Investigating the Impact of Formative Years in Developing Social Change Leaders: A Study Using Hermeneutic Phenomenology

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Completing a work of this nature is not possible without the support of many individuals seen and unseen. To start with, I would like to thank *society*. Similar to the 18 participants who took part in the study, my existence and leadership journey may not have been possible without the support of communities I belong to or have engaged. To refuse to acknowledge society is to deny findings from the study that suggests that our socio-economic background, in which society is key, is the greatest determinant of who we become.

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Abstract

Social change leaders address systemic inequities, aiming to create a just society through transformation. The existence of social change leaders has resulted in studies or models exploring social change leadership, including motivators or values that characterize leaders, such as common citizenship and concern for humanity. This study investigates the impact of formative years in developing social change leaders and the area of interest of social change leaders.

Using hermeneutic phenomenology and qualitative interviews with social change leaders, the study found that formative years contribute to the development of social change leaders in two ways. First, one of the critical dimensions of formative years, socio-economic background growing up grounds social change leaders' understanding of their community, gradually changes their perception of and approach to leadership and teaches the principles of social change leadership (interconnection between individual values, group values, and societal values). Second, formative years influence the area of interest, or the social challenge addressed. The study also found that social change leaders address challenges they have faced, feel a sense of responsibility, and have a deep interest in the challenges they address.

The findings suggest that: to understand social change leaders and their interest in social change work, we need to understand the existence of the challenges they are working to address and their lived experience with such challenges. Equally, to solve the systemic, endemic, and emerging social challenges, focus should be on developing leadership qualities in young adults or working with individuals and communities to address challenges facing them.

Keywords
Social change leadership, formative years, leadership, social entrepreneurship, motivation, Africa

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Area and Problem

There has been an upsurge of social innovators, entrepreneurs, or civil leaders passionate about positive social change in their communities. Like many leaders, social innovators, or social change leaders, are motivated by a range of factors. They could have faced the challenges they are working to address or were influenced into action by the suffering of others around them, and or a desire to be part of the solutions to some of the challenges facing humanity (Ospina & Foldy, 2005). Social change leaders have been at the centre of addressing systemic inequities in nearly all sectors and issues in society in an effort to create a more just and inclusive society for the benefit of all. The actions of social change leaders have resulted in transformative changes such as diversity and inclusion in the workplace, efforts towards equal and inclusive education, inclusive finance, and access to healthcare, to name a few. The number of social change leaders has been rising, leading to studies on social change leaders or models to study social change leaderships. According to the social change leadership model, social change leaders (individuals) align their values with the group values (common purpose) and societal values (citizenship) and eventually effect change (Astin, 1996; Higher Education Research Institute, 1996; Lester 2010).

What elements trigger participation in addressing collective societal challenges? Does the motivation to address commonly shared problems begin in the social change leader's early life - formative years? If the answer is affirmative, what can formative years inform us about the social change leaders' motivations and interests in social change leadership? What is formative life like for social change leaders? What was formative life like for social change leaders? Qualitative researchers note that the answer lies within the *individual*, enmeshed "in a person's background, personality, upbringing, worldview, and conditioned behaviours" (Patton, 2015, p.47). In addition, the answer to why people do what they do is found within the systems they belong. Patton observed, "the answer to why people do what they do is found not just within the individual but, rather, within the systems of which they are a part: social, family, organizational, community, religious, political, and economic systems" (Patton, 2015, p.47).

While research has addressed leadership, social change leadership and the values that characterize social change leadership (Vermeulen, April & Lhermitte, 2005; Astin, 1996; Henry et al. 2015;

Lester, 2010; Ospina & Foldy, 2005), limited research examines the impact of formative years in developing social change leaders. Much of the existing research on the linkages between formative years and leadership focus on the role of parents and family (Eccles & Wigfield 2002; Gottfried et al., 2011; Perreault, Cohen & Blanchard, 2016), school (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2018), social background (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Eccles, 1992), chance events (Shanahan & Porfeli, 2006), and leadership formative experiences or significant events on leadership (Vermeulen, April & Lhermitte, 2005; Janson, 2008; Meers, 2010).

To understand social change leaders and their interest in social change work, we need to understand the existence of the challenges they are working to address and their lived experience – directly or indirectly, with those challenges. The study contributes to knowledge of social change leadership by examining the influence of formative years on developing social change leadership and the impact of formative years on the area of interest of social change leaders. The hermeneutic phenomenological approach applied allows for the understanding of impact of early life of a leader as reflected and told by the leader. Moreover, the study structure and its approach allow the investigation of multiple aspects of a leader's development journey, including through the leader's own reflection for a better understanding of the influences and motivations of their interests in leadership. The appreciation of the role of the individual in the telling of their life history, provides the pre-understanding of what may have influenced their interest in leadership. In turn, scholarly reflection and analysis of the individual's journey and their current leadership approach and occupation may enable us to develop a broad understanding of developers of social change leaders and leadership more broadly. Conclusively, the methodological approach applied may be used to explore other aspects of impact of formative years on leadership development.

1.2 Research Aims and Objectives

The research aims to investigate: ***the impact of formative years in developing social challenge leaders.*** The research examines the social change leaders' formative years by looking at various key characterisations of the social change leader's early life - socio-economic background, challenges, as well as development and growth opportunities that have played a role in shaping individuals to become social entrepreneurs or social innovation leaders. The outcome of the research is useful in (i) understanding the role of formative years in developing social change

leaders; (ii) understanding what motivates social change leaders; and (ii) developing enablers (such as programmes, models, or praxis) that can empower young leaders to be engaged in social change leadership.

1.3 Research Questions and Scope

The study complements existing research exploring the background of the social change leader and the impact of that background on the challenges they address. The study explores the research question in a sample of social change leaders.

Table 1 Research Questions

Research Questions	
Main Research Question	How do formative years influence the development of social change leaders?
Sub-questions	● What aspects of formative years act as motivation for careers as social change leaders? ● What is the impact of formative years on the area of interest of social change leaders?

1.4 Definition of Key Terms

The key terminologies underlying this study are *social change*, *social change leaders(hip)*, and *formative years*. These terms are defined in much detail in section two which traces their etymological sources following the hermeneutics theoretical framework applied in the study. Still, it is imperative to provide a working definition of terms. For this research, social change leadership is used as an umbrella term incorporating social innovators, social entrepreneurs, system innovators and entrepreneurs or system leaders – individuals working to address systemic inequities to create a just society for the benefit of all through transformation. On the other hand, formative years is taken to mean age 0 to 25 years. Thus, the study explored how events from early childhood until mid-twenties impacted an individual's life journey and their current social change leadership work.

1.5 Research Assumptions

The research questions are based on assumptions that (i) seeds of leadership are sown in formative years (Asante, 2015; Gottfried et al., 2011; Karagianni & Jude Montgomery, 2018; Lazarides et al., 2017); and that (ii) social change leaders and individuals are broadly motivated to address systemic inequities they have faced or that they feel connected to in their societies (Ospina & Foldy, 2005). Limitations in this study come with the challenges of phenomenological research, which is time-consuming, especially around data collection. Furthermore, the interview method is applied to the study and getting access to targeted participants can be challenging. To avoid such limitations, interview data collected was triangulated with secondary sources to reach the validity and reliability required of phenomenological studies (Van Manen, 2016).

1.6 Research Approach

The research questions were investigated using a qualitative approach. Phenomenological studies must apply phenomenological methods. The qualitative theoretical approach applied was hermeneutic phenomenology. Qualitative inquiry is a flexible approach that allows constructing the lived picture and characteristics of the experience (Maxwell, 2005; Patten & Newhart, 2017; Patton, 2015). Qualitative interviews were used to elicit and emphasise shared experiences. On the other hand, hermeneutics phenomenology allows the researcher to comprehend the meaning of the formative experiences as the Participants share them. Hermeneutics phenomenology provides for a deep understanding of the everyday experiences as reported by the participants and examined by the researcher, as well as the participant's reflection of the impact of their lived experience (Laverty, 2003). Through phenomenological inquiry, participants reflect on their history (including personal background) and gain a deeper understanding (become conscious) of the lived experience (Laverty, 2003). For the researcher, it provides an essential format for studying the background and the impact of formative years on the participants and making meaning of the impact of those years in understanding the participant’s inclination towards social change. Hermeneutic phenomenology appreciates the role of background in the life history of a person. This background in turn provides individuals with the pre-understanding that is central to how they consciously visualize and interpret the world as they live in it, and hermeneutic phenomenologists argue that nothing can be understood about a person without reference to their background

(Laverty, 2003). From this perspective, the world is viewed as socially constructed and subjective and has no existence or meaning outside that given to it by members of the society (Laverty, 2003; Patton, 2002).

In listening, comprehending, and interpreting the social change makers' lived experience, the study relies on van Manen's method of phenomenology (Manen, 1984) that involves four concurrent procedural strategies. These include: (A) Turning to the Nature of Lived Experience; (B) The Existential Investigation; (C) Phenomenological Reflection; and (D) Hermeneutic Phenomenological Writing (these are expanded in Chapter 3 on research methodology). Each stage consists of various activities and sub-activities that the researcher must naturally engage. But these stages need not occur in chronological order (Manen, 1984). The study is structured in a way that attempts to utilize this phenomenological style of writing while balancing with the traditional social science research methods (outside phenomenology) expected of a study of this nature.
For introductory purposes, the first step - turning to the nature of lived experience – involves (i) orienting to the phenomenon, (ii) formulating the phenomenological question and (ii) explicating assumptions and preunderstandings. Having formulated the phenomenological question (research questions), it is essential to explicate pre-understandings and the assumptions they may present by using personal experience as a starting point; using personal experience is a key part of the existential investigation.

1.7 Using Personal Experience as a Starting Point

Phenomenologists note that our backgrounds provide the pre-understanding that affects how we consciously visualize and interpret the world as we live in it and that nothing can be understood about us without reference to our background (Laverty, 2003). From this perspective, the world is viewed as socially constructed and subjective and has no existence or meaning outside that given to it by members of the society (Laverty, 2003; Patton, 2015). My lived experience motivated my interest and decision to pursue the study. My formative years impacted my understanding of the world, leadership, and interest in positive social change like other social change leaders. What follows is an attempt to construct my background and interest in the research.

At the age of 11, a combination of physical abuse and bad role models pushed me out of my childhood home, and I spent the next four years as a street child in Kenya. Though the experience of living as a street child came with its terrors and tragedies, I learned some valuable lessons in those years. For example, in the streets, I interacted with other street children from different communities across Kenya and we often shared our stories and experiences. This was my first intercultural experience. From these exchanges, I realized that despite our differences, our struggles are interconnected. Later on, studying and living in three foreign countries (Mauritius, Kenya, South Africa, and the USA) and travelling across Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean provided a chance to see the world and my understanding of our human interconnectedness and expanded my networks. I also learned to value education through the fortune of being rescued from the streets by organizations that catered for my education which opened undreamed-of future possibilities that I could not have accessed through life on the streets, and so am committed to helping others receive similar opportunities.

I have remained interested in social impact work as implemented through my work in international trade and development policy, social entrepreneurship, leadership development, and education. I have been assisting disadvantaged students across Africa with access to educational and training opportunities in addition to mentoring them. I have designed and implemented programmes focused on developing personal and leadership qualities of youths and provision of income opportunities. In many ways, these are driven by personal reflection, appreciation, and drive to improve society through compassion. Moreover, I have benefitted from leadership development programmes that have improved my leadership capacity. These include: being awarded a Mandela Rhodes Scholarship (2017), Dalai Lama Fellowship (2019), a Bertha Scholarship (2020) among others. These recognitions further enhanced my interest in utilising my skills, experience, and resources for doing work focused on social justice, equity, and transformation.

Starting qualitative research with a personal story allows the researcher to appreciate how their experience may present research limitations. Patton (2015, p.40) observed that, “qualitative inquiry is personal” as “the researcher is the instrument of inquiry.” As such what brings the researcher to the inquiry – “their background, experience, training, skills, interpersonal competence, capacity for empathy, cross-cultural sensitivity” and how they, as a person, engage in research, undergird the credibility of their findings. Similarly, the data collection and analysis are affected by the

personality of the researcher and events in their life such as who they are, what is going on in their life, what they care about, how their view the world, and how they have chosen to study what interests them, and why at this time (Patton, 2015). Being aware of my background as discussed above, allowed me to understand the limitations of my inquiry. I remained objective throughout the study, despite personal pre-understanding and experience with social change leaders and social change leadership, as illustrated in various research limitations sections.

1.8 Conclusion

As aforementioned, the study investigates the impact of formative years by exploring how formative years influence development of social change leaders and aspects of formative years that act as motivation for careers as social change leaders. The study is divided as follows: **Chapter 1** provides an introduction to the study, including research area, research aims and objectives. **Chapter 2** provides a review of existing literature on leadership, social change leadership and scholarship on formative years. Notably, the chapter first attempts to conceptualise leadership, social change leadership, and formative years. It also explores essential themes critical to understanding leadership and formative years, and motivation for social change. Chapter 3 provides the research methodology by unpacking the hermeneutic phenomenological approach used in the study. Moreover, a detailed description of the data collection and analysis is presented. The limitation of the methodological approach is also provided. **Chapter 4** and **5** provide the findings and discussion of the findings respectively. Meanwhile, **Chapter 6** concludes the research and provides recommendation for future studies.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews existing scholarship on formative years, and how scholars have investigated questions relating to the influence of formative years and social background on an individual's life. The essential themes include the role of parents and family, the school, career motivation, the influence of role models, significant life events, formative leadership events, chance events, legacy beliefs, and training and development programmes. The question of leadership and social change leadership is also discussed.

2.1 Tracing Etymological sources by Defining Key Terms

> "Words build the architecture of our thoughts and paint images in the mind. Like dance and music, they can alter how and what we think about and, as such, are some of the most powerful tools of leadership" (Grace, 2003: 1).

Tracing etymological origins of words allows us to both understand the context they emerge and situate them within the nature of the study since, "every word presupposes a context" (Partridge & Crystal, 1981, p. i) in Grace (2003). Moreover, meanings of words can be best conceptualised by tracing their etymology. Simply defined, etymology is the art and science of ascertaining the history of a word, including changes in form, and meaning of the word (Partridge & Crystal, 1981, p. 51; in Grace, 2003). Tracing the etymological foundations of words provides a deeper understanding of their origins. Phenomenologist van Manen observed that:

> "to be attentive to the etymological origins of words can sometimes put us in touch with the original form of life where the terms still had living ties to the lived experiences from which they originally sprang (Manen, 1984, p. 53)".

In perspective, tracing the origins of the words "leadership," "change" or "social change" can allow us to see a deeper meaning of the word "social change leaders," or "social change leadership." For instance, we might reflect on questions such as what is leadership? What is change? What is *social* change? Who is a *social change* leader? Why should there be social change? Similarly, questions such as *what formative years* are allow us to differentiate that *stage*

of an individual's life from another. Consequently, to explore the concepts of formative years implies the existence of another aspect of years in an individual's life that differ from formative years. Is this the opposite of formative years? Would this be mature years? Is it adult years? How do these stages differ in an individual's life? This section traces the origins of the above keywords in an attempt to formulate a definition, linkages among the keywords and how they set the ground for the study.

2.2 Contextualising Formative Years

Formative years is a central concept in the study. Tracing the etymology of the concept is necessary in order to construct its definition. From the Online Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word *formative* is construed to mean "giving or capable of giving form;" "capable of alteration by growth and development". In simple terms, formative relates to the time when someone or something is starting to develop in character. Used this way, formative years can be defined as the *transitional* period of development between an established or mature phase that has a strong influence on the overall development of an individual. If we conceptualise society as a group of people who meet from time to time (socialise) to engage in common interest (common citizenship), formative years can be defined as the period when someone begins to develop those characteristics that underpin their socialisation in the society (see section 2.3 for discussions on society). Socialisation in this sense is defined as the process whereby individuals acquire the modifications of behaviour and the values needed for the stability of the social group of which they are or become members.

In the seven stages of psychological development, which form part of the ego-development journey that occurs in the first 24 years of an individual's life, Barret (2018) classifies formative years as psychological developmental stages of *survival* (age 0 to 2 years), *conforming* (age 2 to 7 years) and *differentiating* (age 8 to 24 years). These stages are crucial in the development of an individual and are in part influenced by parents and family, and schooling – environments that provide for socialization. The early stages of the fourth stage, *individuating* (age 25 to 39 years), is also to an extent affected by parental and school, including university socialization (Barret, 2018). While scholars differ on where formative years ends, for most individuals,' formative years includes years beyond school socialization (individuating stage) (Arnett, 2000; Arnett, 2006).

Definitions of formative years vary across fields and geographical context. For example, in western countries such as the United States, an individual above the age of 18 is considered an adult capable of making their own decisions and often want to start living on their own. Meanwhile, in much of the African region, while the same 18-year-old individual is considered an adult, it is not common for them to live on their own and, most still rely on their parents for guidance and financial support. Regardless of the geographical context of a person is born, most individuals would experience the same path into their early adulthood (mid-twenties). This path starts with some form of formal or informal pre-school education and ends with university education. Parents, teachers, and the communities, for example church, which the individual belongs provide inputs into their development. Still, during this period, most individuals are mostly concerned with their schooling and career. During emerging adulthood (ages 18 – 29) which Arnett (2000) defined as a "time of life when many different directions remain possible, when little about the future is decided for certain, when the scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period of the life course" (p. 469) different possibilities remain open for individuals to explore.

In this study, formative years is classified as age 0 to 25 years. The focus is on lived experiences and development factors taking place from early childhood through initial stages of early adulthood. This broad definition recognises the different socio-economic contexts in which individuals are raised, for example, differences on who is considered an adult in western and non-western societies, and the expectation of young adults in different contexts. Such recognition is necessary since the study engaged social change leaders from different backgrounds – nationality, education levels, and geographies.

2.2.1 Essential themes constituting formative years

Scholars have emphasized the need to examine the early building blocks of leadership development as important in understanding the roots of adult leader emergence (Guerin et al., 2011). Models developed often consider developmental precursors such as psychological capacities that promote the potential to lead, motivation to lead, and contextual processes that support or undermine the development of leadership, for example, through the provision of experience or observation of a model (Bloomer, 1999; Guerin et al., 2011). Models of youth

leadership development often explore antecedents such as: individual difference variables such as communication, personality, emotional/social intelligence, and gender; developmental factors (such as parenting styles and learning experiences); and self-management concepts (such as self-efficacy, coping styles and motivation) (Guerin et al., 2011). These building blocks interact with context and behaviours, which in turn predict leader outcomes at each development stage (Guerin et al., 2011). To gain a full understanding of social change leaders' motivations and intentions, an understanding of their formative years, background, and all the opportunities that have developed them needs to be explored. Essential themes (factors) that constitute formative years are explored below.

2.2.2 Socio-economic background

Socio-economic background represents a combination of an individual family income, occupation, and social background (Townsend & Scriven, 2014; Baker, 2014). Socio-economic background is often related to or derived from socio-economic status – defined as a measure of an individual's or family's social position relative to others (Baker, 2014). Measurements of socio-economic status consider education, income, type of occupation, place of residence, and, in some populations, heritage, and religion (Townsend & Scriven, 2014; Baker, 2014). Research exploring the social and economic background explore the role of parents, family, teachers and the community and their impacts in the socialization process that gradually impact on the life of a person (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Asante, 2015; Boon & Stott, 2004; Eccles, 1992b; Farmer, 1987; Guerin et al., 2011; Karagianni & Montgomery, 2018; Lazarides et al., 2017; Mtemeri, 2017). Socio-economic background affects a child's cognitive development for example achievements in reading (Noble et al., 2006), and education, career, occupational achievement, and earnings (Eckland et al., 1976). In the life course approach, which combines historical, social, and personal experiences, the past is seen to shape the future (Asante, 2015). Early-life decisions and actions are seen to play critical roles in the present and future outcomes (Asante, 2015). Socio-economic background thus influences the school an individual attend, their social environment, interest, and achievements. Examining social change leaders' socio-economic background during their formative years is necessary to explore how this motivated their social inclination.

2.2.3 Parental socialisation

Socialization is defined as the developmental processes through which individuals acquire the values, behaviours, and motivations necessary to become competent members of a culture or group (Morawski, 2014). Parents provide the first socialization environment for their children at home, which eventually shapes how they socialize with other environments (family, school, and community) (Lazarides et al., 2017). During this socialization process, parents provide an important source of value and ability information for their children, influencing children's motivations and career plans, directly or indirectly, through conversations, activities, materials, or tasks (Lazarides et al., 2017; Mtemeri, 2017). Parents also provide academic support for their children in their early high school years, and the support continues into late adolescence as children transition from high school to university or the workplace (Lazarides et al., 2017). Additionally, conversations with parents about future occupations affect students' career exploration (including choice of subjects and perceptions of the value of those subjects) (Lazarides et al., 2017; Mtemeri, 2017).

As a socialization environment, the family is an important ground for cultivating leadership and leadership qualities. As custodians of the home, and the first primary points of interaction, parents first develop leadership qualities in their children within the framework of the home. Parents are also children's first and most important teachers and advocates. In the family, members are often allowed to make mistakes, with the opportunity to 'bounce back' and learn from their experiences. The family plays a role in character building, developing habits of integrity, and establishing a stable home environment, which is critical in developing as a leader (Asante, 2015). In addition to parents, grandmothers have also been recognized as leaders and role models and mentors, especially to their granddaughters (Asante, 2015).

Parents' beliefs about their children affect their children's expectations and the value they attach to tasks (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001). For example, parents' beliefs regarding academic value affect their children's beliefs about academic value (Lazarides et al., 2017). Research has found that adolescents who perceive their parents as valuing mathematics display greater interest in mathematics and maintain a positive attitude on the usefulness of mathematics throughout high school (Lazarides et al., 2017). Parents' beliefs about their children's abilities and the value of

domains for their children's future is often influenced by social gender-role association stereotypes (Lazarides et al., 2017). On the other hand, parent's belief about gender-role stereotypes emerge from societal norms such as beliefs on women's political empowerment and economic opportunity (Rodríguez-Planas & Nollenberger, 2018), and parental expectations on girls' academic knowledge, where for instance, parents strongly encourage boys to be involved in science-related activities than girls (Callanan et al., 2001; Rodríguez-Planas & Nollenberger, 2018).

Ardelt and Eccles (2001) investigated the effects of parental efficacy on children's self-efficacy, and children's academic success in adverse environments and found that children who observe their parents succeed and overcome difficulties in their lives are most likely to develop a strong sense of self-efficacy themselves and prevail under adverse circumstances. In disadvantaged communities or environments with high rates of violence, drug use, and unemployment, nurturing parents employ promotive parenting strategies that offer successful developmental pathways for their children (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001). Promotive parenting strategies are defined as activities that cultivate children's skills, talents, and interests and prevent the occurrence of negative events and experiences (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001).

Studies investigating entrepreneurship have found that when looking at the influence of a person's social background and earlier experiences, the family, particularly the father or mother, plays the most powerful role in establishing the desirability and credibility of entrepreneurial actions (Nishantha, 2009). For instance, individuals whose parents owned a small business often exhibit a higher preference for self-employment than for organizational employment (Kim-Soon et al., 2014; Nishantha, 2009).

2.2.4 School Socialisation

After the family, the school is the second most important formal organization that most individuals experience (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2018). The school environment provides opportunities to practice leadership; in the school environment, leadership starts at the class level (e.g., class prefect positions), school captain (e.g., head of prefect's positions), in clubs, and sports. Opportunities to lead in the school environment provide the early building blocks for future emergence in youth and adult leadership. Strong leadership is developed through practice, and the more chances one

has to practice leadership the more one is likely to develop (Perreault et al., 2016). The school environment also influences the career choice of young adults, through advisors, conversations with peers, or the geographical location of the school (Mtemeri, 2017). Nonetheless, while one can develop leadership qualities and effective leadership skills at a young age, these leadership skills could be 'lost' when it does not continue to develop towards adulthood due to societal biases, such as those based on race or gender, that may prohibit an individual from engaging in additional developments in adulthood (D'Intino et al., 2007).

