social change in all spheres of life (Sharma, 2008). Education becomes, in this way, a social process by which societies accept or reject social change. Education, like social change, is a continuous process and forever evolving. It starts at birth and continues until death. No wonder Yeaxlee (1929), Lindeman (1926/1989), and Field (2000) defined education as a lifelong process. The notion of learning through life is hardly new, as a glance at Plato's *Republic* reveals (Smith, 2001). However, with the development of a self-conscious education (particularly for adults, the focus participants of this study) came the view that "education should be lifelong" (Smith, 2001, p. 2).

Both Yeaxlee (1929) and Lindeman (1926/1989) provided an intellectual basis for a comprehensive understanding of education as a continuing aspect of everyday life. They touched upon various continental traditions such as the French notion of *permanent education* and drew on developments within learning, particularly with regard to adult education in Britain and North America (Smith, 2001). In line with these views, Field (2000) argued that there has been a fundamental shift in the behaviour of ordinary citizens who, increasingly, regard the day-to-day practice of learning as routine—perhaps so routine that they give it little explicit attention. This suggests, according to Beck (1992) and Giddens (1990, 1991), that social change—like other forms of change (e.g., economic, political, and cultural)—means that many people now live in knowledge or informational societies that have strong individualising tendencies and a requirement for permanent learning (reflexivity). Thus, education and social change are intimately related; hence, education should prepare the path for social change because education and social change are like the body and soul, each complementing the other.

Education in any society, and particularly for individuals, should spell out the changes needed by that society, and how these changes are to be brought about. Therefore, education should aim at studying and understanding the various problems of society in general (see Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). When this aim is achieved, positive social change emerges—that is, the social change that leads to growth, development, progress, better reputation for societies, citizens being proud of their societies and prepared to defend their societies, and people willing to stay and contribute meaningfully to their societies. The opposite will manifest when the reverse takes place, that is, when education follows social change instead of social change following education. Policy documents and researchers in the past and in recent times have, at one time or the other, discussed the relevancy and the need for education to alleviate and promote social change. For example, the Nigerian national policy on education highlighted and linked the dynamics of social change to the demand for education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

Transition from individualism to social change.

It is well documented that social change is a broad concept, given its determining factors and their interpretations (see for example, Haferkamp & Smelser, 1992; Leat, 2005: Noble, 2000). This section, thus, presents explicit conceptualisation on transition from individualism to social change. This is aimed at providing clarity on how these factors relate to social change for this study's participants, individually, and how their perceptions extrapolate to social change—particularly given that they are immigrants. The works of Arnett (1997) and Wyn and Woodman (2006) suggested that role transitions are crucial to social change from an individual's stance.

Conceptions of the transition of people from where and who they are to "imagined self" require several characteristics (Arnett, 2000). Arnett (1997) argued that the top criterial aspects of individualism include accepting responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, deciding on one's own beliefs and values independently of others or other influences, and establishing a relationship with parents as an equal adult. Arnett added that issues such as finishing education, entering the labour force, marriage, and parenthood that are largely associated with individual or role transition are no longer accepted as they were by the previous generation. This, as Arnett (1997) concluded, suggests that the current generation, especially the young in societies, conceptualise the transition to adult individuals in intangible, gradual, psychological, and individualistic terms.

Wyn and Woodman's (2006) critique of the conceptualisation of people using *youth as transition* in Australia shows the extent to which *generation* offers a more effective way of conceptualising individuals. This is a shift from traditional measures of patterns of life (education, work, and family patterns) to the political, economic, and cultural processes that frame and shape lives and generation, as well as their distinctive experience and meaning of life. In contrast with Arnett (1997), Wyn and Woodman (2006) emphasised that finishing education, entering the labour market (work), and marriage (family and parenthood) remain inevitable and current approaches to life. However, the approaches serve as yardstick for people's faulty and failed transitions, when measured against the standards of the previous generation. The shift of interest from traditional approaches to political, economic, and cultural spaces or processes often compel people to think in terms of survival. Scott's (2008) reference to Balzac's characters, Tonsard and his mother, said as much—they steal for a living and they do it cleverly, shows the extent individuals are prepared to go to when survival is the order of the day. Furthermore, this habit grows slowly, becomes calculated impunity, and is unlikely to be renounced unless compelled by a force stronger than their audacity (Balzac, as cited in Scott, 2008).

