

**Understanding International Student Migration:  
The Case of Nigerian Christian Women Students  
Engaged in Postgraduate Studies in UK Higher  
Education**

**Stella Oluwaseun**

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**Dedication**

To my wonderful husband, Ibiyemi and beautiful daughter, Oluwatobi. Having you both in my life has made it possible for me to follow my dreams, including pursuing this doctoral degree.

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Most of all, I am grateful to God Almighty for His goodness and unending love.

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the motivations and lived experiences of Nigerian Christian women engaged in postgraduate studies in UK higher education based on 20 semi-structured interviews. For this group of women, their educational quest abroad is happening at the phase in the normative life course when they are expected by Nigerian society to be wives as well as mothers. Such cultural expectations carry social sanctions for non-conformity.

This thesis investigates the immense social pressures the women come under as their educational achievements are not considered as important as the fulfilment of their social roles in their home country, and the strategies/negotiations they engage in to gain and maintain support for their educational pursuit. Being that they are studying and living in an egalitarian society like the UK, the thesis also examines why the women remain attached to Nigerian patriarchal values.

Using empirical data, the thesis attempts to challenge and critique the current debates on international student migration that portray it as an individualized process and international student migrants as a homogenous group. It argues that the participants' motivations and migration experiences are gendered and embedded in social relationships and processes. Furthermore, the thesis claims that the set of women interviewees are not just engaged in academic study alone as the literatures tend to portray international student migrants, they are also family members (wives/mothers/daughters) and workers, who consciously juggle their multiple roles in an order that seems to prioritize their social roles above the rest. The thesis asserts that the women are not victims; rather they are agentic beings whose compliant attitudes to patriarchal gender structures and roles are rooted in their religious and cultural beliefs.

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## **Chapter One: Introducing the Research**

### **Introduction**

This thesis is based on research involving 20 in-depth qualitative interviews with Nigerian female students (all of whom identify themselves as practising Christians and mostly belong to the Pentecostal denomination) in UK higher education (HE), and investigates the realities of their lives and the particular cultural and societal pressures they face while studying at postgraduate level at a time in the normative life course that the Nigerian society expects them to be wives and mothers. In so doing the thesis aims to explore and contribute to current debates on international student migration (ISM), especially through a focus on gender.

It opens by discussing my own background and experiences as a Nigerian female international student migrant in the US and the UK, which influenced the choice of topic for this PhD. This introductory chapter then moves on to explore the currents debates on ISM and situate the ISM literature within the wider literature on migration study.

### **My Own Experience of International Student Migration in the US and UK**

I am a Nigerian woman and I have been living in the UK since September 2010 as an international student. Prior to studying in the UK I spent two years in the USA as an international student while getting my Master's degree from 2006 to 2008. These two instances of international migration as a student occurred at different stages in my life (I was single while studying in the US but I got married before coming to the UK, and I have become a mother while still studying in the UK), and my motivations and experiences as an international student in the US and UK are quite different though the underlying Nigerian cultural and societal pressures were present in both instances as will be explained below.

In my student days in the US, I was on my own and had no one to consider when making certain decisions (such as using every school holiday to travel round the US) but I cannot say the same for my time here in UK. I now have a husband and daughter to consider in every decision I make and have had to learn the balancing act of being a full time student, a wife and a mum. Also while in the USA I found myself struggling with the thoughts of whether to settle there or to move either back to Nigeria or to another country taking life opportunities into consideration. I eventually returned to Nigeria to work for a while because I wanted to honour a “gentleman’s agreement” with my sponsor, the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Programme which was to use the new knowledge and ideas I gained in my Masters studies to advance my home country.

Before travelling to the US for my Master’s programme I was under immense pressure to get married because I was over 30 years of age. My family, friends and Nigerian society viewed my educational pursuit at postgraduate level in the US with mixed feelings. On one hand it would position me for a very good job after graduation but on the other hand it was regarded as a kind of “handicap”. This is because the Nigerian mind-set is that men would be scared to approach me for marriage because I would have imbibed too much Western education and become too “exposed” to the Western way of life and would therefore not be a submissive wife. As an unmarried woman, I was a subject of concern and sometimes ridicule, and this was a very difficult phase in my life. Though my work with street children in Lagos (Nigeria) prior to studying in the US was receiving attention in national newspapers and television in Nigeria, and I got leadership nominations, awards and international fellowships, I still carried the burden of being single like a stigma. Some of my friends and extended family made hurtful comments such as “you are still single because you are too proud and choosy”. A few of them both

at home in Nigeria and abroad tried to match-make me with single men they knew and some very insensitive ones challenged me to my face to get married or at least have a baby if I was unable to marry.

While away in the US I got some kind of reprieve from the everyday reminders of my single state that came my way in Nigeria. But cheap international telephone calls and social media such as yahoo chat, Skype and Facebook meant I was in touch with a lot of people back home in Nigeria and abroad, who constantly wanted to know if I had met someone and started a relationship. All these were an endless source of concern to my mother and siblings who showed the most sensitivity in the matter by not badgering me like everyone else. However, it was also a source of humiliation for them because everyone who knew my family in Nigeria continually asked them “Is Stella finally married now?” On a number of occasions, my immediate family and closest friends embarked on fasting and prayer sessions entreating God to help me to get married. I appreciated this show of concern, but did not want to marry just anybody so as to fulfil the society’s expectation and ease the pressure on myself and my immediate family. I wanted to marry for what I considered the right reasons; that I had found someone I loved and could spend the rest of my life with. The situation continued when I returned to Nigeria after my studies in the US. The constant scrutiny of my marital status made it seem that having a Master’s degree from a top university in the US was not much to be proud of. I tended to avoid the people who harassed me most or ridiculed me about not being married. I also avoided my friends from secondary school and undergraduate days who were long married and had had children because I did not want anyone to pity me or ask me too many questions.

When I got married in June 2010 it was the best news to those who really cared about me and had stood by me all along. And it made the news of my going away for PhD studies in the UK in September 2010 more acceptable to my family and friends because by getting married I had fulfilled a major societal expectation. My husband on his part was adamant that we would not have a baby until I had finished my PhD programme because he would not want anything to disrupt my studies and he wanted us to “enjoy” ourselves before children came so that we could give one another undivided attention. But after the first year of our marriage when we still had not announced the birth of a baby or the news of a pregnancy, I came under another round of immense pressure from my friends and family. And because I did not want them to think that I had a problem which was stopping me from having a child, I told them that my husband and I had a plan to finish my PhD first before having a child. On this occasion, my mum and siblings who had not harassed me previously spoke out and reminded me that I should never place having a PhD above having a child. My friends wanted to know when I would get pregnant, and especially those in the UK (who had children while studying) encouraged me to start a family because my place in my husband’s house would only be cemented in Yoruba<sup>1</sup> culture by my having children for him though we are legally married. So the societal expectation and pressure shifted from my getting married to having a child. My husband could tell when I had had one of those telephone conversations or interactions on social media with my family and friends because the atmosphere of the whole house would change. Before long, I started mounting pressure

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<sup>1</sup> Yoruba is one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. My husband is Yoruba while I am from a different ethnic group, Igbo. The Igbos are also a major ethnic group in Nigeria. A fuller section on Nigerian culture will be discussed later in chapter four of this thesis.

on my husband that I wanted to have a child to prove that nothing is wrong with me (the whole scrutiny was on me and not on him).

Becoming pregnant eased the tension in my home but it also presented different challenges in relation to my studies. I had morning sickness that lasted for most part of my pregnancy and I also developed pregnancy induced medical problems like diabetes and gingivitis. Those discomforts during pregnancy were so much that they made my work as a PhD student difficult. I also had to suspend my studies for four months so I could take maternity leave; but getting back to my academic work after my maternity leave was really difficult because I was the primary caregiver to our baby until we made the decision to place her at a day nursery so I could cope with the demands of a fulltime PhD.

In spite of the challenges my new status presented, my family, especially my mother could not be prouder of me. She can now tell anyone who cares to listen that she has a daughter living abroad with her husband and a grandchild who was born abroad, and in a matter of time her daughter will earn another title, a doctorate degree holder. For her, gone were the days when my being a student abroad was not enough to make her happy; when she had to hold her head low in shame to answer questions about me, whether I had gotten married and when I would be having a child. On my part, having a baby has finally liberated me from Nigerian societal expectations and pressures. It seems as if I have been given new wings to fly to any level I could ever aspire to without fear of recrimination or any Nigerian societal prejudice. When I communicate with my family and friends now by telephone or social media, it is a big relief to answer questions about the welfare my family (husband and child) instead of questions about when I would get married or have a baby. However, achieving the dream of being a wife and mother

according to Nigerian cultural and societal expectations seems to be a threat to achieving the dream of acquiring a doctorate degree in the UK as I grapple with the demands of being a full time postgraduate student, a wife and a mum.

Having experienced international student migration (ISM) and the pressures of conforming to Nigerian societal expectations myself, I decided to step back and document the realities of other Nigerian women's lives and experiences as postgraduate students in the UK in view of the Nigerian cultural expectations of them as wives and mothers and against the British understandings of HE as an individual pursuit and the identity of a student. I start by discussing the current debates on ISM.

### **The Debates on ISM**

The number of international students in the UK has risen significantly in the last decade, so has their recruitment by British Universities. The drive for their recruitment will even get more competitive with the recent cuts in public funding of higher education in the UK. There are fears that the higher tuition fee for home students introduced in the UK will lead to a reduction in the number of applications made to the universities by home students. This will even make the recruitment of international students more attractive to UK universities. Nigeria is currently ranked third among 10 top non-EU sending countries of international students to the UK with 17,620 students in 2011 – 2012 academic year, while China with 78,715 students, India with 29,900 students and the USA with 16,335 students are first, second and fourth respectively (UKCISA, 2014). No other African country made the top 10 list. (Nigeria also tops the list of African students in universities and colleges in the United States with over 7,100 students while Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania have 4,000, 2,500 and over 2,000 students respectively, see Awosiyan, 2012).

Student migration from Nigeria is increasing and the number of Nigerian students in UK HE has been predicted to grow to 30,000 by 2015 according to British Council research (Gill, 2008). In a recent British Council study, researchers forecast that Nigeria will soon overtake India to become the second largest source of international postgraduate students in the UK (Shaw and Ratcliffe, 2014). Though the UK appears to be a preferred destination for higher education by Nigerian students, to-date, little research has been carried out to understand the motivations and experiences of students from such an important country in the UK international education market. Instead, the existing research literature on student migration focuses on China and India as the two biggest sending countries of international students: for example, Chinese students in Canada, (Waters, 2008), Chinese students in the UK (Gu, 2011), and Indian students in Australia (Baas, 2010).

International student migration (ISM) has a huge impact on both the host and sending countries' economies. For example, a host country like the UK receives tuition fee income from international students put at almost £4.5 billion per annum with an estimated additional £10 billion injected into the UK economy annually by international students on expenditures like accommodation, food, and other consumer items (Wilson, 2012). Furthermore international students are vital to keeping some universities' courses in the UK viable especially science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects and post-graduate courses (Able and White, 2012, Beall, 2012). ISM has also become one of the main types of modern mobility (Findlay et al., 2012) and is now a big global service industry (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003). However, it is still an under-researched field in migration studies (Baláz and Williams, 2004).

ISM is often located within the concept of youth migrations which are said to be motivated more by learning, leisure, travel and experiential objectives rather than by economic factors (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003). Some commentators view international student migration as a form of tourism, educational tourism to be exact, which is the kind of travel embarked upon in order to take part in formal learning experiences in the destination (Ritchie et al., 2003). However, the binary notion that youth migrate for leisure and education whereas adults migrate for labour is an Eurocentric view – in the majority world, many children and youth move for labour purposes, as shown by Hashim and Thorsen's (2011) study of child migration in West Africa. Also, many international students, like home students, engage in paid part-time work during the period of their study (Barron et al., 2009, Moreau and Leathwood, 2006).

Some commentators argue that student mobility is as a result of individual decisions which reflect certain characteristics of the person such as socio-economic background, gender and language proficiency (Dreher and Poutvaara, 2005, HEFCE, 2004). Social class plays an important role in who migrates, for example. Destination countries compete to attract the highly skilled through privileged rules on entry and residence, while low skilled workers and refugees often experience exclusion and discrimination (Castles and Miller, 2009, Koser, 2007). Also mobility or migration requires economic means which makes it more unrealistic for the poor to migrate (Urry, 2007). The idea that student migration results directly from individual decision making is also countered by scholars who emphasize the role of social relations in influencing students' migration (e.g., Carlson, 2013; Brooks and Waters, 2010).



While for a long time student migration has been widely viewed as distinct and unconnected with other forms of migration, more recently the notion of student mobility as a straightforward temporary phenomenon has been challenged. For example, studies by Findlay et al. (2012) and Brooks and Everett (2008) confirm that several students are involved in “life-planning” and their resolution to migrate as students is part of their life-course desire for migration in the long run. Some scholars argue that student migration is a form of highly skilled labour migration and a precursor to subsequent skilled migrations (Castles and Miller, 2009, Koser, 2007). This therefore implies that apart from the obvious reason for student migration, there may be other hidden reasons, and these may differ from one individual to another. For some people, student migration could be a stepping stone to permanent labour migration, cultural enrichment or personal development (Baláž and Williams, 2004); it could also be due to a combination of these three reasons or due to all three. Some schools of thought believe international students fit the label of “professional migrants” (Hazen and Alberts, 2006).

According to Hazen and Alberts (2006) in their study of international students in the US, career-related and educational reasons informed students’ choice of the US as a place of study thereby confirming the notion that professional reasons are behind ISM. Therefore the choice of country of study may be the first step of a longer term strategy of subsequent immigration (Baas, 2010, Brooks and Waters, 2011). With academic mobility a potential source of qualified workers either in the course of their studies or through subsequent recruitment from the host country’s perspective, studying abroad may become part of a deliberate immigration strategy by prospective students (Tremblay, 2005, Brooks and Waters, 2011).

Hazen and Alberts (2006) further argue that international students fit the tag of “professional migrants” because they arrive on a student visa but have the prospects to adjust their status to immigrants due to the desirable skills/competences and connections made during their study. Thus ISM which is taken to be a temporary migration on student visa can lead to permanent migration. Also, student migration occurs at a point in the life-course when families are forming and so can lead to the conversion of student visas due to family ties in host countries (Tremblay, 2005). This is because most migrations for economic/professional reasons are by young and economically active people some of which with the passage of time could find partners in the receiving countries; and the birth of children to such couples tends to make migration permanent (Castles and Miller, 2009).

However, Findlay et al (2012) are of the view that ISM is not only structured by social class and the internationalization of aspects of the educational system, but also dictated by the rising economic competition for global talent/highly skilled workers (Kuptsch, 2006) and the geographies of cultural capital (Waters, 2008, Waters, 2006). Here the argument is that international student mobility is not just about formal knowledge gained outside one’s country; it is also about socially and culturally constructed knowledge. Cultural capital is an immaterial form of capital which may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications and can be converted on certain conditions to economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). And the “accumulation of cultural capital involves the acquisition of a variety of embodied cultural traits” (Waters, 2008, p. 13).

The argument from the cultural capital perspective of international student migration suggests that the social benefits accrued through new knowledge, skills, education and

living in another place is what is most important as shown by Waters' (2006, 2008) studies on Chinese middle class families. In this context, education is seen as the tool for transferring cultural capital from one generation to another (Bourdieu, 1986). Many aspects of cultural and social capital are amassed through study abroad (Findlay et al., 2012) and the middle class reproduce their advantage through educational opportunities abroad (Hunt and Lightly, 2001, Hunt, 2002) which serve as an identity marker on their return to their home countries and offer positional advantage to them in terms of employment opportunities. This suggests that cultural capital, social capital and economic capital cannot be entirely separated as one form of capital can be converted to another and vice versa; for example, social capital or cultural capital can be converted into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986, Faist, 2000).

Contrary to the widely held belief that ISM leads to permanent immigration, Cavanagh and Glennie (2012) argue that most international students do not stay permanently even though they do value the opportunity to gain some work experience after their studies in the host country. Hazen and Alberts (2006) confirm this in their research in the US. Most of the international students who participated in their study had embarked on ISM in the US with the intention of returning home after their studies. Extended stay by international students in the US was regarded as a way to gain important work experience and earn some money as start-up capital or a nest egg for the return home. This view is also supported by the findings of Hunt (2002) and Hunt and Lightly (2001) in their research with Nigerian students in the UK. Furthermore Hazen and Alberts (2006) report that international students from developing countries may be more elite than those from developed countries and therefore tend to return home as they have a higher status (their economic standard of living back home being higher than as students in the West) and they have better career options available to them at home whereas they

will face racial barriers in their host countries. This buttresses the argument that a person's cultural capital can be limited outside their home region (Waters, 2008).

In terms of integration into the host society, studies have shown that international students live in relatively segregated social spaces as they tend to make friends within their own circle (students from the same country) or with other foreigners instead of the home students (Alberts and Hazen, 2005, Baas, 2010, Waters, 2008, King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003). This could be attributed to pre-determined arrangements for accommodation and course work (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003), language difficulties and lack of understanding of the host country's lifestyle (Alberts and Hazen, 2005, Waters, 2008), in addition to their choice of maintaining their own networks and social capital (Waters, 2008, Baas, 2010), and/or perhaps discriminatory attitudes on the part of home students.

From the above discussion it is apparent that there is no one way of looking at ISM as different scholars have approached the subject from different perspectives. In order to problematize how ISM has been conceptualized and theorized, the next section situates the ISM literature in the field of migration of studies more generally.

### **Explaining International Migration**

The United Nations (UN) defines an international migrant as a person who stays outside their usual country of residence for at least one year. The estimated number of international migrants has increased over the last 20 years from 155.5 million in 1990 to 214 million persons in 2010. This means that three per cent of the world's population today are migrants (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs). International migration is not a recent phenomenon. In the period between 1850 – 1914 international migration was mainly transatlantic while the movements which began after

1945 and expanded rapidly in the 1980s involve all regions of the world (Castles and Miller, 2009). In offering an explanation for migration, many theories have been proposed, up until the 1970s the most prominent theories of migration were of the neoclassical school of thought which sees individual migration decisions as based on “push-pull” factors (Kofman et al., 2000).

The central argument of the neoclassical theory (a dominant paradigm in economics), is that people move from heavily to sparsely populated areas or from low to high income areas because it is presumed that migration is caused by a combination of push factors that compel people to leave areas of origin, and pull factors which attract them in particular receiving countries (Castles and Miller, 2009). Migration is believed to be due to wage differentials between countries which reflect income and welfare differentials across regions, as such migration will bring about elimination of wage differentials and lead to the end of migration (Arango, 2000). At the micro level of neo-classical theory, it is supposed that would-be migrants are rational actors who have perfect knowledge of wage disparities and job opportunities in destination countries, hence they migrate to where they can get higher income for their labour and improve their well-being (Arango, 2000, Castles and Miller, 2009).

Arango (2000) argues that migration is too diverse and complicated to be explained by just one theory. With the earlier migration trends in European transatlantic settlement and post-war European migrations, the variables (migrants’ origin/destination countries, motives, means and routes of migration) were very predictable. But this is no longer the case because in recent decades migrants’ motives and the outcomes of their decisions are far more diverse, as are their places of origin, destinations, modes of travels and routes taken in their journeys (King, 2002). Migration flows have become more global

and heterogeneous, with Africa, Asia and Latin America replacing Europe as the major region of origin (Arango, 2000).

Though neoclassical theory has played a vital role in migration studies, its key assumptions have been critiqued by many scholars (Castles and Miller, 2009, Kofman et al., 2000, Massey et al., 1998). For example, Castles and Miller (2009) argue that if migration is all about economic motivations, why is it that the poorest people from the least developed countries of the world hardly move to the richest countries? Those who move are in fact more often people of middle social status from regions which are experiencing economic and social transformation. Also the movements are not always from densely populated to sparsely populated regions, as the experiences of densely populated immigration countries like Germany and Netherlands indicate. Moreover, it is not only the poor who move. Increasing numbers of people are moving between rich countries too. Castles and Miller (2009) further argue that neoclassical theory is not capable of explaining actual movements, such as why a certain group of migrants favours one country over another (for example, Algerians going to France or Turks going to Germany) or predicting new movements.

Factors considered under the push and pull framework are entirely economic, whereas some commentators argue that migration is about much more than this (Massey et al., 1998, Kofman et al., 2000, Castles and Miller, 2009, Arango, 2000). Other criticisms of neoclassical theory offered by Arango (2000) are first, that if migration conforms to just economic factors, then the number of migrants ought to be much higher than it currently is, and second, it downplays non-economic factors and treats migrants as if they are homogenous, thereby equating migrants with workers and disregarding all movement that is not labour related. While economic disparities can create a necessary condition

they are not a sufficient condition for migration (Massey et al., 1998). Focusing on push and pull factors alone is simplistic and misrepresentative since migration is a complex process involving social, economic, political and cultural factors, and migration decisions are influenced and shaped by conditions in both the sending and receiving countries (Castles and Miller, 2009). Hence migration should be studied within broader social units and as a social process (Kofman et al., 2000, Castles, 2007) because migrants' behaviour is influenced by many other factors such as historical experiences, family and community dynamics (Castles and Miller, 2009).

In order to introduce a wider range of factors into economic research alternative approaches have been proposed to explain migration. Firstly, the dual (or segmented) labour market theory emphasizes the importance of institutional factors in addition to race and gender in bringing about labour market segmentation (Castles and Miller, 2009). The dual labour market theory explains the permanent demand for foreign labour in advanced countries due to the structural segmentation of their labour market, this means that there are certain jobs their citizens would not want to do because they are considered unstable, unskilled, dangerous, low status and low paying with limited opportunity for upward mobility (Arango, 2000, Castles, 2007). Therefore foreign workers are required to fill such jobs that native workers refuse because for the foreigners, status does not matter outside their home region and such jobs pay better than what they would have ordinarily earned at home. Citing Piore (1979 in p. 23), Castles and Miller (2009) argue that international migration which is caused by structural demands within advanced economies of both highly skilled workers and lower skilled manual workers gives rise to a division into primary and secondary markets. Primary labour market are selected based on human capital, membership of majority ethnic group, male gender and regular legal status for migrants while the

secondary subdivision is disadvantaged by lack of education and/or vocational training, gender, race, minority status and irregular legal status.

The second approach that developed out of neoclassical tradition is the new economics of labour migration (Arango, 2000). The new economics of labour migration approach developed in the 1980s argues that migration decisions are not made by independent individuals but by families, households or even communities as a way of diversifying income sources. Though similar to neoclassical theory in that it focuses on the supply side, social groups and not the individual become the unit of analysis under this approach (Castles and Miller, 2009). Another distinction is that the new economics of migration downplays wage differentials across regions and highlights the role of families and households, the importance of remittances, stages within the life cycle (the young migrate to work), and information in the migratory process (Arango, 2000, Castles, 2007). The difference between the new economics of labour approach and the dual/segmented labour market theory is that the latter lays emphasis on the demand side arguing that migration is caused by structural factors in contemporary capitalist economies (Castles and Miller, 2009).

Massey et al. (1998) argue that though these different economic theories function at different units of analysis and focus on different aspects of migration, they offer vital insights into migration. More importantly, they claim that the existence of these differences in the economic approaches and the policies they inspire is an indication that migration cannot be understood merely through economic analysis hence an extensive analysis is needed. Alternative international migration explanations like the historical-structural approach and the world systems theory proposed in the 1970s and 1980s which view migration as a way of mobilizing cheap labour (from developing countries)



for capital in the context of unequal distribution of economic and political power in the world economy, like the neoclassical tradition have been criticized for being one sided in that they ignored migrants' agency (Castles and Miller, 2009).

According to Castles and Miller (2009) these critiques of earlier migration theories gave rise to new approaches namely migration systems theory and migration networks theory. Migration systems theory is concerned with the exchange of migrants between two or more countries based on prior links like colonization, trade, investment or cultural ties; for example the migration of Algerians to France can be explained by colonization (of Algeria by France) while Turkish migration to Germany is explained by labour recruitment by Germany (from Turkey) in the 1960s and 1970s (Castles and Miller, 2009). Therefore migrants are agential beings and not just individuals responding to economic incentives and governmental rules but social beings who pursue what is best for them, their families and communities by keenly determining the migratory process (Castles, 2007). Under the migration systems framework, migration is believed to result from intersecting micro and macro structures - with micro structures denoting the individuals' beliefs, practices and networks and macro structures representing large scale institutional factors (an intermediate structure, the meso structure links the two) (Castles and Miller, 2009).

From the foregoing arguments migration is not just about labour anymore, social networks have become one of the most important explanatory factors of migration as people tend to migrate to where support structures exist for them to settle into a new culture or environment (Arango, 2000, Urry, 2007). Social or migrant networks tend to serve as social capital to potential migrants and influence their choice of route and destination (Hollifield, 2007). According to Massey et al. (1998) and Bourdieu (1986)

the concept of social capital refers to a set of immaterial resources in families and communities that help promote social development in human society; and a major characteristic of social capital is that it can be converted to other forms of capital, for example economic capital. Though social capital can have both positive and negative impacts on the individual (Zontini, 2006, Evergeti and Zontini, 2006, Hellermann, 2006) as my research data will confirm in the discussion chapters of the thesis, the positive elements of social capital are demonstrated in migrant networks. It is becoming increasingly evident that migration is a perpetuating and self-sustaining social process because of chain migration and social or migrant networks (Portes and DeWind, 2007) and the existence of social networks in host countries creates new migrants (Waters, 2008). Urry (2007) has used the concept of network capital made up of physical, organizational and temporal components of access to describe social or migrant networks.

The relatively new forms of migration originate from different motivations at both micro and macro levels as against the earlier migration theories (until the 1980s) which led to the erroneous assumption that all migrants are poor and uneducated (King, 2002). Even with the long academic study of the field, King (2002) maintains that migration still remains a dichotomised and fragmented area of study. Often the sub-classifications that states use to manage and control migration do not necessarily map onto the motivations and experiences of the individuals who move thereby making migration and migrants very difficult categories to define. Some migrations are existential in nature because employment, improved economic conditions and career advancement are not the basis for such migration. Existential migrants (Madison, 2006) leave home to become foreigners in a new culture because they seek more opportunities for self-

actualization, want to discover foreign culture so as to evaluate their own identity and the struggles with issues of home and belonging (Madison, 2006, Arango, 2000).

King (2002) argues that migration dichotomies such as voluntary versus forced, temporary versus permanent, legal versus illegal, internal versus international, need to be deconstructed to help understand the migratory phenomenon better. Though migration is a complex phenomenon the different categorizations tend to simplify reality and this is true regarding the above migration categories. Within the voluntary versus forced migration dichotomy, a complex continuum of coercion and free-will exists in migration decisions; hence migration fundamentals of free-will, encouragement, virtual compulsion and force (whether applied by violence or threat) still have blurred boundaries (Koser, 2007). For example, voluntary migrants can also be forced in the context of severe economic deterioration (Madziva, 2010). This simply suggests that migration categorizations are often not very clear cut because very few migrations are for example purely voluntary or involuntary (an individual employee may accept an international posting because the other option left to them would be to lose their job); and circumstances could make someone slip from one form of categorization to another. For example, a legal migrant may overstay their visit, study or work visa and consequently become an illegal migrant (Koser, 2007, Hollifield, 2007).

International student migration is often depicted as a form of voluntary migration (Bailey, 2001). In the Nigerian context, I am curious about the possibility of some students being actually “forced” to migrate and study outside their home country by specific circumstances they want to get away from or by their families due to various reasons. Research has shown that in Asia migration decisions are usually made by families and not by the individuals concerned, because migration by a member of the

family is seen as a way of diversifying and increasing the family's income streams (Castles and Miller, 2009). In her study of student migration from China to Canada as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Waters (2008) also shows that the migration decisions were made by middle class parents to spare their children the harrowing experience that could ensue from failure to get a place in the highly competitive Chinese higher education system. Can ISM be termed “voluntary” in situations where the migration decision was made for the individual or where the student decided to migrate to “escape” unpleasant experiences at home? (See for example Koser, 2007). The dichotomies of migration studies just like those of forms of capital (such as social, cultural and economic) can sometimes be blurred (Castles and Miller, 2009).

One of the recent trends of migration is that many migrants today engage in activities and maintain relationships with significant others in countries other than those in which the migrants themselves live; this new ease of communication and movement made possible by use of technology and cheaper air travel enables many migrants to live their lives across borders leading to transnational communities (Castles, 2007, Vertovec, 2007, Castles and Miller, 2009). Also, globalization has a huge impact on migration because ‘the global integration of goods, services and capital entails higher levels of international migration’(Hollifield, 2007), so migration and trade can be said to be two sides of the same coin.

Another contemporary trend of migration is the feminization of migration – women play a significant role in all regions and in most types of migration (Castles and Miller, 2009). Early migration theories ignored not only the non-economic elements influencing migration; they also excluded women from migration studies. Up until the early 1980s women migrants were seen as dependents of “primary” male migrant under

the category of family reunion (Koser, 2007, Castles and Miller, 2009). The dearth of gendered analysis of migration stemmed from the conceptualization of labour migration model where labour was assumed to be male and women as economically inactive (Kofman et al., 2000). But since the 1960s women have played a major role in migration as they increasingly migrate for economic reasons and as students and refugees (Castles and Miller, 2009, Kofman et al., 2000). According to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 49 per cent of international migrants are women. Therefore it is important to note that a growing number of women these days are the primary migrants (Koser, 2007, Castles and Miller, 2009, Kofman et al., 2000)

According to Koser (2007) women make up an increasing number of world's migrants for the following reasons: 1) the demand for foreign labour is becoming gender-selective in sectors like service and healthcare which are jobs traditionally done by women, 2) more countries now extend the right of family reunion to migrants making it possible for their spouses (most often women) and children to join them, 3) changing gender relations in some sending countries mean more women have more freedom to migrate than before, 4) especially in Asia, growth in migration of women for domestic work (maid trade), organized migration for marriage (mail order bride) and trafficking of women for sex.

From the preceding discussions it is apparent that the conceptualization and theorization of migration is problematic especially with regards to gender migration. My empirical data, which will be discussed in chapters three to six of this thesis, show that these models do not explain the migratory decisions of my women participants as accurately or as adequately as the literature has suggested. Furthermore, these theories often fail to sufficiently address gender-specific migration experiences (Boyd and Grieco, 2003). In

recent years migration scholars (Boyd, 1989, Kofman et al., 2000, Boyd and Grieco, 2003, Jolly and Reeves, 2005) have sought to include gender in migration studies. While this will significantly enhance the literature, it is also important to note that “women” are not a homogeneous group. Exploring their differences in terms of social class, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, culture, may be important in understanding why and how women migrate, and how they experience life as migrants.

To return to the ISM literature reviewed in the preceding section, it assumes homogeneity among international students. For example, most of the existing literature on ISM is gender neutral or the male gender is normalized as the “international student” except for a few studies that are specifically about women international students (Ono and Piper, 2004, Habu, 2000, Beoku-Betts, 2004, Ichimoto, 2004, Bullen and Kenway, 2003). Matsui (1995, p. 357) claims that “research seldom specifies findings by gender and often excludes female students as subjects”. International students are also portrayed as individuals who travel to a foreign country to engage only in academic study. But scholars like King and Raghuram (2013) and Baas (2010) warn that international students are not just people engaged in academic study alone. Such a view is supported by other commentators such as Brooks and Waters (2011) and Madziva et al. (2015) who suggest a “people-centred” approach to the study of student mobility is needed because students are “complex actors” who often have highly personal and always social reasons for engaging in ISM. While HE institutions are interested in “students”, what they receive are “people” who also have other social roles (such as spouse, parent, worker) which can compete with their student role (King and Raghuram, 2013).

But are the experiences of studying abroad the same for men and women and for students from different nationalities? For example, in reference to the study by Hazen and Alberts (2006) mentioned above, do we assume that women from developing countries would be as willing to return home as the men? Do we assume that the motivations and experiences of students from all the developing countries are the same?

This thesis is about how women from a patriarchal society such as Nigeria negotiate their lives as international student migrants in the UK, which is an environment where individual achievement is paramount and where (at least in theory) there is gender parity. In addition to finding out how the decision to migrate for HE was reached and the support systems that exist for the women, the study will also explore if Nigerian Christian women's migration to the UK really means parting with Nigerian culture, societal and family pressures women face to get married and/or to have children, or whether the expectations and norms which result in "monitoring" an individual at home can still take place irrespective of the geographical distance. How do they maintain contact with their families and loved ones back home, do such contacts serve as a means of perpetuating the cultural norms of Nigeria so that people can move physically but remain emotionally and subconsciously fixed at home?

While globalization and migration of people have had deep influences on cultures and identities, scholars like Gross (2013a), Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy (2008) and Davies (2013a) have questioned if these result in changes in religious identities and the role education plays in such changes. In their seminal work on Christianity and the university experience in the UK, Guest et al. (2013) argue that religious identities cannot be easily separated from those of gender, age, class, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality or disability since each factor overlaps or intersects with others. This mirrors

the claim by Hunt (2002) that religion, like categories such as gender, class, and age, is important in the construction of identity, whether by individuals or groups.

Also, though the existing literature in the social sciences and humanities has documented women's involvement in many spheres of life, the combined religious/educational sphere remains an understudied and under-theorized field (Gross, 2013a). Moreover, Gross (2013a) argues that how people experience their religious identity in a new context and country deserves more complex analysis. With Western higher education seen as a force of secularization (Guest et al., 2013) and in the light of this study being on Christian Nigerian women engaged in higher education in the UK, in the following section I will discuss an emerging area of study that examines the intersections of gender, religion and education (Gross et al., 2013, Guest et al., 2013, Avishai et al., 2015).

### **The Intersections between Gender, Religion and Education**

Most scholars see education as an important component of human development and the positive outcomes of women's education in traditional societies have been documented, see for example Matsui (2013), Chaaban and Cunningham (2011) and Aja-Okorie (2013). However, Gross (2013b) argues that the discourse on the benefit of women's education, like the associated discourse on social mobility, disregards and even denies the difficulties, internal transitions, and conflicts occasioned by crossing social and class boundaries (Lucey et al., 2003) especially for women from traditional societies who migrate to study in modern societies.

For religious women who engage in education, the question has been asked whether education is liberating, and if so, whether it liberates *through* religion or *from* religion. Or whether education itself can act to reproduce any gendered religious oppression and



inequality (Gross, 2013a)? Research findings show that it can do all simultaneously, depending on the agency of participants and on the political context, as well as how religion is adopted by different power interests (Gross et al., 2013).

In the context of gender and religion, there has been a lot of focus on women's subordination within religion (Daly, 1973, Walker, 1999, Redfern and Aune, 2010). Some scholars have also questioned why in the face of such subordination do women, especially well educated women, remain religious devotees and what these women find empowering in their religion (Gross, 2013a, Chong, 2006, Davies, 2013b). But the notion that religious women are "doormats" has been refuted by studies such as that by Stacey and Gerard (1990) which show that religious women are agentic beings. Though religious women are indeed subordinated to the norms and laws restricting them, they also have empowerment channels through which they negotiate their cultural freedom (Gross, 2013a).

In all religions, religious women can show their agency through altering measures intended to subdue their liberty into power in their favour, in other words women can use religion strategically to further extra-religious goals (Gross, 2013a, Chong, 2006, Chen, 2005, Bartkowski and Read, 2003, Weiner-Levy, 2013). This is related to the concept of "bargaining with patriarchy" theorized by Kandiyoti (1988) about the ways and coping mechanisms with which women strategize for autonomy within family constraints. Gross (2013b) also claims that religious women can bargain with patriarchy without revealing their real intentions, and these bargaining efforts play out in three parallel fields namely gender, religion and education.

But why do educated religious women not reveal their true intentions when bargaining with patriarchy? Education was previously perceived as a major means of

secularization, emancipation and social mobility and was hence limited to men because of the fear that educating religious women and enhancing their advancement will endanger the social order (Gross, 2013a). Because educated religious women risk exclusion from societal circle if they cross the line or break boundaries, they therefore must “bargain” and attempt to influence their status through working together with the existing social structures or find acceptable ways in the society to express their disagreement and drive for transformation without posing a threat to men or losing their image of respectable women who are submissive to men (Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy, 2008, Gross, 2013b, Weiner-Levy, 2013, Aina, 1998a).

For some religious women the importance of their higher education is emphasized in terms of the collective, with their success representing their societies or improving their entire community (Gross, 2013b). This is confirmed by studies which show that many traditional and religious societies now allow their women to study in institutions of higher learning after women have demonstrated how their education is likely to advance men, their families and the entire society (Aja-Okorie, 2013, Pessate-Schubert, 2003, Gross, 2013a). For the participants in my study, I am interested in the type of “bargaining” they engaged in before embarking on ISM to the UK and while studying away from home.

Existing studies have looked at why educated women are attracted to conservative religions and how they make sense of their religion, for example, see Chong (2006) and Chen (2005). Some commentators have noted the ambiguity involved in religion in that religion can be both oppressive and liberating to women (Weiner-Levy, 2013, Chong, 2006, Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy, 2008, Gross, 2013b). Avishai (2008) argues that despite the subordination of women inherent in conservative religions,

women consent to patriarchy and are complicit in upholding patriarchal structures within their religions because their religious affiliation actually empowers them to lessen the effects of such family structures on their lives (Chen, 2005, Chong, 2006), avoid unattractive employment (Gallagher, 2007), hence protecting women from the challenges of modernity and social change (Chong, 2006). Can the same be said for the women in my study?

Despite all the benefits offered by higher education, Weiner-Levy (2013) argues that it seems to wield a complex effect on the identities and lives of women in traditional societies in that the new opportunities opening up for women through education and employment are yielding mixed results – for some women they present empowerment while for others they are causes of pressure and loss (Weiner-Levy, 2013, Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy, 2008). In their study on Christianity and the university experience, Guest et al. (2013) agree that university shapes the identity of students, but not necessarily through intellectual challenges to their faith but mainly through existential challenges occasioned by disruption of life patterns they are used to and the dominance of particular forms of Christianity in the context of different university campuses. I am interested in exploring the complexities higher education has brought into the lives of my research participants.

Following the reference to women from traditional societies who migrated to modern societies above I want to briefly explore the “traditional” versus “modern” binary as it relates to migrant women. It is important to note that migrant women are not homogenous. They are a very heterogeneous group, encompassing significant differences in educational, social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Lutz, 1997).

Some commentators such as Buijs (1993), Bhachu (1993) and Lutz (1997) argue that the debates on migrant women have been mainly from Eurocentric perspective which focus considerably on the seeming unchanging traditions, and lack an understanding of the cultural values from the perspective of the ethnic minority women themselves. Such debates, they further claim do not take into account that such women are active agents and may in reality prefer the traditional way of life in the societies they belong to; hence what an outside observer may categorize as oppressive do not always seem that way to the women involved. According to Lutz (1997), a binary that denotes the “European” and “other” woman exists in academic literature through discourses of “racial”, ethnic and national otherness. In this binary, the European woman becomes the standard against which women from elsewhere are measured. European women are the “yardstick of excellence, idealized as straightforward and independently successful beings whose gendered life has been freed of major contradictions and ambivalence” (Lutz, 1997, p. 97). Non-white feminists such as Bhachu (1993) call for a recognition of ethnic minority women as active negotiators of the cultural values that they choose to accept, and the lifestyles to which they subscribe instead of their characterization as people who lack agency and must accept oppression and control by men.

According to Morokvasic (1984), feminists with Eurocentric perspective claim that modernization is meant to lead to emancipation and the process of modernization for minority ethnic groups is defined as – weakening of the extended family patterns and adoption of the nuclear family, fragmentation of the family structure, access to paid work, influence of the media, decline in religious practices, increasing adoption of egalitarian values for girls and boys and adoption of new consumption behaviour. Some commentators also argue that there is a tendency for women to feel that their social status improves post migration while men feel the opposite. Hence migrant women are

more likely to develop personal and household strategies consistent with long term or permanent resettlement abroad while men pursue transnational strategies that link them more closely to their homelands and to an eventual permanent return there. (Pessar and Mahler, 2003, Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005).

Studies which characterize migration as a move from a more oppressive to a less oppressive environment, from traditional to modern, and towards more equal relationships as a result of Westernization, have been criticized since the 1970s (Abdulrahim, 1993, Morokvasic, 1984). According to Morokvasic (1984), such studies claim that migration is a liberating process and results to a degree of gender equality, a rejection (whether conscious or unconscious) to traditional female roles, and unintended or covert positive changes in domestic relations if women are involved in productive tasks and the public space. The interpretation of the evidence on which these studies were based have been criticized for the following reasons: 1) women generally are more likely to be engaged in low waged and exploitative jobs and this is more so for migrant women (Morokvasic, 1984, Buijs, 1993, Abdulrahim, 1993) which complicates the claims that the migrant women's access to waged work contributes to access to a less oppressed status; 2) the lifestyle changes made by couples who are considered to be "traditional" are out of exigency to survive the social situation of the cities and not necessarily an attempt to embrace a Western model; 3) evidence showed that the supposed change towards attaining equality among migrant communities were not always what they are purported to be because it involved both gains and losses as already highlighted Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy (2008).

All through this thesis, I will be drawing from Sanders' (2003) claim that – tradition often implies specific ways of doing things – in any reference to my research

participants as women from traditional society and not necessarily because they are backward. I will also be exploring to what extent the debates on the “traditional” and “modern” binary fit the experiences of my research participants.

### **Research Aims and Questions**

ISM has been explored in various literatures but studies have focused mainly on migration flows, transnationalism, immigration policies, global market for education, non-return, brain drain, and cultural adjustments in host countries (Waters, 2008, Tremblay, 2005, Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007, Wilson, 2012, Cavanagh and Glennie, 2012, Smith and Khawaja, 2011). As mentioned earlier, little attention has been paid to gendered experiences of international student migration (Ono and Piper, 2004, Matsui, 1995, Brooks and Waters, 2011), on international student migration as a socio-cultural process (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003) and the linkages between education, religion and gender (Gross et al., 2013). Students’ own narratives also remain largely absent (Baas, 2010, Brooks and Waters, 2011).

Also, the concept of “international student migration” is problematic and an emerging critique of ISM literature is the generalization of “international students” (Raghuram, 2013, Mosneaga and Winther, 2013, King and Raghuram, 2013). My thesis hopes to add to this set of insights/arguments by providing empirical data on a small and specific sample, Nigerian Christian women engaged in HE in the UK, which will show that their motivations and experiences of migration are in several ways different from the usual depiction of migration in general and ISM in particular; and that this difference can be rooted in their conservative, submissive attitudes to gender norms which come from their attachment to religious and cultural beliefs.

The thesis is based on interview research with 20 Nigerian Christian women engaged in postgraduate studies in UK HE and it was at one level prompted by the question of whether the category ‘international student migration’ adequately grasps their experience. In what respect, and through whose eyes, are these women ‘international’, ‘students’ or ‘migrants’? Questioning this basic categorization opened up other questions, all of which speak in various different ways, to the literatures reviewed above:

### **1. Are Nigerian Christian women students in the UK simply ‘international’?**

#### **The specificity of being Nigerian, Christian and female**

Though the label “international” can be used for all students studying in a foreign country, their experiences of studying and living abroad are not homogenous. The experiences of male and female students are different, and even among female students, their experiences of international student migration also differ depending on their cultural backgrounds and their attitudes towards their cultural gender roles. One aim of this study is to examine what being Nigerian, Christian and female means to women studying in UK Higher Education. Another is to explore the same question from the other way around.

### **2. What does being a student in UK HE mean to Nigerian Christian women?**

The Western liberal notion of academic pursuit is of an individualistic and “disembodied” process. Do Nigerian Christian women regard it in the same light? How do they ‘make sense’ of being a student in a UK university against their understanding of themselves as Nigerian and Christian women? Does engagement in education in largely secular university settings and society conflict with their conservative religious identity? Do they consider their religion as empowering or constraining during their

study abroad? How do they juggle the demands and responsibilities borne of their multiple roles and identities in the course of their academic quest in the UK?

### **3. To what extent are Nigerian Christian women students ‘migrants’?**

My interviewees were all, in one sense, classifiable as ‘migrants’. But does this classification help us to understand their lived experience? Does the research literature on other groups of migrants, even other groups of student migrants, help to shed light on that experience, and if not, what is specific to these women? .

This thesis provides closer examinations to these questions and relates them to academic discourse on migration and international student migration, and to gender, culture, and religion. By using first-hand qualitative data, it seeks to bridge the gap as well as make two contributions to the current literature:

Firstly, the existing literature tends to normalize the male student, and portray the experiences of international students mainly as regards struggles in adapting to a new culture (Smith and Khawaja, 2011, Subhash, 2013, Jung et al., 2007). But the experiences of women as international student migrants and their struggles to conform to their home countries’ social expectations of them even when they are living in a foreign country has received little or no attention in academic literature. The different strategies and negotiations such women engage in in order to meet the social expectations of their home countries as well as academic expectations of their universities have been under-theorized, therefore this thesis will be adding to the existing literature in these thematic areas.

Secondly, it will add to the migration and ISM literature that analyzes the importance of social networks in perpetuating migration through acting as support structures for international student migrants in terms of helping them settle into a new country (Baas,



2010, Collins, 2008, Hirschman, 2007, Urry, 2007). Specifically it will highlight how the same social networks (such as the Nigerian community in the UK and Nigerian church in the case of this group of research participants) become a source of pressure on the women to conform to Nigerian expected gender roles even while they are living and studying away from home, see for example, Zontini (2010a) and Hellermann (2006). It seeks to analyze the tensions and contradictions the women face in terms of disliking the pressures from the social networks on one hand, yet on the other hand they do not break away from such networks and how what can be considered as “control” in an individualistic culture like the UK’s is seen as “show of concern” in a collectivistic culture like Nigeria’s.

### **Thesis Structure**

In the next chapter I discuss the method and methodology adopted for this study and the rationale behind them. I also share my experience of intersecting as both an insider and an outsider, and the many conflicts and tensions I felt in the course of the research.

Chapters three to six are data/discussion chapters. Chapter three investigates what motivated the women to choose the UK as a study destination instead of Nigeria or any other country and analyze these motivations against the push – pull binary of migration. It also explores the gendered nature of the women’s motivations and demonstrates how some of these motivations for international student migration are embedded in social relationships and processes.

Chapter four explores the patriarchal ideology in Nigeria under which these women were raised, gender roles socialization from childhood, and how social expectations of the interviewees to be wives and mothers at the stage they are undertaking postgraduate studies put enormous pressure on the women. It also investigates how my research participants are

complicit in upholding the Nigerian patriarchal culture even while studying in the UK in order to avoid the social sanctions faced by women who do not conform to cultural age deadlines to marry and have children.

In chapter five, I interrogate the multiple roles they can embody in addition to the student role, how the women juggle these roles, and why being just a student is not enough. I also explore the complex demands of each of these roles, the conflicts they can create and how the women manage and negotiate these conflicts to gain and retain support for their educational quest.

Chapter six examines how factors such as friendship patterns, belonging to a Nigerian church and the use of new technology like the internet and social media have kept the women fixed on Nigerian culture though they have migrated from Nigeria. In the final chapter I make the concluding arguments that religion and Nigerian culture perpetuate the subjugation of my interviewees even while they are living and studying in a “gender equal” country like the UK.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided an introduction to the thesis by using my own experience of international student migration as the background. It explored the debates on ISM and the wider debates in migration literature with which the thesis will engage. It attempted to problematize migration categorizations and the homogeneity of international students in migration and ISM literature. It also highlighted the gaps in existing literature and showed how the concepts used in the current debates are not enough to explain and/or understand the motivations and experiences of certain groups of international students, for example, religious women.

Being a study on a group of Christian women students, this chapter further explored the intersectionality of gender, religion and education in the light of emerging body of work on women's involvement in combined religious/educational sphere. This thesis will argue that the motivations and experiences of international students are gendered and dependent on the students' cultural attitudes. It will also argue that broad categories used to represent migrants in general and international students in particular do not speak to the realities of individuals in these groups. It will also unpick the problematic notion of social networks as sources of support only to migrant students.

## **Chapter Two: Research Design, Method and Methodology**

### **Introduction**

A research design is the structure within which collection of data is carried out and should help answer the questions the research seeks to investigate (Becker et al., 2012); for this PhD, I followed a feminist qualitative research perspective in studying the lived experiences of Nigerian Christian women in UK HE.

