ìrìnkèrindò: a journal of african migration

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Editorial

Mixed, Perilous and Other Migrations: Do African Lives Matter?

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This is a trying period for anyone that pays attention to African migration. Migrants' gruesome deaths while in transit are given more coverage. Of these, those in the Mediterranean Sea, and to a lesser extent, the Sahara Desert make it more into the news. But there are also deaths in places in-between. Some are reported. Others are not. One only gets glimpses of such deaths when repatriated migrants mention or lament them. There has been more coverage of Libyan "Slave auctions," at least after CNN released taped evidence from such markets (Elbagir, Razek, Platt, & Jones, 2017). The African Union (AU) and selected African states, including Nigeria, (which by dint of its sheer population size in the African continent, has more citizens caught up in the movements of migrants intent on getting out of their countries to realize dreams of social, economic and political security elsewhere), belatedly responded (Ibuot & Okopie, 2017; Daily Nation, 2017; Busari, 2017). Some have not bothered to do so. It is amazing that Nigeria and other African countries have embassies and diplomatic representative in Libya, yet, there was no previous report, awareness, response, nor were any measures whatsoever taken to document, respond to, and correct the abuses of citizens and violation of their human rights.

What then is the value and utility of diplomatic representation? How do African governments understand their responsibilities to citizens? What is the function of the media in these countries?

What is the duty of the AU?

The European Union (EU), whose fortress-building and fortress-protecting actions force increased use of more dangerous migration routes, has also responded. The lateness of response makes one wonder whether there was no previous awareness of the hardships, horrors, and deaths of migrants, or if these actors felt no need to respond in the absence of embarrassing media scrutiny and public condemnation.

This article was first written for the conference: "African Refugees and Migrants at Europe's Door, on March 7 and 8, 2016, at Duke University. Okome was at the time living in in Gottingen, Germany, where she was a Senior Research Fellow at Max Planck Institute. Being in Europe opened her eyes anew to the plight of refugees in a new and different way, especially since some Germans thought she was a refugee, and she received the kind of treatment believed to be deserving by them. The article was also revised and presented on October 28, 2016, at "Breaching Fortress Europe…" the inception conference for the academic exchange between the University of Ibadan and The Graduate Center, CUNY.

Given the xenophobia experienced while in Germany, (which we must remember, was one of the more welcoming European countries for refugees), it was also odd for Okome to be a Senior Research Fellow at Max Planck--the only reason she was in Germany--and to be treated with the respect that was believed appropriate once she stepped into the Institute. The experiences of her time in Germany, and of crossing borders, from Germany to the UK, the US, and back were also interesting, since her color meant that people assumed she was a refugee in some instances. The American passport was read to mean she was African American by the border authorities, and this probably made her border crossings less onerous than for many others who may have been refugees.

There is heartrending news on African migrants in Europe and along its borders. Okome's article attempts to analyze some of the circumstances that we see unfolding. It also complicates and contextualizes African migration to Europe. One cannot also help noticing growing xenophobia and consequent increased securitization of migration. Living in the US under the Trump administration means reading reports of anti-immigrant policies, increased incidences of xenophobic responses to immigrants, and witnessing increased anxiety among targeted populations. Europe also shows increased evidence of similar trends and tendencies. Two of the articles in this issue focus on African migration in Europe and the other two on African migration in the US.

In "Breaching Fortress Europe: By Any Means Necessary: The Complications of African Migration to Europe," Mojúbàolú Olufúnké Okome focuses on the European aspect of these phenomena. She contends that there has been long-standing centuries-old African migration to Europe that increased during the 1960s, and intensified with the imposition of neoliberal reforms in the 1980s, post-independence political crises and conflicts in the 1990s and 2000s. These migrations from Africa to Europe included skilled and professional Africans whose movement was conceptualized previously as a brain drain, and who secured the few jobs available in areas where destination countries needed their labor, skills and expertise. They also included clergy, artistes, sports stars, and all manner of hopefuls seeking fame, fortune, refuge, human and material security. Many of the migrants are young people. Some of the deaths in the passage show us their photos, some of the post-rescue debriefs tell us their stories. Some engage in mixed migrations, as they involve irregular migrants who are frustrated into moving from their

countries of origin due to failure to make any headway and access decent jobs that provide viable opportunities for survival and upward mobility. Some also want to unite with family who migrated earlier.

The frustration with material conditions at home and desire for family reunification combine with lack of legal options to migrate to make clandestine migration, including seeking out human traffickers, or being susceptible to offers of opportunities that seem too good to be true. More materially comfortable and successful fellow-citizens are often very critical of these migrants, blaming them for leaving their countries in the first place, for paying traffickers to move them, for being gullible dupes, or greedy folks who believe that the streets of the destination country are "paved in gold." Many such critiques assume that public education that focuses on the horrors of migration would suffice to persuade potential migrants to stay home. However, there is not too much likelihood that those intent on migrating will be so persuaded. What might help is the availability of decent work and hope of a better future.

Despite some Africans' movement into Europe involving the figurative breaching an impregnable fortress, using any means at the disposal of migrants, there is movement, and the movement includes more invisible regular migration, and visible painful, tortuous and dangerous migrations. Irregular migrants include as a mix of refugees, asylees, documented and undocumented migrants (MHub, 2017). While European economies were thriving in the period before the 2008 World Economic Meltdown, the degree of enforcement of harsh migration regimes was low. Labor was needed for menial as well as skilled, technical and professional jobs. But the meltdown and "the vulnerabilities spawned in consequence, have laid bare politicized, securitized, xenophobic and callous responses, particularly in the frontline states that receive what is increasingly perceived as a "deluge."" Greece, Spain, Those Europeans who also

faced increasingly precarious conditions were resentful of anyone perceived as taking jobs that should be reserved for Europeans. There was a rise in "xenophobic attitudes, discourses and policies …. and the increased securitization of migration, seen in the growing strength of right wing and extreme nationalist parties (Erlanger & Smale, 2015; BBC, 2016), the enforcement of restrictive migration laws and the use of measures meant to keep migrants away.

Scholars of migration tell us that nothing can stop migration. People will migrate willynilly. Thus, we should expect that when some routes are closed to migrants, they will seek other routes, which may be more dangerous. The deaths in the passages through the Mediterranean and Sahara are then liable to continue. When these routes become unavailable, others will open up that may be even more dangerous than these. For migration to be reduced, the structural reasons that make it seem to be the only viable option for decent material existence must be successfully addressed. This is more difficult than implementing stopgap measures and responding to migrant deaths only when there's media coverage and public scrutiny. African countries also benefit from migrant remittances. They benefit from the ways in which migration releases pressures for governments at home to come up with policies that reduce inequality through economic redistribution and attention to people's need for human security.

Despite the 2008 meltdown, European countries stand to benefit from both regular and irregular migration, particularly because European birth rates have declined and there is need for more population. Migration can fill the gap, but a nod must be made to those Europeans who suffer from economic marginalization. Politicians oblige, and while extreme nationalist right wing parties have been most vitriolic, pronouncements by EU officials and those from centrists and even liberals have been troubling. Of course, until the outing of Libya and the exposure of the horrors and excesses that have brutalized migrants there, the face of the migrants and

refugees was predominantly Syrian. This in itself should make us wonder if we are getting the full picture about migration. We should also be concerned enough to stay focused and seek lasting solutions.

The second article that focuses on Europe is Dmitri M. Bondarenko's "African Migrants in Post-Soviet Moscow: Adaptation and Integration in a Time of Radical Socio-Political Transformations." This is a notable contribution to the literature on African migration, as there are few studies on these migrations to Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. Post-Soviet Russia's sociopolitical transformations are akin to the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs in African countries, although Russia received better consideration due to the Washington Consensus-driven desire to prevent a resurgence of communism. As with the rest of Europe, the Soviet Union experienced migration from Africa and her diaspora. Many were communists for whom the Soviet Union offered refuge for a time, from perceived and real injustices from the capitalist system, including racist segregation, class oppression and socio-economic inequality as well as extreme marginalization. The promise of refuge was fulfilled for some time, although Stalinist purges and xenophobia challenged the expectations of blissful refuge (Simmons, 2014; Savvine, 2014).

African students benefitted from offers of free education in the Soviet Union during a period when, for symbolic as well as realpolitik reasons, support for the anti-colonial movement was strong (Goff, 2016). "In 1960, the People's Friendship University of Russia was established to train students from newly independent countries in Africa and Latin America, and more than 60,000 people from 165 countries studied there during the Soviet period" (Chudinovskikh & Denisenko, 2017). Bondarenko considers how African migrants in Russia are negotiating the post-Soviet changes. He shows that some have chosen integration into Russian society while

others are adapting to social realities and are either unwilling or unable to integrate. He enumerates socioeconomic strategies pursued by Africans and their potential.

Being post-Soviet means that Russia has had to deal with migration to and from other post-Soviet states. It has had to update its immigration policies to address contemporary realities, and given that migrants from post-Soviet states are the overwhelming majority, they are the most visible of the populations involved. Bondarenko reminds us that some of the African migrants went to the Soviet Union before its collapse, while others are newer sojourners. The circumstances of entry and length of stay influence strategies pursued. Bondarenko contends that "more privileged" migrants, who went to the Soviet Union to study and work are the privileged, for whom integration is attainable. The newer "economic migrants," who also were not allowed into the Soviet Union, but have been able to enter post-Soviet Russia, have no such options. They suffer considerable marginalization and social exclusion. They are forced to adapt as best they can in a Russia where paradoxically, xenophobia is on the rise, but there are also increased opportunities for migrants to engage in business, work and organize social and economic institutions that engage the Russian political establishment.

In "Exploring the Migration Experiences of Black Zimbabwean Women in the Greater Cincinnati Area." Florence Nyemba and Lisa Vaughn (one of the two articles on the United States of America), consider "the migration experiences of Zimbabwean immigrant women living in the Greater Cincinnati, Ohio area." This article, significant already due to the dearth of studies on African migration, takes on additional importance due to the increased attentiveness to all things Zimbabwe after the sudden dramatic end of the Mugabe administration. The article shows that the Mugabe administration's policies and their effects on Zimbabweans pushed many to migrate elsewhere in search of refuge, economic and material benefits and other elements of

human security that either were not available, or were declining in their country. Majority of the

migrants go the UK, followed by South Africa. Fewer have migrated to the US and settled there

(BBC, 2005).

Increasingly, African women are migrating in search of political asylum, better material

conditions, and for education, almost in equal numbers with men. Zimbabwe is no exception.

However, Nyemba and Vaughn rightly argue that there is little scholarly attention to these

economic migrants. Why do they migrate? What are their hopes, dreams and aspirations? Using

"a participatory research approach and used a photovoice method for data collection," Nyemba

and Vaughan privilege the subjects voice and their analysis of their satiation, as well as the

solutions they fashioned for their problems, in telling this migration story.

The second article that focuses on African migration to the US is Guy-Lucien S. Whembolua,

Donaldson Conserve, and Daudet Ilunga Tshiswaka's "Socio-cultural Factors Influencing the
Ebola Virus

Disease-related Stigma among African Immigrants in the United States." Current preoccupation
with the

Libyan horror story has replaced the horror story of African immigrants' vilification,

dehumanization, denial of access to economic opportunities, marginalization, and abuse during

the Ebola epidemic.

Currently, the Ebola epidemic only comes into media accounts with reportage of pending

loss of Temporary Protective Status by Africans from affected countries—Sierra Leone, Liberia,

and Guinea (Nordwall, 2017; Murriel, 2017). This article reminds us of the stigma and

xenophobia faced by African immigrants in the US at the height of the epidemic. It was bad

enough that many lives were being lost. It was worse that people were stigmatized and otherized.

Using the PEN-3 cultural model, the article does socio-cultural analysis that explain the

prevalence and escalation of stigmatization, and recommends public policy and action to address stigma, negative stereotypes and racism experienced by African immigrants due to ignorant and racist responses to EVD.

Altogether, the articles in this issue address significant issues and problems on African migration. They challenge us to be more observant, more critical, more progressive and more involved in studying, documenting, analyzing African migration. They also challenge us to make progressive and humane migration policy that if done well, will transform the existing international migration regime.

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Breaching Fortress Europe: By Any Means Necessary: The Complications of African Migration to Europe

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Abstract

Although African migration to Europe dates back to antiquity, Africans' presence in Europe increased substantially from the 1960s, especially since the imposition of neoliberal reforms in the 1980s, and the political crisis that consumed some African countries in the 1990s and 2000s. There has also been increased migration to Europe by the few skilled and professional Africans allowed to take advantage of opportunities that have opened up for employment in fields where there is a dearth of expertise. Nevertheless, predominant conceptualization of Africans' movement into Europe entails breaching an impregnable fortress, using any means at their disposal. Those making irregular migration includes as a mix of refugees, asylees, documented and undocumented migrants. However, European economic crises and the vulnerabilities spawned in consequence, have laid bare politicized, securitized, xenophobic and callous responses, particularly in the frontline states that receive what is increasingly perceived as a "deluge." Given the siege mentality that has developed around migration, the negative xenophobic attitudes, discourses and policies that emerge from them, and the increased securitization of migration, the siege characterization seems even more apt.

Keywords: Fortress Europe; African migration to Europe; undocumented migrants; irregular migration; refugees, asylees; xenophobia; securitization of migration.

Introduction

African migration to Europe is numerically smaller than those from other regions of the world as seen in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) statistics (ECOWAS-SWAC/OECD 2006). The current refugee "deluge" also does not have an African face whether it is in media reports, scholarly analysis, the popular imagination, or even as measured through the institutional responses by African governments or their regional organizations. One does, however, get glimpses of African migrants from Islamophobic responses that paint Muslims from North African and other regions with a broad brush. There is little indication of the longevity and diversity of African migration, or of the true character of migration from the Maghreb, Sahel and other parts of Africa. There is inadequate understanding of the larger social, political, and economic contexts within which these migrations occur. There is even less understanding of the disparate motivations of migrants, and of how second and subsequent generations of African migrants are similar to, or different from their parents. There is also a tendency to see African migrants as predominantly driven to migrate by economic impetus rather than political constraints. Although it gives us a sense of the antinomies of this ongoing process of border crossing, scant attention is paid to the ways in which African talent is contributing to the enrichment of professional and cultural life, including academia, sports and entertainment.

The fact that some of us can cross European borders more easily than others also creates incentives for those denied entry to strive even harder. What they are challenging in trying to breach the seemingly impregnable fortress that Europe has erected to keep them out is not only state and regional policing of various ever-increasing borders; they are ultimately calling upon a hypocritical liberal world order to act as though it were truly liberal. So many are dying because

most of the world refuses to engage. Many believe it is not their business; the migrants/refugees/asylees should stay put wherever it is they are coming from, particularly when they are being propelled by economic crises. The liberal world order even has rules and norms that affirm this callous perspective.

This paper will explore the unfolding effects of contemporary securitization regimes on African migration to Europe, and how the complexity of African migration challenges tendencies to over-generalize, oversimplify, and underestimate the vibrancy that African immigrants bring to Europe. This applies to both those migrants that are treated as disposable and left to die on the Mediterranean, as well as those migrants that are lucky enough to have made the crossing. Though considered lucky, the latter are still expected to remain corralled in encampments, awaiting either a magnanimous response or a deportation to other places where they are fair game due to their desire to breach fortress Europe. Paradoxically, some of these locations are in Africa (Raghavan 2017, Graham-Harrison 2017 , Hall 2017, Hagan 2017).

Another paradox is that the establishment and strengthening of the fortress and increased harshness of policies to restrict entry cause an increase in clandestine movements and a proliferation of dangerous alternatives (Collyer 2010, DeHaas n.d.). Migrants have then to make longer, more fragmented journeys, often at great cost to their well-being. Sometimes, they even lose their lives. When this happens to numerous people, we hear about it on the news. Otherwise, the struggle goes on behind the scenes. African and European states are equally guilty for hypocritically choosing expediency over genuinely effective, well-thought out policies that would acknowledge that Europe needs migrants for many reasons, not least due to its inability to reproduce the aging population and tap into a steady stream of low-paid workers. African countries need outlets for frustrated youth and other workers, who are either unemployed or

underemployed. The volume and size of remittances have also been proven to be significant enough, not only as support for family in emergency situations, and for everyday living expenses, but also as a higher source of financial flow that in some situations, is bigger than both Official Direct Assistance (ODA) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Thus, there is no real incentive for African states to take serious measures to deter potential migrants. Regardless, expedient measures are often taken in response to European overtures that erect barriers to migration, leading sometimes to egregious human rights abuses. One such example is the removal of migrants from locations from which they can more easily make the crossing to Europe, and leaving them stranded in the desert without water by Libya and Morocco.

African states on the frontlines of the migration such as Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal have also entered into agreements that give them what I consider to be meager payoffs to shore up the fortress meant to keep out migrants. These bilateral agreements with African countries, e.g. Libya, lead to human rights abuses and flouting international law on refugees. Libya for example, constructed jails in the desert to stop people from reaching European Nation (EU) countries. Red Cross and Human Rights activists complained that they were denied access. Syria is a game-changer due to the sheer numbers of those attempting to cross European boundaries at the same time, but in spite of the lower numbers of migrants from Africa, the journeys through the Mediterranean are of long standing for people from the Maghreb, Sahel, and other parts of Africa. Regardless of what is done, the journeys will continue. Depending on state and regional policies, some journeys might be as dignified as when I casually travel to go to a conference, visit family, engage in tourism, attend my mother's funeral, visit a child, etc.