Theoretical Underpinnings

Most of the early theoretical work on the emergence and understanding of state society focussed on the extraction of social surplus for and beyond survival, that is, surplus material resources beyond those needed for subsistence (Rapp, 2005). This focus is deeply seated in materialism. Scholars' works, such as those of Crossman (2017) and Górnik-Durose and Pilch (2016), disclosed that materialism has several meanings and interpretations. Górnik-Durose and Pilch's (2016) article, which investigated materialism–personality configurations, identified two types of materialism: defensive and anxiety-driven materialism, and offensive and bold materialism, each associated with a different attitude to money. As Crossman (2017) put it, materialism on the one hand refers to a cultural value placed on the accumulation of material possessions, a process in which people base their sense of themselves, their well-being, and social standing on possession. On the other hand, it refers to an approach to understanding social life that rests on the idea that production and reproduction are fundamental social processes that greatly influence, if not determine, the basic character of social systems and the patterns of life associated with them.

Both stances suggest that the quest for materials, in other word resources, by people is cardinal to social change. Thus, given the researchers' preference for the first stance (as informed by the peculiarities of individuals' views who are, in this study, immigrant women students in higher education) materialist social theory was used to frame the study. The reviewed literature reveals that social change is primarily promoted by people disagreeing with the ways and manner of how things were done by previous generations (Sharma, 2008). Social change is usually driven by a need for improvements in survival and life style, as well as by people competing for scarce economic resources (Bogushevich & Tsilevich, 2002).

Materialist social theories argue that to understand social change we must begin with the conflicts and collaborations of men and women who work, fight, and procreate in order to survive in social and political systems (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). For materialist social theorists, everything else is essentially epiphenomenal, that is, a matter of rationalisation, justification, and window dressing (Noble, 2000). Moreover, materialist theorists point out that people behave as they do because they interpret their situation in a particular way. In seeking to understand social change, people, and society in terms of materialist theory, the researchers accept that the material world is effectively inert until we give it meaning. Only when we attribute meaning to the world that acts upon us, or we upon it, can we as individuals and the world in a larger sense think of social change either in terms of a society or as a people. Therefore, the first thing one needs to understand will always be the ideas, the rules, and assumptions that guide people's behaviour. It is for this reason that the researchers stress the needs, desires, opportunities, and resources that determine the behaviour of individuals and people as a group in the real world. Despite its remarkable contribution to academic scholarship, the materialist social theory according to idealist sociological theories seems to ignore social interaction—a major concept that provokes social change among people in a society (Seidman, 2013).

Materialist theory stresses the determination of social development by practical necessities of procuring subsistence (Nobel, 2000). For most versions of Marxist thought and non-Marxist materialists, how people gain a livelihood has been the central issue in social change and history. Marxists and other materialists have generally emphasised the importance of who owns or controls the means of subsistence in a society. Many people struggle to own and control the means of subsistence in a society, to secure the unsecured future, and, perhaps, to move away from their current situation to a better situation in life (Pontuso, 2015). Thus, the quest for a better life and future arguably gives birth to social change. This quest leads to several political, social, and economic activities including increased zeal for education, entrepreneurship, ritual killings, fraud, change in marriage patterns and family planning, crime, congestion, and more people seeking political office.

Methodology and Ethical Concerns

An intrinsic qualitative case study approach within phenomenology was taken in this study. Stake (1995) used the term *intrinsic* and suggested that researchers who have a genuine interest in a case should use this approach when the intent is to better understand the case. This is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The purpose of this research method is not to understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon, nor is it to build theory (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Yin (2003) described the case study as a strategy of inquiry that involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases with a bounded system, namely, a setting or context. For this study, this strategy, method, and design of research was considered the most appropriate because the researchers have clearly identified cases with boundaries and seek in-depth understanding of the cases. The cases (research sample) identified involve four individuals—students. They are Nigerian women residing in South Africa and studying in South African higher education institutions. They are

aged between 30 and 40 years and were born and lived in Nigeria for at least 20 years before travelling from that country.

Snowball sampling technique was used to select the research participants. The researchers approached the first participant who resides in Sunnyside, Pretoria, and asked her whether she would like to participate in the research. She agreed to participate in the study after the researchers had answered her questions regarding the purpose of the research, when, and how she would be involved. She participated voluntarily and no remuneration was offered or requested. At the request of the researchers, this first participant introduced them to another person who became the second participant. After meeting with the second participant, the researchers requested that she suggest or link them to a third Nigerian woman residing in South Africa, which she did. This process continued until the fourth and the last research participant was found. Like the first participant, all other participants completed the consent form and agreed to participate in the research voluntarily. Their names were changed to pseudonyms.