This chapter will start with a consideration of the research design – exploring my epistemological positioning and why a feminist qualitative approach was adopted for the research. Next it discusses the method used for data collection, the rationale for choosing this method, and the sampling technique employed in the research. The discussion then moves on to the ethical considerations during the research such as gaining access and informed consent, data recording and confidentiality. The concluding section considers the reflective account of my experiences and the key methodological issues I faced in carrying out the research.

### ***Feminist Perspectives***

Bearing in mind that epistemology is a theory of knowledge (Harding, 1987, p. 3), that explains certain assumptions about the social world like who can be a knower and what can be known (Harding, 1987, Anderson, 2012), I adopted a feminist epistemology in this study because I want to gain “knowledge” that reveals the viewpoints of the subjects or research participants (Anderson, 2012). According to Anderson (2012), feminist epistemology considers “how the social location of the knower affects what and how she knows.” Furthermore, a feminist epistemology is appropriate for this study following the argument by Anderson (2012) that “women are oppressed, and therefore have an interest in representing social phenomena in ways that reveal rather than mask this truth.” This is particularly relevant as the women in this study come from a

patriarchal society as discussed earlier in chapter one. “Feminist perspectives developed as a way to address the concerns and life experiences of women and girls, who, because of widespread sexist bias, had long been excluded from knowledge construction, both as researchers and as research subjects” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011, p. 27), (see also Hesse-Biber, 2012, Roberts, 1981, and Anderson, 2012).

Within feminist studies, reflexive sociology in which the researcher takes her own experience seriously and incorporates them into her work is encouraged though it exposes the researcher to challenges of lack of objectivity from supporters of positivist research (Roberts, 1981). In support of Roberts (1981), Harding (1987) argues that the beliefs and behaviours of a researcher are also part of empirical evidence in research findings and are more free of misrepresentation from the unacknowledged beliefs and behaviours of researchers. Hence bringing in the “subjective” element or reflexivity into the research process actually increases the objectivity of the research (Harding, 1987, Harding, 1993, Hesse-Biber, 2012) and confirms the bias of representations without disputing their conceivable claim to reality (Anderson, 2012).

Following Hoggart’s (2012) suggestion that a feminist methodology can include an open acknowledgement of subjectivity because no research can be value free; and to admit this at the onset is a step towards more honest research, I acknowledge my own subjectivity (as a Nigerian Christian female student who has faced and is still facing Nigerian societal pressure to conform to gender roles and expectations) in this research and the possibility of the influence it could have on my analysis and interpretation of the data. This is in line with Roberts’ argument that:

[F]eminism is in the first place an attempt to insist upon the experience and the very existence of women. To this extent it is most importantly a feature of an

ideological conflict, and does not of itself attempt an “unbiased” or “value-free” methodology.

(Roberts, 1981, p. 15)

***Research Method: in-depth interview***

A research method is a technique for data collection (Harding, 1987). Some feminist scholars have acknowledged that there is no research method that is distinctively feminist (see for example, Anderson, 2012, Harding, 1987, and Hesse-Biber, 2012). In their introduction to the special issue on social capital, migration and transnational families, Evergeti and Zontini (2006) argue that the use of quantitative methods such as questionnaires and surveys are unsuitable for examining complex and sensitive issues such as those of ethnic identity and family/social networks because they encompass both meanings, significances and actions which cannot be adequately explored by a quantitative technique. In support of Evergeti and Zontini (2006), Mand (2006) also notes that quantitative methods do not capture the nuances of ethnicity and gender in the context of migration but narratives are more suited for studying migration because like migrants, these accounts move across time and space.

Hence the qualitative method I employed in this study is in-depth interviews. An important viewpoint within feminist research is that gender is a historically and socially constructed category (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011); therefore, my rationale for using a feminist approach and this method is that interviewing grants researchers access to people’s ideas, feelings, thoughts and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher (Reinharz, 1992). I want to draw out some of the meanings the students make of their lived experiences in the UK with their detailed descriptions as well as emphasize on the context and process under which these experiences happen (Becker et al., 2012, Bryman, 2008, Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011).

In-depth interviews are also a suitable method to assess subdued information (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011), consequently interviewing is an asset which “is particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women’s ideas altogether or having men speak for women” (Reinharz, 1992, p.19). The fact that my topic of investigation is not tied to a particular setting like the individual’s natural setting, rather data can be collected from respondents in a prearranged setting also makes in-depth interview an appropriate method for data collection (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011).

### ***Sampling Technique***

In choosing my research participants, I adopted purposive sampling because their selection was based on their specific characteristics as determined by the definite goals of the research project (Dattalo, 2008, Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). I recruited the first set of participants (Nigerian Christian women who are currently studying at the postgraduate level or who have graduated from a UK higher institution) from my contacts in everyday life (for example school and church) and used snowballing technique to increase the number of participants. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method where each person interviewed may be asked to suggest additional people for interviewing (Babbie, 2011). Some commentators argue that a characteristic problem with the snowball method is that it may not be representative of the sample under study (Babbie, 2011, Black, 1999). It is imperative to note that I decided to interview women who are practising Christians because I wanted to provide a solid focus on Christianity as a religion and how it influences the women’s identities of themselves and their roles in the family and society. Most of the participants in this study belong to the Pentecostal denomination.

I am aware that a common weakness of qualitative research is the inability to generalise the finding to a larger population and the knowledge created may be restricted to the research participants (Becker et al., 2012, Bryman, 2008). My objective in this research is not to make generalizations but to provide a detailed account and analysis of how the Nigerian women in my study experience pressures to conform to Nigerian societal expectations of gender roles whilst in HE in a seemingly gender-equal country like the UK.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The fact that feminists try to avoid continuing the mistreatment and exploitation of women makes the question of ethics of access, informed consent and confidentiality (which are always important) even more vital in feminist interview research (Reinharz, 1992). I strove to work within the ethical guidelines<sup>2</sup> provided by the school and I was also mindful that ethical guidelines could not conceivably account for all happenings that may ensue in a particular project (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011), and therefore I was prepared to seek my supervisors' advice on how to handle any unexpected occurrence.

### ***Access and Informed Consent***

As stated earlier, the first set of participants for this study were recruited from my contacts and snowballed to 20 participants. The participants were very willing to introduce me to their contacts whom they felt should also take part in the interview. For example, when I went to interview Eno<sup>3</sup> who was introduced to me by a friend, she wanted to introduce me to her brother and sister who were also PhD students so I could

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<sup>2</sup> A copy of completed ethics form is included as appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup> All the names of people and places used in this thesis have been changed to ensure anonymity.



interview them as well but I explained that my focus was only on Nigerian women. She offered to recruit her sister on my behalf because she believed her sister's experience would make her a good candidate for the research, she had got married and had a baby in the course of studying for a PhD in the UK.

Another example of interviewees' willingness to take part in the study was Vera. She was introduced to me by another participant. When we met she told me she had been hoping someone would carry out a study like mine; and was glad to be part of it so she could share her experience of leaving her 15 month old baby behind in Nigeria to study for a master's degree in the UK. The initial interview could not be held as we had earlier scheduled because she lost her phone and all her information on it including our interview appointment. When I was finally able to contact her again she was in fact grateful that I still included her as one of my participants.

There is a need to point out that out of over 20 women introduced or recommended to me as potential participants in the research only one woman declined participating in the study. Kemi, the woman who refused had been recommended to me as a possible interviewee by her sister-in-law, a friend of mine, while she was still living with my friend and her family. I presume she may have been uncomfortable discussing her experiences (dealing with childcare, finding her own accommodation and supporting herself and her two children with limited money as she was not working as well as commuting to her university located in a different city), with me after the relationship with her host family soured when she returned from a visit to Nigeria with her children without consulting them. I will discuss some of the conceptions, obligations and tensions inherent in the "family" in Nigeria and the meanings attached to them in the data chapters of this thesis.

Being that some of my research participants were women already known to me and to my contacts, it was therefore imperative that I explained very clearly and thoroughly 1) the nature and purpose of the research and what it would entail (i.e., the issues that I was exploring; there may be repeat visits from me to clarify or take on new issues emerging from the research) and 2) that participation or non-participation in the research would have no bearing whatsoever on our existing relationship presently or in future; that this research is academically focused to assist me in my private and personal goal of studying; that their participation was purely voluntary and that if they initially consented and then wished to withdraw at a later date, they were free to do so.

I began every interview by reminding the participants that they could renegotiate their consent to participate at any time during the research (British Sociological Association, 2002). I gave my participants for the interviews the participant information sheet<sup>4</sup> so they could read more about my research and have the contact information for me, my supervisors and the School's Ethics Officer in case they have any queries about the research. I also gave all of them the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarifications before deciding to consent to the research; I verbally got their consent to participate in the research before proceeding. Due to the fickleness of migration categories as discussed earlier in chapter one of this thesis and that of migration policies of the UK government (Cavanagh and Glennie, 2012, Able and White, 2012), I suspect my participants were more comfortable giving a verbal consent rather than a written one. It is important to point out that there was no need for any repeat visit to interview the

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<sup>4</sup> A sample participant information sheet is included as appendix 2.

women further during the fieldwork and none of the participants withdrew their consent during and after taking part in the interviews.

### ***Data Recording, Transcription and Analysis***

I carried out 20 interviews between the months of June 2013 and April 2014. I followed Reinharz's (1992) suggestion that a reflexive researcher should think of ways to put women at ease while doing interviews such as using ice-breakers, creating an atmosphere in which the women felt knowledgeable before urging them to tell their life stories. Hence I started each interview by asking "non-threatening" questions like demographic data. I made it a point to interview my participants when they were alone, except in one case where a baby was present in the room, because according to Reinharz (1992), women tend to discuss their feelings about their lives, their roles, and their marriages more freely when their husbands/partners are not present.

Twelve of the interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes whereas four of them were conducted in school, one in a church and another three at the respondents' work place. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) acknowledge that in-depth interviews often take place in the researcher's office or in the participant's home, though any private space is appropriate provided that both parties are comfortable. I chose to interview some of the participants at home because it offered more privacy as I share my office space with other PhD students; also it was more convenient for the participants especially those who live outside Nottingham and those who had childcare duties as well. In line with the school's ethical guideline to ensure the safety of the researcher, I informed my supervisors and my husband of my whereabouts whenever I was going to interview any participant at home. I called them before entering the participants' houses

to conduct interviews and immediately after I left so they would know that all was well with me.

Reinharz (1992) recognizes that there often are large variations in the time spent on interviews within a single project due to interviewee-guided nature of much of feminist research. For my study, the interviews lasted between 40 to 77 minutes. Five of my participants are M.Sc. graduates while three are PhD graduates who are currently working in the UK. Also eight of my interview participants are Master's students enrolled in postgraduate taught and research programmes whereas the remaining four are PhD students.<sup>5</sup>

All interviews were conducted in English. At the start of every interview, I asked the participants' permission to audio-record the interviews and they all granted their permission. I also made notes immediately after the interviews on my impressions about the participants, the interviews and the relevant things some of them said in the course of chatting with me after I had stopped the interview and recording so I could compare them later with my recorded data. All the interviews were unscripted as I followed the example of Mona Harrington and Nadya Aisenberg (1988 quoted in Reinharz (1992, p. 24):

Because we did not know at the outset what the particularities of each woman's relevant experience would be, we identified general areas we wanted to cover, but let the interviewees' responses determine the order

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<sup>5</sup> A table of the interviewees' full profiles is included as appendix 3.

of subjects, the time spent on each, and the introduction of additional issues.

On a few occasions, I had to ask certain questions, if they did not emerge in the interviews (Acker et al., 1991). Despite the fact that the interviews were unscripted, some common themes emerged from the interview data such as the importance of marriage and having children for a Nigerian woman, and belonging to a church (mainly a Nigerian church) in the UK to name a few.

I started transcribing the interviews soon after conducting them to generate full texts for data analysis. In the course of transcribing the interviews, I made notes of the themes emerging from the data in preparation for the analysis using thematic coding (Smith and Khawaja, 2011) with emphasis on how the women explain their lived experiences in the UK, the social role or roles they consider important and why, and the rest of their answers to my research questions. In order to understand the transcribed interview quotes used in this thesis better, I want to point out that I used bold letters to represent where the participants emphasized certain points or issues by raised or changed tone of voice. I also used symbols such as ellipses and brackets to denote pauses and omissions respectively in the participants' interview quotes.

### ***Confidentiality and Anonymity***

All data collected were anonymized to protect the participants' identities and privacy in my transcription, analysis and writing up the thesis. To ensure further confidentiality all the data files in my computer are encrypted and the audio recordings are safely locked away.

With the UK government including international students in net migration figures as they seek to cut net migration to the UK to only tens of thousands (Cavanagh and

Glennie, 2012), I was also mindful of the ethical/political issue about this research focus and sought to avoid contributing to discourse and policy that harm ISM.

### **Reflexivity and Key Methodological Issues**

Reflexivity refers to the situational dynamics or social interaction between researcher and researched that can influence the creation of knowledge; it is a process that enables the researcher to discover, examine, and comprehend how their own experiences and assumptions can interfere in the research process (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011, Becker et al., 2012). I acknowledge that I am a product of my society and its norms just as much as my research participants, therefore I followed Hesse-Biber and Leavy's (2011) suggestion to write down my reflections on the research process in my research journal so I could see if and how my attitudes and values entered the research process; and if they compromised it in any way. I was also open to encountering "difference" or a "negative case" in the research process because "analysing negative cases provides researchers with feedback concerning the extent to which their initial theoretical claims are validated by their data" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011, p. 49).

In the following section, I present the particular dilemmas that I faced while interviewing other Nigerian Christian female postgraduate students and graduates in the UK. I also discuss how my experiences and reflections in the course of carrying out my data collection may affect how the data were collected, analyzed and interpreted.

### ***Insider versus Outsider Status***

Some commentators have argued that shared gender is not enough ground to build rapport with participants in research and that other dimensions of difference for example, ethnicity, race, age and class can affect how the researcher and the researched relate to one another (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010, Phoenix, 1994). Phoenix (1994)

argues that differences between the locations of the researcher and the researched such as race, gender and socioeconomic status influence the interview but not in a predictable way. For example though Zavella (1993) came from a Chicana working class background, in her research with Chicana cannery workers in New Mexico, her participants saw her as a privileged educated woman and assumed she had resources beyond her “poverty-stricken” graduate student level. Furthermore the research questions she put to them highlighted the crucial political differences between her and her participants. This confirms the claim by Islam (2000), that researchers are not automatically considered insiders in their respective communities, hence both insider and outsider status have definite connotations and consequences. In studying Nigerian Christian female students in the UK, I consider myself an insider because of our shared characteristics such as gender, race, nationality, religion, class, status (student/wife/mother).

According to Islam (2000) who is of Bangladeshi origin and living in the US, a person’s mannerisms, clothing and frequent use of “Americanized English” and coded symbols of Westernness/whiteness could portray the researcher’s outsider status. In her experience of interviewing the Bangladeshi community in Los Angeles, her position as a researcher was challenged by the interviewees (who initially viewed her as an outsider) making it imperative for her to resort to making herself more acceptable as an insider by sharing her gendered knowledge base (such as the chores she does and how to cook certain dishes). She also learnt to contain her outsider status (for example by not wearing “Western clothes”) in order to fit in within the community boundaries (Islam, 2000).

But the researcher's insider and outsider location binary is not experienced in the same way by everyone. In my experience of interviewing within my own Nigerian Christian community in the UK I never had cause to change the way I dress or speak while interviewing my participants, and neither did my research questions highlight points of difference between my participants and myself. This is because in terms of appearance, most of the participants would also dress similarly in casual clothing such as jeans, when going to school or at home. Also I got the impression that my research participants saw me as not too far removed from themselves because of our shared characteristics such as being Nigerian female students studying abroad, hence they related to me as an equal. Probably my interview experiences would have been different if I had interviewed Nigerians in the UK with lower educational qualification than me, and/or included older men and women in my research sample like Islam (2000) did in her study of the Bangladeshi community in Los Angeles and Zavella (1993) in her research with Chicana cannery workers in New Mexico respectively. Though being an insider could grant one access to a research community, it can also present some dilemmas in the course of research. In my own case, I found myself interchanging between the insider and outsider status in order to generate the required data for my study. I share some of these experiences below.

***a. Difficult Questions and Assumed Shared Knowledge***

I am aware that the other side of being an insider is that my participants would assume I already knew the answers to some of the questions I asked them. For example, some of them kept referring to assumed shared knowledge by making comments like "you know in Nigeria." Therefore a lot of sensitivity was required on my part during the interviews to know when and how to assume the status of an outsider and ask things that one would otherwise take for granted as "shared knowledge."



Islam (2000) acknowledges that just as her insider status gave her access to particular discourses, it also made others such as skin colour (a touchy issue among Bangladeshis) difficult to explore. In my own case there were also situations I found it difficult to navigate the discussions around uncomfortable topics such as why Nigerian women choose to accept subservient roles in their relationship with men and in the society. In order to get my participants to discuss topics that would ordinarily have been difficult for me to ask them to as well as those where some assumed shared knowledge exist, I borrowed an approach adopted by Madziva (2010) (in her research with fellow Zimbabwean migrants in the UK) in using her British supervisors who would not understand those assumed and associated meanings as an excuse to probe further for information on difficult questions and topics which the participants assumed she should be knowledgeable about.

#### ***b. Challenging versus Perpetuating Prejudiced/Racist Comments***

In the course of my fieldwork, I had the impression that my participants were free with me and were comfortable enough to discuss their feelings and some of their negative perceptions of the UK and British people which they may not discuss with a British researcher. On some occasions I was uncomfortable with the way they talked about British people but had learnt not to let it show or share my own opinions about a subject matter during interviews. For example, while trying to tell me the Nigerian cultural perception of women one of my participants, Chioma referred to our “collective Nigerian culture” in showing her disdain for British women drinking and smoking in the following quote:

*Chioma: The first time I came here and I saw little girls smoking I was so shocked because I had never seen that in my ..., well in our environment before.*

*Because you see women more kind of shy and they are not really that outgoing, having that gut to smoke, to drink, get drunk and all. It's more for men, so I was really shocked about, so that was ... well I knew we had different cultures because even if you are a Christian or a Muslim as someone being brought up well in African culture you won't do that. It's more attached to harlots but here it's like a general thing. So it was really shocking to me. (Married and aged 27)*

To be referred or likened to a harlot in the Nigerian context is very degrading. Perhaps for this, participant, any Nigerian woman refuting her claim risks being labelled “someone who was not well brought up” because she was expressing a view that is commonly held in Nigeria (Adichie, 2013). I maintained the insider status she had assigned to me as a fellow Nigerian woman and my silence when she made the above comments may have come across as an assent.

This also mirrors Islam's experience where her insider status provided her with unique insights and access to the Bangladeshi community but also created particular dilemmas, her interviewees felt very comfortable in making racist statements against blacks and Latinos because it was assumed she would share those views (Islam, 2000).

Not challenging prejudiced comments or remarks during research is something researchers grapple with for fear of destroying the rapport they have built with the participants, being thrown out of the research community, or sounding morally superior to the research participants (Islam, 2000, Scharff, 2010, Phoenix, 1994). Some scholars have acknowledged feeling guilty about not challenging racist comments during interview and that perhaps they are perpetuating racist comments by their silence, which is a price for their entry and inclusion in the research community (Scharff, 2010, Islam, 2000). However, Phoenix (1994) argues that since the whole point of conducting

interviews is to elicit respondents' interpretations and accounts rather than hear one's own viewpoints echoed back, negative comments or remarks by participants should be treated as interesting data; and rather than being offensive they should be manageable within the interview context.

### ***c. Language of Interview***

In Nigeria, English is the official language and the language of instruction in all schools except Qur'anic schools. Apart from the different ethnic languages spoken in Nigeria, Pidgin English is also spoken generally. I speak, read and write Igbo (my mother tongue), Pidgin and English languages fluently and a smattering of Yoruba (my husband's mother tongue). I am aware that ethnic language may be viewed as a "language of intimacy" during interviewing when the researcher is an insider because of the connections to "home" and "emotions" it can invoke in both the researcher and the researched; it can also encourage free expression because the meanings are only known to the researcher and researched. (See for example Islam, 2000 and Madziva, 2010). Though some of the participants are of my own or my husband's ethnic groups, I chose to conduct all the interviews in English in order to maintain uniformity as well as for ease of transcription without translation. Also the fact that we are in England and all my participants are educated and can understand and speak English very well made my decision to interview in English easy.

Most of the Bangladeshi interviewees involved in Islam's study had limited knowledge of English hence making Bengali language the preferable language for conducting the interviews. Also the racist views of Islam's interviewees were shared liberally in public and private spaces because speaking in Bengali created a private space even in a public arena. I argue here that the reasons that necessitated interviewing her participants

mostly in Bengali do not apply in my case. Firstly, all my participants could understand and speak English. Secondly, in my interviews with Nigerian Christian women in the UK, privacy was ensured during the interviews either in the women's homes, offices in school or at work hence there was no need to resort to any language that will not be understood by others within earshot. Even in the few cases where Nigerian women made prejudiced comments as I had noted above, they had done it in English knowing we were all alone. Some of them also felt comfortable to use Nigerian lingo at some point during the interviews without bothering to explain their meanings because I understood what they were talking about and have used footnotes to explain such lingo in my transcripts. So it is debatable if the data from my interviews with Nigerian women would have been richer if the interviews had been conducted in an ethnic language or Pidgin English instead of English.

### ***Building Rapport versus Introducing Bias***

Oakley advocates self-disclosure and "believing the interviewee" as ways to build intimacy with interviewees in feminist research (Reinharz, 1992). This approach was adopted by Madziva (2010) in her research with Zimbabwean migrants in the UK who are forced apart from their children. She shared her own experience of leaving her children behind in Zimbabwe with her husband when she originally came to study in the UK with her participants and built rapport with them. Reinharz (1992) also acknowledges that researcher self-disclosure during interview is a good feminist practice and helps put women at ease. However, some commentators caution that self-disclosure in research may pre-empt the responses of participants. I adopted the outsider status and chose not to talk about my own experiences and not to disclose any opinions on the subject matter in order not to introduce bias in the interviews. This was mainly because 1) I already had rapport with my participants since they were mostly from my

circle of contacts, unlike Madziva (2010) whose participants were people previously unknown to her, hence her endeavour to build rapport with them; 2) I wanted the responses of my participants to be entirely theirs and not influenced in anyway by my own accounts of conforming to Nigerian gender expectations as a student.

I suspect that my adopting an outsider approach by not sharing my own experiences with my interviewees was justified by the concerns raised by Zavella (1993). In her study of Chicana cannery workers, Zavella (1993) tried to build rapport with those of them involved in the workers' union by discussing her own political sensibilities and commitments at length though she also worried about "contaminating the field" with her own biases. Therefore I desisted from reacting or commenting in any way that might influence the responses of my participants during the interview but like Dorothy Hobson's account of her study on the experiences of housewives' social isolation as documented in Oakley (1981) after the interviews I usually talked with the women and in the process I sometimes shared my own experiences of combining wifely duties and motherhood with my studies.

### ***Dealing with Respondents' Evasiveness***

One of my interviewees who was at the writing up stage of her PhD programme told me that prior to that PhD programme she had started a PhD course at another university but had to take a lower degree from that university because "something happened along the way". I did not pursue that line of questioning because she had said it with a tone of voice that indicated she did not want to discuss it further (Zavella, 1993), and because it would have been unethical to make her talk about something she did not want to. In the words of Davis (2010),

[I]t could, of course, be argued that, as an interviewer, I had no other choice.

I needed to establish rapport with my informants so that they would speak freely to me about a subject which they found painful and potentially incriminating. Calling them on their evasiveness might well upset the interview relationship, causing them to watch their words or even refuse to talk to me.

(p. 156)

On one occasion, I also had cause to doubt what the same interviewee told me. According to Reinharz (1992) “believing the interviewee” is a contentious issue because social relations are naturally fraught with a level of deception but “some feminist researchers reinterpret the notion of believing the interviewee as a utilitarian and decidedly feminist approach” (p. 28). As a woman, I have experienced some struggles doing a full time PhD while pregnant, nursing a new-born and taking care of my daughter as a baby and now as a toddler. So when Amara, one of my interviewees told me it had been fun doing a full time PhD with a family of six (husband and four children with the youngest only two weeks old when she started her first botched PhD course while her husband and three older children were still in Nigeria), I found myself not “believing the interviewee”.

Bearing in mind that Reinharz (1992) suggests that a feminist researcher should begin a research project intending to believe the interviewee and should question the interviewee if she begins not to believe her, I had to question what Amara meant by “fun”. And this was the only case I referred to my personal experience in the course of the interview. In order not to sound like I disbelieved her, I shared briefly my struggles with juggling my academic work with childcare especially when my daughter was sick and had to be away from the day nursery and wondered how she had been coping with

looking after four children and doing her PhD as well. With further questioning and sensitivity to the subject matter, because of my own experience, I eventually got to learn that Amara's experiences of being a wife, mother and full time PhD student had been harder than she had earlier admitted. Perhaps the bold and fun outlook she presented initially was due to her resilience and determination to succeed against all odds which she had built over the years, especially after a failed attempt to earn a PhD in the first university she attended.

### ***Power Balance/Imbalance***

It has been argued that a power imbalance will always exist between the researcher and the research participants because the researcher is in control of the agenda (Becker and Bryman, 2004). But according to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), interviewing is in line with many women's concern to avoid control over others and develop a sense of connectedness. The fact that I share some characteristics with my participants such as nationality, gender, status (student, married, mother), culture and religion makes me an insider in this study. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) also argue that having such a balance in some of these characteristics decreases the likelihood of power imbalance in research situations and makes it easier to establish rapport with participants. Feminist researchers have argued that power imbalance in research could be reduced by adopting non-hierarchical and friendly relationships with participants (see for example Oakley, 1981), but later feminists critiqued this position and highlighted the inevitability of power imbalances in research (Douchet and Mauthner, 2007).

I have to point out that the participants in my research have no expectations that my research will bring about a change in their lives and situations unlike the experiences of Madziva (2010) and Stock (2012) in their studies with Zimbabwean migrants some of

who are failed asylum seekers in the UK and African migrants stuck in immobility in Morocco respectively. In both cases, some of the participants in these studies had solicited help from the researchers at some point during the studies or hoped that their research would bring about a change in their unfortunate situations. The participants in the study by Madziva (2010) felt she as a fellow Zimbabwean was in a privileged position because she was able to bring her family over to the UK and was studying towards a doctorate degree whereas some of them were refugees or failed asylum seekers and as such did not have the right to work, education or bring family over. The participants in Stock's (2012) study also saw her as a privileged white woman who could be in a position to help or know those who could help them. I argue that my participants have made no requests from me because they were not in desperate situations like some of the participants in the above mentioned studies. Also my participants considered me their equal, which may diminish any power imbalance that might exist between the researcher and researched. This is in line with the following:

[W]here both share the same gender socializations and critical life-experiences, social distance can be minimal. Where both interviewer and interviewee share membership of the same minority group, the basis for equality impress itself even more urgently on the interviewer's consciousness.

(Oakley 1981, p. 55)

But some feminist researchers argue that the research process is not an equal encounter but is characterized by power-imbalances (see for example Phoenix, 1994). And the balance of power tends to be in favour of the researcher because they determine the questions and have the power to select and reject data at the different stages of the



research (Scharff, 2010, Phoenix, 1994). Researchers also have the final say in the dissemination of their research regardless of which approach they take in the research (Ahmed, 2010).

### ***Betraying my Community and Religion***

In the course of carrying out this research I find myself torn between being critical of how my culture, traditions and certain religious practices oppress women on one hand and on the other hand, my desire as a member of the same society to support the values of the same culture, traditions and religion because they are what I have been brought up with (Narayan, 2004). Ryan-Flood and Gill (2010) argue that insider researchers who research minority groups may experience certain dilemmas especially if access to the group had been granted with the implicit assumption that the researcher being an insider will be sensitive or sympathetic to the interests of the group. Therefore it may be difficult and uncomfortable for insider researchers to present their research to the scrutiny of academia without feeling that they have “exposed” their communities (Islam, 2000, Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010). For example, how do I as a researcher talk about the oppressions and subordinations of Nigerian women due to their culture and religion even when they are in the UK when I as a Nigerian woman have been complicit in upholding such practices?

The tensions I feel about studying and writing about Nigerian Christian women in the UK could be likened to those of Narayan (2004), an Indian feminist living in the US. Though she wishes to share with honesty the miseries and oppressions her culture confers on its women, she fears that such communication will reinforce western prejudices of western culture being superior to others. Narayan thus advocates the importance of understanding the intricacies of oppression experienced in different

historical and cultural settings without attempting to make comparisons across such settings given that they are incomparable. Irrespective of geographic divide, Lentin (1995) claims that all women compromise or collude in maintaining patriarchal structures, therefore feminist research should also focus on women's internalised oppression. Lentin (1995) further argues that this does not mean blaming the victim, but it does assume women are not perpetual victims but are active agents as will be shown by data from some of my participants in the data chapters.

### ***Academic versus Emancipatory Research***

Hoggart (2012) gives a broad definition of feminism as “a position with the political aim of challenging discrimination against women and/or promoting greater equality between the sexes” (p. 136) and argues that the methodological choices of feminist scholars is determined by how they define feminism. Some commentators argue that the commitment of feminist research is grounded on the fundamental motivation that research and action cannot be separated in the research process (Hussain and Asad, 2012). Therefore feminist research is seen as an emancipatory type of inquiry; it is not just about documenting reality but also about taking a personal, political and engaging stance to the world (Sarantakos, 2005, DeVault, 1996, Lentin, 1995).

Being that the women I interviewed were known to me or introduced to me by my contacts, it has been difficult distancing myself from some of the experiences they shared with me which I have gone and/or am still going through, so these experiences resonate with me. For example hearing my participants talk about avoiding certain people or occasions so they would not be harassed or reminded inadvertently that they are not yet married or that they do not have children brought to mind the immense pressure I had faced myself before I got married and before I had my daughter. Also

when the participants who are mothers like me talk about the struggles to combine keeping their homes (cleaning, shopping, cooking, etc.), childcare and full time postgraduate study, I knew too well what they were saying because I also grapple with the same issues on a daily basis.

I have realized that I have become more sensitive to issues relating to women especially the discriminatory practices since I started this research and have also started thinking of ways I could make a change outside the purview of this research instead of accepting it as part of our Nigerian culture. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) acknowledge the fact that research can bring about a change in the attitudes of researchers and therefore warn researchers to bear in mind that they do not know what their research will teach them, and that it can be very difficult not to try to effect social change in some situations. For me, hearing some of the comments and discriminatory practices against some of these women in the Nigerian churches they attend made me start thinking of how I could draw the attention of the leaders in the church I attend to some of these issues in a non-threatening way that will be acceptable to them as educated religious women are known to do (Gross, 2013b, Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy, 2008, Weiner-Levy, 2013). For example, the name of the married women fellowship in my current church is the “Good Women”, see also Hunt (2002). Apart from the fact that the name seems to stigmatize as “bad” any woman who is not married I have become uncomfortable with the knowledge that so many women are excluded from such gathering by virtue of their single status which inadvertently puts pressure on them. I have struggled between boycotting the Good Women fellowship as a way of protest of non-inclusion of all women regardless of their marital status and continuing to be a member. But from my experience which is also supported by academic research cited above, I am more likely

to bring about a positive change if I stay within the community and find acceptable ways of doing it.

### *Stress during Interviews*

An ethical research should not to do any harm physical or emotional to the researched or researcher but feminist research often adds handling stress to the other challenges of interview research (Reinharz, 1992). The fact that I have also encountered stressful moments in the course of my field work confirms Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) position that ethical rules and checklists cannot account for all events that may crop up in a given research. On one occasion one of my participants, Onome, narrated to me how she found out from social media, Facebook that her sister had died in Nigeria because her parents did not know how to tell her and what she might do to herself if she found out. She was a teenager then and all by herself in the UK as an undergraduate student.

I found my eyes welling up with tears as Onome recounted how she survived that period in her life because it reminded me of my own grief of my sister's death almost ten years ago in Nigeria. I tried to hide the fact that I was crying but I could not. I thought of the fact that I had spent some time with my sister during her illness and had closure by attending her funeral but Onome never got a chance to say goodbye to her sister and she was not at her funeral. I could not imagine what it must have been like for her especially since I had my family to comfort and grieve with me during my own period of bereavement. Such stressful reactions could occur:

[B]ecause feminist researchers discover there is more pain in the interviewees' lives than they suspected. The interview process gives the

researcher an intimate view of this pain and the shock of discovery may eventually force her to confront her own vulnerability.

Reinharz (1992, p. 36)

I was surprised when Onome apologized for upsetting me with her narrative. So I reassured her that I understood what she must have gone through because I had lost a sister too. I could not continue with the interview after that.

### ***Researcher's Raised Consciousness and Emancipation***

I was also made to confront my own vulnerability when my interviewees recounted experiences that privilege men above women in our society and most times I left the interviews very angry (also see accounts by Stanley and Wise, 1991). And without knowing it, when such situations which I had hitherto accepted as normal occurred in my family I started reacting angrily. For example, it made me angry that my husband left most of the chores and childcare duties to me and that my mum sometimes openly displayed acts of favouritism towards my brother while discrediting my sister and me.

For some research participants talking about their experiences could be emancipatory, and according to Acker et al. (1991), the positions of women researchers were and are similar to those of their subjects in fundamental ways “thus a ‘sociology for women’ has emancipatory possibilities for the researchers as well as the researched” (p. 135). In a sense doing this research has proved a transformation in me, raised my consciousness (Stanley and Wise, 1991) and it has also been emancipatory for me. Though I was unprepared for the different emotions doing this research stirred up in me, acknowledging that my family members did not set out to hurt me (rather they were acting according to the gender role socialization in Nigeria), helped me in discussing

my feelings with my family in a non-judgemental way that made them commit to changing their attitude.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the research design and why I chose a feminist qualitative approach as the framework for this research. I also discussed the actual research process, the method used to gather data, as well as ethical and methodological issues I encountered.

The fact that I am insider and shared many characteristics with the research participants did not make the research process “tension-free”. Being an insider helped me to gain easy access and build rapport with the participants but it also created certain dilemmas in the course of carrying out the research which a researcher who is considered an outsider may possibly not have encountered in doing the research

## **Chapter Three: Motivations for International Student Migration to the UK**

### **Introduction**

The internationalization of education has become an important driver of international migration (Collins, 2008). It has been argued that migration for education is closely related to other forms of migration for example highly skilled migration, hence it must be treated as an important aspect of the international migration systems (Li et al., 1996, King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003). Also, it appears that the answers to the question of why students move abroad are almost always based on models of push and pull factors of migration (Carlson, 2013, Raghuram, 2013, Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). The push factors for ISM function within the home countries and influence students' decision to study abroad whereas the pull factors function in the host countries and make the countries desirable for international study (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002).

Unlike the push-pull model of migration which is based on neo-classical economic theory of wage differentials leading to welfare differentials in different regions (Arango, 2000), some of the push factors for ISM include the inability to access comparable higher education in home countries in continents like Asia and Africa, other economic or political factors in the home countries (Li et al., 1996, Maringe and Carter, 2007, Collins, 2008, Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). On the other hand, the pull factors for ISM range from improving language skills (Baláž and Williams, 2004, Collins, 2008), increasing opportunity of employment or career development (Findlay et al., 2012, King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003), securing permanent residency (Baas, 2010, Hazen and Alberts, 2006, Andressen and Kumagai, 1996), experiencing excitement and adventure (Waters and Brooks, 2010) and acquiring cultural and social capital which can be transformed to economic capital (Waters, 2008, Brooks and Waters, 2011). In view of this dichotomy, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) warn that the explanatory factors in the push and pull

model vary from one country to another. These explanatory factors can explain the pattern of migration from some source countries as well as why some host countries are more attractive than others.

Irrespective of the different studies focused on understanding why students migrate, King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) argue that what has been largely absent in the existing literature on student migration is the theorization of the phenomenon in terms of social processes. But there is an emerging body of work that argues that international student migration is connected to a wider set of processes occurring at and across the social spheres of the individual, family, community (Waters, 2008, Collins, 2008, Brooks and Waters, 2010, Carlson, 2013, Geddie, 2013, Mosneaga and Winther, 2013). For example, Collins (2008) in his research with South Korean international students in Auckland, New Zealand argues that migration is hardly a singular process but that such movement is tied to the several relationships between people and places, consequently international students' migration cannot be viewed as independent of other phenomena. Rather it must be understood as dependent on the particular relationships to people and places, formed and maintained by individuals, families and communities in countries of origin and education (Collins, 2008).

In their study of British international students, Brooks and Waters (2010) categorize the different social networks that can influence the decision to study abroad as kinship, friendship, and partnership networks. According to them, one's family members (such as siblings), friends, colleagues or other students from one's school/university who have been abroad themselves can act as role models by giving information, guidance and encouragement on matters relating to international student migration. Likewise, the idea of being with spouses or partners who are overseas can be a motivation for study abroad



and/or significantly influence the choice of study destination (Brooks and Waters, 2010). In their respective studies of international students, Geddie (2013) and Mosneaga and Winther (2013) also found out that the migration of these students is shaped by the relationships with their family members (parents and siblings), partners, and friends. In his research on German international students, Carlson (2013) notes that his respondents' accounts of how they became international students made references to influences from other people such as friends, family members, partners or teachers that it was impossible to identify who precisely "caused" the students to migrate. Carlson (2013) therefore argues that the "social embeddedness" of educational mobility allows us to challenge the common notion of student migration as individual decision making and to recognize how social relations influence students migration. On her own part, Koehne (2005) argues that international students should be seen as a diverse group and not an entity as is often portrayed in academic literature and debates because they are individuals with varied personal histories and experiences, combined with diverse personal motivations and desires which shape their decision to become international students.

In this chapter, from the data of my interviews with a particular group of Nigerian women students engaged in postgraduate studies in the UK, I hope to add to existing literature on ISM by 1) examining why the Nigerian women students chose to study in the UK and not in Nigeria or any other English speaking countries against the push-pull binary of migration, 2) exploring the gendered nature of the motivations of the women for ISM, and 3) critically analyzing how some of these motivations and decision making are embedded in social processes. The next section will provide some contextual information on Nigeria and how the current Nigerian educational system can encourage some Nigerian students (men and women) to opt for study abroad.

### **Setting the Scene: Background on Nigeria**

Nigeria is located in West Africa with an area of 923,768 square kilometres bordering the North Atlantic Ocean between Cameroun and Benin. It gained independence from Great Britain on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1960. It is a very culturally diverse country with over 400 ethnic groups and over 500 dialects but the three majority ethnic groups are the Hausas (found mostly in the North), the Igbos (found mostly in the South-East) and the Yorubas (found mostly in the South-West). Nigeria is divided into six geo-political zones with 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (Nigeria High Commission London, 2012, Brennan et al., 2004).

Military rule and civil conflicts have been a recurrent part of its history with the country returning to democratic governance in 1999 (Brennan et al., 2004). Most Nigerians are very religious - the main religions are Christianity, Islam and local beliefs grouped together as Traditional Religions (Nigeria High Commission London, 2012, National Bureau of Statistics, 2014). The Northerners tend to be Muslims while the Southerners tend to be Christians (National Bureau of Statistics, 2014). The ratio of Muslims and Christians in Nigeria is a very sensitive political issue, hence the Nigerian government sources shy away from statistics on religion, for example the National Bureau of Statistics has no official information on the number of Christians or Muslims in Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2014). According to Adogame (2010), this is because census statistics on religious and ethnic populations in Nigeria in the past, have been highly politicized with such statistics often manipulated for political, economic and religious ends, especially as such figures are important in the allocation of national revenue and other resources.

However, according to an American think tank, Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life (2011a), in 2010 the Muslim population in Nigeria was 47.9 per cent of the entire population while the Christians constituted 50.8 per cent (Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2011b), the remaining 1.3 percent of the population represent other religions (BBC News, 2007). In Nigeria, the native and ethnic-based religions are apparently the oldest category, and these indigenous religious forms are differentiated according to the names of the respective linguistic and/or cultural groupings such as the Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Edo religions (Adogame, 2010). Adogame (2010) further argues that in some instances some indigenous religious beliefs may be more common among the different ethnic groups while in other cases, they may vary from one ethnic group to another, and none of the indigenous religions can lay claims to any particular historical geneses. Rather they are believed to be transmitted from one generation to the other.

Nigeria is an oil rich country and presumed to have great economic potential (Brennan et al., 2004). It is also the most populous country in Africa and it is reputed that one out of every four Africans is a Nigerian (Owasanoye and Okunsanya, 2004). The report by the Chairman of the National Population Commission of Nigeria on the 2006 census put the total provisional population of Nigeria at 140,003,542 with 71,709,859 males and 68,293,683 females. The annual growth rate is 3.2 per cent over the 1991 census figure (Makama, 2007). In 2011, the UNDP put Nigeria's total population at 162,470,700 while the country ranked 156 out of 187 member States of the United Nations in the Human Development Index with life expectancy at birth at 51.9 per cent and education index (expected and mean years of schooling) of 0.442 (UNDP, HDR 2011). The UNDP Human Development Index functions as a frame of reference for both social and economic development in different countries and shows where each country ranks in

relation to the specific indicators. The low life expectancy in Nigeria has been attributed to factors such as poverty, poor health care with high incidences of infant and maternal mortalities (Vanguard Newspaper, 2012, Ucha, 2010).

### ***How the Current Nigerian Educational System can Foster ISM***

Nigeria's educational policy has given rise to different programmes – the Universal Primary Education introduced in the 1970s; the 6-3-3-4 educational system patterned after the American system introduced in the 1980s which stipulates compulsory six years in primary school, three years in junior secondary school, three years in senior secondary school and four years in a tertiary institution; and the Universal Basic Education (9-3-4) launched in 1999 which is a nine year basic educational programme with three years in senior secondary school and four years in a tertiary institution (Onyukwu, 2011).

Higher education is provided by universities, polytechnics, institutes of technology, colleges of education as well as professional institutions (Brennan et al., 2004). The expansion of higher education in Nigeria since independence is hinged on the ideology of education as a pillar for development and also as a consequence of the internal dynamic of the Nigerian federalism where universities can be set up either by federal or state governments, or privately owned (Brennan et al., 2004).

In the last few decades, the quality of Nigerian education has gone down as a result of decreased government funding of the sector (Adeyemi, 2011). The Nigerian government embarked on austerity measures in 1982 to reverse the nation's worsening economic fortunes. When these measures yielded minimal impacts, an extensive Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was introduced in 1986 with emphasis on policies that reduced and switched expenditures as well as used the market forces and the private

sector as the new engine of growth (National Centre for Economic Management & Administration (NCEMA), 2002). This has given rise to an exponential increase in private schools in Nigeria from nursery to the tertiary level. Currently in Nigeria there are about 37 federal universities, 37 state universities and 50 private universities including Christian and Islamic universities (National Universities Commission, 2012, Brennan et al., 2004). The federal universities are generally cheaper because they are subsidized by the federal government. The first generation federal universities are the oldest and most prestigious, but highly competitive with very high entry requirements while the private universities are the newest and most expensive, reputed to be more efficient with better facilities and patronised by students from the middle and upper classes in the society. The state owned universities are funded by the different states in the federation and were set up to bring university education closer to the indigenes of the different states though non-indigenes of particular states can still be accepted in the state universities. There is also the American University of Nigeria which runs a full American curriculum but there is no British university yet in Nigeria.

There are, however, a few UK universities which offer online degree programmes in Nigeria. An emerging international student population include students who are *in situ*, but are registered in higher education courses in international universities and colleges; these students are awarded degrees by overseas universities without the physical movement of going there (King and Raghuram, 2013). For example, the University of London advertises its international programmes in Nigeria with the catchy slogan “study in Nigeria, graduate from the University of London” (University of London, 2013). Such transnational education programmes in Nigeria target those who desire a foreign degree but are not able to travel abroad for HE due to financial, work or family constraints. In their study of British transnational higher education in Hong Kong,

Waters and Leung (2012) discovered that vast inequalities exist between the degree programmes offered in the UK and those offered in Hong Kong in terms of the quality of education, recognition of/and value of the degrees and acquisition of cultural capital occasioned by international travel.

Despite the expansion of higher education, demand for places still exceeds their supply (Brennan et al., 2004). In the 2008/2009 academic year, 1,054,060 students applied for places in Nigerian universities out of which only 200,000 were admitted (Shu'ara, 2010). With the poor quality of education and increased demand for places in the Nigerian higher education system some Nigerians now enrol in transnational higher education in Nigeria, for example the University of London has over 900 students in Nigeria studying for a range of degree programmes (University of London, 2013). Many other Nigerians prefer to go abroad for higher education (Hunt and Lightly, 2001, Hunt, 2002). Arango (2000) as well as Castles and Miller (2009) argue that migration often links countries with past colonial ties; the UK has been a destination of choice in Europe for Nigerian students because of its colonial history with Nigeria (D'Arca, 1994) and English language is the official language in Nigeria. A lot of international students come to the UK because English language is seen as the "ground floor" of the world hierarchy of languages and useful for doing business in a globalized world (van Parijs, 2000). Also some international students from non-English speaking countries may enrol in short English courses as preparatory programmes before their main degree programmes. Because Nigeria was colonized by the British and English is the language of instruction in Nigerian schools, Nigerian students are most likely not to enrol in English language courses in the UK. Rather they are most likely to embark on a longer term "degree mobility" (Universities UK, 2008), which is studying for an entire degree at a university outside Nigeria, their country of usual residence.

As of 2010, only 33,000 UK students are in HE institutions abroad (Higher Education International Unit 2010) compared to 370,000 foreign students studying in the UK. Therefore education and training exports worth so much to the British economy (Able and White, 2012). It is apparent that successive British governments have cut back on spending on higher education (Harrison, 2011, Chowdry and Sibiet, 2011) as is the case in Nigeria. The contrast between Nigeria and the UK is the fact that UK institutions have been able to compensate for the loss of government funding through attracting foreign students and charging them significant amounts in fees (more than three times the amount home and EU students paid before the Browne review of 2010 recommended that universities could charge home and EU students tuition fee of up to £9,000 a year starting from 2012-2013 academic year) (Browne, 2010). Instead of attracting international students to Nigerian higher education, Nigeria is increasingly losing grounds to its Western African neighbour, Ghana in addition to the thousands of Nigerian youth who travel to Western countries annually in pursuit of higher education. In 2011 the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi stated that over a billion dollars is invested in the Ghanaian economy by over 71,000 Nigerian youth schooling in Ghanaian higher institutions. Frequent strike actions by the academic staff of Nigerian universities make university education in Nigeria very unstable. On the other hand, Ghana is reputed to be more stable, secure and with better basic amenities than Nigeria which makes it more appealing to Nigerians who move there for educational as well as business opportunities. Apart from the \$1billion investment of Nigerian students on education in Ghana, other sectors benefiting from Nigerians schooling in Ghana are the real estate and medium scale businesses (Oluwapelumi, 2012).

The rate of return on education is highest at the tertiary level but the benefits to be derived are more private (for the individuals involved) than social while the rate of return on education to the public/economy is highest at the primary level (Vickerstaff, 2012, Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2004), hence the Nigerian government policy thrust on free and compulsory basic education. The rise of the middle class in Nigeria has made it possible for families to send their children abroad to Western countries or to other African countries like South Africa and Ghana for HE, or for mid-career professionals to seek post-graduate qualifications from universities abroad as part of their professional development and to enhance their competitive edge in the local job market. But for my particular set of interviewees, why did they make the decision to pursue further education in the UK? This is what the next section of this chapter will focus on.

### **The Women's Motivations behind Choosing the UK as a Study Destination**

People migrate for a variety of reason – displacement, in search for a better life, to escape poverty, political persecution, social or family pressures which play out in different ways for men and women (Jolly and Reeves, 2005, Boyd and Grieco, 2003). Female migrants have been largely invisible in migration literature, and are regularly assumed as dependents of migrating spouses regardless of the fact that almost as many women as men have migrated since the 1960s (Jolly and Reeves, 2005, Boyd and Grieco, 2003, Kofman et al., 2000). Also the literature on ISM tends to be largely gender neutral except for a few studies (Bullen and Kenway, 2003, Beoku-Betts, 2004, Ichimoto, 2004, Bonazzo and Wong, 2007) that focused specifically on the experiences of women as international students. Kofman et al. (2000) criticize the migration literature that analyze women's migration using models created to understand, explain and predict male migration patterns because such models assume that men and women



have the same reasons for migrating and that men and women would behave in exactly the same way. They argue that such literature ignores the women's agency in the context that migration could be a means to resist oppressive and exploitative situations at home.

