Na Me Be Dis? Professional Nigerian Women's Narratives of Immigration and Adaptation to Life in the UK

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PhD

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Women's Studies

July 2019

Abstract

This thesis explores professional Nigerian women's narratives of immigration and adaptation to life in the UK. Despite the gradual interest in researching skilled female migration, the case of Nigerian women is obscured by frequently categorising them as African or Black women. The few studies that focus on Nigerian women often tend to concentrate more on trafficking, smuggling and prostitution. This thesis draws on semi structured interviews with 32 Nigerian women, who were professionals in different fields in Nigeria, before legally migrating to the UK. I examine how these middle-class professional Nigerian women make sense of their lived experiences in Nigeria, their roles in migration decision-making and some of their experiences so far in the UK. Drawing on Mead's work on the symbolic reconstruction of the past from the standpoint of the present, and employing a feminist approach to qualitative research, I pay attention to how participants reflexively construct narratives of their lived experiences in Nigeria. Adopting a framework of possible selves and imagined future, I discuss how participants' migration decision-making is informed by drawing a link between their possible selves and their imagined future. Rejecting the term "culture shock" to adequately explain immigrants' early experiences in the UK, I propose the use of a "person-by-situation" approach to accommodate the nuances of individual narratives. The challenges faced by my participants as they adapt to life in the UK are complex and multi-factorial. They draw on themes of exclusion, racism, sexism, alienation and downward mobility in their narratives of their challenges in the UK, which led to a participant asking a rhetorical question, "Na me be dis?" (Is this me?). Many participants however ended by presenting themselves as Strong Black Women (SBW), drawing on themes of resilience, faith, determination and hope to construct a vision of a positive future.

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Acknowledgements

I learnt that to be grateful and not express it, is like wrapping a present and not giving it. I therefore express my profound gratitude, first to God, the author and finisher of my faith, without whom I can do nothing.

I want to thank my supervisor like no other, Professor Stevi Jackson, for her immense support and guidance. Without you Stevi, this research would not have been possible. I am forever grateful for your insightful feedback, invaluable supervision meetings, your attention to details and more importantly, your encouragement. You did not only give me a platform to thrive, you told me that I could do it. It's been a great honour working with you.

My special thanks go to my Thesis Advisory Panel, Dr. Gareth Millington and Dr. Nisha Kapoor, for their useful and positive feedback. And to all staff, friends and colleagues in the Centre for Women's Studies, thank you for being part of my journey. Hearty thanks to Michael Askew and Ajibola Ogunshakin for taking time out of their busy schedule to proof-read my thesis; God bless you.

To my siblings, (my cheerleaders), who all believed in me and stood by me, I say a big thank you. And to my sweet mother, Mrs Bose Adams, who encouraged me to follow my dreams and carry out this research, I say a massive thank you. You taught me that true happiness comes from what we give, not what we get; you gave me your all—your love, your time and your listening ears; in return mum, I dedicate this research to you.

I am eternally grateful to my ever-loving children, Shalom, Gideon and Bethel. Your sincere love and understanding carried me through every step of this journey. Your cuddles were strength to my bones. And to you, my dear loving husband, my soul mate and better half, Dr. Peter Ogbemudia, who fully sponsored this research project, I am forever grateful. Your undying love and selflessness singles you out as a special human. Thank you for believing in me, and more importantly, thank you for listening. How can I ever thank you enough?

I cannot forget my distinguished participants, without whom there will be no research. Thank you for giving your time and sharing your experiences. And to all friends and family who walked by me on this journey, I doff my hat in gratitude.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late father, Pa Olorunnimbe Adams, who laboured day and night to give us a good life. Daddy, see, your labour is not in vain!

Author's Declaration

In accordance with the University of York regulation, I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other university. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Telling My PhD Story: Still I Rise[1]

My interest in carrying out this intriguing research is born out of my lived experiences as a Nigerian woman in the UK. I migrated to the UK in 2007 under the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP). I came with very high expectations and at the top of my list was to further my career. I arrived UK at about 6 a.m. on the 17th of October 2007. I still remember the flight from Lagos Nigeria, to Heathrow London. It was a 7 hour flight but 4 hours into the journey, I became airsick. I suddenly became very weak and could not attend to my sleepy baby. I could hear the lady sitting next to me praying that I would not die. As weak as I was, I could not help but force a smile. I felt like assuring her that I had never been more alive than then, when I was heading to the Queen's land; I was pregnant with visions and very exciting plans. Though weak and tired after the long trip, I told myself there was no stopping me.

My first week in the UK was marked with high and low moments; it was a humbling experience of expectation meeting reality. One of the very shocking realities was my sudden consciousness of my blackness; my "otherness". I suddenly felt foreign; I felt I was living in a space, yet not belonging to it. I convinced myself that finding a suitable job would fill the void and frustration that was beginning to set in. The first job I was considered for was as a 'packer' in a food factory. My frustration gave way to despair when after the interview and right-to-work checks, one of the interviewers announced, "Because of your status as a dependant and not the primary immigrant, I'm afraid we cannot offer you the job"! I tried to explain that under the immigration law, as a spouse to a primary immigrant under HSMP, I had equal right to work; but with a disdainful look, I was shown the door. A feeling of inadequacy that I had never really felt before enveloped me.

I could describe my experience of the first five years in the UK as a roller coaster ride. My greatest challenge was not making headway in my career. As much as I tried, I realised I was stuck in menial jobs despite having a university degree with six

[1] "Still I Rise" is culled from Angelou (1986).

years working experience. My immediate social network could not really help; they had been affected by the same system and could not move past it. I saw women who were highly placed professionals, intelligent and hardworking top officials in Nigeria settling for menial jobs or being "stay-at-home" mums in the UK. I wanted better, but I was confused and helpless. I felt my career and my intellectual wellbeing was too much of a price to pay for migrating. I decided on a master's programme; but I could not, because of childcare challenges and lack of funds. I had to wait for some few years to gain an Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK, which qualified me to pay home fees[2]. The challenges were multi-faceted and at that point, I was becoming disappointed and discouraged.

On the 2nd of July 2013, a dear friend bought me a birthday present. It was a poetry book, *And Still I Rise*, by Maya Angelou. One of the poems in the book, "Still I Rise", marked a turn-around in my life! It was just the right antidote for my low state. The poem became my anthem; it gave me courage to see past my pain, vulnerabilities and present realities. It turned the many voices of "impossible" into mere echoes and instead, like air, I arose (Angelou 1986). September 2013 saw me enrolled for the MSc in Human Resource Management programme in Sheffield Hallam University. It was not smooth sailing, but I survived and graduated with merit. It boosted my confidence but there was no significant change to my status in the labour market. I suddenly became "over-qualified" for entry level jobs because I had a post graduate certificate, but "under-qualified" for higher level jobs due to lack of UK working experience. It was a catch-22 situation.

To fulfil part of the requirements for my MSc. programme, I completed a dissertation on Work and Family Life Balance among immigrant (Nigerian) medical doctors in the UK. The research was an eye opener to the peculiar problems faced by immigrant doctors and how women doctors are disproportionately affected by these issues. The difference in the stories told by the men and the women birthed in me an insatiable desire to research the lived experiences of professional Nigerian women in the UK. I became convinced that my experiences of migration, integration, the labour market and family care challenges were not peculiar to me. Also, irrespective

[2] "Publicly funded educational institutions normally charge two levels of fee: a lower 'home' fee and a higher 'overseas' fee" (UKCISA 2019)

of their present employment status, I perceived that inside the beautiful elegant ebony skinned Nigerian women I meet in churches, parties and shopping complexes is a strong voice seeking expression. Their accounts, coloured by multiple factors and diverse challenges, determine how they construct their lived experiences as immigrants in the UK.

I consider the lack of adequate representation of this group of women a huge gap in academic research because it amounts to neglecting the immigration experiences of professional women from the most populous country in Africa. In order to put the relevance of the case of these women in perspective, a brief discussion on how they are situated in the Nigerian demography is necessary. According to the World Population Review (2019), the estimate of the Nigerian population in 2019 is 200,683,297 which makes Nigeria the 7th most populous country in the world, where approximately I in every 43 people in the world call Nigeria their home. 49.31% of this population are women but unfortunately, many of these women lack access to basic education, which accounts for why more than half of the Nigerian illiterate population are women. Although there is a gradual increase in the number of students in school, as at 2015, only 43.7% of the number of students enrolled into tertiary institutions in Nigeria were women (National Bureau of Statistics 2016). These figures suggest that not only is the number of literate Nigerian women low, fewer also make it to higher institutions. This implies therefore, that the migration of a significant number of highly educated professional women from Nigeria to Western countries constitutes a very high level of brain drain among professional women. What is more painful however, is the lack of utilisation of such brains, which are left to waste in Western countries.

The realisation of the importance of this research situates my interest as both highly political and highly personal. To satisfy my curiosity, I decided to make enquires as to how I could engage in research work. I spoke with a careers adviser who encouraged me to consider applying for a PhD. Reaching the conclusion to do a PhD was one of the most daunting decisions I ever took. It was considered a ridiculous idea by some of my friends and some called it a stupid move. They felt I should have learnt my lessons that accumulating academic degrees does not necessarily boost the career chances of immigrant women in the UK. One of my good friends puts it plainly, “if you struggled to get a good job after your Masters, is it after your PhD

you will get one? She concluded that I would still end up with a menial job, therefore, there was no need to waste my time and resources. At that point, my motivation was beyond economic value; I wanted to be involved in work that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally engaging and psychologically satisfying. Although the many voices of "you cannot" were becoming stronger and overwhelming, I decided that "still like dust, I'll rise" (Angelou 1986).