Conversely, it might exert great suffering, indignities, otherization, and even death to Africans who only differ from me because of the level of their desperation and exclusion from the muchtouted benefits of globalization.

African Migrations: Documented, Undocumented, Irregular and Otherwise

African migration to Europe spans a panoply of typologies, including the documented, undocumented, irregular migrations, as well as the movement of refugees and asylees. The irregular movements that encompass African migrations to Europe are some of the most stigmatized forms of migration in the 20th and 21st centuries. They are precarious, capricious, turbulent trajectories via the Sahara, Morocco, and the Mediterranean that belie metaphors of waves and flows (Schapendonh 2012). It is also important to remember the frontline states Italy, Greece, and Spain, who complain about carrying the majority of the burden, and the EU response of using FRONTEX as a solution. This "solution," or lack thereof, is unhelpful and inhumane. Many protests have caused the stoppage or pausing of FRONTEX, but there is no guarantee that this would not be revived.

Even as migrants who take the most grueling measures to breach fortress Europe and put muscles behind their imagined futures of better life are repelled, elite footballers and athletes are very welcomed (Paul 2007, Poli 2006). But this variant of the migrations too has a most unpleasant underbelly. Recruiters are not always ethical, and many would-be footballers get duped or at least, exploited by unscrupulous scouts who promise glorious futures akin to those of Yaya Toure from Cameroon who plays for Manchester City, Didier Drogba of Ivory Coast who plays for Chelsea, and Sam Eto'o of Cameroon who plays for InterMilan. In reality, many recruiters leave players in the lurch without any recourse.

The crisis-driven imperative affects not only media and popular attention, but also seems to influence scholarly focus. Structural explanations give some insight into the causal factors that are operative, but do not fully capture the complex reality. Long term historical elements that reveal enduring patterns due to the structural constraints from the Capitalist World System must be combined with attention to the influence of human agency. This means we should attend to variation in migration impetus, and the combination of structural and agentic drivers is needed for a fuller picture.

Media focus and the brutal nature of the journey, combined with multiple deaths and sheer numbers of migrants involved, shows us enduring images of unfolding, unending catastrophe. State policies and regional responses do not help. For example, on March 3 2015, Donald Tusk, the EU Council President made a statement in Athens after a meeting with Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of Greece, "I want to appeal to all potential illegal economic migrants, wherever you are from: Do not come to Europe…Do not risk your lives and your money. It is all for nothing. Greece, or any other European country, will no longer be a transit country" (Afanasieva and Karagiannopoulos 2016) What does this mean for the policy of nonrefoulement? (as expressed in Article 33(1) of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of refugees: "No Contracting State shall expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (UNHCR 1977). One almost wants to tell these bureaucrats and policy makers not to waste their breath. Nothing can stop people from migrating if they want to do so. Although people will migrate regardless of what states and regional organizations dictate, one cannot stop there particularly since there is much more to migration than the compelling lack of

volition that forces people to uproot themselves from the familiar to struggle in places where they are strangers and sojourners. *Oro po ninu iwe kobo*/there is much to be found in a penny-pamphlet, as my Yoruba kin are wont to say. There is also a great lament in Yorùbá that captures the situation of migrants: *"Ha! Ise Aje l'o gbe mi de'le yi o!"*/I am in this land due to the quest for work and good fortune (Ige 1960s). The lament reminds us that migrants are driven to leave their home countries and foray into other lands by the quest for good fortune. The lived experience of migrants also show that some are fleeing from conflict and persecution, as well as environmental devastation, wide variety of motives while others are highly sought after and courted. Paradoxically, when it comes to Africans, we tend to get the propaganda about those driven to migrate by desperate economic circumstances and devastation. Most are repelled and demonized rather than embraced and lionized.

The EU warns economic migrants to stay away. But is it that cut and dried? Scholars of migration have told us about mixed migrations. People move for economic reasons; some of these folks could also be asylees or refugees. It is often impossible to clinically separate one from the other category. Where war, conflict, political persecution and the like cause increased movement of people who leave everything behind, and are joined by people who don't have the same impetus, but want better socioeconomic conditions, is this just opportunism? What solutions are available? As far as Donald Tusk is concerned, they should simply not come.

The matter is complicated by the existence of some international legal coverage for refugees and asylees, via global and regional laws, but no such coverage for people fleeing lack of economic opportunity and poverty. All these exist in a world that purports to be guided by liberal principles. No one here is naïve. We know that the liberalism that extends to economic situations doesn't apply to the desire of people to move. Money moves faster than the eye can

blink. When bureaucrats in Europe see the refugees and asylees, they fear disruption, claim that they are freeloaders and free riders, and also want these people to realize that beggars can't be choosers. This is why the French bulldozed "the Jungle" in Calais. It is why many countries refuse to take refugees. It is why the EU President warned people to stay away. It is why three young African men were attacked by other youth in quiet, orderly Gottingen, where I currently live. It is why some people clutch their handbags closer to their bodies when they see me coming in the same Gottingen. It is clear that migration will not stop despite harsh and brutal measures and rhetoric. The people moving are an admixture from multiple origins. Africans are lost in the shuffle. People also express clear preference despite the desperate, harsh conditions in places like "the Jungle" in Calais. Many refugees and asylees prefer the UK to France. The UK doesn't want everyone. Neither do France and Greece, some of the epicenters of movement, particularly from Syria. Making sense and teasing out Africans from this has become very difficult. It was clearer before the Syrian crisis propelled its own flows. Eritrea, Libya, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan and South

Sudan still have conflict. The Casamance region in Senegal and Northeastern Nigeria plus Nigeria's neighbors that are afflicted by Boko Haram are also pressure points. Some of the people affected will foray farther afield and join these flows. Some are similarly fleeing from or walking away from long-term lack of opportunity. It is these latter categories that attract the ire of Eurocrats and decision-makers which leads to efforts to keep migrants at home, to build more formidable barriers, including weaponized walls, and to increase brutal policing of borders of all sorts, including those over ever-increasing locales on land, the high seas and in airports (Jusionyte and Goldstein 2016).

Migrants Leaving Africa by any Means Necessary: The Problem with Bilateral and Multilateral International Agreements on Migration

International agreements with African states, as mentioned earlier, compel the interception, detention, and repatriation of migrants in gateway countries to keep them from reaching Europe. From the post-1973 oil crisis, these increased restrictions caused increases in family reunification and permanent settlement by migrants who knew that they could no longer freely travel back and forth. People moved to more congenial countries where cheap labor was in demand, including southern Europe, especially Italy, Spain, and even Portugal. Most of the migrants were Maghrebi until the 1990s when the irregular migrations were subjected to increased regulation by Spain and Italy. Again, the response increased clandestine migrations under unsafe conditions, increased crises in "Morocco's Spanish enclaves in 2005 and Spain's Canary Islands in 2006" (de Haas 2006). In a development dating from the 1970s and 1980s when African countries experienced serious economic crises, the migrants crossing to Europe from the Maghreb increasingly included Sub-Saharan Africans. The flows have intensified since the 2000s. The migrants draw on ancient historical trans-Saharan movements. Former nomads and traders began seeking construction jobs in Libya and Southern Algeria.

"By any means necessary" is how I conceive of the movements of irregular migrants. I do this because of the importance of the imaginary as an impetus for migration. Let's consider one of Appadurai's five scapes of globalization: *ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, ideoscapes, and financescapes*. Ideoscapes, in particular, concern the power of the imaginary and role of everyday lived realities and activities to create/reinforce/modify and reshape the possibilities (Appadurai 1990). Social institutions play an important role—the long shadow of the past and integration of new knowledge causes modified expectations and new possibilities.

New modes of attaining the desired objectives also materialize. The role of neoliberal ideological and institutional mechanisms is felt in a consumerist world where people are made to believe that all things are possible, but the possibilities are more to be found in the West, as a matter of fact, in some imaginaries, they are located there. Migration to Europe is seen as the avenue to success—glossy and privileged life in material terms appears and can be embraced. All one needs is to be there. Individuals and businesses, even media conspire to propagate this idea of the limitless, beautiful Europe.

It is also important not to downplay the persistence of economic pain for some. We all know of Africa's fast-growing youth population. Despite the rhetoric of "Africa Rising" and great investments in education by families that want their offspring to be successful, high levels of unemployment and underemployment drag on for years on end (Anyanwu 2013). The idea that all you need to do is leave, somehow get to the West and you're all set, inspires hope which is groomed by Christian pastors, Muslim clerics, friends, family abroad, media, ads, etc. This idea that your life is going nowhere and you could be successful instantly once you get to the West causes ever-rising expectations and the urge to go by any means necessary. The efforts to prevent migration/dampen the urge/stop entry is bound to fail because of the powerful impetus of the imaginary, the perception and reality of the absence of more viable options, and the tendency to believe that one success case is indicative of infinite possibilities.

The process of irregular migration includes both men and women but the securitization of migration favors young men who are able to scale high and formidable physical barriers such as the walls that barricade against easy entry. Women are also more vulnerable to some kinds of exploitation, but should not be seen as mere victims, or always as victims. They are in fact more likely to benefit from the "humanitarian" aspects of the migration regime, particularly if they are

pregnant, or have young children. As hard as the journey is, as challenging as the obstacles are, and as formidable as the barriers are made, the urge to leave and create better lives is even stronger. Those who successfully scale the hurdles are celebrated by institutions like churches that use them as examples. Pastors preach about them to inspire the potential migrants; businesses like Money Transfer Organizations (MTOs) feature them as providing for their families via remittances; advertisements show "the good life"; vacationing immigrants who show off their best attires and communicate only positive experiences, often claiming that were they to give the nitty-gritty, they would not be believed anyway.

Cumulative causation (Massey 1990) contributes to transnationalism in a process where contacts abroad assist with information, encouragement and actual facilitation of movement of migrants. This results in chain migration of family, friends, and people in social networks that provide information, assistance, and resources. There is a thriving migration industry and people movers proliferate by the day. They include a panoply of legal and clandestine institutions, mechanisms and processes. Human trafficking and the work of criminal syndicates tend to attract the most attention. Passages aren't always stable. Some may be stable and smooth and they inspire people to consider tapping into their presumed success and "good fortune". Even as we see the heightening of securitization and harshness of the migration regime, neither the African Frontline states nor the European Union nor even the African Union are truly committed to restricting population movements because they have no economic incentives to do so. However, symbolism matters to European publics who in the aftermath of the world economic meltdown in 2008, became more xenophobic and believed that anti-immigrant measures would improve their economic conditions. The perceived threat leads to preferences for exclusion and increased antiimmigrant prejudice (McLaren 2012) .

The Mediterranean is described by Sarah Wolff as an "open air cemetery" where: In

2004, between 700 and 1,000 died each year as they tried to cross into Europe from

Africa depending on whose numbers you consulted. This number almost tripled in

2011 and included migrants dying in the Mediterranean, off the coast of Libya,

Egypt, Tunisia, Malta, Italy, Spain, Algeria, Greece, but also people shot dead on

the Moroccan-Spanish border in Ceuta and Melilla or drowned in the

Evros river on the Greek-Turkish border (Wolff 2015).

The West African route to Europe (Senegal➜Mauritania➜Morocco➜Canary Islands) has

become disrupted – not necessarily stopped. FRONTEX tells us that the migrants are from

"Morocco and Senegal, with others from Niger, Nigeria and Mali" (FRONTEX 2016) By 2012,

there were only 170 migrants. By 2006, the numbers peaked at 32,000. There was a 60 percent

reduction in 2007. What was responsible? "Bilateral agreements between Spain and Senegal and

Mauritania, including repatriation agreements. Strengthened border controls, including the

installation of the SIVE maritime surveillance system, also helped, along with the coordinated

Operation Hera" (FRONTEX 2016).

The current strategies are not working. Scholars of migration have said this ad infinitum

and even the media sometimes show this. Migration evidence shows how badly the EU needs to

rethink its migration strategy, which has made it "the deadliest migration destination in the

world" (The Conversation 2016) The reports are grim. In 2014, the BBC said that over 700 died

in just one week (BBC 2014). According to the UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR),

from January - August 2015, 300,000 people had made the Mediterranean crossing. 200,000

landed in Greece, and 110,000 in Italy (Flemming 2015). The International Organization for

Migration (IOM) said 3,329 people died while crossing in 2015 (IOM 2015). IOM's Missing

Migrant Project reported that 418 had already died in the Mediterranean by 2016, out of 582 worldwide (Missing Migrants Project, IOM 2016). How many Africans died? Good question!

Securitizing Migration

The Western European regional integration process fostered the securitization of migration. Both the Maastricht and Schengen Treaties and The Dublin Convention guarantee freedom of movement among the signatory states, a freedom that is not extended beyond Europe, and one that asserts the sovereignty of states to determine entry into their territory, strengthened by volubly expressed concern about the destabilizing effects of migration on social security, welfare, and dilution of cultural identity, as well as fears about the invasion of terrorists, and criminal syndicates (Convey and Kupiszewski 1995, Huysmans 2000). The economic project of developing the European Common Market produced a regime that connected migration "with representations of social dangers" (Huysmans 2000). Migration is now "connected to representations of societal dangers" causing "the explicit privileging of nationals of Member States in contrast to third-country nationals and the generally restrictive regulation of migration sustains a wider process of delegitimating the presence of immigrants, asylum-seekers and refugees (Huysmans 2000, 752-753). The securitization of migration fuels "the wider politics of belonging, that is the struggle over cultural, racial and socio-economic criteria for the distribution of rights and duties in a community" (Huysmans 2000, 753).

The securitization of migration also causes the extension of borders to the high seas, and to other gateway or even origin countries, in a process that favors expediency over humane treatment of migrants, when arrangements are made with non-European gateway states like

Libya, to keep the migrants away. Grave abuses have been documented, including auctioning off migrants in slave markets, physical and sexual brutalization, exploitation and dehumanizing treatment. Migrants are also forced to undertake more dangerous migrations that increase the death toll (Sunderland 2017, Kirkpatrick 2017). The deaths in the Sahara and Mediterranean underline the harrowing nature of the journeys. African countries and regional institutions exhibit tremendous nonchalance to studying and making sound policy response to the root causes of problems that cause people to seek migration as means to survival. They tend to defer to European countries and adopt the strategies, policies and mechanisms favored by them. Such policies are not designed to help African migrants, neither are they designed to meaningfully address the fundamental causes of migration: poverty, desperation caused by structural violence, including lack of legal avenues to gainful employment, frustration from lack of economic mobility, political, sectarian and communal conflict and extreme marginalization.

Securitizing migration also encourages increased criminality. Lacking decent employment and key elements of human dignity, many see migration as a gamble that could not possibly be worse than what they endure at home. Legal opportunities for migration are few and far between, increasing the likelihood that people will pay to be trafficked. Given increased securitization, more dangerous avenues are pursued and trafficking becomes more grueling and dangerous. Both African and European states are to blame. Extreme marginalization will produce desperate "by any means necessary" type migrations. The only viable solutions are those that address structural problems that make violence characteristic of people's experience in most African countries, and produce the unending stream of desperate migrants. These are more difficult problems to solve than stopping hapless migrants at various borders.

African countries also benefit from the remittances sent by migrants that succeed in breaching the formidable fortresses at the borders that fail to keep them out. Some, like Ghaddafi's Libya benefit from the payouts from European destination states that depend on them to keep out African migrants. This situation had its own harrowing tales of horrible treatment for migrants. However, the elimination of Ghaddafi has created a vacuum now filled by gangs that inflict even more pain, including establishing their own private prisons and auction off fellow

Africans as slaves. Can African states really claim that they were unaware of these situations? Are the African Union, ECOWAS, and other regional organizations unaware? Where are their long-term policy responses to the problems?

There are also agreements between African regional organizations and the European Union, hammered out in periodic summits, of which the 5th African Union - EU Summit from November 29-30, 2017 is an example. In its account of the summit, the EU presented:

The joint declaration outlining common priorities for the EU-Africa partnership in four strategic areas:

economic opportunities for

youth peace and security

mobility and migration

cooperation on governance

According to Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, "As you know, the European Union is Africa's biggest partner and closest neighbour. Its biggest investor, its biggest trading partner, its biggest provider of development aid and humanitarian assistance as well as its biggest contributor in peace and security. And this summit demonstrated our determination to

reinforce our partnership even more" The EU also provided information on its financial outlay toward

funding its priorities in the African continent:

> The EU and its member states are the number one contributor to promote
>
> development, stability and peace in Africa:
>
> €21 billion development aid was provided to Africa in 2016 by the EU and its
>
> member states, the largest aid donors on the continent
>
> €32 billion were invested in Africa by EU companies in 2015, accounting for
>
> around one third of the overall foreign direct investment in Africa
>
> €3.35 billion are allocated to the European fund for sustainable development,
>
> which should trigger up to €44 billion of investments
>
> 7 civilian and military missions are deployed across Africa
>
> €1.4 billion are committed to educational programmes in Africa from 2014 to
>
> 2020 (EU 2017).

Reading the joint declaration of the AU-EU summit raise questions such as: Is this enough? What is the AU position? How much African input is there in determining what's needed and what's sufficient? How are the funds used in the implementation of these objectives? What are African countries doing to guarantee the human security, well-being and dignity of their citizens?