Research has shown that migration can offer women new opportunities to improve their lives and escape from oppressive gender regimes and relations (Jolly and Reeves, 2005, Kofman et al., 2000, Zontini, 2010b). In the case of ISM, some scholars have documented that resistance against the gender marginalization and stifling conformity in a patriarchal society like Japan serves as a source of Japanese women's motivation to study abroad (Yokomizo, 2002, Tanikawa, 2013, Walker, 1998, Matsui, 1995, Habu, 2000). Boyd and Grieco (2003) in their analysis of women and migration argue that the family is usually where female subservience to male authority happens, therefore gender relations and hierarchies within the family setting can affect the migration of women as the family both determines and allocates the roles of women. And the woman's position within the family can be an incentive or disincentive to migrate since the family can control the distribution of resources and information that can support, discourage, or prevent migration (Boyd and Grieco, 2003).

According to the existing literature, different motivations are behind ISM, for example Hazen and Alberts (2006) claim that professional (career-related and educational) reasons are behind ISM in their study of international students in the US. Also the cultural and social capital acquired through study abroad offers positional advantage to the international student migrants in terms of employment opportunities on their return to their home countries, and this too serves as motivation for studying abroad to some students (Findlay et al., 2012, Baas, 2010, Waters, 2008). While some commentators

claim that ISM is often located within the concept of youth migrations motivated more by learning, leisure, travel and experiential objectives rather than by economic factors (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003, Waters and Brooks, 2010), some others view ISM as a form of tourism, and educational tourism precisely (Ritchie et al., 2003, Raghuram, 2013). However, Castles and Miller (2009) argue that no single reason will ever adequately explain why people decide to migrate from their home country to a host country and in this section of my thesis I explore the various motivations that led my participants to migrate from Nigeria to the UK for further education.

### ***Benefits/Socially Accepted Motivations for Migration as Pull Factors for ISM***

When I asked the women in this study what motivated them to study in the UK, their narratives support the claim of Castles and Miller (2009) because no one gave a single reason for choosing the UK as a study destination. The initial answers given by all of them fit the benefits of international student migration as marketed by host countries, universities and their recruitment agencies. Scholars like Li et al. (1996) and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) have opined that the trend of international students migration is similar to that of other migrants in that the highest rates of student migration occur between countries that have geographical proximity, colonial ties, commonality of language or some cultural affinity. This position on shared colonial history and language competence is supported by Maringe and Carter (2007) and D'Arca (1994) in their respective works on international student migration. From my data, it appears that studying in an English speaking country is important to my participants since English is the official language in Nigeria as well as the language of instructions in schools. However, my interview data suggest that for the majority of the women, the UK (which had colonized Nigeria) as a study destination was not an exclusive choice. They would have also wanted to study in the USA which is an English speaking country. Most of the

women told me that their options were between the USA and the UK but they chose to study in the UK because they considered the admission process in the USA to be more cumbersome especially with the different entrance examinations required. Other reasons for choosing to study in the UK instead of the USA include proximity to home (Nigeria) and the shorter duration of academic programmes in the UK.

Therefore in the context of the argument by Maringe and Carter (2007) and D'Arca (1994), the choice of the UK as a study destination for these women is related to their language competence but not to the colonial ties to Nigeria. To support the argument that the relative proximity of the UK to Nigeria was a consideration in their choice of study destination (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002, Li et al., 1996), none of the women had expressed any desire to study in other predominantly English speaking countries like Australia and New Zealand, probably because they are farther away from Nigeria. Another reason given by many of the participants for choosing to study in the UK was the presence of family members in the UK which supports the notion that migration is a self-perpetuating phenomenon because of the presence of social networks<sup>6</sup> (Urry, 2007, Koser, 2007). Most of the women valorized the quality of British education and certificates while a few others mentioned the availability of scholarship offers by their universities as some of the reasons for their decision to choose the UK as a study destination. These findings support earlier research on the motivations of African students to study in the UK by Maringe and Carter (2007) which identifies the pull factors as mainly the worldwide value attached to a British HE degree, the straight forward and simple application process and the excellent teaching and learning

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<sup>6</sup> I will be exploring the various enabling and constraining roles played by social networks in the interviewees' lived experiences all through the remaining chapters of the thesis.

environment in the UK. The findings also confirm earlier studies in the USA by Hazen and Alberts (2006) and Alberts and Hazen (2005) which suggest that pull factors such as educational reasons especially the perceived high quality of American education are behind ISM to the USA.

Unlike studies where international student migration decisions were motivated by economic reasons such as career advancement and securing permanent residency or citizenship (Baas, 2010, Hazen and Alberts, 2006, Ono and Piper, 2004) none of my participants mentioned economic factors as their motivation for migrating to the UK for higher education. King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) argue that ISM is not motivated by economic factors, rather it is grounded in youth migrations which are mainly for learning, leisure, travel and experiential objectives. The responses which seemed to support the claim by King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) came from my younger and single participants. Take, for example, the following excerpts from my interview with Dayo:

*Dayo: I just wanted something different from what we have back at home.*

*Stella: Different in terms of ...*

*Dayo: In terms of probably the ... as in the structure, the educational system, the environment, something totally different from what I had at home.... I am just like I am this kind of person that I just like to be current. I like to know what is happening all around (laughs) so I am not left behind. And I just felt like just let me see what's happening. (Single and aged 25)*

Apart from the education itself, perhaps the cultural capital amassed through international study and the associated “identity marker” (Findlay et al., 2012, Baas,

2010, Waters, 2008) serve as another motivation to travel as also suggested by interviewees like Ola and Dayo respectively when they said:

Ola: *I wanted to study outside Nigeria because of the prestige that comes with it (smiling). In Nigeria once you go outside the country to study you have more opportunities, people rate you more. (Engaged and aged 27)*

Dayo: *I chose the UK because normally you know from Nigeria every one of us want to travel out. (Single and aged 25)*

In the following narrative by another interviewee, Ngozi, she indicates that the acquisition of cultural capital as a result of ISM was important in her making the decision to study in the UK. In her own words:

Ngozi: *Mmm, I had a couple of my colleagues back home that finished from this university and I would say I was quite impressed with their disposition and their way of life basically. That's why.*

Stella: *Their disposition and way of life? You mean after they had returned from the UK?*

Ngozi: *Yeah, though I never met with them before they came to study here but I met them after they finished their programme and we worked together and I was quite impressed and I had an impression that the school must have added something to them maybe that was not there before. So that was why I came. (Married and aged 38)*

Ngozi's reason for embarking on ISM may be to acquire the requisite cultural capital but her account above also touches on the importance of social networks in the decisions regarding ISM (Collins, 2008, Brooks and Waters, 2010). But the current debates on ISM are often framed by assumptions about the individualised nature of such

movement (Brooks and Waters, 2010). There is an increasing acknowledgment among scholars that international education involves a set of processes happening at and across the social strata of the individual, family and community (see for example Waters and Brooks, 2010, Collins, 2008, Waters, 2008). In their study of British students overseas, Brooks and Waters (2010) argue that the decision making processes involved before a student embarks on ISM are largely embedded within social relationships – with parents and other family members; with friends at school, work or abroad and, with partners. And this appears to be similar to some of my participants' experiences, see for example the following quotes:

*Eno: [ ] even when I was finishing my first degree I had a group of friends like look we were all just working towards admission in one foreign country or the other. (Married and aged 29)*

*Liz: I just had few friends as at that time that had interest too to come to the UK. So we sat together to fill forms and send them down. (Married and aged 28)*

Another participant, Nneka, is a Master's degree student whose husband is a PhD student in the same university in the UK. Our discussion went this way:

*Stella: You mentioned coming to the UK, was your reason for coming to the UK mainly for your studies or to join your husband?*

*Nneka: Both. To study and to join my husband.*

*Stella: There must be a main purpose of coming ...*

*Nneka: Ehhnn, joining my husband facilitated the study. (Married and aged 29)*

As stated earlier in this chapter and the introductory chapter, the choice of destination for ISM could also be influenced by the presence of social networks that could offer support to the students in the host country (Collins, 2008, Brooks and Waters, 2010), for example one of the women, Jolomi listed the presence of distance relatives in the UK who could lend support as one of the reasons for choosing to study in the UK. Social networks or migration networks “can be seen as a form of social capital” and “can be defined as sets of interpersonal relations that link migrants or returned migrants with relatives, friends or fellow countrymen at home” (Arango, 2000, p.291). Such networks have been recognized as one of the most important explanatory factors for migration – many migrants move because others with whom they are connected migrated before (Arango, 2000, Kofman et al., 2000, Castles and Miller, 2009).

Thus it is important to view ISM in the light of the intersecting nature of these social influences and not just as an individualized phenomenon (Brooks and Waters, 2010). And I am going to discuss this in the light of the specificity of my group of interviewees. In the following paragraphs, I explore some of the women’s narratives that show how their decisions to study abroad are embedded in social relationships and processes. I argue that not all the socially embedded factors that lead to ISM are necessarily pull factors that attract the students to the host countries. My research data suggest that some of these factors can also be understood as “push” factors or dissatisfaction with the status quo in home countries. And I will be examining some of them in the section below.

### ***Unsatisfactory Home Factors that Encourage ISM***

When it comes to the push factors driving ISM, the lack of access to comparable higher education opportunities in the home country is increasingly acknowledged (Raghuram,

2013). The perception of a country's quality of education as poor could be a double disadvantage. For example, D'Arca (1994) in his study of international students from developing countries in Italy notes that countries which are perceived as not having high quality of education find it difficult in attracting the desired number of international students. It therefore follows that not only will such countries not be able to attract international students (D'Arca, 1994), such poor standard of education could act as a push factor for migration encouraging some of their own students to migrate in search of high quality education (Oluwapelumi, 2012, Li et al., 1996) as these women interviewees suggest. In this context, students are 'engaged in the strategic and conscious pursuit of "advantage"' (see Waters and Brooks, 2010, p.218), where "advantage" is assessed by making comparison between places (Raghuram, 2013).

Nonetheless, there are existing studies (for example, Li et al., 1996) that argue that negative economic and political factors could influence the decision for ISM. One of such studies relevant to my research as mentioned earlier is by Maringe and Carter (2007) which indicates that a mixture of push and pull factors motivate African students to study in the UK. Examples of such push factors from their study include economic and political instability and lack of HE capacity to meet the local demand in home countries. The only push factor similar to my participants and those in the study by Maringe and Carter (2007) is the lack of local capacity to meet the demand for places in higher education as I will be analysing in the next section. Perhaps due to the fact that the economic and political situations differ from one African country to the other, the argument that political and economic instability necessitates ISM may be made for a country like Zimbabwe (Maringe and Carter, 2007) and not Nigeria. This reminds us of the warning by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) that the explanatory factors for the push and pull binary of migration differ from one country to another.



### ***Complexities of Socially Embedded Motivations and Push Factors for ISM***

During my interview with Nneka, she acknowledged that prior to her getting married in December 2011, she had applied to a Nigerian university for a place for Master's degree study but her application was unsuccessful. The literature on ISM (Maringe and Carter, 2007, Collins, 2008, Li et al., 1996) recognize the lack of capacity in sending countries to meet the local demand for places in higher education institutions as one of the reasons driving ISM. The implementation of the "education for all" and the free and compulsory basic education policies in some of the sending countries of international students have resulted in the expansion of primary and secondary schools but the same cannot be said for higher education institutions (Li et al., 1996, Maringe and Carter, 2007, Collins, 2008). Possibly because the return on investment in higher education tends to yield higher individual benefits than social or public benefit (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2004, Vickerstaff, 2012). According to Li et al. (1996), the limited supply and selective nature of university places in sending countries result in many of those excluded from local education seeking alternatives abroad.

But for Nneka, her primary reason for migrating to the UK was not to pursue the postgraduate course she could not get admitted for in a Nigerian university, rather she used the opportunity of family reunification in the UK while her husband is studying for a PhD to further her ambition of enrolling in postgraduate study. Possibly she would not have studied in the UK if she had not to come to join her husband in the first place.

Against the backdrop that no single reason is enough to explain international migration (Castles and Miller, 2009), I have used lengthy accounts by two of my interviewees to illustrate the multi-faceted reasons that led to their studying in the UK. I start with the

youngest participant in this study who has been studying in the UK right from her foundations level and through undergraduate and Master's programmes.

*Onome: When I finished secondary school ... because I finished at the age of 15 plus about to turn 16, I didn't want to stay at home so I applied for a diploma in (mentions university) because my late sister was there. But after the first year of diploma and the university had a lot of problems with accreditation of courses and the whole strike issue. And in Nigeria, law is five years and I always wanted to finish school at 21 maximum. My dad knew that and so he thought maybe you should leave, and you would certainly be done in three years.*

*Stella: Besides the university you had attended in Nigeria, couldn't you have gone to any other Nigerian university?*

*Onome: I did apply to ... because I took JAMB<sup>7</sup> ... I applied to (mentions another university) because I heard they are really good in law and stuff. But my mum even though ... I, I think I passed the cut-off but my mum was not very comfortable. She said no, she's heard too many bad things about cult activities and stuff. And like she wouldn't want me to go there.*

*Stella: You said cult activities, what do you mean by that? Please explain ...*

*Onome: Okay basically in Nigeria, I think here they are called fraternities. Yeah I think so, while in Nigeria they are meant to be fraternities but there is eeh an aspect of*

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<sup>7</sup> JAMB stands for the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board which oversees entrance examinations into higher institutions in Nigeria such as universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. The acronym JAMB is colloquially used in Nigeria to refer to the entrance examination into universities.

violence, **severe violence**<sup>8</sup> involved and so on. That's what I mean by cults – fraternities with violence.

*Stella:* So your mum didn't want you to be in any of those schools?

*Onome:* She didn't want me to be in that environment and eh she ... I think it's ... maybe it's the way she views me considering not just the fact that I was young but she felt like I was probably weak and would not be able to defend myself in such environment. My dad was very comfortable with the UK because ... he calls the UK a civilized place compared to America, compared to other countries. So he felt like I would be safe here, and my uncle is here too so someone is also here to look out for me. (Single and aged 21)

From the above, we see that the decision to study abroad was not the migrant's alone. Onome's accounts suggest that social relationships played a huge role in her migration to study in the UK. Her parents made the decision (which they felt was better for her) to send her to the UK, a country they considered safe and where her uncle would look out for her. Also, the short duration of study and presence of social network in the UK played a role in the decision to study in the UK as already documented earlier in this chapter. But to what extent can ISM be attributed to the inability of local supply to meet the demand for places in higher institutions of learning, especially against the background above where Onome got admitted in more than one Nigerian university but her parents chose to send her to the UK to study? Some scholars (see for example, Waters, 2008, Hunt, 2002 and Baas 2010) have argued that studying outside one's

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<sup>8</sup> She stressed this with a raised tone.

country of origin has been used as an exclusionary tactic by the middle class to ensure their social reproduction and to maintain their class structure. Waters and Brooks (2010, p. 217) argue that “with the ‘democratization’ of access to formal education, the social advantage of middleclass families has come under threat. They have, consequently, had to find new ways of excluding working class participants from the most valued and sought-after occupations” hence they send their children abroad to study. Such exclusionary measures are not limited to sending countries who aspire to acquire Western academic degrees, some research have shown that the experiential reasons, acquisition of cultural capital and positional advantage are mainly behind the decision by students from Western/receiving countries to move outside their own countries to study especially in other Western countries and such students tend to be from middle class families (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003, Findlay et al., 2012, Waters and Brooks, 2010).

In this case the decision to study abroad was not only informed by the desire for quality education (Hazen and Alberts, 2006, Maringe and Carter, 2007), lack of local capacity to meet the demands for places in HE (Collins, 2008, Li et al., 1996) or accumulation of cultural capital (Waters, 2008, Baas, 2010). Onome’s interview extracts above reflect many negative aspects of Nigerian educational system that middle class Nigerian parents try to shield their children from, hence the decision to send them abroad for higher education. As already discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, ISM has been acknowledged by some scholars such as Li et al. (1996), Waters (2008) and Brooks and Waters (2011) as a strategy by middle class families to protect their children from negative situations in their home countries. Li et al. (1996) also claim that it can also be a strategy by parents to indirectly protect themselves against any undesirable

economic or political eventuality in their home country, take for instance the case of Hong Kong before the transfer of sovereignty by the British in 1997.

Nigeria has been experiencing poor educational standards in recent decades as mentioned earlier in this chapter. These poor educational standards are exemplified in non-accreditation of certain courses in some universities by the National Universities Commission (Okojie, 2008), strike actions that could last for months by academic and non-academic staff of higher institutions leading to disruptions and uncertainty regarding duration of study (Ogala, 2013), violent cult activities in higher education institutions (Rotimi, 2005) that sometimes tend to target students from very comfortable socio-economic backgrounds, all contribute to encourage middle class families to send their children to study abroad. Take for example, the following quote taken from my interview with Chioma, the other participant who had also studied in the UK at the undergraduate level before proceeding to a Master's degree course:

*Chioma: Well because of strikes in Nigeria and inconsistency. My sister came here and she knew it was better off so she advised me to do the same. So I came here and followed suit. (Married and aged 28)*

It is instructive that only the two women, Onome and Chioma, who had studied in the UK at the undergraduate level before proceeding to postgraduate studies mentioned uncertainty in duration of study in Nigerian higher institutions of learning as a motivation for choosing to study in the UK. Some of the remaining interviewees only talked about it in the course of making another point for example when talking about the differences between Nigerian and British educational system. Below are two extracts I have used to illustrate the nuanced reference to duration of university education in Nigeria.

*Vera: If I did this (Master's degree) in Nigeria, I wouldn't have finished now. And I won't get the same quality of education that I have gotten so far. (Married and aged 30)*

*Dayo: You know back at home we are used to all you know is when you come into school; you don't know when you graduate. But here if they say you are submitting by..., even before I came in I knew the date I was going to submit my dissertation, everything was strictly by deadline. (Single and aged 25)*

Perhaps the women who had studied for their undergraduate degrees in Nigeria and experienced academic disruptions had accepted it as part of the Nigerian university system as the data above suggest. Maybe that is why only the two women whose parents had shielded from such disruptive academic system saw it as a major motivation for studying abroad.

The second lengthy interview excerpts I have used are from Eno, who had come to the UK for a Master's degree programme before proceeding to PhD studies. She initially told me she came to study in the UK because of the value of the British degree, her father had studied in the UK and her brother who was studying in the UK had encouraged her to come. In the course of the interview she further told me of her other motivations for studying in the UK which highlight the structural inequalities in the Nigerian educational system as well as the exploitation and discrimination women face that tend to put pressure on some of them to try to prove that they are "good women" and deserve their educational accomplishments in Nigeria. I will discuss more on the subjugation of women and the social pressures they face in Nigerian society in the next chapter of this thesis. But here I provide the following interview extracts by Eno which suggest that her coming to study in the UK was also a strategy she had employed to

enable her to rise above the pitfalls in Nigerian educational system, the negative stereotype associated with graduates of state universities and to prove that her earning a first class degree in Nigeria as a woman was no fluke. In her own words:

*Eno: I wanted also to be able to prove myself; okay I had a first class in Engineering. I went to a state school. There is this disparity between federal and state schools in Nigeria and I finished from a state school. The only way I could really prove myself is going out to the outer world and show myself like look it's not a matter of coming from a state school or a federal school in Nigeria but it's a matter of yourself, what you are able to do, your ability.*

*Stella: How are federal universities viewed and how are state universities viewed?*

*Eno: Yeah, the thing is like if you go to a first generation university (which my parents went to) you are on top of the world. So it's like the federal universities, if you go to a federal university and one of the first generation universities you are viewed like someone who is exceptionally brilliant and ummm you have a lot of opportunities and all that if you go to those schools.*

*Stella: Would that be because they are highly competitive?*

*Eno: Yeah, they are highly competitive. The other thing, I think to me they are better funded than other universities [ ]. So that's where you always desire to go, yeah. And I remember like somebody telling us that when you go to the job market the thing is like they tell you umm "state university students fall out of the line, you are not supposed to be here." [ ] So it's like look I have to compensate also for all these state university issue or no state university. I have to take myself out of it.*

*Stella: Even though you made a first class?*

*Eno: Yeah even with a first class, that's the other thing some of them don't consider. [ ] yeah there is that kind of belief that if you are a female student they believe you are able to work your way, if you start going out with a lecturer for instance umm he may be able to ... maybe upgrade your mark, possibly. So there is that kind of impression, some people feel like oh if you say that this lady had first class, it's like "hee you are not sure of what she did to get it". So it's like people are not too confident that you got it yourself, you understand that kind of thing? So going out is actually look I have gone out, I have gone to a neutral place where all those things don't exist and I have still proved myself, yeah. I have come to the UK and I also made a distinction in the UK. (Married and aged 29)*

Some scholars claim that women experience discrimination in Nigerian society on many fronts such as in the home, work place and the political sphere (Aina, 1998b, Aderinto, 2001, British Council, 2012, Okpara, 2006). In their work on gender discrimination and education in West Africa, Tuwor and Sossou (2008) argue that women still have unequal access to education in Nigeria because of cultural practices of early marriage and the perceived lack of returns on women's education. Even after some women had gone further in their education up to university level, Eno's accounts above suggest that the discrimination against them persists in that their academic success is not often seen as what the women had achieved by dint of hard work but by trading their sexuality willingly or under coercion (Ladebo, 2003).

From the foregoing, on the surface the women's accounts suggest that they chose to study abroad because they want to gain qualifications, but further interrogations reveal that gaining an overseas degree is far too simplistic an explanation for the Nigerian



women interviewed for this study (see also Ichimoto, 2004). Some studies on women students from patriarchal societies like India and Japan who are studying in Western universities in Australia, UK and USA suggest that the pull factors for their migration include the pursuit of academic goals and self-fulfilment, and the quest for different lives and career opportunities in those countries while the push factor was mainly to circumvent the restrictions and problems of living in patriarchal societies (Habu, 2000, Andressen and Kumagai, 1996, Ichimoto, 2004, Matsui, 1995). Though in my study the women never mentioned economic reasons or the quest for career opportunities in the UK as their motivations for study abroad, it appears that some economic and career considerations also influenced ISM and are important to them as well. This is because they spoke with disappointment regarding the scrapping of the post study work visa by the past UK coalition administration. One of the women told me this:

*Mary: Mmmmmmm, yeah I think basically to be very truthful it's ... when I left Nigeria I was thinking that maybe when you are through that you would have opportunity to work for a while then you decide on what to do. But when I came here I was a bit disappointed because I had to like ask questions [ ]. If I am to advise someone in Nigeria about studying in the UK I think that advice is going to be spread into two. I would advise the person to come maybe in terms of educational achievements yes, but if the person is looking out for what I also looked out for which is maybe having the (work) experience in the UK I wouldn't advise him to come. Maybe they should look for another country that you can have the experience after schooling. (Single and aged 25)*

Abiola, another interview also said the following:

*Abiola: I think, I think it's been a little bit unfair to international students to be fair. Migration in the UK I don't think the policy perhaps is friendly. It used to be*

*perhaps at some point but not ... In fact now I don't even encourage anyone to come to the UK. I just think "why do you want to come and waste money?" I think it is a massive investment. (Single and aged 29)*

The accounts of Mary and Abiola above also suggest that just like former international student migrants or alumni of foreign universities can act as role models and attract people in their social network to study in their host countries (Brooks and Waters, 2010, Collins, 2008, Fisher, 2014), they can equally discourage people from seeking HE in the UK. They seem to support the argument by Able and White (2012) and Thomas (2011) that the current immigration policy of the UK government (that had listed international students in the net migration figures as the government seeks to cut net migration to the UK to tens of thousands) which is viewed as unfriendly to international students (Able and White, 2012, Thomas, 2011) can act as a deterrent to ISM to the UK. In chapter one, I mentioned a recent British Council study by Shaw and Ratcliffe (2014) which predicts that Nigeria will become the second biggest sending country of postgraduate students to the UK (after China) in the next decade, but this study did not consider the impact of visa arrangements and immigration policies of host countries on international students' decisions of study destination in their analysis. In view of the negative comments by most of my participants regarding UK immigration policies on international students, it would be interesting to see what the predictions of students' preferred study destinations would look like if immigration policies are factored into the analysis.

Also in terms of using ISM as a strategy to escape oppressive and restrictive conditions in one's home country as the earlier stated studies have documented, in my study only one woman in the course of the interview stated that she came to UK because she found

the Nigerian setting too repressive for women. This participant, Abiola, had valorized having a British degree when asked why she came to study here but she later conceded during the interview that:

*Abiola: Because we live in a patriarchal society in Nigeria, which is what I hate about it. [ ] It (living in the UK) just feels very natural to me, that's why I knew I couldn't thrive in Nigeria. Even already I was struggling at the time I was working in Nigeria because I felt repressed, I felt very angry about ... like I want to be **me**<sup>9</sup>, I just want to live my life! You know be, and you can't do that in Nigeria. You can't! (Single and aged 29)*

She must have felt strongly about leaving Nigeria because she told me that when she got admission to study in the UK and her parents could not pay her tuition in the UK as earlier agreed, she deferred her admission and saved up from her job in an investment bank to fund her Master's in the UK. She also worked part-time while studying to pay for her living costs. I will discuss Abiola more and why I suppose she is different from my other participants in chapter six of this thesis.

At this point, I want to draw a parallel between my study and that of Japanese women in Australian universities by Ichimoto (2004), which indicates that women's narratives of their motivations to study abroad are a more 'complex layered process' and a boundless mixture of pull and push factors. Their openly stated reasons (those that they are wont to give initially in the interviews) are related to their academic goals (pull factors) but

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<sup>9</sup> The participant emphasized this in a raised tone.

their fundamental and more private reasons are related to other issues such as the discriminatory practices they faced in Nigeria (push factors).

Chirkov et al. (2008) in their study of the role played by the motivation to study abroad in the adaption of international students in Canada used the concepts of “preservation” and self-development” goals in ISM to explain the traditional concepts of migration push and pull motivations. According to them:

[P]reservation goals include various strivings to avoid aversive situations in their home country in order to preserve their security, freedom and other humane conditions. Self-development goals incorporate strivings related to obtaining better education and establishing successful careers.

(p. 428)

In this context, the fact that the interviewees are more likely to talk about self-development goals without inhibition and only discuss the preservation goals with more prodding suggests that they probably view the self-development goals as universal and more socially acceptable because they are supposed to be main purpose of study abroad as marketed by universities and other institutions of learning (Education UK, 2014, Education New Zealand, 2014, Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002).

### **Who Decides and Who Pays?**

From my research findings, the other ways in which ISM is embedded in social relationships are in terms of who decides and who pays for ISM. In their study of Chinese students in Australia, Singh and Doherty (2008) argue that the decisions on ISM were normally made by the patriarch of the family (usually the father) with the main aim of furthering the families’ transnational ties. In the case of some of my

participants the decision on ISM was also made by their families' patriarchs (in this context fathers and husbands as the case maybe) but for various reasons as shown in the examples below. As Nneka who I had referred to earlier on in this chapter put the decision-making regarding her study abroad:

*Nneka: Well, my decision was to do a Master's back in Nigeria because I already took a form but somehow I wasn't given the admission so my husband suggested doing it here at the same university where he is studying. ... I think he suggested that because I am going to come to the UK to join him. So it's an opportunity for me to be here and also to do my Master's as well. (Married and aged 29)*

*Amara: When it (first failed PhD attempt) happened my husband said "you are not going back home without your PhD". I came with (mentions scholarship) but when that thing happened, everything stopped. The scholarship stopped, everything ... this and that. (Married and aged 43)*

Amara had travelled to the UK with her husband and children on an all-expense paid international scholarship to study for a PhD but had encountered problems in the first university she had attended which led to her losing her scholarship and job in Nigeria. But the decision for her to register for PhD studies in another university without any scholarship was made by her husband and he supported her in looking after their four children and doing multiple jobs to help pay for her £50,000 tuition fees and their living expenses while she continued her educational aspiration in the UK. Onome's father also made the decision because she said, "he believes that the system here is better than the one back home."

Aderinto (2001) in her study on the subordination of women in rural Yoruba land in Nigeria argues that women worldwide face discrimination in the society but the

subordination of women is more pronounced in the developing countries of Asia and Africa, and even more in rural than in urban areas; and the greatest pattern of subordination is in the area of 'who decides what'. Her findings generally show that men enjoy a dominant position in this area. One may consider men making the decisions for women to study abroad as a form of domination of women. But in the context of the benefits of ISM I argue that "men making decisions for women" may not necessarily be to "dominate" them or lead to negative consequences for the women all the time. Maybe these men also gain some prestige from sending their daughters and wives abroad to study.

For most of my other participants, the "patriarchs" in their families also played a role in paying for their studies overseas. In some cases, their fathers and husbands paid their fees and living expenses in full and in other cases the women got part scholarships from their schools while their families paid the balance of the fees. There were a few cases where though their fathers had paid their fees in full and were still paying for their living expenses, the women chose to work in order to gain some work experience in the UK and make extra money for themselves. There were also a few cases where my participants' families did not have to pay for their education in the UK because they got full scholarships that covered their tuition and living costs, or the women paid for their education themselves from their savings while working in Nigeria and their living expenses from working part-time in the UK while studying.

The role of the patriarchs (fathers and husbands) in the women students' quest for higher education in the UK is not limited to paying for their education. In the following chapters I will discuss how the "patriarchs" seemed to support their daughters and wives' educational quest in the UK while their mothers were more interested in the

women students fulfilling their social obligations by becoming wives and mothers themselves.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter set out to document the motivations behind the women participants' decision to study abroad. It provided a context on Nigeria and how the contemporary Nigerian educational system can encourage Nigerians to embark on international student migration. The chapter then examined the women's migration decisions against the neoclassical push – pull binary of migration, and against the conceptualizations of migration as an individualized decision/ process, and men as the primary migrants.

The chapter has demonstrated that the conceptualizations of the motivations for migration and international student migration in literature do not necessarily represent the realities of those who migrate. Migration decisions are not just based on push and pull factors alone, rather a complex and layered mix of push and pull factors contribute to migration decisions. As the accounts provided have tried to show, ISM is not an individualized process but it is enmeshed in a web of social relationships and influences (with family members, friends, partners and existing social situations in Nigerian) which all impact the decision to study abroad. It has also tried to demonstrate that ISM is not a gender neutral process. Women also engage in ISM and sometimes for reasons peculiar to them as women.

The different ways in which the women experience life in the UK while studying at the stage of life they are expected to be wives and mothers according to Nigerian cultural expectations are explored in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Four: Living in the UK: Experiences of Social Pressures**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter has highlighted the women's motivations for coming to study in the UK. This chapter builds on that analysis with demonstrations of how they experience life in the UK as postgraduate students with particular emphasis on the social pressures they face to conform to socially expected gender roles in Nigeria. This is with the intention of challenging the migration and ISM literature that depict the cultural experiences of migrants and international students mainly as 1) regards struggles in adapting to the host countries' culture – in terms of language barriers, different cultural expectations and difficulties in making friends with host nationals (Singh, 2012, Williams and Johnson, 2011, Hendrickson et al., 2011, Brown, 2009, Smith and Khawaja, 2011, Myles and Cheng, 2003); or as 2) opportunity for women to circumvent problematic gender roles and expectations in their home countries.

Earlier studies on ISM that focused on gender suggest that female international students from patriarchal societies like India and Japan adapt to and show a preference towards their host countries' egalitarian culture (Baas, 2010, Hazen and Alberts, 2006, Matsui, 1995, Ono and Piper, 2004). In his account of Indian students' experiences in Australia, Baas (2010) touches on the gendered expectations of Indian students from their families in India. There are varying expectations from both male and female Indian international students from their families on the completion of their degrees. Most of the Indian students are expected to work in Australia after their studies to pay off the debts their families accrued to send them abroad. That is why getting a permanent residency (PR) in Australia is very important to them. For the male Indian students their families back home expect them to have financial and social success abroad that match the Indian middle class perspective, while Indian women are expected to marry a "suitable"



partner back in India irrespective of whatever success they may achieve abroad. While the Indian men want the PR so they can work in Australia, the Indian women want to get the PR because they prefer the freedom living in Australia guarantees them. So the PR means different things to Indian male and female students. This supports the findings in the last chapter that migration motivations are gendered. In this chapter the thesis attempts to demonstrate that migration expectations are also gendered.

In the case of Japanese female students, some commentators claim that women face limited opportunity and poor reward structure in the Japanese labour market, therefore women see investment in higher education abroad as a way to overcome their handicaps or to resist more traditional life paths (Habu, 2000, Ono and Piper, 2004, Matsui, 1995, Kelsky, 2001). Many of the women that participated in the above mentioned studies have experienced the limitations imposed by societal norms and expectations of “what a Japanese woman should and should not be”. Ono and Piper (2004) acknowledge that such norms are changing but that the notion of “good wife and wise mother” is still prevalent and impacts the actions and ideals of many Japanese women. Although the Japanese female students’ original motive for embarking on HE abroad was to earn university degrees, they saw their experience of living abroad as an occasion for “cultural exploration” and “self-emancipation” (Matsui, 1995). Some of them claimed that:

[T]hey will never marry or have children, so as to pursue their careers and live their own lives. They prefer to be in the US, where, in their view, women have more options than just motherhood.

(Matsui, 1995, p. 373)

The thesis findings seem to challenge the views of the studies mentioned above, as 18 out of the 20 women involved in this study characterized their experiences of international student migration in terms of their struggles to conform to their home country's patriarchal social expectations of them as women even when they are living in a Western country. Also, these 18 women displayed a disposition to meet Nigerian gendered cultural expectations of them.

Scholars such as Kofman et al. (2000) have suggested a model which takes account of women's agency in migration studies. Zontini (2004) notes that such a model not only sees migrants as social actors (instead of as passive objects), it also helps to understand their background by considering the social, political and economic power structures at the national and international level which might limit and impact their actions (p. 1114). So in order to understand the context of the lived experiences of this group of Nigerian women in the UK, I deem it important to present an overview of concepts relevant to this research such as patriarchy, social age deadlines and socialization which seem to have played a huge part in the making of the individuals the women in this study have become. I will first look at the patriarchal system under which these women were raised in Nigeria.

### **Patriarchal Ideology in Nigeria**

Patriarchy as a system in which the father as the head of a household holds both legal and economic powers over members of his household has been described as the older and narrower meaning of the concept (Lerner, 1986, Kramarae, 1992, Asiyanbola, 2005). In recent years most feminists have used the term, patriarchy to refer to the institutionalization of male supremacy and female subordination (Asiyanbola, 2005, Kramarae, 1992, Walby, 1990, Aina, 1998b). According to Lerner (1986, p. 239):

Patriarchy in its wider definition means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power. It does not imply that women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence, and resources.

The figures on the percentage of women in positions of political power, or as senior executives in major corporations in the UK and many other western countries (Davies, 2011, Grant Thornton, 2013) suggest that these supposedly “modern” societies are also patriarchal. However, in such societies for example the UK, there are concerted efforts by the government to remove barriers to gender equality in all spheres of life through equality strategy and legislation (Davies, 2011, Government Equalities Office, 2014).

It is important to add that Nigeria participated in and is a signatory to most of the international conferences and international instruments on the eradication of discrimination against women such as the four World Conferences on Women (which were held in Mexico City in 1975; in Copenhagen in 1980; in Nairobi in 1985 and in Beijing in 1995), the Vienna Conference on Human Rights of 1993, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, as well as the Copenhagen World Summit of Social Development held in 1995, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, African Charter on Human and People’s Right and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (Aderinto, 2001). In spite of all these, discrimination against women persists in Nigeria as in patriarchal societies where the men are regarded as

heads of the households. According to the 2011 state of the world population report, 80.2 million (49.3%) of Nigeria's estimated 162.5 million people are women (UNFPA, 2011). Irrespective of the almost equal gender distribution in Nigeria, the country ranks 119 out of 148 in the global Gender Equality Index (UNDP, 2012). And women still suffer discriminations and subordination not just in their homes but also in the work place, social and political spheres (British Council, 2012, Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development, 2006). Women's employment is mostly limited to low income-generating activities, mainly in the lower echelons of the unregulated informal sector (Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development, 2006).

Some commentators argue that in Africa, the family structure according to gender roles has its root in patriarchy where male authority and power are dominant (Wamue-Ngare and Njoroge, 2011). Thus the "patriarchal ideology bestows absolute power on men, thereby leaving women at their mercy" (Wamue-Ngare and Njoroge, 2011, p. 1). Asiyanbola (2005) argues that Nigerian society has always been a patriarchal society and that the patriarchal system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex privileges men and at the same time places severe restraints on the roles and activities of females; by way of taboos to ensure conformity with certain gender roles (Aina, 1998b).

Izugbara (2004) notes that among the many ethnic groups that make up Nigeria the male child is usually preferred over the female child, and therefore many couples would go to any length to have a male child, even consulting oracles. She further suggests that the preference for the male child in Nigeria is the strongest in West Africa. Igbelina-Igbokwe (2013) and Aina (1998b) claim that a mother of sons tends to relish greater pride and security than a mother of daughters due to the preference of male children. In

some communities the privileges accorded to a mother of sons may not be obviously displayed but there are subtle innuendos of superiority. And a woman without sons lives under social insecurity and the constant fear of losing her marriage and home to another woman who may be brought in to correct her shortfalls (Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013, Aina, 1998b). As such, female children are more likely to suffer rejection, prejudice, discrimination and abandonment; they are also less likely to be sent to school resulting in many girls in Nigeria engaging in domestic work or child labour to earn money for themselves or to supplement their families' resources (Izugbara, 2004, Makama, 2013).

This preference for the male child was further validated by a socio-linguistic study of Igbo names by Ukonu (1989 as cited in Izugbara (2004, p. 8). She reports that the names given to male children tend to represent strength, hope and fulfilment and the longer it takes a family to have male children the more the expectation, and ultimately anxiety, grows in the family (Aina, 1998b). And when the male child is finally born he is named with relief, such names are *Obisike* (my heart is strengthened), *Nwokedi* (there is a man here), *Obiajulu* (my fear has calmed), *Ujoadi* (no fears again), *Obiora* (the heart desire of all). On the other hand, the names of the preceding female children before the arrival of the male child affirm the "crisis of anticipation" in the family such as *Ogadinma* (it will soon be better), *Ndidi* (patience), *Anaelechi* (I hope on God), *Anaedi* (I continue to persevere), *Otuomasirichi* (however God wants it), *Nwanyibuife* (a woman is still of value).

Male children are expected to bear the family name and are seen as those that will stay back in their family homes and inherit the wealth and duties of their parents (Amadiume, 1987, Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013, Aina, 1998b). Amadiume (1987) illustrates gender roles attached to both male and female children using Igbo maternity songs sung

by women that say that having a boy is very good because it is men who owned profit or fortune but when a female child is born she is referred to as a “bag of money”. At the birth of a female child, the women also sang that they have given birth to a daughter who would cook for them and marry a good husband. Hence, Amadiume (1987) argues that the importance of women was stressed in terms of exchange, a daughter would be married off and bride price/wealth would be paid to her family by her husband. For most men, the payment of bride price implies the act of acquisition of a property - the woman (Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013). This form of exchange in marriage has been identified by Lerner (1986) as the first gender-defined social role for women, where the complementary gender role for men was to be those involved in the exchanging or who determined the terms of the exchange. While the payment of bride price is a symbolical expression in the act of coming together between families, it is also seen as a complete act of transfer of a woman's rights in her family to her husband's family; and “through this process of exchange, the commoditization phenomenon of a woman's body as a site of reproductive potential is given ultimate interpretation” (Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013). Lerner (1986) is of the opinion that the primary exchange of women has taught men how to assert and exercise power over people slightly different from themselves.

While the male children's subordination to their father is only temporary until they also become heads of households, for the female children and wives their subservience is lifelong with the daughters only changing who they are in subordination to when they become wives and come under their husbands' domination and protection (Lerner, 1986). In a patriarchal society like Nigeria, both men and women are talked about and judged based on their socially expected roles as full adults which are their status as fathers and mothers. While it is a man's duty is to provide for and protect his family, Nigerian culture does not label bad men as it would bad women (those who failed in

their wifely and maternal duties) (Amadiume, 1987, Ezumah, 2008). This reflects Lerner's (1986) argument that:

[T]he basis of paternalism is an unwritten contract for exchange: economic support and protection given by the male for subordination in all matters, sexual service, and unpaid domestic service given by the female. Yet the relationship frequently continues in fact and in law, even when the male partner had defaulted on his obligation. (p. 218)

A woman derives her social status from her two major roles – being a wife and a mother (Aina, 1998b, Beauvoir, 2009 (c1949)). A successful woman in Nigeria is judged by her ability to fulfil her obligations as a wife to her husband and also as a mother to her children, but she faces many challenges and contradictions to her self-actualization (Ezumah, 2008). The same society that extols virtues of resourcefulness and perseverance in women as mothers tends to perceive women's achievement of affluence and social status independent of their men negatively – such women are regarded as witches<sup>10</sup>, prostitutes and free women (Ezumah, 2008, Aina, 1998a). Aina (1998a, p. 75) reports that husbands of such women are not only disrespected, they also become topics of gossips. She cites Yoruba lingoes for such men, *O ti ra ni ye* (the man has been bewitched by his wife such that he has lost all control to exert power over her), *O ti so di didinrin* (the wife has caused the husband to lose memory, vision and intellect) or *O hun ma ni iyawo* (the specific roles of wife and husband have been swapped through witchcraft). This also mirrors the account by Adichie (2013) that some

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<sup>10</sup> I will discuss the concept of witches further later in this chapter drawing from anthropological literature on African witchcraft as well as Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the witch*.

successful single women in Nigeria who wish to get married would rather not own assets such as cars and houses so as not scare potential suitors away even when they can afford such.

The argument on the origin of patriarchy in Africa cannot be generalized, it is very complex as different schools of thought have attempted to trace the foundation of patriarchy to African or Western origins. Some commentators argue that patriarchy is characteristically African since African and indeed Nigerian cultures are embedded in patriarchy (Aina, 1998b, Asiyanbola, 2005), whereas others believe that patriarchy was brought about by colonization (in the case of Nigeria by Britain) (Amadiume, 1987, Aidoo, 1998, Wamue-Ngare and Njoroge, 2011, Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013). Though Wamue-Ngare and Njoroge (2011, p. 1) note that “patriarchal ideology bestows absolute power on men, thereby leaving women at their mercy” earlier in their report, citing Wamue (1999), they later argue that patriarchy in the African set up did not and does not necessarily subdue women but “it is the adoption of the colonialist’s sense of family administration that presented an undesirable intra-gender relationship modelling. The colonization process erected men as masters of the home, village, clan and nation. By so doing, women were allowed insignificant roles to play” (Wamue-Ngare and Njoroge, 2011, p. 14). On her part, Igbelina-Igbokwe (2013) agrees that patriarchy existed in pre-colonial Nigeria, but colonization worsened the gender gap through establishing and buttressing discriminatory gender division of roles for women and men which encouraged the primacy of men's roles over women's. The political and economic structures put in place by colonialism deprived women of the use of public space and restricted them to the domestic sphere.



From Amadiume's (1987) account, the western education introduced under the British colonial rule equipped boys for roles in government, trade, industry, church and educational services while girls were prepared for domestic services and taught cooking, cleaning, childcare and sewing. Amadiume (1987) argues that the gendered educational system of the colonists and missionaries were rooted in their values and the notions of women embedded in Victorian ideology. Hence, Amadiume (1987) agrees with Igbelina-Igbokwe (2013) that the domination of women by men was exacerbated by the economic and political structures introduced by the colonists and missionaries, for example the recruitment of only men into Native Administration. Aidoo (1998) also claims that most of the subjugation of women that African men indulge in and regard as "African culture" was brought about by colonization. According to Aidoo (1998, p. 47):

European colonizing men (especially Victorians) brought with them a burden of confusion; first about their own women, and then about other women – all of which was further muddled up by the colonizers' fantasies about the sexual prowess of both African men and women.

Women have been able to overcome subordination by men in some parts of the world especially if they are educated, wealthy and have high status but the same cannot be said for Nigeria because the subordination of women occurs although to different degrees to both educated and uneducated, rich and poor, urban and rural women (Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013, Aderinto, 2001). Such subordination is perpetuated by numerous factors that are embedded in the cultural practices, norms, unwritten family codes and discriminatory provisions of the tripartite legal system in Nigeria namely Statutory, Customary and Sh'aria (Makama, 2013, Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013). There are Statutory Codes in the Nigerian state that privilege men. For example, a married woman is

required to submit a written letter of consent from her husband before applying for a passport from the Nigeria Immigration Services (Whyte, 2002, Omonubi-McDonnell, 2003, Izugbara, 2004). This is especially the case if she is applying for the passport in her married name (Nigeria High Commission London, 2014) and most Nigerian women want to be addressed by their married title, Mrs. (Smith, 2001a). Also fathers provide written consent to support passport applications for their children younger than 16 years old as mothers are not allowed as official guarantors unless where the fathers are deceased (Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014, Nigeria Immigration Services, 2015).

Another example of legal system's discrimination against women is the Penal Code in northern Nigeria. The Penal Code of 1960 which operates in northern Nigerian is mostly English in origin with the resulting Code integrating many principles of Islamic law, but in the 12 states of Northern Nigeria which had adopted Sharia law from 1999 the "new" Sharia Penal Code (Islamic criminal law) is practised alongside the Penal Code (Ostien, 2007). The Penal Code explicitly excludes sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife from the definition of rape as long as she has reached puberty. The Penal Code also precludes as a felony any act which is done by a husband for the purpose of correcting his wife which does not amount to infliction of grievous injury (Makama, 2013). There are also traditional or customary laws which are indigenous to the different ethnic groups (Oba, 2006) with customary courts of appeal in every state of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (Federal High Court, 2014). According to the traditional laws, a wife is regarded as the property of her husband and a wife is to be inherited after the death of her husband especially in South Eastern Nigeria (Amadiume, 1987, Makama, 2013). Also the cultural belief that a woman is the property of the man makes the society view his use of violence as a means of

controlling her as a domestic issue that should be settled privately (Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014).

Religion has been identified as another factor that reinforces the subordination of women (Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013, Izugbara, 2004, Makama, 2013). Religion is used as a tool in safeguarding class society and patriarchy because most religious traditions of the world are patriarchal (the founders and great names of the main religions in the world – Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and Buddhism) are male (Makama, 2013, Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013). For the Christian faith which the participants in this research belong to, the belief that God ordained the man to be the head and women to be ruled by men is apparent in many passages of the Holy Bible (Izugbara, 2004). The high spirituality and attachment of Nigerians, especially women, to religion make religion a critical tool to enforce women subordination; and the custodians of spiritual authority are held in such reverence that guarantees absolute adherence to the declarations by such figures (Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013, Makama, 2013). The religious texts are also given patriarchal interpretation which worsens women's circumstances and enforce compliance in a way that privileges men/boys, hence women and girls are forced to obey to avoid social sanctions or labelling that may result from non-conformity (Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013).

Lerner (1986) argues that without the cooperation of women the patriarchal system cannot thrive and some of the ways to ensure the cooperation of women include:

[G]ender indoctrination; educational deprivation; the denial to women of knowledge of their history; the dividing of women, one from the other, by defining “respectability” and “deviance” according to women’s sexual activities; by restraints and outright coercion; by discrimination in access to

economic resources and political power; and by awarding class privileges to conforming women. (P. 217)

Regardless of the fact that women may have cooperated with men in their long subjugation to men, Lerner (1986) and Lentin (1995) warn that it would be wrong to regard women as predominantly victims because women are vital in creating the society and have always been actors and agents in history.

### **Gender Role Socialization in Nigeria**

According to Persell (1990), socialization is a central process in social life and refers to the preparation of newcomers to become members of an existing group and to think, feel and act in ways the group considers appropriate. Right from when a child is born in Nigeria, they are perceived in terms of their future gender roles. From infancy, girls are socialized to acquire skills and qualities that will aid them in accomplishing their anticipated future roles as wives and mothers (Ezumah, 2008, Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013).

Culture exists before the socialization of new members begins and the family remains the main source of passing on the society's values, attitudes, and behaviours to children (Persell, 1990, Beauvoir, 2009 (c1949), Boyd, 1989). In Nigeria, the social creation of masculinity and femininity usually starts at home through the process of socialization by allowing practices whose objectives are to impart certain traits and identities into male and female children (Izugbara, 2004, Makama, 2013, Adichie, 2013, Asiyanbola, 2005). From the very beginning, a boy's value and superiority over a girl are made obvious to both boys and girls because the Nigerian culture sees them as different in terms of their make-up, abilities and potentials. As such, men/boys and women/girls are socialized to become different individuals and to conform to the prescribed gender roles at both the family and community levels – the boys are socialized to perceive

themselves as future heads of households, breadwinners and owners of wives and children while the girls are socialized to be good women, obedient, meek, submissive (Izugbara, 2004, Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013).