My first step was to write a research proposal which I sent to various schools and departments. The response from The Centre for Women's Studies, University of York was prompt. I was invited for an interview, after which I started my PhD journey. The first step was relocating with my family from a small town of Worksop to the city of York. We were happy to move, but there were adjustments to be made. My first year was very challenging; settling into a new city and a new course of study was challenging for me. I felt like a square peg in a round hole; but the friendly atmosphere that marks the culture of the Centre for Women's Studies helped me to settle in quickly. Doing a PhD in a supportive environment makes a lot of difference; I was never despised for starting off with baby steps in my research work, neither was I refused the opportunity to take giant steps as I went on. The support I received made difficult times bearable and fun times memorable.

I spent my first year and early part of my second year fully engrossed in reading academic literature around my research topic. During this period, with invaluable support from my supervisor, I began to explore feminist approaches to qualitative research. The beauty of doing a PhD, at least at the Centre for Women's Studies, is the support and liberty to explore broader fields of knowledge, and to celebrate diverse ways of knowing. I saw myself like a flower, begin to blossom. This is not to say that it was all rosy, far from it. There were times I felt like quitting, times when I could not adequately manage schoolwork and family responsibilities, times when my health was a challenge and times when I just felt lost. But I was told that feeling lost is a welcome experience for researchers, "and part of the finding is in the getting lost. If you're lost, you really start to look around and listen" (Metzger 1986:104).

The main part of my second year was spent carrying out fieldwork. Though emotionally taxing, it was the most intriguing part of my research experience. During my interview sessions I realised that my participants' challenges were not only

complex but multi-factorial. This led me to extend my research focus, which was initially on participants' experiences of the labour market, to other related and intersecting factors. What was more significant for me, was the way my participants engaged with their stories. I realised that I needed to pay attention not just to what they say, but how they engage with telling their stories in order to make sense of their lived experiences. This challenged my knowledge of doing research and helped me to appreciate it as an organic and evolving process with many turns and twists.

My third and final year were spent transcribing and analysing my data. The data analysis process took me to another height of intellectual intensity as I engaged with feminist approaches to qualitative research to examine the subjective dimensions of my participants' narratives. I enjoyed the process of learning to approach data analysis from a reflexive and flexible way of "seeing". My work opened me up to a very high level of academic rigour, sharpened my critical thinking and writing skills and helped me to embrace an interdisciplinary approach to knowing. As I began to draw my data analysis to a conclusion, it dawned on me that this thesis is not one filled with lofty ideas of 101 ways of solving human problems but one that lays bare how women reflexively tell their stories of negotiating competing and conflicting hierarchies of power and structures as professional Nigerian women who migrated to the UK. I concluded that it is one thing to explain women's experiences but to "see" from their point of view is to explore the meaning they give to their own lived experiences. Each chapter of this thesis endeavours to present this meaning.

Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 1 (this chapter) introduces my motivation for carrying out this research, presents a brief overview of the research focus and an outline of the chapters in the thesis. Chapter 2 presents a review and critical analysis of relevant literature that informs the context within which I explore women's experiences of gender, migration, integration and their link to other structural determinants. It begins with a critical analysis of the historical background of the roles of Nigerian women from pre-colonial Nigeria to modern times. I wanted to present how their cultural, social and economic roles have evolved over time. I then move on to examine critically some influential migration theories, building a

case for a need to further broaden migration theories to accommodate the effects of gender on migration. I also explore the place of Black women generally and Nigerian women in particular in the history of Britain. In chapter 3, I present my methodological choices and research process. I discuss how I became aware of and engaged with feminist approaches to qualitative research, helping me to lay bare my plans, processes and reflections in the research field. I discuss my high and low moments, my successes, mistakes and concerns as I journeyed through the research field and in my documentation and analysis of the research data.

My research findings are discussed in four analysis chapters. In chapter 4, drawing on George Herbert Mead's work on the symbolic reconstruction of the past from the standpoint of the present, I explore participants' reflections on, and interpretation of their lived experiences in Nigeria. Viewing their accounts both as resource and topic (Plummer 2001), I examine the stories of participants' experiences of growing into womanhood in Nigeria and how they create a sense of social order through their narratives. By going down memory lane to examine their lives in Nigeria, they present the space within which the motivation and decision to migrate to the UK was informed and shaped. In Chapter 5, based on the narrative interactionist framework informing this thesis, I analyse participants' accounts of how they negotiated their migration decision-making. Based on participants' retrospective narratives, I propose a link between the concept of "possible selves" (Markus and Nurius 1986) and "imagined futures" (Hardgrove et al 2015) to analyse how multiple selves and identities are reflexively created in relation to migration decision-making. By linking both concepts, I explain how the constructions of expected possible selves, feared possible selves and hoped-for possible selves (Markus and Nurius 1986), are symbolically embedded into narratives of expectations, anticipations and ambivalence in participants' accounts of how and why they make the decisions to migrate.

Chapter 6 presents participants' early days experiences and integration in the UK. I analyse their self-conscious accounts of the nuances and complexities involved in settling and integrating into a new country. Rejecting the concept of culture shock as a unifying concept to explain migrants' integration experiences, I adopt a "person-by-situation" approach to unpack some of the often overlooked nuances that shape immigrants experiences of adaptation in their destination countries and to explore the

diverse and complex ways my participants engaged with their individual stories. The discussion of participants' settlement challenges continues in chapter 7, where I examine the links they draw in their narratives between paid work and family life challenges. I discuss the intersection of race, class and gender and how it informs discrimination and tokenism in the workplace. I also explore the link between family, patriarchy and reproduction, presenting the complexity and multi-level connections between all these concepts. I argue that the complexity of these related factors situates every aspect of migration and settlement as gendered and affecting women disproportionately.

Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter where I provide a summary of my research findings, starting with my reflective presentation of the impact of the research on me. I move on to discuss some areas of new enquiries that could be focus for the future in the areas of migration and gender studies. I call for the full acknowledgement of gender in migration theories to illuminate every aspect of migration as gendered. I also draw attention to the need for more Black women to be fully part of feminist research, urging them to arise and tell their stories by themselves. I end the chapter by presenting the collaborative efforts made in making "our voices" heard. I also discuss the interest this research is already generating which creates a link between academic research and public relevance. I am more convinced now than ever, that we can re-think the past, own the present and shape the future as we collectively rise!

Chapter 2. Nigerian Women in Context: (Re)Telling (Her)Story

> "… high time we started to record our version of events, from where we stood as Black women …" (Bryan et al 2018:1).

Introduction

"Aivani onime bidi yoshete o"[3] (I have not always been like this), my grandmother would try to convince me anytime I visited the village and I was alone with her in her small red-mud kitchen covered with a thatched roof. She would excitedly tell me stories about her exploits as an independent young woman who became a force to be reckoned with in the village because of her early success in business. However, her excitement often gave way to an expression of pain whenever she went on to talk about the downturn caused by war, invasion and political unrest which led to the loss of her business among other things. It was difficult for me to picture my feeble and bent-over grandmother as a young vibrant and independent young woman; but each time she shared her stories with so much passion, I felt she wanted me to know her full story. She wanted me to hear about her past self that I had no way of meeting, so I could better appreciate the journey of her present self.

Like my grandmother, I felt the need to first present the background of Nigerian women, not in a deterministic way, but to explore how their cultural, social and economic roles have evolved over time in Nigeria. I therefore set the foundation of this chapter by reviewing existing literature on the role of Nigerian women from pre-colonial to modern day Nigeria. Moving on, and based on arguments from feminist migration scholars, I present a critical review of some contemporary migration theories. I also examine the representation of Black people in Britain, paying attention to the place of Black women generally, and Nigerian women in particular. I consider this exploration necessary as "knowing this history better, understanding the forces it has unleashed, and seeing oneself as part of a longer story, is one of the ways in which we can keep trying to move forward" (Olusoga 2016:526).

[3] Igarra language spoken by Igarra people from the Northern part of Edo state, which is situated in central Southern Nigeria.

Nigerian Women Since Pre-colonial Era: A Historical Necessity

Despite women's immense contribution to political transformation and economic growth in Nigeria, their history had remained largely neglected until recent times (Akoda 2011). Although women were described as weak, fragile, delicate and incapable of taking political decisions, their joint effort to fight against injustices, oppression and exploitation negates such notions (ibid). Examples of such fights for justice include the Aba women's riot of 1929, where thousands of Igbo women organized a massive revolt against the oppressive leadership of British administrators and warrant chiefs who imposed unfair regulations and special taxes on the Igbo market women. There was another significant protest by the Abeokuta market women in 1946, led by Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti, when women revolted against the imposition of unfair tax by the Nigerian colonial government (Abdulraheem 2015). Even in modern day Nigeria, the fight against women's marginalisation and injustice continues, as they are still faced with "obnoxious social norms, political exclusion and economic lopsidedness" (Okafor and Akokuwebe 2015:1). Discussing the cultural, economic and political roles of women in Nigeria shed some light on their position during the pre-colonial, colonial and the post-colonial eras, and highlight some of the challenges they faced. This provides a useful insight into the lived experiences of women in Nigeria, which informs some of the reasons why they desire to migrate to Western countries.

Nigerian Women in the Pre-Colonial and Colonial Era

Dating back to the pre-colonial era and even until now, women have made invaluable contributions to the societal growth of Nigeria; but they have always been "viewed from the perspective of the "colonial mind"" (Onor 2017:24). Contrary to the misconception and misrepresentation of pre-colonial Nigerian women as a group of powerless, side-lined and oppressed women, they played vital roles in the cultural, socio-economic and political development of the country (Callaway 1987; Falola 2007; Abdulraheem 2015; Onor 2017). One possible reason for the scarcity of research into the pre-colonial history of Nigerian women could be the fact that women's history is said to be left out of oral narratives and records of pre-historic events (Ogbomo and Ogbomo 1993).