Education (formal or informal) is a pre-requisite entry into many career paths, and students choose their courses of study due to both intrinsic motivation (a desire to gain knowledge, achieve competence and mastery, internal pleasure, and stimulation of achieving) and extrinsic motivation (a desire to perform well for external reward and punishments, and to maintain important values) (Domene et al., 2011; Skatova & Ferguson, 2014). Since schooling is future-oriented, and students often perceive their education as a preparation for more schooling, for their future professional life, and life in general, the motivations behind the choice of studies correlate with the three sets of motivations – aspiration, mastery and career motivation developed (Farmer, 1987; Skatova & Ferguson, 2014). At school, students are likely to be motivated by the pre-requisites and courses relating to the career path they want to take. Individuals with a higher future orientation are often motivated to succeed, and often take on risks as a way of learning. On the other hand, individuals with a lower future orientation avoid challenges (Halvari & Thomassen, 1997). This is also similar in sports where regular practice determines future success. For example, athletes often develop their mastery gradually through successes as well as failures. The sports experience and the intensity of the competitive environment influence the cumulative achievement in sports and further strengthen the athlete's motivation to succeed (Halvari & Thomassen, 1997).

2.3 Contextualising Social Change

As with leadership, *social change* is central to this research. This section will attempt to contextualise social change by exploring the etymology of the words "social" and "change". In turn, the etymologies are used to construct a working definition of "social change, and understanding "social change leadership"

2.3.1 Defining *Social*

The Online Merriam-Webster (2022) dictionary conceptualises the meaning of the word "social" as "relating to people or society in general;" "the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as members of society (as in social institutions);" tending to form cooperative and interdependent relationships with others;" and "living and breeding in more or less organized communities especially for the purposes of cooperation and mutual benefit." From above definitions, the word *social* relates to networks and relationships among humans in a society. Etymologically, *social* traces its origins from the French word *social* and Latin word *socialis* which means "of companionship, of allies; united, living with others." The word *socialis* itself traces its origins from Latin words *socius* and Latin *-alis.* The word *socious* has meanings relating to persons with strong bonds such as *kindred, related, akin* or non-blood relations such as *allied or united,* according to the Online Etymology Dictionary (2021). On the other hand, the Latin suffix *-alias* is used to form adjectives of relationship from nouns or numerals. To this end, variations of the word social would include: social work, social worker, social drinking, social studies, social security, social contract, social science, social networking, social media, social justice, social challenges, among others – all of which relate to various aspects or activities of the human society.

Meanings can also be found in the etymology of the word society, which originates from the Latin word *societas* which means those united for a common purpose, a company or society of such persons; or the French word *societé* meaning association, council, or group of people, according to the Online Etymology Dictionary (2021). Thus, *social* involves a society since a society involves a group of people who meet from time to time (socialise) to engage in common interest (common citizenship) such as issues affecting their society to explore how to resolve them. In modern civilisation, society has a leader presiding over its affairs. Philosophically, the modern idea of society emerged with the advent of the modern state; in the thoughts of the philosophers who presented the concept of the modern state (Leon, 1968; Angus, 1998). If society involves a group of people bound by common interest socialising to address or explore those interests, what can the concept of society tell us about "*social change*" or "*social change leadership*"? To understand this, it is necessary to explore the philosophical expositions on the concept of society. Exploring the concept of society should allow us to understand the social, political, economic,

legal, cultural, or moral contexts and questions that pre-occupy social change leaders. It should be noted that it is problematic to systematically define society and that definitions of society are often subject to distortions depending on the philosophical or theoretical foundations applied (Copp, 1992).

Leon (1968:578) conceptualised society as an "encompassing network of social relationships that enclose some more specific phenomenon which is the primary object of analysis." For sociological theorists such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and George Simmel, the domain of "society" represented a convenient platform for relating specific problems to a larger context in discussions of the emergence and influence of modernity (Leon, 1968:578). This larger context can be said to represent the larger issues that pre-occupy the career, interests and individuals working on aspects that relate to the existence of the human beings – the society, including social change leaders. Modern definitions of society trace its emergence from philosophical thinkers pre-occupied with the conception, structuring and functioning of the state, including the differentiation between the state and society and the roles played by each. For example, in the Marxian conception of society, men are seen to compete for access to resources of life. In this competition, the competing units may be families, bands, classes, nations, or races, depending on the level of analysis (Leon, 1968: 581). In the competition for the resources of life, one unit or group is bound to benefit at the expense of the other, resulting in inequality. Following this narrative, the social change leader then emerges to address this inequality – inequality being the unequal distribution of the resources of life.

Leon (1968) notes that other scholars conceptualised the idea of society as a process. These scholars argued that "society is ultimately an organized process. . .. The units of social relations are not people but activities…" (Leon, 1968:583). This conceptualisation is important for studies on social change leaders since social change agents often pre-occupy themselves with activities intended to address processes that result in systemic inequalities in their communities; for example, *transforming* the processes that result in the unequal distribution of resources of life. In conclusion, society is not merely the population that exist in it, but the complex systems of action in which the units of the population participate or compete for the resources of life.

2.3.2 Defining *Change*

Having discussed the etymology of the words "social" and "society," it becomes necessary to explore the original meaning of the word "change" before conceptualising social change. Simply defined, the word *change* means *to alter* or *make different.* The English word *change* traces its origins from the Latin word *cambiare*, and later Old French *changier* meaning to change; to make a change, to modify, as in making change. Words with similar meanings include: *transform* or *transformation.* According to the Online Merriam-webster dictionary (2022), *to transform* means to change in composition or structure; for example, to change the outward form or appearance of a house. These definitions are important since social change leaders are interested in transformation.

2.3.3 Defining Social Change

Having attempted to define *change*, we now turn to the definition of *social change*. Following conceptualisations of "social", "society" and "change," a simple definition of social change can be developed from combining the meanings of the words social and change. In this sense, we can define social change to mean transformation, alterations or changing the structural processes – rules of behaviour, social organisations, or value systems - that guide the competition for the resources of life to ensure equal distribution of such resources in the society – society being units of the population interested in, and participating in the competition for resources. This definition is consistent with scholars such as (Leicht, 2020) who define social change as processes that result in significant alteration of social structure and cultural patterns over time.

In its broadest sense, social change is any change in social relations. This broad view implies that change is an ever-present constant in society, as in societal change. But the specific meaning of social change depends on the social entity considered while the observation of social change, including when social change occurs, depends on the lifespan of the change. The occurrence of social change follows the transformations in social structure, social order, social values, and related factors. The occurrence of social change also transforms the socialisation process in a society.

Social change may evolve from different sources, including contact with other societies or diffusion, changes in the natural environment or ecosystem, demographic processes, technological inventions, economic processes, political processes, ideas, and social movements (Form & Wilterdink, 2021). Changes in the natural environment occurring naturally or through human actions may result in climate change, natural disasters or emergence of disease epidemics which may shift people's attitudes towards conservation and other social consequences. Demographic process such as rapid population growth may result in geographic expansion and the intermingling of cultures as people migrate. In turn, migration may result in nationalism related conflicts and pressures or pushback towards immigrants as presently experienced in western countries, notably the United States and the United Kingdom, or the xenophobic attacks as recently experienced in South Africa. Population growth may also spur innovations and changes similar to the industrial revolution, or it may result in increasing poverty. Technological processes spurred by the industrial revolution created a new urban and class group. More recently, technological processes such as the evolution of mobile phone has allowed access to finance, education, employment, and other opportunities to groups that were previously marginalised. On the opposite, they have also resulted in further marginalisation of those with limited access to the innovation they have created. Meanwhile, ideological processes such as the Marxist vs capitalist divide played significant role in the debates regarding allocation of resources, resulting in, for example, emergence of capitalist vs welfare states. Similarly, proponents of feminism as an ideology greatly influenced understanding of the gender divides and brought issues affecting women such as an unpaid labour to the mainstream resulting in processes towards gender equity. Economic process includes the transition from feudal lord-peasant relations to contractual proprietor-tenant relations or changes in the organization of labour such as shift from independent craftsmen to factories. Meanwhile, processes towards social change include changes in the organisation of the state such as the transition from democracy to authoritarianism, and or influence from international relations, political revolutions, or social movements (Form & Wilterdink, 2021). Each of these processes is overseen by a leader; for example, the leader who invents the technology or introduces an idea.

2.4 Contextualising Social Change Leadership

Leadership is central to this research and needs further elaboration. In its simplest form, leadership is the application of social influence. The exploration of the word *leadership* requires an

exploration of words related to leadership. These included: *lead and leader*. Scholars that have explored the origins of the word *leadership* and its etymology note that *leadership* traces its origins to pre-literate England (Grace, 2003). Grace (2003) noted that the root word of *leadership, lead* originates from the Anglo-Saxon Old English word *loedan*, the causal form of *lithan* – to travel. The Oxford English Dictionary's (OED) (1989) defined the word *lead* as: "to cause to go along with oneself, to bring or take (a person or an animal) to a place…" The closest definition of the word *lead* that is closer to the modern sense of *leadership* means "to guide with reference to action and opinion; to bring by persuasion or counsel to or into a condition; to conduct by argument or representation to a conclusion; to induce to do something – said of persons, circumstances, and evidence" (Grace, 2003:3).

In addition to tracing the Latin roots of leadership, I attempt to trace the etymology of leadership from two languages I have been socialised in: my native language of *Dholuo* and *Swahili*. In my native Dholuo, we refer to leadership as *telo*. *Telo* has many meanings or connotations; it is used generally used to refer to a leader, leadership, someone in a leadership position or someone in front. For example, *Jatelo*, means a leader (singular) while *Jotelo*, means leaders (plural) or leadership. In situations of movement such as walking or driving, it used to refer to the one (person or car) in front. In Swahili, a leader is referred to as *kiongozi*. In this sense, the act of leading is referred to as *kuongoza*. The key root word here is *-ongozi* or *ongoza*. The first word, *-ongozi*, can be directly translated to mean *leading*. The second word *ongoza* means *lead*, as in "lead the way".

If leadership is associated with the words *lead*, what does it mean to lead? The word *lead* can be loosely translated to mean *to guide* or *act of leading*. It traces its origins from the English word *lædan*, which means "cause to go with oneself; march at the head of, go before as a guide, accompany and show the way" (Grace, 2003). For the action of *leadership* or *leading* to take place, there has to be a leader. There is a general understanding that it is the leader who carries out the *act of leading*. The word *leader* traces its origins to the English word *lædere* "one who leads, one first or most prominent." This means that a leader is someone who leads or guides others or a process from one state or form to another. To be a leader means to have some form of influence, and recognition and acceptance among those who are being led.

Studies on the etymology of leadership also focus on the suffix "*ship*" which is usually added mostly to nouns to indicate a state or condition of leadership such as authorship or partnership, the qualities belonging to a class of human beings such as craftsmanship or, sportsmanship, or office such as ambassadorship (Grace, 2003). Where the noun designates a class of human being, the sense of the qualities or character associated with or the skill or power of accomplishment of the person denoted by the noun, is included in the sense of the compound (e.g., kingship). Leadership thus denotes the role, authority, influence, impact or significance of the leader and the role of that leader in the society (Grace, 2003; Rosen, 1984; Rost, 1991).

2.5 The Social Change Leadership Model

Social change leadership is driven by images of both the present and the future. In this sense, leadership in the social change landscape is driven by (i) *systemic inequity*, where leaders identify and or feel connected to a problem, and (ii) *visions of the future,* such as human well-being and just society which can be achieved through transformation, inclusion, and preservation (Ospina & Foldy, 2005). Present systemic inequities spring social change leaders into acting for the benefit of humanity, with the ultimate goal of eliminating systemic inequality in the future. The social change leadership model conceptualises leadership as a collaborative process encompassing three core values: individual, group, and community (Astin, 1996; Lester, 2010). The model is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Social change leadership model

Individual values include consciousness of self, congruence, and commitment. Group values include common purpose, controversy with civility, and collaboration. Finally, community values include citizenship. According to this model, the social change leaders' (individual) values, group values (common purpose), and societal values (citizenship) interconnect and work together in a dimension that eventually affects change (Astin, 1996; Lester, 2010). Initially developed for use in modelling undergraduate students for leadership, at the core of the social change leadership model is the belief that all individuals are capable of developing their capacity to become leaders by aligning their values with those of communities they belong. The model has widely been seen as a useful framework for students to assess and reflect on their leadership potential and growth (Wilson, 2012).

2.6 Essential Themes on Leadership Formation

Different factors affect individuals' development and engagement as leaders. In addition to background, these include: the presence of role models, chance events, leadership development programmes, legacy beliefs, experiential leadership, or experiential situations that demand leadership; these are discussed below.

2.6.1 Influence of Role Models

Role models can be defined as individuals who encourage and inspire others to pursue certain career paths, goals, and activities (Basow & Howe, 1980). Explaining an individual's leadership aspiration and intention is a central element in leadership research. Role models are increasingly being acknowledged as strong influencers of an individual's career and some life choices. Sealy & Singh observe that "our sense of what is possible in our careers is influenced by what has gone before, how we interpret that history, and how we draw inspiration and learning from leaders past and present in our own identity development" (2008, p. 208). Role models often unconsciously inspire people who often consciously and unconsciously emulate some of their attributes, which can be positive or negative (Banks & Bailey, 2010; Bartle & Thistlethwaite, 2014; Mtemeri, 2017; Sembawa et al., 2015). For example, medical, dental, and nursing students have reported being influenced by experienced professionals in their careers (Banks & Bailey, 2010; Bartle & Thistlethwaite, 2014; Sembawa et al., 2015). Role models are particularly important in motivating

individuals from historically disadvantaged communities or stigmatized groups to set and achieve ambitious goals (Morgenroth et al., 2015). However, for stigmatized groups, motivation must be accompanied by strategies or enablers such as mentorship programmes, inclusivity or diversity programmes that allow them to access similar opportunities as others from different backgrounds (Morgenroth et al., 2015). This is necessary since the role model, and those who they inspire, are not always from the same socio-economic background. Though individuals are necessarily motivated and inspired by role models who have overcome closely related circumstances.

2.6.2 Influence of Chance Events

Chance events also motivate individuals to pursue certain careers or engage in causes. Chance events can be described as unlikely and unintended but important occurrences that cause changes in the life course (Shanahan & Porfeli, 2006). Examples of chance events can include: "A woman misses her plane and meets her husband-to-be while waiting for the next flight in a crowded terminal. Another woman misses her plane; leaving several hours later to pick up his delayed wife, her husband is injured in a freeway accident" (Hirschi & Valero, 2017, p. 99). Many people experience chance events in their life and these chances affect their career and life decisions (Vermeulen, April & Lhermitte, 2005; Hirschi & Valero, 2017), despite the emphasis on planning and control of the life narrative/approach (Shanahan & Porfeli, 2006). Chance events influence the transition to adulthood – including elements that make the transition and warrant an examination when looking at events that have shaped and motivated one's life. Nevertheless, the extent to which chance events affect one's life depends on internal characteristics, such as locus of control - the belief in the extent to which individuals believe that their actions or personal characteristics affect outcomes (Shane et al., 2003), self-confidence, and openness to experience as well as external characteristics such as barriers and social support (Hirschi & Valero, 2017).

Although chance events are challenging to predict, scholars have developed tools to assess their influence (Bright et al., 2005; Hirschi & Valero, 2017). The effect of chance events in one's career, for instance, depends on:

> "(a) professional or personal relationships, (b) being at the right place/right time, (c) encouragement from others (e.g., encouragement to attain education and experience, set

higher goals, or pursue a new field), (d) previous work/volunteer experiences, (e) obstacles in original career path, (f) unintended exposure to a type of work or activity that was interesting, (g) unintended exposure to a type of work or activity that was not interesting, (h) unexpected personal event (e.g., injury or health problem), and (i) other unexpected events" (Hirschi & Valero, 2017, p. 6).

The importance of chance events in one's life path cannot be overlooked since chance events change people's outlook on career or life plans. In this case, the research will investigate the role of chance events in the social change leader's life journey.

2.6.3 Influence of Leadership Development Programmes

In their efforts to correct systemic inequity and create a new future, social change leaders also benefit from several growth and development opportunities such as leadership development training and fellowships. These programmes take many forms, and each focus on a specific population addressing specific issues, bringing together social change leaders across several sectors, countries, or regions or targeting particular age groups. Individuals participate in training and development activities to learn new skills, improve their skills, or grow. Even in these training programmes, individual differences are essential predictors of engaging in training and development activities, especially in voluntary programmes (Bertolino et al., 2011). Studies have found that a proactive personality predicts a motivation to learn and was directly related to engaging in training activities (Bertolino et al., 2011). In this sense, highly proactive people participate in voluntary development activities and are often out to identify new opportunities. While few studies have explored the impact of these programmes in youth and adult leadership development (Modisane, 2017), they significantly affect individuals who participate in them, and they are thus worth exploring when in studies that explore linkages between formative years and future leadership emergence.

2.6.4 Influence of Experiential Situations

The concept of experientially qualified leaders denotes that leaders who are not qualified for their responsibilities by formal education or certification are formed for leadership through situations

that demand leadership (Bloomer, 1999). In this sense, leaders are prepared by their formative educational experiences, being placed into leadership, modelling of leadership by those with authority over them (such as teachers or senior personal), relationships and peer support, family background, crisis and suffering experiences (Vermeulen, April & Lhermitte, 2005; Asante, 2015; Bloomer, 1999; Boon & Stott, 2004). Moreover, experientially qualified leaders learn from leadership formative experiences (LFE) or formative events. LFE is described as experiences that were highly impactful on the leader, resulting in learnings relevant to their leadership (Vermeulen, April & Lhermitte, 2005; Janson, 2008; Meers, 2010). These experiences shape the leaders' identity, concept and sense of leadership, and their leadership actions; these experiences are so impactful to the leader that they are often included in their autobiographies (Vermeulen, April & Lhermitte, 2005; Janson, 2008; Meers, 2010). The extent to which leadership formative experiences impact the growth of the leader depends on contextual factors such as societal expectations, time in history, and the age in which they occur (Vermeulen, April & Lhermitte, 2005; Janson, 2008; Meers, 2010).

Examples of significant life experiences that influence how leaders learn include: (1) experiences of adversity or loss; (2) experiences of "stretch assignments"; (3) inspirational experiences; and (4) experiences with conflict. Through reflection of these significant experiences, leaders learn (i) self-awareness; (ii) consideration of others; (iii) resiliency; (iv) change; (v) embracing of life; (vii) confidence; and (vii) humility (Meers, 2010). Significant life experiences (i) provide a valuable foundation of case-based knowledge that leaders can utilize in times of uncertainty, (ii) can serve as the trigger point for the development of authentic leadership (iii) provide a means for developing emotional intelligence within leaders, and (iv) can serve as a means to develop the servant leadership characteristics (such as altruism, emotional healing, and wisdom) (Vermeulen, April & Lhermitte, 2005; Meers, 2010). These qualities are essential for social change leadership since social change leaders seek a balance between individual values and common citizenship values.

2.6.5 The Influence of Legacy Beliefs

Individuals are also motivated by legacy beliefs. Legacy beliefs, defined as one's convictions about whether they and their actions will be remembered, have an enduring influence, and leave something behind after death, motivates individuals to pursue a path that allows them to leave a

legacy (Zacher et al., 2011). Individuals pursuing a legacy often intend to transmit their values or their family values, in the case of a family (Hammond et al., 2016). Individuals may decide to follow family legacy or community legacy (e.g., school). In the case of family, individuals whose family owned a business are often motivated to explore self-employment paths associated with starting and running a business (Kim-Soon et al., 2014; Nishantha, 2009). Moreover, in the case of family firms, members of a family are often motivated to pursue and protect family values and legacy, and this often influences the behaviour of family-owned or managed firms (Hammond et al., 2016). Individuals' legacy motivations can also be leveraged to increase their engagement in social change. For instance, in a study exploring individuals' legacy motivations Zaval et al., (2015) found positive association between individual differences in legacy motivation and their pro-environmental behaviours and intentions, and that priming legacy motives increased donations to an environmental charity. Legacy beliefs are thus worth examining when exploring the motives of social change leaders.

2.7 Motivations for Social Change Leadership

Individuals engaged in social change either commit themselves full time to addressing issues they care about as with social entrepreneurs starting and running social impact businesses or part-time. For example, when individuals engage in social justice issues such as activism or volunteer activities on an ad hoc basis to organizations or projects addressing causes they care about. One of the assumptions of this study is that social change leaders are broadly motivated to address systemic inequities they have faced or that they feel connected to in their societies (Ospina & Foldy, 2005). Drawing upon the literature on motivation, this section explores the motivations of social change leaders in the systemic issues they address, especially since some engage in social change leadership full time and others on a part-time basis. The literature on motivation useful since it is concerned with how individuals become interested in the issues that pre-occupy them, for example, how a person selects one school or career over another.

2.7.1 Understanding Motivation

The word motivation derives from the Latin word ‘motive” which refers to means, desires, wants or drives within individuals (Eccles et al., 1998). Eccles et al (1998) defined motivation as

"individuals' choices about which tasks to do, the persistence with which they pursue these tasks, the intensity of their engagement in these tasks, and their thoughts about performance and goals." Though variations occur across a host of variables such as social conditions and cultures within the society, motivation can be categorized into three different but related dimensions: Aspiration, Mastery, and Career (Farmer, 1987). In this case, aspiration is represented by the level of education and occupation and mastery represents the motivation to achieve challenging tasks such as the motivation to persist until mastery is achieved, while career is the occupation or combined progress of aspiration and mastery (Farmer, 1987). These variables change throughout an individual's life. However, Farmer (1987) noted that mastery changes the most as individuals continue to improve their skills and lives, driven by aspirations and careers.

Motivation is impacted by a set of factors: personal (self-concepts such as personality where proactive personality has been found to directly relate to engagement in training and voluntary activities (Bertolino et al., 2011)), and environmental factors (such as parent support, family, school, teacher support, community and the economy) which interact over time with other factors such as sex, social status, school location, age, race, and ability, to influence the strength of the achievement and career motivation dimensions (Eccles, 1992; Farmer, 1987). The influence of these factors (sex, age, race, social status) on motivation is relatively weak and indirect and are often mediated through interaction between personal and environmental influence in a reciprocal but dynamic manner (Eccles, 1992; Farmer, 1987). Moreover, the strength of the background factors varies based on the dimension of motivation (aspiration, mastery, or career), and the effect of parent and teacher support on motivation, for example, support for men is often greater in many cultures than for women (Farmer, 1987). It is noted that where, background factors (sex, social status, race, and ability) are found to influence motivations significantly and substantially, to enhance motivation, the personal and environmental factors are the ones to be targeted for change (Farmer, 1987). This underscores the importance of the environment in enhancing one's success in all or most aspects of life such as academic, family, and career.

Motivation affects real-life outcomes, and each motivation corresponds to the subjective reward one expects to get from the chosen activity (Skatova & Ferguson, 2014). Motivation can be either intrinsic, extrinsic, or both. Intrinsic motivation refers to motivation that is driven by internal rewards (such as self-fulfilment or natural satisfaction from or after doing an activity), while

extrinsic motivation occurs when one is motivated by external rewards (such as fame, money), and not because they naturally love and enjoy the activity) (Eccles, 1992; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Farmer, 1987; Skatova & Ferguson, 2014).

2.7.2 Career Motivation

Social change leaders can be described as individuals pursuing a 'career', a line of work - whether full time or part-time. In this case, the literature on career motivation can be important in understanding the motivations behind social change leaders' choice of projects relating to social change/innovation as a career or area of interest. Career motivation is defined as a commitment to long-range prospects (such as personal advancement, status, money, and contribution), or cumulative achievement throughout one's career (Farmer, 1987). Career motivation is driven by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors include: job recognition, achievement, advancement, personal growth, and responsibility, and motivation to benefit society, which leads to a greater level of job satisfaction. Extrinsic factors include: wages and benefits (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Farmer, 1987). However, most real-life choices bring multiple rewards (e.g., one can choose to volunteer as a way of helping others (intrinsic reward), but also because it might help in certain career paths (extrinsic reward)) (Skatova & Ferguson, 2014).