Conclusion

Africans are breaching the fortress erected by Europe. They are not necessarily a deluge because their numbers are smaller than xenophobic discourse suggests. Many are losing their

dignity, well-being, and lives in the process. They are not as visible as Syrians. They are not all fleeing from conflict or well-founded fear of persecution. But they are there. Are people deserving of refuge from grinding poverty? Who should decide? By what rationale? What if they are not fleeing from grinding poverty but just want better economic opportunities? What are their options if they stay at home? How do we treat all such adventuristic quests for fortune regardless of race, class, gender, and status? Will migration cease when all Africans experience the benefits of the "Africa Rising" propaganda in their daily lives? According to deHaas and other scholars of migration, not necessarily. The migrants who make the trip are more affluent than people who stay (deHaas 2008). It is expensive; you need information, networks, and boldness. Most African migration also occurs within the continent. Europe loves or tolerates the skilled African footballers, artistes, medical doctors, nurses, info tech gurus, sometimes even professors. They are not always treated as though they were breaching any fortress. Should people be able to flee from conflict and political persecution and dare to come in irregular flows to Europe? The European answer to this: it depends. I agree with Carl Levy that Europe has extraterritorial refugee camps where people are processed in a way that adds up to neorefoulement. This flouts the international liberal democratic asylum and refugee regime encoded in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refuges (Refugee Convention). A process of supra-national inter-governmentalism has been established where "the use of agencies such as FRONTEX and the more recent European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the open method of coordination, and other variations of soft law…was used rather than a formalized communitarian method" (Levy 2010, 92). Along with compassion and humane responses, burden sharing among the states involved has flown out the window.

Just in case we want to shout the mantra: African Lives Matter! To whom should they matter? Whom should we hold responsible? Is it ironic that we live in a liberal international order, and money can move, goods can move, but people can't? What will it take for African governments to realize that, at least some of the onus for making humane solutions is on them?

Biographical Sketch

Mojúbàolú Olufúnké Okome is an International Political Economist whose regional specialization is on the African continent. Educated at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, Long Island University, New York, and Columbia University, New York, she's a Professor of Political Science at Brooklyn College, CUNY; past Women's Studies Program Director and past Deputy Chair for Graduate Studies in the Department of Political Science at Brooklyn College. Born in Nigeria, Mojúbàolú has worked on international development issues as a consultant for clients including the United Nations and Commonwealth Secretariat in London. Her teaching interests include a focus on the meanings of inclusive, equitable citizenship in the context of the interplay between globalization, democratization and economic development. Her research interests include: Effects of globalization, post-colonialism, and post-modernity on economic and political transformation; Gender, democracy and citizenship in Africa and African Diaspora Studies.

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African Migrants in Post-Soviet Moscow: Adaptation and Integration in a Time of Radical Socio-Political Transformations

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Abstract

The changes since the breakup of the USSR have impacted African migrants' social composition, as well as their strategies and forms of adaptation and integration in the capital city of Moscow. In this study, we discuss the factors influencing the choices of African migrants, related to their background as Africans and to their perceptions of the receiving society. We distinguish between two social groups of African migrants and argue that while one group seeks integration into the Russian society, the other limits itself to mere adaptation to life in Moscow.

Keywords: African migrants, community, diaspora, megacity, Moscow, socio-cultural adaptation, socio-cultural integration

Introduction

Africans have always constituted a rather small minority among the migrants to the Soviet Union and, after its break-up in 1991, to the Russian Federation. It appears that their numbers, as well as their impact on society at large, will likely never compare to those of migrants from former Soviet republics, or even from some other countries, such as China. At the same time, it is evident that nowadays the influx of Africans into Russia is growing, and that Africans are becoming more noticeable in the Russian ethno-cultural landscape. It is safe to predict a further increase in the number of African migrants in Russia, provided that Russia

remains an open-to-the-world state. However, their infusion into Russian society faces difficulties explainable by the unpreparedness of many of the migrants on the one hand, and by the incomplete readiness of the Russian state and society to accept them, on the other.

The lives of migrants in the world's largest post-socialist society may differ significantly from that which applies elsewhere. So, it is clear that any "global" study of migrations would be incomplete and imperfect without taking migrations to Russia into serious account. Yet, there are still only a handful of studies on Africans in post-Soviet Russia (Davidson and Ivanova 2003:190–204; Kharitonova 2003; Ivanova 2004; Allina-Pisano and Allina-Pisano 2007; Bondarenko et al. 2009; Boltovskaja 2010; 214).

Socio-Cultural Adaptation and Integration: Challenges and Opportunities

This paper is based on field evidence collected by the author and his associates from 2007 to 2016. The research includes two interrelated parts: the pathways of socio-cultural adaptation and integration Africans choose, willingly or forcibly on the one hand, and their perception and appraisal by the receiving society (as reflected in the prevailing opinion about Africans and especially in their most typical image among native Russian citizens), on the other. The point here is that while most frequently African migrants estimate themselves as "partially adapted" to their new reality, it is definitely not by chance that there are many more Africans who regard themselves as "well-adapted" to life in Moscow among those who consider the native Russians' attitudes towards them as positive or tolerant. This exists in parallel to groups of migrants who believe that Russians treat them poorly, and as a result describe themselves as "ill-adapted".

Thus, the attitude of the receiving society is a significant factor in migrants' lives (Googueva 2007:47–48).

The methods used in the research included both structured and non-structured interviews, distributing questionnaires with subsequent database compilation, extensive observation (participant, when possible), and intensive informal communication. We regarded observation and communication as the most appropriate methods for this type of study and hence most important. In total, information has been obtained from over 150 Africans from 19 African countries and about 300 native Russians based on non-probability sampling. The analysis is grounded on the theoretical frameworks of urban studies and on different conceptions of community, particularly of "symbolic" and "imagined" communities. It is informed by the historical and sociological context of post-Soviet changes in African migrants' social composition, the typical forms of self-organization and strategies they employ to further their integration in the Russian capital megacity Moscow – a "global city-region" (Sassen 1991; Scott 2001; Soja 2003), and the modes of acceptance of their presence displayed by the local sociocultural environment.

From communist capital to neoliberal megacity: Post-Soviet transformations and Moscow Africans

It would be difficult to understand how African migrants can try to live in the Moscow of the 2000s without acknowledging that certain historical particulars of Russian society pose specific challenges to them. For one thing, Russia does not have as long-lasting, diversified, or contradictory history of interaction with Africans, as most Western European nations do (Golden-Hanga 1966; Blakely 1986, 2007; Fikes and Lemon 2002; Matusevich 2008b, 2009; Novikova 2013). Many such nations' historical involvements have resulted in the firm establishment of diaspora communities and the elaboration of at least some basic principles of

the receiving societies' attitudes to, and their states' policies toward, the newcomers. In addition, the "closed" nature of the Russian society in still recent Soviet times, and the difficulties of the reforms of the transitional period complicate the matter even more.

The national mass media have also played a negative role. Until the late 1980s, the image of Africans that the media spread was generally always positive (as a people struggling against world imperialism and economic backwardness), but during Gorbachev's *Perestroika* and in its aftermath, Africans were often represented as symbols of hopeless savagery and stupidity. It was also implied, and even openly stated, that by helping African countries, the communist regime had just been wasting money, instead of making friends with the "civilized world" (i.e., the West) and raising the living standards of Soviet citizens (Abiodun 2005; Quist-Adade 2005; Usacheva 2008, 2012). "Russia does not know Africa, or pretends it does not know, because the image of Africa in Russia is as follows: a poor continent where people live primitively in the forest, eat coconuts and bananas and where all have AIDS," says a Beninois who spent thirteen years in Russia, from the late 1980s until the early 2000s. Today, this attitude towards Africa and its inhabitants remains alive in the consciousness of a portion of the Russian population. The position manifests itself, for example, in angry comments on the Internet on every official(s') declaration that Russia will help African countries (most often in the context of writing off part of their debts).[1]

As in any contemporary society (Ojo-Ade 2001; Winant 2004), there are both active and passive (implicit) racists in Russia.[2] There were quite a number of racist acts against Africans in Russia, especially between the late 1990s and early 2000s. It is an erroneous view, though widespread in Russia, that there were no racists in the Soviet Union and that they suddenly materialized in the turbulent post-Soviet society of the 1990s. Racial prejudice does not spawn

from nothingness, and even in the 1960s (Mazov 2000; Hessler 2006; Boltovskaja 2014: 86–90) and furthermore in the time when popular belief in communist ideology was decaying during the 1970s and 80s, there were people (probably less numerous than nowadays) who disliked racial "others", Africans in particular, despite propaganda suggesting otherwise. However, what is important to realize, is that these people had no possibilities to act or even express their views openly. The Soviet authorities could still suppress all that did not conform to the official ideology, whether good or bad. In any case, in the post-Soviet era, due to both the national and international media, many people in the world, including those in Africa, became very wellaware of extreme acts of racism that took place in different Russian cities not so long ago. In particular, awareness of these racist acts prevented some Africans from going to Russia for educational purposes, and in general, it seriously damaged the image of Russia in Africa and worldwide (Bondarenko 2010). As a result, a young educated man whom we interviewed in

Tanzania in 2007 told us, "[the Russians] 'are really racists, like Nazis.'"

Naturally, social and political cataclysms always provoke aggravation of the interest to the "other," and the Russian society, one of the most turbulent at the turn of the millennia, has revealed this interest in a variety of forms, including some that are really painful (Evgenyeva 2004). Yet our research leads us to agree with Elena Kharitonova's (2003:192) statement that, "in general, Moscow's Africans are assessed [by Moscow Russians] without steady negative associations and do not have the status of 'enemy'" in the mass consciousness of Muscovites. Besides, it should be noted that in the 2010s, violent manifestations of racism have become less frequent than in the 1990s–2000s, which of course, does not mean that the problem of racism is eradicated (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance 2013, 2016).

Another, evidently most popular view of Africa and Africans portrays them as exotic

objects of curiosity. (It is not by chance that Africa has become a popular destination for wealthy

Russian tourists). For those that share this view, Africa is associated with heat, bananas,

hippopotamuses, and so forth. There is no aggression in this perception, but it does reflect the

fact that people are not ready to accept Africans' presence in Russian city streets as an everyday

reality. This oversimplified and one-sided image of Africa and Africans is actively exploited by

film producers, TV soap opera and sitcom directors, and advertisers (Gurevich 2008;

Bondarenko et al. 2009:96–98). For instance, Africans are often portrayed on the billboards of

tanning salons; on the Internet, one can easily find offers promoting "real African show

programs for corporate parties, New Year celebrations, and weddings." The most recent trend is

to invite a black Father Frost, a Russian equivalent of Santa Claus, to entertain children for the

New Year (with which, this character has been associated since Soviet times, and not with

Christmas).

One must also consider that Russians, especially the young, have very little basic

knowledge about African culture, ethnography, history, geography, politics, and so on

(Bondarenko et al. 2009:98, 2011:128–29). This can be viewed as a symptom of the general

unsatisfactory situation with school education in present-day Russia. Indeed, "the deficit of

information leads to simplification and corruption of the image" of Africa and Africans in Russia

(Kharitonova 2003:190). The majority of our Moscow African interlocutors attribute some

young Russians' anti-African actions to the sheer scarcity of real information about Africa and

her peoples (Shakhbazyan 2007:242). However, it is worth noting that in recent times, African

art and photo exhibitions have become quite frequent events in Moscow's cultural life, and many

young people can be seen in the exhibition halls on these occasions. It also goes without saying

that the youth form the overwhelming majority in concert halls when an African group is giving

a concert. This may include professional groups, coming from abroad like Beninese *Gangbe Brass Band* in May 2007, *The National Ballet of Rwanda Urukerereza* in June 2015, and several others, or semi-professional, formed by Africans living in Russia, like *Sun Music* or *Djembe Africa*. Schools of African drumming and African dance schools, run mostly by native Russians who may attract Africans to teaching, are becoming more and more popular among young Russians in Moscow and other cities.

Despite this apparent appreciation of African culture, in a 2008 survey only 36 percent of almost one hundred interviewed Moscow university students were able to name at least five subSaharan countries, while 26 percent could not recall even one. It became clear in the course of conversations that some of them were confused by the very expression "Africa south of the Sahara." Being asked to name prominent Africans they knew, quite a few students named Diasporan people of African descent such as African American jazz musicians, Pele, Naomi Campbell, and some other prominent black people of African descent, and 57 percent could not name anybody at all. Naomi Campbell, who became known to post-Soviet people as a symbol of glamour, and who during the survey was a focus of media attention because of her marriage to a Russian oligarch, was mentioned by 37 percent of the respondents. Conversely, the most often recalled Africans in the continent, included Nelson Mandela and Patrice Lumumba, in only 14 and 11 percent, respectively. It is clear why these were the most often mentioned Africans: Mandela, because of his victorious struggle against apartheid, is probably the best-known African world-wide, and Lumumba was remembered by Russian students because of the "Lumumba University" – one of the best known Russian educational establishments.[3] 47 percent believed that African languages (not European) are official in a majority of postcolonial African states, among other incorrect beliefs.

In our 2016 survey conducted across several Moscow schools among thirteen and seventeen-year-old students, many of the 122 interviewees, when asked what African countries they knew, named countries of the Middle East and Latin America. 66 percent could not name even one notable African, while some students recalled prominent blacks but not Africans: Bob Marley, Usain Bolt, American rappers and hip-hop artists.

The current national immigration legislation is more liberal than in Soviet times when the country was actually closed to potential migrants of any sort, except for a handful of politically motivated individuals, like leaders of communist parties (John Marks of South Africa).[4] Yet, it is still very difficult for a foreigner to gain a permanent resident or citizen status; the easiest way to do so is the same as it was in the USSR – to marry a citizen of the country. Our interlocutors from national human rights organizations have told us that very few of those seeking refugee status, including Africans, are granted it. All in all, the Russian migration laws remain generally rather opaque, and hence, still leave enough room for arbitrary interpretations and corruption in their practical application. This is particularly due to the continuing discussion, both in the public sphere and various governmental circles, of whether migrants are beneficial to Russia, and about what desirable ethnic/cultural and educational/professional priorities should be introduced as selection criteria for accepting them. Opinions vary, from the idea of only welcoming ethnic Russians, especially from the former Soviet republics (currently the only category of migrants for whom it is relatively easy to get Russian passports) to that of opening the doors to the country as widely as possible. Because of the huge influx of migrants from former Soviet republics and the migration crisis in Europe, the dominant public mood today is that immigration legislation should be tightened. It is certainly the case that "there is no strategic vision of migration as a positive event in Russia up to now" (Aleshkovskiy and Iontsev 2008:86).

At the same time, the situation regarding migrants from Africa has changed radically with the breakup of the Soviet Union. By the end of the Soviet era, almost all Africans residing in the country were university and college students, that is, non-permanent residents. They were spread rather evenly among numerous education centers all over the USSR, except for parts of Siberia and the Far East. In 1990, over 180,000 foreign students and graduate students studied at almost 700 educational institutions in 120 cities of the country, and Africans were 24 percent of them, i.e. about 43,000 people (UNESCO 1990:3.301–3.403; Golubev et al. 1994:90; Sheregi et al. 2002:9–28). Today, the overwhelming majority of Africans in Russia are concentrated in a limited number of large cities, Moscow first and foremost. The number of African students coming to Russia has decreased considerably, mainly due to the cutting of state quotas for free education and the introduction of tuition fees that are too high for many prospective students. However, the raising of the Iron Curtain and the collapse of the USSR made it easier for foreigners to get entry visas, leading to the influx of other migrant groups into the country.

Though in the 2000s, the visa regime became tougher than in the preceding decade, at present, some Africans residing in Moscow are refugee status seekers from the sites of current or recent violent conflicts like the DRC, Côte d'Ivoire or Somalia. However, the majority are economic migrants from all over the African continent. Today the number of Africans in Moscow can be estimated very roughly at about 10,000, including only a bit more than 1,000 students. Moscow houses nearly one quarter of the approximately 40,000 African residents of the Russian Federation. No official figures are available, but these are the reasonable figures several African activists and knowledgeable Russian Federal Migration Service officials provide.

As noted earlier, African migrants most frequently estimate themselves as "partially adapted" to their new Russian reality. Research has shown that many Africans experience

difficulties in adapting to life in Moscow. For many, if not most present-day newcomers, matters are complicated by such issues as insufficient education background and poor Russian language skills, poor knowledge of Russian lifestyle, differences in climate, few, if any, Russian friends, and very limited financial possibilities with little hope for any kind of support by the home country's official representatives (Bondarenko et al. 2009:89–91).

Coming to Russia with one's family alleviates the migrants' psychological problems to a certain extent. However, it makes the problem of earning money even more critical. While in recent times foreign students have been able to work legally, not all Africans have legal residence or work permits, and it may be very difficult to acquire them, even for graduates from Russian universities, sometimes including those married to Russian citizens. According to unpublished statistics of the national migration service, in 2011, only 356 migrants from subSaharan African countries (including 113 Nigerians and 91 South Africans) were granted work permits all over the Russian Federation. Moreover, African migrants usually complain that it is rather difficult to find a good job, even for those fluent in Russian and those with permanent legal status (in 2011, seventy-six sub-Saharan African migrants were granted permanent residence permits and thirty obtained full citizenship).

Moscow, now a typical neoliberal metropolis, offers plenty of low-paying jobs that tend to be taken by migrants as well as poor and unskilled workers from different parts of the Russian Federation and Muscovites from underprivileged social backgrounds. For example, one can see Africans distributing advertisement leaflets or magazines, standing as "sandwich people" at subway station entrances, or hanging advertisements on bus stops and building walls. Typically, this work is done by Russians from financially disadvantaged social backgrounds – mainly students and pensioners, but Africans have managed to penetrate this sphere of labour activities.