Iyela (n.d) and Attoe (2002) wrote about the economic independence of pre-colonial Nigerian women. They stated that women were successful traders involved in selling products like guinea-corn, palm-oil, salt and cam wood. They were involved in food processing such as fish drying and cassava processing, as well as weaving and pottery. They were also not left out of agricultural activities; while men engaged in clearing, tilling and sowing the farmland, women were involved in weeding, harvesting, threshing, storage and selling of the farm products. Furthermore, Falola (2007) discussed the entrepreneurial prowess of pre-colonial Nigerian women, describing their exploits in long distance transactions as large-scale distributors, which in return earned them prestigious chieftaincy titles like "Iyalode" (the queen of ladies), a position of power and privilege among the Yoruba. Kolawole (1997) also stated that there exists a catalogue of unrecorded women leaders and warriors among the Yoruba. In addition to women being independent and resourceful, she discussed the courage and bravery of women by giving the example of Endei of Afin-Ifelodun in Kwara state[4], who mobilized women against male domination.

Nigerian women's pre-colonial exploits are not only limited to Yoruba women; there are records of other women leaders from different communities. Nigeria is made up of a very diverse group of people, with over 250 ethnic groups (Mustapha 2007). These ethnic groups are part of the different territories and kingdoms which made up the Northern and Southern protectorates which were amalgamated into a single territory called Nigeria in 1914 (Soeze 2014). Some of these kingdoms and territories include the Benin Kingdom, the Lower Niger Kingdoms, the Fulani Empire, the Kanem-Borno Empire, the Oduduwa Empire, the Aro-Chukwu Empire and the Aboh Empire. Women's leadership prowess recorded from these diverse territories include the first queen of Zazzau, Queen Nana Asmau, who positively transformed her state. Also, the military, religious and administrative functions of Madam Okwei of Osomari and Emotan of the Benin Kingdom, who displayed tremendous bravery in politics (Attoe 2002; Fayomi and Yartey 2015). It is important to mention however, that historical records are patchy and very little is known about the women from humble backgrounds.

[4] Although only examples of Yoruba women leaders were used here, it is important to note that there are pockets of women leaders in almost all the tribes in Nigeria. There are about 371 tribes in Nigeria, but the level of women leaders' autonomy differs from one tribe to the other (Vanguard 2017).

As much as these records suggest the influence and independence of women in pre-colonial Nigeria, Onor (2017) warns that their power should never be viewed as all conquering, as they are not presented as women who possessed superior powers nor exhibited absolute leadership over men in political, economic and social matters. It can be argued therefore, that although women enjoyed a high level of independence in the pre-colonial era, men's position was never subordinate to theirs. According to Kolawole (1997), the position of women helped them to fight male domination (which presupposes that there was male domination). To talk about the power of women in the pre-colonial society is not to erase the prevalence of gender inequality; it is to insist that although they enjoyed a high level of autonomy, their power did not amount to equality or to a gender-neutral existence (Pearce 2014). It is therefore suggested that women enjoyed some level of power in pre-colonial Nigeria. However, by the early 20th century, colonialism had eroded the political, social and economic powers of women (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994).

Colonialism brought with it, women's subordination channelled through gender oppression and exploitation (Oni 2014). The impact of this on customs, religion, language, politics and law established men as superior to women, and rendered women voiceless in the public sphere and only relevant at home (as child-bearers and house- keepers). Women's already established markets were destroyed, and they were denied access to loans which could have helped them to establish their businesses (Ngakwe 2002). They were instead forced into subsistence farming, which was arranged by the British colonial administration in collaboration with male chiefs, who took control of the export of cash crops such as rubber, cocoa and groundnuts. This could be seen as "the feminization of small-holder farming" as described by Sassen-Koob (1984:1145), where women who were once independent producers become petty farmers, indicating the gradual erosion of the position and privileges of women. Furthermore, the colonial masters imported and established a patriarchal Western culture in Nigeria, which according to Falola (2007), continued to affect women in the 20th century. This is as a result of the alteration of gender relations, which relegated women to the background and undermined their position (see also Makama 2013).

The subordinate position in which women found themselves is also evident in the challenges they faced in their desire to acquire Western education, which was

established by the colonial administrators. Western education was introduced in Nigeria in the late 19th century through Christian missionaries (Bamidele 2014). Their primary motive was to educate boys who would become teachers and clerks and help to enforce church doctrines and support manpower strategies in the colony. Girls on the other hand, were marginalised and excluded due to the colonial views of women. They were thought to be only good enough for unrewarded domestic work (Mama 1997; Jacob and George 2014). Educating girl children was therefore viewed by Nigerian people themselves as investing in the family she would sooner or later marry into, which meant that her natal family would not be able to reap the dividend of her education. This unfavourable position invariably limited the chances of women gaining employment in the new jobs established by the colonial masters (Jacob and George 2014).

The Rights of Nigerian Women in the Post-Colonial Era

Some of the challenges highlighted in the colonial era contributed to the complexity of the new trends established in postcolonial Nigeria (Gelb and Palley 2009). Educating the boy-child was seen as educating "the bread-winner" of the family while educating the girl-child was a waste of time and money because she would only be groomed for the benefit of another family (Okobia and Ekejiuba 2015). This picture presents men as the "locus of cultural value" and agents of lineage continuity (Blunt and Gillian 1994) but women as economically, socially and politically inferior (Adeyemi and Akpotu 2004; Alabi et al 2014). For the girl-child therefore, stronger emphasis was placed on domestic training than on education and other developmental training. Abdulraheem (2015) stated that the constitutional order that was established as a result of Nigeria gaining independence in 1960 was expected to usher in a positive change to the rights of women. Also, the Nigerian 1999 constitution guarantees fundamental human rights for all citizens; but these rights are merely cosmetic because of lack of enforcement (Dada 2012). The constitution also fails to clearly state the rights of women, which reflects elements of gender insensitivity.

According to the Nigerian Women's Trust Fund (2013), "he" is used 235 times and "she" only twice in the Nigerian constitution, which suggests a masculinization of the constitution. Another issue is the silence of the constitution regarding the place of

women in Nigerian politics. The constitution lacks policies that encourage women's participation in politics. Moreover, Nigerian politics is highly patriarchal; while men occupy key positions, women are relegated to background roles (Peoples' Daily 2015). For instance, only 3% of contested political positions went to women in 1999, 4% in 2003 and 6% in 2007 (Agbalajobi 2010). Also, although Nigeria subscribes to the Beijing platform For Action,[5] women are yet to attain the 30% seats in government that they recommended (Ogbogu 2012). Some of these struggles of women in the post-colonial era can be traced back to the influence of some of the practices introduced during the colonial period.

Women in the post-colonial era enjoy only a little recognition in the Nigerian constitution and the implementation of these constitutional rights remain a challenge. Educational rights for all are indicated under section 18 of the 1999 constitution (Abdulraheem 2015), but the 2006 National Census reflects that there were still over 40 million illiterates in Nigeria, of which 60% were women (Oyitso and Olomukoro 2012). Economic and social rights of women are implied under section 17 of the constitution, giving rights to all Nigerian citizens to equal pay for equal work without discrimination (Abdulraheem 2015). Nigeria, however, still suffers one of the highest gender pay-gaps in the world, where the average wage of men in paid employment is said to be 25% higher than the average wage of women (Ogwumike et al 2006; Fapohunda 2013). The Nigeria post-independence constitution has minimal provision for the rights of women, which are only acknowledged theoretically but not practically. However, Nigerian women are known to persistently reject the position of 'passive onlookers,' and are tenaciously committed to self-development and contributing to the socio-economic growth of the society (Agbalajobi 2010; Okoyeuzu et al 2012).

Profiling Professional Women in Modern Day Nigeria

There are various definitions of who counts as a professional (see Hollos 1991; Reynolds 2006; Showers 2015). I define professional Nigerian women as highly educated women, who are gainfully employed in their areas of expertise in the labour market. This class of women are employed in the public and the private sector, some

[5] The Beijing Platform for Action derived from the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in 1995

are self-employed, and a few are engaged in other kinds of work, for example NGOs (Robertson et al 2011). Gradually, Nigerian women are beginning to hold positions in the government and various professional bodies like the Nigerian Bar Association, the Institute of Chartered Accountants and the Nigerian Medical Association (Rozon 2015). However, women in these categories are still in the minority. Despite the gradual increase in the number of women engaged in professional jobs in Nigeria, it is still generally challenging for them to enjoy career progression in their various professional fields or to be employed in the higher positions of the labour market. In 2005 there were about 227,000 men and less than 40,000 women employed in the federal civil service (See Table 1). Although statistics may show that there is a relatively steady increase in the number of Nigerian women in the workforce, they are over-represented in low paid employment, as they are mostly self-employed or work in the informal and agricultural sectors (Oyitso and Olomukoro 2012). At the time of the 1991 census, 56.4% of men and only 32.38% of women were recorded as economically active (Omoruyi et al 2011). The labour force participation rate of women above the age of 15 was 38.90% in 2008 and 39.20% in 2009 (Iweagu and Chukwudi 2015). Some of the reasons for the high level of disparity between men's and women's workforce participation include level of education, gender stereotypes, religious beliefs, cultural practices and women's poor economic base (Lasiele 1999; Lawanson 2008; Omoruyi et al 2011). Table 1, (Lawanson 2008:13), reflects the gender breakdown of the Nigerian Federal Civil Service between 1980 and 2005.