Studies on career motivation stress the importance of the individual's accurate self-perception of talents and skills when engaging in career development (Lopes, 2006). This perception is often influenced by culture, which influences how an individual defines their career path and success (Lopes, 2006). Socialization processes within the family (parents and other family members), school, and the community, and peers also influence the career choices of an individual (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Asante, 2015; Boon & Stott, 2004; Eccles, 1992b; Karagianni & Montgomery, 2018; Lazarides et al., 2017; London, 1983; Mtemeri, 2017).

Studies have found a positive correlation between motivation to benefit society and public sector job preference (Ko & Jun, 2015). For example, in the United States, public policy graduates pursue jobs in the public sector with a desire to make a difference in society while those who prefer private-sector jobs are motivated by financial resources and professional development (Ko & Jun, 2015, p. 195). Equally important, individuals with a high level of public service management

(PSM) prefer non-profit careers over government careers (Bright, 2016). Similarly, a study comparing the motivations of medical students and dental students found that medical students are centrally motivated by altruism (career opportunities, patient care, and working with people, use of personal skills, and interest in science) whereas dental students tended to be motivated by personal and financial gain (Crossley & Mubarik, 2002). This was also evident in phenomenological study examining the lived experiences of 14 early career nurses which found that despite the challenging nature of the profession, those who remain in the vocation are motivated by altruism (knowing your calling in life and having the desire to nurture others in need), self-fulfilment (feeling fulfilled when providing competent care to others), the challenging nature of the career, and the influence of role models (experienced nurses) and even patients who fostered their development of self-confidence and feelings of competence (Banks & Bailey, 2010).

Interestingly, most nurses started exhibiting an altruistic interest in the career in their formative years, through the influence of family members, teachers, advisors at school, and their immediate community (social environment) (Banks & Bailey, 2010). One Participant noted that:

> *"Well, I knew a long time ago that I wanted to be a nurse even though I took the long route getting here. Because when I was younger, we had an elderly lady who stayed up the street from us and she had diabetes and she had both of her legs amputated and I took care of her like giving her insulin and grandmother would cook for her and give her a bath. I have people in the medical field my mother is a certified nursing assistant (CNA) and she went to nursing school but did not finish and nurses are all around me. My aunt.... other family members are nurses. They keep me from leaving this stressful situation"* (Banks & Bailey, 2010, p. 1498).

Similar to nursing, teaching can be considered a demanding career, and teachers often leave due to job dissatisfaction which often includes workload, salary, disruptive pupils, and concerns regarding the status of the teaching profession (Kitching et al., 2009). However, internationally, teachers who join and remain in the profession are motivated by intrinsic job satisfaction (Kitching et al., 2009), in addition to other socio-economic needs. Additionally, family, school, and religion all have a significant influence in shaping the basic values and beliefs of school principals and how they perform their school leadership roles (Boon & Stott, 2004).

2.7.3 Summary on Motivation for Social Change Leadership

The literature on motivation has shown that individuals are either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. On the other hand, the literature on social change leadership has shown that social change leaders address systemic inequities intending to create a better future for all. It can be argued that social change leaders are motivated to address systemic inequities, transform society to create a better and more inclusive future for all. The motivation of social change leaders can be both intrinsic and extrinsic. The literature on career motivation suggests that individuals, including those with a social inclination, are driven by long-range of prospects including job recognition, personal advancement, and responsibility (intrinsic) and wages, benefits, and awards (extrinsic) (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Farmer, 1987). Notably, real-life events often bring multiple awards, for example, one may be intrinsically motivated to volunteer to help others, but also as a way of getting work experience, awards, or entry into a particular programme (extrinsic) (Skatova & Ferguson, 2014).

2.8 Summary of Literature Review

The literature review explored scholarly conversations on leadership, social change leadership, and how scholars' study social background. The findings from the literature review revealed that research into formative years focuses on: (i) the influence of parents and other family members, (ii) the role of the school as a second socialization zone after the home, (iii) motivation, including career motivation, (iv) chance events (v) role models (vi) the influence of significant life experiences or formative events, and (vii) legacy beliefs. However, the review could not identify a study that has conducted similar research – investigating the impact of social change leaders or their formative years. The literature is fragmented since it explores multiple sectors. Nonetheless, it provides an overall picture of the factors that influence the life course of an individual, and it's proposed that the identified elements will be investigated where possible.

2.9 Gaps in the Literature

The literature review identified key variables in the scholarship on formative years such as the role of parents and family members, the role of the school, the influence of role models, chance events,

and significant life experience, amongst others. The role of motivation and different types of motivations was also explored with the view that social change leadership is a career or individuals engage in it as part of their careers. For example, when one is motivated to engage in correcting a systemic inequity, they may have faced or have developed an interest in correcting system inequity for the benefit of all (Ospina & Foldy, 2005), or engaged in such processes to leave a philanthropic legacy (legacy beliefs) (Zacher et al., 2011). The gaps in the literature, for instance, the lack of specific research investigating the impact of formative years on social change leaders and the limited studies focusing on particular geographical contexts, such as Africa or Asia, creates room for scholarly exploration of these topics.

2.10 Limitations of the Literature Review

The main limitation of the literature review is that it was broad, that is, the reviewed material was not context specific – based on country, city, or space. This was necessary since the study focused on social change leaders from a wide-geographical context. However, attempt was made to provide context specific discussion where necessary. For example, in differentiating between expectation of young adults in Africa and western societies such as the U.S. and comparing career motivations of different professions, for example, nursing vs public service.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach and Strategy

The methodology involves using different techniques to gather data (Florya, 2016). Philosophically, it is how information is collected and what methods one uses to justify, their findings without applying biases in their research. The methodology entails, research philosophy, research design, data collection and analysis procedures. Furthermore, the methodology chapter also presents limitations of the study, and ethical considerations within the research.

In conducting research, the researcher is the engineer of the study; they impact the finding or the results due to the chosen data gathering techniques (Patton, 2015). Therefore, for this study to arrive at objectivity, different techniques of data collection and analysis are considered. Hence, each is described below, starting from the research philosophy to design, data collection procedures, data analysis, and research limitations.

The research approach and design were based on the themes and gaps identified in the literature review and the research question and objectives. The overall aim being to investigate how formative years (the key factors that characterize formative years) influence an individual's growth and inclination towards social change leadership. The Research approach is *inductive*, with a strategy of *qualitative research.*

3.2 Inductive Research Method

Inductive methods involve analysing data without a predetermined theoretical framework, model, or structure (Burnard et al., 2008). Inductive methods allowed the researcher to explore and discover emerging traits that might be outside the identified elements that influence formative years. On the other hand, the deductive method involves was not utilized as it focuses on testing an existing theory or framework, for instance, testing the statistical data from inductive research (Patton, 2015; Streefkerk, 2019). In this case, the methodological theoretical framework has been identified as hermeneutics phenomenology and the inductive method will be followed with the framework. Hermeneutics phenomenology as a qualitative method proceeds without a pre-determined hypothesis; though the study was interested in understanding the impact of factors

related to formative years (as identified in the literature review), the interview method allowed for participants to tell their own story, allowing for the discovery of new traits, outside those identified by the literature – as discussed in the data analysis.

3.3 Qualitative Research Method

As aforementioned, the research applied qualitative inquiry, which is flexible and allows the research to respond to the study as it unfolds (Maxwell, 2005; Patten & Newhart, 2017). Due to the constructive nature of the qualitative analysis, where data can sometimes be used to construct the reality that the researcher wishes to see (Patton, 2015), reflexivity such as bracketing was applied to ensure convergence of results from different sources, responses, and issues.

3.4 Theoretical Framework

Phenomenology allows the researcher to listen and make meaning of the experiences as they are shared by the Participants. Qualitative interviews (structured and unstructured) are ideal to elicit and emphasise shared experiences. Hermeneutics phenomenology allows for a deep understanding of the everyday experiences as reported by the participants and examined by the researcher as well as the participant's own reflection of the impact of their lived experience (Laverty, 2003). Through phenomenological inquiry, participants reflect on their history (including personal background) and gain a deeper understanding (become conscious) of the lived experience (Laverty, 2003). For the researcher, it provides an essential format for studying the background and the impact of formative years on the participants and making meaning of the impact of those years in the Participant's inclination towards social change work. Through phenomenological inquiry, participants and researchers are without categorisation or conceptualisation able to inductively reflect and understand the 'lived world' and examine experiences that sometimes are taken for granted and uncover meanings to them (Laverty, 2003; Willard, 1990).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is an appropriate method as it appreciates the role of background (including cultural background which starts at birth) in the life history of a person. The background provides individuals with the pre-understanding that is central to how they consciously visualize and interpret the world as they live in it, and hermeneutic phenomenologists argue that nothing

can be understood about a person without reference to their background (Laverty, 2003). From this perspective, the world is viewed as socially constructed and subjective and has no existence or meaning outside that given to it by members of the society (Laverty, 2003; Patton, 2015). As an inductive method, hermeneutic phenomenology will allow the research to unfold as participants are engaged.

The phenomenological approach applied was that developed by (Manen, 1984). van Manen outlined four simultaneous procedural activities for doing a phenomenological study. These include: (A) Turning to the Nature of Lived Experience; (B) The Existential Investigation; (C) Phenomenological Reflection; and (D) Hermeneutic Phenomenological Writing (van Manen, 1984). Figure 2 illustrates these four stages. Each of these stages consists of various activities and sub-activities that the hermeneutical phenomenological researcher must naturally engage.

Table 2: Outline of the Phenomenological Process

Turning to the Nature of the Lived Experience	1. Orienting to the phenomena 2. Formulating the phenomenological question 3. Explicating assumptions and pre-understandings
The Existential Investigation	4. Exploring the phenomenon: generating "data" 4.1. Using personal experience as a starting point 4.2. Tracing etymological sources 4.3. Obtaining experiential descriptions from subjects 5. Consulting phenomenological literature
Phenomenological Reflection	6. Conducting thematic analysis 6.1 Uncovering thematic aspects in lifeworld descriptions 6.2 Isolating thematic statements 6.3 Composing linguistic transformations 7. Determining essential themes
Hermeneutic Phenomenological Writing	8. Reading 8.1 Attending to the speaking of language 8.2 Varying examples 9. Reflective Writing 9.1 Writing 9.2 Reflective Journal 9.3 Rewriting (Revising) 9.4 Writing

The study was structured in a way that attempted to utilize this phenomenological style of writing while balancing with the traditional social science research methods (outside phenomenology) expected of a study of this nature. The study introduction, including the formulation of the research area and problem, research aims, and objectives and research questions and scope as well as the literature review entailed ***turning to the nature of the lived experience.*** The literature review, data collection and data analysis represent ***the existential Investigation***. The discussion section can also be said to form part of this section. Data analysis and discussion sections entail the process of ***phenomenological reflection***. The discussion section is particularly key as it involves interpretation of the results (themes) through *reflection* on the literature review, data collection process, and the collected data, including using the researchers' pre-understandings. Lastly, the entire research process – style and structure underly the ***hermeneutic phenomenological writing.***

The phenomenological processes outlined above need not occur chronologically (Manen, 1984). The phenomenologist can start at the point of interest to them, based on the nature of their study. Compared to other research, it can be challenging, in phenomenological writing, to separate research steps – for example, literature review, data collection, data analysis and discussion. In phenomenological writing, it is possible and sometimes common, for these processes to occur simultaneously, as in the example of a poem. Thus, the choice of structure, style, and presentation is left to the phenomenologist as the study is *personal* to the phenomenologist in a similar way the poem is to the poet. van Manen remarked that 'phenomenological research is a poetizing activity' (van Manen, 1984 p. 40). As a poetizing activity, phenomenological research is different from other research in that the link with the result cannot be broken.

> As in poetry, it is inappropriate to ask for a conclusion or a summary of a phenomenological study. To summarize a poem in order to present the result would destroy the result because the poem itself is the result. The poem is the thing (van Manen, 1984 p. 39).

3.5 Research Philosophy: Ontology and Epistemology

Interpretivism philosophy has qualitative nature and is suitable for phenomenology studies, it holds that knowledge can be arrived at through interpreting different meanings and experiences, then comparing them and analysing their deeper meaning because the social world is complex, and

knowledge can be distorted if the researcher does not concentrate on the different and opposing meanings (Chowdhury, 2014; Ryan, 2018). Moreover, the interpretive approach aligned with the research because of the need to understand theory and practice of how formative years influenced the development of social change leaders. Furthermore, the interpretive method fitted the primary goals of social change and leadership, including the understanding of theory and practice in social actions and behaviour (Aguirre & Bolton, 2014).

Access to information or data highly depends on the environments which are socially constructed. Therefore, access to such information can only be achieved through such social construction, which involves an individual's consciousness, shared meaning which are affected by the individual's epistemological background and language, including the research instrument, which might also be socially constructed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Such evidence is highly demonstrated in the literature review, indicating that social environment and formative years influenced social change leaders differently. From such statement above, knowledge then becomes socially constructed, leading to subjectivity. Thus, knowledge depends on one individual's perception over another.

Subjectivity comes with experiences and beliefs; hence, this study adopted an interpretivism research philosophy, interpreting the different perspectives and interrogating their meaning before arriving at a justifiable finding (Flick, 2014). Interpretivism philosophy is the opposite of positivism which focuses on objectivity through rationalism such as measurements and numbers (Ryan, 2018). In other words, an interpretive approach is an anti-positivist approach, and it points that the world is a construction of social reflexive norms, facts, and ideas. Thus, the knowledge and truth depend on the knower who has control over the subjects receiving the knowledge (Moya, 2011). Therefore, the study appreciated this philosophy by interpreting different facts gathered from the secondary data and interviews, then triangulating these interpretations to identify the different themes and patterns of reality or biases. Phenomenology design or descriptive phenomenology design is common in qualitative studies, particularly in social sciences. Such design helps to describe social experiences, look at the historical events, and understand how they have an impact on social change today. Method that applies in phenomenology studies involve focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and observation, and the latter two are applied in this study; each is explained in the data collection section below. The use of a phenomenological

approach allows participants to tell, reflect, interpret, and give meaning to their stories and lived experiences.

3.6 Research Design, Data Collection Methods and Research Instruments

3.6.1 Data Collection Method

The data was collected through a mix of structured questionnaires and in-depth one on one interviews. Such interviews allowed the investigator to gather in-depth information and perception from the participants, which is reached in understanding different views (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Furthermore, through interviews, the investigator had the opportunity to observe the actions and reactions of the participants and make judgments in relation to the research objectives (Patton, 2015, Stake, 2010, Edwards & Holland, 2013). The data collection process involved first identifying, sampling, and interviewing individuals dedicated to addressing various systemic inequities (social-change related issues). Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the data was collected virtually through google forms for the semi-structured questionnaires and through Zoom Video for the in-depth interviews. The interviews were recorded after written and verbal approval from the Participants. Detailed descriptions of the data collection method and the sampling technique applied are discussed below.

3.6.2 Sampling

A purposive sampling method was used to identify and select study participants. Compared to random sampling (often used in quantitative research), purposive sampling provides flexibility for the study to select participants based on the nature and intent of the study (Groenewald, 2004; Taherdoost, 2018; Tongco, 2007). In the case of this phenomenological inquiry, a sample of social change leaders committed to addressing systemic issues in a wide geographical context was considered. The sampling process involved a pre-screening process through a structured questionnaire. The structured questionnaire (a) stated the objectives and aims of the study, (b) asked for participants, interest, age group, and consent to participate in the study (c) whether the participant considered themselves a social change leader, (d) the challenge the participant is addressing (e) nationality or country where participants work is focused (appendix 1). Participants who completed the pre-screening, by identifying as social change leaders and signing an informed

consent form were invited for interviews. For ethical review purposes, all participants were above 18 years of age and were informed of their participation and confidentiality rights as per the ethical clearance obtained from the Commerce Ethics Committee, University of Cape Town.

3.6.2 Participant Context

A sample of 18 participants was pre-screened and invited for interviews. Though this may be a small sample, it allowed for a focused investigation and development of a rich picture. In phenomenology, the collective statement of the population is often already explored, including through literature review and informs the researcher's pre-understanding (Osteraker, 2002), and what has shaped the researcher's interest in the qualitative method used in the study (Patton, 2015).

The participants were from a wider geographic background and national origins. Most of the participants (n= 16) were from Africa while two were from the United States. Moreover, the two non-African participants were working on projects whose objectives focused on social justice in Africa, in addition to other regions. Participants from Africa were either based or working in six countries in east and southern Africa - South Africa, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mozambique. The study allowed for the participation of diverse Participants to allow for a rich picture of lived experiences and explore the impact of formative years across different backgrounds, races, levels of income, genders, level of education, and different sectoral areas within social change. Study participants were also identified from a large population of social change leaders within the researcher's network; the researcher has been part of various leadership development programs whose participants include social change leaders. However, the researcher remained reflective during sampling, ensuring that the sample was not limited to participant-friends. This was done by sharing invitations to the study on multiple platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook & WhatsApp groups) – technology platforms used by many social change leaders. The study was also shared with diverse organizations or "collectives" through which many social change leaders participate and belong. The sample was not limited to any demographic, organizational, geographic, or issue-centric area or population.

3.6.3 Semi-structured Questionnaires

While the study focuses on the lived experience and individual life stories which the individual can decide how to tell, it's important to collect comparable data among all participants to be able to control for factors such as gender, level of education, social challenges addressed or geographic origin when necessary, such as during data analysis and discussions. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect comparable data on all Participants including age, gender, geographic origin, and social challenge addressed (see appendix 1 for the questions asked). Semi-structured interview questions were also developed to accompany the unstructured interview. An interview protocol (**research instruments**) with all interview questions is provided as appendix 2 and responses to the questions is provided in the findings section.

3.6.4 Semi-structured Interviews

The best way to learn about an individual's life and experiences is to allow them to tell their story. Individuals can reflect on past events in their lives and make sense of how those events have shaped their present life. The life course perspective notes that the past shapes the future, and early life decisions and events are critical to present and future outcomes (Asante, 2015). The study utilized semi-structured interviews where participants were allowed to tell their stories. To start the interview (after the initial introductions where the participants are asked for their informed consent), participants were asked these two questions (i) how did you get here? (ii) please tell me your life journey thus far and how you ended up working on this project, context, or challenge. Participants had the discretion of choosing which prompt question to base their initial responses. The full scope of interview questions is provided in appendix 4.

While the unstructured interviewing method allows for the research to naturally unfold with participants having a wider latitude on their responses, it was necessary to observe for the presence or absence of the variables the literature review identified as key factors in forming an individual's formative years or lived experiences. These factors include: the influence of parents or family members, parent's occupation, the existence of chance events, significant life experiences, leadership formative events, early learning experiences (such as leadership at school, sports, clubs) existence and role of role models, and legacy beliefs among others. Semi-structured questions were

used to solicit additional prompts from the Participants in cases where the participant responses failed to indicate or highlight these factors. These questions asked for whether the participant was involved in sports or club in school, the first time they held a leadership role, level of education, parental occupation, what career one wanted to be when they were young, the existence of role models, any significant or formative life experiences, whether one has attended a leadership fellowship or development programme and the existence of a chance event and legacy beliefs.

During the study design, there was an interest to conduct focus group interviews to allow participants to share their experiences in an informal collaborative format. Patton (2015, p. 218) noted that open-ended "focus interviews are highly valued and widely used qualitative methods" as an additional tool to individual interviews. The study intended to conduct focus group interviews with the same participants after individual interviews are completed and codified. However, this did not take place due to a lack of consent from participants (lack of interest) and time constraints. Focus group interviews would have allowed the researcher to engage and share their own formative-year experiences and how they have shaped the researcher's worldview, interest in the study, and engagement in systemic inequity issues (reflexivity). Still, the researcher was able to share his own lived experiences (formative years) with individual participants, helping build rapport, and in turn, ensuring the trustworthiness of the responses.

3.7 Data Analysis Method

The study data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire and in-depth virtual interviews. The data collection instruments resulted in a large data which is analysed. Scholars have proposed various methods for analysing large datasets of qualitative data including organizing the data into matrices or themes, noting patterns, clustering, comparing, and contrasting variables, exploring intervening variables, building a logical chain of evidence, and making conceptual or theoretical coherence or building framework models (Hashimov, 2015). In the beginning, these steps are descriptive but gradually proceed to analysis and the inferential stage where the material is grouped into more meaningful clusters.

The interview data were recorded, transcribed, and analysed using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS); transcription was done using Otter.ai – a computerized

application software for recording, transcribing, and organizing interview data while NVivo was used to code and analyse data. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package used by qualitative researchers to organize, analyse, and find insights in unstructured qualitative data like interviews. Before beginning the analysis using NVivo, I first learnt how to use the software, taking short courses on YouTube and online free sessions on Coursera offered by professors and experts from leading global institutions including MIT, Harvard and Yale Universities. While using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) I remained objectively aware of the pitfalls of using computer tools in phenomenological studies (Sohn, 2017). Such challenges involve technological issues such as coding and the difficulties that come with mastering CAQDAS, and probably misconceptions (Zamawe, 2015). However, such limitations are avoided by triangulating the interviews with the secondary data through thematic analysis.

3.8 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is suitable because it helps to analyse the data into various themes, discovering deeper meanings from such themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, the technique involves looking at the data's details by analysing the data, identifying the pattern and themes, then organizing the themes before interpreting them (Nowell et al., 2017). Such analysis provides an understanding and trustworthiness of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, the similarities and differences were identified from the themes, and after that, a conclusion on the findings was made based on the patterns or the themes. The thematic analysis also helped the investigator to be flexible as the different themes emerge, and exclude the irrelevant concepts. This allows an understanding of concepts in an in-depth manner. Such flexibility, however, might cause the risk of inconsistency and incoherence in the process of analysis. Thus, the researcher's robust epistemological background helped to avoid such biases (Nowell et al., 2017). Finally, the primary data (semi-structured interviews) and secondary data were triangulated to reach a defensible ontological and epistemological position, respectively (Noble & Heale, 2019). Essentially, it should be understood that there are limitations to different methods, as already mentioned that incoherency and inconsistency may occur in the thematic analysis. However, the multiple techniques explained above helped to erase the biases.

3.9 Data Presentation

The data (including findings and discussions) is presented in framework matrices and categorized in themes. In qualitative research, framework matrices and tables are useful in clustering and presenting data into various sectoral areas for effective analysis (Henry et al., 2015; Priest, 2002). The matrices allow for exploration of similarities and differences, categorization, and identification of patterns. On the other hand, thematic analysis provides a vast amount of flexibility and is best suited for vast data, and often accompanies phenomenological studies (Ho et al., 2017; Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

Consequently, in line with the methodology, first, I coded the data into the themes initially identified in the literature review. Then as I read the transcripts, new themes emerged that were key to answering the research questions and presenting new findings. The coding table which includes themes identified in the literature review and from interviews is presented in table 4. The coding table briefly states the coding note (which is also translated as a theme), the number of participants (files) the code was referenced and the number of times the code (theme) was reported. It should be noted that the appearance of a reference in the coding table does not necessarily imply participant was influenced by that variable or factor (node or theme), for example, the influence of a role model. On the contrary, it means that either the variable was directly present, or the transcribed text was added to the node since there was something related to the presence or absence of that node or variable, for example, the presence of a role model in the participant's life course (during formative years). Indeed, this is related to the pitfalls of using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis tools. The table also includes other key data from participants necessary to answer the questions such as inclusive innovation participant is engaged, their motivation for social change and participants owns reflections on social change. Some of the identified themes such as the influence of peers and friends or parents and family may be related to each other, but were initially separated to allow for the expansion and categorization of rich texts describing specific aspects, for example, the role of family members other than parents. Nonetheless, these themes are later combined and discussed as predominant themes supported with statements from participants.

3.10 Research Criteria

Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative methods do not measure variables, thus reliability and validity concepts have limitations on the impact on qualitative research (Maxwell, 2005; Morse et al., 2002). Qualitative studies focus on transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Bowen, 2005; Guba, 1981). Credibility is favoured over validity, as the desire is to ensure the unmeasurable qualitative data is authentically collected and interpreted. Scholars have identified ways in which credibility can be ensured in qualitative research, including adopting rigorous and well-established research methods, triangulating data collection methods, promoting honesty among Participants, frequent scrutiny between researcher and supervisor and peer scrutiny (Morse et al., 2002; Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004). The rigour and reliability of the study was ensured through regular meetings between the supervisor and the student. In addition to the supervisor, the research was also presented to peers in the same cohort and a *collective* of social change leaders who provided critical feedback.