From the options available for data generation in a qualitative case study, the researchers used interviews (face-to-face) with individuals. Participants objected to audio recording of interviews for no disclosed reasons; hence, the researchers resorted to taking copious notes, which slowed the pace of interviews. Each interview lasted 45 minutes. The interview schedule (questions) was the same for all participants despite being conducted on different dates, at different times, and at different locations. Before the finalisation of the questions, the researchers ensured that two practicing sociologists and educationists, who both work in academia, perused the questions. One works in a Nigerian university (Lagos) and the other in a South African university (Pretoria). Their inputs were important as a means to ensure trustworthiness and credibility.

Research questions and the reviewed literature were used to provide guidelines for data analysis (see Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Further to this, Marshall and Rossman's (1999) six phases in the analytic procedures were utilised, namely, organising the data, generating categories, themes, and patterns, coding the data, testing the emergent understandings, searching for alternative explanations, and writing the report. We analysed the data by looking at key words such as description or understanding of social change and the factors that affect social change. Two main themes emerged as we coded and interpreted interview transcripts—social change understanding, and factors influencing social change. Both themes relate mainly to the research questions that this article seeks to answer and, thus, served as the anchor of the findings and discussion as will be seen in the next section. With reference to the study's limitation, we divulge that this article was not aimed at generalisations. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised following its small sample. This suggests that the findings are limited to the research participants; nevertheless, it could serve as a useful insight or springboard for larger and future studies of a similar nature.

Findings and Discussion

Subcategories (sub-themes)—smaller ideas that build up to the main themes (categories)—are the rallying point of the findings (see Table 1).

Table 1: Themes and sub-themes

Themes (Categories)	Sub-themes (Subcategories)
Theme 1: Social change understanding	1. Culture and behavioural change
	2. Survival and standard of living
	3. Government and social institution failure
Theme 2: Factors influencing social change	1. Behavioural adaptation/toughness
	2. Means to self and family satisfaction
	3. Society acceptance/rejection—Political and social structures

These sub-themes, as will be seen in the next paragraphs, are conspicuous and evident in the voices or responses of participants. Rather than separately showing the responses of participants, as sub-themes reflect, and before proceeding to the main themes or extraction of findings (as is the case with many dissertations and some journal publications), we elect to follow the argument of Perumal (1999, p. 135). In her argument around *conversations about research*, she stressed, perhaps warned, against the growing urgency to dismantle time-honoured cultures that have defined the hierarchical dichotomies around research epistemology and methodology. In addition, Delport and Fouche (2005, p. 354) summarised that there is no agreement among researchers on the elements, structures, and procedures of reporting on qualitative research. These views condemn the suggestion of only one or a specific procedure or process of research reporting. Based on this, as analysis progressed in this study, we wove or linked sub-themes appropriately to main themes in order to address research questions. Findings are presented below together with discussion in terms of the reviewed literature and the theoretical underpinnings in response to the research questions.

Understandings of social change

Cultural and behavioural change

One participant, Okiemute, a nurse and married woman living with her husband and two children, described social change as "alterations in norms and behavioural patterns of people as individuals or as a group in a society which is different from what they are known for." In Okiemute's opinion, "social change includes the transformation of culture and social institutions over time." This suggests that she perceived social change as noticeable changes in culture and social institutions that permeate it for new ways of people's thinking and acting—implying that social change is necessary and desirable because transformation comes with time and with adjustments in what people do and are known for.

Survival and standard of living

According to Amara (married), social change is perceived as "the pursuit of good standard of living, to feel sense of belonging in a country of her residence and the right to governance as reasons for the need for social change justification," that is, their behavioural change.

Government and social institutions failure

Efosa, a single woman, stated:

> *The failure of government in providing us basic amenities and employment opportunities widen the gap between the rich and the poor. This has caused a lot of people including myself to double our "hustling" (struggle) in order to live the life of a middle-class person just to be seen, counted and regarded as a human being, otherwise you will be seen as someone that does not exist. These days, it does not pay or help to wait for government for anything. Just do your things! In short, the government is so corrupt that everyone now*

know that his or her future depend on how serious you can pursue or chase stuffs or your needs.