Table 1: Men and Women in the Nigerian Civil Service (1980-2005) (Lawanson 2008:13).

Year	Male	Female	Total
1980	197325	28299	225624
1981	224341	31913	256254
1982	232374	33971	266345
1983	253396	39591	292987
1984	262752	39672	302424
1985	223343	32549	255892
1986	223100	32530	255630
1987	222211	32526	254737
1988	222802	32777	255579
1989	234678	36067	270745
1990	242661	44872	287533
1991	137486	44768	182254
1992	145448	45881	191329
1993	149712	47490	197202
1994	152183	42954	195137
1995	152110	47908	200018
1996	189217	30802	220019
1997	208644	31176	239820
1998	206787	33663	240450
1999	218979	32721	251700
2000	217993	35487	253480
2001	221321	36029	257350
2002	223376	36364	259740
2003	223626	36404	260030
2004	224529	36551	261080
2005	226825	36925	263750

Table 1 shows that between 1980 and 2005, the number of women at the Federal level compared to men was very low. Representing this in percentage terms shows that while almost 87% of the Nigerian Federal Civil Service employees were men, only about 13% were women (Omoruyi et al 2011). According to Iweagu and Chukwudi (2015), the federal civil service in Nigeria provides a good overview of the employment situation in the country. This suggests therefore, that there is much work to be done not only to increase women's workforce participation, but to address the forms and quality of employment available to them.

Hollos' (1991) discussion of the private and public dichotomy of educated Nigerian women's lives shed some light on the challenges faced by Nigerian women as they strive to climb the professional ladder in the 21st century. Hollos explains the erosion of the traditional powers of women by distinguishing between the domestic (private life) and the community (public life) of professional Nigerian women. She claimed that these women enjoy a very high public status because of their education, their employment and their husband's position. They are highly respected and

honoured in the public sphere; but the story is not the same in their domestic lives. Although many of the women and their partners are engaged in waged labour, the husbands earn more than the wives, thereby establishing financial dependency on the husbands. Major decisions are taken by the husbands, even decisions that concern the personal ambition of the wives. Unlike in the traditional Nigerian setting (still prevalent in rural areas) where the wives enjoy a level of autonomy and power to coordinate their homes, many urban professional women suffer a reduction of autonomy in their (domestic) private lives as they are subject to the authority of their husbands. But a contrary view to Hollos' public/private role shift is given by Nkemdili and Anigbogu (2013), which is fully discussed in chapter 4.

Despite the challenges facing women in Nigeria, they continuously strive to play impactful roles in the socio-economic affairs of the country but not without challenges. There is a gradual increase in the number of women pursuing professional careers which may be as a result of the recent awareness of the invaluable advantage of women's education; but there are many factors affecting this pursuit. The advancement of their professional career remains one of the greatest aspirations of Nigerian women who are engaged in international migration.

Situating Gender in Migration: Theories and Practice

Women migrants make up nearly 50% of the world's estimated 232 million international migrants regularly moving across international boundaries, which suggests why the term "feminized migration" is now commonly used (Sharpe 2001; Jolly and Reeves 2005; Donato et al 2006; Morrison et al 2007; United Nations 2013). The term may however be misleading as there has only been an increase of 3% in women's international migration since 1960 (Caritas Internationalis 2011). It is therefore possible that women have always been as involved in migration as men but suffer gendered obscurity because they were not mentioned in migration studies (Sharpe 2001). The recent popularity of the term "feminized migration" may be due to the recent attention given to women in migration, which marks an increase in visibility but not in volume (Dodson 1998).

A conceptual review of existing migration theories reflect how gender, which should be central in exploring the patterns, causes and impacts of migration is often ignored. It was only in the late twentieth century (1970s and 1980s) that research on

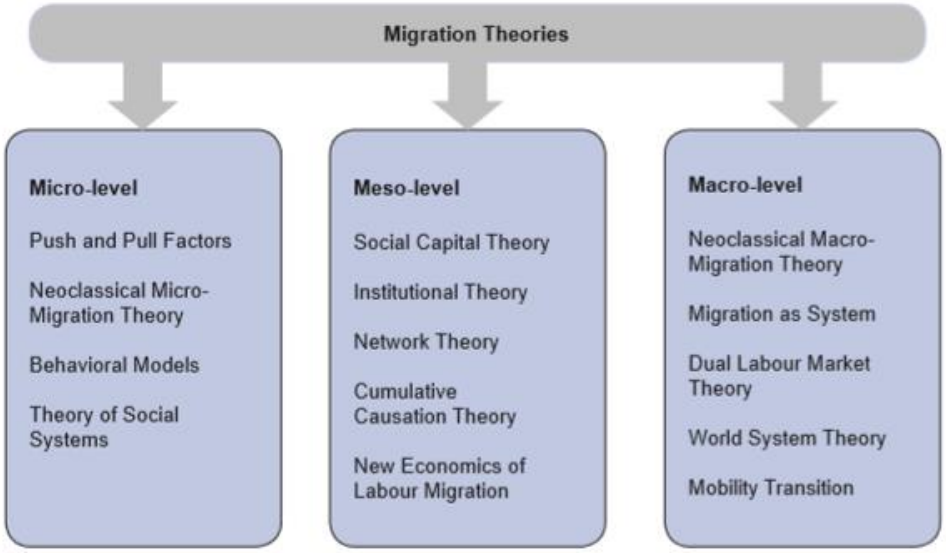
migration began to include women (Boyd et al 2003). But moving beyond sex as a "dichotomous variable", there is the need to focus on gender rather than on women because migration itself is a gendered phenomenon in need of more rigorous analytical tools (Donato et al 2006). It is also important to study the difference between how women and men process their entry into their destination countries, negotiate the labour market and gain access to social services. But the effect of gender analysis does not end there; it should also expose the gender-stratified labour market, biased policies, risks to human security and rights (Piper 2005).

To pay some good attention to the gendered nature of migration, feminist approaches to migration need to fully penetrate the dominant spheres of migration research (Pessar and Mahler 2003; Nawyn 2010; Piche and Dutreuilh 2013). It is often the case that migration theories focus more on the causes of migration than on who migrates. However, the consequences of this oversight is treating migration as gender neutral, ignoring the traditional masculine approaches that shape the different circumstances under which migration takes place and the differential outcomes for men and women (Boyd and Grieco 2003; Rohde 2019). A critical review of some migration theories reflects the need to fully integrate gender analysis in the study of migration.

Theories of Migration: A Critical Overview

It is important to note that there is no one generally accepted theory of migration. This may be due to the fact that migration attracts input from various disciplinary perspectives, such as sociology, political science, law, economics and psychology (Borjas 1989; Castles 2010). Massey et al (1993:432) put it succinctly, "at present, there is no single coherent theory of international migration, only a fragmented set of theories that have developed largely in isolation from one another, sometimes but not always segmented by disciplinary boundaries". Furthermore, the continuously growing interest in international migration has led to the proliferation of migration theories and the unceasing scrutiny of its processes. Some of these theories are classified by their origins, patterns and applications in different contexts (Wickramasinghe and Wimalaratana 2016), and they are categorised into 3: Micro-level, macro-level and meso-level of migration as seen in Table 2:

Table 2: Migration Theories: Level Based Analysis (Wickramasinghe and Wimalaratana 2016:18).



Micro level theories focus specifically on the migration decision-making processes of individuals, families and households based on their values, desires and expectations. They consider the factors that influence migration decision-making and evaluate the potential costs and benefits of migration. Returns on human capital are estimated based on individual calculation of positive and negative factors in both home and destination countries. (Olejarova 2007; Hagen-Zanker 2008; Piche and Duteuilh 2013). However, most micro theories do not distinguish between the decision to move and the act of moving. They assume that all migrants make the decision to move and all non-migrants make the decision not to move. But this is not always the case as not all those who decide to migrate end up migrating, and the factors that influence migration decision-making may be different from the factors that influence migration (Sly and Wrigley 1985).

Macro level migration theories on the other hand, consider decisions to migrate from a more global perspective, emphasizing the economic, social and political circumstances within which these decisions are made. Migration is not viewed as a linear process but as a complex phenonenon, layered with interdependent variables. Therefore, structural economic conditions are considered based on push and pull factors in home and destination countries respectively (Olejarova 2007; Piche and Duteuilh 2013). However, there are factors that could influence moves, like historical relations, family, community dynamics, the role of different intermediaries and the role of states in recruiting labour which have been overlooked in macro level

migration theories (O'Reilly (2015). Meso level migration theories lie between the micro and the macro level theories, perceiving migration processes as systems of linkages where family bonds, social networks and other symbolic ties are considered as factors influencing migration; but meso-level theories are seen as underdeveloped (De Haas 2014). It is important to note that although the three levels of analysis are complex and represent different incentives for migrating, they should not be viewed as mutually exclusive but as complementary (Olajerova 2007; Drbohlav 2011; Kurekova 2011).

Neoclassical theory, popularly linked to the push-pull factors of migration is considered the dominant theory in explaining the causes of migration (Kurekova 2011). Arthur Lewis is one of the main proponents of Neoclassical theory. He was possibly the first to develop a theoretical explanation of migration (Arango 2000). Building on the ideas of Ravenstein (1889), who concluded that the state of the economy determines the push and pull factors which are basic features of migration, Arthur Lewis came up with a significant model which links migration to the development of dual economies (Lewis 1954). Other Neo-classical theorists like Bauer & Zimmerman (1995) and Todaro and Smith (2006) also believe that the most important factors responsible for stimulating international migration are wages and distance, where existing wage differential informs the decision to migrate from low wage to high wage regions.