In qualitative studies, transferability – the extent to which the results of the study apply to other contexts (Merriam, 1995), is challenging to control as the selected sample is sometimes specific to the particular context (participants, population, and region) (Shenton, 2004). Nonetheless, while the researcher has ensured both credibility and authenticity of the findings, it is upon the reader to decide the applicability of the research to other contexts. The strength of this research is that it is largely focused on a sample of social change leaders from Africa – out of the 18 participants, only two are outside Africa. However, these two participants work in a global context and their work significantly involves Africa. The research also focuses on multiple areas within social change - education, employment, health, and sustainable development (including environment). Dependability (whether the study is dependable) is assured through a thorough methodology and research process that includes strong quality control beginning with strict supervision, ethical assurances and strong rapport between the researcher and the Participants.

The study is conducted in an objective manner that ensures both objectivity and confirmability. The research instruments, including data collection tools, were designed in a semi-structured way, for example allowing participants to self-report their lived experiences in their own way. For example, asking the researchers whether they identified as social change leaders. While

participants self-identified as social change leaders as they completed the questionnaires, the trustworthiness of their responses is confirmed during the interview phase when they are asked to describe the social challenge they are working to address, their motivation for social change leadership and reflections on how their early life prepared them for social change leadership. During the research process, the researchers' role was limited to identifying comparable factors while coding and analysing reported stories. This is in line with recommended best practices that ensure credibility and trustworthiness of phenomenological inquiry such as the use of verbatim quotes from participants (Hycner, 1985; Priest, 2002). As aforementioned, the researcher then engages repeatedly with the data, exploring and combining thematic variables to make interpretive analysis.

3.11 Research Limitations

Phenomenological inquiry suffers from the central challenge of the researcher's own subjectivity in interpreting the data (Pringle et al., 2011; Whitcomb et al., 2017), since the researcher's background already predetermines their interest (and their bias) in the subject under study (Laverty, 2003). This a common challenge for qualitative methods as the inquiry is personal and the researcher is the instrument of inquiry (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) noted that what brings the researcher to an inquiry – their background, training, interpersonal competence, how they view the world, what's going on in their life, what they care about, and how they've chosen to view the subject being studied affects their data collection, reflection, and interpretation. Bearing this in mind, as a mitigation strategy, the researcher remained objective by suspending judgment and engaging fully with the data as provided by the Participant; seeing the lived experience from the participants perspective and only utilizing objective knowledge to interpret and frame it as part of the larger sample or population. This is a recommended method for conducting phenomenological inquiry (Laverty, 2003).

Moreover, participants may not feel comfortable sharing some aspects of their lives (which might be useful in understanding their formative years). The researcher first focused on establishing trust with participants, by appreciating the work they do and allowing them to tell their story in an unstructured format. In a phenomenological inquiry, bracketing – the act of suspending judgments about the phenomena under study - allows the researcher to see the subject clearly (Laverty, 2003).

The researcher showed compassion and empathized with participants whose experiences elicited emotional disturbances as they recalled some aspects of their formative years such as abuse, which for example, led one participant to engage in specific abuse. During such instances, the researcher will revert to other aspects of the interview while also notifying participants that the interview can be concluded. Overall, participants were interested in the study and during the interview indicated they were attracted by the uniqueness of the study, noting that they also had an interest in learning how experiences during their formative years connected to the social change work they are engaged in today.

One of the major pitfalls of phenomenological inquiry is that it relies on participants' self-reported data, which can sometimes present truth limitations, as individuals may adapt their stories to match with their present realities. Though this cannot be controlled as the researcher must remain objective and trust the participant, the trust of the participants was obtained by confirming the confidentiality of the study. In some instances, participants could trust the researcher since both participant and research have engaged repeatedly in the past. While this was useful in getting the trust of the participants, it is understood that it may be a limitation that may result in prejudices of the researcher. Additionally, as aforementioned, some participants reported there were excited when they saw the study advertised, as they were interested in understanding how their formative years influence their interest in social change work.

As part of the phenomenological study, van Manen (1984) advises that the phenomenologist must first explicate assumptions and pre-understandings. One way of doing this is using personal experiences as a starting point. This was applied during the interview process; interviews were conversational allowing for the sharing of experiences during formative years. To put into perspective, I shared how my formative years (including significant life experiences) shaped my social inclination and interest in the study, applying reflexivity throughout the entire research process. Guba and Lincoln defined reflexivity as “a conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and Participant, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the process of research itself” (2005, p. 201). Simply defined, reflexivity thus refers to a method of self-awareness used to improve the quality of phenomenological research practice and ensure the ethicality of decisions. Through reflexivity, and as part of using personal experiences, I share my experiences for the reader to understand how they may have strengthened or biased my

interpretation. I refrain from discussing or interpreting my experiences as I want the reader to make their own interpretation of my lived experiences, in the same way, I interpret the participant responses. This a strategy recommended by van Manen (1984) and other phenomenologists since the reflexive process is meant to restrain the researcher's pre-understandings from affecting their interpretations (Finlay, 2008), enabling the researcher to provide a reliable, reasonable, and ethical explanation of participants' accounts while avoiding assumptions (Clancy, 2013).

The other limitation affecting the study was that it was conducted virtually. Given the outbreak of the Covid-19 and pandemic and measures applied to control it such as restrictions on movements and physical meetings, the study was conducted through electronic formats. In particular, the interviews were conducted virtually and without video. It was not possible to get clear responses from some participants due to connectivity issues. Similarly, it was challenging to build rapport with some participants who only had a few minutes for the interviews and whose connections kept breaking during the interview – resulting in the study taking longer than planned as participants faced network challenges.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

The study involved adult human participants. As per university regulations, ethical approval was obtained from the Commerce faculty ethics committee before the research commenced. As per ethical clearance regulations, participants were informed of the research aims and objectives, the approval of the research by the ethics committee, that their participation is voluntary, that their answers will remain confidential, and that they have the right not to answer questions or discontinue their participation in the study at any time without penalties. The research acquired informed consent from participants before engaging participants at every stage of the research (online data collection - google forms) and during virtual interviews. The ethical clearance letter obtained from the Ethics Committee is provided in Appendix 1 while Appendix 3 provides signed consent forms.

A Data Management Plan was established during the research phase to curate, clean, and store data. The data collected was cleaned to omit any personal identification marks to protect the identity of the Participants. Interview and questionnaire data was curated and categorized through

a matrix that can be shared with other researchers. The data is stored in a secure cloud environment for safety and ease of access, as per University of Cape Town Commerce faculty research regulations.

3.13 Summary of Data Analysis Method

The final stage of the existential investigation recommended by van Manen entails consulting phenomenological literature. During this stage, I consulted phenomenological literature, reading the works of Merleau-Ponty (1962/1948), Sartre (2001/1943), Husserl (1970/1900), and Heidegger (1962/1927) as portrayed in the writings of Laverty (2003), van Manen and van Manen (2021), van Manen (1984), van Manen (2016) and Lauterbach (2018). I began to organize my ideas and understanding of experience and perception after reading the writings of Merleau-Ponty and van Manen's (1984) interpretations of Merleau-Ponty's writings. Phenomenological literature revealed that humans perceive their experiences: across time (lived temporality), within space (lived spatiality), physically (lived corporeality), and interpersonally (lived relationality). Some scholars have referred to these as van Manen's four lifeworld-existential (Rich, et. al, 2013). After transcription, I engaged in a careful reading of the data to identify initial patterns and themes for thematic analysis, based on these existential themes. I used these existential themes during phenomenological reflection to guide a line-by-line analysis of the transcripts. I considered how time (lived temporality or lived times), space (lived spatiality or lived spaces), physical (lived corporeality or lived bodies), and interpersonal interactions (lived relationality or lived human relations) emerged in the participants' discussion of their experiences (van Manen, 1984).

The next steps following the existential investigation is phenomenological reflection and phenomenological writing (van Manen, 1984). Phenomenological reflection involves conducting thematic analysis and determining essential themes. On the other hand, phenomenological writing is the combination of the entire research process. After determining the essential themes, I read the transcripts individually and as coded into various themes before beginning the analysis process, and throughout the analysis and discussion phase to ensure my interpretations reflected participants lived experiences during their formative years. During analysis and discussion processes, I attended to the speaking of language, varying the selection of examples to represent participants experiences, as advised by van Manen (1984). The circular process of reading, writing,

and interpreting continued until the project was completed. Writing in and of itself leads to reflection (van Manen, 2016). The interpretative (analysis) process began during the interview stage, where I used a reflective journal to make notes and draw initial connections of participant responses and continued throughout the study. A reflective journal is useful as it allows phenomenologists to engage in a reflective circle (Heidegger, (1962/1927) in Lauterbach, 2018). The reflective journal was also useful for brainstorming during analysis, where it was used for brainstorming, writing, and revising themes and interpretation formed. Numerous revisions of the interpretations were made during the discussions to reach a fusion of horizons and understanding of the impact of formative years in participants formative years.

4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter provides feedback on the findings of data collected from 18 study participants. Research findings are presented in several sections. First, a background of study participants is provided; the profile includes the social challenges or the inclusive innovation area in which participants are engaged. Second, predominant themes necessary for understanding the impact of formative years on social change leaders is presented; the presence or absence of these factors in various participants lived experience is also provided. Finally, the motivations or reasons why participants – social change leaders - are engaged in the work they do, and the specific focus areas is provided. Findings are supported with direct statements from participants.

4.1 Summary of Participant Profiles

The data collected from semi-structured questionnaires is presented in Table 3 which shows participant's social change sector (social challenge addressed), age group, country of residence, work, and gender. The 18 study participants came from diverse backgrounds. There were more females than males (11 females vs 7 males). Most of the participants were from Africa (16 out of 18) and two participants from the United States. Moreover, participants from Africa were either based or working in six countries in East and Southern Africa (South Africa, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mozambique). The two participants from the U.S. worked on projects that also focused on Africa. In terms of racial dynamics, the two participants from the U.S. were white or of Caucasian origin. Similarly, two female participants from South Africa were white. The rest of the participants were black or persons of colour. Most of the participants were young adults– aged between 18 and 35. Seven participants were from 26 to 30; five participants from 18 to 25; four participants from 31 to 35; and two participants 46 to 50.

Finally, participants are working in multiple areas of social change, ranging from education, health (including mental health), employment, business and enterprise development, gender equality, inclusivity, addressing effects of the environment and climate change, leadership training and development (training young people to be leaders), systems change, sustainable development, youth education, leadership and skills development, conservation, and food systems equity.

Table 3: Background of study participants

Interview Participants	Age Group	Gender	Location /Nationality	Inclusive Innovation Area or Challenge addressed
Participant 1	26 - 30	Female	South Africa	Education
Participant 2	26 - 30	Female	Mauritius	Education
Participant 3	31 - 35	Female	Mauritius (originally from Nigeria)	Health
Participant 4	31 - 35	Female	South Africa	Employment
Participant 5	26 - 30	Female	Rwanda (originally from Zimbabwe)	Gender Equality
Participant 6	18 - 25	Male	Kenya	Health
Participant 7	26 - 30	Female	Tanzania	Inclusivity
Participant 8	26 - 30	Female	South Africa	Conservation
Participant 9	26 - 30	Female	South Africa	Education
Participant 10	31 - 35	Male	United States	Education
Participant 11	18 - 25	Male	Mozambique	Employment
Participant 12	46 - 50	Other	South Africa	Multiple Contexts (Systems Change)
Participant 13	18 - 25	Male	Rwanda	Environment
Participant 14	18 - 25	Female	Rwanda	Sustainable Development (Environment)
Participant 15	31 - 35	Male	Kenya	Employment
Participant 16	26 - 30	Female	Kenya (originally from Uganda)	Education
Participant 17	46 - 50	Female	United States	Food Systems
Participant 18	18 - 25	Other	South Africa	Multiple Contexts

4.2 Essential Themes that Influence Social Change Leaders' Formative Years

The topical themes that emerged as essential to understanding the impact of formative years on social change leaders are: (i) influence of socio-economic background, (ii) influence of parents and family, (iii) influence of the school environment, (iv), influence of chance events, (v) influence of leadership formative experiences or significant events, (vi) influence of role models, (vii) feeling a of responsibility, (viii) influence of peers and friends (being a part of a collective of change-makers), (ix) being a part of a collective of change-makers, (x) the impact of the work done, (xi) experience with the challenge addressed, (xii) intercultural exposures or experiences at a young age, (xiii) influence of the media, and (xiv) legacy beliefs. Table 4 provides a summary and discussion of the themes as meaning units. Meanwhile, Table 5 highlights presence or absence of the theme in participants lived experience.

Table 4: Themes influencing formative years

Theme / Node	Description of the theme/Meaning Unit	No. of Participants influenced by theme	No. of times theme reported
Themes from Literature Review			
Socio-economic Background	The presence of variables or statements that point to influence of socio-economic background – family income, parents' occupation, type of school attended, where the participant grew up (rural / urban) in participant responses.	18	92
Parents	The presence of statements relating to the influence or lack of influence of parents in participant descriptions in response to question directly or indirectly posed. The node includes all statements relating to parents and family as a socialisation environment or environment for leadership development. For example, when participant responds to a question who was your role model when you were young? One participant positively discussed how their mother influenced their interest in education (teaching).	18	56
Family (other than parents)	This node focused on the impact of other family members other than parents, including siblings (brothers and sisters), grandmothers, unless and aunts. However, if a Participant was raised by family members other than biological parents, this family member has been classified in the node for parents above.	8	10
Career Motivation	Statements indicating the participant is engaged in social change work as part of their career motivation.	17	40
School	This node aggregated statements indicating the influence of the school environment (all school levels) in participants engagement with social change work. It includes all aspects of school socialisation activities such as influence of teachers, peers, and the opportunities the school provides for leadership development.	18	69
Role Models	Statements indicating the influence of role models are coded in this section. There was a differentiation between natural or close role models such as parents and distant role models such as influential figures (either in public sphere or mythical figures like movie characters).	18	58
Significant Life experience	Statements indicating that participants had a significant life experience, for example an accident during their formative years are coded into this theme. A significant experience may be a suffering or a family member suffering abuse leading to a Participant deciding to focus their effort in addressing that challenge. This node (theme) may correlate to the themes discussing chance events, or experience with the challenge addressed.	17	42
Chance Events	Statements indicating the presence of chance events - unlikely and unintended but important occurrences that cause changes in the life course (Shanahan & Porfeli, 2006) – are aggregated under this theme.	16	47
Experiential Situations	Sometimes individuals who are not in leadership position take on leadership positions when circumstance demand or through modelling of leadership by those in authority. This node focused on statements highlighting these aspects.	10	22
Leadership Programmes	Leadership programmes are useful developing leaders from an early age. Organisations, for example, the school and among others, religious institutions often provide leadership training and opportunities that support the development and growth of young people as leaders. Notable	14	26

	examples include the boy scouts or girl guide movements. This node aggregated statements indicating existent and engagement of participants in leadership trainings.		
Past Leadership Experience	This theme explored whether participants were engaged in any prior leadership roles or experience for example, in sports, club, church, or school (prefects). It is common for individuals engaged in one form of leadership to have an interest (or lack of) in leadership roles, especially when there are pertinent issues, they come across that require addressing.	18	43
Community	This theme or node explored the influence of the community in general in the participants leadership preparation. This theme corelates and may conflict with other themes including background, the school, and socio-economic background since these themes may all be defined as community. The initial attempt was to explore the existent of the influence of the community in and of itself.	16	71
Deep Interest	The literature on social change leadership and motivation indicated that social change leaders have some form of interest in the social challenges they address. This theme aggregated statements indicating deep interest of the individuals in their leadership and area of focus.	11	23
Legacy Beliefs	Statements indicating the presence or interest of leaving a legacy – personal or family – from participant responses are aggregated under this theme.	4	9
Themes emerging from Interviews			
Sense of Responsibility	This theme emerged out of participant responses. In addition to showing deep interest in the social challenges they address; participants indicated a sense of responsibility for taking on leadership and addressing the challenges in their communities.	18	97
Part of a Collective	Social change leaders are known to work in collectives or communities of change. Participants reported being influenced by the collectives they belong or wanting to be part of the collectives (individuals) impacting change in their communities. These statements are coded in this section.	14	34
Influence of Peers and Friends	This theme concerned the influence of peers in the social change leaders' network or those they directly worked with. This theme correlates with the theme on Part of a Collective.	14	24
Impact Done	Individuals tend to be motivated by the influence or impact they are having, for example, in motivating or changing the lives of others. Some participants reported being impacted by the impact their work is having in their communities.	7	9
Experienced Challenge Addressed	This theme aggregated statements indicating whether participants were working to address social challenges they have faced either directly or indirectly, for example, the suffering of a family member motivating someone to engage in addressing the roots of that suffering.	16	53
Travel/Intercultural Exposure	Some participants were influenced by exposure to different cultural settings at an early age. For example, through the schools they attended, travels and exchange programmes. These shaped their world perspectives and shaped their leadership. This node correlates to the nodes on community, the school, leadership programmes see they also provide environments for intercultural exposure and experiences.	12	26
Media	Some participants reported being influenced by the media – TV programmes, media personalities or seeing the suffering of others highlighted in the media and deciding to address those challenges.	9	13

Table 5: Presence or absence of themes in participant's lived experiences

Participant	Inclusive Innovation Sector	Theme																
		Parents	Family (other than parents)	School	Background	Chance Events	Leadership Programmes	Experiential (Leadership) Situations	Role Models	Career Motivation	Sense of Responsibility	Collective of changemakers	Peer Influence	Impact Done	Experienced Challenge addressed	Intercultural Exposures	Media Influence	Legacy Beliefs
Participant 1	**Education**	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x
Participant 2	**Education**	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	
Participant 3	**Health**	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x		x	
Participant 4	**Employment**	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x			
Participant 5	**Gender Equality**	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x						x	
Participant 6	**Health**	x	x	x	x				x	x	x			x	x		x	x
Participant 7	**Inclusivity**	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
Participant 8	**Conservation**	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Participant 9	**Education**	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Participant 10	**Education**	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		
Participant 11	**Employment**	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		
Participant 12	**Multiple Contexts**	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Participant 13	**Environment**	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x			x	x	x	x	
Participant 14	**Sustainable Development (Environment)**	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Participant 15	**Employment**	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x		
Participant 16	**Education**	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Participant 17	**Food Systems**	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		
Participant 18	**Multiple Contexts**	x		x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x		

4.2.1 Feedback from Participants

The sections that follow provide feedback from participants on the influence of the identified thematic factors in their lived experiences. To provide a rich understanding and influence of specific thematic factors in participant's formative years and lived experiences, participant's whose experiences best highlight the impact of that theme are highlighted. This is in contrast to approaches that emphasize providing brief highlights from all participants since, for this study, the focus is to provide a *full picture* of a participant's lived experience. Still, variations are made by introducing other participants whose stories contradict the theme, where possible. This style follows van Manen's (1984) approach of hermeneutic phenomenology which requires the provision of rich details that allow the reader to make their own initial interpretations of the lived experience, even without the researcher's interpretations. Themes that are closely related such as 'parent's and 'family' are also combined to form one title, for example, parents and family members.'

4.2.2 Socio-economic Background and Community

Though explored as a singular thematic area, background also includes other variables explored such as the role of parents and family, the school, the community, peers and friends, and leadership development programmes. For some participants background gave meaning to everything they do. Participant one, a lady from South Africa whose work focuses on education and social entrepreneurship said: *"Anything we do is a product of experience, circumstance, and conviction. Those three things, obviously not in the same shape, often can give reason, and sometimes meaning to the things we do. If you ask me how I got here, by way of social innovation or social entrepreneurship work that I do, I will say those three things* (P1:2).

To further contextualise the influence of the larger community, the participant added that: "*There are a lot of things that people around me did before I did them that kind of coined where I am right now. I grew up in a part of the world where community is a big thing. It is something that is emphasized… in folklore, in our history, in our storytelling, in our music, but very much exemplified in how we live... very few people experienced lack in deprivation that essentially castrates them to the wayside. This often showed up… in the adults that raised me intimately, for*

instance, my parents, family, teachers, religious institutions, social clubs… They exemplify the way of actually showing up, which is a community need" (P1:2). *"There are people's homes that literally turned into outpatient care facilities, meaning once you got out of the critical care unit of a hospital, you were then discharged to somebody's home to recover. We knew the strain the medical system was under. Through people's homes, we became part of the broader healthcare provision… People who had certain particular experiences and advantages set up care facilities that then morphed into some of the most enriching educational experiences for the children around the area… To recap, what brought me here in the inclusive innovation space or social change leadership would have been the kind of people that were part of my upbringing, who guided me through the things that they exposed me to. Then the things that I ended up doing very much… fell in line with that understanding… that there were certain privileges that I had…. that there were certain resources I was exposed…. with the richness of the communities* (P1:3).

Participant 12, who works in multiple areas of social change by convening multi-stakeholder forums, trainings and research in systems change in South Africa observed that she wouldn't have become who she is if not for the environment where she grew up. *I was born in the UK and came to South Africa when I was two years old. I don't know who I would have been if I wasn't brought up here in South Africa. I feel living in this country has shaped a lot of my desire to want to work in social justice. I think you can't live in South Africa and think that everything's okay. I was a young person in the middle of apartheid. I have spent a lot of time reflecting on all of that. It's definitely a part my shaping* (P12:2).

Similarly, participant 15, who identifies is Kenya and works on projects directly related to improving economic well-being of slum communities in Kenya, and youth entrepreneurship programmes across Africa, reflected on how growing up in a slum impacted them. *"my life journey is an inspiration from my childhood, I was literally brought up in a slum… with iron sheet structure, very poor drainage, single houses. I also went through the experience of losing my parents when I was 10. That made me to live in a children's home. I realised… when I was there, there was so many street kids, because most of the people that we lived in the home with… didn't even know their parents. That really changed my mindset towards wanting to do something at least to go to help people. And just giving back to society"* (P15:3).

For participant 18, who is based in South Africa and works in multiple areas of inclusive innovation and social justice ranging from gender equality, youth inclusion and development, addressing toxic masculinity, and education to entrepreneurship, having dual nationalities provided diversity that eventually influenced their worldview. "*I'll touch on things that I believe kind of sort of impacted my worldview. And then that kind of impacted the decisions I made career wise. My parents are from two different nations. My mom's from Eswatini and dad is from South Africa. Growing up I always had, these two worlds that I grew up in, because it's kind of its own world, to a certain degree. I think that made me realize that there's a lot to the world that I don't know about"* (P18:3).

Feedback from participant seven, a lady from Tanzania whose work focuses in inclusivity – providing equal access to economic opportunities for people living with physical disabilities, best summarised the influence of all aspects of background in the social change leaders lived experiences, and the interlinkage between socio-economic background and other aspects of formative years such as the role of the school, parents and family, and intercultural exposure. She said that: "*I have grown up in a family of a humble background… that exposed me to all types of people. My parents, I think when I was just starting school, got jobs at the US Embassy, which also exposed me to the elite, I would say, globalized minded or diplomatic world. But also, I had this other exposure to the ghetto village, and to some extent, middle-class kind of life… mixed at different times. But they're all important, sometimes working simultaneously, sometimes very separately. But then the places that I've been able to visit, the schools that I've been able to go to, the family around me that I've visited, and lived with, exposed me to a lot of different situations in my community, some of which I thought, from a very young age, were not right"* (P7:1).

4.2.3 Connection with the Social Challenge Addressed

One of the central research questions and assumptions was that social change leaders are broadly motivated to address social challenges they have faced or those they feel strongly connected to. For this section, participants whose lived experiences indicated a higher connection with this theme are highlighted. Some participants were addressing social challenges they have faced directly (at a personal level) or indirectly (at the community or background level). The connection

with the challenge addressed is also related to, and in this section, seen as significant life experiences.