Participants' consensus on the description of social change suggests an agreement for the need for social change in societies and the inevitability of change. Bidemi (single), the fourth participant, simply said that "everything happening in Nigeria is the reason for the need of social change." On attempt by the researchers to probe further to ascertain the specific reason, she said, *"Na So"*—meaning that she stood by everything she had just said. The researchers picked up feelings of anger or frustration from her tone and stopped probing on that question. By everything, she could have meant the failure of the entire Nigerian system and structure as Ngwodo (2005) proclaimed.

Now, we present an elaborate interpretation of the above. Social change constrains and structures the behaviour of individuals who make up the society. It brings into focus the extent to which people might be frustrated by social institutions and structures, and that are experienced consciously or unconsciously—in some way external to the individual, even though individuals are also instrumental in their creation and manifestation. For instance, and common to all participants, is the acknowledgement of the problems and privileges the current change or transformation in culture and social institutions has denied them. Yet, they admitted to changes and finding new ways of earning a livelihood and living life as derivable advantages of migration. These changes, amongst others, required them to travel out of their country of origin, something some may not have considered. Efosa stated:

> *I had to borrow money from friends and some family members including the ones that I know wish me nothing but evil just to leave Nigeria for South Africa because things are not just working out for me and as learnt from my neighbour, who arrived here three years before me, I will be better, but she is wrong even if I don't really want to blame.*

Efosa's expression, lamentation, and views of other participants indicate that social change brings forth social trends either in the form of social progress or regression to both a country and individuals because, on one hand, the image or reputation of the country is at stake and, on the other hand, individuals who are supposed to contribute to a country's social development and growth are migrating to other countries. As interviewed, participants presented their experiences individually. They sounded personal, implying a personal problem. However, after analysing all the interview notes and reports, the researchers came to the conclusion that the problems were not personal but, rather, social in nature because they were experienced by them all—and related more to the social conditions of a society emerging from the constraints of social structures, which influenced their ways of doing things or living as compared to the past.

The current social change in the participants' home country, according to the participants, particularly Efosa, Amara, and Bidemi is responsible for the underdevelopment of the country as well as for the influx of Nigerians into South Africa. In the words of Amara:

> *Government representatives at our embassy here and delegates from Nigeria when present often speak at forums especially every 1st of October, celebration of our independence day. Representatives of the embassy would encourage us to be law abiding and do legitimate businesses. They are good at speeches but they frustrate people when people apply for passport or renewal. You will wait for almost eternity if you cannot pay some illegal money that their boys ask you to pay—a practice that is not different from what happens in Nigeria. You cannot get help or anything free from their offices. Most*

> *annoying are the delegates from Nigeria and some others who often say to us come back home and invest, Nigeria is a changed place and better!*

She continued:

> *Go back to where? A country where you invest your hard-earned money and someone working there is prepared to steal everything or run the investment down the drain in few months through several means. They think we are all stupid. Thank God for technology like television and social media like Facebook that keep me and many of our people abreast with happenings at home and what we can do to improve our lives. You cannot trust them, they are politicians. Their politics is dirty and full of corruption.*

Amara reveals two central issues that are peculiar to her perception of social change. These suggest social change as a product of situation, and as a shaper of behaviour in situations. Making sense of herself in terms of who she was, is, and may become, required her to evaluate people in authority like the embassy, with whom hope and aspirations for the country where she currently resides, greatly rest. She believes that the embassy, being an institution, and those officials working there have the responsibility of making life for her and other Nigerians worthwhile, a reason, we guess that makes her attend functions like the independence day celebration. She appears disappointed that things at the embassy are not in any way done differently from in her country that she left some years back. Amara's experience is, thus, likely to impact on her future path and beliefs. We, as researchers, believe that Amara's social change perspective, as well as that of other participants, is a predictor that can influence what they are motivated to do, how they think, and make sense of themselves and others, and their ability to manage themselves for present and future challenges.

In articulating their perceptions, participants used comparative and historical narratives and descriptions to recall past happenings and compared them to current happenings or situations. From their views, two distinctive premises can be pinpointed. These are *human lives* and a *changing society*. It is evident from their perspectives that in the understandings of social change, the relation between human lives and a changing society must be underpinned and emphasised, following their unavoidable relationship. The similarities of social change perceptions among participants in this article are striking and inform the need for the trajectory transformation of individuals who meet with current activities that perpetually alter their lives. This, in our view, can be enduring and require unremitting adjustment on the part of individuals for the sake of addressing the question of survival.