One can also see Africans selling cheap goods on the streets, working at construction sites, cleaning offices, or sweeping streets and yards. The situation can be more accommodating for students, who as a rule have residence permits, are provided with housing at university dorms, study Russian with teachers during the first year of their stay in the country, and can seek support from their countries' embassies. However, their adaptation to life in Moscow does not run smoothly either (Zherlitsyna 2009; Boltovskaja 2014: 113–132). Many of the immigrant students must also look for jobs, usually in the same sectors as African non-students.

After coming to Moscow, most economic migrants do manage to improve their living standards in comparison to what they were accustomed to in their home countries. Nevertheless, only a few of those not trained at a university or college in Russia can succeed professionally in white collar occupations and earn enough to send remittances home to support their relatives. This is one of the reasons why many Africans that arrive in Russia would probably say that they hope to one day go to Western Europe, United States, Canada, or Australia. One respondent, a Cameroonian residing in Russia for over ten years, said about such migrants, "I call them 'swindlers'; about 90 percent [of Africans that come to Russia] are of this sort – those who arrive here and then begin to look for a way to go further". Other Africans would say that they hope to return to their home countries sooner or later. Yet, some of these people are eager to recognize honestly that in most cases their ideas of going to the West or returning home is nothing more than a psychological trick they are playing on themselves; the dream of enjoying a sweeter life in a Western country or being able to return home in the future helps these migrants cope with the hardships they face in Russia.

It can be safely argued that today it is more difficult for people coming from Africa to adapt to life in Moscow (and Russia in general) than it was during Soviet times. The validity of

this generalization becomes especially evident when one compares the situation of the students before and after the end of Communist rule. The Soviet authorities were interested in the ideological and political indoctrination of foreign students, including Africans, therefore, they were invested in their acclimation (Katsakioris 2009; Mazov 2009; Kret 2013). In the Soviet Union, the systematic facilitation of foreign students' adaptation to life was thought out at the state level, with the participation of scholars (psychologists, social scientists, and others) as well as special departments in universities tasked with their care. Their Soviet fellow students, partly with the encouragement of university authorities and partly because it was a rare opportunity for them to communicate with foreigners, usually treated Africans – whom they saw as victims of imperialism and as fighters for a better life – with sincere interest and affection, eagerly including them in their company.

Today, foreign students most often encounter a very formal attitude on the part of the university authorities, which are no longer bound by such strict state regulations and control; no special measures for their socialization are taken, and on campuses Russian and African students form two distinct communities, each keeping to itself (Gdaniec 2009; Gribanova and Zherlitsyna 2012; Boltovskaja 2014: 122–130).[5]

In those segments of the mass media sympathetic to their plight, Africans are represented most often as victims of difficult circumstances that accompany their establishment in Russia. While it is true for a portion of African migrants, it is by no means the case for the whole population. There is another, smaller but still distinctive and significant segment of the African migrant population in Russia, which is formed by very different people whose fortunes contrast with the representation of Africans as passive victims in the receiving society. While the economic migrants and refugees might be conventionally referred to as "common" migrants,

these people might be called privileged Russian Africans. These are Africans who have found

pathways toward social recognition and success in a Russian megacity and eventually managed

to establish a worthy, even prestigious place for themselves in society. Almost all of these people

are Soviet or Russian university alumni who have lived in Russia for at least twenty years, have

obtained Russian citizenship (mainly through marriage), speak fluent Russian, know the Russian

lifestyle very well, enjoy support from Russian family members and respect in their home

countries, have native Russians as close friends, are happy to see their children being very well

integrated into Moscow city life, and are always welcome in their motherlands' embassies in

Moscow. Some of these individuals even become their native countries' official representatives

in Russia, for example, H.E. Dr. Gabriel Anicet Kotchofa who was the Ambassador of the

Republic of Benin. These Russian Africans do not have any intention of leaving Russia

permanently. They are journalists, university teachers, medical doctors, translators, and so on.

Many Africans are economists, managers, and other professionals involved in, or related

to different kinds of businesses, and some are successful middle-class and even upper-class

entrepreneurs. It should be noted that these people were astute and smart enough to use the

opportunities in the turbulent period of "wild capitalism" of the 1990s provided to those ready to

take risks and those who did not fear hardships (Bondarenko et al. 2014).

In the 2000s, Russian capitalism became much more "regular" (in fact, state-regulated

and controlled), but many educated Africans still managed to make inroads in Moscow. In the

younger generation, among the innumerous Africans who came to study at Russian universities

and colleges in post-Soviet times, there are those who went into show business, including as

musicians, singers, dancers, DJs or VJs. Nonetheless, in general, contemporary migrants to

Russia face more difficulties in establishing themselves and, for example, setting up successful business ventures than those who came at the end of the Soviet period, and who could benefit from the economic and political liberalization of the late 1980s and early 1990s (Bondarenko et al. 2014).

In sum, since the early 1990s, the social composition of Africans in Russia has changed markedly and has become more heterogeneous. This is occurring simultaneously with the number of African migrants exceeding the level of being just a barely perceivable minority in Russian cities and regions, with Moscow serving as their most important hub.

Remaining African, Becoming Russian: Self-organization forms and integration strategies of African migrants in present-day Moscow

Characteristically, conscious attempts to unite at least some groups of migrants have been made, not by the neediest, but by some of the most integrated, and prosperous in the receiving society: Moscow Africans. In particular, they participate in the activities of the official (that is, registered) *Russian Migrants Federation,* which was founded in 2007 and held its First Congress in 2008 in the grandiose *President Hotel* with the State Duma (Russian Parliament) members as distinguished guests. The aims of the Federation are by no means political. Migrants, including Africans, concentrate on social projects, carefully avoiding engagement in political activism as they fear that this could hinder reaching the main goal – securing their position in the country. These Africans have consciously linked their lives to Russia and prefer to establish and strengthen their positions in the Russian society by promoting cooperation with their Russian colleagues and other social peers rather than with compatriots who have low social status. So, affluent and struggling Africans usually use two radically different strategies to embroider

themselves into the fabric of Russian society. While the latter cooperate mainly with one other, the former opt for maximum inclusion in the mainstream socio-cultural milieu.

The *House of Africa*, a non-governmental organization, which is probably the most successful large-scale project of Russia-based Africans at present, was founded in 2012 by Odunlami Serge Phocas, a Russian university alumnus from Benin. The *House of Africa* declares on its website homepage that it is, "devoted to the development and strengthening of friendly and partner relations between the peoples of Russia and Africa," and that it is a, "[n]on-commercial partnership for the development of cultural, educational, business and public relations . . . to facilitate the process of integration of Russia in the African economic and social space through the creation of stable partnerships in civil society."[6] In its activities, the *House of Africa* (as well as the *Russian Migrants Federation*) relies not only on Russian partners including governmental bodies, but also on the embassies of African states in Russia. This support from different sides allows the *House of Africa* to organize important events, for example, *Afrofest* – an annual African cultural festival that attempts to familiarize native Russians with Africa and its diverse cultures.

Permanent migrants from several African countries are planning to register their own associations. A *Rwanda Diaspora to the Russian Federation* was founded on the initiative of the Rwandan Embassy in 2015. However, until December 2016 when the Guineans registered their association, the *Nigerian Community Russia* (N.C.R.), founded in the early 2000s with branches in United States Moscow and St. Petersburg, and the *Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation* (N.I.D.O.-Russia) founded later in 2007, remained the only officially registered self-organized and self-governing associations of African migrants in Russia. These organizations have elected administrative bodies, possess official websites as well as Facebook pages, and have strong ties

with the Nigerian Embassy in Moscow and with compatriots in the home country and worldwide, among other markers of a strong network.[7] N.I.D.O.-Russia is a Chapter of the *Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation Europe* (N.I.D.O.E.), the European arm of a global network of *Nigerians in Diaspora*, with Headquarters in London. N.C.R. consists of about two hundred registered members, while N.I.D.O.-Russia counts over one hundred.

Typically for such organizations, whether registered or otherwise, in the words of the then N.I.D.O.-Russia Chairman, Dr. Bashir Obasekola (personal communication, August 23, 2013), its "members are largely . . . non-students who are already accomplished in their professions, but currently working or doing business in Russia. The focus of the organization is to mobilize Nigerian professionals and entrepreneurs living in Russia." On the contrary, N.C.R. Is an organization for everyone. There is no particular focus on any group. Students, non-students, professionals or artisans are all supposed to be involved. The relationship between NIDO and *Nigerian Community* is [a] very cordial one, since most of the members of NIDO-Russia are also activists of the *Nigerian Community* . . . Members of NIDO are mainly graduates and successful entrepreneurs . . . [and they] are also the core benefactors and avant-gardes to the *Community*.

Dr. Obasekola himself was the President of the *Nigerian Community Russia* for eight years before becoming the Chairman of the *Nigerians in Diaspora Organization Russia*. Besides registered members, both organizations have sympathizers among Nigerians residing in Russia who have doubts about the profitability of officially joining any of them due to different reasons. In particular, as one of our interlocutors said, "Several years ago, many Nigerians were afraid of identifying themselves as a union nation; we did not trust each other. It was caused by the

ethnoreligious and socio-political situation in Nigeria. Even abroad it is hard [for us, Nigerians] to realize ourselves as a 'united nation from one country with common aim'."

As a rule, the African migrants' associations are functioning as informal (unregistered) clubs and societies, whose aims are not only to provide their members with support and recreation in the native cultural milieu, but also to facilitate their business and social success in Russia. Such organizations involve privileged Africans almost exclusively in their activities. Generally, these informal voluntary associations are based on personal relations providing group solidarity. Such associations (as well as compatriots' support in general, in various forms) play a positive role in the process of Africans' integration into the Russian society (Googueva 2007:44–45, 48; Gribanova and Zherlitsyna 2012:73). "We all know the cell phone numbers of each other, know when one has a birthday. Sometimes we get together and visit one of us to talk about current news," a member of a Cameroonian fellow- migrant association told us.

Beyond the necessity of having a legal status in the country in order to have the right to register an official organization, in fact, any organizational work demands time and money that African migrants with low social status and income cannot afford to spend freely. A result of this, the dualistic "diasporic identity", when migrants associate themselves both with the country of origin and the country of residence (Vertovec 2000; Anderson 2001; Naujoks 2010), develops primarily among the privileged Moscow Africans who have the resources to engage in community-forming projects.

Migrants of the other category – non-privileged, economic migrants – generally remain out of this process. Not integrated into the Russian society to a sufficient degree, they mostly retain a "one-sided", brought from home, identity. These people have their own forms and ways of finding each other in Moscow's megacity jungle. The social distance between the two

segments of the African population in Russia is quite large, and their spheres of interaction are limited. Well-integrated and thus privileged Africans even tend to separate themselves from other migrants; in discussions, both with each other and even with interviewers, they often referred to out-group migrants as "they", in attempts to avoid associating themselves with the less privileged migrants, including compatriots. This was despite many of our interviewees telling us they had helped struggling less affluent migrants when possible. As an example, this assistance could be in the form of providing jobs. This was before inspections looking for illegal workers became too frequent and meticulous in the second half of the 2000s.

In the USSR, there was an invisible demarcation between foreigners and native Soviet people. This distinction was not enshrined in law but it could be clearly seen in the spatial practices of Soviet-style urban planning, which was very functional in its nature. The implication was that foreign students (who in those days formed the vast majority of African residents) should spend most of their lives in dormitories and in the remote areas of the cities, while their contact with Soviet people was to be kept to the unavoidable minimum for ideological reasons. The authorities protected Soviet citizens from any foreign influence on one hand, and tried to limit the possibilities of foreigners seeing the reality of life in the country on the other. Indeed, not only people from the West but also students from the "Third World", thought of as true friends of the Soviet Union and comrades in the anti-imperialist struggle, were disappointed with the Soviet reality, especially because it was at odds with the ideology which declared the USSR as the country of complete freedom, while political and cultural isolationism, ideological pressure, disregard for human rights were part of the norms of everyday life. Several former Soviet African students told us how they had been shocked by this reality (Matusevich 2012; Katsakioris 2014). Today, both state ideology and social composition of African migrants are

different. However, no "ethnic" (with clear numerical and cultural domination of non-Russian inhabitants) neighborhoods have been formed in modern Moscow. Africans are scattered all over the city and the city region, though there seems to be a trend to the concentration of economic migrants. The poorest and socially lowest south-eastern and eastern outskirts and suburbs of the city house African migrants, while Moscow's south-western outskirts, where the international Peoples' Friendship University of Russia is situated, remain the center of attraction for African students and graduates.

Churches and mosques situated in different parts of Moscow are examples of another type of institution around which a significant number of African migrants gather, although far from all attend church or mosque regularly, especially among those more socially established and financially well-off, who have less need of the moral or practical support a religious institution can provide. African Orthodox Christians (almost exclusively Ethiopians), as well as Sunni Muslims may visit the same churches or mosques attended by native Russian citizens of different ethnic origins and cultural traditions, and, should they choose to do so, may try to establish informal relations with the respective religious community or parish members. At the same time, there also are several Catholic and Protestant (Lutheran, Anglican, and other) churches in Moscow, as well as quite a number of churches of "new" Protestant congregations, including Africans (created and led by African preachers), which are active in Russia.[8] The social backgrounds of their parishes are mixed, and include many individuals who are not wellestablished in the Russian society in either practical or psychological terms. The role played by such churches in the integration of the Africans is ambivalent. On the one hand, as is the case elsewhere (Okome 2002:17–24; Arthur 2008:94–102; Olupona and Gemignani 2009; Agbali 2012:86–92), these churches help African migrants in Russia by giving them consolation and

support (sometimes – even in connection with the problem of racism), providing them with feelings of security and stability, and creating an atmosphere in which they can express and reproduce the values of their native cultures, thereby maintaining their cultural identities. [9] On the other hand, affiliation with these churches raises an additional barrier in the migrants' journey to integration in the cultural milieu of the receiving country, and so promotes their parishioners' continued seclusion from the wider Russian society (Shakhbazyan 2010). Not by chance are they often called "foreign churches" in the media and by the public, these churches have no roots in mainstream Russian culture, and are perceived by the overwhelming majority of the country's native citizens as completely alien. In the light of their more politicized than truly religious minds, these churches are often seen as the enemy's agents in the "eternal" and irresolvable opposition between Russia (inseparable from Orthodox Christianity) and the West (symbolized by Catholicism and Protestantism).

Africans also meet in specific nightclubs, cafés, and restaurants. Naturally, there are the more and less prestigious among these places. Typical regular visitors of some of them are African students and migrants with a modest, but stable, and at least "more or less" legal income. The most popular café of this sort is *Avenue*, situated on the periphery of the city, on the campus of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, and run by Tefera Yehuala Wasie, an old alumnus from Ethiopia, and his Russian wife Anna. This small café has a democratic atmosphere and rather low prices. It is less known by Russians than it is by Africans who use it as a meeting place where they can socialize with each other, immerse themselves in a familiar cultural atmosphere and express their identities freely. While in Soviet times dormitories were the main places used for socializing for both African and Russian students, for Africans now, this café has become such a place. As the café proprietor's Russian wife said, "Here is a place where no one

will judge." In other words, *Avenue* gives Africans a sense of home and of belonging to a community, which becomes a lived experience of that particular locality. Besides, *Avenue* is also the place where the Ethiopian community holds meetings every Saturday. In this manner, *Avenue* has become more than just a local eatery on the outskirts of the capital city. The lavish *Addis Ababa* restaurant in the prestigious Downtown is the second of the two Moscow eateries that are run by Africans. *Addis Ababa* also belongs to Ethiopian graduates of Soviet and Russian universities, a brother and a sister, and is primarily visited by well-off Russians and Western expatriates; only a handful of the most successful Moscow Africans are among its *habitués* (Bondarenko et al. 2014).

Although Africans in Moscow usually have acquaintances among people from different African countries, the basic level of their integration is with the culture and people of their country of origin, and not with those from the same ethnic or regional origins (whether within their country or within the African continent), or with any other kind of group. The answer to the question, "Are you divided by ethnic groups here in Moscow?" by an Ethiopian respondent is characteristic in this respect, "Here – no. Not like in Ethiopia". As for pan-African sentiments, they may be present as a virtual frame for distinguishing "us" from "them" in the "white" cultural milieu. The sense of pan-African unity is rather loose among Russian Africans, and exists mainly because, from the point of view of most native Russians, all these people are (and will probably always be) seen as "the Africans" – that is, as members of a single African community. As a rule, these sentiments do not lead to the emergence of stable, nationally mixed informal or formal groups, clubs or societies. This is especially true of the cases when the

European languages spoken in the African migrants' home countries are different, although practically all our respondents declared that they were ready to offer informal help to any African from any state.

This conclusion seems equally true of both categories of Africans in Russia, except sometimes in cases of an ongoing tension between ethnic groups in the migrants' home country. In these cases, if mutual dislike is so strong that it is irresistible even in another country, the representatives of conflicting groups may use the tactics of more- or-less strict mutual avoidance. On the other hand, if problems in interpersonal relations become grave and begin to threaten the tranquility of the whole community, its most authoritative members try to pacify those quarreling by encouraging them to realize that while in their home country they may divide themselves into groups according to ethnicity, when they are abroad, they must feel that they are people of one nation and behave accordingly. During the research, Cameroonians, Nigerians, and others repeatedly told us about such situations.