As in most patriarchal societies in Nigeria, boys are taught to be domineering, ruthless, and aggressive (masculine) and to see themselves as naturally superior to women, while girls must be submissive, polite, gentle and skilful in domestic chores (feminine) and to see themselves as inferior to men (Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013, Izugbara, 2004, Ezumah, 2008). Adichie (2013) notes that girls are also taught to aspire to marry, and not to be too “ambitious”. These gender roles are stressed through the process of socialization at various levels including the home, schools, places of worship and the use of mass media to depict the ideal man and the ideal woman (Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013). In the words of Izugbara (2004, p. 10):

The key words used in the construction of the ideal man in Nigeria are strong, hard, unyielding, vigorous, stout-hearted, resolute, aggressive, active and tough whereas the ideal woman on the other hand is spoken of in terms of dutiful, submissive, quiet, fearful, humble, faithful, patient, and careful.

Boys’ superiority over girls in Nigeria also reflects on issues regarding sexuality. Due to the fact that the culture stigmatizes pregnancy before marriage, the socialization of girls emphasizes sexual restraint and preparation for their future roles as wives and mothers whereas the socialization of boys emphasizes masculinity, which is associated with virility, violence, valour and authority (Amadiume, 1987, Adichie, 2013).

A woman’s worth in Nigeria is tied to her conformity to gender roles of being a wife and mother (Aina, 1998b, Aderinto, 2001, Makinde, 2004), hence these gender roles are

stressed right from birth and throughout every point in life. For example, the following marriage song documented in Amadiume (1987, p. 72) encapsulates the perception and role of a woman in Nigeria:

Be you as beautiful as a mermaid

the beauty of a woman is to have a husband.

Be you one who has been to the land of white people

the beauty of a woman is to have a husband.

If a woman does not marry, her beauty declines.

One who is beautiful is best to be in her husband's house.

When you get to your husband's house, have a baby.

After you look after the child, the child will look after you.

As will be seen, this song still speaks poignantly to the situation of my participants who are studying in "the land of white people" and the notion that their being married and mothers are of more social value in the Nigerian society than their educational attainment. But do the women have the same views about their social roles and value? The assertion by Amadiume (1987, p.69) that when a woman outgrows the question "whose daughter is she" people would ask, "whose wife is she" reflects the social expectations of women when they get to a certain age. And it is to how these expectations shape the women's lives while they are studying I turn to in the next section of this chapter.

### **How Nigerian Christian women experience life in the UK as postgraduate students: *Social or Cultural Age Deadlines in Nigeria***

My interviewees who migrated to the UK for educational purposes discussed lived experiences which suggest that a change in geographic location did not necessarily mean a change from Nigerian cultural norms and expectations of women. In the

following sub-sections I draw from the women's narratives which seem to demonstrate that in most cases they are still holding onto the Nigerian societal expectations and gendered roles. I will begin these discussions by looking at the perceived social age deadlines for marriage in Nigeria.

At the informal societal level, age is related to notions of appropriate behaviour, proper timing and sequence of events and roles in life, and there are social age deadlines at which people are expected to make certain transitions in life (Settersten, 2003, Settersten and Hägestad, 1996a, Settersten and Hägestad, 1996b, Neugarten et al., 1965). A collection of age expectations and norms as well as a prescriptive timetable for major life events tend to govern the adult life, acting as prods and brakes on human behaviour (Neugarten et al., 1965). The operation of social norms in a society was captured aptly by Settersten (2003) in the following quote:

[I]nformal social norms are defined by three components. First, they are prescriptions for, or proscriptions against, engaging in certain behaviours and taking on certain roles. Second, there is consensus about these rules. And third, these rules are enforced through various mechanisms of social control, particularly positive sanctions to keep people “on track”, and negative sanctions to bring “back into line” those individuals who stray from these tracks. If an age-normative system is operating, individuals should be aware of the sanctions and consequences for violating norms, and be sensitive to social approval and disapproval. These sanctions may be informal (e.g. interpersonal sanctions in form of persuasion, encouragement, reinforcement, ridicule, gossip, ostracism) or formal (e.g. political, legal, or economic sanctions). For example, when people deviate from a norm, their

behaviour is not only evaluated negatively by others, but it is often taken to reflect something problematic about their personalities or abilities. (P. 86)

Generally there was acknowledgment of cultural age deadlines for women in Nigeria to get married and have children by my participants but there was no consensus on any particular age as the social age deadline for a woman to get married in Nigeria. According to the study by Isiugo-Abanihe (2000) which examines female age at first marriage and proportions marrying in Nigeria, age at first marriage in Nigeria remains early with the median age of 17 years and mean age of about 20 years. Marriage is still a general occurrence and is practically complete before age 30. He further argues that despite the nationwide patterns, there are still significant differences among socio-cultural groups: 90 percent of women with no schooling have married by the age of 15 and those with tertiary education by the age of 24.5 years. Differences also exist between the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria regarding the age by which 90 percent of their women are married - 17 years among the Hausas, 24 years among the Yorubas, and 26 years among the Igbos. As already discussed in chapter three, the Hausas from northern Nigeria tend to be mostly Moslems, while the Yorubas from the South-West have mixed proportions of Moslems and Christians but the Igbos from the South-East are predominantly Christians.

The enrolment of girls in schools in Nigeria is higher in the Southern part of the country (Tuwor and Sossou, 2008, Makama, 2013) and this can explain the statistics above on the increased age of Yoruba and Igbo women at first marriage compared to their northern Hausa counterparts. It is important to point out that the women in this study are all from the southern part of Nigeria. This does not mean that there are no Christian women from the northern part of Nigeria engaged in HE in the UK, rather it highlights



one of the shortcomings of snowballing sampling technique – not being representative of the whole population (Babbie, 2011, Black, 1999) as mentioned earlier in chapter two.

The study participants acknowledged that when a woman gets to early twenties she starts receiving hints from family and friends suggesting that she is expected to get married soon. And if she does not get married by her late twenties, such hints turn to pressure with sometimes subtle and open confrontations/harassments. The women's accounts support the position that social age deadlines wield utmost power when there is general consensus about them within a population (Billari et al., 2011). For some interviewees they judge the right age for a woman to marry based on the normative or expected sequence in the life course (Neugarten et al., 1965), such as a woman should marry after completing her Master's degree in the case of women pursuing postgraduate studies. Liz experience falls into this category and this is her account:

*Liz: When a woman finishes her Masters or studying, the next step is like to get married you know. Since for me I was of the age of marriage and also at the point I met my husband I was ready to get married. I felt it was just the right time for me. And naturally parents will always ask you now that you have finished school, what's next? (Married and age 28)*

It is interesting that the question about the next course of action for a woman who has finished a Master's degree is interpreted as marriage by some of my participants and not career advancement as their Western colleagues would see it. Maybe, this can be better understood in the context of the study mentioned above by Isiugo-Abanihe (2000) that 90 percent of women with tertiary education in Nigeria are married by the age of 24.5 years. Onome who is 21 recounts that her parents would want her to further her

education and get a PhD but her mother's expectation mirrors Liz's experience that marriage should come after a Master's degree. She reports that her parents have started hinting about her getting married soon in the following excerpt:

*Onome: My dad [ ] He would say at 26 after your PhD you start thinking of ... but my mum is like mmm you should start thinking about it now you know, leave PhD, marry first and then you can continue (laughs). (Single and aged 21)*

I find it interesting that my younger participants (for example Onome and Dayo) tend to laugh or chuckle when they talk about the social age to marry. They both agree that it is an important subject which they are already considering; I suspect that they treat the matter with levity because they are not facing any social pressures to marry yet though their parents have started dropping hints. For one of my participants, Eno who had faced some social pressure before getting married in her late 20s<sup>11</sup>, her demeanour and tone are quite different as she recounts the following:

*Eno: [ ] when you are 25 as a woman they expect you to be married. Okay you have grace till 27 you are not married, let's see what you are up to. But when you start getting close to your late 20s and then you are not married or worse still if you are in your 30s, then you have problems! (Married and aged 29)*

If the submissions by Liz and Onome's mother as reported above that the right age for a woman to marry is after her Master's degree is anything to go by, the fact that Eno had already started her PhD by the time she got married may have worsen the pressures she

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<sup>11</sup> Eno's account of the social pressure she faced before she got married will be discussed further in the following sub-sections of the thesis.

felt from family and friends in Nigeria and the diaspora to get married. A few of my participants attribute the social age deadline for women to marry and bear children in Nigeria to physiological characteristics of women. Billari et al. (2011) report that while advanced maternal age has been a long standing topic of research, recent scholarship has shown that advanced paternal age could also affect fertility, lead to risks of genetic abnormalities, miscarriage, etc. For example, see Lewis et al. (2006) and Fisch (2008).

In their study among people aged 15 and above in 25 countries in Europe, Billari et al. (2011) found out that the social age deadline for childbearing of women and men are significantly lower than biological deadlines. Though the deadlines are stricter for women than for men, the difference in deadlines between women and men is unexpectedly small, particularly among young people in Europe (Billari et al., 2011). Billari et al. (2011) attribute the difference to three reasons: 1) young people in Europe may be more aware of modern medical knowledge on the biological limits to childbearing for both men and women, 2) the views of gender equality in the life course may be of more importance to young people, hence they adopt similar expectations to women and men alike, or 3) to the young people what should be avoided is late parenthood instead of late motherhood for physical reasons or otherwise. In another study in the US on the cultural age deadline to make family transitions carried out with adults 18 years of age and above by Settersten and Hägestad (1996a), they found out that cultural age deadline exist for getting married and having children mainly due to development (physiological and physical) reasons but hardly due to social sanctions. Hence the respondents in the study reported that there are no consequences for not meeting these deadlines as people have their own lives to live. Billari et al. (2011) suggest that social age deadlines for childbearing may be linked to, but not necessarily equal to, biological or physiological deadlines, and that these social age deadlines are

most likely to influence actual reproductive behaviour if they are lower than the biological limits.

Though research evidence shows that young people in Europe are more aware of these new medical insights than the older population (Billari et al., 2011), the views of my participants who are also currently living in Europe do not reflect this. Rather, the view that men do not have any biological clock is still very prevalent in Nigeria as interviewees' responses below suggest:

*Onome: Em ... I will not be able to say for every family or for everyone. I am guessing from ... between ... from your 30s it becomes an issue. [ ] like you are gonna get close to menopause and you probably will not be able to have a child. And it's very, very critical, it's very essential in any Nigerian family to have a child. (Single and aged 21)*

*Chioma: I know there are always pressure on women to be married early because you know they think, [ ] ... you know women have like an expiry date than men in a way. So probably that's why. (Married and aged 27)*

According to another interviewee, Ola, these social age deadlines to marry are not restricted to any specific ethnic group (tribe) or religion in Nigeria but they tend to apply to only women as the excerpt below suggests.

*Ola: It does not have anything to do with religion; both Christians and Moslems get married. Those are the two religions in Nigeria; they both believe that you should marry as a woman. Muslims even get married at a younger age than Christians do but both religions feel marriage is normal and is the right thing to do at a certain age. Everybody! As in Nigeria ... for females, it's all the same. Hausa, Igbo and*

*Yoruba<sup>12</sup>, at a particular age if you are not yet married people start asking you questions and stuff like that. But for men it's not that way, they hardly put pressure on them at such a young age as 25, they don't start to ask. You see some guys not getting married till their late 30s and nobody is disturbing them but for women, it's not that way. You have to get married, you have to have children and then your career can come after that. (Engaged and aged 27)*

Another interviewee, Jolomi who is aged 33 and still single agrees that social age deadline does not apply to men in Nigeria because a single man in Nigeria is not stigmatized regardless of his age. She captures the perception of a single man in Nigeria as “*he is not yet ready*”. This is unlike the West where research evidence has shown that social age deadlines (for example to marry and have children) apply to both men and women though not with social sanctions (Billari et al., 2011, Neugarten et al., 1965, Settersten and Hägestad, 1996a). If my participants reflect on men not being pressured to get married just like women as typically Nigerian probably because Nigeria is still a very patriarchal society (Amadiume, 1987, Aina, 1998b), Beauvoir (2009) (c1949) in *the Second Sex* complicates this position. Take for example her claim that “for men marriage is simply a way of life, not a destiny. They are just as free to prefer a celibate solitude or to marry late or not at all” (p. 454). This suggests that Beauvoir views such norms that privilege men above women as universal. But one can also argue that Beauvoir’s claim above fits the perception of the older generation in Europe regarding stricter age deadlines for women (Billari et al., 2011).

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<sup>12</sup> These are the three major ethnic groups or tribes in Nigeria.

So when a Nigerian woman outgrows the question "whose daughter is she?" people start asking "whose wife is she?" (Amadiume, 1987). Such patriarchal notion that a woman should be married at a certain age presents some problems to women who are not yet married as the accounts of my interviewees in the next section on the Nigerian perceptions of a woman without a family life (husband and children) suggest.

### ***Nigerian perceptions of a woman without a husband***

The literature discussed earlier indicate that many women in Nigeria aspire to get married so they can become mothers because these are pointers to complete personhood Smith (2001a) and women's identity is grounded in motherhood (Makinde, 2004, Aina, 1998b). The high value placed on the role of wife and mother are not just found among those in the lower strata of the Nigerian society, even the most elite women in Nigeria want to be seen as wives and mothers (Smith, 2001a). For example, married women who are engaged in professional roles such as lawyers, doctors, and academics almost generally insert "Mrs" into their titles to read/appear as Barrister (Mrs), Dr (Mrs) or Professor (Mrs).

Irrespective of the fact that my interviewees are far away from home, they mostly share similar thoughts about what it feels like to still be single when you are expected to be a wife.

For Eno who is 29 years old and only got married a few months before our interview, she faced immense pressures from friends and family members before she got married. She recounts that the pressures of not being married can turn a woman into a recluse in the following quote: *"And that kind of a person sometimes even withdraws from people like you don't want people to start asking you questions about what is happening to you and all that."*

Though Nneka was already married before coming to the UK to study, this is her opinion about being single when you are expected to be married:

*Nneka:     **I will be bothered**<sup>13</sup>. Because I will just be thinking what is happening to me. So that's it... Yeah like something is wrong with you, like you have a problem. They still believe it is a "spiritual problem". Back home they will feel maybe someone is "doing you"<sup>14</sup> or something like that (laughs). (Married and aged 29)*

Nneka's account is in line with the claim by Settersten (2003, p. 86) earlier in this chapter that when people deviate from a norm, they face social sanctions and "their behaviour is not only evaluated negatively by others, but it is often taken to reflect something problematic about their personalities or abilities." It also confirms a widely held belief in Nigeria that women who have gone past the conventional age of marriage are stigmatized and seen as having moral and spiritual problems (Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014). My interviewees also invoke this belief on several occasions during our interviews by making references to how single women are viewed in the society – pitiable, arrogant, choosy, irresponsible and/or under attacks of evil spirits for which prayers are required.

The concept of spiritual problems or attacks is similar to those of witches and witchcraft. The reference by my participants (a group of highly educated women living in the West) to witches and witchcraft can be understood in the light of the suggestion by Moore and Sanders (2003) that education and science (both seen as markers and bearers of progress and modernity) should not eradicate belief in the unseen, the

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<sup>13</sup> Throughout the thesis I have put words, phrases and sentences in bold where the interviewees emphasized them in the quotes by a change of tone.

<sup>14</sup> Nigerian slang meaning responsible for your woes and miseries.

magical and powers that operate beyond human understanding and control. According to Moore and Sanders (2003), witchcraft is used interchangeably with the occult, magic and enchantment in the literature to denote happenings which are often of the despicable type. They argue that by the turn of the nineteenth century, anthropologists and other Westerners perceived “witchcraft” in Africa and some other places (in)correctly as an indication of primitive thinking, which they themselves had undergone at some point but have now outgrown. Thus African witchcraft was an indication of the “the primitive other”.

Such comparison of witchcraft to the historical experience of Europe tend to change the meaning to something “backward” and “traditional” and the interpretation of the relationship between modernity and witchcraft complicates the existence of such beliefs and practices in contemporary time (Moore and Sanders, 2003). Acknowledging the school of thought that believes that African witchcraft is and must be about modernity, Sanders (2003) argues that while African witchcraft may be part of modernity, it by no means needs to be about modernity. Whereas in his own argument, Smith (2001b) calls for the understanding of modernity and witchcraft in their historical, political and economic contexts. Citing Auslander (1993) in the study of witchcraft in contemporary Africa, Smith (2001b) suggests that occult activities and the popular dialogues they create are not ancient or mysterious phenomenon which are unconnected to historical processes of global political and economic transformations. Rather they are moral discourses very relevant to the inconsistencies in the economy and society.

According to Sanders (2003), in some cases, African witchcraft gives people the opportunity to delineate, imagine and reaffirm the authenticity of their tradition; and “tradition” as a category has little meaning without its shadowy companion,



“modernity”. Tradition often implies specific ways of doing things, usually those passed from older to younger generation (see for example Sanders, 2003). Citing Comaroff and Comaroff (1999), Moore and Sanders (2003) claim that modern day witchcraft, do not connote a return to “traditional” practices or a sign of backwardness; rather they are current expressions of “uncertainties, moral disquiet and unequal rewards and aspirations in the contemporary moment” (p. 3). As a category tradition ought not to be a misleading return to the idea that “non-Western” people live in a stagnant and ancient world, or to defend flawed social evolutionary trends (Sanders, 2003).

Some commentators acknowledge that there has been a surge in interest in “witchcraft” in Africa since the 1980s with the literature on the modernity of witchcraft stressing the ancient times in Africa and the significance of witchcraft practices to present social changes (Smith, 2001b, Moore and Sanders, 2003, Sanders, 2003). Nonetheless Africans do not have a monopoly on witchcraft, occult powers and the associated discourses (Moore and Sanders, 2003). Witchcraft is used to explain the incomprehensible such as adversities, and witch-cleansing/witch-finding often leads to divisions as against the building of social stability in “traditional” African societies (Apter, 1993, Smith, 2001b, Moore and Sanders, 2003, Sanders, 2003). For example, the failure of some people in the area of production (say in business and trade), and/or reproduction (say infertility) and the obvious achievements of others in those areas are explained and acted upon through accusations of witchcraft; with witches sometimes said to profit from their wicked activities and other times they seemingly gain nothing (Apter, 1993, Smith, 2001b, Sanders, 2003). Another example is the Nigerian culture of a woman’s dependence on her children for full integration into her husband’s house which emphasizes the significance of “childlessness” as a sign of witchcraft persecution (Apter, 1993, Makinde, 2004).

Witch-cleansing or witch-finding became a remarkable feature of colonial Africa and was usually interpreted as being a result of new institutions and modern forms of socio-economic breakdown (Apter, 1993, Moore and Sanders, 2003). Much of the literature on the increase of witchcraft in contemporary Africa has been a critique of the capitalist economy and postcolonial politics which produce increasing inequality that is largely beyond the understanding and control of most people. Hence witches in Africa and their likely growing power and numbers have been linked to new forms of consumption, production and political control (Apter, 1993, Smith, 2001b, Moore and Sanders, 2003, Sanders, 2003).

Anthropologists have acknowledged that witchcraft does not decline under “modernity” because it can be refashioned to fit new situations and can resist changes, hence Moore and Sanders (2003) have argued that modernity does not destroy tradition or lead to secularization. This is in line with the claim by Apter (1993) that though government intervention may have suppressed the Atinga witch-cleansing movement of the 1950s in South-Western Nigeria, witchcraft still thrives among the Yoruba elites of South-West Nigeria as well as the masses. Regardless of the proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, references to witches as exemplified by accounts of my research participants are common place in Nigeria. Moore and Sanders (2003) argue that modern Christianity has not displaced notions about witchcraft and the occult, rather it has provided a new context in which they can be understood by underscoring the struggle between God and the devil, in which witchcraft and other occult practices are unequivocally acknowledged as the works of the devil (see also Eriksen, 2014, Meyer, 2004, Robbins, 2004). Having acknowledged the wider anthropological literature on witchcraft in Africa, I want to draw out better how women who do not fit particular social

expectations and norms are characterized as witches using the literature above and Federici's (1997) text in my analysis below.

Witchcraft according to Siverblatt (1987) and Federici (1997) was an ideological creation of the church as the religious arm of European feudal society of the late middle ages to suppress every political resistance in the name of heresy or witchcraft. Both scholars contend that 1) the witch-hunt of Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries was important in the development of capitalist society and was an attempt to destroy women's social power with women making up more than 80 percent of those who were tried and executed for the crime of witchcraft; 2) witches were created in the "new lands" where none existed before the arrival of the colonizers because cultural defiance was seen as weapon of sorcery. This raises the question on whether African witchcraft was a creation of the West, or if African witchcraft is both a reflection and continuation of African tradition (see Sanders, 2003). Adogame (2010) argues that the belief in supernatural forces and in the reality of witchcraft are aspects of indigenous religions which suggest that African witchcraft probably existed before colonization.

According to Federici (1997) witches in medieval Europe were "accused of having sold body and soul to the devil and, by magical means, murdered scores of children, sucked their blood, made potions with their flesh, caused death of neighbours, destroyed cattle and crops, raised storms, and performed many abominations" (p. 169). Also witches included promiscuous women, "rebels", aggressive women, those who readily take initiative or lord over their husbands which fit Aina's (1998b) description of women who make money independent of their husbands in Nigeria mentioned earlier in this chapter. Hence Federici (1997) argues that witch hunting helped entrench a new patriarchal order where women's bodies, labour, sexual and reproductive powers came

under state control and changed into economic resources through the eradication of generalized forms of female behaviour which they perceived as unacceptable, and made them repulsive in the eyes of the public. Just like in late medieval Europe, a family which does not approve of their son's relationship with a woman in Nigeria claims that he has been bewitched (Federici, 1997, Amadiume, 1987, Aina, 1998b).

Federici (1997) argues that there has been a resurgence of witch-hunting in many parts of the world (with a history of slave trade) in the 1980s and 1990s including Nigeria. The said period coincided with a wave of Pentecostal revival in Nigeria<sup>15</sup> linked to unstable socio-economic and political situations in the country (Hunt and Lightly, 2001, Gifford, 1994, Hunt, 2002, Adogame, 2010), which supports the argument by Smith (2001b) as well as Moore and Sanders (2003) above that witchcraft manifestations are linked to other societal transformations. Federici (2013) views any ideological devaluation of people as playing into the context of witch-hunting with primary blame heaped on the church "Evangelicals" for re-injecting into the religious discourse the notion of demonization and the devil which suggests that if you do not conform to certain beliefs something is wrong with you or somebody in your community is evil. The argument on demonization is supported by Eriksen (2014), Meyer (2004) and Robbins (2004) in their different accounts on how Pentecostalism denotes anything bad with demons and the devil, especially in places like Nigeria and Ghana in the 1980s where Pentecostal churches began to challenge the notion that demons and the devil had no powers (see Eriksen, 2014).

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<sup>15</sup> This is discussed further in chapter six of this thesis.

Going back to unpick Nneka's quote above, a woman who faces delay in marriage in Nigeria deals with myriad problems. Apart from dealing with the many pressure her single status brings, she also has to deal with the psychological torture that the public probably perceives her as a "witch" or someone within her community has bewitched her hence preventing her from getting married. This is one of the ways in which witchcraft is used to explain certain "misfortunes" or situations some people face which are beyond human explanation especially when other people seem to succeed and achieve in the same areas as highlighted by scholars such as Apter (1993), Smith (2001b) and Sanders (2003) earlier in this chapter. This is why Nneka stresses that she would have been bothered as a Nigerian woman if she had not been married by now. Nneka's laughter while making the above statements is similar to Dayo and Onome's behaviour discussed above and my interpretation of it is that those who do not face a particular social pressure/problem could afford to be flippant about it. However, Nneka's account suggests that Nigerian societal pressures make a single woman begin to think something is probably wrong with her when she gets to a certain age and she is still not married. Eno was already studying in the UK before she got married not too long before our interview, her reflections on being a single woman is not different from Nneka's and she acknowledges that getting married has brought some reprieve from the pressures to a certain extent. According to Eno:

*Eno: If you are not married it's like you have a problem and then your family members are worried, your friends are worried. "What's your problem? What is happening to you? Are you driving men away?" Umm and there is this kind of thing like when you achieve to a level, when you get to a level of education people feel like your level of achievement will drive men away. So umm and I think that's one of the things I*

*would say is affecting higher education in Nigeria. You don't want to pursue it because your chances of getting married will actually slim down.*

Going back to the last sub-section where I had discussed that some families' expectation is that their daughters should marry after their Master's degrees course, Eno in the quote above highlights how the perception of some women as "over-educated" could actually reduce their marriage prospects. Being that most Nigerian women want to be married because that is what the society expects from them, they may not want to "jeopardize" their chances of getting married by embarking on higher education especially at the postgraduate level.

Eno's response is also in line with the literature that suggests that women going for higher education may hamper their chances of getting married, therefore the fear of not getting married may actually deter some women from pursuing higher education (Aderinto, 2001, Matsui, 1995, Ono and Piper, 2004). In support of the position that education is one of the many areas women are discriminated against in Nigeria, findings from some of the male and female respondents in the study by Aderinto (2001) favoured the education of male children/men and did not support giving female children/women much education because they believed the women would eventually leave home and get married therefore the husbands' families would be the beneficiaries of women's education. Other reasons are contained in the following expressions of two of her respondents: "No matter the level of a woman's education, she will end up in her husband's kitchen" and "educated women do not respect their husbands" (Aderinto, 2001). The first expression supports the gendered role of women in Nigeria as cooks, housekeepers/homemakers whereas the second expression suggests that higher

education maybe seen by some people as a disadvantage to Nigerian women and reduces their chances of getting married.

So it seems there may be added pressure on women enrolled in higher education to get married by their family and friends because they fear their status as highly educated women may scare away potential suitors. According to analysis of research findings by Aune (2002), single women are more likely to be better educated and have high status jobs while on the other hand single men are likely to be unemployed and from the lowest social class; it is still common for men to marry women of lower educational qualifications so most highly educated women are likely to experience difficulty in finding marriage partners. This perception of “over-educated women” may be the reason behind Liz’s and Onome’s mother’s position that a woman should get married after completing her Master’s degree as reported in the section above. Onome reiterates her mother’s preference for her to marry before pursuing a PhD; and her own insistence that her getting a PhD will come after marriage in the following quote:

*Onome: My dad wants me to do a PhD but my mum wants me to get married first (both laugh). I need a break! [ ] I might pursue a PhD later in my life as a mother and a wife but I don’t know if I want to do it right away. After NYSC<sup>16</sup> I would like to settle down, and then start up a business and then maybe PhD. (Single and aged 21)*

Though Onome is only 21 years old she believes strongly that “*marriage will definitely come before a PhD, that’s for sure!*” The description of “over-protective mothers” used

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<sup>16</sup> This refers to the National Youth Service Corps, a compulsory one year programme for Nigerian university graduates under the age of 30 to serve Nigeria outside their home region, in order to encourage integration.

by Matsui (1995) in the research on Japanese women studying in the US fits Onome's mother. In the context of the Japanese patriarchy, which has traditionally maintained the role of women as "good wife and wise mother", over-educated women are seen as a threat to the status quo (Ono and Piper, 2004). Hence, over-protective mothers do not support their daughters' quest for education in Western societies for fear that their chances of getting married will be limited. However, Onome is different from the Japanese women in that study because she wants to follow her mother's suggestion and marry early, even before contemplating PhD studies or career advancement. She tells me she knows what it feels like for a woman to get to an age she desires to be married and she is not. This is how she puts it:

*Onome: I do know people that are above 25 and they are worried that "oh I am not married", especially with your friends getting married you think you are left behind. There is also this expectation of I am meant to be married at this point, my family expects me to be married now, the society expects me to be married. It's almost like not being where you are meant to be at the time. It's like me being ... starting uni now, how I would feel if I was going to start my first year now at 21 when I am expected to have finished. It's that kind of feeling of I am not on track and I think different people take it differently to be honest. (Single and aged 21)*

Apart from the social aspect, the psychological pressure on the women to conform can derail their academic pursuits. Before Eno got married, the following excerpt captures her experience:

*Eno: Umm, it can be very hard I would tell you. [ ]there were people I was no longer talking with and then I no longer went on social media so I don't get pressures from anybody because those things directly or indirectly affect you, you are reading and*



*you are thinking about it. “Gosh, what am I doing? All these things I am reading ... they said everybody is gone, they’ve all left me and **I am here reading rubbish**” (laughs), you understand that kind of feeling? (still laughing) it’s something hard to cope with sometimes ... yeah it would really, it would definitely distract you, your productivity on your studies, it would, yeah. (Married and aged 29)*

The above accounts by Nneka, Eno and Onome speak to the literature on “expected” or “predicted” sequence of the life course and how individuals who are off time or not on track with the social age norms could find life difficult and uncomfortable (Settersten, 2003).

Just like my own experience which I shared at the beginning of this thesis, unmarried women in Nigeria face myriad social sanctions – direct harassment, they become topics of gossip and prayers and indirectly their families as well come under pressure as the accounts of my interviewees suggest. They also face ridicules which could be to their faces or behind their backs. This is how Ola describes it:

*Ola: [ ] even the woman will not feel at peace because she will see that everybody around her is married and being the only one out ... (chuckling) in Nigeria because you are not married as a girl you are seen as “old cargo”<sup>17</sup>, (laughing) “old school”. Oh that’s it. (Engaged and aged 27)*

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<sup>17</sup> A derogatory expression used in Nigeria for a single woman who is assumed to have passed her prime.

Apart from religious celibates such as Catholic Reverend Sisters and priestesses in Traditional Religion<sup>18</sup> women who are unmarried voluntarily or involuntarily, beyond the social age deadline in Nigerian society are treated like second class citizens because of the patriarchal ideology that entrenches marriage as the acceptable adult status (Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014). The stigmatization of single women is not unique to Nigeria, other studies in different countries also show that older, never married women also suffer discrimination and stigma in their societies (Macvarish, 2006, Byrne, 2008, Byrne and Carr, 2005). Bourdieu (1996) in his study of single women in France documents that they also suffer discrimination and are regarded as incomplete persons. Byrne (2008) opines that the ideology of marriage and family continues to resonate in contemporary Irish society despite the economic and social forces of modernity and reminds us that a single woman is stigmatized and constructed with demeaning words and phrases such as old maid, spinster, embittered, sexless. In the USA, while young unmarried students are socially acceptable, those unmarried and in their 40s are viewed with pity (Byrne and Carr, 2005).

Research evidence suggests that the stigma attached to “singleness” does not apply only to unmarried women. For example, Hellermann (2006) in her study of social capital among Eastern European women who migrated to Portugal found out that some women who migrated alone are discriminated against in their social networks because of their “single” migrant status even when such women were married with children in their home countries. Also research evidence shows that not every single woman speaks of their status negatively, while some speak of their singleness as failing to realise

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<sup>18</sup> Less than 1.5 percent of Nigerians are adherents to traditional religious beliefs as mentioned earlier in chapter three.

womanhood as traditionally endorsed, others speak of freedom of choice and independence (including financial independence) being single brings (Byrne, 2008, Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014).

The research participants in Byrne's (2008) study acknowledge that it is easier to be a single woman in contemporary times than it was two decades ago because of the changing perceptions of single women as "spinsters" and "minders" to include women who chose to postpone motherhood and career women. This seems to support studies cited earlier in this chapter that young people in Europe consider social age deadlines for marriage and having child almost equally for men and women, and mainly due to physiological reasons and not social sanctions. Studies by Byrne (2008) and Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe (2014) also suggest that acceptability of singleness among their research participants is dependent on one's social class – with poorer women believing that financial and social security can be guaranteed in marriage. While financial independence can boost a single woman's confidence in the West, for some of the "involuntary" never married women in Lagos, Nigeria in the study by Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe (2014) financial independence can have both negative and positive consequences on their marriage prospects. This seems to apply to some women in Nigeria who are still single because of their search for a man with a domestic egalitarian attitude, or deemed too financially independent to make a "submissive" and "good" wife. Interestingly, not only very financially independent women are unable to "attract" a husband, their study also suggests that a woman's lack of economic resources could also be a deterrent to her getting married because men in Lagos expect to marry women who can contribute to their families' economic wellbeing, though the women are not supposed to be richer than their husbands (Aina, 1998b, Adichie, 2013). Thus, Ntoimo

and Isiugo-Abanihe (2014) argue that single women who have no means of livelihood would need other complementary attributes in order to attract a marriage partner.

From the foregoing, the “success factors” associated with higher education could end up as liabilities for single Nigerian women who desire to get married because of the labels of “over-educated women” and “too financially independent women” they can confer on them. Perhaps, such labelling and the fact that unmarried women are the subjects of constant discussions and prayers by others make such women unduly sensitive and they tend to read meanings into people’s statements and actions. For example, Liz narrates an incident involving two women in her church in the UK in the following excerpts:

*Liz: I don’t know if that was intentional but people do pass some terrible comments, like a lady said to me today someone told her “what have you done? What have you achieved so far?” That really meant a lot; she is still single you understand. And the other lady that said that to her is a married lady.*

On further questioning, I learnt that the single woman in question had finished a postgraduate degree in the UK and is currently working. Liz tells me that:

*Liz: Yeah, she’s got a good job, she’s got her house, she bought a house, she owns a car, she is taking care of a younger brother as in she’s comfortable, she’s fine.*

*Stella: Why won’t these count for achievements? Must achievements for a woman in Nigeria only be around family life?*

*Liz: Well, I think the way the society has made it like if a woman is not married that means you are incomplete no matter what you have achieved, no matter how many degrees you’ve got, no matter how many houses and cars you’ve got. If you are not married that means you don’t have anything – in quotes. (Married and aged 28)*

The achievements of a Nigerian woman in the “land of white people” are not reckoned with as long as she is not married (Amadiume, 1987). So the notion that a woman’s value or status comes from being a wife and mother (Aina, 1998b, Aderinto, 2001, Makinde, 2004, Amadiume, 1987) is still upheld by Nigerians in the UK as the interview excerpts above with Liz suggest.

The expectation that a woman ought to be married is so strong that even when a Nigerian woman is already engaged, she is not completely free from the social pressure to marry. Ola, the only interviewee, who is engaged reports that she constantly gets questions about when she would be going back to Nigeria to marry and that she should not keep her fiancé waiting for too long. Such attitudes suggest that Ola’s educational pursuit is not as important as her getting married. A single woman is deemed as irresponsible whereas the same woman will become a responsible person in the society once she marries because by getting married, she had come under a man’s authority (Amadiume, 1987).

One of the ways single Nigerian Christian women strive to show that they are not irresponsible is in their sexual behaviour. As mentioned earlier, while Nigerian women are socialized to show sexual restraint, the men are encouraged to “sow wild oats” as proof of their masculinity from a very young age (Izugbara, 2004, Adichie, 2013, Amadiume, 1987). The thesis research data suggest that this is the case with the participants; some of their experiences are documented below:

Dayo: [ ] like my mum she's always been like that ever since we were in secondary school sef<sup>19</sup>. She would be like tell me, who is your boyfriend and I am like what's doing<sup>20</sup> this woman. I am still reading and you are talking about boyfriend, are you not the one that taught us that we should not think of boyfriend now? (Single and aged 25)

Onome: [ ] it's funny how Nigerian parents expect you to get married and never date! They never want to see your boyfriend but they want to see your husband! And sometimes you think (smiling) "how am I supposed to bring a man home (laughing) if you never let me date?" (Mimicking parental warning), "they are like men are evil, don't date a man" but at 25 you want me to bring a man home! Em before now ... eh the kind of discussions I have with my mum (laughing) I could never, ever, ever have. I could probably talk to her about certain things but now I can talk to her about a guy or this is what he is like and she is *calm* unlike before, she getting tense like "hun, which man!" (both laugh) now she is calm and like "okay where is he from?" I think she is giving hints, "it's okay now to date, maybe it's okay to get a boyfriend." (Single and aged 21)

An earlier quote used to explain another point in chapter two is also relevant here so I am re-using it:

Chioma: The first time I came here and I saw little girls smoking I was so shocked because I had never seen that in my ..., well in our environment before. Because you see women more kind of shy and they are not really that outgoing, having that gut to smoke,

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<sup>19</sup> Colloquial term to mean anyway

<sup>20</sup> Nigerian lingo referring to what's wrong with someone.

*to drink, get drunk and all. It's more for men, so I was really shocked about, [ ] It's more attached to harlots but here it's like a general thing. So it was really shocking to me. (Married and aged 27)*

Women's sexuality is constructed as restraint (construed as good) or lack of restraint (construed as bad), and only allowed in the context of a certain relationship – marriage (Sharma, 2011). But who “controls” women's sexuality? According to Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe (2014) a contradiction and double standard exist in patriarchal heterosexuality in that women's sexuality is controlled by men in ways that reduce women's likelihoods of getting married. In their study with “involuntary” single women in Lagos, Nigeria, they found out that some women who refuse to indulge in sex before marriage could end up losing the relationship because the men perceived their refusal as lack of commitment, or entertained fear that such women could have problems with their fertility. On the other hand, women who are seen as “over indulging” in sexual activity are labelled as promiscuous and therefore not suitable for marriage. The accounts of Dayo and Onome above as single women indicate that their mothers have a big influence on the control of their sexuality through socialization. This is an example of how women can subjugate fellow women and fits Beauvoir's (2009 (c1949)) explanation of a mother's attempt to create a “true woman” out of her daughter so she does not end up a “reject” and “social waste” if she does not fit the society's acceptable form of womanhood (wife and mother).

### ***Nigerian perceptions of a woman without a child***

Though the studies by Aderinto (2001) and Makinde (2004) I referred to earlier in my analysis were done in Yoruba speaking region of Nigeria, the findings of the studies are not limited to Yoruba land because ethnographic data from Smith (2001a) on Igbo

speaking region of Nigeria show that the stability and success of marriage remain embedded in webs of kinship and are dependent upon fertility. Smith's narratives of marriage and gender relationships in Igbo land mirror accounts of such relationships in Yoruba land. According to Smith (2001a), in modern courtships the couple's personal relationship is mostly negotiated through interpersonal intimacy and expressions of love. But this is different in marriage which tends to be constructed within the context of unending ties and obligations to extended family and community, favouring fertility and the social roles of mother and father. While modern courtship adopts a more equal gender relationship, modern marriage reinforces a more patriarchal hierarchy. And interestingly, neither men nor women are passive actors in these practices (Smith, 2001a).

The thesis interest in investigating to what extent Nigerian women who come for postgraduate study in the UK are obligated to uphold the norms and cultural practices in Nigeria is because regardless of the impact of Westernization on popular media which suggest a transformation in the social construction of marriage in Nigeria, Smith (2001a) argues that "modern African marriages are both new and embedded in longstanding social and cultural systems".

Though spouse selection, marriage, and family structure appear to be altering in line with typical Western models, the magnitude of those changes and the gender dynamics that materialize are still extremely sensitive to the enduring importance of parenthood and fertility (Smith, 2001a). Therefore once a couple gets married, the combined interest of family and friends in the marriage focuses on their fertility because successful parenthood is still cherished as the defining characteristic of complete personhood (Smith, 2001a). Such is the importance attached to having children that



much attention is paid to the anticipated fertility of a couple going into marriage. For example, prayers are said on their behalf during the marriage ceremony asking God to give the couple many children, usually entreating that they have a child by the one-year anniversary of the ceremony to mark the consummation of the marriage (Smith, 2001a).

The fact that the participants in this study are studying outside the shores of Nigeria do not exempt them from the pressure and scrutiny of their families and friends back in Nigeria to have children while studying. For example, Eno who is still in the first year of her marriage during our interview is already facing “another round of pressure” from her family and friends but this time, it is to have a child. This is how she puts it:

*Eno: I would say like people are getting concerned, “it’s almost a year you got married!” **It’s like it’s always one concern or the other!** ... and my mum recently asked what’s really happening and I told her you know mummy I am just finishing this PhD, I want to get a job and start a job and all that, [ ] other people are asking “so what is happening? Are you pregnant now?” I had a friend calling me “oh I guess you are pregnant now.” So it’s like the pressure shifts from this phase to another one. So it’s always like there is a pressure somewhere, yeah, yeah. (Married and aged 29)*

Eno is mindful of the fact that the repeated questions about her “delayed conception” almost a year after her marriage could push some women in similar situations with her into trying to get pregnant just to prove that “they do not have a problem”. The interview with Eno took place in July and she admits that her getting pregnant before starting her new job in September would jeopardize her chances at the new job. So she is willing to “bear” the pressure until she could qualify to go on maternity leave on her new job. Her submission above suggests that pressure to conform to Nigerian gender expectations is not a one-off occurrence. At various stages in these women

interviewees' lived experiences in the UK, the social pressures re-emerge as this thesis will try to demonstrate in the remaining sections and chapters.

In the case of Nneka, she chose to avoid the pressures by having her first baby within the first year of her marriage though she knew she was going to start postgraduate studies in the UK. This is because she knew that being in the UK would not exempt her from the pressures. This is how she narrates her experience:

*Nneka: Well, culturally if you are married they expect you to have a baby like the same year you got married. So they won't believe that it's the plan of both of you, or agreement to wait and conclude your studies first before you have a baby. So that is the number one reason. Culturally, they believe you should be productive as a wife because they don't want to know that the fault is from maybe the husband or it's your plan to study first before you have a baby. They believe once you are married, the next thing is child bearing and that is what we consider too as well. (Married and aged 29)*

Nneka's account above mirrors Eno's in that family and friends do not consider that a newly married couple could purposely delay conception and child birth. And even when the new couple intimates to their friends and family their plan to delay child birth, such explanations are usually not acceptable. Unlike Eno who is willing to persevere with the pressure so she could advance her career, Nneka says that she could not have waited to finish her one year Master's degree programme before having her first child because she does not want to experience any kind of pressure and scrutiny. She concedes that if a woman does not have a child within the first year of her marriage, *"they will think something is wrong with you, that you are not normal"*. But by having a baby she has proved that nothing is wrong with her because *"even if it's the man that has the problem they will believe it's the woman, so it's the mentality"*.

The responses by Eno and Nneka are typical of the research participants. Ola, who is engaged and aged 27 suggests that educated women who are much younger than her could consciously delay child birth for a year or two without risking much scrutiny. She explains that she would have wanted to do the same if she had got married at the age of 24 but would not entertain the thought anymore because she is already in her late 20s. This raises questions on whether the experiences of Eno and Nneka recounted above are based on the fact that they got married when they were already in their late twenties.

Abiola, a PhD student jokingly tells me she has given herself a personal deadline to have a child by 30 though she is still single. Her reflections below summarize the pressures on a Nigerian woman to conform to gender roles of being wives and mothers:

*Abiola: And if a woman behaves in a funny way they will say oh yeah it's because she is not married, you know. She needs to be married or if she is married and they say oh maybe she needs to have a child (chuckles). You see a lot because some of my friends get married and all of a sudden they tell me I don't want to have a child until two years' time and within two months they are already pregnant (giggles). And it's because there's a lot of pressure from somewhere saying "what are you doing, what are you waiting for." It's almost like they are saying you are not complete yet if you have not done that. (Single and aged 29)*

Abiola as stated in the last chapter left Nigeria because she found the patriarchal setting too oppressive. She is speaking tongue-in-cheek in the above quote but most of the interviewees accepted that getting married and having children would make them "complete" or "fulfilled" as women.

Rita, one of the women interviewees narrates that she met her husband here in the UK when she came to study, got married and was expecting her first child before the end of

her one year Master's degree programme. When I asked her why she could not defer marriage and childbearing until the end of her course, the following is her response:

*Rita: Emm ... the culture where I come from does not interpret it in that way. The moment I met my husband he wanted to get married and I also sought the advice of my family back home and they were very encouraging that I should go ahead and get married. And that was because at the time I was talking about I was already 34 years of age ... when I got the MSc scholarship I had a wonderful conversation with my mum when I went home and told her I had a scholarship to study for my MSc. She looked at me and said "I am not expecting you to come back and tell me you want to get more education; I want you to come back and tell me you are getting married," ... the last conversations I had with her at the airport ... she vehemently told me that "I expect you to come back with a husband and your children, when you come back I expect you to be married" ... obviously she wasn't impressed with the thought that I was getting an academic scholarship to come abroad and study. That did not persuade her on her main intention that at the age of 34 I should be settled and married. (Married and aged 45)*

The above account by Rita supports the literature and narratives mentioned earlier in this chapter that see a Nigerian woman's university degrees as minor achievements compared to her social roles as a wife and a mother. The social pressures to marry and have children are so much that some Nigerian women engaged in higher education choose to have children in order not to deal with the pressure as Nneka's experience of becoming pregnant even before she arrived in the UK to study demonstrates:

*Nneka: Yes, I don't want to experience those pressures. I can't manage too much of the pressures. Assuming that I have not had any child and I want to do my Master's I*

*still wouldn't have waited to finish that one year before I have one baby. (Married and aged 29)*

Smith (2001a) reiterates that having children is not just to prove individual personhood; it is also an accomplishment of one's obligations to kin and community. In keeping with the assertion by Makinde (2004) that it is a tragedy for a Yoruba woman to be childless, Smith (2001a) further illustrates how hard life can be for a couple without children thus:

[C]ouples that do not have children in the early years of marriage face certain scrutiny from their relatives and become the object of gossip. Long-term childlessness is usually a sign of infertility, because almost all Igbo couples wish to conform to the expectation of parenthood soon after marriage. Few problems are more threatening to a marriage than infertility. While infertility is more often blamed on the woman, both men and women can be socially excused for terminating a marriage with an infertile partner. But most couples go to extreme lengths to try to get pregnant. (p. 140)

One of my respondents, Koko captures this in the following excerpt as she told me how important children are to a family:

*Koko: I don't know how many families or if I have ever heard that couples say "I don't want kids ever." Some people think the reason why you get married is to have kids, and so if you don't have kids you are not happy while in the Western world marriage is more about companionship and so people don't think that if they don't have kids it's a problem. But in Nigeria or most parts of Africa I think sometimes the reason for getting married is so you can raise a family and continue your lineage. So if*

*they can't achieve that it's a problem, it's like their purpose has been defeated. (Single and aged 25)*

In their study on the motivations of African students for studying in the UK, Maringe and Carter (2007) report that missed opportunities back home are some of the problems that African students in the UK encounter. Delay in getting married and having children are reported by this study interviewees as some of these missed opportunities. Research evidence shows that students enrolled in postgraduate studies tend to be older than undergraduates (Brooks and Waters, 2011). The implication for international student migration is that social expectations of Nigerian women to be wives and mothers may hinder some women from migrating for postgraduate studies. Vera who was already married before coming for a Master's degree in the UK reports that her parents would not have supported her quest for a postgraduate degree in the UK if she had not been married. Although Vera would like to go further and earn a PhD in the UK, she says that she would not be able to do that because her being away for a Master's degree has already delayed her from having a second child.

The complexities surrounding the social expectations of a Nigeria woman to be a mother is further exemplified by Ngozi's narrative. She has been married for five years without a child and decided to come for Master's degree in the UK to develop her knowledge in her field and improve her chances professionally. But while studying in the UK, she reports that she is stigmatized by Nigerians in the UK especially women for *"leaving her husband behind in Nigeria when she is still looking for a child."* It does not matter that she and her husband have not been able to have children in the first five years of their marriage, perhaps her being away for postgraduate studies is seen as delaying or in fact reducing her prospect of having a child as she is already in her late

30s. Such criticisms of Ngozi suggest that what the society values more is her status as a mother and not as a professional or a student (Amadiume, 1987, Aina, 1998b, Makinde, 2004, Smith, 2001a). Just like Vera, Ngozi also wants to get a PhD but cannot contemplate the idea until she has had children hence her desire to return to Nigeria to her husband after her Master's degree.