Factors influencing social change among Nigerians

Behavioural adaptation/toughness

Society places a high priority on the achievement of material success, but deprives some people of legal ways of achieving this success; these people are then forced by society into deviant behaviour (du Toit & van Staden, 2009). The current social change in Nigeria is creating a wider gap between the rich and the poor thereby promoting and portraying crime as a way of life for many, even when they reside outside Nigeria. In the words of Okiemute, "the advantage of social change includes repositioning for toughness, the mentality of people towards a positive or negative attitudinal behaviour of fending for self and family." The influencing factor of social change here, as Okiemute proposes, is behavioural adaptation—people become tough mentally in order to adjust their attitude or behaviour in line with waves of happenings. Further to this, toughness is not optional if self and family are to be pleased or satisfied. Okiemute, Amara, and Bidemi revealed that self and family satisfaction are factors of social change. Okiemute's interview response that "with education one should be able to get a job to feed and provide for herself and forget about getting anything from government," points to education as a means to self and family satisfaction. Amara's response that

"education is the only way out of this hardship except if you have someone in government, someone very close to always remember you" and Bidemi's interview extract that "in this rugged world, one without education is hopeless and doomed," also identify education as means to self and family satisfaction. Revelations of participants concur with writings on transition from individualism to social change. Although Wyn and Woodman (2006) did not specifically mention self, their mention of family can be equated to self and seen together with work when they referred to fending for both as key factors of social change.

Means to self and family satisfaction

Slightly different from Okiemute's view was that of Efosa, however, it relates to fending for the individual—self and family—which also requires toughness on the part of the individual. In the view of Efosa, a bar attendant at a nightclub, illegality is a way to cope with the ills of social change. She admitted that she was involved in drugs and other illegal businesses because they provide her with an extra income. "My fiancé—husband-to-be—must not know of this otherwise . . . !" she exclaimed. She explained that her role in such business transactions was to connect the buyers and sellers, many of whom patronise the nightclub. She said, "Honestly, I do not know where the sellers (who are from different nationalities) get the substances from."

Society acceptance or rejection—political and social structures

Amara, told the researchers about her "Internet or cyber-crime business." According to her, the business seems to be "less yielding in comparison to the past years." In her narration, Amara looked unhappy because this was not her plan when she left Nigeria. She arrived in South Africa hopeful that she would find better opportunities because she is educated: "I am averagely educated; I hold a national diploma and ought to find a job for a living as I was told before my arrival here." Her hopes were dashed following her inability to get a job after three years of searching and waiting. Bidemi noted that every coin has two sides. She experienced the same scenario, happenings, and development as the other two participants—forced by social change (trends) that led to the deviant attitudes of the previous two participants—yet these events made Bidemi more industrious and more committed to her daily routines. She holds a National Certificate in Education (Social Studies/History). In many ways, she lives a similar life to the other two participants who are not employed, however, she buys goods (Nigerian foodstuffs) from Nigeria through friends and sells these in South Africa. Despite her commitment to her business, she wishes to return home or somewhere else (a country in Europe). This she expressed as,

> *I am tired of this country where hate is everywhere, most locals hate you for reasons you don't know neither understand. You won't be offered a job because you are not from here regardless your education, training or experience and crime free report. Why can't I get a job? I sometimes ask myself, some other Nigerians, and some of my South African friends. The answer or response from everyone I had asked is policy says this or that. For me, it is politics of saying you are not one of us. It is discrimination and corruption. The saying— you are not one of us—is a very popular saying in this country. There is hardly any day that goes by that you don't hear this on the streets and even on television from politicians that are supposed to unite people. I don't blame them. I just want to leave this country for good to another place where I can get a job with my diploma for a decent livelihood and at least be seen as somebody.*

However, she is unable to do so because she declared herself a refugee when she first arrived in South Africa and cannot travel out the country because of her asylum status.

The views of Amara and Bidemi suggest education as a key influencing factor of social change. They believed before leaving Nigeria, that with their qualifications and education they would fit into the South African society in terms of getting a job and making it their home. This belief of education being a major influencing factor or prerequisite of social change seemingly remains even as they anticipant migrating from South Africa, following their disappointments. Participants' frustrations and disappointments are supported by Amara and Okiemute's expression, that, "we should stop blaming people and condemning their attitude. Rather, the structure or society that produces them should be condemned." These assertions disagree with Arnett (1997) who said that education is no longer accepted as in the past. The participants are sure that education is still acceptable and relevant to the transition and success of individuals, especially in the 21st century, a century globally powered by education and known as knowledge bound or driven.