The aforesaid is also applicable to African students, the official temporal migrants. In particular, there are several organizations of students from Nigeria and Cameroon (*Association of Nigerian Federal Scholarship Students in Russia*, *The Nigerian Students Union of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia*, *Association of the Cameroonian Students in Moscow*, *Association of the Cameroonian Students in Russia*, etc.). It can happen that for some members of such unions, ethnic origin really matters, but, as a leader of a Cameroonian student association said, "We try to stop them immediately . . . We tell them, 'There, in the home country, you may divide but we have come here, and here we are all together!'." Characteristically, there is no Moscow pan-African association; Africans from different countries are connected with each other mostly either interpersonally or within wider migrant organizations like the *Russian*

Migrants Federation. The pan-African association of the international Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (called the *Association of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia African Students*) is designed as a federation of the separate African countries' student unions. Furthermore, it must be emphasized that the association was created only in 1995, while the first national African student union appeared immediately after the University's founding in 1960. As the early activists of the association recall and openly admit, only the hardships of the 1990s (in most of the African states and in Russia), which made foreign students' lives extremely difficult, pushed the University's African national student unions to integration.

Conclusion: The "African Diaspora(s)"?

This article highlights both some similarities and – especially – important differences between the situation of the African migrants in Russia and in many other (particularly Western European and North American) countries. One of the most important differences is the extent to which Africans in Russia and the West are integrated into diaspora communities. We agree with Aihwa Ong (2003:87) that, "the old meaning of diaspora – of being scattered or in dispersion . . . is too limiting an analytical concept to capture the multiplicity of vectors and agendas associated with the majority of contemporary border crossings." Diaspora communities must not be seen uncritically and assumed to be homogeneous, but rather should be analyzed in the transnational context of the present day in which they emerge, partly as constructs, "as a category of practice, project, claim and stance" (Brubaker 2005:13), and special attention must be paid to their dynamic and fluid nature, which makes them networked and heterogeneous in many respects (Braziel and Mannur 2003; Tsagarousianou 2004; Dufoix 2008).

We approach the diaspora community not simply as, "the offspring of an area, who have spread to many lands" (Kottak 2002:501), or a "dispersed group living outside a homeland" (Fogelson 2006:1116), but as a network community that serves as a means of both more successful establishment in the receiving society and of pre-migration identity support. Due to numerous and various visible and invisible connections among its members, it forms a distributed social unit, without a single shared fixed territory (a *status in statu*) within a wider society. From this perspective, we argue that the process of diaspora formation among Africans in Russia in general, and Moscow in particular, is developing slowly (Bondarenko et al. 2009:92–96). Many people remain completely, or almost completely, excluded from it since their social ties are limited to a narrow circle of their immediate acquaintances. Most often, this is a consequence of their objective circumstances (such as unofficial migrants' necessary "clandestinity") but sometimes it is also due to an individual's own wishes.

At present, no single "African diaspora community" in the sense of community suggested by Anthony Cohen (1985), which exists without any necessary links to a certain place or regular gatherings, is emerging in Russia. The homogenizing perception on the vast part of native Russians as a single African community – "the Africans" – can to some extent stimulate the strengthening of the ties between Africans of different ethnic and even national origins (Manotskov 1995:188). However, our analysis shows that the real situation is far from that envisioned by a typical Muscovite. What can really be observed today among Moscow (and generally Russian) Africans, is a rather weak trend toward the formation of internally diversified (by ethnic or regional origin, religion, and social status) national diaspora communities. The Nigerians have definitely advanced furthest in this respect and are likely followed by the Cameroonians, Ethiopians, and Ivorians.

The sense of pan-African unity in these national communities is quite loose. Its existence is predicated on the opinion of native Russians that all of the migrants are members of a single "African community." The sense of pan-African unity may manifest itself mainly in cases of either a common emergency, such as the necessity of resisting racist attacks (Manotskov 1995; Allina-Pisano and Allina-Pisano 2007; Bondarenko et al. 2009), or attempts to demonstrate to the wider Moscow society the richness of African cultures at African festivals and fairs (at which, however, each national community occupies its own pavilion).

It would be instructive to compare the situation in Russia to that in other countries. Our experience allows us to compare it with the situation in the United States, in different parts of which we did fieldwork during 2013–15 (Bondarenko 2016). Based on field research in the two countries, we argue that, despite all differences, the very pattern of African communities in Russia and the United States is generally the same, but in the United States, similar processes within these communities are proceeding faster. Although extensive migration from Africa to the United States began at almost the same time as Russia became more open to foreigners (mid1980s and especially 1990s), currently, there are many more African permanent residents in the United States than in the Russian Federation. Although the proportion is gradually changing in the United States, well-educated middle class Africans dominate even numerically over poorly educated lower class African migrants. For these and some other reasons related to fundamental distinctions between American and Russian societies and states, as we believe, Diasporas as network communities have already emerged among recent migrants to the United States from many African countries. This is not a single "African diaspora" but Ghanaian, Senegalese, Ethiopian, and other national Diasporas. So, what is already a fact in the United States is still a "work in progress" in Russia, but it is obvious that the process is moving in the same direction.

As with Russia, relationships within African communities in the United States are not conflict-free, they are extremely heterogeneous and internally fragmented – ethnically, religiously, socially, politically. However, the United States far exceeds Russia in the number, variety, and role for the communities of the associations founded by African migrants. There are over a dozen Ghanaian associations in only one relatively small city of Columbus in Ohio (Agbemabiese n.d.) – this is hardly less than the number of associations of Africans in Moscow. The larger number of Africans in the United States, when compared with Russia, is facilitated by the more advanced development of civil society living, which makes the United States better suited to accommodate such associations. As a result, although some scholars write about the "invisibility" of Africans in American society and thus, in mass consciousness and intellectual discourse (Arthur 2000; Hintzen and Rahier 2003; Okure 2011:5), they are definitely more visible than Africans in Russia. Nonetheless, today, Africans are becoming increasingly more visible in both countries.

What is most specific about the situation with Africans in Russia (and particularly in Moscow), is the historical background of the role that social factors play in slowing the formation of African diasporas even at the national level. These factors are quite significant, though usually underestimated (and thus, understudied) compared with ethnicity or religion. The social factor manifests itself in the social differences between the Africans who came to Russia as students many years ago and remained there, and the Africans coming nowadays as economic migrants or political refugees. These differences draw a bold dividing line within every African national community and serve as a salient feature at the pan-African level. An important outcome of this is that while the African migrants denoted here as privileged are cultivating a Diaspora identity and successfully seeking deep integration into Russian society, African

economic migrants most often have to remain excluded from the Russian social and cultural mainstream and limit themselves to mere adaptation to life in Moscow. This sharp division of African migrants into the two groups is a direct consequence of political, social, economic, and cultural differences between the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. Due to the aforementioned reasons, majority of privileged Moscow Africans are originally "Soviet Africans" who came as students and were welcomed, while the economic migrants are exclusively "post-Soviet". The liberalization of the entry regime allowed them to arrive in

Russia, much to general dismay. Economic migrants could never appear in the USSR, while the Russian Federation accepts many fewer potential privileged Russian Africans than the Soviet Union did since the early 1960s.

Far from being homogeneous not only nationally and ethnically but also socially, Africans are making very different inroads in the Moscow socio-cultural environment. While a part of them, mainly those who came to the Soviet Union or Russian Federation as students, have successfully integrated, others – the more recent newcomers, among whom there are many economic migrants and political refugees, face serious difficulties. At all their social and cultural diversity, today, natives of Africa are becoming increasingly visible in Moscow. There are good reasons to believe that in the future, they will become even more visible.

Bio-sketch

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NOTES

[1] See, e.g., http://www.bbc.com/russian/russia/2012/10/121018_russia_debts_writeoff (accessed July 8, 2016).

[2] Among many studies of contemporary Russian racism, the one deserving special attention as most grounded and profound is the two-volume monograph by Victor Shnirelman (2011). On racist attitude to, and discrimination of Africans in post-Soviet Russia, see Boltovskaja 2014: 187–204.

[3] The official name of the university since 1992 is People's Friendship University of Russia (*Rossijskij universitet druzhby narodov*, *RUDN*). Founded for the purposes of educating students from so-called "Third World" countries in 1960, it was officially named after the Congolese hero in 1961–92. However, most Russian citizens, as well as people worldwide, still call it the

"Lumumba University."

[4] On most recent updates in the immigration legislation, see: Artamonov 2015.

[5] On the Soviet ideology of internationalism that made the acceptance of Africans mandatory, see: Katsakioris 2006; Matusevich 2008a (cf. with regards to Latin America: Rupprecht 2015).

[6] http://african-house.com/ru/dom-afriki (accessed February 28, 2016).

[7] http://nigeriancommunity.ru/, https://www.facebook.com/Nigerian.Community.Russia/, http://nidorussia.com/, https://www.facebook.com/nidorussia?fref=ts; naturally for our time, many unregistered organizations of Africans in Russia also have their pages on Facebook; for example – The Ivorian Community in Russia: https://www.facebook.com/Ивуарийскаяобщина-в-России-582666751757954/?fref=ts (all accessed February 28, 2016). The Internet plays a very important role as a means of both self-

organization and, not less significantly, selfrepresentation of Africans living in Russia, including Moscow (Serov 2008).

[8] However, the law passed in July 2016 (so called "Yarovaya's law", by the name of its main proponent) can complicate the activities of all religious organizations in the country, but especially of non-Orthodox Christians.

[9] In particular, *Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy* established in 2001 the *Task Force against Racism*. "Members of the Task Force interview and counsel victims of racially motivated attacks, and publish results in quarterly and annual reports" (http://mpcrussia.org/ [accessed July 10, 2016]).

Exploring the Migration Experiences of Black Zimbabwean Women in the Greater Cincinnati Area

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Abstract

This article explores the migration experiences of Zimbabwean immigrant women living in the Greater Cincinnati, Ohio area. It argues that despite the increased population of women migrating, sometimes alone, in search of a better lifestyle, their unique experiences have remained invisible in studies on migration. The study followed a participatory research approach and used a photovoice method for data collection. Over a period of seven months, participants took photographs that vividly captured their experiences. Implications from the findings and the nature of the photovoice as a participatory approach for future research with Zimbabwean immigrant women are presented.

Keywords: Migration, Zimbabwean women, photovoice, participatory research

Introduction

The influx of Zimbabwean immigrants is contributing to the growing cultural mosaic of the United States. In 2008, the total population of Zimbabweans living in the United States was estimated to be somewhere between fifty thousand to two hundred thousand (Firger 2008). These figures, although not conclusive, included both immigrant and non-immigrant visa holders. Like

other immigrant groups, Zimbabweans are exploring diverse ways to settle permanently in the

United States. Reliable data compiled by the United States Department of Homeland Security's

(DHS) Office of Immigration Statistics indicates that a total of more than ten thousand

Zimbabweans had obtained lawful permanent resident status between the periods of 2006-15

(United States Department of Homeland Security Office of Immigration Statistics 2015

Yearbook of Immigration Statistics). These statistics include those granted political asylum and

green cards through employment and marriages to American-born citizens. DHS also revealed

that a sizeable number of Zimbabweans have their asylum statuses still pending, and the number

of asylum applications increased since 2000, when compared to previous years. This coincided

with the period when Zimbabwe's economic and political turmoil was tumultuous. Based on

these figures it is evident that the United States is increasingly becoming a safe international

destination for many Zimbabweans in pursuit of better economic opportunities and human

security.

It was difficult to determine the accurate total figures of Zimbabwean women living in the

United States from the data provided by DHS. However, anecdotal observations indicate that

there is a considerable population of Zimbabwean immigrant women in the United States,

particularly in Greater Cincinnati, Ohio where this study took place. Physical evidence, which

includes the expanding Zimbabwean religious congregations around the city, such as: The

Seventh Day Adventist Church located in Clifton, and Forward in Faith (FIF) located on Queen

City Avenue in Cincinnati presented a large population of women attending church services

every week. These churches have congregations that are predominantly Zimbabwean and prayer

services are even conducted in Shona and Ndebele. Furthermore, gatherings at weddings, funeral

services, and other social functions reveal a substantial growth in the population of Zimbabwean women in the Greater Cincinnati area (Nyemba 2014).

This article is based on the author's doctoral thesis (Nyemba 2014). The study sought to understand the migration experiences of Zimbabwean women using photovoice methodology. The study specifically explored the reasons why Zimbabwean women took the initiative to migrate, often leaving their families behind, and the challenges they encounter whilst living in the United States. It seeks to contribute to literature on African immigrant women's postmigratory experiences and how photovoice as a method can provide them a medium to examine and share their own experiences.

The article is organized in the following sections: first, a background on the reasons why Zimbabwean women left their homes; followed by the research methods, findings and discussions; and finally, limitations of the study and conclusions.

Reasons for leaving Zimbabwe

For the thirty-four women who participated in this study, migrating to the United States was a decision that was largely influenced by the country's declining economic and political environment, which started around the late 1990s. An overview of the country's economic decline indicates that its gross domestic product (GDP) declined by 46 percent between 2000-08. This was attributed to three things: (1) poor rainfalls; (2) the Fast Track Land Reform in 2000 which reallocated land from the White minority to Black populations with limited resources for large scale food production; and (3) political violence, which prevented people from working (Mudzonga and Chigwada 2009, Orner and Holmes 2010); all of which resulted in severe

shortages of basic necessities such as food, medicine, water and transportation. Politically, the contestation for power between President Robert Mugabe's current ruling political party, Zimbabwe African Union- Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), led by Morgan Tsvangirai, resulted in chaos. There were several reports of executions and disappearances of people, mostly members of the opposition party, along with several cases of torture or serious assaults. Therefore, migration to regional and international destinations became a strategy for both men and women to escape Zimbabwe's challenging economic conditions and political persecution (Madziva and Zontini 2012).

This economic and political challenge affecting the general population greatly shifted the gendered migratory patterns in Zimbabwe. Women's migration out of the country was very limited during British colonial rule (1880-1980) to the late 1990s. Historically, only men migrated in large numbers to neighboring countries such as South Africa and Botswana to seek employment opportunities (Pasura 2008, 2010a; Orner and Holmes 2010). Zimbabwean women, on the other hand, were socialized to perform domestic chores such as cooking, growing vegetables and nurturing children (Madziva and Zontini 2012).

These traditional roles began to transform starting around the late 1990s when the country's economic and political stability began to collapse. Faced with poverty and hardships, women began to join their male counterparts in pursuit of better lifestyles in neighboring countries and abroad. Previous studies indicate that by the year 2000, the number of Zimbabwean women migrating was equal to and in some cases surpassing that of men (Madziva and Zontini 2012). A 2001 survey conducted by Southern Africa Migration Project (SAMP) indicated that 62 percent of Zimbabwean women versus 54 percent of men had given a great deal of thought to emigrating (Tevera and Crush 2003). This indicated that the traditional barriers that previously prevented

women from migrating were becoming less significant, as women were beginning to act independently in order to fulfill their economic needs rather than simply depending on their spouses (Crush and Tevera 2010; Pasura 2010b, 2008; Adepoju 2010; Arthur 2000). It is therefore, against this background, that women's immigration experiences should be understood through their own interpretations.

Methods

Participants

Thirty-four Zimbabwean immigrant women living in the Greater Cincinnati area were recruited to participate in this study. Participants were formally recruited using Facebook and phone contacts. A message describing the study was distributed to participants' email accounts including the researcher's contact details for responding. Informal recruitment included the use of a snowball sampling technique. In snowball sampling, participants contacted first are asked to use their social networks to refer the researcher to other people who may be interested in participating in the study (Lucas 2014). In addition, women were recruited verbally at social gatherings such as baby showers and graduation parties. The eligibility criteria included being above eighteen years of age and had migrated from Zimbabwe. All participants recruited for this study were fluent in the English language. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Cincinnati approved this study.

Data collection

Photovoice methodology, supplemented with semi-structured individual interviews, was used to collect data. Photovoice is defined as a participatory process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique (Wang 1999). Photovoice puts cameras in the hands of those individuals that are directly affected and often excluded from decision-making processes. This provides individuals with the opportunity to use digital cameras to capture realities about their life experiences (Wang 1999). Photovoice engages people to tell their own stories through photographs, to call for community engagement, and to bring about change (Wang and Buris 1997). Therefore, over a period of seven months, the women engaged in photograph assignments to take photos that vividly captured their migration experiences. The photos were then shared during organized photo group discussions to identify common experiences among the women.

Semi-structured individual interviews were used to supplement data collected through photographs. This allowed further analysis of the photos with the women on an individual basis. Fifteen women participated in the individual interviews. The interviews used the same probing questions that were used during photo discussions. Six of the interviews were conducted telephonically due to scheduling conflicts. The remaining nine interviews were conducted faceto-face at participants' homes. The interview durations ranged from 20 to 90 minutes depending on the amount of information each participant shared.

Data Analysis

Both photograph group discussions and semi-structured individual interviews were audiorecorded and the responses were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Pseudonyms were used for participants that were quoted verbatim in the report to protect their identities (Table 1).

Table 1. Pseudonyms for Participants

Pseudonyms	Age	College /University	Married	Single	Divorced	Widowed	Employed
	18-28						
Tariro		✓	✓				✓
Tendai		✓		✓			✓
	29-38						
Nyemwererai		✓	✓				✓
Mazvita			✓				✓
Sharai			✓				✓
Nyaradzo		✓			✓		✓
Tsitsi			✓				✓
Tarisai		✓	✓				✓
Ratidzo		✓	✓				✓
	39-48						
Kundai		✓	✓				✓
Farirai Miriro			✓				✓
		✓					
Chido	49-58					✓	✓
	59-65						
Marwei		✓					✓
Paidamoyo		✓	✓				✓

Note: Check mark indicates a yes

Photo analysis

The photographs were analyzed based on three techniques suggested by Wang and Burris (1997). First, participants engaged in photograph selection. Each participant presented their own photographs and described where the pictures were taken and what they represented. The group then collectively chose the photos they felt were most significant from each participant's pile. This was followed by the second technique which involved contextualization of the photographs. Participants interpreted and told stories to describe the photographs they had taken. They discussed what the photographs meant to them as they shared their life experiences. This process involved using the **SHOWeD** approach to critically analyze the content of the photographs. **SHOWeD** stands for;

<div align="center">

S- "What do we **S**ee here?