Based in Mauritius, and working in inclusive curriculum design, Participant two experienced a sense of displacement in multiple aspects of her life. *"If you want to understand where I come from, with regards to social change, it's because of this deep experience of displacement, and unfairness that I experienced at that young age. That is something that is still a source of pain for me."* To add further context, the participant said: *"from birth to nine years old, I grew up in the UK.… existing in a space that was predominantly white…I was minority there…I didn't really see people around me who looked like me who I could look up to and also… my parents wanted us to go to better schools found… in the districts that were predominantly white… I think growing up as a minority also informs my perspectives on social change, which is why inclusiveness is something that's really important to me. The way that I express that is through design. Trying to think from multiple perspectives. And always being aware that there are perspectives that I'm missing. And if I'm missing those perspectives, then it's my responsibility to seek out those perspectives. Because at the end of the day, if I'm designing something, I want this to be a really good product. And if it's going to be a really good product, that means I need to be inclusive with other stakeholders whose perspectives I do not have*" (P2:3).

The participant continued "*my earliest memories of my parents are from an old people's home… they were the managers and caregivers [of the home]. I literally grew up around elderly people's home, and I guess elderly abandoned people... I think that definitely shapes a lot of who I am, and the way that I reflect about age and how we experience life at different phases. After my parents went bankrupt, we had to sell the business and then we moved out. Then my parents started fighting… my mom's sister and I came to Mauritius… and my dad got left behind in the UK."* (P2:6).

The participant concluded by noting that "*there are various things that guide your mission. One of the questions that I tend to ask myself and others around me, what is the hurt that you're trying to heal? For me, that is one hurt I am still trying to heal. It wasn't just that my parents separated. It wasn't just that we were kind of torn away from our homes and brought to a different country*

[Mauritius]. [Even though my parents are originally from Mauritius]. It was also that that experience was poorly managed. It was learning that… feeling of being different … not fitting in or not feeling like there was a place for me … that impacted my identity. Because you reach a point in your life where you're like, I'm not really British anymore. But I'm also told by people around me that I'm not really Mauritian. And am told by other people that I'm not really African. It feels like other people take liberties outweighing in on your identity and how you express that identity in this world. Then it makes you shrink and become so small that you're just like, but I don't know who I am. As a result of those experiences, I now have this fundamental belief that it is everybody's human right to take up space. We need to create environments that allow people to do that, and for me, that is just like basic humanity" (P2:7).

Similarly, participant 17 who is based in the United States, decided to work on food systems equity after feeling "*disconnected from food"* despite living on a farm. When asked to describe the motivation for working in food systems change, the participant said: "*I think it's equity through food… I was born on a farm that grew food I couldn't eat. It was commercial grade corn [and] soya for processing. It wasn't like a farm where I was going to stumble out and pick a pear and munch it for lunch. It was a factory in many ways. I was really disassociated from food, even though I was surrounded by 'food.' There was no farm-to-table living. I grew up in the late 70s, early 80s, when convenience foods in America were really getting their foothold. When I have delicious food memories of my childhood, it was something that was in a package that came from the shop. It wasn't something that I could trace to a tree or a bush or anything on our farm. Very rarely… I felt disconnected from food, even though I grew up on a farm. I was always curious about it. And that was a shaping factor"* (P17:7).

Meanwhile, participant six who works in healthcare in Kenya, described how experience with non-communicable diseases, challenged them to address the scourge. "*I got into social change… in the health sector where I work partly because of… my personal experience with non-communicable diseases… I grew up with childhood obesity and it was a big part of my early life. I had all of these challenges that come with being obese and experiencing discrimination and getting bullied because of weight. It was an embarrassing part of my story growing up… Besides my experience… there are also friends and family who died from cancer and stroke and diabetes…*

we had to take care of them and see them until the point where they die. That was the part of the initial drive that caught me working in this space" (P6:2).

Participant eight who works in conservation and biodiversity management policy advocacy in Africa reminisced their experience with environment growing up in rural KwaZulu Natal province in South Africa, and how they realised the things they used to do while young were no longer possible due to environmental changes. She said: "*If you grew up in a village [in Africa], the things that I believe are common across it is being used to having wild fruit, climbing trees, and falling and getting injured. And going with the elders when they're going to harvest honey, and you get stung by bees, and swimming in the wetland after rain, and getting sick afterwards. Those experiences formed integral parts of my childhood…. With time, I realized that a wetland close to my home, even though it rained, was not feeling so much anymore. The fruits I grew up eating we're not available anymore. But I was young… I didn't make sense of what was happening. I didn't make much of a big deal of it"* (P8:1). The participant added that: *"The community that I come from, I'm close to [iSimangaliso Wetland] Park. When my grandfather was alive. He used to tell me how his father… they used to reside inside the Park in those era's before it was a Park. They were removed during apartheid in South Africa. Now the village… is less arable"*(P8: 4).

Similarly, participant 13 who founded and runs a waste recycling company in Rwanda recalled how environmental degradation resulted in an accident that hospitalised his friend and inspired him to work in waste management. He said: *"when I was young, we went on a school assignment, alongside my best friend… we were assigned to work on an environmental degradation project. It was where the city throws their household waste… When we were about to finish the whole assessment, a heap of garbage fell on my friend… He stayed in the hospital for almost four weeks. That incident really shaped and inspired me. If we had not gone for the assignment, this could not have happened. I was being inspired on how I can do my part… by diverting many wastes from going to landfills. I started by volunteering with local NGOs. My first initiative was a recycling ad campaign in partnership with Samsung Engineering… In 2015, I founded a campaign called "To sacrifice for the environment" and it was targeted to train young people who had to recycle plastic waste into creative products… Initially, we started with electronic waste… because…. when it comes to electronic waste, it's quite neglected"* (P13: 2).

Finally, participant 11 who is from Mozambique and works on projects focused on youth empowerment, recalled how a discriminatory issue impacted them. He said: "*when I was about to finish school... I did an internship… we went to work… and three of my colleagues got fired after a week…. because most of the managers were South Africans, and they spoke English and my [Mozambican] colleagues could not even say a word in English. The reason why I was able to communicate with them, was because I learned how to speak and communicate because I was part of a social movement. When I finished my internship, I saw that the school did not prepare me for the future…, I wanted to learn and going back to school was not a good option…. I believe that there is strong power in education and education should… be a right, not a privilege…"* (P11:6).

In conclusion, using multiple examples, this section highlighted how social change leaders are driven to address challenges they have faced directly or indirectly. The discussions in this section also showed that in addition to facing the challenge addressed, social change leaders are also impacted by other factors, of which background is predominant. Several other examples that relate to this theme are used in other themes.

4.2.4 Parents and Family Members

Participants were also influenced by parent and other family members. Parental influence occurs in multiple ways, including in career decisions, role modelling, impact of poor parenting styles, or conflicts among parents. Two participants whose work focus on education and leadership development had parents who were educators. Participant 10, who is based in the United States, said that "*I think as early as primary school… I was drawn to educational spaces. My mom was a public-school teacher. She was a very caring, loving mother and just person in her community. I sort of resonated with how she showed up in the world. It's like caring for others, educating others, serving the community. That always spoke to me. I think I had some natural tendencies to do that, as well. Obviously, getting some modelling from her. It felt good for me to do that as well* (P10:2).

Similarly, participant one who is based in South Africa said that "*my parents… are both educators. One is an educator in the high school space. The other is an educator in the higher education space"* (P1:4). Similarly, Participant five grew up in a house that valued education. "*I was raised*

by my great grandmother… my parents were not in the picture. I would probably see my mom, once in five years… until I stopped seeing her. I still grew up in a household which valued education. My great grandmother emphasized reading" (P5:1).

On the other hand, Participant two recalled how her mom *"sabotaged"* her (participants) career, and always criticised their career choices. She said: *"the first thing I ever wanted to be was a palaeontologist. My mom was like, you're going to dig up dinosaur bones! You sit in a field and brush bones? The second thing I wanted to be was an archaeologist. And she told me that everything that was worth discovering, has already been discovered. I didn't become either of those things"* (P2:3). She continued "*there were aspirations that I had for myself…when I left high school… that did not come true… the biggest reason being that I was sabotaged by my mother… that was something that became deeply scarring for me..."* (P2:5).

Parents acted as role models and mentors. Participant 16 who is from Uganda but based in Kenya and works on youth advocacy and inclusivity in policy development, said that: *"I had a very good role model and mentor, my father. From a young age, he always, enforced in me and my siblings, that it's possible to do whatever we put our minds to, it's possible to make a change and make a difference… from a young age I more or less believed in myself"* (P16:2). Similarly, participant 18, lady from South Africa, drew inspiration and mentorship from her dad: she said: "*my dad… I always say he was very weird and how he brought us up because he didn't… make me feel… that because I'm a girl, I can only… act in a certain manner. I believe he challenged… my thinking, always wanted to know my opinion on things, especially with global affairs because he loved politics. So that's where I think my interest for social issues, politics, governance, all those things came from"* (P18:3).

Participant 10, an educator in the United States, said that despite having multiple role models, his mother remains his greatest inspiration. He said: *"I remember in primary school, doing those, what do you want to be when you grow up exercises. I specifically remember… saying, I want to be a teacher, like my mother… obviously, I'm her son… But when it comes to a role model for this work I'm doing now. I mean, I have had a number of role models over the years, but I know it started with my mom. I think I had some other role models, like I had an older brother. I really looked up*

to sports figures. But I think they may have modelled different behaviours, or values for me (P10:5).

For participant 13, parents provided flexibility that allowed them to explore their potential. *"I would say I was so privileged to have flexible parents, who could actually give me the opportunity to just explore my potential…. It was motivating for me to see that I had supportive parents who were flexible enough to provide enough space to do what I want, and even provide guidance to ensure that I am not going out of the way. That was something I'll say contributed to my social change journey"* (P13:8).

Participant 18 also described how their parent pushed their thinking. She said: "*my dad… would engage me at an intellectual level. And he would challenge me to push myself further. He would always allow for me explore my curiosity, whether it was acting, whether it was in sports, and he was very much a huge supporter of anything that I found to be a passion and an interest at the time, I think for me, that's what builds my confidence a great deal and helped shape how I present myself in the world"* (P18:6).

Meanwhile, participant 11 said that *"My father… he used to work for the army [in Mozambique]. He was very disciplined and very determined to get what he wanted to get. I think he passed that to us. My mother was a nurse for over 25 years. I would see my mother, making sacrifices for the common good"* (P11:7).

Some participants were influenced by what may be described as poor parenting or toxic family environment. Participant 12 who works in systems change leadership *"helping convene multi-stakeholder initiatives around a specific social concern… such as convening stakeholders around developing innovations for the prevention of violence against women, land reform, food security…, and leadership development"* (P12:1) recalled how she played a mediator role between her parents: "*… my parents got divorced when I was four years old. It was quite acrimonious. There was a lot of conflict even into my teens, between them. I found myself often playing a mediator kind of role in that conflict, even though I wasn't sitting with them together… trying to manage it. I was often in the middle of… you tell your father this, and you tell your mother this. I think that put me in a*

kind of mediation role" (P12:2). The participant further added about conversations with a stepfather, noting that: "*my stepfather was… extremely racist. I would have a lot of debates with him about how he treated other people… about what I thought was fair, and wasn't fair [in apartheid South Africa]"* (P12:4).

Similarly, participant 12 who is from Nigeria but provides wellness and mental health to students in an African university was influenced from experience of poor parenting. She said: "*a lot of times my parents weren't very available…. my relationship with my parent wasn't very warm. It was a lot of instruction and punishment, not a lot of constant hugging… love and so on. It was always do this, so that you will not be punished type of parenting. And it was always about fear. I lost my dad when I was 13 years old. And my relationship with my mom did not improve until I was 18 years old. That was when I started to see my mom as not just a mum, but as a human being… when I was able to understand what she was going through with her marriage… my dad had been a stressful marriage for her. I am able to draw enough boundaries with the students and have the necessary conversations when I feel like they are necessary…"* (P3:4).

In conclusion, this section has showed, with statements from participants, impact of parents, and the family environment in social change leaders' developmental journey.

4.2.5 School Environment

This section highlights the impact of the school environment in the leadership journey participants, by modelling leadership or providing opportunities for leadership discovery and development. For participant eight, the school provided an environment to understand the implications of what was taking place in her community, opportunities to attend a global conference that would shape their leadership journey. She said: "*in high school, when I joined the environment club… I learnt about changes in environment and some of the things that cause them, and how we can really play a role in conserving wetlands. Before that it never made sense to me that I was having a wetland next to my home, and that it no longer exists… I believe, the environmental club opened my eyes to why these things happen. What's the role that people can do to ensure that we protect the things that we love, that we still have access to them that their populations are growing.?"* (P8:1). The

participant added that "… *the club came with opportunities [for further self and career development in environmental conservation"* (P8:2).

For some participants the design structure of the school impacted their view about education. Participant two, who works in inclusive curriculum development recalled that: "*I knew that the education I had received, did not shape or support me in engaging with the types of problems that I wanted to be engaging with…"* (P2:5). She continued: *"In high school, I went into hardcore science where I wanted to be an elementary particle physicist. I did not end up becoming that… because of my competency in math. I am somebody who is good but not excellent at math, that is not where my strength is. For the longest time, I tried to force something that I was not. I realized, later on, that was a product of the educational system being designed as it was. When you realize how much of the world around you is designed for you, it's kind of when you can start to do something about it and change it… to be more inclusive and the ways that you want them to be."* (P2:4). Similar to high, school the participant also noticed an issue with university education. She said: "*I remember when we graduated… I was realised I've gone through this educational system only to find myself once again at the bottom of the system, entering the workforce and not having any tangible skills. The impact that has had on me, has been incredibly profound. I was like I want to play a part in creating educational experiences that are empowering and that creates students who are confident, creative, critical thinkers and compassionate. Those are basically my four guiding principles for anything that I design"* (P2:8).

The school environment also provided opportunities for mentorship through relations with teachers and peers. Notably, participant 10 said: *"early on in my educational world, I… had different opportunities to be a mentor to a peer student. Those continued throughout primary school, secondary school. I did some sports coaching, where I was the captain of a sports team. I was gaining the sense that I can do this…. I felt comfortable in those roles. It feels like people are interested in learning from me… That then led me to do my PhD program in education.* The participant also added strong relations with teachers. "*I always had a pretty strong relationship with my teachers growing up and had some great teachers. They modelled that kind of caring service to others for me. They would also reinforce my own behaviours. I might get some messages*

from the teacher like… it was so great, how you helped out, so and so there.' For me that is like touching something within me where I'm like… I should keep doing that" (P10:6).

The school environment also fostered service and community. For instance, participant one who grew up in South Africa said that "*I was put in schools throughout my career that spoke to the mission of doing more with what you have, making the world a better place and being part of a collective"* (P1:3). Similarly, Participant two related that: "w*hen I was in high school, I was part of a girl school that was very community oriented. It was often big around helping others. It was a really good fit for me as a school* (P12:2).

For Participant two, in addition to building a sense of community, opportunities to lead in school resulted in building a sense of self-worth, capability, and recognition, including through awards. The participant recalled that: "*in my school... It was usually the responsibility of the cohort to fundraise across the academic year to have their own prom. In the last year of high school, I took the initiative of fundraising, and it was the first time ever in the history of the institution that someone founded a committee and was driving fundraising initiatives in a more organized manner. What that resulted in was that it wasn't just about the fundraising, it was about creating cohesion across the cohorts. As a result, we became a cohort of students that were known for being very close, and supportive of one another. We also had the best prom in the 25-year history of the institution at that point. Then that culminated in me receiving an award, which I hold quite dear, because the award was created specifically for me. It was called the award for Ambassador at large. And the description is of somebody who is able to bring together people from differing backgrounds, into a sense of inclusion and culture. I think that's also something that came to it was kind of like one of those signals in life where you're just like, oh, so I am this person. I can do these things by virtue of just being myself"* (P2:5).

4.2.6 Leadership Development Programmes

Some participants reported being influenced by leadership development programmes. These programmes allowed them chance for reflection, which led to discovery and meaning by providing a safe space for sharing experiences. Participant 18 whose work addresses gender-based violence

recalled a traumatic experience of being "*molested as a child, by my male cousin. I only came to a place of acceptance about this during a workshop in a leadership development programme… they separated us into groups. And they said, we can choose whatever topic we want to discuss. I chose gender-based violence and femicide. One of the female scholars shared their story of being molested. And it felt like such an out of body experience… because… I've never shared this with anyone… I was in so much denial. When she shared that everything came back to the forefront, and I left that workshop with a huge burden on my heart to find out why do… these things that they do to us woman…"* (P18:5).

For some participants, school-based leadership development programmes had an influence. For example, participant five, who studied in Zimbabwe and South Africa said that: "*In school, when your marks are good… then you're considered to have the capability of being a leader. I don't think that's necessarily true… I remember there was a teacher… one day she called me after class, and she was like, Okay, here's a speech memorize that [and]present in the assembly next week. I was like, I've never done anything like that before. She's like, no, you're capable. And when I got home, my grandmother was excited… [and affirmed that] there's a reason why they chose you"* (P5:3).

Similarly participant 10 said: "*my formal leadership training experience was in high school. They identified some students who had whatever they considered to be leadership potential, and then the following summer, we were invited to a weeklong training program. It was specifically framed as a leadership training. We looked at things such as problem solving, communication, cooperation, those foundational pieces. I was learning and connecting with other folks who were identified there"* (P10:7).

Finally, participant seven said: *"I was part of AIESEC which is basically a leadership organization for youths all over the world, through exchange programs, and just learning and understanding yourselves. I got the needed training, through exchange programs and leadership programs within the organization. And that built me to contribute to what I'm doing right now"* (P7:9). Similarly, participant one reported that "*I attended… a leadership incubator for two years. I received the training and then also further trained others*" (P1:12).

4.2.7 Opportunities to Lead During Formative Years

Opportunities to lead during formative years further influenced leadership development, including understanding of the issues facing society. Most of the opportunities to lead existed in the school. Participant one said: "*I was the school President. I have been a leader in choirs and stuff… I was student leader putting together extracurricular activities for students…"* (P1:6). Participant 12 said: "*I was a prefect at school. I was also in a leadership role in in my primary school"* (P12:7).

Participant 15 said: *"I have been a leader throughout. when I was in primary, I was prefect… I think several times when I was in high school. I was a school captain. When I went to university, I was a class representative"* (P15:6). Meanwhile, participant 11 *"had many of those moments where I had to step up, especially when I was in my last year, I was basically what we call a country manager, I was leading the organization [AIESEC] to move forward"* (P11:8).

4.2.8 Religious Institutions

Participants also reported being influenced by religious institutions. Participant one said that "*there were aspects of that community support that was offered by missions and religious institutions. But that example specifically spread way beyond. The system was integrated. The church mission had a few schools that wouldn't necessarily subscribe to it, but was supported by it…. The religious experience that I was exposed to, at a young age, the projects that the church engaged in the community and how those were run, how they built community beyond just believers…. was quite fascinating. A meticulous way of their work was their service. The primary school that I went to was started by an immigrant who was from a neighbouring country who came to South Africa. Her husband passed on, then the church mission supported her in starting what was a tutoring business at first. That then became a school"* (P1:4). *"I found that regardless of your affiliation, support, that was given to those institutions, whether they were served by a mission or not, was regardless of religious affiliation"* (P1:5).

4.2.9 Peers and Friends

Peer influence was also reported as a factor influencing development of social change leaders. The influence of peers or friends is also combined with being part of a collective or communities of

change makers, that is, individuals sharing similar interests and providing support. Participant 10 said peers looked to them for leadership: *"my peers, they would always look up to me to take up a leadership role on the team"* (P10:13). Participant one said that "as *my peers also started enacting change in their communities, I also was just like, yes, I could do this, too. So, I became a change agent, through those three broad means, in my daily life"* (P1:3).

Meanwhile, participant 13 looked to senior peers for leadership: "*there were senior students driving more impactful projects. I was interested to see how they were doing that. And even try to interact with them and try to familiarize myself with what they were doing… having that peer group… influenced me"* (P13:9). Similarly, for participant 14 "*the idea of having young people actively involved in doing something sustainable, led me to see, that as a young person, we can actually do some things that are really important for society"* (P14:2). In conclusion, peers *"gave support and encouragement"* (P4:8) to social change leaders journeys.

4.2.10 Chance Events

In addition to education, familial, and socio-economic background, chance encounters can serve as powerful formative experiences that shape social change leaders and their area of focus in social activism. Participants reported how chance encounters in their communities influenced their interests and actions. Participant seven, whose work focuses on inclusivity through art – working with people living with physical disabilities by supporting them to use their talents (e.g., art) to generate income, described how a chance encounter with a physically disabled person changed their perception about that population. She said: "*Growing up … I would see people who are [physically] disabled, begging for money on the streets on the roadside. But one day I met one man… I will never forget this man… his picture just stuck in my head forever. He was selling water. It was a very hot day. Dar es Salaam is very hot. He had his tricycle. Then he had like a box on his lap with cold water that he would pass on to the public on the roadside, and it would sell. You just give him money and take your water and cool yourself down. He changed my perspective about people who are [physically] disabled because before him, I would only think that these people are beggars, and they can't do anything for themselves. They need to be given money, because I saw people giving money to them as a way of helping them. But then when I saw*

this man helping himself by helping us… I just had that mindset shift, and I didn't know that then. But it just stuck with me somehow at the back of my head. Then as I went on with school and other life experiences, I found myself back into wanting to do something about these situations or doing something different, as opposed to what I would call charity. Because it's not. For most people that I'm working with, they don't want to be given money, they want to be given opportunities and work for themselves… I think some of the experiences that I have had, I have lived growing up, you know, seeing different people in different positions, needing different things, wanting different things, especially people who are marginalized, somehow contributed to where I am right now" (P7: 2).

Similarly, participant 10 ended up in their present occupation through a chance event despite the influence of parents in their education. The participant said that: *"As I was finishing my PhD… I didn't find the specific job I was looking for…. I took a little break. I needed to slow down and heal a bit from that Ph.D. completion. A few months later when I was… looking for a job again… I was more open to what I could be doing professionally… the first week of working for the programme, it just felt so right. It felt so aligned. I started to see all the ways that I could still use my gifts and really show up in the way that I imagined myself showing up…"* (P10:4).

Finally, a statement from participant eight best summarises the influence of chance events. *"I'm realizing that… amongst all things that happened, there's always that one key event… that unlocked the next stage. The environmental club was that key event for me that unlocked the broader stage [of my work in environmental conservation and advocacy]. That conference was that key stage for me at the age of 19… that unlocked the whole understanding beyond just animals… For that conference, they were only looking for 30 people, with open applications all over the world. I even needed someone to assist with the English in my application. Because, I mean, with my Zulu English, was I going to be able to qualify? In many ways, for me, the conference was a chance event. When I went there, I didn't go there thinking that I will come back as an activist of some sorts. I never labelled myself as an activist. But I came back a changed person. It changed my perspective to conservation"* (P8:16)

4.2.11 Intercultural Exposures and Travels

Travel and intercultural exposure resulted in participants meeting or becoming aware of significant personalities that would influence their life journey. For example, participant 15, who grew up in a slum in Kenya recalled: "*I had the chance to attend the Young World Conference, which is one of the biggest conferences in the world... That was my first time even going out to the country. When I was there, I met amazing people like Muhammad Yunus, who is the founder of social entrepreneurship. People like Muhammad Yunus inspired me a lot from their stories from what they've done with Grameen Bank"* (P15:3).

For participant eight, intercultural exposure resulted in a mindset shift that would change their career. She recalled: "*when I was 19, and during my second year, I applied for a grant to go attend the Conference of Parties for the Convention on Biological Diversity. It was one of those things that made my jaw drop… A lot of conveners of local community representatives, and indigenous people were speaking about how the model of conservation that we have actually speaks more about creating protected areas, removing people from their land… you find protected areas where everything looks nice on the inside, but people on the outside have a high amount of poverty… I had grown up knowing the other side, but never deeply understanding the other side of communities themselves and the things they face… staying around these areas…I came back from that conference… a changed person… I recognized that as a young person… I had a bit more energy and connections to start advocating for young people to contribute"* (P8:5).

Similarly, participant 17 who works in food systems equity understood the extent of poverty and inequality through travel. She said: *"I took a year off… and travelled around the world mostly in emerging economies. I spent about three months in South America, about four months in southern Africa and another four months in Southeast Asia… I was 25 years old, and had been raised a middle class in a high-income country. I don't think I had a real context on the developing economies. I don't think I understood, in any real sense, the poverty on the scale that it existed. I hadn't seen it. I hadn't been exposed to it. And so, when I spent the year traveling in low- and middle-income countries, I saw poverty, in real life. Obviously, it changed everything about the*

way I saw the world. And so that was sort of one thing, observations, just seeing poverty. When I came back to work following that trip, I decided that I wanted to do social impact work..." (P17:3).