Linking the findings above to the theoretical underpinning, the researchers believe that society is a product of human actions and interactions. The actions and interactions of these participants are shaped and influenced by education, infrastructural facilities, security, and the environment, which are all agents of social change, and which, by extension, determine people's attitude and behaviour. The researchers asked the participants to explain what they meant by environment. They described environment as the physical conditions and surroundings, which included bad roads, lack of drinking water, electricity outages, and poor sanitation in Nigeria. The attitude of two participants (Efosa and Amara) in this article can be termed *deviant*. Deviant attitude, as du Toit and van Staden (2009) noted, is a dysfunction that disrupts the social order and equilibrium in a society. Reasons given for these participants' deviant attitude include denial of job opportunities as foreigners, their legal documents not being processed, lack of educational qualifications, and the celebration of wealthy people in Nigeria. As a result, they were desperate to accept jobs and businesses of any sort. The celebration of wealthy people concurs with Ngwodo's (2005) view that the Nigerian system has been set loose from conventional moral assumptions. A deviant attitude, as expressed by the participants, arises from the unequal distribution of wealth and power that results in increasing poverty, oppression, and unemployment—the very reasons they had for leaving Nigeria in the hope of finding a better life in South Africa.

Factors influencing social change among participants as revealed in this article include the environment, education, technology, politics, acceptance or rejection of people, job opportunities, behavioural adaptation, or toughness. Of these, education and the environment appear most important, as participants underpinned. Education and the environment reflect the social and economic preoccupations of the participants. Both factors influence social attitudes and cannot be disentangled from social realities and experiences of people as participants indicated, and we therefore argue that people's perceptions are significant in the discussions and understandings of social change. Social change, as this article revealed, relates to economic relationships between self and society where survival is linked to the acquisition of tangible and intangible wants in order to deal with the fear of the future.

In this study, the attitude or behaviour adopted by participants in order to ensure their survival and acquisition of surplus economic goods was acquired, as Scott (2008) underpinned, is not something that they were born with. In contrast to the utilised theoretical underpinning (which ignores social interactions), interview responses of participants, in conformity with Seidman (2013), suggest that the adopted behaviour of participants has its root in everyday conversations and interactions of people. These conversations and interactions presumably steer people towards imitating one another to defend themselves from oppression by the rich. These conversations and interactions, whilst triggering anxiety for some people, equally help to instil boldness and confidence in others as Górnik-Durose and Pilch's (2016) types of materialism highlighted. It is further clear from interview excerpts of participants that no compelling forces or militarisation (as in the case of Nigeria) can address adopted behaviour if

the environment, through government and social institutions and structures, is not genuinely restructured.

Conclusion

In coming to know themselves, participants came to know their society (current and former countries of residence). With factors influencing social change revealed in this article, we note that participants may not have revealed all the reasons for their choices, actions, and beliefs as a result of the limitations of the research questions. But they were able to provide justifications and explanations through reflexivity as to why they are who they are. Knowing themselves is a means of understanding others, and vice versa. Thus, understanding people is a precondition for any society like Nigeria and South Africa that aim to promote relationships and peaceful co-existence among people. Moreover, understanding as well as peaceful co-existence among people in a country can help people conquer their fear of foreigners that results in conflicts such as xenophobic attacks.

Corruption, poor leadership, and the politics of "our people" as some participants of this article perceived, are the foregrounding elements of the political landscape of their society. Nonetheless, we argue that one cannot (in totality) hold a government accountable for the effects that social change brings about without also mentioning globalisation and civilisation, which are driven by education and technology—for change is an inherent part of both.

Through the lens of social change, the participants' activities can be described as consisting of internal and external actions that involve economic needs that they wish and desire to meet, in terms of materialist theory. Their concerns are of prominence because societal structures—economic and political—inform who they are and, as such, should be improved. The external actions of the sampled participants are affiliated with economic activities, involving their jobs or businesses as members of society. While examining change patterns of attitudes of people towards norms and beliefs, the researchers found that social change relates to economic relationships between self and society in terms of materialist theory where survival is linked to surplus economic goods and the acquisition of wants in order to deal with the fear of the unknown future.

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