The macro level Neoclassical theory conceptualises migration as the economic relationship between benefits and costs caused by geographical differences in the supply of and demand for labour. In other words, migration is strongly influenced by the labour market mechanisms, and it can be regulated by governments through labour market polices. The main argument therefore, is that if wage differences were eliminated, labour migration would be controlled (Kurekova 2011; Massey et al 2012). The micro level model arose as a response to the macro-economic model, as people desire a positive net return on their human capital based on the estimate of cost and benefit of moving (Bauer and Zimmermann 1999; Kurekova 2011). Some of the assumptions of Neoclassical theory can however be challenged because many socio-cultural factors which are shaped by gender relations which determine who stays and who migrates have been ignored (Kanaiaupuni 2000; Wickramasinghe and Wimalaratana 2016). A critical analysis of how gendered systems, structural and

normative forces facilitate or constrain migration and settlement should be the basis of analysing migration decision-making (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Nawyn 2010). "Therefore, a theory of migration that does not consider the macro- and micro-level effects of gender falls short of an accurate portrayal of human behavior" (Kanaiaupuni 2000:1312).

The New Economics of Labour Migration theory (NELM) also strongly criticises and challenges Neoclassical theory. NELM conceives migration as a joint decision-making process between the migrant and some non-migrant family members, where costs and returns are shared between both parties (Stark and Bloom 1985). In comparison with the Neoclassical theory, NELM emphasises the group-role of households in migration process as more significant than economic wage differentials; although families may consider wage differentials alongside many other factors in their decision making, such decisions are taken as a group (Wickramasinghe and Wimalaratana 2016). For example, migration within and from Sub-Saharan Africa is still very much a "family matter", where the migrating and non-migrating members of the family are jointly involved and affected by the migration process (Adepoju 2000). The NELM theory has however received a level of criticism. Krissman (2005) argues that to explain migration networks as the mutual interdependence between migrants and their non-migrating families is a myopic view because, migration networks involve a variety of other actors and stakeholders. De Haas (2010) also rejects the notion of household as a monolithic unit capable of taking unanimous decisions, as this may mask the impact of intra-household dynamics and other social inequalities like age and gender. Furthermore, it is important to scrutinize how people's gendered social agency, located within multiple hierarchies of power and informed by global and societal norms is facilitated within the family in response to household needs, concerns and desires (Kanaiaupuni 2000; Pesser and Mahler 2003; Paul 2015).

Closely related to push/pull factors like the Neoclassical theory is the Dual Labour Market theory (DLM). It is concerned with the social context within which migration decision-making takes place. Its main focus is the contrasting, segmented and dualistic nature of the economy in developed countries (Massey et al 1993; O'Reilly 2015). One of the most influential proponents of the DLM theory, Piore (1979) argued that international migration is mainly caused by pull factors (labour demand

and a strong need for migrant workers) and not by push factors (low wages and unemployment). Also, Massey et al (1993) outline structural inflation, motivational problems, economic dualism and the labour supply as the four core features informing the pulling of labour from third world countries. The argument therefore, is that rather than difference in wages or household decisions, the structural needs of the economy of the receiving country determines the demand for migrant workers.

Massey et al (1993) stress the economic dualism which creates a distinction among workers leading to the bifurcation of the labour force: a capital-intensive primary sector marked with skilled jobs and high-wages, and a labour-intensive secondary sector marked with unskilled jobs and low-wages. There is usually a high tendency for citizens of the destination country to maintain or strive for jobs in the primary sector, thereby creating a shortage of labour in the secondary sector which gives rise to international migration. However, unlike Neoclassical theory, DLM ignores some major push factors from sending countries and focuses mainly on recruitment practices of receiving countries (Kurekova 2011). Also, DLM portrays developed countries as welcoming migrants, but ignores major demographic factors that mark migration and integration processes (Wickramasinghe and Wimalaratana 2016). One of the main demographic factors is gender, and neglecting gender in the discussion of migration leads to a poor understanding of the migration processes (Merefield et al 2005). Paying attention to the processes that mark migration gives some insights into the complex mixture of social, economic and political pressures that lead to migration (Birchall 2016).

World Systems theory, which builds on the ideas of Wallerstein (1974) focuses more on wider systems than on individual agents (O'Reilly 2015). This is similar to the Dual Labour Market theory, where the decision to migrate on a micro level is ignored, but attention is given to the impact of global forces (Porumbescu 2015). However, unlike DLM which links immigration to the structural requirements in industrial economies, the World Systems theory emphasises the global inequalities that exist as a result of the economic relationship between the core and the periphery. The core are the capitalist-based countries and the peripheries are the developing countries which though rich in natural resources, depend on core countries for the manufacturing of their resources and for trade (Wallerstein 2004; Hryniewicz 2014). Drawing from Marxist political economic theory, O'Reilly (2015) argues that World

Sytems theory not only highlights global inequalities but considers the economic relationships established in the world arena as responsible for certain patterns of migration. More so, the urbanization of developing countries inevitably attracts its citizens to the countries where capital originates (Sassen 1988; Massey et al 1993; Portes and Walton 2013). Migration is seen as the natural response to the level of disruption and dislocation caused by the expansion of capitalism from the Western world into the periphery of the world economy. It is therefore the dynamics of the global market structure, and not wage rate differentials, that influence migration (Massey et al 1993).

Faist (2000) drew attention to the economic bias in World Systems theory, arguing that political and cultural processes are ignored. The theory is also seen as too core-centric and state-centric, overlooking the theoretical significance of globalisation (Robinson 2011). It gives very little attention to the material processes that could inform migration decision-making, where some people may choose to migrate and others may not (Rizvi 2005). Wallerstein himself critiqued the World Sytems theory, arguing that there are four main intellectual objections to the World Systems analysis: the positivist, the orthodox Marxist, the state autonomist and the culturalist (Wallerstein 1987). The positivists object to the level of generalisation of the analysis, the orthodox Marxists argue that the theory overlooks social class analysis and other social grouping such as race, gender and ethnicity, the state autonomists criticise the theory for removing the distinct intellectual boundary between the state and businesses, and the culturalists reject the level of importance placed on the economy and not on culture (ibid). Even in its emphasis on economics, the place of women is ignored despite the fact that women have become major players in global survival circuits, and global care chains, marked by the outsourcing of domestic care labour through household internationalisation strategies (Sassen 2002; Yeates 2005; Fudge 2012).

Scholars in various disciplines are making effort to bring women's migration out of the shadows (Piper 2005), but Palmary et al (2010) argue that there is a need to examine the absences, silences and exclusions in the discussion of gender in migration. Sassen (2003) posits that there is a systemic relationship between globalization and the feminization of wage-labour, which is established by incoporating migrant women into a low-wage labour force. Similar to the economic

relationship between the core and the periphery that marks the World Systems theory, Sassen describes the migration of women from global South to North as participating in two sets of dynamic configurations: global city and survival circuits. She argues that the economic activities in global cities create an increase in the demand for highly paid professionals, which in turn increases the demand for low paid domestic workers like maids, nannies and low wage clerical staff jobs readily available to immigrant women. Also, the government and other actors from sending countries, build "survival circuits on the backs of women" (Sassen 2002:255), as their remittances contribute to the revenue of home countries.

Kofman and Raghuram (2005) object to Sassen's representation of migrant women as sole providers of reproductive labour within the domestic sphere because, whilst globalisation means new and better paid employment for non-migrant women, it appears that the only option for migrant women is to take up 3D jobs—dangerous, dirty and dull (Knight 2014). To present it this way, is to suggest a buy-in to the "unchallenged hegemonic patriarchal discourse" (Mirza 1997:3) that marks the unidimensional view of women from third world countries. Although women are always part of the stream of skilled migrants, the economic characteristics of their skills are ignored, and the manner in which the gendered nature of immigration policies in destination countries creates a barrier between them and suitable employment in the labour market is not fully discussed. Robinson (2009) also argued that Sassen's work fails to pay adequate attention to agency within the subordinate groups, and analyse the class groups and social forces that operate in global cities. Changing gender roles, ethnic factors, migration status and family dynamics are signicant factors to consider in the discussion of migration as gendered.

The argument of feminist migration scholars is not about what migration experts discuss in their different migration theories but what they fail to discuss. Kanaupauni (2000) argues for a need to broaden migration research to accommodate the effects of gender in the migration process and to analyse these effects using a gendered lens. Pessar and Mahler (2003:815) suggested "Gendered Geographies of Power," as a framework for analysing the complexities that exist across transnational spaces. The framework contains three components: geographic scales, social locations and power geometries. Geographic scales reflect the power relationship that defines the link between gender, space and social scales. Social location defines the impact of the

inter-connected power hierarchies within which individuals are situated through socially classified structures shaped by politics, history, economics, geography, class, race, gender etc. The third component, based on Massey's (1994) concept of Power Geometry and Time-Space Compression, emphasises how the positions people occupy across transnational borders shape their level of agency and reflect how inter-connected events are controlled within such spaces. This framework can be instrumental in analysing the complexities that exist within and across different terrains. Such analysis begins with addressing the unequal power relations that inform ethnic identification of migrants in different spaces and time, which greatly impacts on the process of personal identity formation and integration ((Pessar and Mahlar 2003;Lulle and Jurkane-Hobein 2017).

Being Black in Britain: Fractured or Flexible Identities[6]

> "In a time when your 'belonging', who you really are, is judged by the colour of your skin, the shape of your nose, the texture of your hair, the curve of your body- your perceived genetic and physical presence; to be black […] in Scotland, England or Wales, is to disrupt all the safe closed categories of what it means to be British […]" (Mirza 1997:3).