Travels and exposure also resulted in *"conversations in conflict"* that tested participants world view. Participant 17 said that: *"Another thing was, it was sort of a conversation in conflict, which tested my worldview. This was in 2001. The United States was having a moment… We'd had the September 11 attacks where we were invading Afghanistan. I didn't understand geopolitics in any real way… and I was backpacking internationally. I was in a social context with many other travellers. I was having conversations with other travellers, who were saying things that made me think about my national identity… as an American. At the beginning… they were saying things like, oh, we're so sorry for you. It's terrible… what has happened to America! They were full of sympathy. And then it changed as the US started to take action in Afghanistan. I remember having one conflict with a French guy who, just kind of really attacked me for being American. And it was sort of the first time I'd understood and felt very personal about America's role in the world. I was very vulnerable… in active conflict and trying to defend…of all things…my country's actions. That just really made me think about who I was going to be in the world. Definitely, a lot of veils came away through that trip and process…"* (P17:4).

4.2.12 Legacy Beliefs

Legacy was also a motivator for some participants. For instance, participant 16 said that: *"my motivation is to leave the world better than I found it… basically leave a legacy…"* (P16:6). Participant six who works in healthcare said that: "*I feel like it would be very sad, for any man… any human to just come and leave, and nothing about them remains… just become a statistic. I don't intend to become a statistic at any point in my life. And I'm working very hard right now, to ensure that I don't become a statistic"* (P6:7).

However, some participants are not motivated by legacy. For example, participant two who is based in Mauritius said: "*I am not someone who really cares about legacy. I'm more like, I'm going to walk on this earth and through this life, and I'm going to do my best to try and help people around me on the way. Even if those people know my name, or if they don't know my name, even*

if they know me personally, if they don't… this idea of legacy and wanting to leave something behind is not something that interests me" (P2:2).

4.2.13 The Media

Media also influenced participants interest in social change. Participant two, who grew up in the UK, narrated that: *"When I was around three years old. That memory is still very distinct to me. My parents had gone out, and I had gotten up to some mischief. I was basically taking all of my mother's makeup and combining it into a bottle. When my mom came home, she was obviously mad, and she smacked me. I think what I told her in that moment, was something that became defining for the rest of my life… I was crying… telling her don't throw it away because I'm making medicine for sick children in Africa. Obviously, at the age that I am now I look back on that memory, and I realized how problematic that statement could have been. But it was literally a three-year-old child who said that…. I had seen things like the television, talking about sick children in Africa, like those kinds of adds that portray Africa in a really negative way. But it spoke to something deep inside of me. There was this element. it wasn't just empathy, but rather compassion. That was like, I see these sick children, and I want to help…"* (P2:2). Similarly, media allowed some participants to notice that things were amiss in their communities. Participant 12 said *"some of these things, I think the media, seeing what was happening in the townships [informal settlements] in [apartheid South Africa]. Having the sense that something's not okay"* (P12:4).

Participant six reported how TV programmes, especially cartoons contributed to their interest in healthcare. He said: "*when I was young, I had the broad interest of just being in the science field, which was really inspired by cartoon such as Dexter's Laboratory which had a very big influence on me. … that cartoon is still one of my favourites today. In the cartoon, the guys had to figure out problems and create solutions. Early on, watching it made me want to become a scientist or work in the science field…"* (P6:5). Similarly, participant five commented on significance of educational shows, noting that: *"on the television we would watch kids shows that were dedicated towards education…. those kinds of educational shows made you see what is happening in South Africa*" (P5:2).

4.2.14 Sense of Responsibility and Deep Interest in Social Challenges Addressed

One of the central research questions was to understand what motivates social change leaders. This question is based on the presumed understanding that social change leaders would be interested in addressing challenges they have faced in their formative years or influenced by their background. Asked *what motivates them to work in social change and the various sectors they work in*, participants provided responses indicative of a desire for change, interests in their community and concern for others.

Participant 18 who works in multiple contexts addressing gender, education, policy, child rights, racism, and sustainable development goals mentioned that: "*It's the people. I think, growing up… you go to primary schools… and you come back home during the holiday, you go back to the villages that your parents came from, or the Townships (informal settlements) that your relatives live, and just seeing the inequalities really… and how that has a complete impact on the trajectory of people's lives. That's my biggest passion, especially for black people, for them to be able to have a better life … a more prosperous life… a more dignified life than what they currently have"* (P18:7).

Participant 17 was motivated by equity. She said that: *I think that so much depends on the accident of birth. Few people see the world that way. That systems are built to weigh overvalue that accident and so, my motivation is to level the playing field...to allow humanity to tap into the potential that exists in so many people who are born outside of the spotlight of… the right gender or the right social economic class or the trajectory from the rights to or from the right school… all the different sort of trappings of meritocracy"* (P17:7).

For participant seven it's about being part of the change process. "*The issues that exist are equivalent to the people who can actually solve them. It's basically about taking actionable steps. It can actually happen if people are incorporating the right kind of people. And getting the right kind of people involves inclusivity, making sure there's diversity because that diversity is reflected. If you have diverse problems, you need diverse people to solve those diverse problems"* (P7:8). Similarly, participant six believed that change is possible if people take action. He said: *"we*

actually have the ability to affect change… when I realized…. that if I lead in this manner, or if I try this thing, then I could positively affect other people's lives…that's a lot of power… to do good" (P6:6).

Participant 12 who works in systems change stated that: "*I can look at the world and tell you that it's wrong. I think there are things we can do better. What appeals to me about this work is that it's bridge building. It attempts to build bridges. It doesn't mean that people have to like each other or trust each other. But in an attempt to show people's different positions to each other, and to find a way to do something a little differently, either together, or in their own spheres"* (P12:6).

A summary of the motivations of social change leaders towards social change is provided in Table 6. The table does not contain responses from all participants as not all participants provided a response to the question. Still, interest in inclusivity, diversity and addressing inequity, in addition to the conviction that change is possible through action, have driven many a change leader into action, mobilization of resources and even continued interest and transformative impacts in their communities.

Table 6: Social change leaders' motivation for social change work

Participant	Inclusive Innovation Area	Motivation for Social Change
Participant 4	Employment	What I set out to do from the onset was just to play a role in the economic development of people – very broad statement. I'm going to play a role in social economic development, because for me, your ability to participate financially, in anything in the economy will allow you to access a better life.
Participant 6	Health	There are different things that motivate me. The biggest is the fact that we have the ability to actually create the change…. that's a lot of power… to do good. The other thing… with the work I do in Health… is that if change is not created, then people stop… if people are not educated (about good health habits) … they suffer. I have seen that suffering first-hand with myself, with my friends, and family.
Participant 7	Inclusivity	There's no other way, you have to do it… You have a responsibility to others, not you. I have a responsibility. And whatever contribution I have counts a lot. I see that every day, I hear it. It's like every everyone has a responsibility and the purpose of life. I know deeply that whatever contribution I can give the society, will bring a lot of change. I see the change and the difference, and I feel fulfilled. It's not even work anymore. It's like a drive on its own.
Participant 8	Conservation	My motivation is to see people having quality life, not just having life, but having quality life. But I want a world where people do not have to struggle to get food, those basic needs are met when people are respected. I strive towards that. I do it in the sense of, I do recognize that one can't (sic) achieve everything at once and that we are all playing as different generations. For me, I've chosen to pursue this space of ensuring that people have quality life and dignity in their environment. I think as Africans you have a role to play.
Participant 10	Education and Leadership	Maybe I'll just start with something that's come up a few times already in that it seems like there is just this natural or innate motivation inside of me. Some voice saying this world is bigger than you. That you're a part of this bigger world, and you're kind of responsible to this… world. I wouldn't know if I have used those words in third grade, high school or even college or university. I think there was always some voice under, even if I didn't have the words, or understood it, saying that you should care for other people and the world around you. That voice is still there. I have this natural tendency to show up for others, show up for the world. I think, and my guess is that's my primary motivation.
Participant 11	Employment	It's simple. We need to ensure that our society gets the chance to change. We need to bring change, and the only way for use to do that is through mobilizing people for a common good. That's my main motivation, to try to see how collectively we can bring change. We need to also be able to ask, why not? That's my main motivation because that's what I did.
Participant 12	Multiple Contexts (Systems Change)	I can look at the world and tell you that it's wrong. Though I don't know if everything's wrong, I think there are things that we can do better. I think what appeals to me about this work is that it's bridge building. It attempts to build bridges. It doesn't mean that people have to like each other or trust each other. But in an attempt to show people's different positions to each other, and to find a way to do something a little differently, either together, or in their own spheres. A lot of change that is going to happen will involve people doing different things within their organizations and in their roles as leaders, you know. For me, it's about inclusivity… we get people in diverse groups, and something does happen, because you are providing a space where people can talk and listen to each other differently, think differently, and to start thinking about acting differently. They can challenge their assumptions about each other, or the work they are doing… they uncover blind spots?
Participant 14	Sustainable Development (Environment)	The issues that exist are equivalent to the people who can actually solve them. It's basically about taking actionable steps. It (change) can actually happen if people are incorporating the right kind of people. And getting the right kind of people involves inclusivity, making sure there's diversity because that diversity is reflected. If you have diverse problems, you need diverse people to solve those diverse problems right. It also starts from that point where if everyone is involved, you can get the solution really quickly, and you can get it perfectly. It's going to literally take every single person to actually have sustainable development.
Participant 15	Employment	I would love to see a world that, you know, everybody filled part of, and everybody is given a chance to showcase their innovativeness. And also like to see a world whereby we are more focused on the impact and the change from just making a lot of money and being the richest people while we are not really taking good care of the environment that we live in, and the world that we live in, and even taking care of the other people that are still lagging behind in terms of poverty and all this kind of stuff here.
Participant 17	Food Systems	Equity. I think that so much depends on the accident of birth. Few people see the world that way. That systems are built to value that and to weigh overvalue that accident and so, my motivation is to level the playing field, or you know, just allow humanity to tap into the potential that exists in so many people who are born outside of the spotlight of developed economies, the right gender, the right social economic class, or the trajectory from the rights to or from the right school. All the different sort of trappings of meritocracy. It's equity. I think it's equity through food.
Participant 18	Multiple Contexts	What is my motivation? Very simple. Also, maybe might be a bit cliche, but it's the people. I think, growing up, you'd go to primary schools, and you can't deal with the extent you come back home during the holidays, you go back to the villages that your parents came from, or the Townships (informal settlements) that your relatives live, and just seeing the inequalities really and just how that has a complete impact on the trajectory of people's lives. That's my biggest passion, especially for black people, for them to be able to have a better life, a more prosperous life, a more dignified life that has more integrity, than what they currently have now.

4.2.15 Participants Self-reflections on Impact of Formative Years in their Lives

As part of the research inquiry, participants also reflected on how their formative years influenced their leadership journey. The question for this prompt was: *when you reflect on this entire conversation, all your early life experiences, and if you try to make meaning out of it, in your own way, how did your early life influence your interest in social change leadership*? Participant 11 mentioned that: *"sometimes you do what you do not because you want to, but because you are part of a system [of the society]"* (P11:8). Other participants statements confirmed this aspect of being part of a system.

Participant 15 said that "*I was not privileged enough to have the best life growing up… I was born in the slums [in Kenya]. I am still working very hard towards where I want to be… making sure that the kind of life that I was brought up in is not the kind of life that I live. But also encouraging people who might be currently living the life I lived…. Trying to give them a direction… show them meaning*" (P15:7).

Participant 17 reflected that: "*the first thing that comes to mind is that it gives me legitimacy. I could speak with legitimacy about agriculture, and food security. I have never really been food insecure in my life or been in a danger of becoming so… My history my early life gives me legitimacy to be having a conversation about food systems. I would also say that opportunity to travel… in my early life… set the trajectory*" (P17:8).

Participant five reflected that: "*my early life really did play a very big role. Because I feel like if I did not have the kind of experiences that I would have had, or probably grew up in a very privileged place where everything around me was okay, I think I would probably not care about other people. I don't know but I just feel like there's a certain sense of responsibility that you feel like you have if the world around you is… crumbling"* (P5:7)

Participant 18 said: *"Everything… the good, the bad, the ugly. I think life goes through different seasons where different things happen. There were certain moments of profound significance, moment that's helped plant a seed for the passions that I'm currently living. Everything that has*

happened in my life led me to this path that I am on right now. And when I reflect and I think about it, nothing happened by chance" (P18:8).

4.3 Limitations of Research Findings

The findings were comprehensive, exploring the lived experiences of 18 social change leaders from a wide geographical background and social innovation areas. But while engaging participants from a wide background enables exploration of multiple contexts, the limitation is that it does not allow for an exhaustive analysis of a single unit. For example, the findings may not completely represent social change leaders in a single country or within a social innovation area such as health. The findings also suffer from some of the limitations of doing interviews with participants from multiple countries as multiple countries are covered. Nonetheless, the selection of wide geographies was necessary as it was challenging, especially given the Covid-19 pandemic, to find respondents from a single country or sector.

The second limitation of the findings is that given the many participants, it was challenging to exhaustively explore all themes within a single individual. For instance, it was challenging to separate and discuss and discuss some themes as single topics. It is for this reason that multiple themes are discussed under a sub-theme; for example, role models being discussed while discussing background or parental influence being discussed in the same paragraph exploring the role of the school. Still, an effort was made to extensively explore a theme, by using an *anchor case*, the lived experience of a participant who was strongly influenced by that variable (e.g., the school) when discussing the role of the school in developing social change leaders during formative years.

Lastly, limitations of using qualitative data analysis tools were experienced during the analysis phase. Though the study initially sought to code the data into thematic areas using NVivo, the application was only used minimally as it was realised that it would be challenging to use with this vast amount of data. In the end, most of the coding was done manually.

5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Features of Formative years that Influence Careers as Social Change Leaders

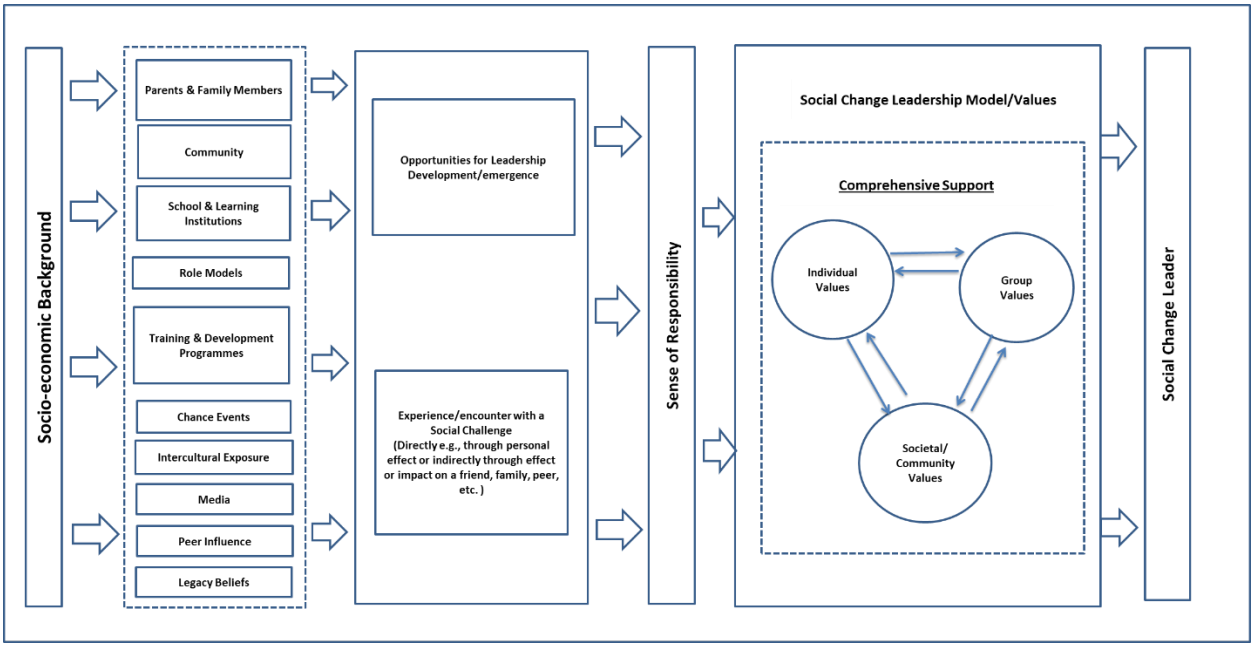
Studies that explore formative years focus on the role of parents and family (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Gottfried et al., 2011; Perreault et al., 2016), school (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2018), socio-economic background (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Eccles, 1992a), chance events (Shanahan & Porfeli, 2006), and leadership formative experiences or significant events on leadership (Vermeulen, April & Lhermitte, 2005; Janson, 2008; Meers, 2010), role models (Basow & Howe, 1980; Banks & Bailey, 2010; Bartle & Thistlethwaite, 2014; Mtemeri, 2017; Sembawa et al., 2015; Morgenroth et al., 2015), and career motivation (Lopes, 2006; Bright, 2016; Crossley & Mubarik, 2002). These were dominant themes in participant responses. Pertinent themes observed include feeling a sense of responsibility, the influence of peers and being a part of a collective of change-makers, the impact of the work done, experience with the challenge addressed, intercultural exposures or experiences at a young age, the influence of the media, and religious institutions.

This section is structured as follows: firstly, identified influences on formative years are either discussed individually or as combinations, that is whenever a strong correlation exists among two or more themes. For example, the relationship between the influence of religious institutions and background or community, where the former may be considered part of the latter. Secondly, the section also explores the connection between formative years and the area of interest of social change leader. For an effective discussion, a conceptual framework indicating the relationship between various aspects of formative years is developed (Figure 2).

5.2 How formative years Influence the Development of Social Change Leaders

Therefore, this section explores the following vectors in social change leadership development: (i) role of socio-economic background and community, (ii) the family as a micro developmental environment, (iii) the school environment, (iv) influences by role models, (v) access to leadership development programmes, (vi) motivational potential of leadership opportunities during formative years, and (vii) chance events.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework on the Impact of Formative years on the Development of Social Change Leaders



Source: The framework is developed by the author. However, the social change leadership model is adopted from the model development by Astin (1996). Whitten-Andrews (2016) expanded this model by adding Comprehensive Support. The model is discussed in section 5.2.5 which examines leadership development programmes as enablers of social change leader development.

5.2.1 Socio-economic Background and Social Change Leadership Development

Most of what humans absorb from the immediate environment—spaces, events, and community—shape worldviews. Among the factors considered for in this study, socio-economic background dominates the developmental structure. Socio-economic background is an expansive topic. Although explored as a singular thematic area, background constitutes a range of variables, namely parents, family, the school, and the larger community an individual belong. It is then unpuzzling that some studies enumerate parents and other family members, including parents' occupation (Eccles & Wigfield 2002; Gottfried et al. 2011; Perreault, Cohen & Blanchard, 2016), the school and other learning environments (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2018; Mtemeri, 2017; Sembawa et al., 2015), role models one engages with directly or passively (Banks & Bailey, 2010; Bartle & Thistlethwaite, 2014), and the larger community or society where one resides.

van Manen (1984, p. 38) observed that "phenomenological research is the study of essences." As the study of essences, phenomenology asks for the very nature of the phenomenon, that which makes the phenomenon what it is, and without which it could not be what it is. In exploring the background of the social change leader in this case, the study is less interested in learning, "how did social change leaders learn about social change leadership from their background or even formative years, but interested in the question, what is the nature of the socio-economic background of the social change leaders so we can now better understand how that background shaped the social change leaders value-system and interest in social change leadership.

Phenomenologists note that background provides individuals with the pre-understanding that is central to how they consciously visualize and interpret the world as they live in it, and hermeneutic phenomenologists argue that nothing can be understood about a person without reference to their background (Laverty, 2003). From this perspective, the world is viewed as socially constructed, subjective, and has no existence or meaning outside that given to it by members of the society (Laverty, 2003; Patton, 2015). Socio-economic background influences the school an individual attend, their social environment, interest, and achievements. Furthermore, socio-economic background also encompasses socio-economic status, nature of education, income, type of occupation, place of residence, heritage, and religion, among others. These environments have different impacts on the acculturation processes that result in a person's development. In the life course approach, which combines historical, social, and personal experiences, the past is seen to shape the future and early-life decisions and actions play critical roles in the present and future outcomes (Asante, 2015).

But while an individual interacts with all these dimensions in their formative years, the spark that ignites their interest in social issues happening in their communities or that gradually springs them into action often occurs during their engagement with one aspect. Moreover, sometimes interactions with one environment allows for a deeper understanding of an underlying issue observed in another environment. This was the case for participant eight, who despite her actions and interest in conservation being inspired by her lived experiences and observation of conservation malpractices in her community in rural KwaZulu Natal province in South Africa, such as displacement of communities living close to or inside national reserves, when such areas

are transformed into parks, only catalysed her interests while interacting with the school environment. Before she joined the environmental club in her school, the young conservationist did not understand the implications of environmental changes taking place in her community. Discussions with members of the environmental club, and other opportunities provided by the club including a travel opportunity to attend an international conference significantly catalysed the leaders interest in contributing to inclusive conservation policies, especially those that take care of communities living close to national parks or protected areas such as her community. Obviously, the school is an environment for learning and discovery, and it is expected that the school contributes to the cognitive development of the student. Nonetheless, sometimes the learning may exceed expectations, especially when it significantly transforms the lives of young adults as in the above example. More so, when that school is located in a low-income environment, with minimal resources, yet still provides opportunities for discovery and committed teachers and other, themselves leaders in their environment, who go beyond expectations to support learning.

5.2.2 Community as an Enabler of Leadership Development

A leader is first and foremost a member of the society or community where they belong, starting with the basic unit of the society – the family. Consequently, aspects that influence one's background and formative years can significantly impact one's sense of community or common citizenship and interest in advancing communal values, or simply defined, interest in social change leadership. To illustrate, some participants approach to leadership, common citizenship, and life generally, were influenced by the community growing up. In many African societies, *community* is a concept that is highly emphasised. The community is often called upon and comes together during both times of praise such as when a child is born and the whole community comes to congratulate the mother and welcome the newborn, or during times of loss, for example when one has lost their loved one or when the community is in crises such as famine. In Africa, community is emphasised in African folklore, music, history and portrayed at all levels. The sense of community or *showing up for others* was exemplified in the immigrants who founded the schools that one participant attended, and how the entire community – professionals, public servants and the business community came together to develop the social service facilities needed in the community, even with the absence of governmental support in apartheid South Africa where one

participant grew up. Many social change leaders in Africa have been groomed following this *richness of communities*, of being there for others, of seeing humanity in others.

Nevertheless, while background and formative years generally impact leadership development, studies have found that leadership skills acquired, or experiences obtained, may be lost in the absence of an opportunity to practice leadership caused by discriminative practices or societal biases that prohibit an individual from practicing leadership such as race or gender (D'Intino et al., 2007). Meanwhile, differences in socio-economic background may impact one's access to opportunities for leadership development. Practices such as tribalism or racial discrimination may determine who goes to which schools, who is selected to attend a leadership development programme or who gets a particular job. Structural or systemic inequality often result in unequal distribution of resources for socio-economic development. For example, in South Africa, structural issues inherited from the apartheid system are visible in the differences between schools attended by whites compared to blacks. White suburban schools have quality physical and institutional infrastructure compared to those in townships. Students in schools with poor facilities may not take hold of all opportunities the school provides, for example, educational trips that may expose them to practical, and out of school learning. In effect, the absence of opportunities to lead and poor communal facilities may prevent an individual from engaging in further leadership development in their life course.

5.2.3 The Family as an Environment for Social Change Leadership Development

Parents and family members influence an individual's formative years. The family provides an important environment for cultivating leadership, providing formative experiences, including those related to socioeconomic background, values, chance, and even significant life events necessary for future leadership emergence. Parents, as custodians of the home and first primary points of interaction during formative years, first develop leadership qualities in their children. Character building, integrity, honesty, or lack thereof of them, among other leadership qualities, are first developed in the home environment (Asante, 2015; Lazarides et al., 2017; Mtemeri, 2017). In this study, parents are defined as both biological parents and individuals who raised the social change leaders.