As mentioned earlier, a woman gets the blame when a couple fails to have a child (Smith, 2001a, Aina, 1998b). The interviewees report that the same negative perceptions surrounding a woman without a husband apply to a woman without a child. Apart from people thinking that she probably has a "spiritual" and/or "medical" problem, they could also think she may have had abortions in the past that probably damaged her reproductive organs. Abortion in Nigeria is illegal, hence some women do not get the best care during abortions because of the "underground" nature under which they are mostly carried out and could lead to complications later. Take for example, the following quote from another interviewee:

*Belema: It's just the cultural norms and values. It's how people have been brought up to believe that once you are in your husband's house you must have a baby. If you don't have a baby it's either spiritual attack or maybe you've had abortions or stuff like that and mostly it's blamed on the woman rather than the man. [ ] it's the society in Nigeria, that's how people think in Nigeria. (Single and aged 33)*

The above quote's reference to spiritual attack as an explanation for a woman's inability to have a child is supported by the literature on African witchcraft discussed earlier in this chapter (see Smith, 2001b, Apter, 1993, Sanders, 2003) that see one's inability achieve certain status or social expectations as an indication of witchcraft oppression. Such is Ngozi's fate as she is still to have a child after five years of marriage. She

recounts that apart from the erroneous perception that she may have damaged her reproductive organs during an abortion before she got married which has prevented her from getting pregnant; she has also been accused of assisting other women in abortions in the past in her role as a medical practitioner. So her inability to conceive is seen as retribution for killing innocent babies. One can draw a parallel between Ngozi's experience and those of other women who may consciously wish to delay child birth with witch-hunting in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries' Europe. According to Federici (1997), women branded as witches in those centuries were accused not only of causing the death of children but also preventing conception which suggest that witch hunting was an attempt to criminalize birth control and use women's body for the service of population increase and production of labour force.

The accounts of these interviewees help in understanding why just being a student is not enough for them at the stage in life when they are involved in postgraduate studies. According to Uloaku, another interviewee, her mother-in-law's visit to the UK before she had her son made her change her priorities of finishing her education before childbearing. In her own words:

*Uloaku: Whenever I came back from school at the end of day and asked her (mother-in-law) about her day ... she would complain about boredom and how much better it would have been if she had a child to look after to fill her day. Though she didn't come out directly to criticize me, I still felt she was criticizing my decision to finish my Master's first before having a baby. To safeguard your marriage, you wouldn't want her to start poisoning her son's heart about you and your marriage ... so you have to give in. (Married and aged 30)*



It seems that the women cannot get away from scrutiny and social pressures. These do not come from only their families and friends in Nigeria, it appears that belonging to a Nigerian church<sup>21</sup> brings them under the kind of scrutiny and social pressures regarding social age deadlines for women to get married and have children prevalent in the Nigerian society (Amadiume, 1987, Aina, 1998b). Rita, who is an ordained minister in her church and also married to a Pastor had this to say:

*Rita: The church is replicating exactly what is happening in the society and it is a pain, it is a shame to imagine that you come to church and it is what you are suffering. Yes, there is a lot more when they come into a church that is predominantly African or Nigerian in nature. [ ] but if they are not in churches that are predominantly African or Nigerian they wouldn't feel those sorts of pressures. (Married and aged 45)*

Liz agrees with Rita that women in church can experience pressure to conform to Nigerian social expectations but argues that it is not the church per se as an institution that is guilty but the people who make up the church. In her own words:

*Liz: I shouldn't say the church. I should say the people in the church because these are people from Africa as well. And coming into the UK with still the notion of traditional getting married, having a child, and being in that church environment yeah could also put pressure [ ] because it's still like the setting of people you left back home that you came back here to meet. (Married and aged 28)*

Eno whose marriage is not yet a year old narrates an example of the way the pressure to conform plays out in a Nigerian church – some of her church members are already

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<sup>21</sup> I will discuss the Nigerian church and the role it plays in the women's lives further in chapter six.

concerned that she is not pregnant yet. And this came to the fore during the Mothers' Day celebration in March:

*Eno: In the UK like people in my church some of them are concerned and raising prayer requests like next Mothers' Day we have to see you with something and all that. There is that kind of concern from people. (Married and aged 29)*

The thesis discusses other examples of how the social pressures are created and maintained in a Nigerian church. Starting with Rita, who further shares from her own experience of dealing with women students in her own church. In her own words:

*Rita: Emm, the church can be a source of pressure because I am in leadership in the church and I know that parents do call me from Nigeria asking okay ... my daughter is not married, do you talk to her? Do you remind her of those responsibilities that she needs to achieve in those aspects of her life apart from just going on with her career here in the UK and all that. And of course, I have had course to speak to some of those girls but not in the way their mums would speak to them. I come in and sort of ... my own pressure is not as harsh as the family pressure would be. (Married and aged 45)*

The fact that parents in Nigeria seek the intervention of the leaders in the churches which their daughters attend in the UK suggests that those parents believe that religious women tend to revere the authority of their spiritual leaders, which supports the claim by some commentators that religion is a tool to keep women subjugated to social expectations of them as women (Izugbara, 2004, Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013, Makama, 2013). The social pressures in the Nigerian church seem to manifest in a continuum. As earlier stated, Ngozi's vilification for leaving her husband back in Nigeria to study in the UK is mainly by members of her church. Nneka, another participant who came to

join her husband in the UK and to study as well fell pregnant four months after having her first child; she too is not spared from the scrutiny in the church. When I asked her how people react to the fact that she is expecting another baby, the following are her recollections:

*Nneka: [ ] they won't be able to tell you to your face but there would be a kind of way they would feel, what they would say "her baby is not up to a year and she is pregnant again" and "how would she cope?" A lot of people have been asking me that, "how will you cope with your studies? Will you defer your course? Will you do this? Will you do that?"*

*Stella: Who are these people?*

*Nneka: Church members, basically church members.*

*Stella: Why do you think they can't tell you to your face?*

*Nneka: Aha, well because my baby is young. She's going to be 10 months this month and we Nigerians ... you are supposed to give two years interval between your children. So I feel they can't say it to my face because they would think we cheated her (baby) [ ] because there was a case of someone that was pregnant in church when her baby was like my baby's age and I knew what they told me about her. So obviously they are going to say such about me. (Married and aged 29)*

Nneka explains that she could not postpone childbearing and focus on her Master's degree course, because "eyes will be on her" if she did not have a baby in the first year of her marriage. It appears that she could not escape "eyes being on her" eventually though the criticisms she encounters (supposedly behind her back) for having her children in quick succession are not as severe as what she would have if she had

prioritized her education over childbearing. Women like myself whose first child is over two years old are constantly reminded that we are overdue to have a second child. However, having proved that one does not have a medical or spiritual problem the pressure on a woman to have a second child is not as intense as that of a woman without a child.

Also the tensions that come from a woman's desire to fulfil her socially expected roles make them feel inadequate; hence just being a student is not enough for most of the women interviewed in this thesis. In the case of Rita she recounts that seeing her old classmates married with children while she was still single made her feel "*handicapped*" in the African culture that she had not yet attained to being a woman. But is such feeling of inadequacy among single women restricted to African culture? Based on findings from various studies with single women in England, Aune (2002) reminds us that womanhood is conventionally linked to being a wife and mother even in the West, hence the question of whether single women are necessarily seen as "proper" women. Married women who are not yet mothers can also feel inadequate as women (Beauvoir, 2009 (c1949), Amadiume, 1987, Aina, 1998b) as the data presented in the thesis show. For Ngozi, being overlooked by people because she does not have a child yet is unbearable and she would give anything to have a child even while still studying. She narrates her experience of being snubbed by the church bus driver on a Mother's Day while the same driver greeted all the other women who boarded the church bus with their children with "Happy Mother's Day!"

*Ngozi: He didn't say anything to me but subsequently he was picking other women and as they come in with their kids he said "happy mother's day, happy*

*mother's day, happy mother's day!" to all the other women ... I was the only one without a child, so he said "happy mother's day" to everybody.*

*Stella: That particular experience, how did it make you feel that day?*

*Ngozi: (Whispering) I was just crying. I mean a whole bus and I was the first, afterwards he kept.... "Am I not a woman? Why can't he just greet me for once?" I had to change my position because I was at the front; I went to the back because I didn't want him to see my tears. Although he apologized but ... "I was just like God eh what have I done? ... can't you just give me mine?" (Married and aged 38)*

Research evidence shows that with fertility and parenthood being the utmost values linked to family, married women in Nigeria are socially assessed principally in their role as mothers (Aderinto, 2001, Amadiume, 1987, Aina, 1998b, Makinde, 2004, Smith, 2001a). The fact that the bus driver later apologized to Ngozi when he saw how upset she was suggests that his not saying "Happy Mother's Day" to her may not have been a deliberate snub on his part. Perhaps it has to do with the cultural perception and respect accorded to a woman who has children which he probably has subconsciously internalized. Just like Rita, in the above account Ngozi also indicates feeling a sense of inadequacy on that Mother's day because she does not have a child when she asked while recounting her ordeal "*am I not a woman?*" This suggests that just being a postgraduate international student is not enough for her, she also wants to be acknowledged as a woman and not being a mother seems to be denying her of that status of womanhood even though she is married.

One can understand Ngozi's pain against the background that motherhood in Nigeria is seen as what elevates a woman's position and grants her the power to exercise authority in her husband's house, especially in Yoruba culture, therefore it is a misfortune for a

Yoruba woman to be childless (Makinde, 2004). However, it is important to point out that a “wife” is not as revered as a “mother”, Makinde (2004) states that in most of Yoruba culture a wife is in fact referred to as a “slave”; nevertheless most girls aspire to marry because through marriage they can become “proud mothers” (meaning that the society still frowns on having children outside wedlock). So due to the level of importance ascribed to motherhood, wives are valued for the purpose of procreation and as factors of economic production because of the help they provide on the farms in rural Nigeria or through other economic contributions they make to the family (Makinde, 2004, Aderinto, 2001, Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014). And by Federici’s (1997) analogy women who are perceived as deviant from the socially desirable “commodification” of a woman’s body are witch-hunted.

Most of the women interviewed for this study also believe that not having a family could also deny women of certain rights and positions in the society. Take for example, the following reflections from Ola and Eno:

*Ola: But even in some areas for instance in politics, if you are going for a position everybody is asking you “are you married?” If you are not married, that’s one of the things the opponents will use to bring you down. You might not even get any electoral position if you are not married.*

She further explains using a family illustration:

*Ola: For instance ... I had an auntie, she was 42. She’d been married but they had a problem early in the marriage, after a year of marriage so she was divorced. But because she was vying for House of Rep, at all the (names political party) meetings, her opponents when she wants to talk, when it’s getting to an argument what they tell her is “go and get a husband before you come and talk to men”, “you couldn’t keep your*

*husband”, stuff like that. So she eventually had to marry someone younger than her, it was an arrangement to be able to vie for the post. She eventually didn’t win. Such things kind of bring down your morale. If she’d had been married before she went for that position, I guess she wouldn’t have had any problems because she was the most qualified for that position amongst the people that were contesting for the same position. But she didn’t get it because she was seen as a divorcee, an unmarried woman... Mostly it’s like that. (Engaged and aged 27)*

The above account by Ola fits with Makama’s (2013) observation that women are typically not elected to the position of power within political party structures in Nigeria due to gender prejudices of male leadership, and in situations where women are brought into politics they come in as mothers and wives. Here is Eno’s account:

*Eno: There are some positions in Nigeria like if you are not married you dare not go for them. So it’s like it shows your level of responsibility, it shows like you are responsible and umm like women that are divorced and all that in Nigeria they tell you that ... like you can’t rule over me, you don’t have a settled home so those things are there. So it’s like to be fulfilled as a Nigerian woman you should have a family, yeah. It’s very, very important. (Married and aged 29)*

Eno’s position and the account by Ola above can be understood in the context of the stigmatization suffered by women who are divorced or separated in Nigeria. Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe (2014) claim that for many people remaining in a bad marriage is still preferred to divorce and/or separation because of the stigma attached to women who are divorced or separated from their husbands.

Eno made a first class degree in Nigeria before coming to the UK for her Master’s degree (she also got a distinction) and PhD in Engineering. For such an exemplary

scholar to extol the social status of being a wife and mother above stellar academic achievements is profound and further lends credence to why some Nigerian women students are under immense pressure to be wives and mothers. The following are excerpts of the interview with her:

*Eno: Your education will only come into play when you have a home, a family, have children then you can be looked at as a role model. But without a family you are nothing. You cannot be reckoned with in the society, you cannot be viewed as a role model, you can't make any impact. It's like when you try to make an impact they just feel like you are trying to transfer the aggression of your not getting a husband on people. That's the way it is, that's the belief. It is only when you are married and have a family that ... and you are educated, well-educated that the education comes to play.*

*Stella: So you are saying now your PhD notwithstanding, if you were to go back to Nigeria single, without a family, without children you are not going to be respected?*

*Eno: Of course you can get a job but you will not be respected, the respect is not there. You don't have a family; there is nothing to show for the education. You can't pass anything to the society. If you are lecturing for instance there is no respect from the students. [ ] so it's like she is miserable and when you try to correct people it is like I understand how she feels - it's because she doesn't have a child, she doesn't have a husband. [ ] I think the family life in Nigeria is very important. As much as education is important, the education will only become significant and important when you have a family. (Married and aged 29)*

### ***Socialization by culture and religion***

In the case of the West, some commentators argue that Western religion, philosophy and culture are the ideological basis for all forms of oppression (sexism, racism and



classism), and these resemble structures of domination worldwide (hooks, 2000, Hodge et al., 1975). In the case of Nigeria, it seems that culture and religion are also the basis of the subordination of women and most people are socialized to accept and even expect these discriminatory cultural practices (Aderinto, 2001, Makama, 2013, Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013, Izugbara, 2004).

As stated earlier in the previous chapter, Aderinto (2001) argues that men are mainly the decision makers especially in a patriarchal society like Nigeria. Gender equality is the “perceived” norm in the British society but the narratives of my participants suggest that they still hold onto the Nigerian cultural norms where women domination is acceptable. For example, Nneka explains that she chose not to go for contraception after having her first baby though the services are free in the UK because her husband does not want her to. Left to herself she would have wanted to wait a while before having another child, but her husband was happy when she became pregnant again four months after having her first baby. When asked if she as a woman does not have a choice in the decision to go for contraception, this is her response:

*Nneka: Of course I do but you know you have to ... (chuckles). Your home is your home, you understand. I don't know if you are a Christian (laughs) oh you are a Christian, and you know the bible says the husband is the head of the family and when the case is getting to like ... getting beyond what you think it is you have to come down. (Married and aged 29)*

In Nigeria, women are generally seen and treated as the property of the men. For the women involved in Aderinto's (2001) study in rural Yoruba land, the decision making in the home is not debatable because it is perceived as un-African for a woman to lead. Some of the quotes that illustrate their position on decision making in the family

include: “the husband’s decision is final” and “the husband is the head of the wife”. Such patriarchal views of women are not only held by rural women and women with lower educational status in Nigeria, Nneka’s account above indicates that some very educated and urban Nigerian women (including women living in Western modern societies) also share such views of themselves and other women. This suggests that even in the UK, the Nigerian Christian women interviewed in the study mostly accept patriarchy and the subordination of women as the natural order because they have been conditioned to do so by their religious beliefs. Another interviewee, Ola does not think that her religion as a Christian has any bearing on her socialization of gender roles but when she recollects a popular biblical injunction, she admits that her religion must have played a part. In her own words:

*Ola: [ ] yes my religion believes that the man should be the head rightly and the woman should submit, and the husband should be the provider the woman supporting, yes. I think it (religion) is reinforcing it (culture). Me, I didn’t even think of it as part of the religion or religious stuff. It’s just something that it’s me. I have grown up that way... I think the church has a role to play but it’s mostly about how I have been brought up, my family – what I see my parents do, so he is the head of the family, provider and the people around me as well, my relatives. (Engaged and aged 27)*

The religious affiliations of the women in Aderinto’s (2001) study are not disclosed but when the views of this study’s participants are also taken into consideration, it seems the patriarchal ideology in Nigeria is shaped by both religion and culture. For someone like Ola, her realization that the teachings in her religion must have reinforced her views of the man being the head and the woman submitting could be likened to the position of African women scholars (Amadiume, 1987, Aidoo, 1998, Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013) who

argue that colonization of Nigeria by Britain worsened women's position in the society as discussed earlier in this chapter. This is because the colonists introduced Christianity in Nigeria and had set up missionary schools through which ideas entrenched in the Christian faith were propagated in the society (see Amadiume, 1987). Apart from religion, it is interesting to note that most participants acknowledged that they have been socialized by Nigerian culture to accept and expect the gendered role of women as wives and mothers, as well as the pressures that can ensue when one is not conforming to any of the expected gendered roles. Onome describes this socialization in the following excerpts:

*Onome: Maybe if I grew up here (UK) it might have been different, I don't know. It might have been. But growing up in an environment where you see a girl mature to a certain extent and get married, it's naturally imprinted in your mind that I am expected too to get married. And so it becomes you that want to get married. Maybe culture did influence it but this is my desire now.... Yeah I think it is so deep that it is imprinted in the mind and the heart of a child. So you grow up desiring it, so now I don't even think about it as culture I think about it as what I want but then to an extent I believe that culture did play a role. Because I think if I was born here ... and ... if I was born to Nigerian parents here maybe it will still be the same thing because they will imprint that thing ... (Single and aged 21)*

Nneka as indicated earlier has also accepted the pressures that could come when one does not have a child within one year of marriage as part of Nigerian culture. She prefers not to focus on schooling alone in the first year of her marriage because the culture expects her to have a baby soon after marriage. The perception in Nigeria that a woman's identity is grounded in motherhood (Aderinto, 2001, Makinde, 2004, Smith,

2001a) could be mostly rooted in the culture as the thesis interviews' data and other research evidence have demonstrated. Makinde (2004) suggests that peoples actions and reactions to situations are influenced by their culture. And culture according to Adefuye (1992), is

[T]he sum total of a people's way of life consisting of values, beliefs and perceptions of the world that underlie a people's behaviour and which are shared by members of a particular society and it contributes to the way they perceive themselves as well as others. It is an aspect of our existence that makes us similar to some people, yet different from other peoples of the world.

(p. 1)

Nneka's submission that bearing children will not stop her and her husband who is also a PhD student from schooling suggests that the women view their adherence to their cultural and religious obligations not at variance with their academic quest in the West. Her position seems to support the claim by Rindfuss et al. (1987) that there can be a disorder in the life course. Rindfuss et al. (1987) argue that the "normative" or "expected" life course order (usually presented as leaving school, entering the labour force full time, getting married, and then having children) is almost as if a parent and a student are mutually exclusive roles. They indicate that the problem with normative order is that individuals can simultaneously hold both family and nonfamily roles. They cite the example of doctoral candidates who might be expected by their family and others to get married before they finish their studies which is similar to the experiences of my research participants. They further argue that although both work and family domains have expected transition sequence, (for example, marriage is expected to come

before parenthood, and the completion of schooling is expected to come before full-time employment) each domain also allows for a variability of sequences which has also been demonstrated in the thesis by the lived experiences of some of the interviewees.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter the thesis attempted to show how the research participants view their struggles while studying in the UK not necessarily in terms of adapting to British culture or evading oppressive Nigerian culture as existing literature portray, but mainly as pressure to conform to Nigerian cultural expectations of them as women. It also demonstrated how the social pressures to conform to these gender roles are not one-off events, rather they continue all through the women's life course.

The chapter also discussed the sources of the social pressures and tried to analyze these in terms of the negative perceptions of non-conformity to these social roles and the consequences they could have on women who are considered deviant by sharing experiences of women who are single as well as those who are married. It also tried to analyze how the desire to conform or fear of social sanctions due to non-conformity can put pressure on the women.

In the next chapter, the thesis will examine the multiple roles that the women have to juggle in addition to being full time postgraduate students as a result of their conformity to Nigerian cultural expectations; and how these other roles can complicate the student role which is supposed to be the "primary" or official reason for most of them being in the UK.

## **Chapter Five: Juggling Multiple Roles (Student, Worker, Wife/Mother/Daughter)**

### **Introduction**

There is an emerging body of work in international student migration and mobility studies that critiques the generalization of the concept of “international students” and advocates for deeper analysis of the complexities involved in the notions of being “international” and “students” (Mosneaga and Winther, 2013, King and Raghuram, 2013, Raghuram, 2013). Raghuram (2013) argues that student migrants should not be categorised as students alone as they can have multiple identities/roles whose demands may be in conflict with the demands of academic study. Also some commentators have emphasized the complexities of being a student and the importance of social relations and family life to a migrant student’s life (Baas, 2010, Collins, 2008, Findlay et al., 2012, Mosneaga and Winther, 2013, Geddie, 2013). Therefore academic as well as social considerations are interwoven in the decisions regarding international student migration and could impact on the lived experiences of international student migrants (King and Raghuram, 2013).

As mentioned earlier in chapter one and demonstrated with research data in chapter three, international students’ migration could be an aspect of an overall life course plan (Findlay et al., 2012), so it is important to interrogate how other roles a student can embody affect the “student experience” because international student migrants can also be family members (for example spouses and parents), workers, refugees, citizens of another nation and students at the same time (Raghuram, 2013, Geddie, 2013, Mosneaga and Winther, 2013, King and Raghuram, 2013). According to Geddie (2013) in her study on the relationship considerations of graduating international science and engineering research students, women share more concerns and tend to make more sacrifices to keep the family together. Also, combining the student role with other roles

such as parenting and partnering could be very challenging (King and Raghuram, 2013). King and Raghuram (2013) acknowledge that there have been gendered discussions involving aspects of international student migration, however, “a fully developed gendered exploration of international student migration” is yet to be written (p. 135). They argue that gender impacts on migration, including international student migration but whereas knowledge is often perceived as disembodied, the bearers of this knowledge are still gendered beings. This is against the background that the motivations and experiences of studying away from one’s home country can be different for men and women; see Baas (2010) for example. Sometimes the way the students see themselves may be different from what liberal Westerners imagine a “student” to be especially when the “student” also have other social roles. King and Raghuram (2013) remind us that international students are complex subjects (such as family members, workers, citizens of a particular nation) and not just students or people engaged only in higher education; they argue that it is at the juncture of these multiple domains that their lives unfold. Hence, how they manage the demands of these often conflicting roles need more empirical exploration.

As the previous chapter showed, the patriarchal ideology in Nigeria views women’s social roles as wives and mothers as more important than any other accomplishments they may have, thereby putting enormous social and psychological pressures on these women students to conform to these gender roles even when they are still studying. So for the Nigerian Christian female student in the UK HE, where there are different

expectations from a student enrolled in full time academic study<sup>22</sup>, how do they manage the different expectations and demands of being a “student” and their other roles?

Some of the research participants fit the description by Manthei and Gilmore (2005) of a category of students who engage in paid work during term time – older students that could not expect significant financial support from their parents, and who would be likely to work to support their families (spouses and children) and/or pay for a large portion of the cost of their education themselves (p. 202). For such students it appears that there are three different areas competing for their time and attention in the course of their

]# studies namely academic, work and family. Their lives could become more complicated in situations where they may be experiencing struggles on one or more of the above mentioned areas. Thus the notion of “role conflict and balance” among students needs to be explored further (Broadbridge and Swanson, 2005). This refers to those who manage multiple role demands such as full-time education, term-time employment and domestic/family commitments.

In this chapter the thesis seeks to interrogate 1) the women’s different role demands and conflicts, 2) how these women make sense of them 3) and how they manage/juggle these demands and conflicts. It starts by looking at how they cope in a different academic environment in the UK. Then it will examine their involvement in paid work before exploring how they cope with social expectations of them as women.

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<sup>22</sup> Such a student is conceptualized as an independent learner and I will explore this concept later in this chapter.



### **Struggles with Academic Work due to a Different Educational System**

The ISM literature suggests that international students who come from a different educational system tend to struggle when they go to study in Western countries such as the UK, USA, and Australia (Subhash, 2013, As-Sabor et al., 2014, Ladd and Ruby, 1999). According to these studies, the academic difficulties faced by international students who come from different teaching and learning environments are particularly due to rote-learning and teacher-centred approaches including the passive and surface oriented learning approaches in their home countries, as well as different examination and assessment patterns; the struggles could also be as a result of language difficulties and the inability to understand and communicate on a cultural level (Subhash, 2013, As-Sabor et al., 2014, Ladd and Ruby, 1999, Rizvi, 2005, Smith and Khawaja, 2011).

For a lot of international students, their expectations are shaped by their former educational experience, hence international students who come from a collectivist<sup>23</sup> culture experience culture shock as well as learning shock when they go to study in a more individualistic culture (Subhash, 2013, As-Sabor et al., 2014). This is because education is judged in terms of knowledge reproduction in their home culture and they receive on-going guidance throughout their studies whereas in the host culture, educational achievement is measured by autonomy, critical analysis and application of knowledge (Subhash, 2013, As-Sabor et al., 2014).

Though English is the official language in Nigeria and therefore the language of instruction in schools and academic settings, the interview data suggest that most of the women participants experience initial academic struggles due to the fact that the

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<sup>23</sup> Collectivist and individualist cultures are discussed in depth in the next chapter.

educational system in Nigeria is quite different from what obtains in the UK. Most of them struggle because the mode of teaching and assessment is different from what they knew in Nigeria. Also constant guidance existed for them back home in Nigeria. Some of their recollections are below:

*Mary: Back home you did not critique, you could not say oh I read this guy's piece of article I do not agree with him because you just thought my goodness this is a professor, he's written that, fantastic yes, I believe everything! ... coming here and having a conversation with my tutors and they asked me ok Professor this has said this, what do you think and I thought why would you ask me? I am doing my postgraduate degree, I don't know anything, he's written everything, he's a professor! And they go no, that's what I need you to do. I need you to read this paper, tell me what you think exactly. If you think it's not good state the reasons you think it's not good. (Single and aged 25)*

*Yinka: [ ] there was a lot of independent learning expected of me which I hadn't acquired through my first degree in Nigeria. And so in the first few months I had to struggle with getting to know how to study independently and to express myself, because most of the education we sort of get in Nigeria, we were sort of spoon-fed in that information was given to us. (Married and aged 42)*

A number of the women report they did not have any support from their universities when they started their HE except Jolomi who recounts the following:

*Jolomi: I engaged with the support that the university provided which I think probably a lot of international students are a) probably not aware of it or b) don't see the relevance in it.... And so one of the things I did was I spoke to them, I read the*

*school brochure and the school said as international students support was available if you needed that.” (Single and aged 33)*

There are existing literature that back the claim that universities provide different types of support to international students including academic support (Ladd and Ruby, 1999, Beasley and Pearson, 1999). Also, some commentators have argued that the home students seem to be more aware of services offered by their educational institutions than their foreign counterparts (see for example Smith and Khawaja, 2011). Although the above narrative by Jolomi supports the claims that educational institutions provide academic support for international students, the claims by the other participants that no academic support existed for international students when they came to the UK to study could also indicate that what is considered as support by the universities and their home students may be different from the “concept of support” the women were used to in their own countries or expected to receive in the UK. Another example of learning shock is adapting to the “informal” relationship between the lecturers and students as described below:

*Bimbo: [ ] where we come from students cannot approach teachers to ask questions, there is that hierarchy in you’re a student and I am a teacher. [ ] And so for me coming to the UK [ ] you had the head of department that said you know what... my name is Peter, call me Peter and you are like really? Okay. That was a very big struggle and because we are Africans we are very used to referring to people as Sirs. (Married and aged 39)*

An additional aspect of the academic struggles faced by the women is that such experiences could affect them emotionally like Jolomi explains below:

*Jolomi: I was depressed to be honest because I thought my God my father had paid so much money for this school fees which is kind of like ten times the average undergraduate school fees so I had nothing else than an “A” to produce. So when I produced my first grade and I think I scored fifty something, God I slept for almost like two days because I was like oh my God this is a disaster. (Single and aged 33)*

A different example of how the academic struggles could affect the women emotionally is shared by Liz in the quote below and seems to support a line of argument by King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) that international students may want to socialize with home students but the chances to do so are restricted, hence international students tend to stick together and do not mix up with home students.

*Liz: I think as an international student you struggle a lot to make friends with people here. [ ] before they say there is a group work the English students already they have people in mind ... for me I thought that if I be in a group of people like that I could learn and also improve myself but by the time you get to them [ ] they are like no I am sorry we can't include you, we are already up to the number the lecturer ... needs and all that. Which was really sad [ ] I don't know if they did it intentionally or they were more comfortable being around their friends to do their work. So at the end of the day we are always left out with other international students to work together which was really bad. (Married and aged 28)*

For most of the women students, their experiences as narrated above confirm existing literature on the academic struggles faced by international students in the West (Subhash, 2013, As-Sabor et al., 2014). However, not everyone thinks highly of the academic system in the UK; for such people their struggles could be rooted in the fact that their academic expectations for embarking on ISM are not met. The two examples

from the interview data below suggest that the disappointment the women face is rooted in the fact that they had hoped to have a different educational experience in the UK but it ended up being similar to their experience in Nigeria. Their narratives are as follows:

*Eno: Umm I wanted to do so many things practically like in my department in Engineering. The Master's I felt ... you would be in the lab doing things and all that. Because I felt I was losing out in Nigeria ... and that was what my parents also felt. When I came my mum was just asking me, "Have you been to the lab? Have you done this? Have you done that?" I told her look it's quite different, it's all still simulations (Married and aged 29)*

*Dayo: I didn't know I was coming in for another kind of lecture all through. If I am doing a Master's in Engineering, you guys should just go straight ahead and teach me something about the technical aspect, [ ] we were having lectures with year 3 and year 4 students so it was like we were doing undergraduate courses which I had already done before. (Single and aged 25)*

In addition to the different types of struggles some of these women face in the UK because the educational system is different from what they were used to in Nigeria, some of them combine their studies with undertaking paid work during term time for various reasons. And it is to that I turn in the next section.

### **Combining Full-time Academic Work with Paid Part-time Work**

As already discussed in chapter one, the classifications used for different groups of migrants (such as labour, student, dependent) are not always representative of their realities. This is because there are overlaps across these categorizations, for example, a student migrant can also be a worker and a migrant who moved to join a spouse can also

be student and/or a worker as this thesis will be showing from the interview data in this section.

Studies in countries like the USA, UK and Australia have shown that students enrolled in full-time academic studies increasingly are engaged in term-time employment due to decrease in levels of government support for students over time (Curtis and Shani, 2002, Moreau and Leathwood, 2006, Hall, 2010). For these students the reasons cited for involvement in paid work are mostly related to financial difficulties, hence they work in order to meet their basic needs and carry on with their studies; other reasons cited less often by students for working include gaining work experience, independence and/or to make extra money to fund their lifestyles (Curtis and Shani, 2002, Manthei and Gilmore, 2005, Hall, 2010, Broadbridge and Swanson, 2005). From their longitudinal surveys, Moreau and Leathwood (2006) discovered that working class students tend to work more and for longer hours while women and minority ethnic groups are more likely to be working than white men. Also women earn less than men on the average. Students tend to work predominantly in the service sector especially hospitality/catering and retailing which usually pay low hourly wages, however, they are more available and the causal basis of such jobs make them easier to be fitted around students' academic schedule (Moreau and Leathwood, 2006, Hall, 2010).

Apart from the benefits which students can derive from working like some of those mentioned above, there are also negative consequences of students engaging in term time work. For example, students who work are more likely to miss lectures than students who do not work and the more hours students work in part-time jobs, the less time they have for their studies – the more they are likely to hand in assignments late, fail to hand in assignments, receive a fail grade or a lower degree result (Curtis and

Shani, 2002, Hall, 2010, Callender, 2008). Other drawbacks of working include tiredness and increased stress which could affect the students' concentration when in class or during their study time.

From the findings of their own study and other empirical works carried out on the effects on paid employment on students' academic work, Curtis and Shani (2002) have argued that for students who work, working occupies roughly the same amount of their time as attending lectures/seminars, yet the discourse in HE continues to regard such students as full-time. Part-time students are usually regarded as those with full-time jobs or family commitments, Curtis and Shani (2002) further argue that whereas lecturers are inclined to give part-time students some considerations when work or personal problems hamper their studies, no such considerations are given to full-time students who have term-time work and family commitments. Rather some lecturers see such problems as unnecessary diversion. This could be because the common constructions of the student in educational discourse is that of an autonomous/independent learner, a construction which Moreau and Leathwood (2006) consider as gendered and culturally specific, with particular implications for students like this study's participants who do not fit the traditional norm of a young, White, Western, able-bodied, male student (p. 33).

In problematizing the concept of "independent learner" Leathwood (2001) claims that the "ideal learner" is not commonly perceived as female, but as male, white, middle class and able-bodied, a being who is not restricted by household tasks, poverty or lack of confidence. Within such framing, she argues that the notion of support and its connotations of need and dependency are hence seen as inappropriate in higher education discourse. This is more so for women for whom the characteristics required

as an independent scholar will possibly involve the denial of the values and ideals of their gendered identities (Leathwood, 2001). I want to go back to the women participants' claims that they had struggled academically on arrival in the UK because they were not supported by their various universities in the section above. Probably such apparent lack of support from the universities can be better understood in the context that the women did not fit the concept of the "ideal learner" in HE. So full-time students who work could face double disadvantages as they often do not receive support or sympathy from their university or their employer, hence they manage the role conflict situation as best as they can by juggling their studies and work (Curtis and Shani, 2002).

Raghuram (2013) suggests that some international students have to work to pay for their migration, university tuition fees, and accommodation in receiving countries because of the commodification of university structures and the entire migration process. This view is also expressed by some of the women in their accounts. All the participants in this study engage in term-time work though to varying degrees and for various reasons. Only three of the women, Eno, Rita and Abiola, work in areas related to their course of study such as research assistant and teaching jobs within their universities. They speak of their work in the universities mainly as gaining relevant work experience. More than half of women report that they work to pay for their living expenses. Most are employed in the catering, care and retail sectors conforming earlier studies by Hall (2010) and Moreau and Leathwood (2006) mentioned above. A few of them do multiple jobs, for example, Abiola is a graduate teaching assistant on campus as well as a programme assistant for a local charity. Those of them in the medical profession like Ngozi and Vera do care work while three of the women have the peculiar situation of being self-employed. In explaining why being self-employed is desirable Bimbo's response is:



*Bimbo: I wanted something I could fit around my PhD lab work and do at my own convenience. And I realized that though there were many Nigerians and Africans in (mentions city) I struggled to find someone to make my hair. So one time I went home (Nigeria) for about three month in between my Master's and PhD... I did a short ... like an apprenticeship at a hair dressing salon in Lagos. I had to learn how to weave and braid different styles of hair. So for the period of my PhD I made people's hair and supported myself financially. (Married and aged 39)*

From the above narrative Bimbo exercises agency by creating a job for herself which offers her flexibility, thereby making it possible for her to juggle her multiple roles effectively. Just like Bimbo, Belema wants flexibility so she could focus on her PhD. In her own words:

*Belema: My education and living costs are funded by my university so I do web designs once in a while to make some extra cash for myself. I don't want to do more ... my PhD is tasking enough, why should I stress myself further especially since the university is funding me? (Single and aged 33)*

Nneka is the third woman who is partly self-employed, like Bimbo she can braid and weave hair in addition to her job in her school's catering services. Being self-employed means these women can choose to work over the weekends and use the weekdays for their studies or however it works out best for them. But Nneka's second job in her school's catering department takes up to 16 hours of her time a week including week days like the rest of the women interviewees in part-time paid employment, hence they fit the description of students who spend as much time on their part-time jobs as they do attending lectures (Curtis and Shani, 2002).

An example of how the pressures on a woman student can be multi-faceted is the experience of Amara. She is studying for a PhD and her husband and four children are with her in the UK. As explained earlier in chapter three, she had come to the UK originally with an international scholarship but the scholarship was terminated when she had problems in her first university and ended up getting a degree lower than a PhD. That academic setback also led to her losing her job in Nigeria because the scholarship was tied to the job. She was determined to get a doctorate degree regardless; hence she sought another PhD admission in another university. It is very challenging to pay her tuition fee of £50,000 as well as take care of the financial needs of her “large” family. The following is how she captures her experience of studying and working at the same time:

*Amara: At a point ... especially the second and the third year, I was doing this part time work – I was working in the factory but night shift ... so that I would be able to come to the campus the following morning. Sometimes on my way back from work (chuckles), I would just branch in the campus to do some things, in the lab before I go home and come back again.*

*Stella: Don't you fall asleep? Don't you get tired?*

*Amara: (Chuckles) not really ... maybe it's a special gift on my own side. Although many a times I would just maybe take some two hours and sleep at home before I come to the campus... but there were times that I won't even have time to sleep at all. Then I would try and switch the schedule so that it would be lab work that I would do so that I would be on my feet throughout. So there won't be chance for me to sleep. (Married and aged 43)*

Not all the women interviewees work out of necessity. The parents of Jolomi and Liz had paid for everything relating to their education and living costs in full but they both chose to be in paid term time employment to gain experience and independence. According to Jolomi she worked as an administrative assistant and during open days in her university before progressing to be a representative of postgraduate students on one of the university's committees because she wanted to understand how the university is run. But for Liz, she worked mainly to assert her independence from her family according to her narrative below:

*Liz: [ ] my tuition fee was paid in full. My accommodation was paid in full and I was given pocket money and the intention was every month they would be sending money in but I just had to say no, let me work and you know gain experience, to make money outside of the family business and see how people make money. So I had to stop the money coming from home and started working, doing some part time jobs.*

*Stella: What kind of work did you do?*

*Liz: At first I got a council job to do some surveys. [ ] it was a contract job, I did it for three months then the contract ended. After that [ ] I had to work in a retail shop ... for four months until I had another job in my school. My department needed an administrator/resource centre assistant so I applied for the job and I was given the job. So I started working there till the end of my study. (Married and aged 28)*

Rita, one of the women interviewees who introduced Liz to me confirms that she had no reason to work as a student because her father was baffled when he initially learnt that Liz was working in the UK. Liz was single and in her earlier 20s at the beginning of her studies in the UK, she met the man who later became her husband towards the end of her studies. A few of the women especially the younger ones also indicate that their

parents pay for their education and living costs in full so working for them is only for experiential reasons. Take the case of Koko in the following account:

*Koko: I only work just to gain experience, so I do voluntary work and things that would broaden my understanding of science really. So it's not like I am working to feed myself. I am working to develop my intellect. (Single and aged 25)*

Koko's narrative is similar to Onome's whose parents fear that her working may impact negatively on her academic performance therefore they forbid her from working since they pay for all her needs in the UK. But Onome chooses to do some voluntary work in her church once in a while so she could have it on her Curriculum Vitae as her work experience in the UK. On her own part, Ola works only in the later part of the academic year so she could save up and do a tour of Europe while Dayo is working so she could get some "extras" which support studies mentioned above in this section (Hall, 2010, Moreau and Leathwood, 2006). In the case of Mary, she only started working at the end of her studies. According to her:

*Mary: I don't have to work but I work now because I am through with my studies. But throughout the period of my study I wasn't working because I didn't really have time and there was really no need for me to work. But now I am free I work temporarily with an agency ... I work in a factory, so I am on the production line ... packaging sandwiches, that's what I do. (Single and aged 25)*

In terms of the struggles that international students face when they study abroad, Liz (who wished she could work with the home students and fit into the British academic system as documented in the preceding section) reflects that facing financial difficulty is the hardest part of being an international student in the UK. She recounts experiences of fellow international students who had dire financial needs but were not as lucky as her

to get a job. Her submission is probably due to the fact that with time most of the women interviewees get to understand what is expected from them academically and adapt to the British educational system whereas on-going financial difficulties can be very unsettling for most people, even non students.

From the interview data, none of the married women<sup>24</sup> said that the reason behind their paid term time work was to gain experience, independence, or fund their lifestyle. It seems that older students who do not receive significant financial support from their parents, who have spouses and children to support and/or who are funding a substantial portion of their studies and/or living expenses (Manthei and Gilmore, 2005) as exemplified by Amara and Nneka in the narratives above are more likely to work out of necessity, engage in very demanding work schedules and work longer hours. Interestingly these research participants do not speak of their term time work as having a negative effect on their academic studies in the same way as the novelty in dealing with a new academic system in the UK in the section above. The only exception is Onome who avoids paid work because of her parents' fears as mentioned earlier. Rather the women tend to talk about juggling their family commitments with their studies as a major struggle. This underscores the assertion by Curtis and Shani (2002) that emphasis on paid work by students risks disregarding the unpaid domestic and caring work which are still done mostly by women.

The women who talk about their domestic and caring roles are not only wives and mothers, single women like Mary and Belema who are living with their sisters' families

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<sup>24</sup> Eno and Rita had jobs as research assistants in their respective universities as documented earlier before they got married.

also talk about having to do chores and care for their sisters' children in addition to their academic workload. Let me remind the reader that Mary only started working after she finished her studies while Belema works for herself as a web designer but not on a regular basis. Both women claim that they have little or no time during term time to fit in paid work. They may not work outside the home during term time but that does not suggest that living with their sisters necessarily mean that they live in "free houses" or eat "free food" and are exempted from paying bills. Their unpaid cleaning, cooking and other housework including childcare could also be perceived as their payment towards their accommodation and feeding.

Scholars like Broadbridge and Swanson (2005) and Hall (2010) claim that when students can no longer manage their different competing roles' demands (studies, work and social) the full university experience especially extracurricular activities/social life is the easiest to sacrifice in terms of reduced leisure hours. But how do these women participants manage their social roles in addition to their student and work roles? That will be the focus of the next section.

### **Juggling Student and Family Roles**

Knowledge is often seen as disembodied (King and Raghuram, 2013) and education in the West is usually perceived as an individualistic quest, but as the previous chapter showed the women interviewees are very concerned about getting married and having children even when they are studying. Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy (2008) have argued that the university is not just a place of knowledge, rather studying in a university involves exposure to a new culture, society and knowledge; and universities tend to support the governing philosophy of a place and the teaching offered in universities towards the norms and values of the dominant discourse. From the findings of

their study on the impact of higher education on the identities of women from non-Western societies, Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy (2008) suggest that when women from such societies attend higher institutions of learning in Western societies and are exposed to new norms, values and culture they begin to question the accepted gender norms in their culture.

Other commentators who have studied international student migrants such as Alberts and Hazen (2005), Matsui (1995) and Ono and Piper (2004) also claim that women's gender role perceptions tend to change remarkably through their experience with higher education. Alberts and Hazen (2005) show in their study of international students in the USA, that Indian women enjoy the freedom to choose not to do house chores, which living in America gives them whereas it would be unthinkable to expect their husbands to do the chores back home in India. In Ono and Piper's (2004) study, some of the participants did not want to return to Japan after experiencing gender equality in the USA while those who chose to return preferred to work for a foreign company that is likely to treat all staff equally. The thesis argues that most of the Nigerian women in this study remained unchanged in their perception of their gender roles in spite of university education in the UK. It now discusses these gender role perceptions and how the women consciously juggle such roles with the demands of full time academic work.

Gender as defined by Ferree (1990) "is a hierarchical structure of opportunity and oppression as well as an affective structure of identity and cohesion, and families are one of the many institutional settings in which these structures become lived experiences" (p. 870). Gender as a social construct is always being used to advance a range of individual and group goals (Ferree, 1990) and "doing gender" means creating

differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 137).

As stated earlier in the previous chapter, in Nigeria, being a wife and mother are powerful social roles that are coveted by most women (Amadiume, 1987, Aina, 1998b, Smith, 2001a). Take the case of Nneka, who had come to the UK to join her husband, who was studying for a PhD in a UK university:

*Nneka: Well, before I came to the UK, I was pregnant for my first child and I got admission at about that time as well. And I didn't want to defer the admission because I am on dependent visa. If I defer the admission that would not make my husband's visa and period of stay here in the UK to cover up for my own stay because I am not on student visa. And I don't want to get one. That is the number one reason for that.*

*Stella: Is there anything bad about getting a student visa because you just said you don't want to get a student visa?*

*Nneka: There is nothing bad in it but I didn't come here as a student though I had it in mind to come and study. (Married and aged 29)*

In the above excerpts, Nneka's multiple roles and subjectivities are highlighted. In addition to being a student, she is also a wife, mother and a dependent migrant. Her decision to study abroad is embedded in her life-course aspirations which supports the argument by Findlay et al. (2012) and Brooks and Everett (2008) that international student migration is not just a straight-forward phenomenon, her life is also shaped by immigration rules in the UK which limits her length of stay in the country to her husband's. And in fulfilment of her socially expected role as a wife she had her first child within the first year of her marriage (Amadiume, 1987, Aina, 1998b, Smith,



2001a) and before she could start her academic programme in the UK. Her explanations for not deferring childbirth include 1) avoiding the scrutiny/pressure that not having a baby within the first year of marriage could bring (as discussed in the last chapter) and 2) her period of study falls within the time frame they have allotted to have children according to their life-course plan. Such submissions raise questions over what she considers as the order of priority of her multiple roles especially in the light that she reminded me that did not come to the UK as a student in the first instance.

Some of the interviewees also speak about their academic and professional roles but not to the exclusion of their social roles as wives and mothers. For example, Amara who had a successful career in Nigeria before securing an international scholarship to study for a PhD in the UK makes several references to herself as a career woman, wife, mother and student during the interview. One of such instances is shown in the quote below:

*Amara: As a parent you must play your own role as a parent. You are a career lady but it should not be to the detriment of children's welfare at the same time. Everything must go on fine, try to manage their own side, try to make sure and put yourself in line with your studies. Then as a wife you have to play your own role. (Married and aged 43)*

Eno is another participant who wants to be known as a professional; however she only presents that aspect of her life in a particular setting and to particular people. She explains her reasons for juggling how she wants people to perceive her in the following:

*Eno: At least to people who have been expecting and all that I am married, I am somebody's wife. Umm to people who are professionally minded I would say I am a PhD student, I would rather introduce myself as a PhD student. But if I go somewhere*

*and I see the kinds of people there, ... I would rather tell them I am this person's wife so that settles the case. But if I am in another place and I know that's not reckoned with, then I would tell them oh I am a PhD student from (mentions university)*

I want to remind the reader that Eno got married towards the end of her PhD course. She explains that she keeps her married identity away from her school which she considers a professional environment because some of her office mates/fellow PhD students may withdraw from her if they know that she is married and she does not want them to see her as "old." But in settings with Nigerian people, she explains "... *but when you are outside maybe with friends you would rather want to stick with your man like oh this is my husband or I would rather say this is my husband and I am doing a PhD. But the first thing is this is my husband and we are here together.*"

She hides her married identity in professional settings such as the university environment probably because she believes that it is a "disembodied" setting judging by her reference to it as a place where marriage is not reckoned. This suggests that Eno is conscious of the "ideal learner" stereotype within the university system and wants to be perceived as one. But in Nigerian community settings where women are judged by their social roles, she wants to portray herself first as a married woman and show off her husband. She agrees that the way she presents herself to the Nigerian community is related to the tension between the social perception of highly educated women and the respect accorded to married women. For example, this is her reflection about her new status as a wife:

*Eno: And then society, yeah they feel like okay you are responsible and they ask you, so how is your husband doing? ... It's like people view you in a different way, there is this kind of respect. And now my friends ... don't want to call me by name. ...*

*That's the kind of respect you get from people, yeah. At least Nigerians, Africans yes I would say. ... And some of them are using ma, oh how are you ma? I am like look I am not ma, I am the same old person and all that. So it's that kind of thing so people just see you, now they don't want to call you by name. Now you are sister<sup>25</sup>, auntie and all that. (Married and aged 29)*

Eno is not the only participant who chooses to hide the very social role or identity they proudly celebrate among fellow Nigerians when they are in the university setting. Three other examples are captured in the following interviews' excerpts. The first is from Uloaku who decided to have a child after her mother-in-law's visit to the UK as documented in the last chapter.

*Uloaku: I tried to hide my pregnancy; I wore very loose clothes because I sensed that my supervisor may not take me seriously if he found out that I was pregnant. But one day ... I think I was about six month pregnant then, I fainted in the lab so they told him. That was how he found out. (Married and aged 30)*

The second account is from Ify who started her PhD course as a single woman. Her narrative should be seen in the context that she was already in her late 30s then and must have been perceived as an "over-educated" woman unlikely to get a husband in Nigeria.

*Ify: I had my first child in the second year of my PhD and until I finished my programme I did not let anyone in school know I had a child.*

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<sup>25</sup> This shows respect and not necessarily blood relationship.

*Stella: How were you able to do that?*

*Ify: (laughing) I was supposed to carry out my fieldwork in Nigeria for nine months. I had been planning my wedding before then ... so within a month of arriving in Nigeria I got married. Luckily I got pregnant the same month. Before I finished my fieldwork my husband's visa application as my dependent was granted so we came back to the UK together. Shortly after that my baby was born. So no one in school saw me while I was pregnant and I never mentioned that I had a baby even after I resumed.*

*Stella: Why did you do that?*

*Ify: My supervisor would not understand. He was too critical of my work ... he gave me a hard time before the confirmation of my PhD status. You can imagine what he would say if he knew I had a child. (Married and aged 41)*

The third example is Bimbo's, she had finished her Master's degree in the UK and started her PhD before her marriage and like Ify she was already in her 30s and an "over-educated" single woman by Nigerian standards.