H-What is really **H**appening here?

O-How does this relate to **O**ur lives?

W-**W**hy does this situation, concern or strength **e**xist?

D-What can we **D**o about it?"

(Wang 1999: 188)

</div>

Finally, the photos were codified to identify emerging themes. Photos were identified and sorted into categories by participants in order to identify emerging themes and issues (Palibroda et al. 2009; Wang and Buris 1997). Each theme was then attached to selected photos that vividly mirrored common experiences among the women.

<div align="center">

Interview analysis

</div>

Semi-structured individual interviews were analyzed using Grounded Theory. This type of analysis helps researchers understand people's behaviors in different social settings such as

groups, organizations, and communities. It focuses on the meanings of events and other often overlooked things in people's everyday lives (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Therefore, Grounded Theory was appropriate for this exploratory study which aimed to generate precise themes that reflected the lived experiences of Black Zimbabwean immigrant women. To begin the analysis, the recorded interviews were first transcribed into a Microsoft Word document. Once transcriptions were completed, the textual material was read several times, utilizing constant comparison throughout the analysis process to identify emerging themes. The themes were then grouped together based on how they were related, andwere compared to those identified during the photo group discussions. This resulted in the identification of seven dominant themes that described the experiences of Zimbabwean immigrant women living in the United States.

Findings

The following seven key themes were identified from both the photographs and interview analysis; (a) Economic emancipation; (b) Access to education; (c) A life of freedom; (d) Unfulfilled dreams; (e) Stress; (f) Cultural shock; and (g) Discrimination. Pseudonyms were used to represent participants' identities.

Economic Emancipation

The women in this study all stated that migrating to the United States was a crucial step towards achieving a better lifestyle for their families. Tsitsi studied Fashion and Design but could not find a job in the fashion industry in Zimbabwe. After migrating to the United States with her husband, she secured a job in a nursing home. She saved enough money to start a fashion business specializing in African clothing designs. She stated, "America is a

wellestablished country with abundant resources and it has a lot of things, there are so many opportunities here that we didn't have back home." Participants also explained that the economic situation in Zimbabwe deteriorated to the extent that even those individuals who once lived luxurious lifestyles by operating businesses and those with high-paying salaries were affected. They witnessed major companies closing, consequently contributing to high unemployment rates. Even the very educated individuals could not get jobs. Chido stated, "Lack of stability of our country you know, that you can't find a job, especially the economy, you know, the corruption that you can't succeed even with education." Chido and her late husband were both educated and worked as registered nurses at the same hospital in Zimbabwe. The hospital later closed leaving many without jobs which ultimately forced them to migrate to the United States. Chido continued with her nursing career whilst her husband operated a taxi business until his untimely death. Therefore, participants agreed that there are a variety of employment opportunities available in the United States. In Zimbabwe, some women said that unemployment forced them to survive on domestic related activities such as growing and selling vegetables on roadsides.

Marwei was a school teacher in Zimbabwe but could not find a teaching position when she migrated to the United States. She concluded that the curriculum differences between Zimbabwe and the United States may have been the reason she was never invited for interviews. However, she did not stay unemployed for a long period when a friend advised her to apply in nursing homes where she currently works. Marwei, took the picture in Figure 1

Figure 1. Home care facility

to explain that finding a job in nursing home care facilities is not difficult at all, "As long as you have the GED and able to do the job, they take you because it's general labor. They don't care in the health as long as you qualify." Participants indicated that whilst the Licensed Practitioner Nurse (LPN) certificate cannot land them to better paying positions in hospitals, nursing homes employ them more. However, an education upgrade to become Registered Nurses coupled with time and experience increases their chances to acquire more rewarding positions in wellestablished health facilities. It took several years for one of the participants to accomplish her dream of becoming a Registered Nurse (RN). Now that she holds a Registered Nursing Diploma, she is looking forward to furthering her career in nursing; from working in a nursing home to pursuing a position in a hospital.

Overall, the women indicated that being able to acquire jobs improved their economic situation compared to the daily lives they left in Zimbabwe. Women like Tsitsi, could finance their own small businesses without relying on capital from their husbands. Some are even thankful that they can now open bank accounts to get loans when needed; they can now afford to buy cars and not rely on public transportation, further expanding on their independence.

Access to Education

Nyemwererai explained that furthering their education is yet another important opportunity available in the United States. With her uncle's help, Nyemwererai migrated to the United States after graduating from high school. She found a job and worked for a few years before deciding to pursue a college degree in Communications. Her dream had always been to graduate from college as represented by a photo she took (Figure 2).

Figure 2. A college graduation cap

She explained that the graduation cap is a representation of her endless educational possibilities.

Other women in the study also supported that they had always wanted college education but the

cultural society coupled with the economic situation in Zimbabwe had limited their educational

dreams. Some women stated that their parents could only afford paying school fees for girls up

to Ordinary Level thereby limiting their opportunities to proceed to Advanced Level, which

prepares students for University enrollment. Therefore, the women were happy with the

opportunity to migrate to a country where they could find jobs to fund their studies.

Ratidzo holds a Doctorate degree in nursing and works in a hospital as a neuroscience

researcher. She also commented that without a stable job it is difficult for women to enroll for

Master's and Doctoral programs at universities in Zimbabwe without scholarships. She stated

that the absence of financial sponsorship limits the number of women enrolling in graduate

school. On the other hand, she explained that colleges and universities in the United States offer scholarships to prospective international students, paving a way for them to pursue their studies. Ratidzo received a full scholarship towards her graduate studies; an opportunity she said was not available when she completed her bachelor's degree in Zimbabwe.

A Life of Freedom

The women were grateful to live free from some oppressive cultural traditions they experienced in Zimbabwe. Tarisai migrated to the United States at the same time with her husband and is happy that she was not left behind staying with her mother-in-law. She frequently visited her in the rural areas and as the only daughter-in-law in her husband's family, she felt like everyone expected too much from her. She stated,

> There is a little bit of freedom from our rigid culture because back home you worry about what you wear. You say; what would people think if I dress like this? But when you come here you will have freedom from people. Back home we live for the society where you are worried about what your husband's relatives will say about you.

Participants also added that in Zimbabwe, there are certain gender specific expectations for women whether married or single. Particularly among married women, not delivering those expectations would sometimes result in domestic violence. When Sharai migrated to the United States, she was young and single. She later met and married her husband, also from Zimbabwe. She commented that their relationship as husband and wife is different from what she grew up witnessing. For example, she explained that her husband helps with cooking whereas back home married women are expected to perform all household chores for their husbands. If the husband

believes that his wife fails to deliver those expectations, this could result in domestic violence. Relatives do not usually intervene in marriage matters with the belief that couples should solve their own problems. Sharai further stated that even the law enforcement in Zimbabwe does not take domestic violence seriously and sometimes reporting incidents does not necessarily result in any action.

On the other hand, the women reported that the law in the United States offers better protection for women against domestic violence. If husbands become violent, they can report them to the police. As a result, husbands avoid breaking the law as this may negatively impact their immigration status. Therefore, if they remain in the United States, participants explained that they are less likely to be exposed to domestic violence.

Referring to the relationship between her daughter and son-in-law as an example, Paidamoyo really appreciates that husbands spend more time with their families and help with food

preparation as indicated by a photo of a cooking pot she took (Figure 3).

Figure 3. A saucepan on the stove

Paidamoyo migrated alone leaving her husband in Zimbabwe. Her eldest daughter who had migrated earlier to the United States sponsored the migration process and let her stay in their household until she found a job in a nursing home. During that short period of time, Paidamoyo observed that her son-in-law was always at home when not working. She commented that, in Zimbabwe, men usually spend their free time with friends in bars and clubs as opposed to helping with cooking; a behavior which is not common here. Participants agreed with Paidamoyo that couples' alternate schedules to balance their time between work and family. For example, the husband works during the day whilst the wife takes care of children, and then the wife works at night. Participants appreciate this balance of responsibilities, which enables them to work outside the home.

Unfulfilled Dreams

Participants explained how they always dreamt of a sweet life in America before they migrated. Nyaradzo is a divorced mother raising two children. Her initial plan when she migrated was to get a job and further her studies. Things did not go according to plan when she quickly met and married her American husband. The marriage did not last long forcing her to work more than two jobs to raise her children. She commented that when she is with friends the question they constantly ask themselves is, "Where is the sweet life I dreamt of?" She further explained that she spends a lot of time debating with other immigrants at her work place about what it means to be American and what the American dream means to them. The consensus in those debates is that the immigration dream is centered on a lifestyle of endless opportunities, which is not always true. Nyaradzo stated, "One thing no one tells you when you are coming to America is how much you are going to work." She further commented that, upon arrival is when they realized that jobs are available but not the kind of jobs that can make them rich like they had imagined.

Figure 4. An expensive vehicle

Sharai took a photo of an expensive vehicle (Figure 4), to explain how she too realized that life is

not at all what she had imagined. The photo indicates the type of car she envisioned driving

which is the opposite of the battered car she currently drives. Sharai used to admire the beautiful

houses and cars she saw on television shows and magazines. Those beautiful images intensified

the dream to improve her life. "It seemed like everyone had money. The African Americans we

saw on television were very rich. To be honest, I was really shocked because the America I had

in my mind was the movie life," said Sharai. She and other participants came to the realization

that the beautiful life portrayed on television was unreachable to immigrants and even to

ordinary African Americans. Farirai, a mother of two who is studying for a certificate in licensed

practitioner nursing followed her husband two years after he migrated to the United States. She

too was shocked to find him living in a small apartment not ample enough to accommodate a

family of five people (Figure 5)
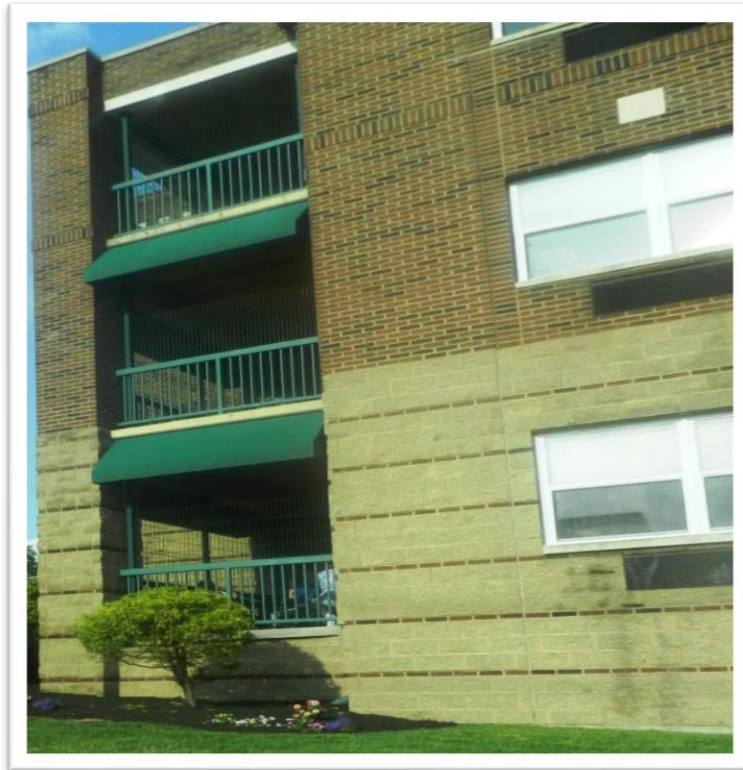
Figure 5. Single family apartments

Farirai had dreamt that she was going to live in a much bigger house than the one she had

in Zimbabwe.

The women discussed that as soon as they arrived, there were a lot of obstacles they were

not aware of before they left Zimbabwe. Nyaradzo explained that unless one migrates with a

company-sponsored visa, the process to acquire a work authorization permit is long and

expensive. It takes at least ninety days for the permit to be processed after approval from the

Department of Homeland Security. For those women migrating as students, even with a full

scholarship, their lives did not change overnight. It takes a considerable amount of time to finish school and then look for employment.

Stress

Most participants revealed that they were stressed during at least one point upon arrival to the United States. The struggle to balance work, school and family activities, cultural shock, fear, loneliness and anxiety of deportation were all cited as major sources of stress. Miriro, lives alone and sometimes works part-time jobs to pay for her studies. She left all her children in Zimbabwe because she could not obtain visas for them when she migrated. She explained that when she is stressed, she feels empty like an old chair (Figure 6), that everyone avoids sitting on. The optionto go back to live a life without employment was out of the question.

Figure 6. Empty wooden chair

Mazvita works in a nursing home and at the same time pursues a college degree. She is also a

mother and lives with her husband and children. She took a photo of a clock (Figure 7), to

explain how time management also contributes to stress.

Figure 7. A clock

Like some of the participants, she works at most twelve-hour shifts each day. "I never

expected to work like crazy. I am a mother of two kids, a seven-year-old son and a five-

monthold daughter," stated Mazvita. The women's obligations to support families back home

through remittances also force them to work long hours. Tarisai stated, "Some of us have

responsibilities back home compared to people here who don't take care of their parents and

siblings. We come from Africa where the whole family depends on us." This responsibility is

stressful when not making enough money.

The women also complained about the challenges in providing for their children, especially childcare provision, which is very expensive. Kundai migrated together with her husband and two sons. She works in a warehouse and her husband is a teacher in a correctional facility. She stated that finding affordable daycare for her children was quite a challenge. "I can work as many hours as I would want, but I need to take care of my adult children so it is a challenge," she said. She further expressed that she cannot leave her children at home alone for fear of prosecution for child endangerment. Whilst bringing a relative from Zimbabwe could be a viable solution to childcare pressures, the women stated that securing a temporary visa and buying tickets to sponsor a relative is expensive. Moreover, individuals with pending green cards and asylum applications are not eligible to invite relatives to join them. As a result, participants sometimes rely on each other for childcare. Living in the same neighborhoods sometimes enables them to trade work schedules. The individual free during the day babysits for others including picking up children from daycare and school. In extreme cases, some women are left with no choice but to quit their jobs and postpone their educational enrollment until their children are ready for kindergarten at affordable public schools.

Cultural shock

The women in the study commented that they are sometimes challenged by conflicting cultural expectations. For example, they had imagined that it would be easy to identify themselves with African Americans since they share the same skin color but soon realized that they have conflicting cultural values. Sharai said,

I have got a few friends you know, I have trouble with making friends with

African Americans because I don't understand them, who they are. With African Americans, we only share skin color but that's where it stops. This is where I realized that I relate better with White people than African Americans.

The other challenge for the women is the unsuccessful efforts to raise their children the way they were raised themselves. Participants want their children to embrace the Zimbabwean culture, which is not provided by the society they are born and growing up in. This has resulted in a cultural clash between parents and children. Parents struggle to keep what is really valued to them and to their cultural community, whilst at the same time trying to facilitate their children's integration into the American society. They observed that children acculturate effortlessly into the American society as they spend more time in school with other children.

Fear of deportation also contributes to stress. Tariro migrated to the United States on a non-immigrant visa which had several restrictions. She later married a Zimbabwean man with a permanent resident status who then helped her apply for a green card. Based on her previous experiences, she commented that even with a green card, one could be deported if you violate visa restrictions. She shared, "There was a time when I had messed up my papers. It was difficult because you want to work, at work you are afraid to apply for certain promotions." Tariro could not complain about any abuse at work fearing that further investigations would reveal her ineligibility to work in the United States. The other women also stated that deportation procedures are harsh and one could be taken to the airport straight from jail without being given enough time to gather their belongings and say good-bye to family and friends. Therefore, the women are aware of certain boundaries they cannot overstep. One woman explained that there are certain violations that immigrants are severely punished for, compared to native born Americans. Therefore, each time they want to do something different, they must stop and think

about the consequences associated with taking such risks. *"So, I feel like there is a speed bump to whatever you do,"* commented Tariro. The women articulated that this constant stopping and evaluation of decisions and actions interfere with their progress. As a result, participants agreed that American women progress economically and socially more rapidly because they do not suffer those additional obstructions encountered by immigrants.

Discrimination

Participants also stated that racial discrimination contributes to their stress levels. Nyemwererai took a photo (Figure 8) to demonstrate how she feels about the discrimination she faces as a black immigrant woman.

Figure 8. White blossoms

She said, "There is discrimination that you are black and then discrimination that you are African because they do not think we know anything." She explained that the white flower is very clean, and represents the majority white population, which is considered intelligent. The white flower is very visible among flowers of other colors. Participants agreed that since their skin color is not visible like the white flower, they are the minority that is always oppressed. Participants stated that they were not affected by racial discrimination in Zimbabwe since black people are the majority. Unfortunately, when they migrated to the United States, they become part of the minority black population, as they are automatically associated with African Americans regardless of the cultural differences between the two groups. Paidamoyo commented, "You know, I think it is kind of hard you know, because unfortunately especially in this country, as much as we don't like it we are automatically classified as African Americans. African Americans have already set precedents where they are already discriminated [sic] in any way."