Parents provide a socialization environment that shapes their children's behaviour and interactions with other environments such as the school, other family members and the larger society. Parents also influence their children's perceptions of themselves, their abilities, interests, and plans, either directly or indirectly., Parents act as and are the first role models for their children, influencing, for example, their children's career exploration and eventual career choices (Lazarides et al., 2017; Mtemeri, 2017; Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Callanan et al., 2001; Rodríguez-Planas & Nollenberger, 2018). Some participants emulated their parents' ways of *showing up* in the world as a teacher – in a kind and caring way; the maternal parent who was a teacher both influenced the participant's interest in the teaching profession, approach to teaching, and leadership values which the participant applies in teaching and leadership development activities with young leaders across the world and in using education to serve others. Yet for others, poor parenting styles such as absence of a parent – when the parent was alive but not there, affected their childhood development, inspired, or influenced them to venture into working with students in the area of mental health and wellness.

Studies have suggested that parents' entrepreneurial drives often influence individuals towards entrepreneurialism. For example, Nishantha (2009) noted that the family, particularly the father or mother, plays the most powerful role in establishing the desirability and credibility of entrepreneurial actions. Similarly, individuals whose parents owned a small business often exhibit a higher preference for self-employment than for organizational employment (Kim-Soon et al., 2014; Nishantha, 2009). However, this study found that such influence is only present where the entrepreneurial actions are successful. For one participant, though the father had multiple entrepreneurial activities, compared to the mother who was a public-school teacher, feedback implied that the participant was more influenced by the mother's stable occupation compared to the dad's multiple but failed entrepreneurial initiatives. Comparing the dad and mom's occupations and familial responsibilities, the participant noted that the dad had different roles in sales, at least 10 different jobs and needed to constantly change position. Though the dad supported the family, it was consistent with the support provided by the mom's stable and consistent job.

In addition, parental and family environment influence leadership development when future leaders, learn either from the mistakes of their parents or from issues such as domestic quarrels.

Some leaders working to bring stakeholders together for difficult conversations around specific concerns affecting their societies began their mediation roles by acting to reconcile disputes between parents. For one study participant who grew up in apartheid South Africa, conflicts between parents resulted in an opportunity to build meditation skill which has been crucial in their work in convening multi-stakeholder conversations and workshops around key social challenges and systemic issues such as equal access to education, healthcare, racism, and leadership. Domestic conflict, conversations with a father the participant described as racists, and the environment the participant lived, itself the result of actions by parents - moving from the UK to South Africa during apartheid in the 1990s, shaped the participants work in social change leadership. The participant described how after her parents got divorced, when she was only four years old, an acrimonious environment developed, and she often herself often playing a mediating role between her parents. While it is common for children to be caught up in conflicts between their parents, the nature of the conflict and how the conflict is handled shapes a child's development in multiple ways, including their future parenting styles, their decision to have or not have a family and, among others, their value system.

Since social change leaders address issues in their communities, sometimes their interests may collide with the interest of others and even their parents. Thus, it is necessary for them to have supportive parents that understand the time commitment, resources required, and challenges involved. The findings suggest that parental responses to what their children are doing differs. Some parents provide the supportive environment needed while others tend to sabotage or disrupt their children's interests. Even outside the social change landscape, it is common for some parents to criticise their children's career choices. Obviously, parents are expected to model their child's behaviour and provide them with growth opportunities. Not surprisingly, the study found that parents who provided a flexible environment for their children to explore their social change leadership interests worked in environments that required an understanding of the need to support and allow young people to explore their potentials such as the teaching profession. Others worked in leadership development or were already actively involved in their communities. Meanwhile, those that did not provide support were either absent in their children's early life, or provided a toxic family environment.

The linkages between parental experience and social change leader emergence are important to explore not least given the divergences between generation X and millennials on key issues affecting the society, including the systemic issues in which social change leaders aspire or commit to resolve. Simply defined, generation X refers to older members of the society, while millennials are defined as the younger members of the society. Millennials have different attitudes towards issues facing the community compared to their older counterparts. For example, younger people have been accepting to technological changes such emergence of social media compared to the older generation. The same can be said of economic and social shifts such as on issues related to climate change or decisions on whether or not to have a family or children.

In the social change leadership landscape, millennials have inherited a host of complex problems arising mostly from the actions of generation X. Furthermore, pressure is seeming piled on young people to address the challenge in their communities, yet they were not responsible for their creation. Such pressures have resulted in young people facing challenges that have resulted in some committing suicide. While some young leaders who experienced poor parenting may opt to become good parents and even take such experiences as lessons, others may end up question the whole idea of parenting. The complex nature of the challenges young leaders face today has resulted in such themes as de-parenting, mindfulness, sustainability, and socially conscious actions amongst the younger generation who embrace such practices as a copying mechanism.

5.2.4 The school as an Environment for Social Change Leadership Development

Studies have shown that after the family, the school is arguably the second most important formal organization that most individuals experience (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2018). The school provides opportunities for learning and practicing leadership either through direct leadership engagement (e.g., class prefect) or through engagement in sports or clubs. For many study participants, opportunities to lead in the school environment acted as early building blocks for adult leadership. The school environment also influenced their career choices, for example, through teachers and career advisors, or through conversations with peers. But the impact of the school differs across individuals. For some leaders, the school acted as the environment where they were able to make connections with social changes happening in their communities, and the

action needed to address such issues. Besides, interactions with peers through clubs and associations in school, allowed them to devise initial responses and confident to both test and implement their ideas.

On the other hand, the school also provides a window into some of the reforms needed in the society, including within the education sector. For example, social change leaders in the education sector are interested in ensuring diversity and inclusivity in curriculum development and ensuring that education meets challenges facing society. This drive comes from their experiences with the educational system. For illustration, one social change agent described their interest in developing inclusive educational curriculums that empower students while responding to the needs of the society based on their reflection of the inadequacies of the educational system that prepared them. These leaders are interested in creating educational experiences that are both holistic and that empower students to be confident, creative, critical thinkers and compassionate. Education, both formal and informal, plays an important role in the life-course of an individual, including how they respond to challenges in the society. Social change leaders working in the education sector believe that educational experiences should be designed in a way that allows the student to deconstruct the world around them, and at the same time enable the student to remain compassionate to others in the process.

5.2.5 Leadership Development Programmes as Enablers of Social Change Leader Deevelopment

Leadership development programmes and related trainings provide growth and development opportunities for existing and aspiring leaders. Programmes focused on young people are particularly important as they inculcate leadership values during formative years. Most of these programmes are modelled around the social change leadership framework which conceptualises leadership as collaborative process involving individual, group, and community values (Astin, 1996; Lester, 2010). Many leadership development programmes emphasise principles such as self-consciousness, collaboration and commitment to community, or country. Moreover, in the same way the social change leadership model believes that all individuals can develop leadership capacity, leadership development programmes often aspire to bring out leadership aspirations of

young people, or of their participants. Many young leaders benefit from these programmes and in recent times many programmes have mushroomed focused on leaders engaged in common citizenship.

Nonetheless, few studies have investigated the impact of youth leadership development programmes among social change leaders, especially in Africa. Majority of studies on leadership in Africa focus on socio-economic and political malfunctions resulting from improvident leadership such as organisational crises, maladministration, corruption, and bad governance (Modisane, 2017). Moreover, few studies have explored the impact of leadership development programmes in Africa, including whether those programmes embrace the structural issues that social change leaders address, or such programmes merely overromanticize leadership. In a study reviewing literature on leadership development programmes (LDPs), Modisane (2017) noted that programmes focused on youth development expands training of a leadership pool of future leaders. Besides, the effectiveness of such programmes, especially in Africa, will depend on how best those programmes align with challenges to be addressed. For instance, in study exploring the nexus between youth empowerment programmes and youth unemployment programmes in Botswana, Diraditsile (2021) found that most potential beneficiaries were not aware of all or some of the programmes. Though the study focused on a government run programme, it's findings can be used to problematise accessibility of most leadership development programmes, including those run by private sector or non-profits.

Though there are leadership development programmes focused on leaders at different levels of their careers or leadership journey, age-groups, nationalities, or geographical regions, it is common to find that certain programmes prefer, in their selection process, leaders with a track record achievement. Achievement in this regard is sometimes defined to mean previous leadership training or recognition by other leadership development programmes. In turn, the focus on rewarding past recognition results in the exclusion – or rather discrimination - of other individuals interested in these programmes. Moreover, individuals who have participated in multiple leadership development programmes, even without a track record of action in their communities are seen as leaders at the exclusion those individuals who may not be in the public eye, but are working silently but creating meaningful impact. Such individuals may not be aware of the

existence of the programmes, or may be prevented from participating in them due to other factors such as their inability to write effective application materials compared to those who get selected. The question that arises then is whether someone is to be seen as a social change leader by the mere fact that they have been part of a leadership development programme encompassing individuals working in social change. This statement does not ignore the multiple ways in which individuals may consciously or unconscious contribute to the social change ecosystem. In fact, it appreciates the importance of both context and mindset in successful leadership, or leadership training programme. In conclusion, some of these programmes may be seen to overromanticize leadership rather than embracing or resolving the structural issues that social change leaders aspire to resolve. Still, leadership development programmes significantly affect the life course of a leader.

Even the social change leadership model has its limitations. Despite its positive core values and wide adoption, critics of the model observe that the framework focuses more on the processes leading to the development of social change while ignoring the external factors that significantly affect an individual's capacity to develop as a leader. These external factors include institutional issues such as racism, and structural inequality, for example, poverty and the challenges that accompany them (Whitten-Andrews, 2016). Though rooted in inclusivity and social justice, the model does not concern itself with examining whether students have access to the necessary support that would determine whether they benefit or not from this model. For example, lack of access to a university education, or when one lacks interest in leadership programmes at school by perceiving themselves as inferior, r not capable of such opportunities.

In effect, Whitten-Andrews (2016) proposed the addition of "comprehensive support" to the model to address these structural issues. The comprehensive support is double fold and includes both contextual support, and college-based support. Contextual support encompasses the responsibilities of institutional staff and faculty who are student facing and provide both strategic advisory, oversight of the education, facilitation and who are also the key implementers of the leadership development programmes. These individuals are key in ensuring access and full engagement in programmes designed for students under their tutelage. Contextual support thus entails an understanding of how best to utilise student assets, such as their unique skills, and more importantly, the unique external factors that affect performance between students coming from

privileged versus those from marginalised communities. Conclusively, comprehensive support should pay attention to addressing external factors such as equal access to leadership development programmes, the effect of student belonging or quality of life on student participation and engagement in leadership development, intersectional realities within the student body, resources required to engage in leadership development and the politics surrounding access to those resources, and in general, system-wide transformation (Whitten-Andrews, 2016).

On the other hand, college-based support complements contextual support by focusing on institutionally specific issues that make contextual support possible. These issues include institutional provision of resources, professional development among staff, genuine concern for staff issues, equitable staff hiring practices, and staffing patterns that allow equitable and inclusive engagements (Whitten-Andrews, 2016). Paying attention to these issues would create an environment will make the college or school environment effective leadership development possible.

The same can be said of leadership development programmes focused on social change leaders. Most leadership programmes have the primary aim of contributing to personal development of the participant through both knowledge acquisition, building collaborative networks and gaining access to opportunities. But despite their positive developmental aspirations, leadership development programmes may be less impactful on the leader if they do not provide comprehensive support that allow participants to apply concepts learnt in their unique operating context. Not least because in the corporate environment, leadership training programmes have been found to fail when participants are not able to implement what they have learnt in practice in the context in which they work (Beer, Finnström and Schrader, 2016). In general, even though individuals are generally enthusiastic to acquire knowledge and participate in programmes that will help them advance in their careers, leadership development programmes need not ignore systemic issues that may render their programmes in accessible to their target audiences. Examples of such issues include unequal access to technology, for example, internet or computers that prospective participants need to prepare their application. Moreover, since most programmes are these days shared through the internet, those without internet are likely to be excluded since they may not even be aware of such opportunities.

The importance of comprehensive support is further supported by studies that have examined the role of international scholarships in higher education as pathways to social change (Dassin, Marsh and Mawer, 2018; Musa-Oito, 2018). In a review of the selection processes of scholarship programmes that provide access to higher education as a means to strengthen leaders from marginalised communities, Musa-Oito (2018) argued that widespread social injustice among individual, communities and institutions often result in exclusion of marginalised populations from social mobility programmes, including leadership-based scholarship development programmes. Sponsoring organisations should thus ensure that their programmes are well-communicated to ensure that the target groups are effectively identified, reached, and encouraged to participate (Musa-Oito, 2018). Moreover, the programmes should be well publicised, including through strategic outreach programmes that would ensure a robust and diverse pool of qualified candidates are attracted to them.

5.2.6 Role Models as Leadership Developers or Influencers

Role models significantly impact an individual's career or life choices. In their lives, individuals interact with both closer role models such as parents and teachers who they can directly relate to. But they are also influenced by distant role models such as media personalities or historic leaders whom even though they may never meet, inspire them – positively or negatively – through their actions. Both established, and emerging or aspiring social change leaders have a role model who inspires them. Role models influence our sense of what is possible or not possible when we learn from the history of leaders past and present as well as history. The 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner Professor Muhammad Yunus is one of the worlds renowned social entrepreneurs, in particular within field of financial innovation and inclusivity. The Grameen Bank founded by Yunus in 1983 broke ‘established’ rules of the financial world by loaning billions of dollars to impoverished people all over the world, at a time when poor people could not access credit due to institutional barriers such as the need for collaterals or security for the loan. Driven by the belief that access to credit is a fundamental human right, Grameen Bank extended credit facilities to poor people on terms accessible to them while teaching them sound financial principles intended to help them escape poverty (Nobel Prize, 2022). Grameen’s actions would later fuel a revolution in the microfinance business, a system that has been used widely to support small businesses, especially

those operated by women and people from low-income backgrounds. One study participant reported being inspired by a speech Prof. Yunus gave in an event in Switzerland where the participant attended. While the participant was already working to improve the conditions in the Kenyan slum where he grew up, understanding the significant challenges facing women and poor households in informal communities, the actions of the Grameen bank were inspiring and illustrative of the possibilities of actionable, and context based social change leadership.

In many Kenyan schools, and the country generally, the American neurosurgeon Ben Carson is a famous figure and, during my school days, was a role model to many who nurtured aspirations in the healthcare profession. *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story*, a book that tells Dr Carson's story growing up in inner-city Detroit, to his miraculous surgery and ascent as director of paediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital at age 33, was and remains a common read among primary and high school students. Walking across the streets of Nairobi, Kenya it is common to notice the book in the collection of street booksellers that dot the city. Many in Kenya, including the teachers who always recommended it, saw the story and Ben Carson as a role model and belief that one achieves the seemingly impossible. In is not surprising that one of the participant's decision to work in healthcare was partly influenced by the Ben Carson story. Although the participant suffered from childhood obesity and saw his family members and friend succumb to cancer, a non-communicable disease, the participant reflected that growing up, Ben Carson was a strong role model, through his book. It inspired them of what was possible, and they aimed to achieve similar recognition. This leader has done tremendous work in the health space, including holding numerous workshops on non-communicable diseases and how to prevent them, developing and facilitating online courses on the same, and has been recognised for his work in the sector.

Individuals often consciously or unconsciously emulate the attributes of their role models (Banks & Bailey, 2010; Bartle & Thistlethwaite, 2014; Mtemeri, 2017; Sembawa et al., 2015). Individulas may emulate role models in the same profession they aspire to or even those outside. Studies have found that positive role models motivate individuals from historically disadvantaged communities or stigmatized groups to set and achieve ambitious goals (Morgenroth et al., 2015). Still, despite the existence of role models, for marginalised groups or those individuals from lower socio-economic groups, enablers such as mentorship programmes, inclusivity or diversity programmes

are necessary to allow them to benefit fully from inspirations of their role models. Moreover, the mere fact that a role model endured, and exited suffering by achieving tremendous success should not be translated to mean that one must endure suffering to emerge a leader. In fact, perceptions or notions that link successful leadership with past suffering have distorted the *origin story* of the social change leader.

The most dominant origin story of the social change leader, as in the start-up world, is one of moving from struggle to success. This *struggle narrative* posits that social change leaders have faced some form of struggle such as being victims of a problem related to the area they are working. While this is true for some, it is not representative of the entire social-change leadership ecosystem. Speculatively, there are many social innovators genuinely interested and addressing issues of which they have not been victims. But the struggle narrative perpetuates a trend where those leaders who play victim in their origin stories are rewarded, including with participation in leadership development programmes or with funding for their projects, sometimes at the exclusion of those without a struggle narrative.

5.2.7 Chance Events and Social Change Leadership Development

In addition to education, familial, and socio-economic background, chance encounters can serve as powerful formative experiences that shape social change leaders and their area of focus in social activism. Shanahan & Porfeli (2006) described chance events as unlikely and unintended but important occurrences that cause changes in the life course. Individuals experience chance events at some point in their life, and these events affect their career and life decisions (Vermeulen, April & Lhermitte, 2005; Hirschi & Valero, 2017; Shanahan & Porfeli, 2006). Chance occurrences were present in all participants lives since sometimes one might not be aware that they experienced a chance event. Nonetheless, for some leader's chance events are often the main influence that motivates them to action. For example, one change agent who works with physically disabled persons - supporting them to use their art talents to generate income - described how an unexpected encounter with a disabled person changed their perception about physically disabled persons. In a very hot day in Dar-es Salaam, Tanzania, a physically disabled man was vending bottled water to pedestrians and motorists on the street. It was the first time the participant saw a physically

disabled person who was not begging, and even more importantly, this person selling a commodity that the abled persons needed – water. Prior to the encounter, the participant initially saw physically disabled persons as beggars who only need help. While some physically disabled persons may have been forced to beg, most are looking for opportunities that enable them to sustain themselves.

The unexpected encounter and its impact on the participant relate to findings from the literature on how chance events affect one's life course (Shanahan & Porfeli, 2006; Hirschi & Valero, 2017). Furthermore, it correlates with studies exploring the impact of significant life experiences on leadership development (Meers, 2010). Examples of significant life experiences, and one that correlates with this finding include inspirational experiences and experiences with conflict (including inner conflict) (Meers, 2010). Through reflection on significant life experiences, individuals or leaders become self-aware, develop consideration for others, embrace resiliency and change and develop humility. Moreover, these experiences allow for authentic leadership development and the development of servant leadership qualities (such as altruism emotional healing, and wisdom) (Vermeulen, April & Lhermitte, 2005; Meers, 2010). In addition to the literature, this study found that chance events occur in the presence of other variables - background, parents, socio-economic status, role modelling, and education, among others, sometimes working simultaneously, sometimes very separately.

5.2.8 Opportunities to Lead During Formative Years as Motivation for further Leadership Development.

Young people have the potential to make better leaders, and cultivating the leadership qualities and values during formative years is important in their future adult leadership. Studies recognise that leadership during formative years are crucial for adult leader emergence (Guerin et al., 2011). Leadership during formative years starts in the family, school, church, sports, clubs. Most study participants were engaged in some form of leadership during their formative years. For example, one participant who works in the education sector was always entrusted with providing mentorship and tuition classes to students that were not doing well. This not only boosted their confidence, but the feeling that his teacher trusted his abilities was encouraging. In Africa, leaders are

increasingly recognising that engaging young people in leadership will be crucial to resolving and bridging the leadership gap. More specifically, there is increasing recognition that young people should be trusted to lead, since they constitute majority of the population. As such more efforts are still needed to ensure all young people, especially those that show an interest in leadership, are provided opportunity to build their leadership careers. Comprehensive support including among others the provision of resources, knowledge, and support such as networking are needed to foster activities that result in leadership development. While leadership development programmes often aim to provide such support, previous sections have discussed the limitations of such programmes, and the need for critical evaluation of their structures, focus arears, accessibility to target groups, and overall impact.

5.3 How Formative Years Influence the Area of Interest of social Change Leaders

To understand how formative years influences the area of interest of social change leaders, this section explores key themes, including (i) connection with social challenge addressed or social change leaders address challenges they have faced, (ii) social change leaders feel a sense of responsibility since some have experience with the challenges address, and (iii) social change leaders have a deep interest in the challenges they address as they feel as feel a sense of responsibility.

5.3.1 Connection with the Social Challenge Adressed

One of the central research questions and assumptions was that social change leaders are broadly motivated to address social challenges they have faced or those they feel strongly connected. The findings were consistent with the previous studies that social change leaders are interested in addressing systemic inequities in their communities (Ospina & Foldy, 2005). In addition to feeling a sense of responsibility, service to others and addressing systemic issues with a view to transformation, some of the study participants were directly influenced to address challenges they faced on a personal level, in the community, and those that affected their direct family and friends. For example, one participant was motivated to work in waste management after directly experiencing the effects of poor waste disposal during his formative years while another participant working in healthcare was motivated to address non-communicable diseases after directly suffering from obesity and witnessing his family members die from cancer both of which are non-

communicable diseases. But this was not the case for all participants as some participants had no direct connection with the challenges they were addressing. Moreover, people attitude towards trauma are different. One person can convert their traumatic experience into an opportunity for healing and leadership while another may not want any recollection of the event. As such, we can argue that not everyone ends up addressing challenges they have faced.

5.3.2 Social Change Leaders Feel a Sense of Responsibility

As aforementioned, one of the central research questions (and assumption) was to understand what motivates social change leaders. This question is based on the presumed understanding that social change leaders would be interested in addressing challenges they have faced in their formative years or influenced by their background. Participant responses indicated a sense of responsibility and a deep interest in the challenges they address, either because some of them have faced these challenges directly or indirectly suffered them by witnessing the suffering of others, including family members. The findings were consistent with the literature (Ospina & Foldy, 2005), which notes that social change leaders are often influenced into action by the suffering of others around them or a desire to be part of the solutions to challenges around them to create a more just society for all, through transformation. Asked what motivates them to work in social change and the various sectors they work in, participant responses indicated a desire for change, interests in their community and concern for others. Common phrases from participants in response to what motivates them included “equity”, “the people”, “community”, “responsibility”, “care for the world”, “systems change”, among others.

The sense of responsibility may be directly or indirectly related to and or influenced by a connection to the challenge addressed. Participants felt the need to address challenges they had faced while others addressed challenges they observed in the suffering of others or systems they felt needed change. For instance, one participant’s early experience with agriculture later influenced their interest in food systems transformation or food equity. Though the participant grew up on a farm, she couldn’t eat the food grown on the farm. She would only realize later after travels in emerging economies with communities suffering from famine, and careers with international organizations and in technology, that she had a deep interest in food systems equity and decided to use the combination of experiences from multiple industries and early life

(background living in a farm) to work in social change, focusing on food systems. Hence the participant felt a sense of responsibility to ensure "equity… through food."

5.4 Summary of the Discussion

The findings confirm that formative years contributes significantly to the development of social change leaders in two ways. Firstly, one of the key dimensions of formative years, socio-economic background growing up substantially grounds social change leaders understanding of their community, gradually changes their perception of leadership and approach to leadership and inculcates the principles of social change leadership - interconnection between individual, group, and societal values. It is during formative years that social change leaders develop either initial or grounded understanding of the challenges facing their community, and their communities' responses, lack of response, and challenges in responding to the systemic or emerging challenges. However, these impacts may occur consciously or subconsciously. Second, formative years influence the area of interest, or the social challenge addressed by the social change leader. The majority of the social change leaders interviewed were either working to address issues they faced directly or indirectly through the experience of a family member or community. Before they embarked on the challenges they address, social change leaders developed a sense of responsibility for addressing the challenges in their communities, based on the experiences observed during their formative years.