*Bimbo: When I told my supervisor I would be travelling to Nigeria to get married, he advised me not to let my husband stay with me in the UK ... that he will slow down my progress. But how could I do that? I was getting married because the whole PhD journey was too lonely and I needed companionship. So when I got pregnant I avoided my supervisor (laughing) until I couldn't hide the fact that I was pregnant. I had a very smooth pregnancy so I did not stop doing my lab work, and to prove that having my husband in the UK did not slow me down I did not take any maternity leave. (Married and aged 39)*

Chapter four of this thesis explained why these women participants want to fulfil their social roles even when studying. From the foregoing accounts, it seems the women also recognize that such roles are not compatible with the concept of the “ideal learner” so they consciously juggle their student identity/role with their social identities/roles. It is thought-provoking that all the women who speak of their supervisors as unsympathetic have male supervisors. Though I have two female supervisors and my own experience of having a child while doing a full-time PhD programme is different from the accounts above, I cannot conclude that all female supervisors are sympathetic to their female students’ parental and domestic concerns.

It appears that for the women juggling of these roles becomes even more important outside the university setting as they try to keep up appearances of their expected gender roles within their families and Nigerian community. As discussed earlier in the previous chapter, in Nigeria, right from childhood boys are socialized to see themselves as the heads of the household, providers, protectors and superior to women while girls are socialized to be housekeepers, gentle, submissive, and generally inferior to men (Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013, Izugbara, 2004, Amadiume, 1987). In spite of living in a seemingly gender equal society in the UK, the Nigerian women interviewees mostly uphold the socially expected roles of them as wives, mothers, housekeepers in addition to their roles as students. This is regardless of the fact that most of the married women living with their families in the UK are the primary migrants (Kofman et al., 2000) and their husbands are their dependents<sup>26</sup>. Back in Nigeria, in cases where women do less domestic chores and childcare because they are employed outside the home for

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<sup>26</sup> See full interviewees’ profiles included as appendix 3.

example, such tasks are not undertaken by husbands and fathers but by maids and nannies (Smith, 2001a). Nevertheless, women doing most of the housework and childcare duties in the home is not predominantly Nigerian. Western scholars like West and Zimmerman (1987) and Hochschild and Machung (2012) also acknowledge that wives, even when employed outside the home do most of the housework and child-care tasks. So what is it like for the Nigerian Christian women who are full time students and have families in the UK too?

Some of them acknowledge that their husbands sometimes help with chores and childcare in the UK as against the norm in Nigeria (Smith, 2001a) because it would be impossible for them to cope otherwise. However it is interesting to note that in situations where husbands help out with such “women’s roles” their wives are careful about letting other people, especially his family members know about it so they would not be stigmatized. Below are some of the quotes from the interviews on the theme of gender roles. I start with Dayo eulogizing some of the domestic roles men play here in the UK as against what obtains in Nigeria when the following ensued:

*Stella: Will you ever dream of being the provider of your family whereas your husband is the house-husband?*

*Dayo: No, no, no. I don’t support that kind of gender equality.*

*Stella: Why is it wrong for the man to be a house-husband?*

*Dayo: I come from Africa and it’s just consciously, you know it’s like you are limiting the man’s kind of ego, like people look at the man like the breadwinner, the provider for the house. Even if you don’t talk his family will say something, that you*

*have used something for their son, that probably you are using some kind of jazz<sup>27</sup> or whatever for him. That why is he doing this and that.*

The contradiction here is that it is acceptable for a British man to be a house-husband for which Dayo extols their contributions to the family but it is unacceptable for a Nigerian man to be a house-husband mainly because of the public perception of what a man should be. The thesis argues that the notion of witchcraft and its associated powers is used commonly to explain deviant behaviour by the participants and other Nigerian women scholars cited earlier. In the above quote it is used to refer to the suspicion that the man must have lost use of his senses if he becomes the house-husband in the same context as scholars like Federici (1997), Aina (1998a) and Ezuma (2008).

In his study on economic dependence, gender and division of labour at home, Greenstein (2000) argues that “as a result of their non-normative economic roles, breadwinner wives and economically dependent husbands occupy deviant identities” (p. 332). He uses the concept of “deviance neutralization” to explain how the “breadwinner wives” overcompensate for the “deviance” by embellishing appearances and/or behaviours which refute the deviant identity. For example such breadwinner wives try to do more housework than women who earn same as or less than their husband and their men on their part do less housework. Citing Hochschild and Machung (1989, in p. 334) Greenstein (2000) contends that men who lose power over women in one way try to make up for it in another way. Therefore husbands and wives see housework as a strategy for “balancing” interpersonal power (Brines, 1994). According to McDonald

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<sup>27</sup> Jazz is used colloquially to refer to love potion when a love interest is at stake. In other cases, jazz could also be used to refer to African juju or witchcraft.

(1980) power is the ability of an individual within a social relationship to carry out his or her will, even in the face of resistance by others (p. 842). Dayo's further account below suggests that Nigerian women may sometimes "neutralize deviance" by "misrepresenting" their men so that others will respect them.

*Stella:            You mentioned men's ego earlier, will this be because of your husband's ego or societal expectations?*

*Dayo:            No! Actually if you love your husband, there's a way you will always place your husband like forget about ego now. There's a way you will always place him, describe, ... present him to other people even when you know it's not what you are presenting. There's a way you will always package him and like make people know that yeah he's my husband and he's the one that is providing for this family. You make him look good, make him feel good and it's like you encourage him. That's just the word.*  
*(Single and aged 25)*

The above is also an example of how women "do gender" (West and Zimmerman) and fits Tichenor's (1999) claims about women who have more resources than their husbands. According to Tichenor (1999) in her analysis of status and income as gendered resources in the case of marital power, wives with more resources do not use these resources to make claims to greater power. They rather do the reverse by deferring to their husbands in order to demonstrate that they are not making claims to power. By "doing gender" in this way the women try to retain their spouse's power in the relationship though their economic potential should offer them more power advantage.

When asked if her perception of gender roles has changed since living in the UK, this is what Ola had to say which supports Dayo's opinions:



Ola: *It hasn't! [ ] I don't try to imbibe that culture. I still believe very strongly in my own culture. It hasn't changed the way I see things, it's just that I have seen that they think differently. For instance, if I go out with my classmates and they come with their boyfriends or fiancés they pay separately – the boy pays, the girl pays. Such things don't happen in Nigeria, it's the guy's responsibility even if he doesn't have the money, it's the guy's responsibility to pay. And if you go out with friends, he should pay for the girl even if it's the girl's money, at least he should be the one that drops the money. But here they separate everything – the guy pays and the girl pays, everybody is equal kind of. I don't really like that and I don't believe in it so I am not imbibing that. (Engaged and aged 27)*

The two narratives I have used so far on this theme, gender role socialization are from women who are yet to marry. This suggests that not only married women do gender, single women have already been socialized to do gender so they can fit the appropriate social contexts of good wives and good mothers when the time comes. Dayo continues in her interpretation of gender roles by sharing an incident which did not go down well with her in her uncle's house in the UK. She had just arrived from Nigeria and spent three days with her uncle and his wife before moving to her university in another part of the country.

Dayo: *I wanted to sweep the floor the next morning after I got to the UK, she (uncle's wife) was like don't bother yourself jare<sup>28</sup>, your uncle will clean it he usually does it on weekends. "Aha! Don't say that word oo! If it gets to Nigeria people will not hear that one from you." I was just joking with her ... I was just laughing I was trying*

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<sup>28</sup> Nigerian slang meaning anyway.

*to tell her that even if you guys are in the UK, even if it's your husband that does it, you don't have to tell me.*

*Stella: Does it mean she could get into trouble?*

*Dayo: Yeah for saying things like that. Even if he is the one doing it, don't just say it like it's his duty. (Single and aged 25)*

Warner et al. (1986) in their cross-cultural study of social organization, spousal resources and marital power claim that Western societies and non-Western societies differ in terms of the importance placed on kinship – one's social position in non-Western societies is influenced by the relationship with the kin group, and the kin structure has significant impact on wives' power in marriage. Therefore a wife tries to be in the good books of her husband's family by conforming to gender roles expected of her, which was why Dayo was not happy with her uncle's wife deviance.

In Nigerian society, the position of women in relation to that of men is such that a woman is not only married to her husband, but also to his relations to the extent that she accords them the same respect she gives to her husband. And in the absence of her husband she has to contact her husband's male relations for key decisions such as the health or education of the children, or giving her daughter out in marriage (Aderinto, 2001). In reference to the only woman, Kemi, who declined to be interviewed as mentioned in chapter two, her sister-in-law Bimbo participated in this study and is also a friend of mine. Bimbo had recommended Kemi as a likely interviewee because I used snowballing sampling technique. The interview quote below reveals Bimbo's view on why Kemi declined to participate in the study.

*Bimbo: When my husband told me his elder sister was coming for Masters and would stay with us ... I was surprised because her uni is about 50 miles away but I reasoned it would save her some money since she is self-sponsored. The next thing, my husband said she was returning from her Christmas holiday in Nigeria with her two sons, without discussing it with us! They are all in my house now, my husband cannot say no and I am not happy with her. That's probably why she doesn't want you to interview her. (Married and aged 39)*

My interpretation of Kemi's actions is based on cultural attitudes that treat women and all they have as possessions of their husbands and invariably their husbands' families (Aderinto, 2001, Aina, 1998b). This mirrors the claim above by Warner et al. (1986) that kin structures in traditional societies affect the power of wives in marriage. It is important to point out that Bimbo is the primary migrant and had brought her husband (Kemi's brother) over to the UK after their marriage. She also earns far more than husband as a PhD holder. While Kemi is certain that her younger brother would not object to his nephews living under "his" roof in the UK, it seems the resources (visa to remain in the UK and higher income) which Bimbo brings to her marriage do not grant her any form of power to warrant Kemi consulting her regarding her decision. Though Kemi is a female student herself, in this instance she seems to have juggled her role and became the assertive big sister who can dominate her brother's wife. This is another example of how women are subordinated not just by men and patriarchal structures, but also by their fellow women. The thesis will highlight other incidences of women perpetuating patriarchy in the remaining part of this chapter.

For this group of participants, keeping up the image of a respectful and dutiful wife multiplies their chores and subservient behaviours as Eno's lengthy reflections below indicate, which necessitates more juggling on her part in order to cope with her studies.

*Eno: No I have more work to do now! Because before I just wash my clothes, now I am looking at my husband you have been washing your clothes before we got married but now you expect me to help you. And I am like there are times we have to wash these clothes together. But of course if it were in other places and you have some elderly people or Nigerians there you won't want to do that because they will feel like ahaha you are not respectful to your husband at all... if his family members were to be around I would not want them to feel like I am controlling their son or I am just putting a burden on their son, I am the one in control of the house. So you don't want them to have that kind of impression. ... Umm but if you look at it as a person getting married in Nigeria typically you have more work to do, more housework, you have to cook. Before looking at myself I can only cook once and eat the food all through the day but now you are marrying somebody that eats different dishes for breakfast and dinner. But as a single person you can always cope with eating the same food. You don't care because you are trying to save time for yourself but now you have those responsibilities which you have to live up to. You have to, more work to do definitely. (Married and aged 29)*

Eno brought her husband over to the UK after their marriage and the account above also confirms the argument by Tichenor (1999) that "status reversal women" (in such a marriage the relative contribution of the resources of status and income by the spouses is the reverse of what has been typical in two-earner couples) seem to place a greater value on their gender appropriate contributions to the household and not their pay cheques – by how much they do in the house instead of how much

they bring home. Doing gender in this way reaffirms them as “women” and reinforces their position as “wives” thereby re-creating the gendered relations of power in their marriages.

Another woman, Liz concedes that her husband helps out with chores and childcare but that does not make her equal to her husband even if they are living in the UK. She invokes a biblical injunction to make her point in the following quote:

*Liz:                You know when I talk about living the life in the UK I am talking about like helping out in housework, taking care of the child but you know there are other things that he has to be the head like the bible says the man is the head of the family and that's how we operate in my family. (Married and aged 28)*

For Amara who is getting a PhD and has four children, her husband helps out with childcare but there are still roles that are exclusively her preserve such as shopping and cooking for the family. All the accounts of the women shared in this section confirm Ferree's (1990) position that housework is a gendered labour in that specific tasks convey social meanings about femininity and masculinity and power differentials. Women accept housework as part of being a wife and/or the price to pay to have a peaceful home. The quality and amount of housework women do also carry symbolic confirmation of such women as “good” wives and mothers as culture outlines those roles. Housework is also used by women to express love and subordination (Ferree, 1990).

In as much as the women try to juggle their different responsibilities there are times their efforts are not enough and an aspect of their life suffers as a result. For example, the physical work involved in meeting social responsibilities of a wife and mother can distract the women from their studies or prevent them from reaching their potentials.

Universally, women of all classes have less leisure time than men, and due to their parenting and other family functions, whatever free time they have is never really theirs (Lerner, 1986). As mentioned in the section above, studies by Broadbridge and Swanson (2005) and Hall (2010) indicate that students who are also part time workers tend to cut back on leisure time as a strategy to balance the demands of their studies and work. But this does not seem to be the case with some of these participants especially those with families. The experiences of women such as Nneka and Rita already discussed in chapter four indicate that having a baby while studying can disrupt academic work. The suspension of academic study after childbirth is not the only way the women's education is affected by wifely and motherly duties, juggling the demands of being a wife, mother and student at the same time poses distractions to academic study.

Amara is one participant whose experience of juggling motherhood and academic work is emotionally draining. At first, she had left her husband and three older children behind in Nigeria and come to the UK with a seven month old pregnancy. This was because she was afraid she may lose her international scholarship for PhD studies in the UK if she did not take it up the same year she got it. Prior to leaving Nigeria she had arranged to stay with a Pastor (of one of her church branches) and his family in Manchester before relocating to Birmingham where her first university was located. She actually started her PhD course when her last child was only two weeks old. This is her recollection:

*Amara: That is why I said it was tough (laughing), that period oh my God, in fact I think I was the only one in this Birmingham (giggling) that used to back<sup>29</sup> baby, because I was not used to pushing buggy especially when I wanted to move. In fact that locality I was living in I found it difficult to ... there was no nothing like a child-minder, no nothing. You know a student environment, no relatives like Nigerian to Nigerian who you can ask please can you look after this baby, babysit for me until I come. Eventually, a lady volunteered to help me but she was living far away if you know (mentions area). It was tough, I would wake up at about 5am so I could take my baby to the other end of town where the child-minder was living, then I would go back to the city before boarding another bus that would take me to the university campus where my department was domiciled which was in another town... I stayed in shared housing with my baby for some months until my husband and kids joined me from Nigeria. Thank God those days are over now.... It was really tough until my family came and my husband started looking after the baby. For my other three children it was also tough for them to adapt to the UK weather, lifestyle and school system after they arrived from Nigeria. (Married and aged 43)*

The thesis had discussed in chapter three that Amara's first PhD aspiration in the UK was botched leading to the termination of her scholarship and job in Nigeria. Though she did not want to tell me in details how she ended up taking a lower qualification than a PhD in her first university, I suspect that the myriad problems (associated with her other roles as a wife and mother) she had to deal with when she came to the UK and the difficulties her family faced in adapting to life in the UK probably affected her

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<sup>29</sup> This is a Nigerian practice by women and girls of carrying a baby on one's back with the help of a cloth wrapped round the baby and fastened on one's chest.

academic work. Also Nneka's account below of the difficulties she faces in taking care of just her first child and studying seems to highlight how difficult it must have been for Amara to study and take care of four children in her first attempt at getting a PhD in the UK:

*Nneka: It's not easy I must tell you. It was a bit easy for me because my mother in law was around to take care of the baby. She used to do most of the work at home – cooking, taking care of the baby, she did almost everything. The only thing I used to do was come back from school; maybe do few chores that were left. So I never felt it until she left. Look at me, I am supposed to be in school now but I am at home taking care of the baby because it's not easy. It's not easy at all coping with the baby, schooling and family. (Married and aged 29)*

The above quote by Nneka referring to the help she got from her mother-in-law fits the term, “flying grandmothers” used by Reynolds and Zontini (2006) to explain intergenerational care across countries – in this case grandmothers travelling from the country of origin, Nigeria to the UK in order visit family and help with childcare of their grandchildren. Unlike Uloaku's account in the last chapter where her mother-in-law's visit was perceived as a source of social pressure because she was yet to have a child then, inviting their mothers or mothers-in-law for a visit is also a strategy used by some of the participants with children in the UK, like Nneka and Bimbo to navigate their difficult and complicated experience of combining social roles with full time study.

The interview data also reveal that though the women who have families with them in the UK have embraced their multiple roles as students, wives and mothers among others; they seem to allocate specific spaces to specific roles. For example, they tend to



keep studying and other activities involved with the student identity away from their homes. Perhaps they believe that the home is where their roles and identities as wives and mothers are played out, and as such would not want their student identity to interfere with their expected roles at home. Amara explains why she keeps her roles in the two spaces (home and school) separate in the following quote:

*Amara: I don't even have time for academic work at home. Forget about it! Even if I have done it in the past, probably maybe there is something that is urgent that you needed for submission ... which I could not complete the assignment in the school so I take it home and finish it... So I don't work from home, I may spend hours here (school), but once I shut down that is the end. You can't see any hardcover, any textbook in my bag! I finish everything here so I have time for my family at home, my academic work in school. (Married and aged 43)*

It is also possible that the women cannot study at home because there are too many distractions with the wifely and motherly duties expected of them (such as cooking, cleaning, childcare) which render their attempts to do academic work at home inefficient. For Nneka, who is pregnant with her second child and studying for a Master's degree while her husband is studying for a PhD, her narrative below suggests that she cannot combine her childcare duties with her studies at home:

*Nneka: I am at home today because we (she and husband) plan to be doing it like my husband will go to school, he will come back and take over childcare and I will go to school, which will not make it to be totally efficient as well because let's assume I have a place to put my daughter now I would have gone to school. (Married and aged 29)*

For women who come to study in the UK without their families (husbands and children), they experience the academic struggles occasioned by the social pressures of being wives and mothers differently. Women usually engage in complex negotiations to gain support for their decision to leave their husbands and children behind in Nigeria to study abroad. In the case of Vera, who had been married for three years at the time of our interview and had left her husband and 15 months daughter to study in the UK, she needed support for her aspiration of ISM from various people. Even before applying for a place in UK HE or exploring scholarship options, she first got her mother's reassurance that she would look after her daughter. She then approached her husband's best friend who interrogated her extensively to understand why she wanted to study abroad, after which he suggested she could tell her husband, that he would sanction it. By negotiating for support for her educational aspirations, Vera showed agency by securing a trusted carer for her daughter and getting her husband's best friend support before broaching the topic with her husband. Probably her husband would not have supported her idea of going abroad to study if their daughter had no good care while she was away and if his best friend kicked against the idea.

Notwithstanding that she had her family's support, Vera reports that none of her friends supported the idea of her going abroad to study because they reasoned that she would *"be tempting him (husband) to go after other women and that it's not fair."* Her friends' reaction reflects the views of Nigerian scholars, Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe (2014), who argue that adultery by a married woman is considered a taboo which can lead to immediate divorce, banishment and in some cases death penalty, whereas adultery by married men is condoned because it is in their "nature" and a mark of masculinity. Perhaps the gendered expectations that a woman belongs to a man and should be at his beck and call inform Vera's friends position that their husbands' would never allow

them embark on ISM and they too would not even contemplate it. It is also possible from the above quote that the women fear they may lose their homes to other women if they are away from their husbands for a given length of time. What is also instructive is that the quote suggests that the women are willing to make excuses for men who get involved in extramarital affairs by blaming their wives for not being around to meet their sexual needs. This supports the literature that gender socialization in Nigeria privileges men above women, while women are socialized to show sexual restraint, men's sexual indiscretions are seen as a demonstration of their masculinity (Amadiume, 1987, Izugbara, 2004). Vera's friends' reaction could be considered as subordinating in terms of preventing her from going for her dreams. The emotional burden of the possibility that her husband might "stray" and she would be blamed for it is one that Vera carries all through her Master's study in addition to her academic and part-time job demands.

For Ngozi whose husband is in Nigeria while she is getting a Master's degree in the UK, studying alone in the UK has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include the fact she can be more focused on her studies since she does not have to worry about cooking for her husband and doing other chores all the time. But the disadvantages are that she has no one to support her in her studies and sometimes men mistake her for a single woman available for a date. But for Vera there is no advantage to not having her family with her in the UK while studying. She acknowledges that though it may seem challenging to be with one's family while studying, in her opinion it is worse not being with family. The journey of ISM for her has been very traumatizing as she captures in the following excerpts:

Vera: *I can't, I don't think there is any word to use and qualify it because it was beyond traumatic. I had to go for counselling sessions ... when I was coming I knew it was going to be hard but I thought I would be very busy and I will keep myself busy with school work and whatever, working as in part time jobs, as in not to dwell so much but when I got here it was hard. I couldn't concentrate on my studies because I was missing home so much ... Oh Jesus! Daughter, husband, mother, father, sister, brother, all! I am the last child and I am very, very close to my family. So that's the most difficult thing for me. So I went for counselling and it didn't work.*

Stella: *Some people attribute their inefficiency when they are studying to the fact that they have family around, but you not having family around ...*

Vera: *(Sighs and then chuckles) They don't know the value of what they have until they have lost it I think. Because I can't physically do anything, I am only in the UK during the day, in my dreams I am in Nigeria. I am with my family, I am talking to my husband, I am playing with my daughter especially my daughter when I wake up and I have played with her in the dream I can't physically do anything, I can't even eat.... Now I had 69% overall if my family was here I would have definitely had a distinction because I know the one course, what made me not to have a distinction was that time I was very, very down. So it was impossible for me to write that bloody essay and I just submitted, I couldn't continue. Almost all the things I have struggled with if my husband was here, he would have helped me with it. (Married and aged 30)*

It was instructive that both Ngozi and Vera speak about the support and help they would have received in their academic work if only their husbands had been in the UK which confirms the literature that international students from collectivistic society tend to receive on-going guidance and support throughout their studies but they struggle when

they come to school in an individualistic host society (Subhash, 2013, As-Sabor et al., 2014). In addition, not only do the women miss their families, in the case of Vera, she also had to deal with the fact that her daughter had probably forgotten her. Though she states that her daughter remembers her it appears that the little girl does not really remember her mother as the following accounts suggest:

*Vera: Yes, she remembers me. If it is that one she remembers me but there have been a lot of people ... I look like my sister. (Sighs) After I left she started calling my mum mummy and then immediately after I left my sister went to visit and she thought it was me and she was following her "bumper to bumper" everywhere ... then when she went to stay with them, she was calling my sister mummy, she was calling my mum mummy and then when I came back she was calling me auntie. I think there were so many mummies she doesn't get it.*

*Stella: How does the fact that she calls other people mummy make you feel?*

*Vera: (Smiling ruefully) I can't complain. She is with my mum, my mum has been giving her all the motherly support so that is absolutely fine ... she (sister) is her mum anyway and we really look alike so I don't blame her. (Married and aged 30)*

Like Vera's account above, the traumatizing experience of leaving a child behind in the care of a grandmother when the mother migrates was also documented by Zontini (2006), who suggests that migrant mothers fear their children may end up loving their grandmothers more than their biological mothers because of the absence of the migrant mothers. I suspect Vera's cordial response about her daughter calling others mummy is rooted in the Nigerian collectivistic culture of a child belonging to all and not just to the biological parents.

It is pertinent to point out that only a few of the women in this study who have no family commitments and part-time job probably face only the academic struggle of studying in a different academic system. The single women who have part-time jobs have to juggle their academic and employment workloads while those with family have to juggle their academic, social and work roles. Therefore the above narratives and discussions support the argument by Geddie (2013) that postgraduate students' identity is mostly gendered, with female students taking on a greater portion of family, parenthood, and partnering considerations. According to Hochschild and Machung (2012) women who have families are on duty when they are at work and resumes another duty when they get home and "just as there is a wage gap between men and women in the workplace, there is a "leisure gap" between them at home (p.4). Most women work one shift at the office or factory and a "second shift" at home". Using the second shift analogy (Hochschild and Machung, 2012) this thesis argues that some of these interviewees actually work "third shifts". Take for example, Amara's accounts discussed earlier in this chapter of working in the factory at night and resuming at school the next morning for academic work after which she would go home in the evening to take care of her children before possibly resuming for another night shift within a 24 hour window. Another example is Nneka whose typical day is filled with domestic and caring responsibilities at home, academic work as a Master's student and part-time job in her school's catering department or making people's hair.

Though Vera and Nneka recount getting support from their mother and mother-in-law in their educational pursuit in the UK, it seems that the mothers often times interfere with the ISM process which introduces another dimension of juggling for the women – their role as daughters as well. While the literature portrays men in patriarchal societies as dominating over women (Aderinto, 2001, Amadiume, 1987, Igbelina-Igbokwe,

2013), these participants' accounts seem to suggest that their husbands, fathers, and father-in-law are more supportive of the educational quest abroad whereas their mothers are more insistent on their daughters prioritizing and accomplishing their social roles as wives and mothers above educational accomplishments. This thesis attempts to offer explanations for the mothers' apparent "lack of support" for ISM and how the women juggle academic and daughter roles in the next section.

### ***The Role and Power of Mothers***

Women's subordination and relegation to the domestic sphere have been the focus of many debates, but Nigerian feminist scholars such as Nnaemeka (1996) and Amadiume (1987) have also acknowledged that women's occupation of such places can be empowering because of their roles as mothers. "Mothering" is powerful in the sense that it grants a woman security in her husband's home, it also enables her to turn the domestic sphere into small areas of resistance. But women's resistance in the domestic site is not always against patriarchal structures. In the case of the women interviewees it seems their mothers' resistance is against "structures" that could dismantle their daughters' adherence to their social roles as defined in their patriarchal society. Beauvoir (2009 (c1949)) argues that because mothers are protective of their daughters they seem to impose their own destiny (marry and have children) on their daughters. In the context of the negative perceptions of over-educated women which hinder their marriage and childbearing chances, these mothers have become over-protective mothers who try to safeguard their daughters' position in their patriarchal society.

On one hand, Ferree (1990) argues that mothers socialize their daughters to subordinate behaviours because they themselves have been socialized that way and not because they suspect that their daughters will become insubordinate in a male-dominated society and

thereby not fit in. On the other hand, Beauvoir suggests that mothers fear their daughters could end up as “social wastes” if they do not intervene and guide them to conform to gender roles which will allow them to be accepted in the society. This is another example of how women sometimes subordinate other women and perpetuate patriarchy.

Mothers exert so much influence on their daughters studying for Master’s degrees among the participants that even while their father, father-in-law or husband are in support of their academic pursuit, the women tend to do their mothers’ bidding and prioritize being a wife and/or mother over continuing their education to PhD level. The experience of 21 year old Onome who chooses to return to Nigeria after her Master’s degree and hopes to get married and have children before pursuing a career or PhD studies was documented in the previous chapter. Ngozi is another woman who is giving up her PhD dreams at the behest of her mother though her husband and father-in-law want her to continue her studies in the UK. In her own words:

*Ngozi: [ ] in fact the last time my father-in-law called he was like “when are you starting your PhD?” I said ... daddy I want to have my kids and he said “don’t worry they will come at the right time. Don’t just think about it, start your PhD I want you to have Dr (Mrs)<sup>30</sup> in front of your name.” And I laughed and said this man, don’t put me into it I want to have my kids now, maybe later PhD will come so no ...*

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<sup>30</sup> In Nigeria, regardless of a married woman’s professional or academic title, most of them also want to be known and addressed as Mrs. So the title, Mrs is normally written in brackets after a married woman’s professional or academic title.



On further questioning Ngozi reveals that she would not be able to give PhD studies the attention required because she would not be settled until she has had a child. She further recounts the following dialogue between her mother and husband:

*Ngozi: He (husband) is like I want her to do her PhD, let her just do it once and come back and settle down. She (mother) said no, by that time she would have been 40 or something. Let her come back and have babies, then she can go back. If you like send her to the moon, let her give those kids now, so you and her can go to the moon, I don't care but now she's coming back home please. (Married and aged 38)*

It is interesting that though the culture views Ngozi's husband as the one who has ultimate say over her and what she is allowed to do, and in his absence his male relatives are to decide on his behalf (Aderinto, 2001, Amadiume, 1987), Ngozi's mum wish seems to have prevailed over her husband's and father-in-law's in this instance. In the case of Onome which was mentioned earlier, though women and children are seen as the properties of the man in Nigerian culture (Amadiume, 1987, Aderinto, 2001), her mother's wish that she should "*leave PhD and marry first*" also prevailed over her dad's wish for her to continue her studies to PhD level and marry afterwards. This suggests that when it comes to conforming to gender roles mothers are allowed to exert control over their daughters' behaviour to ensure conformity. The above cases are examples of how "mothering" offer women pockets of resistance to men and their agenda.

As discussed in the previous chapter, a Nigerian woman is not only expected to get married, she is also expected to have children and keep her family together in order to fit the societal ideal of a "good woman" – one who fulfils her obligation as a wife and mother (Amadiume, 1987, Ezumah, 2008, Aina, 1998a). Just like the notion of a good

wife and/or a good mother, the foregoing narratives suggest that the same analogy can be used for the notion of a good daughter – one who obeys her parents’ advice regarding fulfilling or conforming to gender roles. In the above examples, the good daughters follow their mothers’ advice and their unwillingness to heed to the men’s advice (their father’s, father-in-law’s or husband’s) to postpone conformity to gender roles was not criticized in any way by the men or society at large.

From her study on relationship considerations for graduating international research students, Geddie (2013) claims that parental influence can reinforce culturally-specific gender norms and inform subsequent actions through family opinion regardless of the geographic distance. And this speaks clearly to Onome and Ngozi’s case. Though Ngozi is deferring her dreams of a PhD until she becomes a mother, she also acknowledges that she probably would not have undertaken ISM in the first place if she had been a mother already because she would find it difficult to leave her child or children behind in Nigeria with carers.

The complexities around the social roles’ expectations are further highlighted by Vera, another participant whose recollections suggest that the very reasons which could stop some Nigerian women from embarking on ISM made it possible for her to come to study in the UK. The previous chapter had already discussed how the fear of being perceived as over-educated by men could deter some women who are still single from pursuing ISM and how the desire to have children could also stop some married women from leaving their husbands behind in Nigeria to study abroad as is the case of Ngozi above. For Vera, she could leave for ISM to get a Master’s degree because she is already married and have given birth to a child. She got her family’s support to migrate for higher education because she has fulfilled the basic social expectations of her as a

woman and the kin's obligation to continue their lineage (Smith, 2001a). Though her mother supports her quest to get a Master's degree by taking care of her young child while she is away as discussed earlier, the following excerpts capture how social roles can be prioritized over quest for further educational qualification:

*Vera: No I would not have come if I was not married (laughing).*

*Stella: Why?*

*Vera: Because ... my mum just says the right time, if you are past 27 and you are not married it's late as in she doesn't want any delayed marriage in her house. She would not support it. And definitely if I didn't have a child my mum would not have supported it ... I don't think I would have come if I didn't have a child. My mum would not have agreed, no way! Even now they are not even in support of a PhD because that would mean that I would be away from home again and I would not have a second ... no. (Laughing) that one, there is even no point. (Married and aged 30)*

Though Vera already has a daughter before coming to the UK to study, she admits that leaving her husband again to study for a PhD could mean a delay in having a second child and that idea is not acceptable to her parents especially her mum just like in Ngozi's case where her mum believes her PhD aspirations could lead to further delay in childbearing. So a form of deliberate juggling of roles is evident from most of the participants' accounts as they strive to fit the "good" daughter expectations of their mothers.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter the thesis has tried to demonstrate that an international student is not just an individual engaged in learning alone as migration categories tend to oversimplify. Rather an international student can embody many different roles such as a worker, spouse and parent especially at the postgraduate level by virtue of their age. It also attempted to show how combining work, parenting and partnering roles with international study can pose a personal challenge for many postgraduate students especially women which confirms the claims of King and Raghuram (2013) and Geddie (2013).

This chapter also examined the women's agency in juggling their multiple roles; for example they seem to realize that in the UK educational pursuit is seen as disembodied and individualistic hence some of them hide their social roles that seem to contravene the student role in academic environments. But outside the university setting they sometimes seem to overcompensate in carrying out their social roles in order to fit Nigerian social expectations of the "good wife" and "good mother." This is unlike previous studies that show that Western students tend to sacrifice their social life in order to cope with the demands of their academic work and paid employment (Hall, 2010, Broadbridge and Swanson, 2005).

The findings in this chapter buttress the preceding chapter that fulfilling gender and social roles is important to this group of women. The women's accounts shared so far suggest a deliberate choice on their part to live according to Nigerian societal values and expectation of women as argued by Buijs (1993), Bhachu (1993) and Lutz (1997) in chapter one. Therefore these accounts do not support the literature that suggest that women from traditional societies experience cultural shifts in gender role perspectives

when they embark on ISM (Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy, 2008, Matsui, 1995, Ono and Piper, 2004). The reasons behind these women maintaining their gender roles and cultural perspective regardless of living in the British society and attending British universities will be the focus of the next chapter.

## **Chapter Six: Belonging and Connectedness**

### **Introduction**

The concepts of “stranger” and “sojourner” have been used to describe the social positions of international students in their host countries. In her analysis of the social situation of international students, Coates (2004) likens them both to strangers and sojourners. The definition of the “stranger” by Simmel (1950 as cited in Coates, 2004), is an individual who is a member of the social system but is not attached to it. Coates (2004) argues that the concept of the stranger also applies to international students because they are individuals from another place who assume, or are given certain social positions in their host countries.

The “sojourner” on the other hand is another type of stranger (Siu, 1952, Coates, 2004). Coates (2004) argues that Siu (1952) takes Simmel’s “stranger” as the starting point in developing a social type of ‘the sojourner’ based on his empirical work with Chinese laundry-men in America. Siu (1952) defines the “sojourner” as “a type of stranger who spends many years of his lifetime in a foreign country without being assimilated by it” (Siu, 1952, p. 34). According to Siu (1952), the concept may apply to a broad range of foreign residents in any country such as international students, diplomats, foreign missionaries, international journalists and all kinds of migrants groups to the extent that they maintain sojourner attitudes. Such sojourner attitudes according to Koser (2007) involve moving between places of origin and destination with only a temporary commitment to the place of destination (p. 9).

Using Siu’s (1952) theory of the “stranger” and “sojourner” as the framework, this chapter explores how these concepts fit the realities of the research participants. It investigates how their friendship patterns, belonging to social networks (Nigerian

church) and the use of new technology all contribute to make the women conform to Nigerian gender norms even when living in the UK.

Drawing from the attributes of a collectivist culture and how they differ from those of an individualist culture the chapter also attempts to analyze why the women do not sever ties with their in-groups (family, friends, church) and if the women are transgressing by embarking on ISM since their social roles are perceived as more important than their educational qualifications. The concluding section will analyze the cases of two women who are the exceptions in the research data and attempt to offer an explanation for their differences from the rest of the women interviewees.

### **Living in the UK but Stuck in a Nigerian Mind-set**

Now scholars increasingly recognize that some migrants and their descendants remain strongly influenced by their continuing links to their home country or by social networks that exist beyond national borders. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2007) argue that to understand modern day migrations, the strength, influence, and impact of these ties must be empirically explored. They call for a transnational view on migration that discards the long standing belief that society and nation state are one and the same. A fundamental point in transnational migration is the reconceptualization of notion of the society, because the lives of increasing number of people can no longer be understood by looking only at what goes on within national boundaries (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2007, Castles and Miller, 2009). Migrants and non-migrants' lives are no longer separate units but are regularly set in multi-layered and multi-sited transnational social fields and influence one another; hence basic assumptions about social institutions such as the family, and nation state need to be revisited (Levitt, 2003, Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2007). According to Levitt and Glick Schiller (2007) the integration of

individuals in states and the keeping of cross national ties are not conflicting social processes.

All through this thesis there are narratives by the interviewees that seem to support Siu's (1952) and Levitt and Glick Schiller's (2007) argument above because it appears that for most of the women, their migration to the UK was only a geographic move and that the individuals never left Nigeria in their minds. A few examples which show that their cultural perspectives have not changed even while living in the UK are as follows:

*Ola: It hasn't! I just see that their way of life is different but I don't try to imbibe that culture. I still believe very strongly in my own culture. It hasn't changed the way I see things, it's just that I have seen that they think differently. (Engaged and aged 27)*

*Liz: Someone said the other day the fact that you are in the UK doesn't mean you don't have a root. The fact that you live in the UK all your life doesn't mean you don't have where you are from, ... that all of us are from Africa or Nigeria depending on where you are from in Africa, that we still have our culture so we are just here in a foreign land and at the end of the day you go back and you still meet those culture or those culture go with you no matter where you are. (Married and aged 28)*

In order to understand why and how this group of women are able to stay rooted in Nigerian culture in a foreign country and culture I start by looking at their patterns of friendship.

### ***Patterns of Friendship***

One of the sojourner attitudes theorized by Siu (1952) is the tendency for the sojourner to associate with people of his/her own ethnic group on the basis of their common



interests and cultural heritage. The interview data suggest that this is true for most of the participants. For example, Liz who was still single at the time of her postgraduate study recalls the following:

*LIZ: I think I just chose to be focused on my Nigerian community because of the way of life here. I just chose to be focused on the community I am familiar with. (Married and aged 28)*

Liz is not the only participant who does not make friends with local people because of the perception that the British way of life is in conflict with Nigerian values and way of life. Extracts of a few other examples are below:

*Dayo: Modernize? (Laughing) it's okay, it's a personal thing if anyone wants to modernize but for me I don't want that kind of modernization. I know modernization is good but there should be a limit to everything. Modesty should always be given room in everything you do. That's the way I see it and I don't even think I want that kind of modernization. (Single and aged 25)*

With another interviewee:

*Stella: Apart from school, what else do you engage yourself with?*

*Ola: Church. And then my housemates are all Nigerians so we catch a lot of fun together.*

*Stella: Is it not possible that by moving with people from other nationalities or race you may be broadening your world? Or you didn't think of that?*

*Ola: No, I move with them in class but I don't think I will like to live with them because we are, we think differently and then I know that most white people*

*smoke. So I didn't even bother, I can't take that in the house so I just stuck with the Nigerian people that we met during international week and went house-hunting together. We were lucky enough to get a big house that accommodated all of us.*  
(Engaged and aged 27)

Contrary to the claim by Chapdelaine and Alexich (2004) that a negative correlation exists between the family status of international students and the social interactions with host students, thus single students interact more with the local students than students with partners and children, the interview data suggest that family status has no bearing on level of interaction between the participants and the local students. Chapdelaine and Alexich (2004) argue that students with partners and children tend to spend most of their free time with their families thereby limiting opportunities to interact with host students. But the above narratives by some single women among the research participants suggest that their preference to keep Nigerian friends has nothing to do with their marital status. Rather the above quotes are in agreement with some scholars that argue that the friendship patterns of international students are informed by their peculiar situations in the academic sojourn which make them to have co-national friends (friends from their own country) as a way to sustain and express the culture of origin, and rare but very strategic host national friends to help in their academic and professional pursuits (Coates, 2004, Bochner et al., 1977, Singh, 2012, Williams and Johnson, 2011). Also international students tend to have more multi-national friends (other international students) than host national friends (Singh, 2012, Sawir et al., 2008, Cemalcilar et al., 2005). It appears from Ola's narrative above that her associating with host students only in class is very strategic and could be based on academic and professional reasons as argued by Bochner et al. (1977) and Singh (2012). An earlier quote by Liz in the previous chapter is also very relevant here:

*Liz: I think as an international student you struggle a lot to make friends with people here. [ ] before they say there is a group work the English students already they have people in mind ... for me I thought that if I be in a group of people like that I could learn and also improve myself but by the time you get to them [ ] they are like no I am sorry we can't include you, we are already up to the number the lecturer ... needs and all that. Which was really sad [ ] I don't know if they did it intentionally or they were more comfortable being around their friends to do their work. So at the end of the day we are always left out with other international students to work together which was really bad. (Married and aged 28)*

Liz acknowledges that her desire to be in the same work group with host students is based on academic and professional reasons (Singh, 2012, Bochner et al., 1977). But according to her other quote used earlier in this chapter she prefers relating to the Nigerian community because the British way of life is different from what she is used to. Perhaps the same could be said of her British classmates who prefer to do their group academic work with fellow host students instead of working with international students. Possibly the barriers international students experience in making friends with host students (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003, Singh, 2012) could be related to the perceived cultural differences on both sides. Maybe the initial snub by the host students informs Liz's decision to stick with the Nigerian community where she feels accepted when she discovered a Nigerian church three months into her stay in the UK. For Ola who prefers to move with only Nigerians, she captures her thoughts on why people tend to stick with those of their own ethnic or racial group aptly in the following:

*Stella: Why the choice of all Nigerian housemates?*

*Ola: I didn't want to stay in a catered school accommodation because it is expensive. So in the process of the international students' week it's just like people that were Nigerians we stuck together.*

*Stella: Why was that?*

*Ola: I think it's just normal, or when you see black people you move with black people. When you see white, white people move with white people. There is still the ... not racism but the ethnic differences, you just tend to move with people that are like you. (Engaged and aged 27)*

Here, Ola is constructing her identity – similarities with and differences from others (Lawler, 2008) not just as an international student but also along racial and ethnic lines. The foregoing accounts support the claim by Hendrickson et al. (2011) and Brown (2009) that while co-national friendships are valuable to international students because they offer a feeling of cultural identity and emotional support, they also make international students less willing to adapt to local customs and make friends with local people.

Analysis of these participants' friendship patterns suggests that they fit Siu's (1952) notion of the sojourner because "on the basis of their common interests and cultural heritage they tend to associate with people of their own ethnic group" (Siu, 1952:36). Drawing from Sarup's (1996) concepts of public versus private identities (the private identity is how we see ourselves while the public identity is how others see you) I argue that the participants also fit Siu's (1952) sojourner descriptions – in their more "public" life the sojourner is involved in the community at large (in this context the university environment), but in the "private" life the sojourner tends to be separate from the host culture.

Another way these women participants fit Siu's (1952) notion of the sojourner is that they maintain a centre of social activity irrespective of their different residential locations which from their accounts is the "church." These accounts by the women suggest that the church (mainly Nigerian/African church) is key to their connection with other people who share the same cultural values and heritage with them. And it is to the role the church plays in keeping the women in Nigerian mind-set that I turn to in the next section of this chapter.

### ***The role of the Nigerian church***

Religion like categories such as gender, class, and age is important in the construction of identity, whether it is by individuals or groups (Hunt, 2002). Religion does not only grant identity to its adherents, it can also be an aspect of their culture and this is more so for the members of many ethnic-minority groups where religion provides a treasured support in a hostile environment, whether perceived or real (Sarup, 1996).

Many of the interviewees refer to their Christian identity in the course of our interviews which suggests that their religion plays a major role in how they perceive themselves and how they live their lives in the UK. They express why it is important for them to belong to a church, mainly a Nigerian Pentecostal church in terms of the links to home it offers and the chance of continuity "with their religiously and ethnically constituted, familiar selves, in a new place" (Fincher, 2011, p.921).

Pentecostalism, to which the women mostly identify with, is a brand of Christianity which stresses the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and has uncritical and conservative approach to the Bible (Hunt and Lightly, 2001). Pentecostalism is not a new phenomenon in the UK. It has been linked with Afro-Caribbean and African minorities in the West. Black Pentecostalism in Britain has been interpreted as a way by which

black ethnic communities cope with and counter marginalization, deprivation and social discrimination (Hunt and Lightly, 2001, Hunt, 2002). In recent decades, there have been a “new” wave of Pentecostalism in the UK which is largely as a result of increase in the number and membership of Nigerian and West African Pentecostal churches at a time when the “traditional” Pentecostal churches, including older Caribbean and African churches as well as the primarily white middle class independent and denominational churches are witnessing stagnation and drop in membership (Hunt and Lightly, 2001, Hunt, 2002).

Some commentators (Gifford, 1994, Hunt, 2002, Hunt and Lightly, 2001) claim that the teachings and practices of Nigerian Pentecostal churches which took root in the 1980s reflect strategies of coping with adverse political and socio-economic conditions of the 1980s and 1990s in Nigeria; such self-help doctrines and practices are still relevant in the British context in helping their immigrant black membership adjust to various secondary social situations. Hunt and Lightly (2001) and Hunt (2002) argue that unlike the older “holiness” or conservative churches in Nigeria and older Black Pentecostal churches in Britain whose membership were mainly from illiterate or semi-literate poor, the new Pentecostal churches attract the more well off, educated and socially mobile urban group. The growth of these churches in Britain has been driven by an international student migrant population mostly from middle and upper middle class families as well as young professionals in search of educational and career advancement in the UK. In the following paragraphs I will explore the literature on the diverse practices of Christianity in different Nigerian/African contexts and among transnational groups to help understand the experiences of my participants better.

In his account on the advent of Christianity in Nigeria, Adogame (2010) claims that Christianity as a religion spread along the coast of West Africa by means of the Atlantic Ocean to Southern Nigeria, and as early as the sixteenth century, there had been missionary expeditions in West Africa but such missions failed because the missionaries had put political and economic considerations above evangelism. It was not until the nineteenth century that a more intense attempt at Christian evangelism took place following the abolition of slavery. The British administration which had colonized Nigeria deliberately kept Christian evangelism out of the Muslim areas through indirect rule and the emirates. As such Western education developed very slowly in northern Nigeria compared to the South and the disparity in educational attainment exists till date as documented in chapter four of this thesis.

The most recent development in Nigerian Christianity is the advent of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, especially from the mid twentieth century (Adogame, 2010). Pentecostalism is one of the great success stories of the current era of cultural globalization; it is a form of Christianity in which believers receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit and have ecstatic experiences such as speaking in tongues, healing and prophesying (Eriksen, 2014, Robbins, 2004). The tenets of Pentecostalism have much in common with the Holiness tradition from which it developed which stresses the following four-fold areas: 1) Jesus offers salvation; 2) Jesus heals; 3) Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit; 4) Jesus is coming again.

The religious renaissance in Nigeria has been explained as a reaction to the failure of secularized and formerly organized forms of religion to meet believers' religious needs, continued failures of justice, the failure of the political and economic systems, and a means to provide satisfactory explanations for evil, inequality and pain (Hunt and

Lightly, 2001, Adogame, 2010, Gifford, 1994, Maier, 2012). According to Adogame (2010), there has been a massive proliferation of Pentecostal churches in the last two decades with two waves of Pentecostal movements in Nigeria – firstly, the indigenous Pentecostal groups like the Redeemed Christian Church of God; and secondly the Pentecostal groups which have established branches in Nigeria but have their headquarters in the West such as the Foursquare Gospel church. The indigenous Pentecostal groups hardly depend on foreign funding; rather some are embarking on mission activities in Europe, North America and other parts of the world (Hunt, 2002, Hunt and Lightly, 2001, Adogame, 2010, Maier, 2012). Marshall-Fratini (1998) suggests that indigenous churches tend to add “international” to their names no matter how small those churches may be, even those who do not have any branch outside their home country. This is not peculiar to Nigeria because as Marshall-Fratini (1998) suggests evangelists from countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, South Korea and Brazil speak at conferences around the world, setting up indigenous “missions” and “ministries”,

Despite its Western origin about a hundred years ago, two-thirds of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians live outside the West in places such as Africa, Latin America, Asia and Oceania as do most of the nine million people who convert to it annually (Robbins, 2004). Robbins (2004) further suggests that Pentecostalism’s roots lie in the Protestant Evangelical tradition that grew out of the eighteenth century Anglo-American movement known as the great awakening. The hallmark of Pentecostalism as in Evangelical Christianity is the emphasis on conversion – people voluntarily choosing it on the basis of powerful conversion experiences often referred to as “being born again” (Robbins, 2004). The attraction of Charismatic Pentecostalism throughout Africa is not limited to the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches, but also occurs within



conventional Protestant churches as prayer groups such as the charismatic renewal in Roman Catholic Church and other non-denominational fellowships that born-again Christians attend without leaving their churches (Meyer, 2004). Other modes of Christian worship exist in Africa apart from those of the Pentecostal and orthodox churches. For example, Engelke (2007) documents the experiences of the Friday Masowe apostolics in Zimbabwe. They have Fridays as their Sabbath or worship day, and do not read the bible which is crucial to the Christian faith as the word of God. Rather the Friday Masowe apostolics claim to receive the word of God right and direct from the Holy Spirit (Engelke, 2007).