Participants also explained that black people are forced to work harder to prove their competence to be accepted by the majority white Americans. Tendai is pursuing a college degree and regularly takes a summer job in a small hotel as a waitress. She stated that her supervisor was reluctant to let her serve customers. Even though she was hired as a waitress, she soon found herself working in the backroom, cleaning dishes and scrubbing floors. "When they hired me, they told me I was going to be a waitress, yet they were putting me in the kitchen." At first, she thought her situation had to do with experience even though she worked hard just like the other two white girls that got hired at the same time with her. However, she later observed that the other three African American men that worked the same shift with her were also not allowed to

wait on customers. It became clear to her that they were being discriminated against. "They put me behind and put the white employees upfront. It was the three of us blacks and we were put behind. If it was just me maybe I wouldn't have realized that it was racial discrimination," commented Tendai.

Speaking with an accent is a language issue the women believed is another reason they are discriminated against by Americans. Paidamoyo does not regard herself as failing to speak English because she understands the language well. However, her challenge together with other participants is that they speak English with an African accent, which is difficult for Americans to understand. Participants complained that it is rare to be invited back to a second interview or offered a job easily. When offered a job, participants complained that they are considered dull and Americans feel that it is their responsibility to explain everything to them including simple things like distinguishing between shampoo and conditioner. Paidamoyo's supervisor could not understand that she was fluent in the English language and took it upon herself to explain everything to her including how to shampoo patients' hair, the amount of shampoo to use and that she had to shampoo the hair first before she can apply conditioner. "The way we pronounce words they think we don't know so they always want to correct us," stated Paidamoyo. She further explained that she feels degraded each time her boss repeats the same words she had said to teach her to pronounce it with an American accent. The women noted that the reaction to other accents was different.

Tsitsi also shared the same sentiment that in the fashion industry where she is currently a fashion designer; other designers and sponsors avoid talking to her because of her African accent. She said that when she attends fashion shows, usually fashion designers interact with potential donors and fashion editors attending the show. Each time she is approached to explain

her designs, the donors quickly move on to the next fashion designer upon realizing that she speaks with an accent. She said that upon discerning her accent they would ask questions like,

"'So where are you from?' I say, 'I'm from Zimbabwe,' and they say, 'Oh, okay,' and they move on to the next person." As a result, Tsitsi always finds herself standing alone whilst American designers get more attention from potential fashion sponsors. People usually start giving her respect after they have seen her designs on the runaway and would become more interested in interviewing her. "It's always after our showcase that I start getting attention. They start wanting to know. 'Oh, where did you learn this?' I'm like, 'I went to fashion school in Africa.' And they are like, 'Oh they have this in Africa?'" She feels that as an African immigrant fashion designer, she must work extra hard to prove that she is good at what she does.

Discussion

This photovoice project provided Zimbabwean immigrant women with the opportunity to collect and interpret their immigration experiences through the lenses of cameras. During the interpretation of the photos as a group and as individuals, several observations were made. The first observation is that using the methodology of photovoice supplemented with individual interviews was very powerful to this study for two reasons. First, photovoice gave the women the opportunity to capture their experiences through photographs and interpret them using their own voices. It was evident that through the process of selecting photographs and describing the meanings behind them, the women found the means to reveal their own feelings. Even in situations where they could not describe the feelings verbally, the photos provided a voice for them because the women took photos that best represented their experiences.

The ability for photovoice to empower the marginalized by giving them a voice and visibility is very important to the literature on migration. From time immemorial, women's immigration experiences were narrated through their male counterparts. Previous studies indicated that interviews, surveys, and other data collection procedures have been conducted with immigrant men even on situations that concern women. The general belief was that women were not independent immigrants as they migrated with their husbands and parents who would provide for them in the host country. This created a situation where women became invisible in the migration process. Furthermore, it created a sense of bias in the literature on migration because there was no evidence that the men were reporting the actual experiences of women or their own (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Kihato 2007).

In this study, there is evidence of women who migrated on their own. Even in situations where they migrated with their husbands, the decisions were made collectively. Therefore, giving the women a platform to speak up for themselves removed biases as they shared their actual experiences, and not that of others. It was noticeable during the photo group discussions that the women were very excited to share their photos and talked about their experiences with confidence. This self-confidence and the ability for women to examine their own situations and suggest solutions could not have been captured if men were speaking for them. Therefore, this study revealed that understanding immigrant women's interpretations of their experiences is integral in developing policies and programs that specifically address their needs.

Second, the group discussions through which the women were sharing their photos and explaining the meanings behind them created a sense of unity and sisterhood among them. It was observed that after the women had warmed up to each other throughout the photovoice process, they began to realize that they shared similar experiences regardless of their differing age groups.

This observation was very important because usually immigrants tend to remain isolated, fearing to put themselves at risk by sharing sensitive information with individuals they do not trust. In this study, photovoice allowed the women to share some insightful information due to the trust that was established among them. These findings were also observed in similar studies where photovoice projects created a sense of ownership; it fostered trust and community partnership among minority populations (Castleden and Garvin 2008). Being able to trust and rely upon each other is very important for immigrants as it helps address some of the obstacles they face. Therefore, the creation of a social networking group was the first step towards addressing some immigration challenges such as loneliness and stress the women complained about. The final agreement among the women was to meet regularly going forward to discuss, share and help each other in times of need.

Another very important observation made from the study was that the women shared a strong belief that their lives had changed positively due to migration. This positive change is mostly in relation to the ability to find jobs to economically provide for their families and further their studies. It was clear from the nursing home and graduation regalia photos the women shared that they mainly compared the economic situation in Zimbabwe where they could not find jobs versus here in the United States where employment opportunities in nursing homes are easily available for immigrants. The nursing home photo is very significant because it also reflects that despite being grateful for finding jobs, the women are conscious to the fact that competing for well-paying jobs with native-born Americans is a challenge. Therefore, they look for employment opportunities where there is less competition. These findings are consistent with other studies, which reported that most immigrants migrate for economic reasons and would take any available jobs because of the desperate need to economically provide for their families

(Arthur 2009).

What was most interesting in this study was the women's emphasis on the ability to earn an income. Some women shared that they received their first paycheck in the United States. The economic turmoil in Zimbabwe had made it difficult for them to get jobs and those with less educational qualifications had no chance of employment. Most of the women economically sustained themselves through selling vegetables, fruits, and self-tailored clothes on roadsides.

Self-employment is very common among Zimbabwean women, but still their challenges remain because not every woman had the opportunity to sustain their small businesses. Loans are difficult to acquire from banks and some women rely on their husbands for capital, which is still a challenge if he does not make enough himself or if he is not willing to help. The result is that most of the women end up living in poverty. This provides justification for why participants like Tsitsi were very grateful for the opportunity to migrate and find a job working in a nursing home. Although the job does not pay very well, at least she was able to finance her African clothing business without solely relying on her husband for financial support. Similar studies have also shown that the majority of now successful immigrant businesswomen started off by working in low wage jobs. Eventually, the hard work paid off and these women are currently operating their own businesses independently and no longer work for low wages (Pearce, Clifford, and Tando 2011).

The issue of domestic violence was another important topic discussed that requires further interpretation. This study did not go in detail to examine if the women were directly affected by domestic violence. However, the fact that the women mentioned it meant the topic was very important to them. Interestingly, the women were positive that migrating to the United

States was yet another opportunity to free them from domestic violence. They strongly believe that to a degree, their culture and social norms support domestic violence. For example, the women commented that domestic violence issues among diverse cultural groups in Zimbabwe are regarded to be private matters and intervention into domestic matters is not always encouraged. If the woman decides to report to relatives, she is sometimes blamed for inciting the violence by failing to be submissive to her husband and perfectly perform her wifely duties. As a result, this traditional belief that a man can physically discipline his wife with the support of his family members and society is of great concern. Previous studies on domestic violence issues in Zimbabwe also profoundly blame cultural norms and religious beliefs for inciting violence against women (Chireshe 2012).

In support of these findings, proponents of African Feminism also attribute cultural issues as contributing to the depressing experiences of women from different cultures in Africa (Mikell 1997; Nkealah 2016). Therefore, the women in this study believed that by staying away from the husband's relatives or extended family members, they were less likely to be abused. While this may hold some truth, the women overlooked the family's role in sponsoring relatives, including parents, to migrate, adding difficulty to the notion of distancing oneself. There is evidence of extended families living in the same household among Zimbabwean immigrants. It would be interesting to examine domestic violence issues among these households. Immigrants bring with them their cultural norms and traditional beliefs. Therefore, there could be a possibility that some Zimbabwean women are still facing domestic abuse with the husband's relatives scrutinizing the wife's behavior and encouraging the husband to discipline her.

Furthermore, the women also talked about domestic violence with reference to how the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in the United States sometimes successfully alleviates women's abuse by arresting violent men. On the other hand, the women argued that the Zimbabwean government failed dismally in making its law more practical to assuage domestic violence issues. For example, the Domestic Violence Act (Chapter 5:16), which was enacted on February 26, 2007 had not really made a significant impact on the lives of battered Zimbabwean women. There is evidence that women are abused in large numbers daily and literature also indicates that some women no longer see the benefits in reporting such cases due to lack of action by law enforcement. This lack of action is sometimes attributed to both cultural and traditional beliefs which disrupts the police from performing their duties (Chireshe 2012; Hindin 2003). Whereas some women may view this as justification for not approaching the law, the inability of women to report domestic violence issues is quite worrisome.

This study advocates educating all Zimbabwean immigrant women in the importance of reporting instances of domestic violence even when the law sometimes fails to take immediate action. The fact that some women in the current study indicated that they could report when husbands became abusive with the expectation of the American law enforcement to act, does not assure that every woman would do the same for assorted reasons. For example, there was not enough evidence in the study to guarantee that all women had enough knowledge about the Violence Against Women Act, which also protects battered immigrant women (Sacco 2014; Laney 2010). Similar to these findings, studies on domestic violence among immigrant populations indicated that many battered foreign women are not familiar with the social services available to them in the United States, hence the need to educate them more about such (Levine and Peffer 2012; Orloff and Garcia 2013).

Another important observation made from the data was that the women were all realistic about the challenges they face as immigrants, which contradicts their positive feelings for migrating. It was clear from the women's discussions that their lives had improved by getting jobs and providing for their families. However, they admitted that living as immigrants comes with its own challenges. Similar studies also revealed that most immigrant groups encounter various obstacles and live a lifestyle completely different from what they had imagined (Lueck and Wilson 2010; Nawyn 2000; Padilla and Perez 2003; Pettys and Balgopal 1998; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, and Haller 2005). Therefore, challenges such as discrimination based on race and identity, which mostly confine women to low paying jobs, are not different from other immigrant populations. Also, relative to other immigrant groups were the women's indication that the decision to go back home is not in question. Considering the soaring unemployment rate they left in Zimbabwe, the women would rather work long hour shift jobs than not have a job at all. They were very aware that the country is still struggling to recover from its economic deflation. Reports on the current situation in Zimbabwe also indicate that large numbers of people are still struggling to acquire basic commodities due to unemployment and cash shortages (Hungwe 2014).

Finally, the photo of an empty chair shared by Miriro needs further interpretation because it represents stress as a major health-related issue affecting the women. Similar studies on migration indicate that the unpleasant experiences immigrants encounter in the host country are associated with elevated levels of psychological stress (Lueck and Wilson 2010). If left untreated, stress makes life more unbearable for immigrants as it may result in health consequences such as high blood pressure, obesity, and sometimes suicide (Gonzales, SuárezOrozco, and Dedios-Sanguineti 2013). Therefore, stress among immigrant populations is

very common and it is important to explore what other groups do to alleviate it. In the current study, the women could identify the stressors but the major concern was that it was not clear from their discussions if they were getting help or aware of any stress relief services available for immigrants.

<p style="text-align:center">Limitations and need for future research</p>

Future research is needed to examine how the women deal with stress. It is important to understand how Zimbabwean women deal with stress as individuals as well as a community. In addition to seeking medical help, other immigrant populations managed stress by creating strong social networks to mitigate stress by helping each other with shelter, childcare, and information regarding how and where to obtain important resources (Berzborn 1998; Cattan et al. 2003; Da 2010; Yeboah 2008). Until this photovoice project, which resulted in the formation of a social network group, the women had no existing strong social support systems to assist each other except for those with close relatives living in the same neighborhoods. Therefore, this strengthens the rationale for using a participatory photovoice method, which involves bringing individuals with similar experiences to work together and to find solutions to shared challenges.

There are some limitations that should be addressed. First, the sample for this study was small and only concentrated in the Greater Cincinnati area leaving out Zimbabwean immigrant women living in other cities. Therefore, future research is needed to investigate the migration challenges of Zimbabwean women living in larger cities to examine if their experiences are comparable to those living in smaller cities such as Cincinnati. There is a possibility that larger cities may offer more opportunities than smaller cities.

Second, the study was narrowly focused on one group of African immigrant women, yet there is evidence of a larger population of women from different African regions currently living in Cincinnati. Future research would entail enlarging the sample size by including immigrant women from other parts of Africa to compare their immigration experiences with Zimbabweans. For example, women from South Africa, which have a better economic and political environment, may adapt positively as they are not forced to work long hours to support families back home. Also, African women from war-torn areas such as The Horn of Africa may experience fewer challenges since they migrate as protected refugees and receive economic and social support from the U.S. government.

Conclusion

This study has shown that using a photovoice method provides an alternative way of seeing and understanding the lived experiences of Zimbabwean immigrant women. It proved that women can examine their own experiences, thereby, challenging existing immigration literature for treating women as invisible factors in the migration process. Results of the study revealed an increased population of Zimbabwean women migrating alone, and even in cases where they migrated with their spouses, they contributed to the decisions to migrate. The women's photos indicated that, while migration offers opportunities that were no longer available in Zimbabwe, it is also a challenging process. Therefore, to alleviate some of the challenges they encounter, the women agreed amongst themselves that it was necessary to create a strong social networking system to support each other. The study also recommends that some complex issues affecting immigrant women, such as domestic violence requires further investigation to raise awareness and prepare women to act in cases of abuse.

Biographical Sketch

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Florence Nyemba holds a Ph.D. in Educational Studies from the University of Cincinnati (2014). Her current research focus is in the field of gender and African migration, African politics, global education and educational inequalities among minority populations in the United States. She broadly focuses on the experiences of immigrant women, poverty, inequality, access and participation in higher education, and social and cultural foundations in education. Dr. Nyemba has experience in qualitative methodologies, Action Research and Participatory Action Research.

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Socio-cultural Factors Influencing the Ebola Virus Diseaserelated Stigma among African Immigrants in the United States

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Abstract

African immigrants, one of the fastest-growing immigrant populations in the United States (U.S.), face many unique challenges. Since December 2013, the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) has been claiming lives and altering the societies of origin of West and Central African immigrants. Using the PEN-3 cultural model, a thematic analysis of mainstream U.S. news media was conducted to assess the socio-cultural factors influencing EVD-related stigma experienced by African immigrants. Results of this analysis revealed the perceptions and enabling/nurturing factors that exacerbated or prevented EVD-related stigma. Future interventions designed to address stigma experienced by African immigrants should include EVD-related stigma.

Keywords: Ebola, African immigrants, Stigma, Health

Introduction

The 2014 outbreak of the Ebola virus disease (EVD) was the largest and most widespread outbreak of the disease in history (WHO 2014). Specifically, 22,092 cases of EVD and 8,810 EVD-related deaths had been reported between March 21, 2014, and January 25, 2015 from Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone (WHO 2015). The Ebola hemorrhagic fever is a disease

caused by 1 of 5 different Ebola viruses (CDC 2016). It is a highly contagious disease that has

the ability to spread quickly and has a high mortality rate (Merino 2014). Fruit bats are a known

host of the virus typically affecting people living in or near tropical rainforests (Sawer 2014).

The Ebola virus is introduced into the human population through close contact with the sweat,

blood, secretions, organs, or other bodily fluids of infected animals (WHO 2014). The virus first

appeared in 1976 in two simultaneous outbreaks, the first in Nzara, Sudan and the second in

Yambuku, Democratic Republic of Congo (Muyembe et al. 2012). The culmination of the most

recent outbreak was only officially declared in 2016 (WHO 2016). A number of socio- cultural

factors have been cited as contributors to the spread of the current EVD including, but not

limited to, the legacy of colonialism, developmental neoliberalism, inequality, an inadequate

health care system, and the stigmatization of the infected individuals (Alexander et al. 2015).

The first case of an Ebola diagnosis in the U.S. was identified as an African immigrant residing

in Texas (Washington Post 2014).

Despite African immigrants being one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in the

United States, the health of the African immigrant population remains, to a large extent,

unmapped (U.S. Census Bureau 2010; Venters & Gany 2011). A large portion of U.S. immigrant

health research has focused on Asian and Hispanic residents (Barrington et al. 2010; Singh et al.

2011). The limited studies examining health of African-born residents in the U.S. have resulted

in contrasting findings. African immigrants have been shown to be less likely to access

preventive health care than their counterparts (Carroll et al. 2007; Willis and Nwocha 2006); a

majority has been shown to be either overweight or obese after residing in the U.S. for fifteen or

more years. Moreover, length of stay in the U.S. has been shown to be inversely related to being

covered by a health insurance among Central African communities (Tshiswaka et al. 2014).