5.5 Research Implications

The findings may explain the reason why individuals commit to using personal resources to start social enterprise businesses, address challenges in their communities and why social change leaders persist in their work even with the lack of support from governments or development institutions. They suggest that to understand the social change leaders lived experience and interest in social change work, we need to understand the existence of the challenges they are working to address. Moreover, to solve some of the systemic, endemic, and emerging social, political, economic, environmental, and other challenges facing the planet, more effort should be channelled to developing leadership qualities in young adults or working with young adults, and indeed, communities, to address issues they deeply care about by virtue having directly or indirectly suffered the effects of such issues or for common citizenship purposes.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

Historically, social change leaders have emerged to provide leadership, in response to changes happening in their societies. Social change often transforms the social, economic, political, cultural structures of the society in which they occur. These changes occur over time, either gradually or in a revolutionary manner and often transform the socialisation processes in the society. Changes in the ecosystem, the emergence of new technologies, population growth, global pandemic, ideological processes, identity politics, political processes, among others, have resulted in transformative effects in environments where they occur. For example, the industrial revolution set off the emergence of new technologies that gradually improved the production system, and gradually improved human life. However, it also resulted in the emergence of a new social class (the urban and rural classes), enlarged the disparities among classes, and in modern times, the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor. Similarly, demographic processes such as an increase in population have resulted in increased pressure on natural resources and the ecosystem that sustain the planet. It has also increased unemployment, food scarcity, urbanisation related challenges such as lack of poor housing for the urban poor, or increased health challenges; coupled with industrialisation has further resulted in climate change-related issues as the industrial system work to produce products for this population.

Change is an ever-present constant in society, and with change comes new challenges. The existence of social change and the challenges change present has resulted in the emergence of social change leaders (social entrepreneurs, inclusive innovators, social impact leaders) and social impact organisations working to correct the systemic challenges and inequities that occur when social changes occur. Some of these leaders have been responsible for the development of new technologies, systems, innovations, policies, and processes, in an effort to create a more just society since social change results in the transformation of the structural processes that guide the competition for the resources of life. For social change leaders, the drive is to ensure equal distribution of such resources among all individuals competing for the resources. This drive is to a large extent based on observations of the environment one interacts with.

This study found that formative years do impact or influence social change leaders' leadership development journey – impacting their world view, their sense of responsibility and the social challenges that they decide to address and their motivation and interest in those challenges or interest in social change generally. But while all the factors that influence or characterize formative years impact the lived experience of social change leaders, it is challenging to characterize, conceptualize or rank which factor has more influence than the other. Except for socio-economic background which influences other factors, the lived experiences of social change leaders, like that of other humans, differs from one to the other. For some social change leaders, the school environment had a significant impact on their leadership development, yet for others, it was their home environment or the nature of the communal values of care for one another, pulling resources together and showing up for each other, espoused by the members of the larger community that had a significant impact.

Yet for some, the influence of background is seen on interactions with members of the community results in the occurrence of a chance event that eventually changes the course of their life and leadership as in the example of a social change agent who, motivated by an interest in inclusivity and diversity in socio-economic opportunities, utilizes her art skills to ensure inclusivity of physically disabled persons, after a chance encounter with a physically disabled at the age of 9 years person changed their perspective about physically disabled persons. In conclusion, experiences during formative years influenced the social change leaders' perspectives of their environment, gradually leading to their interest and engagement in social change leadership. However, the impact occurs over time; the realisation of that impact is only seen later in life since some social change leaders only realised (were able to interpret) that their formative years influenced their life and interest in the challenges they address.

6.2 Impact of the Research

The study found that social change leaders have a deep interest in social change leadership and the issues they are working to address. This deep connection emerged as the leaders developed a sense of responsibility. However, both the deep connection and a sense of responsibility are significantly affected by background and emerged out of interactions with various dimensions of background.

The findings are consistent with other studies that argue that social change leaders combine their individual values with both group and societal values to develop common values of common citizenship and work to transform their societies (Ospina & Foldy, 2005; Higher Education Research Institute, University of California 1996; Lester 2010).

Consequently, to understand the impact of formative years on social change leaders is to understand the social, systemic, or structural inequalities that have resulted in the emergence of social change leaders. It means to understand apartheid and the apartheid experience that resulted in one of the participants deciding to work on systems transformation by convening multi-stakeholder conversations; the need for education reforms and lack of inclusivity in educational curriculums and learning institutions that forced social change leaders to focus on innovative curriculum development; famine and inequity in the food systems that obligates leaders to work to ensure social justice in that area; the environmental degradation that resulted in one participant deciding to work in the environment (after seeing their friend suffer); the existent of poor health habits, poor eating habits and the social structures that accompany them that results in non-communicable diseases such as cancer and obesity becoming prevalent and the social stigma that accompany them) that led one social change leader to focus their work in addressing them; and the lack of inclusion and displacement of communities living in conservation areas from engaging in conservation efforts (malpractices in conservation sector in Africa) that lead one participant to decide to ensure diverse and community-friendly conservation efforts in her community.

In all instances, it means to understand the inequities in the society either resulting from the *accidents of birth*, where some individuals are forced to suffer based on the socio-economic conditions of their families and the environments they were born and raised or the *trappings of meritocracy*, when systems are built to weigh and overvalue the accident of birth without allowing humanity to tap into its full potential – by allowing all who are born outside the trappings of meritocracy of the *right environment*, outside the spotlight of either developed economies, the right gender, the right socio-economic class, or from the right school to participate and access resources in the society.

6.3 Recommendations

The findings of the study present limitations as well as implications for future research within the framework of the research topic and related thematic areas. For researchers interested in exploring the impact of formative years and social change leadership development, or leadership development, more broadly, leadership areas of future research may include:

1. Scholars may conduct a case-based analysis focused on the lived experience of one participant to understand the impact of formative years on specific participants. Such a study would provide a holistic understanding of all aspects of formative years, by comparing the interrelationship among all or particular aspects of formative years.
2. In relation to recommendation 1 above, to address truth-based limitations of this nature, especially the limitation that when speaking about formative years individuals may adapt their stories to match with their present realities, researchers may develop a methodology that tracks individuals from a younger age, following their leadership journey until adulthood. Though this may be time-consuming and would require significant resources, it would allow for a more holistic understanding of an individual's leadership journey and all factors that have influenced that journey.
3. Conducting research focused on specific aspects of formative years on social change leadership development or correlation among two factors. For example, investigating the influence of the school environment and social change leadership development or comparing to what extent chance events and the school environment influence leadership development.
4. Replicating the study in another topic or particular area of interest, for example, investigating the impact of formative years among social change leaders working in a specific issue area such as health, environment, or education. This will provide a further and focused understanding of how various features of formative years inspire or influence social change leaders' interest in a specific context.
5. Researching the difference in experiences and motivators between social change agents in certain age groups (for example, millennials and older generation), genders (men, women, or non-binary), countries (high-income vs. low income), levels of education (graduate vs. non-graduates), entrepreneurship (entrepreneurs vs. intrapreneurs), among others.
6. Supplementing the research findings with an approach that applies a quantitative

methodology to collect, store, and analyze data on the impact of formative years. Such a study may allow for seamless replication of the findings if comparable data is collected among different contexts as it provides statistically significant data.

7. Future studies may also explore the connection between a social issue and leaders that address or cause them.

6.4 Concluding with Personal Reflections

Phenomenological philosophers posit that we perceive our experiences across time, within space, physically and interpersonally (van Manen, 1984). In this study, I engaged participants on different aspects of their formative years, tracking their lived experiences through a prescribed time period. I endeavoured to attain a deeper understanding of how situations and events in the participants life-course influenced their work and interest in social justice and transformation. Some of these events included parents, school, teachers, leadership development programmes, and lived experiences with a problem. From my experience, I was first trusted with a leadership opportunity in standard eight (grade 8 in some jurisdictions), when I was appointed the Head Boy just two months after I transferred to the school. In Kenya, where I completed both primary and high school education, in mixed schools – schools attended by both boys and girls – two of the highest student leadership positions was the head boy and head girl, representing male and female students respectively. This was the final year of my primary school education. I had no knowledge of the selection process, as I was not consulted, but I readily accepted the appointment and diligently dispensed my duties. Perhaps it was on account of my age, being older than most of my classmates. In the same month I was appointed, I celebrated my eighteenth birthday. Academically, I have always been a high performer, and was always amongst the top three students in my class. In class, my teachers, especially English and Social sciences teachers, perceived me as a model student. Given my interest in history and leadership, whenever I was not reading short stories or poems, I was an avid reader of newspaper articles and biographies of great leaders. My father was a key figure in my intellectual development. Although he dropped out of high school, owing to economic circumstances, he was a high performer during his school days and instilled in us the need to take our studies seriously. He kept meticulous records of his school reports and, whenever he felt we were slacking in academics, showed them to us. However, my mother, too, had an indirect influence on my reading culture. She was a fishmonger, who purchased raw fish from fishermen,

deep fried the fish in oil, and sold to retailers and individual consumers. In the semi-urban town where we grew up, and in most parts of Kenya, used newspapers are used to wrap products. It was the same for fish. Whenever I was around the business, and I always was, I spent time reading the newspapers. It was my mum who first told me that I would be a great person, just like the people I am reading in the newspapers; now I realise that I spent more time reading the political economy sections.

Years later, in my second year in high school, I transferred to a new school. Three months later I was made the School Captain; the highest-ranking student representative, where I was in charge of overseeing the student leadership. But this time, I was aware of why the school Principal was interested in my leadership. Though I applied for the position which had been vacant, my leadership had been seen in the way I turned around the scout's club, building on lessons I learned from my former school. Later I would take on additional leadership roles across several clubs during the three years I was in the school.

During my first year in the university, I joined the environmental club where I was the treasurer. I didn't have much interest in elective politics and did not run for elections as I always felt shy, reclusive, and more interested in intimate caucuses. However, when I transferred to further my studies in Mauritius, my thrust in leadership came when I realised that international students, as minorities, needed representation and advocation for their welfare both at the University and in the country. First, I worked with the international students, a majority of whom were from continental Africa, to establish the International Student Society, with the aim of bringing all international students together. During a meeting I organised between the University management and (African) international students, the students selected me to represent them. I then worked with both the university and officials from the then ministry of tertiary education on various policies pertaining to international students.

I have always been interested in leadership development training, international travel exposures, and scholarships. The Mandela Rhodes Scholarship is by far the best scholarship programme I have been granted. The scholarship aims to continue Nelson Mandela's legacy providing postgraduate funding and Leadership Development Programme to young Africans who want to

use their talents to serve Africa. During my time in resident as part of the programme in 2017, I reflected on my leadership journey since primary school and realised some of the mistakes I had made. For example, my conflict resolution skills was undeveloped and was an inconsistency in my leadership. The leadership workshops were very impactful, especially on what it means to be a leader and the overall idea of leadership. Prior to the programme, I had mostly associated leadership to mean political leadership – those who run for elective offices in government. But the emphasis of the programme was that you can be a leader in any field you chose to be – art, music, business, writing, academia, etc. This may not be a big deal to some, but for me it was transformational as I gradually started focusing on the areas, I had strength. Given the impact, I become a big proponent of leadership development programmes as enablers of leadership development, and began exploring other programmes to attend. However, after attending a few programmes, I realised that most leadership development programmes tended to focus on the same skills, albeit delivered differently.

When I reflected on my colleagues, I realised that most had also been part of other programmes I was considering applying to or have already been participated. First, I felt the pressure of ensuring I get selected for some of the leading leadership programmes as a way of gaining *credibility* among these communities. But through careful reflection, I realised that in as much as these programmes were useful, attending programme after programme would be denying others the opportunity to benefit from them. Furthermore, it also results in the emergence of what I define as *professional scholars/fellows*. I define professional scholars as those individuals who attend one leadership programme after another with the aim of benefiting from the travel, social capital, financial and other opportunities those programmes provide when they rarely need those opportunities. Professional scholars move from one programme to another, and are encouraged by leadership development programmes who, as aforementioned, sometimes reward applicants with a previous participation in leadership training with selection in their programmes. Even in programmes that require applicants to demonstrate actionable leadership, for instance, by requiring candidates to a portfolio of projects they have implemented or plan to implement during the programme year, professional scholars will submit the same project in multiple applications. Professional scholars are masters at finding leadership development programmes and experts in preparing application materials. In most instances, they are the beneficiaries of structural injustice since they are well-

positioned to benefit from such opportunities – they have the resources such as the internet, computers, and the networks to find new programmes – compared to those who need who lack the resources.

Humans are obviously inclined to pursue opportunities for self-advancement. Moreover, those in leadership positions are encouraged to constantly pursue their self-development as leaders since leadership starts with understanding of the self. However, servant leadership is about being available to support others and sharing of opportunities. As a beneficiary of these programmes, and while my peers still continue to share new programmes, I have dedicated myself to referring these opportunities to other leaders. This is not to say that I am not interested in further leadership training. On the contrary, I only consider programmes that best align with my career objectives, and that are specifically targeted at individuals within my career or leadership level. Before submitting an application, I deeply reflect on whether I actually need the programme, or I should leave to someone else who might be looking for their first training opportunity.

Conducting this research has been eye-opening. Through conversations with the participants, I have also been able to reflect on my own life and leadership journey. This reflection is an ongoing, and inconclusive since new interpretations can always be made about a phenomenon. Nonetheless, the study has raised new understanding on the impact of formative years and lived experiences in our life-course. Furthermore, in addition to the research-based recommendations, the study has demonstrated the need to design and implement effective diversity and inclusivity strategies to ensure equitable access to leadership development programmes, and a holistic approach towards social change leader development in Africa.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Signed Research Ethics Approval Letter

Faculty of Commerce
Private Bag X3, Rondebosch, 7701
2.26 Leslie Commerce Building, Upper Campus
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 4375/ 5748 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 4369
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02/10/2020

Moses Ogutu

Graduate School of Business

University of Cape Town

REF: REC 2020/10/001

The Impact of Formative Years in Developing Social Change Leaders

We are pleased to inform you that your ethics application has been approved. Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid until 31-Oct-2021 .

Your clearance may be renewed upon application.

Please be aware that you need to notify the Ethics Committee immediately should any aspect of your study regarding the engagement with participants as approved in this application, change. This may include aspects such as changes to the research design, questionnaires, or choice of participants.

The ongoing ethical conduct throughout the duration of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

We wish you well for your research.

2020.10.02
10:07:08 +02'00'

Jacques Rousseau
Commerce Research Ethics Chair
University of Cape Town
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Appendix 2: Sampling Protocol (Online Survey)

Greetings,

I trust you are doing well.

As part of the requirements for an MPhil in Inclusive Innovation at the University of Cape Town, I am conducting research that aims to investigate the ***Impact of Formative Years in Developing Social Change Leaders***.

Background and purpose of the research

There has been a rise of social innovators, entrepreneurs, or leaders working to address social challenges and systemic inequities in nearly all sectors and issues in the society in an effort to create a more just and inclusive society for the benefit of all through transformation. But what motivates social change leaders? How or when does one decide to engage in common purpose and citizenship that addresses the commonly shared challenges facing humanity?

Research Significance: To gain a full understanding of social change leaders' motivations and intentions, an understanding of their formative years, background, and all the opportunities that have developed them needs to be explored. The research aims to understand how formative years (early life), including social and economic background shape individuals to become social entrepreneurs, social innovators, or social change leaders.

Importance of Research: The outcome of this research will be useful in (i) understanding the role of formative years in developing social change leaders; and (ii) developing enablers (such as programmes, models, or praxis) that can empower young leaders to be engaged in social change leadership.

Participation and confidentiality

We are inviting social change leaders (social innovators, entrepreneurs, etc.) to volunteer and share experiences that have shaped their leadership journey and interest in the challenges they are working to address.

Research Ethics: Ethical consent for the study has been approved by the *UCT Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee*.

Volunteers for the study have the right to (1) withdraw from the study at any time (2) not to answer any questions they do not wish to.

Time Commitment: The interview will take approximately 1 to 3 hours to complete and will be audio recorded. All responses will be confidential, and participants will not be identified by name in any reports using information obtained from the interview and research.

How to Participate: To participate in the study, click on the link below, where you will be asked to answer a few pre-research questions and an invitation to interview.

LINK TO THE NEXT PAGE

Thank you for your interest in participating in the research. We have developed a few questions to better understand your profile before scheduling an interview.

1. Do you consider yourself a social change leader – social entrepreneur, social innovator, social activist?
    - Yes

- No
- Other

2. Which sector does your work fall? Or what issue are you working to address?
    - Health (including mental health)
    - Education
    - Gender issues
    - Sports
    - Employment
    - Transport
    - Others (Please enter below)
3. What is your age group?
    - 18 – 25
    - 26 – 30
    - 31 – 35
    - 36 – 40
    - 41 – 45
    - 46 – 50
    - 51 and above.
4. I am interested and willing to commit 2 to 3 hours to share my leadership journey and experiences that have led me to the challenge am working to address.
        - Yes (If yes, continue to next section)
        - No (if no, stop the questionnaire and thank them for their interest)
5. Where are you currently based? As participation involves an interview, we are asking this to understand when best to schedule the interview.
    - Enter country.
6. I consent to participate in this interview, based on the terms outlined above and subject to the following additional condition of my own (if any).
    - I Consent
    - I do not consent.
7. Do you have additional conditions of your own?
    - Yes. (If yes, state the conditions)
    - No (If no proceed)
8. Please enter your contact details
    - Email:
    - Phone Number (including country code):

Submit Button

Response after submitting button: Thank you for your interest in participating in the research and concluding the pre-interview questions. We will send you further information and a link to schedule the interview.

Appendix 3: Response to Sampling Questions

Participant	Timestamp (Time participant completed ssmpling Questionnaire; interviews followed after)	1. Do you consider yourself a social change leader – social entrepreneur, social innovator, social activist?	2. Which sector does your work fall? Or what issue are you working to address?	3. What is your age group? For ethical purposes, you must be 18 years and above to particitipate in this research. By continuining with this research, you confirm that you are 18 years and above.	4. I am interested and willing to commit 45 to 60 minutes to share my leadership journey and experiences that have led me to the challenge am working to address.	5. Where are you currently based? As participation involves an interview, we are asking this to understand when best to schedule the interview. Please enter your country, e.g. South Africa	6 I consent to participate in this interview, based on the terms outlined above and subject to the following additional condition of my own (if any).	7. Do you have additional conditions of your own, with regard to consent for interview? (If yes, state the conditions).
Participant 1	5/30/2021 22:58:59	Yes	Education	26 – 30	Yes	South Africa	I consent	That the interview not be used beyond the scope of the research.
Participant 2	5/31/2021 8:02:16	Yes	Education	26 – 30	Yes	Mauritius	I consent	N/A
Participant 3	5/31/2021 6:52:49	Somewhat	Health (including mental health)	31 – 35	Yes	Mauritius	I consent	Protection of my privacy, dignity and integrity of my answers.
Participant 4	6/8/2021 15:52:40	Yes	Employment	31 – 35	Yes	South African	I consent	N/A
Participant 5	6/14/2021 11:58:48	Yes	Sustainable Development and Gender Equality	26 – 30	Yes	South Africa	I consent	No
Participant 6	6/10/2021 6:47:38	Yes	Health (including mental health)	18 – 25	Yes	Kenya	I consent	N/A
Participant 7	6/8/2021 20:39:54	Yes	Inclusion	26 – 30	Yes	Tanzania	I consent	A weekend would work
Participant 8	6/13/2021 13:31:18	Yes	Conservation	26 – 30	Yes	Kenya	I consent	None
Participant 9	6/22/2021 13:33:59	Maybe an emergent social change leader	Education	26 – 30	Yes	South Africa	I consent	No
Participant 10	6/2/2021 20:13:43	Yes	Education	31 – 35	Yes	United States	I consent	No
Participant 11	6/8/2021 19:37:32	Yes	Employment	18 – 25	Yes	Mozambique	I consent	N/A
Participant 12	6/28/2021 17:47:19	Yes	Multiple contexts	46 – 50	Yes	South Africa	I consent	N/A
Participant 13	6/29/2021 8:47:09	Yes	Environment	18 – 25	Yes	Rwanda	I consent	N/A
Participant 14	7/6/2021 18:24:34	Yes	Sustainable Development	18 – 25	Yes	Kenya	I consent	n/a
Participant 15	6/19/2021 20:37:49	Yes	Employment	31 – 35	Yes	Nairobi	I consent	No
Participant 16	6/30/2021 7:23:10	Yes	Education	26 – 30	Yes	Kenya	I consent	No
Participant 17	7/13/2021 17:00:10	Yes	Food Systems	46 - 50	Yes	United States	I consent	No
Participant 18	7/13/2021 17:00:10	Yes	Multiple contexts	18 – 25	Yes	South Africa	I consent	No

Appendix 4: Interview Protocol & Questions

Introduction:

- Welcome and thank you for taking the time to speak with me!
- Introduce the research – purpose, aims, and objectives to the participant.
- As you will have seen from the email I sent you, the idea is to get an understanding of what motivated you to get involved in social change and the project area in which you are currently working.
- Our focus is on experiences during your formative years (early life), though you may want to talk about how different experiences generally prepared you for the social change work you are currently engaged in. I might ask to follow-up questions building on the points you raise – but we'll be flexible, but we'll keep the interview to under an hour.
- That said, if there are any questions you don't feel like answering, you can skip them, and if you would like to stop the interview you can do so at any time without penalty.
- Just so that I pay you proper attention, I would like to record this interview so that I can take notes later, if that's ok with you.
- Please remember though that all your answers, as well as your identity, will remain confidential throughout the study and after.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Main Interview Questions

1. What social or socioeconomic challenge are working to address?
2. What is your motivation for social change? Can you summarize your motivation for social change?
3. Please tell me your life journey thus far and how you ended up working on the project, context or social innovation, entrepreneurship, inclusive innovation, or social change leadership area that you are currently working.
4. When you reflect back, or if you try to make meaning out of it, in your own way, how did your early life influence your interest in social change?
5. How can we support individuals who have experienced a social / life issues to be leaders addressing the challenge?
    a. Put another way – How can we support the beneficiaries of a project – those who we are building for – to take the leading role in addressing the challenge they faced?

OTHER QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to prompt or help participants recall aspects of their formative life journey or experiences:

1. Did you have any leadership roles when you were young? Like a club or team leader at school?
2. Were you involved in sports at school?
3. Have you participated in or attended a leadership development programme such as fellowships etc.?
    a. How did these programme influences or impact your leadership?
4. Who was your role model when you were young?
    a. Why this person?
5. What did you want to be when you were young?
    a. Is it in any way aligned to what you are currently doing?
6. Did you experience any significant life experiences when you were young?
7. What was your parent's occupation when you were young?
8. What are the parents' current occupations?

CONCLUSION:

- That brings our discussion to a close. Thank you for all your valuable contributions and for your time.
- If you have any other questions about this study, don't hesitate to ask me. give email and telephone number.

Appendix 5: Written Consent Form

Graduate School of BUSINESS
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN INCLUSIVE INNOVATION

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM:

Participant name: .....

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Moses Onyango Ogutu as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MPhil Degree at the Graduate School of Business. I understand that the research is designed to gather information about *The Impact of Formative Years in Developing Social Change Leaders* and that I will be one of approximately 30 people being interviewed for this research.

Background and purpose of the research

There has been a rise of social innovators, entrepreneurs or leaders working to address various social challenges in various communities. Social change leaders have been at the centre of addressing systemic inequities in nearly all sectors and issues in the society, in an effort to create a more just and inclusive society for the benefit of all through transformation. What motivates social change leaders? How or when does one decide to engage in common purpose and citizenship that addresses the commonly shared challenges facing humanity?

The research aims to investigate: ***the impact of formative years in developing social challenge leaders.*** The research aims to examine formative years (socio-economic background, challenges, as well as development and growth opportunities) that have played a role in shaping individuals to become the social entrepreneurs or social innovation leaders. The outcome of this research will be useful to: (i) understanding the role of formative years in developing social change leaders; (ii) understanding what motivates social change leaders; and (ii) developing enablers (such as programmes, models or praxis) that can empower young leaders to be engaged in social change leaders

Ethics approval

Graduate School of BUSINESS
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Ethical consent for the study has been approved by the *UCT Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee* (you will only be able to use this consent form once you have received this approval).

Participation and confidentiality

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, that I will not be compensated and that I may withdraw at any time.

The interview will take approximately 1 to 2 hours to complete and will be audio recorded.

I understand that I will not be identified by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

Consent

I consent to participate in this interview, based on the terms outlined above and subject to the following additional condition of my own (if any).

---------- ----------

Signed by interviewee **Date**

....

Signed by Student **Date**