Eriksen (2014) notes that the literature on African Pentecostalism has stressed the significance of the openness of Pentecostalism not only to the spiritual but also to the occult in that the early missionaries drew on the devil in order to make a boundary between what was Christian and what was “heathen”. Ancestral gods and spirits in addition to witchcraft were used to denote the devil (Meyer, 2004, Eriksen, 2014). Meyer (2004) calls for scholars to consider also the negative incorporations of the spirit entities in African religious traditions into the image of Christian devil as part and parcel of local appropriations. Therefore the “old” and forbidden, from which Christians were required to distance themselves, still exist albeit in a new form. The devil symbolizing the ancestral spirits and gods, was denied by the missionaries as a real power in the world, thus creating an absolute border but the Pentecostal churches popular in the 1980s in places like Ghana and Nigeria challenged this border and began to take the devil and his associates seriously (Eriksen, 2014). By the process of demonization, Pentecostal Churches continue making indigenous spirits representatives of the devil (Robbins, 2004).

Tradition as already discussed in chapter four is not merely a matter of the past and hence ultimately opposed to modernity, but it is a vital part of the discourse on modernity (Meyer, 2004). Adogame (2010) argues that the emergence and expansion of other religions like Christianity and Islam may have altered indigenous religious thought and practice but they have not supplanted it. He claims that indigenous religions continue to preserve some of their beliefs and ritual practices but also adjust to the new socio-cultural situation. The relevance of indigenous ancestors religions for many is evident in the irrepressible belief in supernatural forces; and the prevalent belief in the reality of witchcraft in Nigeria (as documented in chapter four of the thesis) are illustrations of avenues through which indigenous religions manifest resilience in the face of a complex, multi-religious, and rapidly changing society (Adogame, 2010). Meyer (2004) notes that in the West, Christianity, which arguably is a key foundation of modernity, has diminished in its public importance as modern society has taken shape. On the other hand, the important and obvious public role of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in other parts of the world bear witness to the fact that secularization seen as a central link between modernization and the decline of the public importance of religion, is insufficient to understand the attraction of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches and their influence on the political as well as personal levels (Meyer, 2004).

Robbins (2004) argues that a consistent discovery in studies of Pentecostal churches worldwide is that more women than men are active members (see also Chong, 2006, Chen, 2005). Generally women tend to outnumber men in Christianity (Avishai, 2008, Robbins, 2004). Robbins (2004) is of the view that Pentecostal patriarchy seems to transform women's understanding of their own positions with women converts seeing themselves as obedient principally to God (see also Stacey and Gerard, 1990). On her own part, Eriksen (2014) espouses two opposing viewpoints on women's involvement

with Pentecostalism - firstly Pentecostalism reproduces and reinforces paternalism, (although in new and different ways) and secondly (contrary to the first), Pentecostalism is a strategic women's movement, a feminist effort to domesticate men. Although individual egalitarianism (everyone is equal before God, and everyone can have a personal relationship with God) is preached in Pentecostal churches, nevertheless a gendered hierarchy seems to exist in the way this is accomplished and done worldwide where Pentecostalism has a base (Chong, 2006, Eriksen, 2014). Such actual gendered differences are highlighted by the experiences of my research participants who are living in an egalitarian society all through this thesis.

(Adogame, 2010) claims that many Nigerian Christians who have migrated to other parts of the Africa and the world have taken traits of their religious activities with them, thus migration seems to be a significant way for the "exportation" and commodification of the various Nigerian religious cultures and worldviews. Levitt (2003) suggests that the transnational religious practices of individuals are often reinforced by the organizational contexts within which they take place such as migrants belonging to host-country institutions that have formal ties with home country "sister congregation". Or they may belong to a group that functions as a branch of the sending-country church that is regularly overseen and funded by home-country leaders. Or the denomination that they belong to may form part of a worldwide religious institution that accepts them as members wherever they are. For most of these participants, they belong to a branch of their home-country church in the UK which makes the manifestations of Nigerian cultural practices very likely. This helps to better understand the experiences and narratives of these women.

Pentecostalism in Nigeria has become a part of a transnational movement (Marshall-Fratini, 1998) and transnational migrants bring particular manifestations of global religion with them, create new forms by combining what they bring with what they encounter, and then send these ideas, practices, identities, and social capital or social remittances (Levitt, 1998) back to their sending countries (Levitt, 2003). As stated earlier in this section, the membership of Nigerian churches in the diaspora tend to be typically young, upwardly mobile and relatively well-educated (Hunt, 2002, Hunt and Lightly, 2001). Such members privilege their international contacts and experiences, combining this international image in the operation and symbolism of their church with the media (both print and electronic) playing a central role in the “new wave” Pentecostalism (Marshall-Fratini, 1998).

The proliferation of Nigerian churches in Britain and other Western countries is usually interpreted by the parent churches back in Nigerian as evangelizing the largely secularized societies in an attempt to win over white converts but their members remain primarily Nigerian and West African immigrants (Hunt, 2002, Hunt and Lightly, 2001). The inability to attract white converts may be related to the argument that race intersects with religion, hence in religious spaces where partial race and class related norms are upheld attracting universal membership proves to be difficult (see Sharma, 2011). Pentecostal Christianity for this immigrant community creates the basis for similarity as well as difference. Such similarity is inherent in the ethnicity/nationality of the members, and their shared aspirations and hopes whereas the difference is in the boundary maintenance delineating cultural differences with the broader society (Hunt, 2002).

For this group of women participants who self-identify as Christians, it appears that their religious identity and practices allow them to sustain memberships in several locations such as their home country, the Nigerian community in the UK as well as their host country. This supports the claim by Levitt (2003), that religion is a global societal system and migrants use religious institutions to live their transnational lives. The women's accounts documented in this thesis lend credence to the argument by Vertovec (2008) that when people live away from home for example in their diaspora, their religious identities tend to mean more to them than they did before.

Diaspora religion is the religion of any people who have a sense of living away from the land of the religion, or away from the old country (Vertovec, 2008). Recent scholarship on diasporic religion or religion in the diaspora developed as a result of the general interest in diaspora with the acknowledgment that social, economic and political life now go beyond national boundaries and cultures (Levitt, 2003). The term, diaspora, drawing from the Jewish model has disputably been a concept associated with suffering, loss and victimization; and the appeal of the term to a range of groups lies in its significance to addressing a fundamental predicament which any dispersed or relocated people face – how to survive as a group (Vertovec, 2008). The nation-state has been perceived as hegemonic, discriminatory and culturally homogenizing, hence the diaspora grew out of postmodern project to resist it with the related alternative agenda to promote the acknowledgment of hybridity, multiple identities and affiliations with people, causes and traditions beyond the nation-state (Vertovec, 2008). According to Vertovec (2008), the term, diaspora is used today to describe any community of immigrants whose numbers make them visible in the host community and has become a loose reference confusing categories such as immigrants, guest-workers, ethnic and

“racial” minorities, refugees, expatriates and travellers. Hence, the Nigeria community in the UK fits the definition of diaspora.

According to Hirschman (2007), international migration, even in this era of instant communications enabled by the internet and cheap telephone calls, and inexpensive travel, can still be a harrowing experience for migrants because they become strangers in a new place which makes them long for familiar sounds, sights, and smells. Therefore they can no longer take for granted the opportunities to engage in customary activities, to hear and speak their native languages and to receive support from people deemed as family and friends; and ethnic churches have been known to strengthen primary relationships with migrants through their homeland customs (Hirschman, 2007). The literature recognize the church and other religious organizations as key in creating a sense of community among migrants by welcoming new migrants, supporting them in settling into the community as well as assisting those in need (Hirschman, 2007).

Apart from adhering to the tenets of the Christian faith, these women also identify some of the above factors when asked why belonging to a church in the UK is important to them. In support of Fincher’s argument mentioned earlier in this chapter, the church offers the women a connection to home and opportunities to practise their faith with similar minded people and in familiar ways though they are away from home. In terms of the spiritual significance of belonging to a church, a few of their narratives to the question *why is it important for you to belong to a church here in the UK?* are as follows:

*Amara: Yeah! I am a Christian and born in a Christian family and brought up in a Christian way. So wherever I find myself till death comes, I must stop and follow that path. Why do I need to pursue that path? To keep my faith going, to keep my faith going*

*(making emphasis by tapping the table lightly) so that I don't fall out of the grace or the kingdom. The bible says we should not forget the fellowship of one another, I need to maintain my faith, I need to go ... where I would hear the word of God. (Married and aged 43)*

*Dayo: It's the most important thing because it's like where you get to fellowship with other brethren and we have been told not to forsake the fellowship of the brethren. Like it strengthens you too, two are better than one when someone is feeling ... as in we all have our downs and our low times. (Single and aged 25)*

*Onome: It's very, very, very, very important considering that I am a born again Christian and I just ... I needed to find a bible believing church and someone I can fellowship with and have people that are like family! (Single and aged 21)*

In addition to being a place where they are spiritually uplifted, going to church offers the women a sense of community; it is also a place they consider as home because it reflects the society they left behind in Nigeria. Some of the women's accounts that reflect these are as follows:

*Nneka: The church has really been helpful because without the church I don't know ... the only place I meet with people is in the church. Without the church I don't even know my neighbours ... though I see people move around but I can't say I want to go visit this one, I want to go and visit that one. (Married and aged 29)*

*Ola: At the moment, it seems they are the only family I have here in the UK, the church. It makes me have people I can really talk to, that understand where I am coming from and what I am saying and then the gathering too ... it's like a social gathering as well although ... it's a spiritual and social gathering as well because you*

*get to meet people every Sunday, it makes me feel like I am back in Nigeria (chuckles) in a Nigerian church. (Engaged and aged 27)*

An earlier study with women participants conducted by Sharma (2012) also confirms that by attending church, the women build relationships with like-minded people and similar practices and spaces keep them attached to their families while away from home, ground their identities and help sustain their roots. The following account by Rita further supports that argument:

*Rita: It is important to belong to a church because I think it's also a culture thing. You want to go back to people ... you want to sort of identify with where you are coming from and that seems to be one of the few places where you can come and meet people that sort of replicate the society you are coming from. And so it helps a lot. (Married and aged 45)*

For Vera, whose traumatic year doing a Master's degree course because she misses her family terribly especially her daughter who was only 15 months old when she came to study in the UK was described in chapter five, the church is a coping strategy to get through her time in the UK. In her own words:

*Vera: Most times I am really down, I am really down because I am missing home terribly when I go to church, it's a Nigerian church so it's like home also. We hear people speaking the language and singing to Nigerian music. I just leave the church uplifted and very different from how I came. And people always asking, they are always asking me in church, somebody must ask me how is your family? How is your daughter? Just that relationship. (Married and aged 30)*



The church also provides a support network to the women interviewees in terms of settling in, opportunity to get voluntary work experience in the UK, advice on their studies and living in the UK from church members who had been living in the UK for a longer period than the women students. This view is confirmed by Christian undergraduates in the study by Sharma and Guest (2013) who acknowledge that their religious beliefs and practices help them to cope with the novelty of student life on arriving at the university. In that sense, the church community can become a stand-in family to students in trying times. In her study of the interrelationship between familial and religious practices and spaces with women who are current or former churchgoers, Sharma (2012) also found out that the church acts as a substitute for absent family relations. Women interviewees like Amara, Ify and Bimbo also admit that the support they received from the church community during different stages of pregnancy and after having children in the UK in terms of church members especially women bringing cooked food, baby items and giving guidance on how to take care of the new-borns was invaluable. And when they had religious ceremonies to mark the birth of their children like baby-naming/christening and dedications in church, church members rallied around to provide support and celebrate with them. As such the church community fills the void when families are not near (Hirschman, 2007). In this way the Nigerian church is involved in the co-production of places and identities and can be places of social support, meeting people and where Nigerian languages can be practised and reproduced (Page et al., 2009).

For Onome, who came to school in the UK at the age of 17, the church is instrumental to her entire stay in the UK, supporting her in various ways and helping her through the challenges of teenage years, academic struggles and coping with her sister's death in

Nigeria while living all by herself in the UK. Below is a lengthy reflection by her on the multifaceted support she receives from a Nigerian church while studying in the UK:

*Onome: Like my church here is like my family, like a **huge support in a way that I can never** ... I came when I was 17. First of all I was part of the youth group ... every Monday, we all meet and we talk about God, we talk about challenges that we face as Christians and as people and as girls and boys. And that support for three years is the **most amazing, amazing thing** I could have ever received. [ ] Then also academically you have people that are on the same course as you, and you guys can have study groups. [ ] And when my sister died (in Nigeria) I was unable to go home because I couldn't deal with going home ... the support I got from my family in church and the youth and my friends ... was just the most amazing thing. They helped me even heal faster than my family back home all together considering I was here by myself. And sometimes my parents just speaking to my pastor just keeps them at ease. Just knowing that she's got a family back there who cares is enough. I mean it helped; it also helped them to not worry about me so much. (Single and aged 21)*

Here again like in chapter four, there is an acknowledgement of parents speaking with the pastor of the church their daughter attends in the UK. But unlike the previous case where the calls were to remind their daughters of their socially expected roles, in the case of Onome her parents' calls to her pastor are to enquire of her welfare. Probably her being a teenager then who was living away from her home and country justified such calls to her pastor. Onome may not have been under pressure to marry but her parents speaking to her pastors could also be interpreted as a mechanism to ensure she conforms to "good" behaviour which "keeps them at ease" since religious women

respect the authority of their religious leaders (Makama, 2013, Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013, Izugbara, 2004).

The women's narratives above suggest they value the social relationship they can get in church but scholars like Evergeti and Zontini (2006), Zontini (2006) and Hellermann (2006) have argued that social capital which can be derived from social networks is not essentially positive for everyone. For example in her study of Eastern European women who migrated alone to Portugal, Hellermann (2006) claims that while social networks like the church offered support and access to the host society, it was also a source of control over the women's behaviour and their exercise of agency. Aune (2002) in her study of single evangelical women in England notes that her participants expressed the church's attitude to single women as the biggest issue facing single Christian women with most of the women citing concerns like: 1) their need for identity, sense of belonging and value as single people, 2) the pressure to marry and conform to expected norms may not always be verbalized but it is always there, 3) integrating into church community is easier for women with children and 4) married people view single women as threats.

Sharma (2011) suggests that probably the sense of community and support some women find in their church far compensates for the pressure and discrimination they face; but in cases where others deem the pressures to conform to gender expectations as too much they left their church community. Hellermann (2006) confirms this in her research findings; some of the women left their social networks such as the church because of the discriminations they faced and the attempts by members of such networks to restrict their agency.

Aside from friendship patterns and belonging to a Nigerian church, another way the women have stayed connected to Nigerian culture is by the use of new technology which has reduced the cost of communication across international borders (Hirschman, 2007, Urry, 2007). This is examined next in the following sub-section.

### ***The role of new technology***

According to Cemalcilar et al. (2005), international students have become a growing population of migrants whose peculiar characteristics (such as being young, well-educated and the temporary nature of their stay) make their experiences different from other migrant groups like guest workers or refugees. Therefore, staying in touch with their own culture and society and continuing existing relationships may be more important to student groups, than more permanently settled migrant groups. With the recent advances in information and communication technologies (for example, cheaper international calls, smart phones, email, Skype, social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, blogging, chat and video chat services on the internet), such existing social networks in the home countries are reachable as a continuous source of social support to student migrants regardless of the spatial and temporal boundaries between them (Cemalcilar et al., 2005, Hendrickson et al., 2011). For example, in a study with well-educated foreign-born residents in the United States, Kim and McKay-Semmler (2013) found out that technology-mediated forms of communication such as email and the internet serve as the chief means for maintaining contacts with family and friends who reside in the country of origin. This mirrors the claim by Cemalcilar et al. (2005) that internet-related technologies are used regularly by international students to stay in touch with people and the social, political and cultural life of their home countries.

A few examples of interview data from my participants that support the above claims are as follows:

*Belema: We have to make so much of calls, Lebara, LycaMobile and all those international call cards are available to take care of emergencies. When I lost my brother-in-law I couldn't go to Nigeria, so I had to make do with calls. (Single and aged 33)*

*Ify: I think now Nigeria is waking up to the fact that we ought to take charge of our lives like people want things to be done now. The political system is an example of that. And I follow events in Nigeria through the internet and social media. (Married and aged 41)*

*Uloaku: Thank God we've got communications made easier now. I can Skype people at home. I can call as often as I can. My parents don't do Skype they just pick their phone and call ... If someone has a birthday, wedding, someone gave birth ... I would have wanted to go but I make do with calls; Skype and phone calls. (Married and aged 30)*

The above accounts suggest that staying in touch with home country is important to international students for various reasons. From Uloaku's narrative it seems that the parents or older generations at home may not be adept at using new technologies like Skype and social media, hence they tend to call. Probably Uloaku uses Skype when communicating with her siblings and friends in Nigeria who are likely to be skilful in the use of new information and communication technology. This seems to support the argument by Cemalcilar et al. (2005) that international students who are young and well-educated may have a different kind of experience such as opting to use new technology to stay in touch with their friends and families in the home countries. Just as the new technology is a source of social support from families and friends back in Nigeria, it can also be a source of social pressure to conform to Nigerian societal

expectations. For example, Belema recounts that she desists from posting status messages on her Facebook account or congratulatory messages to friends who announce their marriage and childbirth on Facebook because her other friends tend to comment on such posts, asking her when she would be getting married or remarking that she is the next on the line to get married. A similar account was reported in chapter four when Eno narrated that pressure from social media can distract one from academic study.

With all the discriminations and social pressures the women face in their homes in the UK (as documented in the previous chapters), their social networks in the UK (mainly the Nigerian church) and from their families and friends in Nigeria through the use of new technology, why do they keep these relationships going? Why do they keep conforming to these gender roles even when they are away from home?

### **Being Part of a Collective**

Levitt and Glick Schiller (2007) propose a transnational social field approach to the study of social life that differentiates between the existence of transnational social networks and the awareness of being embedded in them. Drawing from Bourdieu's use of the concept of social field to call attention to the ways in which social relationships are structured by power, Levitt and Glick Schiller (2007) define social field as a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationship through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized and transformed (p. 188). By theorizing transnational social fields as going beyond the boundaries of nation-state, they note that individuals within these social fields are, through their daily undertakings and relationship influenced by multiple sets of values/laws and institutions.

In the study by Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy (2008) on the first set of Bedouin and Druze women in Israel to get higher education, they note that though the women's

“original reason for attending university was only to obtain higher education, they adopted consciously or otherwise norms, values, skills and customs of a culture very different from their own. As such, they returned to their original cultures as ‘others’ who differ from their peers in several respects” (p. 678). While my research participants are from a traditional<sup>31</sup> society most of them seem to differ from the accounts in the study above in that they retain their original cultural attitudes, values and norms. Unlike the Bedouin and Druze women in Israel, the interaction with the British society and the knowledge most of the participants have acquired in their quest for higher education in the UK have not caused them to question accepted gender norms or rebel to what was previously taken for granted in the Nigerian culture. The thesis examines the reasons behind their conformity next.

According to Triandis et al. (1988) conformity happens more often in collectivist cultures, when the norms are clear, and sanctions likely to be enforced for deviant conduct. On the other hand, where the norms are not clear and sanctions unlikely to be imposed, there may not be conformity. Shame, religious beliefs and other means of social control are used more extensively in collectivist culture than mechanisms of internal control such as guilt which is used regularly in individualist cultures. Both cultures use both, it is only in the degree of use that the cultures differ (Triandis et al., 1988). For this group of Nigerian women participants in order to understand how they experience the negative aspects of social networks in the UK, especially the church which they mostly acknowledge as a major source of support I discuss the concepts of

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<sup>31</sup> In this context I am using the term, traditional to denote preference in doing things in a particular way.

collectivism and individualism which respectively define the culture they come from in Nigeria and the culture in their host country, the UK.

Triandis et al. (1988) have used distinctions between the way of life in modern societies and traditional ones to describe collectivism and individualism. According to them, an essential characteristic of collectivist cultures is that individuals may be induced to subordinate their own goals to the goals of the collective which is usually a stable in-group (like family, group, clan or tribe), thereby making the behaviour of individuals conform to the goals of the in-group. Also, in collectivist cultures the relationship of the individual to the in-group tends to be stable, even when the in-group makes very costly demands the individual stays with it. On the other hand, in individualist cultures people often drop those in-groups that are problematically demanding and form new in-groups.

Smith (2001a) reminds us that Nigerians hardly sever ties with their families, no matter where they may be living. So we will be looking at two kinds of family – their biological family and the “social” family (for example the church) because from the women’s accounts above, they consider their church as part of their family. These participants confirm Smith’s (2001a) claims by revealing that the relationships they have with their families and friends are very important to them, so regardless of the pressures of the cultural expectations, they would keep these relationships going. The following are excerpts of the interview with Onome:

*Stella: Tell me about this cultural expectation, if you are to deviate from that in any way what impact is that going to have on you as a person?*

*Onome: It’s going to affect me because it will affect my family, if that makes sense... Because I care about my family, it will affect me too. If my parents are not happy with me, it will affect me too. (Single and aged 21)*



This speaks to the example of single women who consider marriage in Japan, also a patriarchal society because they take their parents' feelings into consideration as documented by Nakano and Wagatsuma (2004). It also relates to "sharing of outcome" an aspect of collectivism which focuses on interdependent relationship where a person's behaviour or failure can be a source of disgrace to his family or even the whole in-group (Hui and Triandis, 1986).

Eno also offers an insight into why it is difficult for Nigerian women to cut off from families and friends and the pressures they bring while studying in the UK. In spite of the pressures they may mount, families and friends remain a huge support network for the women while they are studying in the UK. In her words:

*Eno: So in terms of the pressure, the pressure is there, it's only if you decide to cut off completely from all these people. And if you do sometimes your life could be miserable. You go through things sometimes in your work and you need people to talk to, you need to share some of your experiences with people – okay you are going through this pressure and just need somebody to tell you look you are able to complete it, you are able to meet up with this deadline. (Married and aged 29)*

Eno's claims above were corroborated by Sawir et al. (2008), that though international students tend to keep co-national friends and associate with people of their own ethnic group, such friendships and associations are not enough to keep international students from getting lonely. In their research conducted in Australia Sawir et al. (2008) discovered that international students who felt lonely turned to social networks to get by, and sources of social support most often mentioned were friends in Australia and family and friends back home. People from collectivist culture value the sharing of non-material resources such as time to build or strengthen the social network (Hui and

Triandis, 1986). Also, because they value on-going guidance and support (Subhash, 2013), it is important to these women to keep their social network regardless of the pressure they receive to conform to gender roles. The frequent guidance, consultation and socialization they receive is maximized within vertical relationships that exist as interdependence in collectivist culture, whereas in individualist cultures there is more emotional detachment, distance and independence (Triandis et al., 1988).

From Hellermann's (2006) study, some women left their church when they could no longer take the discriminating and controlling treatment they received. That is the difference between Europeans whose culture is individualistic and this study participants' collectivistic culture. In terms of women's conformity to patriarchal expectations, Lerner (1986) has argued that patriarchy only functions because women cooperate with the system in the society. Hence the argument that women in a patriarchal society should not be treated as victims because they are actors and agents in creating the society (Lerner, 1986, Lentin, 1995). For some of the women, they accept the harassment to conform to gender roles because it shows the perpetrators care about them which ties with the concept of concern.

According to Triandis et al. (1988), another characteristic of collectivist culture is the notion of belonging and concern for members of the in-group. Thus "concern" was used many times by most of the participants as their interpretation of what ordinarily would have been seen as "meddling" in the West. For example, earlier accounts by interviewees such as Eno and Nneka in chapter four that church members expressed concern about Eno's perceived delay in getting pregnant and Nneka having two children within the academic year she enrolled for her Master's degree suggest that the social pressures that originate from Nigerian churches are couched in expressions of concern

for the individual. Eno confirms that it is part of her socialization to accept and even expect the pressures as part of Nigerian culture as the following narrative suggests:

*Eno: I think to me it's a Nigerian thing, Nigerian mentality. [ ] anywhere you are I think, they would keep telling you those things. And it's only if you have changed completely from being a Nigerian. So there are some expectations in you as a Nigerian that this person is not even showing concern. You expect that, if the person is not even asking you, you are like "haa nawa for this person"<sup>32</sup>, he is not even concerned about me. So it's something like I would say it's embedded in Nigerians... so it's like a Nigerian thing. (Married and aged 29)*

Mary who has started receiving subtle innuendos that it is time for her to settle down captures it this way:

*Mary: Initially I felt why are these people bothering my life but later I am like it's because they care about me. If they don't care about me, if they don't like me they won't even ask about me or what's going on in my life, what I am planning to do. (Single and aged 25)*

Such aspect of collectivist culture, where concern is expressed as the feeling of involvement in others' lives, to an individualist culture may be seen as control (Hui and Triandis, 1986). Therefore the thesis seeks to find out the women's interpretation of church members' show of concern for the individual versus seeking to control the individual. Hui and Triandis (1986) opine that the term "concern" as it regards to collectivism does not just represent fondness and anxiety, it signifies a sense of unity

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<sup>32</sup> Nigerian colloquial expression to show bemusement.

with other people, a perception of complex ties and relationships, and an inclination to keep others in mind although it is not the same as selflessness. Not all the women interviewees view “collective concern” as a good thing. Liz and Rita for example, view some interventionist attitudes by church members as ways of seeking to control the individuals involved. Their narratives below reflect examples of the tensions between showing concern and seeking to control individuals to conform to Nigerian social norms as experienced in Nigerian churches in the UK:

*Rita: Of course the line between showing concern and control is crossed all the time! And a lot of time too you as a leader have to come in and sort of push people back from that unnecessarily asking, because it's obvious the person doesn't have a child but when you keep ... whenever there is a prayer session and everybody is raising a prayer point on the barren and on those who are not fertile or those who are not having children, the couple who don't have children feel they are being unnecessarily focused on and they are not the only ones with problems. Other people have got problems and it is also surprising that a lot of these people have every other thing going for them apart from the fact that they don't have children. And so why keep their lives circled on that issue of childbearing when there are other things happening that they are a lot more successful than others? Those are the issues that yes the church is a source of pressure in that aspect. (Married and aged 45)*

The above quote is an example of the notion that complete personhood is in having a family life (married with children) and not just being married or having other achievements in career or education as espoused by the discussions earlier. In societies where having children is highly valued and having children out of wedlock is stigmatized, it also explains why single women aspire to get married because it offers a

pathway to having children (Makinde, 2004, Amadiume, 1987, Beauvoir, 2009 (c1949)). Liz' account of her perception that the supposed concern shown in church seeks to control women's behaviour is below:

*Liz:                You know we had emm, a visiting pastor who came in to preach and after preaching he just said he was led to pray for people without the fruit of the womb. And this lady wasn't inside; she went out to use the loo. Someone ran out from the church! Where are you?! Where are you?! And dragged her! Took her almost to the front of the church that they want to pray for people that are looking for the fruit of the womb. You know that for me, that's too much for someone to take in if you see what I mean. You know this is what this person wants but it shouldn't be your business, she can decide to go out, she can decide not to go out to be prayed for. You shouldn't force her to and you made it ... it was so obvious that everyone around was seeing you dragging her. Why?*

*Stella:            Could people act like that because they are showing concern? My question is where does concern stop and where does control start?*

*Liz:                For me I'd call that control, they are trying to control this person's life ... for me concern should be okay you know what this person wants why can't you just keep quiet and pray for her. You can pray for someone without that person knowing. You can pray for her secretly you don't have to make it obvious you know. ... you can be concerned for someone and you don't have to control this person's life like please anywhere you hear people praying about children you need to go. (Married and aged 28)*

From the foregoing I argue that there is a thin line between showing concern for the individual and seeking to control the individual to conform to social expectations of

them as women, and it all depends on the perspective of persons involved. For example, another quote by Liz below in which she expresses what she considers as other ways her church supports women who do not have children yet, may be seen by another person as a way of controlling these women to conform to social expectations of them to be mothers:

*Liz: We have the children church and we do have children with birthdays and parents will bring in ... party packs, cakes for the kids to eat. The children church separate things for those ladies ... though they don't have their children for now they still give them their own pack. ... keep it for your unborn child. You know for me that shows that it's not as if all hope is lost, something is coming. Anytime a child is celebrating birthday they will be like you need to go and call her, she should be around the children, snap pictures, be among them, and feel the joy as well.*

*Stella: Can't that also be the control we are talking about? Why do they need to be around the children celebrating? Is it possible that for some women that could also be a constant reminder of the fact that they don't have a child?*

*Liz: It could be, it could be but I can't really say. (Married and aged 28)*

The fine line between concern and control is further illustrated by Rita who sees “collective concern” as a form of control as recounted above. Earlier in chapter four, Rita had admitted that she received telephone calls from some parents living in Nigeria who wanted her to remind their daughters of the need for them to get married. However, she does not see her intervention in these women's lives as a type of control; this is how she describes it:

*Rita: I have had course to speak to some of those girls but not in the way their mums would speak to them. [ ] my own pressure is not as harsh as the family pressure would be... but I sort of sit them down and want to also understand the issues they are going through, [ ] And I sort of support them in the sense that I pray with them, I also counsel them with the word of God and that is ... where the church can play a role. I believe that the church should be a more progressive unit in the society. (Married and aged 45)*

Rita in the above quote admits that she is complicit in perpetuating the Nigerian discriminatory social pressures on women who had left Nigeria and are now living in the UK, though she sees her methods as less harsh and a better way for the church to play a progressive role in the society. Rita as documented in chapter four got married at the age of 34 and had experienced social pressures prior to that due to the perception that she was beyond the socially acceptable age deadline for a woman to be married in Nigeria. She refers to herself as a feminist, a “Christian feminist” and hopes that many more people like her will emerge in the church and help the course of women. Is it possible to be a Christian as well as a feminist? Existing studies suggest that feminists are less likely to identify themselves as religious because religious women tend to “choose” patriarchy over liberation (Redfern and Aune, 2010, Feltey and Poloma, 1991). There are also studies that demonstrate that religious women can stay within the confines of their religion, and “bargain with patriarchy” (Kandiyoti, 1988) to further extra-religious goals that can advance their course and those of other women (Gross, 2013b, Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy, 2008, Weiner-Levy, 2013). The latter fits the methods Rita is currently using to push her agenda through in her church, one of

which is the inclusion of all women in the church's women's fellowship (known as the good women fellowship<sup>33</sup>) and not just married women.

Unlike Liz and Rita above, Dayo does not perceive interventionist actions by church members as a form of control, rather to her it is part of belonging to a collective where people look out for one another and their interests (Hui, 1988, Hofstede, 1998, Triandis et al., 1988) which helps one to stay grounded in Nigerian culture even in a foreign culture. Her explanations from the perspective of a single woman are as follows:

*Dayo: [ ] like back at home in Nigeria, it's like it's only one person that gives birth to a child, but the whole community raises the child. That's another thing I look up to in church here. You know it's normal we are in the UK, it's so easy to just fall in with the culture and with the norm and everything they are doing down here forgetting the fact that I am from Africa, from Nigeria and I would go back home. And what happens here does not really happen back at home. What can be said to be acceptable here in this particular community is not acceptable back at home so the church is like another place where whenever I get there I am like it reminds me of home that I am just here for a while and I am not going to be here forever or for life, like just to checkmate someone.*

*Stella: The church checkmates you?*

*Dayo: Yeah, you know there are so many things you want to do, so many things you see your friends doing and you feel like I can also do this, I can also do that but sometimes I just look like I will do this and I will come back to church on Sunday, deep*

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<sup>33</sup> I had made reference to how the name of this fellowship stigmatizes women who are not married as "bad" in chapter two.



*within you you feel that guilty conscience and you know anybody could just call you and like where are you? Even the pastor can just call or say he's coming to your house or something like that. So it's more like just to checkmate you as in to put a limit on how you can ....*

*Stella: Is that not sounding like being policed?*

*Dayo: No, no, no (laughs) it's a different thing. To checkmate is different from ... being policed is more like someone is following you around. (Single and aged 25)*

I want to analyze and interpret Dayo's quote above using the concepts of norms and internalization. Persell (1990) defines internationalization as the tendency for individuals to accept particular values and norms and to conform to them in their conduct. In the study of society and human behaviour, sociologists and psychologists similarly believe that norms are "internalized" through socialization processes that incorporate "collective cultural" meanings into individual consciousness, meanings which become so ingrained that they seem part of nature itself (Settersten, 2003), therefore norms become a way to appraise and control behaviour and "construct appropriate individuals" (Foucault, 1995, Settersten, 2003). When informal norms are strong, individuals tend to regulate themselves and others, thus the need for formal regulation becomes low (Settersten, 2003). Using the concept of the prison (Panopticon) Foucault (1995) argues that observation and gaze are main tools of power through which the concept of norm is established. Therefore the discipline which is internalized operates by anticipated "deliberate" gaze and not by force. This seems to be the case with Dayo who alludes to not doing what may be unacceptable in her Christian community because someone could just call her and ask where she is. She does not see herself as being policed yet the possibility that someone may choose to check up on her

while she is involved in an “improper” behaviour keeps her conforming to norms expected of her. The checkmating by the church is important to Dayo because she consciously wants to avoid becoming the “other” or alienated on her return to Nigeria if she imbibes British lifestyles that are in defiance of the accepted gender norms in her home country (Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy, 2008). Religion matters to these women because the values espoused by their faith provide support for many other traditional beliefs and patterns such as gender hierarchy, intergenerational obligations, and customary familial practices which seem to be threatened by adaptation to the seemingly “immoral” Western way of life (Hirschman, 2007).

From Dayo’s quote above, we can also infer that Christian practices and spaces associated with home can evoke guilt in adherents when they fail to comply to expected behaviour, thereby stimulating a sense of obligation to ensure compliance (Sharma and Guest, 2013). According to Sharma (2011) the accountability (to the faith and church community) experienced by church members is a disciplining force that can shape one’s behaviour through frequent observation and assessment.

For other women that accept subjugated roles in their marriages and homes, they adhere to such roles because Christianity teaches them that they should be submissive to their husbands (Izugbara, 2004, Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2013). They believe that non-conformity could break a marriage and they do not want to risk their marriages by failing to conform to gender roles. The following are how they express the consequences of non-conformity:

*Liz: For me I think it’s not right, as a lady you don’t want to do that. Since you are married you are under a man... For me it has a spiritual value because if two of you are not in agreement and say the husband is the head and he’s not in agreement,*

*for me my belief is that there are some things that might go wrong. (Married and aged 28)*

According to Warner et al. (1986), the decision-making power in a marriage is directly dependent on each spouse's contribution of valued resources (which helps the other partner satisfy their needs or achieve their goals) but this is different in patriarchal societies where marriages are husband-dominated regardless of the either the husbands' or wives' resources. For Nneka who became pregnant with their second child only four months after the birth of their first child, her answers to my question on not taking up the contraceptive options which are free in the UK mirrors Liz assertion that getting consent from her husband is important and failure to do that could lead to problems in the marriage.

*Nneka: I understand what you are saying. Number one – it's not that I didn't want to go for family planning but we had to agree before I go for it. We never agreed until the pregnancy came. [ ] we are Christians and our religion supports the husband being the head of the home. And if you want peace in the home, you have to be wise and do things the right way. (Married and aged 29)*

The above is an example of how women postgraduate students tend to make more sacrifices in order to keep their relationships and families together (Geddie, 2013). Perhaps these Nigerian women's decision to accept subordination and conform to gender roles expectations of them is linked to the negative stereotype attached to divorced women (bad women – those who failed in their marital and maternal obligations) (Amadiume, 1987, Ezumah, 2008, Aina, 1998a), and speaks to another important feature of collectivist culture – susceptibility to social influence to avoid being rejected even when it is costly (Hui and Triandis, 1986).

Such submissive attitudes also reflect one more feature of a collectivist society, the unequal power social relations that exist in it more than in individualist society (Triandis et al., 1988). Triandis et al. (1988) claim that the most important relationships in collectivist cultures are vertical (for example parent-child) whereas in individualist culture, the most important relationships are horizontal (for example, friend-friend, spouse-spouse). I contend that while spouse-spouse relationship/ husband-wife relationship in individualist society is imagined as horizontal, from the interview data, such relationships in collectivist and patriarchal culture like Nigeria are vertical with the man occupying the position of power whereas the woman is the junior partner.

Even when occupying lower positions of power in relation to men, Lerner (1986) and Lentin (1995) argue that women in a patriarchal system are actors and agentic beings. An example of such agential roles by women in sustaining patriarchy is the claim by one of the participants, Ola, that submission to men is a tool used by women to control their men and homes. I had asked her if she was going back to Nigeria with any change in her perception of gender roles. The following are excerpts of the interview that explain her position on why a Nigerian woman needs to submit to her man:

*Ola: No! I am not going back with any changes. I still believe that a woman should [ ] be calm and submit ... I believe that it is in the submission that you can win a man over. If both of you are arguing, you don't gain anything from it except you believe in divorce. By the time you keep calm about it, when the heat is on you are very calm about it, pleading if need be at that moment [ ] you find out that it's when you are calm and gentle about something, when you submit that it's now as if you are the one ruling the home because at the end of the day it's what you want that will come to pass ... just*

*agree to what he is saying when he is angry. [ ] I just feel women should submit and control their homes that way.*

*Stella: You are saying something here, submission and control ...*

*Ola: Yes.*

*Stella: You are saying it can be used ...*

*Ola: Yes, it can be used to control. When you submit there is no point shouting when someone is shouting for instance. When you keep your calm, and you agree to what the person is saying at that moment, you say “okay, okay, I have heard, okay no problem”, when you agree you make everything peaceful. And then maybe at a later time, you’ve submitted at that moment, you bring it up again but you bring it up gently not as if you are trying to impose what you are saying on him. Guys always fall for that, that’s what I think.*

*Stella: Has it worked in your case?*

*Ola: Yes! It’s been working, ... and at the end of the day it’s what you actually want that happens. You have the power to ... it looks as if you are being stupid when you are submitting but at the end of the day you end up ... it’s even as if you end up controlling the situation when you submit. It has its positive side though at that moment you might feel stupid and used and stuff, but at the end of the day if you know how to use it well it works.*

*Stella: Is that not being manipulative?*

*Ola: To me it’s not being manipulative, (chuckling) it’s being a woman; it’s being a Nigerian woman (laughs).*

Ola's assertion that she is not being manipulative, rather she is being a woman calls to mind Beauvoir's (2009 (c1949)) "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." In "becoming a woman" or "being a woman" Ola assumes a "character" which she was not born with but one she had to consciously learn and master so as to achieve a particular purpose. She tries to make a distinction between herself and her fiancé and that is not based on their sex (anatomical differences) as male and female. Rather it is based on their gender (as man and woman), which are identities bearing cultural meanings that have been acquired over time through socialization. Ola is also "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman, 1987) by assigning to her fiancé a position of power and to herself a culturally acceptable role of the submissive woman. The quote above is an example of how Christian women exercise their agency. Ola from her narrative is not a doormat (Stacey and Gerard, 1990), rather she sees herself as the one in control in her relationship. Her submission to her fiancé is actually a tool for negotiating her cultural freedom (Gross, 2013a) and re-gaining control in the relationship which she seems to have ceded to the man during an argument. Like educated religious women discussed in the introductory chapter, she does not make her real intentions known and by collaborating with the patriarchal status quo within the limits of her religion she furthers extra-religious goals which in this case is gaining control and having her way in the relationship (Gross, 2013b, Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy, 2008, Weiner-Levy, 2013, Stacey and Gerard, 1990).

This thesis has demonstrated that "simultaneity" (which is defined by Levitt and Glick Schiller (2007) as living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally) is possible by exploring and theorizing various ways and forms the research participants remained fixed in Nigerian cultural values despite living in the UK. The thesis supports the claim by Levitt and

Glick Schiller (2007) that migrants' lives in a new country and transnational links to a homeland or to dispersed networks of family, countrymen, or individuals who share a religious or ethnic identity can occur at the same time and reinforce one another.

### **Revisiting the Benefits of International Student Migration**

As discussed earlier in chapter three, the women expressed various motivations for studying in the UK but the dominant one was gaining quality education. One may wonder if they are transgressing by pursuing further education abroad if their academic degrees are not so much reckoned with as their social status as wives and mothers. Having explored why they continue to conform to Nigerian gender role expectations of them it is important to revisit the reasons behind their migration for further studies. Why do these women bother coming to study abroad if getting married and having children carry more importance to them and Nigerian society than their academic qualifications?

Interestingly, their answers to this question relate to their gender roles. Instead of being changed by their exposure in the British society and university educational system, they interpret such exposure as preparing them to be better in their accepted Nigerian dominant gender roles (wives and mothers). A single woman like Dayo narrates the following:

*Dayo: (laughing) You know we need the exposure and some other things, like all these things we've gotten to know down here would also help us in raising our kids even in dealing with your husband, in dealing with your husband's family, with your own family even in future. Like one of my friends says education is not really about what we learn in school, it's about all those things you have, all those experiences you have is to shape us, make us to be better. [ ] So the education is just part of like, more like a grooming ground like everything in life. (Single and aged 25)*

The women with children explain their migration decision as a stepping stone to providing a better life for their children. I provide two examples below:

*Amara: I have always had this dream of having a PhD. It is something I have always desired. Is it not because of our children that we do what we do? Everything we do is all because of our children. If I get a PhD and get a good job, my children will also benefit indirectly. You always want to make things better for your family. (Married and aged 43)*

Vera's account on why she left her husband and child behind in Nigeria to embark on ISM is similar to Amara's. In her own words:

*Vera: I am just trying to do it for the future. I am trying to do it so that I can improve my chances of getting a better job and help her (child) get a better life. (Married and aged 30)*

For Ola, it is possible that the prestige and cultural capital from ISM could also enhance her position in the society and indirectly her family's. She sees her ISM as enabling her to be counted among the "janded people."<sup>34</sup> Though Dayo and Ola are yet to be married, their answers still express the importance of marriage and having children. The women quoted in the narratives above acknowledge the importance of international education as an identity marker which can help one stand out and/or secure a very good job (Findlay et al., 2012, Waters, 2008). However, their remarks also suggest that the quests for ISM and for better jobs after their studies are rooted in their desires to

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<sup>34</sup> Jand is a colloquial expression used in Nigeria to refer to London and the UK and to be "janded" means one has been to the UK.



provide a better life for their families, especially their children. I re-use excerpts from chapter four to draw out the complexity surrounding a woman's professional and familial identities below:

*Eno: Of course you can get a job but you will not be respected, the respect is not there. You don't have a family; there is nothing to show for the education. You can't pass anything to the society. [ ] Your education will only come into play when you have a home, a family, have children then you can be looked at as a role model. (Married and aged 29)*

Eno acknowledges that ISM could be a pathway to securing a job but a woman's education and job profiles count for less when she does not have a family, which suggests that the benefits to be derived from international education are best served when a woman is married with children; then she is viewed as a role model and the "grooming" which comes through international education helps make her a better wife, mother and family person. It is instructive that Dayo in her reflections above admits that university education is not only about academic knowledge but that other values are passed on to students through such exposure in line with the argument by Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy (2008) cited earlier in this chapter. However she seems to interpret those values only in terms of how they can make her a better wife, daughter-in-law and mother but within patriarchal structures as she is opposed to any modernization that means gender role reversal in the family (see chapter five), and welcomes interventionist acts from her church that "checkmate" her from following the British way of life as documented earlier in this chapter.

The women's answers to the question about their ambitions after their postgraduate study in the UK are according to where each participant is in the gendered life-course

expectations. Those of them who are not yet married look forward to getting married while those who are married without children look forward to having children. Even when they talk about their career aspirations, these aspirations are embedded in the social expectations of them as wives and mothers. The women who are already married and are mothers seem to have met these social expectations but when they talk about their careers aspirations their focus is still on their children and keeping up the notion of a good mother as expected by the society (Amadiume, 1987).

In the preceding chapters of the thesis, I mentioned two women whose lived experiences are different from those of the other participants; I call them the “exceptions” and the next section will discuss how and why they are different from the other Nigerian Christian women interviewees in this study.

### **The Exceptions to Conformity**

In chapter three Abiola, a PhD student had disclosed that she found living in Nigeria very oppressive and since coming to the UK she feels more at peace with herself and the way of life in the UK. Her accounts in that chapter suggest that the pull factor (socially accepted reason) for her migration to study in the UK (like most international students’) is the quality attached to UK HE certificates worldwide while the push factor (more private and main reason) is the social situation of women in Nigeria which she could not continue to live with. To buttress the thesis earlier argument that migration categories are blurred and do not always fit the experiences of migrants, I contend that in this context Abiola can be described more as an existential migrant than an international student migrant because she left home in search of a new culture that offers opportunities for self-actualization, so as to appraise her own identity and struggles with questions of home and belonging (Madison, 2006, Arango, 2000).

The difference between Abiola and the other interviewees is not only in their “private” motivations for migration. Her lived experiences in the UK are significantly different from those of the rest of the women interviewees apart from Jolomi, who is the second exception to the notion of conformity among the interviewees. I start by examining the friendship patterns of these two women since coming to the UK and the reasons behind their choices. For instance, both women reveal that while studying for their Masters’ degrees they chose to have mainly host national and multi-national friends (other international students) instead of the norm of making co-national friends among Nigerians (Singh, 2012, Sawir et al., 2008, Cemalcilar et al., 2005). In Jolomi’s words:

*Jolomi: But I think some other international students I spoke to that I used to be friends with, they struggled with belonging. I think culturally as Nigerians ... personally from my experience I wouldn’t say we are the great embracers of other cultures. We just observe, we probably don’t get involved in it. I got involved in it and that was in my bid to try to hopefully improve my belonging in that space while I was there.*

*Stella: Did you think you needed to embrace the Nigerian community in the UK as well?*

*Jolomi: No. No. Actually I would not say I made a deliberate effort not to belong to the community but I did not make an effort to be part of the community.*

*Stella: Why was that?*

*Jolomi: Because I felt that I was in another space to have an opportunity to experience something different, to open myself up to something else and if I stayed in what I know, because to be honest we are Nigerians and I understand Nigerian culture. I know the Nigerian food, I know the Nigerian music, I know everything Nigerian so I didn’t need the community to tell me what that was because I knew that already*

*anyway. But there were communities in other places that I had no clue about and I had to know those. So it was a case of doing one and leaving the other. (Single and aged 33)*

Abiola's account is also similar because she feels she does not share anything in common with her old friends or the Nigerian community; hence there is no basis to keep any relationship with them going. Both women also reveal that they invested time and efforts to understand the history and workings of British society when they first came to study so they could integrate into the system. For example, Abiola who refers to herself as "acculturized" reached out to the host community by making friends with them while Jolomi visited museums and spent her Saturdays on guided tours of cities and towns in the region her university is located. The outcome of these as both women recount is that they are teased by other Nigerian students who assume they have become too English in their mannerisms and accent.

Another point of difference between both women and the rest of my interviews is in terms of belonging to a Nigerian church, Abiola admits that her views about church and Christianity have changed though she still considers herself a Christian. Take for example the quote below:

*Abiola: I shy away from Nigerian churches. I tried going once or twice, it just wasn't me and this was just way before I really acculturized and stuff. [ ] I share some philosophical ideas about religion which means that I am not exactly pro-religion. I understand its benefits but I still think it's man-made and so I struggle with the concept of it. However, I do consider myself ... I still define myself as a Christian first and foremost. (Single and aged 29)*

Abiola had revealed in the course of the interview that while in Nigeria she had attended a relatively new Pentecostal church whose membership was predominantly young,

affluent, educated and upwardly mobile. Perhaps the transformation in her regarding avoiding Nigerian churches could be explained by Sharma and Guest (2013) claim that the university experiences can cause some students to re-assess their faith and become secularized thereby making their Christian identity awkward. From Dayo's admission earlier in this chapter, that she felt a sense of guilt when she did not live up to the expectations of her faith and church, which is corroborated by Sharma and Guest (2013) that Christian practices and spaces could evoke guilt and obligation in adherents to conform; to what extent is Abiola's need to shy away from Nigerian churches linked to a possible feeling of guilt for questioning the same religious beliefs she once accepted? Bearing in mind how "oppressive" social networks like the church can be in collectivist culture, her adoption of the British individualist mind-set probably informed her decision to leave in-groups that are problematically demanding and form new in-groups (Triandis et al., 1988, Hellermann, 2006). This could be especially because she had found living in Nigeria too oppressive to women and Nigerian churches tend to reproduce the same "oppressive" attitudes to women even in the UK as the thesis has demonstrated.