In the 1980s and 1990s, being Black in Britain was not defined by a "natural identification" but by "political kinship," where colour was used as a conscious process of political self-definition (Mirza 1997). Mirza argued that the post-colonial diaspora population earned the name "Black" because of their visible difference in Britain. Though the name was perceived by the post-colonial migrants as a shared sense of objectification and marginalisation, they were able strategically to utilise the shared space to construct a political identity for collective action. However, the diverse personal identities and cultural differences makes being Black in Britain a contested space (ibid). In America also, the collective term, "women of colour" is used for all women not seen as "White", while only African American people are called Black (Davidson 1997). But "no human being is just one thing and therefore no one can be summarised with a single word" (Richardson 2005:10). Instead, terms like "Black British" and "British Muslim" are considered more appropriate to describe people who belong to a range of overlapping communities. Richardson also raises objection to the use of the terms "Ethnic Minority" or "Black and Minority

[6] This title is culled from one of the sub-topics in Mirza (1997:187)

Ethnic" (BME). To her, it is misleading to use such terms to describe those who are not White, because not only does it present White people as majority, but also as having a homogeneous identity, which is not the case as they obviously share significant differences, which include ethnicity. The term "BME" is considered problematic because it is an "additional disadvantage of implying that black people do not belong to an ethnic minority. Even more seriously, referring to people with a set of initial letters is basically reductionist, dehumanising and outrageous" (Richardson 2007:16).

Such categorisations, which Mirza (1997:3) describe as "misnaming, renaming or not naming at all", may be responsible for the hypervisibility and hyper-invisibility suffered by Black people in Britain. For example, while the high rate of young Black men in the criminal justice system could reflect hypervisibility, the very low rate of Black women in public senior positions mirrors hyper-invisibility (Solanke 2018). This level of invisibility could also explain why very little is known about the lived experiences of Black women in the UK, despite their invaluable achievements and contribution to the society.

Black Women in Britain: The Path of Our Foremothers

Due to the scarcity of records of the experiences of Black women in Britain, three Black women, Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie and Suzanne Scafe came together in the 1980s and took it upon themselves to record their version of the experiences of Black women in Britain and particularly to address some of the stereotypes that negatively mark the lives of African women (Bryan et al 1985; 2018). They argue that although the intersection of classism, racism and sexism may present Black women as victims of oppression, this does not tell the whole story, because Black women were actually workers, organisers, fighters and culture preservers. They stated that the presence of Black women in Britain dated back to about four hundred years ago when they were first brought into Britain as slaves; but there are records suggesting that there was a presence of Black women in Britain long before slavery (Fryer 1984; Adewunmi 2014).

Fryer (1984) argued that there were Africans in Britain even before the arrival of the English. They were soldiers in the Roman imperial army who were stationed on Hadrian's Wall and fought beside the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius in the third

century AD. This statement has however raised much debate in recent times. While some scholars considered Fryer's statement as 'pro-immigration propaganda' (Boyle 2016), others argued that there is no evidence that the African soldiers settled in Britain (Branagan and Craven 2016; Millar 2016). Fryer maintained that about 400 or 500 years after the departure of the Romans, there were still traces of the presence of Africans in the British Isles. Other evidence highlighted by Fryer to establish the early presence of Africans in Britain include the excavation that took place in York between 1951 and 1959, where 350 human skeletons were exhumed and the limb proportions of several of the men suggest the possibility that they were Black Africans. Also, the remains of a young African girl dated C.1000 was discovered in a burial at North Elmham in Norfolk, about 25 miles North-West of Norwich.

There were more records of the presence of Africans in England and Scotland in the early sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Miles and Murihead 1986; Innes 2002; Adi 2007; Andrea 2008; Habib 2008; Kerr 2011). Fryer (1984) discussed some individuals who made significant impact during this period. He talked about an African drummer and choreographer in the 16th Century, who was one of a small group of Africans attached to the court of King James IV of Scotland. He was very skilful and was liked by the king. There were also many young women among the Africans in Edinburgh during this period and one of them was baptised on the 11 December 1504. Another woman, in 1507 featured alongside King James IV in the Tournament of the Black Knight and the Black Lady. A Scottish poet, William Dunbar, wrote a poem about her, describing her as having "full lips and a snub nose, and skin that shone like soap; in her rich costume she gleamed as bright as a barrel of tar; when she was born the sun had to tolerate eclipse" (Fryer 1984:3). There was also a Black musician in the 16th Century England, nicknamed "John Blanke", who lived in London and was employed by King Henry VII and Henry VIII (Fryer 1984; Adi 2007). According to Adi (2007) before the end of that century, there were already hundreds of Africans in England, especially London, and some in other towns like Barnstaple and Plymouth. Also, 1555 marked the arrival of a group of Africans from today's Ghana; some were trained as interpreters for London merchants, some worked as servants, entertainers, musicians and dancers at the court of Queen Elizabeth I.

In the 18th Century, many Africans were transported as slaves to Britain. In 1771, about 28,200 slaves were transported from Africa to Liverpool and 8,810 to Bristol (Fryer 1984; White 1994; Adi 2007). The Transatlantic slave trade dates back to the 15th Century with Portugal as the first European nation to engage in slave trade from the West Coast of Africa and subsequently other European nations joined in the trade (Adi 2012). An estimated12 million African people were transported across the Atlantic to the Western hemisphere between 1450 and 1850. Approximately half of them were from West Africa and an estimate of 3.5 million from Nigeria (Bump 2006; Adepoju and Van der Wiel 2010). Most of the slaves from Nigeria were from the Igbo and Yoruba tribes and one of them who became very famous is Olaudah Equiano, born in the Igbo territory of Southern Nigeria in 1745. Kidnapped at the age of 11, he was sold into slavery and shipped to Barbados and then Virginia. He was later brought to London, where he worked and bought his freedom. He was one of the pioneers for the movement to abolish slavery in 1786 in London. He published his autobiography in 1789, "*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African,"* which was one of the earliest books published by a Black African writer. His book reflects the horrors and injustices of slavery and the slave trade; and using his personal experiences made his story vivid and compelling. Not only did the book make Equiano popular, it became a driving force for the abolition of slave trade in 1807.

Although often ignored by historians, the wealth of the Western countries was built on the backs of Black slaves (White 1994). It is not clear if racial prejudice is the root cause of slavery or the other way round, or both worked hand-in-hand (Fryer 1984: 133), but the development of racism can be traced to the role of slavery in laying the foundation for modern day capitalism (White 1994). The English merchants made "big money" from the slave trade, with slaves working very long hours in English sugar-producing plantations and manufacturing industries (Fryer 1984:134). Black slaves were faced with racial violence, but the situation was worse for Black women who were confronted with sexual abuse in addition to racism. Black women slaves were expected to work just as hard as the men without any distinction in labour, which is in addition to women looking after their children and performing domestic chores. This earned Black women the false reputation of being strong and "powerful Black matriarchs". Such stereotypes were subtle ways of

exploiting women and presenting them as consenting to slavery (Davis 1981; Bryan et al 1985).

It should be noted however, that not all Black people who migrated to Britain during this period were slaves (National Archives n.d and Adi 2007). Some were never enslaved; they were sailors, merchants and members of the Royal Navy. Adi gave the example of Philip Quaque, son of a King from today's Ghana, who came to study in England in 1754 at the age of thirteen. He became the first African to be ordained a priest in the Church of England in 1765. Also, some slaves were able to fight for or buy their freedom and became popular in Britain. An example is Phyllis Wheatley; she was born in West Africa and sold into slavery at the age of seven or eight. She became famous in England in 1773 when she became the first published Black woman poet (Adi 2007; Michals 2015).

Mary Prince lived and worked at the home of the Scottish writer and secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, Thomas Pringle. She wrote and published her personal account of slavery in 1831. Not only was she the first Black woman to publish an autobiography, she was the first woman to present an anti-slavery petition before parliament (Adewumi 2014). Mary Seacole was recorded as the most famous Black woman in Britain in the 19th Century. She travelled to the battlefields to nurse the sick and wounded British soldiers during the Crimean War between 1853 and 1856. Despite being faced with racial discrimination, she provided succour for wounded soldiers. She became famous for her work and won medals in recognition of her selfless service. There is a statue of her built outside St Thomas' Hospital in London (Adi 2007; Adewunmi 2014; BBC 2018). Evelyn Dove was a famous singer from Sierra Leone, West Africa. Despite the racial prejudice that marked 20th Century Britain, she became a famous singer and actress in the 1920s. She was also prominent for her radio broadcasts and television shows around 1940s and 1950s (Adi 2007; BBC 2018).

The early 20th Century was marked by the first and the second World Wars, and many Black Africans worked in Britain's war industries during this period. Black women were part of those recruited into the military, to serve in various units during the war; however, very little is known of these women as their history has been ignored for so many years (Killingray and Plaut 2012). According to Bryan et al

(1985), some Black women served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service[7] but they were disillusioned by the level of abuse, insults and discriminatory practices they suffered. To give a summary of their experiences, they stated "the Britain which Black women entered in the late forties and fifties was a hostile, unwelcoming environment. The British people, nurtured on notions of white superiority and steeped in racist ideology, ensured that our reception was a cold one." (Bryan et al 1985:128-129).