Regarding infectious diseases, African immigrants appear to have lower rates of HIV infection than U.S.-born Blacks, but rates of infection and mortality increased greatly in the 1990s (Akinsete et al. 2007). Independent of shifting incidence and mortality statistics, rates of healthrelated stigma have been shown to be high among African communities (Rosenthal et al. 2003).
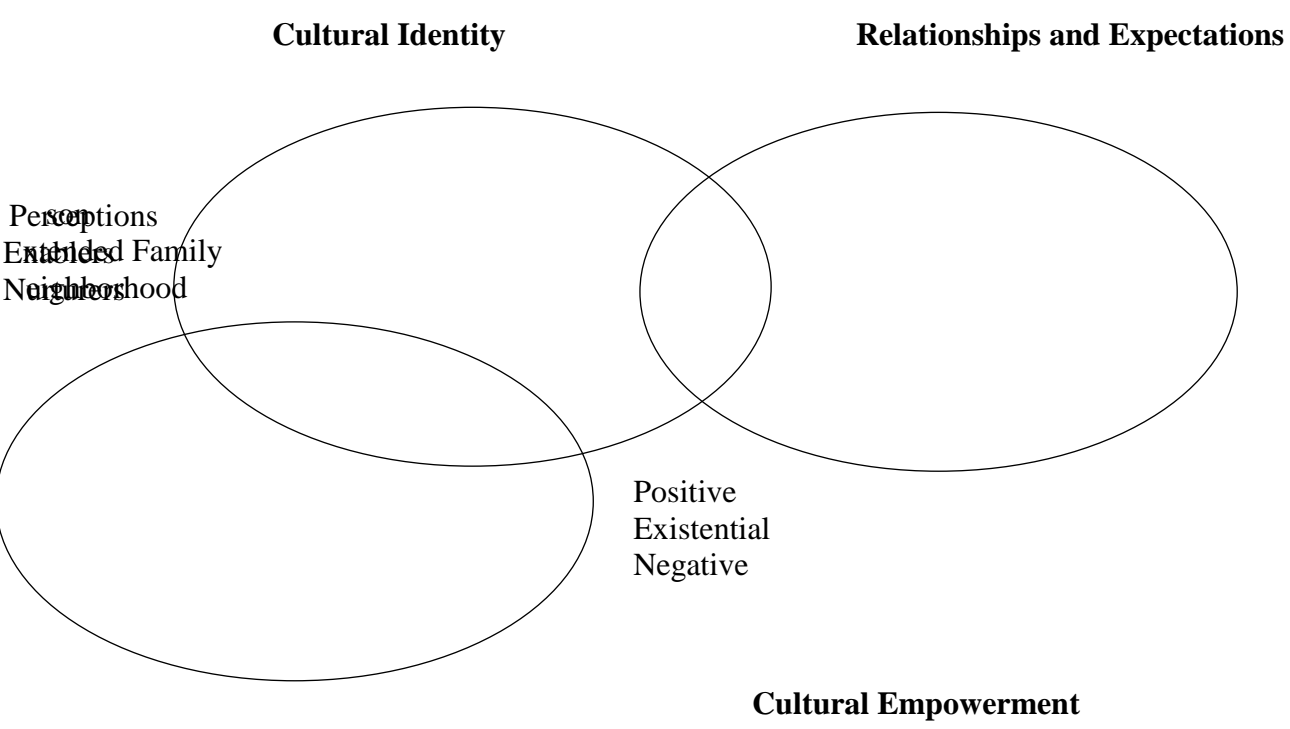
Health-related stigma has been the focus of several biobehavioral studies focusing on disease outbreak and prevention, care, and treatment (Hendler et al. 2016; Kleinman et al. 2008; Mak et al. 2009). Stigma has been defined as "an attribute that has a discrediting effect on an individual which renders society to view him/her as different from the other people around resulting in that person having a spoiled identity" (Goffman 1963). Moreover, three types of stigma have been identified– external physical deformation of the body such as scars, deviations of individual character, and 'tribal stigma' of race or ethnic group, which is perceived to be a deviation from the normative race or ethnicity (Goffman 1963).

Furthermore, the recent cases of Ebola diagnosed in the U.S. led to an epidemic of fear among lawmakers, the media, and the public who were seemingly driven by misinformation, lack of scientific evidence, and demagoguery (Merino 2014). The fear of the virus played a significant role in the stigma associated with EVD, as it was popularly believed that the virus was deadly and could be contracted through methods that were not scientifically proven (Davtyan et al. 2014; Ropeik 2014). Panic was instilled into the U.S. population through the use of social media outlets (Gorski 2014). Subsequently, individuals of African descent residing in the U.S. reported being stigmatized because of the Ebola virus (Sanburn 2014).

Using the PEN-3 model, this study assessed the socio-cultural factors influencing

EVDrelated stigma experienced by African immigrants in the U.S. Moreover, we considered the

extent to which socio-cultural factors have exacerbated or prevented this EVD stigmatization.

Figure 1. PEN-3 Cultural Model (Airhihenbuwa & Webster, 2004)

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework: The Pen-3 Model

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Cultural Identity   **Relationships and Expectations**

Perceptions
Enablers
Nurturers

Extended Family
Neighborhood

Positive
Existential
Negative

Cultural Empowerment

The PEN-3 cultural model was used as a guide to explore the EVD-related stigma

experienced by African immigrants in the U.S. (see Figure 1) (Iwelunmor et al. 2014).

Developed by Airhihenbuwa (1989), the model examines culture and its impact on health

behaviors and beliefs (Airhihenbuwa and Webster, 2004; Airhihenbuwa 2007). It posits that in

order to centralize culture on health behaviors and decisions, three domains should be taken into account: (1) Cultural Empowerment, (2) Cultural Identity, and (3) Relationships and

Expectations. Each domain includes three factors that form the acronym PEN; Positive, Existential and Negative (Cultural Empowerment domain); Person, Extended Family, Neighborhood (Cultural Identity domain); Perceptions, Enablers, and Nurturers (Relationships and Expectation domain). The Cultural Empowerment domain captures practices that are positive, existential, or negative values that have health consequences. The Cultural Identity domain focuses on the points of entry for the intervention, which may occur at the level of persons, extended family members, or neighborhoods. The Relationships and Expectations domain considers elements that influence health behaviors and decisions. For this study, we employed the Relationships and Expectations domain to explore the perceptions, enablers, and nurturers that increased or dissipated EVD stigma among African immigrants residing in the U.S.

Methods

A thematic analysis of mainstream U.S. news media was conducted. The Lexis-Nexis Database was searched for a period between February 2014, when the first reports of the outbreak appeared, and March 2015 using specific key terms 'African immigrants', 'African refugees', and 'EVD'. Twenty-one articles that met the study criteria were retrieved and reviewed. All articles provided specific examples of social experiences faced by African immigrants in the U.S. upon the outbreak of EVD.

Several researchers reviewed the articles that met the study criteria and developed inductive codes. These codes were then, using the PEN-3 model, further developed and refined into broader themes. Direct quotations from the analysis were included so reported experiences were clearly represented.

Results

Analysis of the data showed that African immigrants in the U.S. routinely faced EVDrelated stigma in their communities following the outbreak of the disease. The individuals described in the selected articles migrated from different West African countries, namely Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Senegal. Immigrants reporting stigmatization were either employed in both the public and private sectors, or students receiving elementary or middle school education. The stigmatization became more widespread and tangible once mass media began spreading misconceptions about the disease instilling a sense of fear and panic within the population. The findings revealed that perceptions surrounding EVD coupled with a negative portrayal of the African continent were pivotal in shaping the stigma directed towards African immigrants.

Perceptions Surrounding the EVD and its Influence on Stigma

The PEN-3 model defines perception as beliefs, knowledge or attitudes toward EVD linked to stigma (Airhihenbuwa and Webster 2004). In our analysis, perception of the African continent where this outbreak occurred was linked to stigmatization of the areas affected by the virus. This led U.S. lawmakers to call for a travel ban on people from the West African countries

most affected by the disease (i.e. Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea) (Diamond 2014). A report showed that 58 percent of the surveyed population sampled in the U.S. supported a travel ban on countries with confirmed cases of Ebola (Helsel 2014). This was despite the inefficiency claims of such travel bans made by U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Moreover, the African immigrant communities originating from afflicted regions experienced EVD-associated stigma. In Staten Island, NY, members of the largest Liberian community outside of Africa were stigmatized on a daily basis (Calabrese and Harshbarger 2014). A Liberian man who ran a community fitness-training practice lost clients and friends upon the EVD outbreak (Banks 2014). Alphonso Toweh, a Liberian, was riding the bus in Washington, D.C. and was asked where he was from; when he answered 'Liberia', his fellowpassenger removed himself from the seat next to Alphonso (Brown and Constable 2014). Alphonso went on to testify to *The Washington Post*, "If I'm on the metro, I don't talk. If I'm on the bus, I don't talk. If people hear the accent, they think you are Liberian, that you have Ebola." Oretha Bestman-Yates, who had shopped at a West African market in Staten Island for more than 20 years made this candid observation about the state of local businesses after the number of vendors reduced from twenty-two to five:

> It's because they're scared of the Ebola virus. It's something we can't
> even explain ourselves; we just try to hold our heads up high. People don't
> want to talk with you, you walk in the street and they yell out 'African, go
> back to Africa with your Ebola.' (CBS News 2014)

Enabling Factors Influencing EVD-related Stigma Among African Immigrants

According to Airhihenbuwa & Webster (2004), enabling factors refer to institutional support and assets at the structural level. Our analysis identified the enabling factors that contributed to EVD-related stigma. In particular, educational institutions were found to be a common site, at which individuals experienced EVD-related stigma. Students at an elementary school called the sons of an African immigrant 'Ebola' and excluded them from playing basketball (Hagan 2014). The severity of the stigmatization even extended to attendance and admission requirements from various schools across the U.S.:

- Irrational fear of Ebola caused an elementary school in Milford, Connecticut to require a student to take 21 days off school, after attending a wedding in Nigeria (Kaminer 2014).

- At Navarro College in Corsicana Texas, officials stopped accepting applications from African students (CBS News 2014).

Alarmingly, there were multiple reports of safety being endangered as a result of the stigmatization. African immigrant students reported being teased, bullied, and assaulted in the school setting by peers. CBS News (2014) relayed a story of two Senegalese middle school students being harassed with Ebola taunts and physically beaten by other students.

In addition to the discrimination occurring in schools across the United States, numerous reports of stigmatization in workplace settings were reported during the outbreak. West African taxi drivers reported being shunned by New Yorkers who feared that the cab interiors might transmit the virus (Philips 2014). An office worker from Liberia was sent home because she coughed (Hartocolis and Schweber 2014). Another Liberian immigrant claimed that she was forced to take a temporary unpaid leave, presumably just in case she had any contact with the virus (Sanburn 2014). African healthcare professionals reported being stigmatized in hospitals.

Oretha Bestman-Yates, a healthcare worker in New York said she was barred from returning to her job after a trip to Liberia despite 21 days of quarantine and no signs of illness (Bernstein 2014). Nurses and other staff who treated New York's first Ebola patient, Dr. Craig Spencer, reported being shunned by co-workers and banned from using certain elevators (Hartocolis and Schweber 2014).

Nurturing Factors Influencing EVD-related Stigma

Following the PEN-3 cultural model, the influences of supportive and/or discouraging factors on EVD-related stigma were classified as nurturers (Airhihenbuwa and Webster 2004). Interestingly, it is now well understood that outbreaks can create a complex collective experience shared by communities (Iwelunmor et al. 2006).

Overall, social media intensified the EVD-related stigma and marginalization experienced by Africans in the United States. The sensationalized reports spread by media outlets, such as Twitter, contributed to the panic felt by large sections of the U.S. population (Gorski 2014). The role the media played in relaying and disseminating Ebola-related information "made people believe it was necessary to fear for their lives" (Ropeik 2014). The instilment of fear was arguably even more of a threat than the disease itself, as fear directly contributed to the perception of EVD and related stigma. Twitter played a major role in the spread of fear – led by then presidential candidate Donald Trump calling for the U.S. to 'keep the Ebola-infected people out of our country' and to 'stop all flights from Ebola-infected countries immediately' (Gorski 2014). Subsequently, these diatribes created a culture where African immigrants were blamed for the continuation of the epidemic (Davtyan et al. 2014).

Meanwhile, African communities responded strongly during this outbreak. Communities joined together to denounce the stigmatization faced daily. A social media awareness campaign with the slogan "I am a Liberian, not a virus." was created; with Liberians around the world adopting the slogan and tweeting pictures holding up signs with the slogan catchphrase. In Harlem, New York, a Liberian woman staged a march protesting the hardships affecting their communities and encouraged others to treat Liberians fairly and equitably (Bernstein 2014). The Minnesota African Task Force against Ebola was established to counter fear by providing education about the disease to surrounding communities (Goodnough 2014).

Discussion

A limited number of studies have explored the socio-cultural factors associated with EVD- related stigma. Previous research suggests that EVD-related stigma was strongly correlated with the embedded social values regarding other ethnic minorities residing in the country and community breakdowns (Siu et al. 2015; Van Bortel et al. 2016).

A decade ago, a new sustainable theory of health-related stigma was proposed; this particular type of stigma was redefined as a social process that consists of blaming certain groups of people for having an illness (Deacon 2007). This new model argued that the shaming of others associated with health-related stigma allowed the stigmatizers an opportunity to distance themselves and their in-groups from risk of infection. In Europe, stigma has been shown to contribute to HIV serostatus nondisclosure (Whembolua et al. 2016). Furthermore, in the United States, among immigrants of African descent, the experience of Haitians illustrates vividly the significance of health-related stigma. In the context of the spread of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s, the link between Haitians and their country of origin was shown to negatively affect their

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experiences (McCormick 1993). Numerous negative consequences of this ethnic stigmatization were listed such as discrimination, status loss and lack of healthcare opportunities (Deacon 2007).

In the U.S. context, EVD-related stigma cannot be separated from the numerous issues already affecting African immigrants. Using the PEN-3 model as our theoretical framework, analysis of U.S. mainstream news media revealed that the perception of the African continent contributed to the stigmatization of the African immigrants in the U.S. Previous research suggests that Western media focuses on negative coverage of Africa and the perception of the continent and its inhabitants, which may influence the future of Africans residing outside the continent (Adekoya 2013; Mehta 2015); the relationship between the stigmatization experienced during the EVD outbreak and its region of origin paralleled the experience of Haitians and other African immigrants during the AIDS outbreak nearly four decades ago (Whiteside and Zebryk 2015). In both cases, the link between immigrants and their country of origin was shown to negatively affect their experiences in the U.S. Fear of the unknown proved to be an important factor in fanning the flames of anxiety during outbreaks of deadly diseases (Altman 2014). As a consequence of fear propagating a deadly virus, Haitians as a group were listed by the CDC as a group at risk for transmitting HIV/AIDS despite not exhibiting the specific at-risk behaviors related to HIV/AIDS (McMormick 1993). While the CDC did not officially issue a similar statement in the case of EVD and African immigrants, misinformation contributed to the stigmatization of African citizens and their activities. For example, Harlem-based African businesses reported losing customers at a growing rate during the August-October 2014 period (Philips 2014).

Similar to the experiences of Haitians in the 1980s, the negative effects of health-related stigma reported among African immigrants became associated with additional discrimination and a decrease in economic opportunities (Deacon 2007; Kaminer 2014). Moreover, as demonstrated by Okoror et al. (2014), the use of the PEN-3 model shifted the focus from the individual to the cultural context of the stigma-enhancing behavior. Drawing from this approach, educational entities and places of employment were identified in this analysis as enabling factors that contributed to the stigma. Our results complement other findings, displaying that infectious disease-related stigma can lead to rejection in the domains of school and work (Lee et al. 2005; Sprague et al. 2011).

Finally, unlike in the case of Haitian immigrants with HIV/AIDS, our analysis identifies the role played by social media; as a voice that negatively amplifies the link between African immigrants and the Ebola virus. This is in contrast with work demonstrating how positive the use of social media can be in attenuating stigma (Brown et al. 2003). Moreover, these results revealed how significant community response, as a nurturer against stigma, can be when facing infectious diseases and their stigma. This response demonstrates the ability of the African immigrant community in contributing to the education of the masses about issues affecting its own livelihood. Our findings also support previous research, which accentuates the role of community advocates in mitigating stigma and/or changing policies geared towards immigrants in the U.S. (Galarneau 2010; Koku 2010).

There are several limitations to this study worth noting. First, this study only analyzed U.S. mainstream news media. Thus, it was unable to investigate the experiences of African immigrants residing in various countries worldwide. Hence, the findings raise awareness only for the African immigrants residing in the United States, and are only relevant to discussions

about them. Furthermore, this study does not delve into the stress and hardships experienced by African immigrants, particularly from a mental health perspective.

Conclusions

The 2014 Ebola outbreak in its reach to the United States of America highlights the need for research on neglected infectious diseases as well as for information regarding these diseases in the western world. The skewed, xenophobic, and jaundiced perceptions of the harsh realities behind an infectious disease resulted in negative stigma towards African immigrants residing in the U.S. The results of our analysis underscore how the stereotypical perceptions of the African continent, coupled with the influence of enabling and nurturing factors legitimated by the deep stigma against Africa and Africans, should be central in the design of interventions focusing on supporting the health of African immigrants residing in the U.S. Particularly in light of a politically charged atmosphere that witnessed the rise of nativism as political rhetoric during the U.S. 2016 presidential election (Caddell 2016; Wright 2016), Africanists and public health practitioners must continue to work with these newly formed vulnerable African communities to assess their sociocultural needs and influence social policy to respond appropriately to these needs.

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