As for Jolomi, though she defines herself as religious her belonging to a Nigerian church is on her own terms.

*Jolomi: I think the connection with the Nigerian community I have is in church, that's it! And that connection is on Sunday only, Monday through Saturday I go to work. (Single and aged 33)*

Jolomi prefers to explore other cultures and believes that embracing the Nigerian community will limit her quest in that regard. She however, wants to continue with her Christian faith like most of the interviewees, and in order to maintain boundaries so she

is not drawn into Nigerian cultural lifestyle she created “conditioned belonging” – she belongs to a Nigerian church but on her own terms as mentioned above. Conditioned belonging is used by Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy (2008) to analyze the behaviour of women from a traditional<sup>35</sup> society who went for higher education in a modern society and returned as the “other” since their new terms for belonging were not approved in their home society. It is a way for an individual to build one’s own society with internal boundaries detached from the larger society.

Unlike the other participants who describe the church as their new home or home away from home, these two women describe England where they have been living since coming to study as their home, and not Nigeria – their country of birth and where their parents and extended family members still live. In many ways these two women do not fit Siu’s (1952) characteristics of the stranger and sojourner: 1) they are integrated into the host society and considers it as home, 2) they do not associate with fellow Nigerians on the basis of their common interests and cultural heritage 3) they do not belong to a “centre” of social activities that reinforces their home country’s culture.

But why are these two women different from the others? Both Abiola and Jolomi acknowledge that they are probably different because of their socialization while growing up in homes where gender roles were not defined, and their exposure to reading and thinking independently from an early age . Talking about gender roles and socialization, Abiola recounts:

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<sup>35</sup> I am using the term, traditional here in the Eurocentric context discussed in chapter one because the two interviewees being analysed share similar views.

*Abiola: My parents ... have always been very supportive to be fair and they have been liberal. [ ] so they never assigned roles ... and say be stereotypically woman and don't go after your dreams because you are a woman. I have never really faced that barrier to be honest. [ ] people that don't know me would think oh it's because you have been here. No! I have actually been very unconventional in my thinking really, even in Nigeria ... I kind of was lucky enough to be brought up in an environment where they get you to think. I started reading books from when I was really young. My parents would encourage it, you know. I was already kind of seeing and exploring all the cultures in my head. (Single and aged 29)*

I want to make a comparison between Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy's (2008) study and mine in analyzing Abiola's reported feeling of alienation in Nigeria and the Bedouin women's in their community. The Bedouin's women feeling of alienation was created on their return to their community after acquiring higher education because they had acquired values and norms of freedom and individual choice that were not acceptable in their Bedouin culture (Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy, 2008). But in the case of Abiola, she was already unconventional in her way of thinking while living in Nigeria which made her feel repressed, thus ISM was a way of escape from an environment where she felt like the "other" to a place that feels natural to her.

Both Abiola and Jolomi admit that their parents raised them to be very independent which is an attribute of an individualistic culture (Triandis et al., 1988, Hui, 1988) and that helped them to fit into the British way of life easily on arrival to study. It is possible that their families are not picking on them to get married because their parents did not stress gender roles in their home while they were growing up. Abiola recollects taking her white boyfriend back to Nigeria on her last visit and claims that he was warmly

received by her family especially her father. She also recounts the experience of having extended family members tease her about her British accent and infer that they have lost her to Britain and its culture but no one pressured her about getting married though her parents “... *might jokingly say it like ‘when are you ...’ you know, but they will never say it in a way that makes you feel like oh something must be wrong with my life.*”

Jolomi on her part acknowledges that it was not until she turned 30 years old that her dad mentioned the issue of marriage to her for the first time but not in a condemning way. Like Abiola’s account above, Jolomi’s mother jokingly asks when she will be getting married to which she gives tongue-in-cheek answers like “*mummy if you bring the husband I will marry*” but she does not let her single status bother her. Both women state that they are not against marriage, rather they do not want to be in a marriage situation where they will be subjugated like experienced in Nigerian culture. While Abiola has a white boyfriend, Jolomi seems realistic of her limited chances of marrying a Nigerian man because of the labels of “over educated” and “highly financially independent” woman her studying in the UK has bequeathed her which are not reckoned with in Nigerian society when she narrates the following:

*Jolomi: I do think about it (marriage), I don’t know if it’s fantasizing that oh this will be the ideal husband to marry in my gene pool. I think as they say it, the gene pool has probably narrowed because of the way I guess ... just by virtue of my qualification, by virtue of my aspirations, by virtue of the things I have been able to do in terms of career wise and my experiences, I guess not everybody will be able to step up. (Single and aged 33)*

These two exceptions in the interview data suggest that the subjugation of the women participants and keeping them stuck in Nigerian mindset while living in the UK have



been achieved by the tools of culture and religion (hooks, 2000, Hodge et al., 1975) as exemplified through gender role socialization, friendship patterns in the UK and belonging to a Nigerian social network like a Nigerian church. Therefore this thesis argues that these two women who do not experience pressure from their families back home to conform to gender roles had a different socialization. They also do not experience pressure to conform to gender roles in the UK because they do not associate with the Nigerian community in the same way other women who experience social pressures do.

In terms of racialized identities, a transnational social field perspective can also help understand why women like Jolomi and Abiola are different from the rest of the research participants as documented in the previous chapter. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2007) explain the difference between ways of being in social fields as against ways of belonging. According to them:

[W]ays of beings refers to the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather than to the identities associated with their actions. [ ] In contrast ways of belonging refers to practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group. [ ] Ways of belonging combine action and an awareness of the kind of identity that action signifies. Individuals in transnational social fields combine ways of being and ways of belonging differently in specific contexts. [ ] These two experiences do not always go hand in hand. (p. 189 – 190)

In the case of Jolomi and Abiola, they participate in transnational way of being but not belonging. This is because they still have many social contacts with their families and

friends in Nigeria but they no longer identify as belonging to Nigeria. If individuals engage in social relations and practices that cross borders as a regular feature of everyday life, then they exhibit a transnational way of being. When people explicitly recognize this and highlight the transnational elements of who they are, then they are also expressing a transnational way of belonging (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2007).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has tried to establish how most of the research participants fit the notions of the stranger and the sojourner. It attempted to analyze their sojourner attitudes using the frameworks of friendship patterns and social networks. Existing migration literature have mostly portrayed social networks as positive and supportive to international students and other migrant groups but this chapter tried to complicate that notion by demonstrating how social networks can also be oppressive and restrict migrants' agency.

The chapter also tried to answer the question on why these women uphold patriarchy and conform to oppressive gender roles by unpicking the notions of concern and control using ideologies of collectivism and individualism, and the women's interpretations of these. In the concluding section it demonstrated that not every participant in the study is complicit in upholding Nigerian patriarchal structures and offered an explanation to the exceptions. The main argument of this chapter is that religion and culture have been used by the society and the women themselves to sustain patriarchy even when they are living in a more gender equal society like the UK.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion: The disconnects between ISM/migration literature and Nigerian Christian women's realities of academic pursuit in UK HE**

### **Introduction**

This thesis sought to document the lived experiences of 20 Nigerian Christian women, mostly of the Pentecostal denomination, who had come to the UK to study as Master's and PhD students; and examine their accounts against the wider migration literature and ISM debates in particular. The preceding chapters have explored the women's motivation for embarking on ISM in the UK, their experiences of social pressures to conform to Nigerian gender role expectations while living in the UK, how they juggle the multiple roles created by their adherence to the fulfilment of their social roles as wives and mothers in addition to their academic study and why they continue to hold unto these gender role expectations of them even when living away from Nigeria.

In this final chapter, I revisit the key arguments of the thesis as they relate to migration and ISM literatures. The first section explores the blurry migration categorizations that do not speak to the realities of most migrants. The second section focuses on migration models that conceptualize the migrant as male and assumes homogeneity among migrants. In the third section I explore how the findings of the thesis relate to the literature on transnationalism and diaspora; and in the fourth section I re-examine why this group of Nigerian women bothered embarking on ISM if the academic qualifications they receive are not comparable in importance to their social roles as wives and mothers in Nigerian society.

### **False Categorizations/ Dichotomies of Migration**

Migration theories rooted in neoclassical tradition contend that migration is as a result of wage differentials in different regions hence people move from areas of low income

to areas of high income (Castles and Miller, 2009, Arango, 2000). Factors such as low wages in home countries “push” them to migrate while high wages in certain receiving countries “pull” them to such countries. Using the same analogy to analyze the motivations of my participants which were documented in chapter three indicates that their migration decisions are often embedded in layers of various push and pull factor. There is no participant in this study who migrated for only one reason. Though they all acknowledge the importance of the value attached to a UK degree, the women also migrated for a host of other social reasons such as the presence of social network in the UK and the desire to acquire cultural capital.

While these factors can be considered as pull factors for ISM, their migration for HE in the UK was also influenced by negative factors in their home country, Nigeria which they consciously tried to get away or protect themselves from. In other words some of the women were “pushed” to leave Nigeria to study in the UK in order to “escape” oppressive, discriminatory and restrictive patriarchal and educational structures or unstable university education. Hence ISM provided an acceptable reason for migration and one that could also enhance their employability and future earnings. Such negative factors include violent cult activities, sexual harassment of female students and unstable academic environment in Nigerian universities in the case of Onome. Whereas for Eno, the fact that graduates of state universities and women who earn first class degrees in Nigeria are not accorded the respect and recognition they deserve made her migrate to the UK. Eno wanted to prove herself as an outstanding scholar to those who had looked down on her because she had attended a state university for her undergraduate degree in Nigeria, and/or those who wondered if she actually merited her first class degree in Engineering in the context that female students can use their sexuality to earn top marks from lecturers willingly or under coercion. Abiola also came to the UK because of the

high quality of education on offer but her main motive was to leave the oppressive patriarchal way of life in Nigeria. Another example is that of Nneka, who though had come to join her husband in the UK decided to use the opportunity of being in the UK to study for a Master's degree because her previous application for a place in a Nigerian university for the same programme had been unsuccessful.

So there is no clear distinction on whether the women's migration for further studies was purely motivated by pull factors that attracted them to the UK, or push factors that compelled them to leave Nigeria. In each case, a layered mix of pull and push factors contributed to the women's decision to study abroad. Drawing from Chirkov et al. (2008) concepts of self-development and preservation goals as motivations for ISM, this thesis argues that various motivations for studying abroad function in a continuum. Self-development goals of educational and career advancements pulled the women to study in the UK while preservation goals entrenched in the avoidance of unpleasant situations in the home country pushed them to study abroad.

There is also a tendency to portray ISM as a voluntary process where students choose of their own free will to study outside their home country. I argue that that is not the case for every international student. Some students are actually "forced" or "coerced" to migrate by their families, and unpleasant situations in their home countries. Probably if academic achievements of women were recognized equally as their men counterparts' and graduates of state universities acknowledged as equals with graduates of federal and private universities, Eno may not have sought to pursue further degrees in UK HE. In the light of Onome's original desire to attend a Nigerian university reputed as being very good in law degree programmes, maybe her parents would have allowed her to study in Nigeria if there were no violence in Nigerian universities due to cult activities,

sexual harassment of female students and if the duration of study in Nigerian universities was certain. For Abiola who had a very good job with an investment firm in Nigeria which paid for her Master's degree in the UK, if she had not felt very repressed in Nigerian patriarchal society perhaps she would have continued living in Nigeria and not sought escape through ISM. Also if Nneka had been able to do a Master's degree course in Nigeria as she initially intended, probably she would not have had any reason to study in the UK. Maybe she would have been only a dependent migrant in the UK for family reunion purpose. I also question how voluntary the decision to study in the UK would have been in the cases where the decisions were made for the women. Chapter three of this thesis indicated that as a teenager, Onome's parents made the decision to send her abroad to study; and as "submissive" wives, Nneka and Amara followed the decisions of their husbands to study in the UK. While the element of force (whether physical violence or threat) may have not been used to make the women comply to study in the UK, their decision cannot be said to be of their free-will either because elements of encouragement and persuasion contributed to it (Koser, 2007). Therefore such decisions cannot be purely "voluntary".

The other problematic categorization of migrants is the depiction of students as those who migrate to engage only in academic study and economic/labour migrants as those who migrate to work. Chapter five of this thesis has shown that these international students did not engage in study alone, all of them also engaged in paid and unpaid part-time work for various reasons. Some of the women participants worked to gain relevant work experience in the UK, pay for their living expenses or earn extra money to pay for their lifestyles. Chapter three also suggested that the opportunity to work full time to gain UK work experience after their studies before returning to Nigeria was very important to most of these women and instrumental in their choice of the UK as a study

destination in the first instance. Hence they expressed disappointment with the scrapping of the post study work visa by the previous UK coalition government, and inferred they would not have chosen to study in the UK with hindsight. I argue that from the foregoing, the representation of international students as those who seek only a different academic experience in another country needs to be re-examined as the opportunity to work during and after their studies is also important to some international students.

### **Homogeneity of Migrants and International Students**

Earlier migration theories assume homogeneity among migrants and argue that people move for labour reasons. Such migration literature tended to exclude women (Castles and Miller, 2009, Arango, 2000). In cases where women were mentioned at all they were depicted as dependents of male migrants because the labour migration model conceptualized men as providers of labour while women were viewed as economically inactive. Also migration studies that attempted to document the experiences of women have been criticized for “putting women in the mix and stirring” (Kofman et al., 2000, Jolly and Reeves, 2005) because they did not take into consideration the peculiar situations of women. Rather they assume that men and women have the same motivations for migration, adopt similar migration strategies and have similar migration experiences. Similarly most existing ISM literature assumes that the experiences of all international students are the same. With the exception of a few studies, ISM literatures are gender neutral or depict the “international student” as male. Like the critiques of migration literature, ISM literature mostly fail to recognise women’s agency as migrants in their own rights, and their migratory lived experiences which are highly gendered as this thesis has demonstrated.

Though all those engaged in studies outside their home countries are termed “international students”, their motivations for studying abroad, the patterns of migration of students from some specific sending countries to host countries, and experiences of studying/living abroad differ according to countries of origin, level of study and gender (Baas, 2010, Waters, 2008, Brooks and Waters, 2011). My participants were engaged in academic study at the period in the normative life course where their home country expected them to be wives and mothers. Nigerian men are not subjected to social deadlines for getting married and having children like the women. The thesis argues in chapter four that such social expectations of the women interviewees put them under enormous pressure especially as their academic attainments are not reckoned as much as their social roles of wives and mothers. Though they are in a society where academic pursuit is viewed as individualist and disembodied, the thesis claims that this group of women consciously seek to marry and have children while studying so as to avoid the social sanctions that could result from non-conformity to these gender norms. Women who do not conform are perceived as “witches” or those who have spiritual problems. The scrutiny and humiliation are not borne by the non-conforming women alone; their families in turn face humiliation resulting in increased pressure being put on the women by their families and friends to conform to these social roles.

Unlike most previous migration literature, the thesis has shown that most of the participants in this study who are living in the UK with their families (husbands and children) are the primary migrants while their family members are their dependents. In addition to the women’s workload in school and part-time work, they also have the responsibility of carrying out domestic tasks such as shopping, cooking, cleaning and childcare to keep their families together. Such domestic roles are particularly gendered according to their Nigerian culture and conservative Christian faith; hence complying



women are epitomes of “good” wives and mothers. The ISM literature on women from patriarchal societies studying in modern societies claim that study abroad leads to a cultural shift in the gender role perceptions of the women (Abu-Rabia-Queder and Weiner-Levy, 2008, Matsui, 1995, Hazen and Alberts, 2006, Ono and Piper, 2004) but this thesis argues that the Nigerian Christian women participants remain mostly complicit in upholding patriarchal structures, unchanged in their cultural values and gender role perceptions due to their compliant attitudes to their cultural and religious beliefs. The women exercise agency all through the thesis and make a conscious decision to accept and abide by the way of life they are used to in Nigeria even when living in the UK (Abdulrahim, 1993, Bhachu, 1993, Buijs, 1993, Lutz, 1997).

International students’ cultural experiences in a host country have often been represented as struggles due to culture shock, language barriers, difficulty in making friends with host nationals (Subhash, 2013, Sawir et al., 2008, Brown, 2009) but the thesis revealed that this set of women intentionally restricted their social interactions to fellow Nigerian students and Nigerian community (the church) because they did not want to adopt the British way of life. They experienced some difficulties at the beginning of their academic quest in the UK due to the differences in the learning and assessment methods in HE between Nigeria and the UK. But the enduring struggle for them all through the period of their study was conformity to Nigerian social expectations of them in terms of getting married, having children and performing gendered domestic duties. Accounts by the women demonstrated that conformity to these gender roles was very important because they consider themselves as part of a collective and their continuing belonging and connection to the collective can only be guaranteed by upholding the norms and values of the collective. In other words they view themselves as “sojourners” in the UK and resisted imbibing British values that

might be considered “alien” or make them “outsiders” in the Nigerian community in the UK or on return to Nigeria.

The thesis also highlighted in chapter four that conforming to expectations to marry and have children is a strategy by the women to mitigate certain unfavourable perceptions linked to female international students from societies that do things in a particular way. For example, single women who embark on ISM could be limiting their chances of marriage because they may be perceived by Nigerian society as “overeducated” and westernized and therefore unable to submit to a man. Also married women who are yet to have children face scrutiny about their fertility whereas their husbands are rarely the focus of such scrutiny. The thesis also emphasized that such situations could deter single women and married women who are yet to have children from pursuing ISM. The single women do not want to acquire the label of over-educated women while the married women without children whose husband cannot migrate together with or join them abroad fear they would be prolonging their “childlessness” or may lose their husbands to other women. And because postgraduate studies happen in the life-course phase when the women are expected to be married with children, women who fear that they could miss out on meeting these important social expectations are discouraged from embarking on ISM. A few of the women interviewees who are yet to meet these social expectations attempted to study for Masters’ degrees in the UK, though they still have PhD aspirations they had to abandon such aspirations and return to Nigeria so they could get married and/or have children before contemplating a return to ISM. This was the case for women like Onome and Ola who were yet to get married. Also married women like Ngozi and Vera whose husbands could not migrate to the UK with them returned to Nigeria after their Masters’ courses because Ngozi was yet to have a child and Vera who had a daughter before ISM wanted to have more children. Such

experiences of female international students are rarely documented in academic literature.

Another aspect of gendered migration experience that is hardly reported in academic literature is the role of social networks as sources of pressure on women to conform to gender roles. Social networks have been widely recognized as sources of support to migrants including international students in adapting to host countries (Arango, 2000, Collins, 2008, Hirschman, 2007). The thesis claims that such social networks like family, friends and the Nigerian church in addition to offering support to the women interviewees are also a big source of pressure on the women to conform to the cultural and religious beliefs which subordinate women and lay emphasis on their fulfilment of gender roles. The thesis also highlighted the role of social relationships in sustaining or suspending the women's educational quest. Existing literature tends to portray men as dominating women in all spheres and restricting their agency but the thesis indicated that women also dominated fellow women. For example, while men exemplified as father, father-in-law and husbands are keen to see their daughter, daughter-in-law and wives continue their studies to PhD level, the mothers discouraged their daughters and demanded that they return home to fulfil their social obligations first.

### **Relating the Research Findings to the Literature on Transnationalism and Diaspora**

Vertovec (2008) has tried to delineate migration, diaspora and religion because there are assumptions that migration means diaspora, migrants practice religion, therefore diaspora involves religion. He argues that though religions do not make up diasporas themselves, they can provide additional glue to a diasporic awareness. He conceptualizes migration to include the change and reconstruction of cultural forms and social relations in new location, one that usually implicates the migrants as minorities

who are set apart by “race,” language, cultural traditions and religion. On the other hand, he sees the diaspora as an imagined connection between a post-migration population and a place of origin and with people of similar cultural origins elsewhere. By transnationalism he means the exchanges of information, money and resources including regular travel that members of a diaspora may undertake with others in the homeland or elsewhere within the globalized ethnic community. He hence makes the important argument that diaspora arise from some form of migration, but not all migration involves diasporic consciousness; all transnational communities comprise diasporas, but not all diasporas develop transnationalism. How do these claims relate to my study participants? From the research data, it appears that all the participants except Jolomi and Abiola identify with the Nigerian diaspora in the UK . In the case of Jolomi and Abiola, though they have migrated, they do not have a diasporic consciousness because they no longer consider Nigeria as home or connect to Nigerians in the UK who are supposed to share the same cultural origins for them. They however still engage in transnational living because they still have family and friends in Nigeria with whom they exchange information, resources, calls and visits on regular basis. This thesis therefore argues that it is possible for migrants to engage in transnational living without adopting a diasporic consciousness like the case of Jolomi and Abiola. This is related to migrants participating in transnational way of being but not belonging as discussed in the last chapter (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2007).

Furthermore, the following arguments have been proposed by Vertovec (2008) on why it is important to study religious aspects of diasporic experience: 1) the study of diasporas and their methods of adaptation can grant us understandings into general forms of religious transformations; 2) diasporas may themselves affect the development of religion in the homeland – the wealth, education and exposure to foreign influences

transferred from diasporas may have significant effects on organization, practice and even belief; and 3) multi-ethnicity is now common because of the great prevalence of diasporas in modern world.

Analysing how the research data relate to Vertovec's (2008) first argument above, it appears that the participants themselves and their religious beliefs and practices have remained mainly untransformed by living abroad as against going through religious transformation as supposed by Vertovec (2008). This lack of religious transformation has largely been achieved by virtue of the fact that the women interviewees mostly belong to branches of their home country churches in the UK which are funded and overseen by leaders from Nigeria. This is in line with Levitt's (2003) argument that the transnational religious practices of individuals are reinforced by the organizational context in which they take place. While it is true that their religion serves as cement to the diasporic consciousness, it is also true that they have taken traits of their religious activities in Nigeria with them to the UK. So instead of their migration leading to religious transformations, it has become a major way to export and commodify several Nigerian culture and worldviews (Adogame, 2010).

Vertovec's (2008) second point above relates to the social remittance argument advocated by Levitt (1998) and Levitt (2003) which was also briefly mentioned in the last chapter. The interviews' data do not suggest that these women participants in the Nigerian diaspora are interested in affecting the development of religion in Nigeria. This is because most of the women consciously try not to imbibe the British way of life so they do not return to their homeland or the Nigerian community in the UK (the Nigerian church) as the "the other". According to the women's narratives shared in earlier chapters of the thesis, the church helps to keep the women grounded like the case of Dayo who depends on the church to checkmate her so she does not fall into the

British way of life, or parents back in Nigeria who call the Pastors of the churches their daughters attend in the UK to “check” on their daughters, so it seems unlikely that the women would like to use any of their UK experiences to change anything about their religion back in Nigeria. Even in the case of Rita, the only research participant who calls herself a Christian feminist, she still favours the patriarchal structure in the church though she believes her methods are more progressive, like her counselling and reminding single women of the need to marry in a manner she considers less harsh. Even in the particular instance where one of the women had referred to the likely social remittances from her study abroad, Dayo’s narrative in the last chapter suggests that the “grooming” she has received from studying abroad is not to change her religious stance in Nigeria. The “grooming” is rather to make her better in terms of her future social roles as a wife, mother and daughter when dealing with her husband, children and other family members. Considering Vertovec’s (2008) arguments above, the study findings suggest that not all diasporic groups undergo religious transformations or affect the development of religion in the homeland.

Transnational migration is a process rather than an event. And a transnational social field perspective can further help in the understanding of the findings of this thesis because it allows for new viewpoints on a number of issues usually unnoticed in traditional migration studies such as the effect of migration on gender relations/order, racialized identities, family dynamics and the role of religion (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2007). For instance a transnational social field can help understand the contradictory data of my participants being the main migrants in terms of their visa status in the UK yet they consciously adopt a subordinating position in relation to their husbands who are indeed their dependents in the UK. Whereas some scholars claim that gender relations change when women from patriarchal society migrate to Western egalitarian society, the

findings of this research suggest that migration does not change gender relations and family dynamics with this group of interviews and this is mainly due to their religion and culture.

Levitt and Glick Schiller (2007) claim that social relationships can intersect and overlap in national and transnational social fields with individuals occupying different gender, racial and class positions within different states at the same time. The above claim does not speak entirely to the reality of my research participants. This is because the gender position remains the same regardless of where they are living as stated above, whereas their class positions change depending on where they live. For example, these interviewees who are mainly from middleclass and upper class backgrounds in Nigeria would normally have maids or nannies who help with chores and childcare if they were living in Nigeria. But they do not have such status in the UK and as a result have to do a lot of juggling to take care of their domestic tasks which according to their culture and religion are the preserve of women. Hence these women have a higher class status in Nigeria whereas they struggle as students in the UK.

### **Why ISM Revisited**

If the Nigerian Christian women interviewed in this study deliberately prioritized their social roles above their academic roles, it is important to revisit why they bothered to study abroad in the first place and if they were transgressing by engaging in further studies abroad. All the women participants acknowledged the importance of having a British degree. They mostly associate their study abroad with enhanced career opportunities because of the prestige and social status it confers on them just like existing studies document. The difference for this group of women which indicated that studying and earning a postgraduate degree abroad was not enough for this group of women is the notion that the full benefits of ISM could only be enjoyed when a woman

is married with children in Nigerian society. In this sense, marriage and motherhood are not just about subordination, they open up opportunities and possibilities for women to aspire to any other role they wish for in the society.

A woman with one or more foreign degree/s can get a good job on return to Nigeria but such a woman will not be respected or seen as a role model if she is not married with children. Invariably, she has not attained full personhood which is indicative of something problematic about her. For such a woman living in a collectivist society with strong social norms, her not being married with children is seen as a form of deviance. Having children in Nigeria is seen as a form of social obligation in keeping the lineage going. So women who do not have children seem to have failed their kith and kin. Even in cases where women already have husbands and children, they are expected to continue being “good” wives and mothers and not to fail in their domestic duties because of the stigma attached to women who are separated or divorced from their husbands.

Though the British society has a different perceptive on these issues, most of the interviewees consider Nigeria as home and their stay in the UK as only temporary. For them it is important to stay connected to Nigerian values and ideals so they would not be perceived as “outsiders” on return to Nigeria. Even in cases where some of the women have been living in the UK for long periods to time, they still wanted a sense of belonging to Nigeria and Nigerian community in the UK which is mostly guaranteed by conformity to Nigerian culture and values. This point was buttressed by the two women, Jolomi and Abiola, who were very individualistic in their worldview and had adopted the UK as their home. They were not worried about fitting Nigerian notion of complete personhood because they purposely limited their association with Nigerians in the UK



hence they were very unlikely to encounter social pressures to conform to gender roles from such quarters. But for Nigerian Christian women who chose to conform to gender roles, their lived experiences in the UK can be described in the words of one of them as facing “one concern after the other”.

Having reviewed the main arguments of the thesis, a limitation worthy of note is that the participants in this study were from only the Southern part of the country as earlier acknowledged in chapter two. There are also Christian women in northern Nigeria though they are not in majority. Gender relations in northern Nigeria are generally believed to be more conservative than in the southern region because of the Sharia legal system in practice in most states of the north. So future research could investigate how experiences of a group of Christian women from northern Nigeria engaged in ISM might be similar to or different from the findings of this thesis. Another limitation of this thesis is the focus on Nigerian Pentecostal Christian women students alone. According to Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life (2011c), out of an estimated total population of almost 159 million Nigerians in 2010, 80.5 million are estimated as Christians with 20 million Catholics, 59.7 million protestants, while orthodox and other Christian population make up the remaining. The conservative Pentecostal Christians are included among protestant Christians in Nigeria. Future research could also examine the migratory experiences of Nigerian women students from broader Christian denominations like the Anglican and Catholic churches, or women who identify themselves as more liberal Christians in Nigeria.

There is an existing study on women as dependents of male international students (De Verthelyi, 1995). This thesis has shown that some men migrate with their wives who are international students as dependents. Therefore future research on gendered migration

could also include men's perspectives as dependent migrants of women students to examine how they interpret their migration experiences, their motivations – why they “allowed” and/or “followed” their wives to migrate, definition of gender roles and their own roles in the home against what we know currently in academic literature.

The findings of this thesis cannot be generalized to all Nigerian Christian women in UK higher education, however, there are likely important lessons for universities' international offices who recruit international student migrants and offer support on life in the West during studies, as well as universities' academic support units on the different connotations of “support” to certain international students especially those from collectivist cultures. Also academics who teach or supervise international students could also gain some insights from this thesis on the various factors that could impact the lives of international student migrants during their studies and possibly hinder them from reaching their potentials.

I conclude by acknowledging the courage of these women to go for their dreams regardless of many hurdles that could have stopped them. Their experiences especially of juggling full time academic study with family commitments and part-time work may sound harsh to those from outside their community. But within their community such highly educated women with families are highly respected, not only for their intelligence but also for their “wisdom” and “sacrifices” in keeping their families together. These parting excerpts from the Holy Bible illustrate the respect accorded to women perceived as “good” women in their community and help understand why the participants both single and married aspire to live up to the ideals of their faith.

<sup>10</sup> If you can find a truly good wife, she is worth more than precious gems!

<sup>11</sup> Her husband can trust her, and she will richly satisfy his needs. <sup>12</sup> She will

not hinder him but help him all her life. [ ] <sup>15</sup> She gets up before dawn to prepare breakfast for her household and plans the day's work for her servant girls. <sup>16</sup> She goes out to inspect a field and buys it; with her own hands she plants a vineyard. <sup>17</sup> She is energetic, a hard worker, <sup>18</sup> and watches for bargains. She works far into the night! [ ] <sup>21</sup> She has no fear of winter for her household, for she has made warm clothes for all of them. [ ] <sup>23</sup> Her husband is well known, for he sits in the council chamber with the other civic leaders. [ ] <sup>26</sup> When she speaks, her words are wise, and kindness is the rule for everything she says. <sup>27</sup> She watches carefully all that goes on throughout her household and is never lazy. <sup>28</sup> Her children stand and bless her; so does her husband. He praises her with these words: <sup>29</sup> "There are many fine women in the world, but you are the best of them all!" [ ] <sup>31</sup> Praise her for the many fine things she does. These good deeds of hers shall bring her honour and recognition from people of importance.

Proverbs 31: 10 – 31 (The Living Bible Translation)

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Ethics form

#### School of Sociology & Social Policy

#### Research ethics checklist for staff and students

This form must be completed for all research projects, research assignments or dissertations/theses which are conducted within the School and involve human participants. You must not begin data collection or approach potential research participants until you have completed this form, received ethical clearance, and submitted this form for retention with the appropriate staff.

If the study is based only on a review of documentary sources already in the public domain and involves NO fieldwork of any sort, then this form does not need to be completed.

Completing the form includes providing a brief summary of the research in Section 2 and ticking some boxes in Section 4. Ticking a shaded box in Section 4 requires further action by the researcher. Two things need to be stressed:

Ticking one or more shaded boxes does not mean that you cannot conduct your research as currently anticipated; however, it does mean that further questions will need to be asked and addressed, further discussions will need to take place, and alternatives may need to be considered or additional actions undertaken.

Avoiding the shaded boxes does not mean that ethical considerations can subsequently be 'forgotten'; on the contrary, research ethics need to be informed - for everyone and in every project – an ongoing process of reflection and debate.

The following checklist is a starting point for an ongoing process of reflection about the ethical issues concerning your study.

<b>SECTION 1: THE RESEARCHER(S)</b>
-------------------------------------

#### To be completed in all cases

Title of project: **Nigerian Women Studying in UK Higher Education: International Student Migrants?**

Name of principal researcher: **Stella Oluwaseun**

Status: ☐ Undergraduate student  
☐ Postgraduate taught student  
☒ Postgraduate research student  
☐ Staff

Email address: **lqxs@nottingham.ac.uk**

Names of other project members:

---

**To be completed by students only:**

**NAME IN CAPITALS: STELLA OLUWASEUN**

Student ID number: **4112764**

Degree programme: **MPhil, SOCIAL POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION**

Module name/number:

Supervisor/module leader or tutor: **PROFESSOR JULIA O'CONNELL DAVIDSON  
and DR AMAL TREACHER-KABESH**

**SECTION 2: RESEARCH WITHIN OR INVOLVING THE NHS OR SOCIAL CARE**

**Does this research involve the recruitment of patients, staff, records or other data through the NHS or involve NHS sites or other property?**

☐ Yes

☒ No

If you have answered **YES** to the above question, ethical approval **MUST** be sought from the relevant NHS research ethics committee. Evidence of approval from such a committee **MUST** be lodged with the School office prior to the commencement of data collection.

**Does this research involve the recruitment of users, staff, records or other data through social service authorities (children and adult services) or involve social service sites or other property?**

☐ Yes

☒ No

If you have answered **YES** to the above question, then you must check whether or not the relevant social service authority has its own ethical scrutiny procedures. If appropriate, evidence of approval from such an authority **MUST** be lodged with the School office prior to the commencement of data collection.

Even where external ethical approval has been obtained from an NHS committee or social service authority, completion of this form is mandatory.

**SECTION 3: THE RESEARCH**

Please provide brief details (50-150 words) about your proposed research, as indicated in each section

**1. Research question(s) or aim(s)**

This research seeks to contribute to the understandings of and debates on international student migration through an exploration of the motivations to migrate and the experiences of conforming to Nigerian societal and cultural expectations of women even while Nigerian women are studying in UK HE. By exploring the motivations and experiences of postgraduate (taught and research) female Nigerian students and graduates, the study will contribute to an existing body of work on ISM and gender where there is currently little research and empirical evidence. My main research question will be:

**What are the key influences on the lived experiences and complex negotiations that Nigerian women face while studying in UK higher education?**

In order to answer this question, I will pay attention to issues relating to the Nigerian societal expectations of women and the Nigerian female students' decision making processes. Other closely associated questions related to the main question will be:

- **How do the women manage the identity/role of “student” in UK alongside the demands/expectations that are placed on them as Nigerian women?**

Are the students already married with children? If not, how do their friends and families make them feel about studying abroad when the cultural norms expect them to be married with children at a certain age? Why is it important to abide by the Nigerian cultural expectations of a woman even when living abroad? What impact does this have on their academic work? What identity is most important to a married Nigerian student? How do the students see themselves? As a student, wife or mother? Why is simply being a student not enough for Nigerian women in UK HE?

- **How do they experience the pressure to continue to conform to expectations of them as women?**

How do the students stay in touch with family and friends in Nigeria? How are the societal expectations and demands communicated to Nigerian women when they are studying abroad? To what extent do the students use technology such as Skype and Facebook to stay in touch with family members and friends? What are the enabling/disabling factors around this?

- **How do students who have families in the UK cope with the demands of fulltime academic studies and running a home?**

What are the general expectations regarding gender roles in the family? Who does what? How much household labour and childcare do the students engage in and how long do they spend on the average on these? What are their coping strategies to deal with combining childcare, house chores and academic studies?

- **What is the nature of support (emotional, academic, and/or financial) the students receive in the UK and their destination universities?**

What kind of support do the students receive in their host country and from their universities? Who produces these supports? Do the students receive any support from the Nigerian community in the UK? Do they receive support from family back home? Is the support adequate?

- **What motivated the women to study in the UK and not in Nigeria or other countries? What does a UK degree mean to the students? And what are the benefits to be derived from HE in the UK?**

Why did they choose to study in the UK and not Nigeria or any other English speaking country? What are the events, negotiations and discussions that took place before a decision was reached to study in the UK? Who was involved in these events, negotiations and discussions? Was the decision to study abroad entirely the student's, was it forced and if so by who and/or was the decision reached by mutual consent, and what are the dynamics around these negotiations? What meanings and benefits do they attach to a UK degree?

## **2. Method(s) of data collection**

I will use a feminist qualitative approach and in-depth interviews as a method of data collection in this study. I chose this method because it is appropriate for feminist research. Also I want to draw out some of the meanings the students make of their lives in the UK with their detailed descriptions as well as emphasize on the context and process under which these experiences happen (Becker et al., 2012, Bryman, 2008).

## **3. Proposed site(s) of data collection**

The setting for the interviews is the UK.

## **4. How will access to participants be gained?**

Access will be gained through social networks, employing snowball techniques to identify potential participants through contacts from everyday life (work, church, education institutions and others).

## **SECTION 4: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate box. All questions in section 4 **must** be answered.

### **4.1 General issues**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Will this research involve any participants who are known to be vulnerable due to:		X
Being aged under 18?		
Residing in institutional care (permanently or temporarily)?		
Having a learning disability?		
Having a mental health condition?		

Having physical or sensory impairments? Previous life experiences (e.g. victims of abuse)? Other (please specify)...		
Will this research expose participants to any significant risk of physical or emotional harm?		X
Will this research involve any physically invasive procedures or the collection of bodily samples?		X
Will this research expose the researcher to any significant risk of physical or emotional harm?		X
Will this research involve deception of any kind?		X
Will this research involve access to personal information about identifiable individuals without their knowledge or consent?		X
I will inform immediately the School's Ethics Officer if I change the method(s) of data collection, the proposed sites of data collection, the means by which participants are accessed, or make any other significant changes to my research inquiry	X	

#### 4.2 Before starting data collection

	Yes	No
I have read the <i>Research Code of Conduct</i> guidelines of the University of Nottingham, particularly section 4 on Data, and agree to abide by them: <a href="http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/ris/local/research-strategy-and-policy/Code_of_Conduct(Vers_3_January_2010).pdf">http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/ris/local/research-strategy-and-policy/Code_of_Conduct(Vers_3_January_2010).pdf</a>	X	
For those intending to work with children and/or vulnerable adults: I have read the University's <i>Guidance on arrangements for Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults</i> <a href="http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/wideningparticipation/downloads/Guidance%20on%20the%20Protection%20of%20Children%20and%20Vulnerable%20Adults.pdf">http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/wideningparticipation/downloads/Guidance%20on%20the%20Protection%20of%20Children%20and%20Vulnerable%20Adults.pdf</a>		
My full identity will be revealed to all research participants	X	
All participants will be given accurate information about the nature of the research and the purposes to which the data will be put	X	
All participants will freely consent to take part, and this will be confirmed by use of recorded verbal consent. (An example of a consent form is available for you to amend and use.)	X	
One signed copy of the consent form will be held by the researcher and		X



another will be retained by the participant		
It will be made clear that declining to participate will have no negative consequences for the individual	X	
It will be made clear that participation is unlikely to be of direct personal benefit to the individual	X	
Participants will be asked for permission for quotations (from data) to be used in research outputs where this is intended	X	
Incentives (other than basic expenses) are offered to potential participants as an inducement to participate in the research. (Here any incentives include cash payments and non-cash items such as vouchers and book tokens.)		X
For research conducted within, or concerning, organisations (e.g. universities, schools, hospitals, care homes, etc) I will gain authorisation in advance from an appropriate committee or individual. (This is in addition to any research ethics procedures required by those organisations, particularly health and social care agencies – see Section 2.)	X	

#### 4.3 During the process of data collection

	Yes	No
I will provide participants with my University contact details, and those of my supervisor, so that they may make get in touch about any aspect of the research if they wish to do so	X	
Participants will be guaranteed anonymity only insofar as they do not disclose any illegal activities		X
Anonymity will not be guaranteed where there is disclosure or evidence of significant harm, abuse, neglect or danger to participants or to others	X	
All participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any time, including withdrawing data following its collection	X	
Data collection will take place only in public and/or professional spaces (e.g. in a work setting). If fieldwork takes place in the respondent's home please outline in Section 6 what steps will be taken to ensure your safety. You may wish to consult the SRA researcher safety guidelines: <a href="http://www.the-sra.org.uk/guidelines.htm#safe">http://www.the-sra.org.uk/guidelines.htm#safe</a>		X
Research participants will be informed when observations and/or recording is taking place	X	
Participants will be treated with dignity and respect at all times	X	

#### 4.4 After collection of data

	Yes	No
Where anonymity has been agreed with the participant, data will be anonymised as soon as possible after collection	X	
All data collected will be stored in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998	X	
Data will only be used for the purposes outlined within the participant information sheet and consent form	X	
Details which could identify individual participants will not be disclosed to anyone other than the researcher, their supervisor and (if necessary) internal and/or external examiners without their explicit consent	X	
I will inform my supervisor and/or the School's research ethics officer and (if necessary) statutory services of any incidents of actual or suspected harm of children or vulnerable adults which are disclosed to me during the course of data collection	X	

#### 4.5 After completion of research

	Yes	No
Participants will be given the opportunity to know about the overall research findings	X	
Data must be submitted to the School office and will be retained (in a secure location) for 7 years from the date of any publication based upon them, after which time it will be destroyed.	X	
All hard copies of data collection tools and data which enable the identification of individual participants will be destroyed	X	

### SECTION 5: ETHICAL APPROVAL

#### Declaration of ethical research

1. *If you did not tick any of the shaded boxes in section 4 of this form*, please sign and date below **and** get the checklist countersigned (see below).

Keep one copy of this form for your personal records.

**Students who undertake research involving primary data collection** on non-dissertation modules must submit the authorised checklist along with their assessed work to Alison Haigh in B20.

**Undergraduate dissertation students who intend to conduct fieldwork** should include **two hard copies** of the checklist with their dissertation plans submitted to dissertation tutors in the autumn. Then assuming the checklist is signed and authorised by their dissertation supervisor, **students should confirm this authorisation in a section discussing ethics in the text of the dissertation**. Failure to do so may incur penalties when the dissertation is marked.

**Principal investigators and other researchers**, including postgraduate research students and postgraduate taught students, should also keep a copy on file and hand another copy to Alison Haigh in B20.

**By signing this form you are agreeing to work within the protocol which you have outlined and to abide by the University of Nottingham's Code of Research Ethics.** If you make changes to your protocol which in turn would change your answers to any of the above questions then you **must** complete a new form and submit a copy to Alison Haigh or for undergraduates to your tutor/supervisor.

Signed .....

Date

2. *If you ticked any of the shaded boxes in section 4 of this form, then you must complete SECTION 6 (overleaf). You must then discuss all ethical issues arising, record the outcome and have this form countersigned (see below)*
-

## Authorisation

This section **must** be completed in **all** cases – by type of investigator the form must be countersigned by the following personnel:

Undergraduate student → module convenor or tutor/project supervisor

Postgraduate taught student → dissertation supervisor

Postgraduate research student → supervisor/upgrade panel

Staff → School Research Ethics Officer (REO)

Having reviewed the ethical issues arising from the proposed research:

- ☐ I am happy for the research to go ahead as planned.
- ☐ I have requested that changes be made to the research protocol. The principal researcher must complete and submit a revised form which integrates these changes
- ☐ This project must be referred on for more detailed ethical scrutiny. Please forward a hard copy to the School's REO
- ☐ This project is to be referred to Research Development Group for consideration (this option is for School REO only)

Signed ..... Date

.....

Designation

.....

.....

School REO..... Date

.....

Note: **any** research protocols lodged with the School office may be subject to review by the School's Research Ethics Officer

## SECTION 6: FURTHER INFORMATION & JUSTIFICATION OF METHODOLOGY

One box should be completed for **each** shaded box ticked in section 4 of this form.

Ethical issue: **One signed copy of the consent form will be held by the researcher and another will be retained by the participant**

Rationale for chosen methodology and/or how ethical issue is to be addressed:

The rationale behind this is that some participants may not want to give a written consent and in a situation where they do, they may not be truthful with their answers about issues of immigration. I would get verbal consent instead from my participants.

Supervisor/REO's response (including whether ethical issue has been satisfactorily addressed): Verbal consent, recorded on a tape recorder, will be acceptable.

Ethical issue: **Anonymity will be guaranteed even when the respondents disclose illegal activities**

Rationale for chosen methodology and/or how ethical issue is to be addressed:

The rationale behind this is that the literature acknowledge that some international students get involved in illegal activities like working more than the stipulated hours during term time. If I am to get reliable and accurate data from my participants then I must guarantee them anonymity irrespective of any illegal activities they tell me about.

Supervisor/REO's response (including whether ethical issue has been satisfactorily addressed): We will consider this on a case by case basis.

Ethical issue: **Data collection will take place only in public and/or professional spaces (e.g. in a work setting).**

Rationale for chosen methodology and/or how ethical issue is to be addressed:

The rationales behind this are:

- 1) I share office space with other PhD students, therefore privacy will not be guaranteed if I choose to interview the women in my office.
- 2) Some of the women may have childcare duties and therefore may prefer to be interviewed at home.

In order to ensure my safety when interviewing the respondents at home, I will let my husband and supervisors know where I am always by staying in touch with them on my mobile phone.

Supervisor/REO's response (including whether ethical issue has been satisfactorily addressed):

## **Appendix 2: Participant information sheet**

**School of Sociology and Social Policy  
University of Nottingham**

**Project title:** The Lived Experiences of Nigerian Christian Women Postgraduate Students in UK Higher Education

**Personal information:** My name is Stella Oluwaseun. I am a PhD student at the University of Nottingham, and my project is on the above named topic. My email address is [lqxs@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:lqxs@nottingham.ac.uk) and my phone number is 0115 846 8153.

**Purpose of research:** The purpose of this research is to find out what motivated the women to choose the UK as a study destination and their lived experiences in the UK.

**Nature of request:** I am using a qualitative approach in my research which involves interviewing Nigerian postgraduate (taught and research) students and graduates. I am seeking your consent to interview you about your experiences as a Nigerian graduate student in the UK's higher education.

Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research project at any stage, without having to give any reason and withdrawing will not penalise or disadvantage you in any way.

**Confidentiality:** Your name will not be used and nothing that will make people recognize those taking part in the research will be used when I am writing my findings in order to protect your privacy. All data collected will be securely stored. Extracts from the interview may be anonymously quoted in any report or publication arising from the research.

You may contact the researcher or supervisors if you require further information about the research, and you may also contact the School's Research Ethics Officer if you wish to make a complaint relating to your involvement in the research.

### **Supervisors:**

Professor Julia O'Connell Davidson ([Julia.O'Connell\\_Davidson@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Julia.O'Connell_Davidson@nottingham.ac.uk))

Dr Amal Treacher Kabesh ([Amal.Treacher\\_Kabesh@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Amal.Treacher_Kabesh@nottingham.ac.uk))

### **Research Ethics Officer:**

Dr Simon Roberts ([Simon.Roberts@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Simon.Roberts@nottingham.ac.uk))

School of Sociology and Social Policy  
University of Nottingham  
University Park  
NG7 2RD  
Nottingham, UK

### Appendix 3: Interviewees' profiles

No.	Name	Age	Educational status	Marital status	No. of Children	No. of years in the UK	Migrant type	Date of interview	Place of interview	Interview duration (minutes)
1	Nneka	29	M.Sc. student	Married	1 and pregnant	1	Dependent on husband	14/06/2013	Home	63
2	Eno	29	PhD graduate	Married	0	5	Main	03/07/2013	School	69
3	Onome	21	M.Sc. student	Single	0	5	Main	05/07/2013	Home	40
4	Ola	27	M.Sc. student	Engaged	0	1	Main	27/09/2013	Work	49
5	Dayo	25	M.Sc. student	Single	0	1	Main	04/10/2013	Work	61
6	Liz	28	M.Sc. graduate	Married	1	6	Main	13/10/2013	Home	55
7	Rita*	45	M.Sc. graduate	Married	3	11	Dependent on husband	14/10/2013	Home	64
8	Ngozi	38	M.Sc. student	Married	0	1	Main	18/10/2013	Home	66
9	Jolomi	33	M.Sc. graduate	Single	0	8	Main	19/10/2013	Home	77
10	Chioma	27	M.Sc. graduate	Married	1	9	Main	19/10/2013	Home	40
11	Abiola	29	PhD student	Single	0	5	Main	22/10/2013	School	60
12	Amara	43	PhD student	Married	4	6	Main	30/10/2013	School	72
13	Koko**	25	PhD student	Single	0	7	Dependent on mother	10/11/2013	Church	55
14	Vera	30	M.Sc. student	Married	1	1	Main	15/01/2014	Work	62
15	Bimbo	39	PhD graduate	Married	1	10	Main	17/02/2014	Home	65
16	Mary	25	M.Sc. student	Single	0	1	Main	25/02/2014	Home	57
17	Uloaku	30	M.Sc. student	Married	1	4	Main	03/03/2014	Home	61
18	Belema	33	PhD student	Single	0	1	Main	12/03/2014	School	63
19	Ify	41	PhD graduate	Married	2	5	Main	22/03/2014	Home	50
20	Yinka	42	M.Sc. graduate	Married	2	8	Main	03/04/2014	Home	67

\*Rita came to the UK on a student visa but later transferred to a spouse visa after her marriage.

\*\*Koko came to the UK as a teenager and was initially dependent on her mother's visa.

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