During the mid-20th Century, the British government encouraged immigration from the Caribbean, Africa and other places due to shortage of workers after the war. However, this period was marked with increased racial discrimination against Black people. The colour bar made it difficult for them to find accommodation, jobs and join the trade unions; but Britain's Black population continued to increase and by 2001, there were over one million Black people in Britain (Adi 2007). Towards the end of the 20th Century, Black women from all parts of Britain came together to form a national network named "Organization of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD). It became a mobilising force for Black women's activism and influenced Black women's politics in Britain. Three hundred Black women attended the first OWAAD conference in March 1979; however, it only existed for five years, from 1978 to 1983 (Bryan et al 1984; Mirza 1997). Some Black women's groups formed before OWAAD include Brixton's Black Women's Group (BWG) in 1973, which was instrumental in setting up and maintaining the first Black bookshop in Brixton. Olive Morris was said to be one of the founders of BWG. Also, in Manchester, she helped to set up the Black Women's Co-operative and the Black Women's Mutual Aid Group (Bryan et al 1984).

In present day Britain, there are still prominent Black women who are famous for their contribution to nation building. Among them is Joan Armatrading (born 1950), the first ever female UK artist to be nominated (three times) for a Grammy in the Blues category. In 2007, she became the first female UK artist to debut at number 1 in the Billboards blues chart and in April 2016, she was presented with a life-time achievement award for her outstanding contribution to music (Booth 2016; BBC 2018). Another contemporary and influential Black woman is Margaret Busby (born

[7] The Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) was the women's branch of the British Army during the Second World War. It was formed on 9 September 1938, initially as a women's voluntary service, and existed until 1 February 1949, when it was merged into the Women's Royal Army Corps.

1944). Busby is a Ghanaian-born publisher, editor, writer and broadcaster. She was the youngest and first Black female book publisher. She co-founded a publishing company, "Allison and Busby" in 1967. The company published work by Black writers, celebrating their work and helping to bring them to prominence (BBC 2018; Stevenson 2019). There are many more Black women like Buchi Emecheta, Diane Abbott, Malorie Blackman, Dr Shirley Thompson and Zadie Smith among others who are leaving their marks in various fields from politics to the arts (Okome 2017; BBC 2018).

The age-old contribution of Black people within the national history of Britain suggests that they were not passive victims but historical heroes, who have been denied due recognition until recent times, for their contribution to the development of the British economy (Bryan 1985; 2018). Olusoga (2016:525) however, stated that the euphoria of recounting "good news stories can at times become window-dressing and inspire wishful thinking." He argues that not much has changed in reality, as disadvantages and discrimination still remain rife in the British system. Leach (2005:441) also concluded that in spite of the argument that the practice of racism and segregation may have become less acceptable in recent times, becoming "subtle rather than blatant, symbolic rather than literal and covert rather than overt," there are no significant changes and the operating systems of old remains the same. Nevertheless, despite stricter immigration rules, the British African population doubled between 2001 and 2011, with the majority of the migrants coming directly from Africa. Nigerians are one of the largest group of people from West Africa (Olusoga 2016) however, very little is known about these immigrants in the UK.

Nigerian Women's Migration to the UK

Nigeria is said to have an extensive history of migration (Adepoju and Van der Wiel 2010). There are many reasons why people migrate, and many factors that could lead to the migration of Nigerians to Western countries. One significant reason why many choose the UK is because of the imperial and post-imperial ties shared between Britain and Nigeria (Worlu 2011). The 1950's to the 1970's witnessed a high number of Nigerians migrating to acquire further education and professional skills in the UK. During this period, it was a common practice for Nigerians to come to the

UK for further studies and return home to work; but things took a different turn due to political and economic challenges (Mberu and Pongou 2010). Nigeria suffered austerity during the late 20th century due to the Nigerian civil war (Nafziger 1972) and the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) by the government, which led to the devaluation of the Nigerian currency and reduction in public service employment. Working conditions became generally poor and professionals decided to seek greener pastures abroad (Ogbimi 1992; Nwajiuba 2005). Other push factors became evident after 1980: unemployment, religious/political unrest and a poor standard of living, are among many other factors that caused an increase in the emigration rate.

Women make up a large part of migrants from Nigeria, and labour migration from Nigeria is said to be increasingly feminized (Adepoju 2000; De Haas 2006; Akinrinade and Ogen 2011; ONS 2015). However, spousal migration still remains one of the common means by which women migrate legally from Nigeria to the UK. In 2008, 60% of spousal migrants were women, where 12% of the total spousal settlement grants issued went to South Africans, Nigerians, Ghanaians and Zimbabweans (Charsley et al 2012). Many women indeed migrate for further studies and professional development; but unlike the men, only few married women relocate for other reasons without family (reunion) as the main motivation. Reynolds (2006) argued that some women migrate on their own to better their financial situation in order to fulfil cultural household expectations. Also, some women, in the face of domestic violence, view migration as a welcome option. Recent research suggests that domestic violence against women is still prevalent in Nigeria where two out of every three women in certain communities are reported to experience violence in the family (Oluremi 2015; Benebo et al 2018). In addition to family re-unification and academic pursuits, some women migrate in search of financial independence and some for freedom from abusive partners.

There is a wide variation in the current estimate of Nigerians in the UK (See BBC News n.d; Alimi 2015; Arkwright 2015; Alakija 2016). However, the ONS (2018) provides a recent estimate of about 205,000 Nigerians living in the UK between July 2017 and June 2018. Some of the reasons suggested by Alakija (2016) why the estimates of Nigerians in the UK vary widely is the patchy records of undocumented migrants and the variations of the numerous classes of migration. Although there

may be some inconsistencies in the data, statistics from the ONS reflect a steady increase in the number of Nigerians in the UK (See Table 3):

Table 3: The Number of Nigerians Living in the UK between March 2000 and June 2018 (ONS 2018)

Period	Estimated Number
March 2000 -February 2001	66,000
March 2001-February 2002	78,000
March 2002 -February 2003	80,000
March 2003-February 2004	93,000
January -December 2004	92,000
January-December 2005	112,000
January-December 2006	132,000
January -December 2007	142,000
January -December 2008	143,000
January -December 2009	159,000
January -December 2010	155,000
January -December 2011	196,000
January -December 2012	185,000
January -December 2013	185,000
January -December 2014	178,000
January -December 2015	199,000
July 2015 -June 2016	212,000
January -December 2016	196,000
July 2016 -June 2017	190,000
January -December 2017	194,000
July 2017 -June 2018	205,000

Despite the recent acknowledgement of gender as a crucial and dynamic factor in every social phenomenon (Salih 2011), one of the major oversights of the data from ONS and indeed some other demographic data sources in the UK, is "the lack of gender-differentiated statistics" (Merefield and Raghuram 2005:5), which suggests the possibility that gender is not treated as significant in addressing the factors that underlie migration and integration in the UK. Also, there is limited literature on the immigration experiences and the integration processes of these thousands of Nigerians living in the UK, and scarcely any on the specific experiences of the women. The near invisibility of Nigerians in migration literature may be due to the wrong notion of Black people or Africans as a homogeneous population (Agyemang et al 2005). And using terms like "BME" or "BAME" are not usually helpful because, they obscure rather than expose individual unique issues (Okolosie et al 2015).

There are Nigerians living throughout the UK, albeit in varying number. There are significant numbers of Nigerians in Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham, but according to BBC News (n.d), Nigerians "are overwhelmingly concentrated in London"; three-quarter of them lived in London as at the last census. See Table 4 for the distribution of the Nigerian population in the UK between 1991 and 2001, and the breakdown of the nearly 70,000 Nigerians in London within this time.

Distribution of people born in Nigeria

		TOTAL NUMBERS			AS % OF ALL PEOPLE		
Sort by:	Nation/region	1991	2001	+/- %	1991	2001	+/- %
	Whole of Britain	47,201	88,105	86.66	0.09	0.15	0.06
	East Midlands	688	1,382	100.87	0.02	0.03	0.01
	East of England	1,394	3,160	126.69	0.03	0.06	0.03
	London	36,053	68,910	91.14	0.54	0.96	0.42
	North East	286	552	93.01	0.01	0.02	0.01
	North West	2,020	2,978	47.43	0.03	0.04	0.01
	Scotland	843	1,253	48.64	0.02	0.02	0.00
	South East	2,661	4,719	77.34	0.04	0.06	0.02
	South West	993	1,431	44.11	0.02	0.03	0.01
	Wales	356	562	57.87	0.01	0.02	0.01
	West Midlands	1,030	1,759	70.78	0.02	0.03	0.01
	Yorks & Humber	877	1,399	59.52	0.02	0.03	0.01

Most popular areas

		TOTAL NUMBERS			AS % OF ALL PEOPLE		
Area	Regions	1991	2001	+/- %	1991	2001	+/- %
Peckham	London	2,041	**3,189**	56.25	5.21	6.98	1.77
Southwark N	London	958	**2,343**	144.57	2.32	4.59	2.27
Hackney S	London	1,344	**2,323**	72.84	2.54	3.55	1.01
Camberwell Green	London	1,085	**2,294**	111.43	2.71	6.26	3.55
Deptford N	London	1,324	**2,128**	60.73	3.29	4.83	1.54
Vauxhall N	London	1,242	**2,053**	65.30	2.30	3.46	1.16
Shoreditch	London	986	**1,885**	91.18	2.67	4.58	1.91
Vauxhall S	London	1,310	**1,799**	37.33	2.71	3.30	0.59
Bermondsey	London	737	**1,784**	142.06	1.65	3.11	1.46
Canning Town	London	529	**1,656**	213.04	1.73	4.00	2.27

Table 4: Source - http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/uk/05/born_abroad/countries/html/nigeria.stm

Table 4 reflects that 68,910 Nigerians were in London in 2001. Another recent statistical report on immigrants living in London was presented by PWC (2017). Their record suggests that there were 116,000 Nigerians in London, which makes up

1.3% of the total migrant population in London in 2015. In that year, the NHS had approximately 175,000 of their employees living in London, out of which 2,900 were Nigerians. Judging from the large number of Nigerians in the UK, it is disturbing to discover that not much is known about them, apart from seeing them as Africans and part of the BME population in the UK. In Europe generally, as some scholars have noted, the few studies that focus on Nigerian immigrants often tend to be stereotypically crime related (see Carling 2005; Glickman 2005; Obasaju 2014; Alakija 2016). A brief overview of the situation is presented by Carling (2005:2):

> "Although academic researchers and the media have devoted substantial attention to Nigerian trafficking, prostitution, and organized crime, little is known about the vast majority of Nigerians in Europe who are not involved in these activities. Given the size of the Nigerian population in several European countries, it is a strikingly under-researched minority".

The case of Nigerian women migrants who are involved in trafficking, smuggling and prostitution are represented in research (Okojie et al 2003; Prina 2003; Carling 2005; Carling 2006; De Hass 2006; Shelley 2014; Women's Link Worldwide 2015); but little is known about other Nigerian women migrants who are not involved in such activities. This underlines the need for this research which focuses specifically on professional Nigerian women who came to the UK as independent migrants or dependants of primary migrants under highly skilled and/or student migrant programmes.

Conclusion

It is for the sake of these women who give up everything to move that I argue that it is not enough to consider gender as a mere variable among others, but as a central concept in understanding the dynamics of migration (Piche and Dutreuilh 2013). Also, after careful evaluation of various migration theories, I believe that there is a need to go beyond the "add women, mix and stir" approach delivered by some of these theories. Embracing a gender-oriented framework will help to question women's "presumed passivity" in the migration process and address their specific migration experiences (Boyd and Grieco 2003:1&2). These experiences include not

just why, but how women migrate, how they integrate, work and settle in their destination countries. It is therefore important to apply gender dimensions in examining pre-migration decision-making process and post-migration challenges.

An overview of our past heroes reflects how they negotiated the walls of slavery, disadvantages and discriminatory practices. Although ignored for a long time, a recent return to the exploration of the presence of Black women in Britain suggests that they are very much part of the British history and have contributed immensely to the growth of the economy. According to Bryan et al (2005; 2018:1), "Black women have a voice. But that voice comes from America, and although it speaks directly to our experience in Britain, it does not speak directly of it". In this research, I intend to present how Nigerian women speak directly of their specific experiences and how they engage in making meaning of every stage of their immigration journey.

Scholarly research on Nigerian women in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Nigeria suggests that in spite of all odds, Nigerian women are major contributors to the socio-economic growth of the Nigerian economy. However, due to the many complex inter-related factors of the world system, many professional Nigerian women are engaging in skilled labour migration to the UK. But there is a dearth of scholarly research on professional Nigerian women's involvement in labour migration, especially research that reflects the complexities and gendered nuances that underlie migration decision-making, migration processes and integration in destination countries. My concern as a feminist researcher is not just to explore women's experiences but to examine how they reflexively tell their stories of negotiating competing and conflicting hierarchies of power and structures as Black women in the UK. In the next chapter, I discuss how a feminist approach informs my methodological choices and research process and helped me to examine professional Nigerian women's narratives of immigration and adaptation to life in the UK.

Chapter 3. My Journey into the Research Field: Methodological Choices and the Research Process.

Stepping into the Field

I received an e-mail from the University Research and Ethics committee on Thursday, 13th May 2016. I had been granted approval to begin my fieldwork! I read the mail repeatedly, until my excitement gave way to despair. I suddenly felt I had just been handed a flight ticket to travel to a new destination; one I had never been to before. I fought my fears and desperately wanted only to be consumed by the joy of the moment. But I could not help worrying. It brought back the memory of my first experience in an aeroplane at the age of 10. I was set to travel with my family from the Eastern to the Southern part of Nigeria; a place I had never been before. I welcomed the idea with mixed feelings; happy to be travelling for the first time in this "big bird" called aeroplane but wondered what it would be like inside the plane. I thought about the other passengers and feared that the big bird would not be able to carry all of us. I imagined how big and strong the pilot must be to be able to move the big bird. My greatest fear, however, was not the air travel but my new destination. I feared it would be a very long trip; I was not sure if the people would be friendly and worst of all, I trembled at the thought of having no one to talk to. These mixed feelings consumed me again when it dawned on me that I had to prepare to embark on "a long journey" to the field of research work.

Part of the questions that plagued me included - where will I start from? Where exactly is the field? What if no one wants to share their experiences with me? What if I encounter problems? Amid all the "what ifs", a friend introduced a book to me "*Destination Dissertation: A Traveller's Guide to a Done Dissertation*", written by Sonja Foss. Foss (2015) describes the whole research process as a journey; however, contrary to the use of metaphors that depict research as difficult and complicated, Foss argues that the research journey should be viewed as a fun and exciting trip. Not a trip without frustrations and complications but one, which despite the challenges, yields stimulating results. After reading the book, I felt energised to face my journey. I decided that, just like preparing for any journey, the first step was to

have a proper plan. In hindsight now, I can argue that there is no adequate "proper plan" when it comes to research fieldwork. What is needed is a flexible plan.

Many thanks to my supervisor who early in my supervision meetings, noticed my rigid style of planning, and warned me emphatically not to go into the research field with rigid plans, but with an open mind and an open plan. I also took a clue from an Igbo[8] proverb, "you cannot change anything if you cannot change your mind". Armed with these nuggets, I stepped into the research field willing to address my rigid preconceived idea of doing research and ready to change my mind where and when necessary. This fuelled my decision to give flexibility power over structure in employing tools and techniques in the research field.

Apart from structuring and planning in the research field, another aspect that I felt compelled to address at the beginning of my fieldwork was process. The question of process became a burden to me when I asked a colleague "how is your fieldwork going?" and the response I got was, "well, I'm halfway done now, I need to interview ten more people and I'm out of the field." Her response set me thinking, is that all that happens in "the field"- you go in, interview people and get out? I am aware of the complexity of human beings (I am a good example) and the changing order of our social spaces. I also understand that the field my colleague was talking about, is one occupied by humans and not plants. If this is the case, then "interviewing and getting out" is rather a simplistic way of describing fieldwork. Unfortunately, this practice of giving attention to the results from fieldwork at the expense of process and method of data collection is common (Crinis 2012). Expressing her own ordeal in the research field, Marti (2016:4) explains it more succinctly: "often missing, are the day-to-day fieldwork experiences that make up that data collection, both positive and negative. We are left asking what is it like in the field? What should we expect, what should we know, what should we do?"
In this chapter, therefore, I intend to present my reflections on my actions and decisions in the field. These involve my thoughts, impressions, frustrations, decisions, confusions, pains and joys as I journeyed through the field. How I dealt with my high and low moments, my successes as well as my mistakes are laid bare. All these are embedded in my engagement with the qualitative research process, vis-

[8] The Igbos are one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria. They are mostly based in the southeast of Nigeria.

à-vis embracing feminist approaches, employing snowballing in recruiting my participants, addressing ethical issues in research, the interviewing process and my data collation. I use the term "participants" and not "respondents" or "interviewees", throughout to express the kind of research I desired to conduct. I did not want to sound like a journalist, interrogating her respondents; I wanted a research process, where the women were free to explore their own experiences, reflect on their choices, decisions and actions, and take me through their stories by themselves. I sought to build a symbiotic relationship, where there is mutual support, readiness to ask and be asked questions, as we jointly explore and produce knowledge. It was based on this premise that I embraced the feminist approach to doing research.

Embracing a Feminist Approach to Qualitative Research

I had always wanted to carry out research where I would not be alienated from the research process. I wanted to carry out research where I would have the liberty to address my own experiences, values and dispositions. I was particularly disappointed during my master's programme, when it was time to write my MSc. dissertation, to find out that I could not use the personal pronoun "I"; instead, I was made to prove beyond reasonable doubt, the objectivity of my research. This is contrary to the views of Miles et al (2013:11) who argued that, "the words we choose to document what we see and hear in the field can never truly be objective". I did not want to be a passive recipient of information in my research process, hence, my desire to carry out qualitative research that would create a platform for my voice and the voices of my participants to be heard. Prior to starting my PhD, I knew very little about the feminist approach to research, but I was just contented with knowing that it accommodates my reflections and my experiences. When I became fully engaged with feminist literature, I realised that in addition to my values being recognised in feminist research, it emphasizes women's lived experiences, challenges the objectification of research subjects and queries the theorizing of women's lives only through the lens of men (Mwangi 2002; Doucet and Mauthner, 2006). This awareness made me excited about carrying out my research in a feminist way.

There is no doubt that there are ongoing debates concerning what constitutes feminist methodology or whether there exists anything like it (Harding1987; Fonow and Cook 2005; Doucet and Mauthner 2006; Kleinman 2007). What cannot be

disputed however, is the existence of feminist approaches to doing research which emerged out of a strong desire for feminist research to be carried out not just on women, but for women and with women (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002; Doucet and Mauthner 2006). This engagement in the research field helped me to view my participants as collaborators and co-creators of knowledge (Mwangi 2002). This is because they are equipped with their lived experiences and engaged in forming and shaping data, contributing to the whole process until knowledge is produced. Although Finlay (2002) challenges the egalitarian rhetoric as a disguise for the unequal relationship between the researcher and the participants, my awareness of my power as the researcher does not in any way reduce my appreciation of the collaborative position of my participants.

I had earlier on pointed out that I stepped into the research field with a desire for my voice and the voices of my participants to be heard, I am however, aware that the representation of women's voices is a complex process and care must be taken not to oversimplify it (Ribbens and Edwards 1997). Reading the work of Ribbens and Edward brought me face to face with the difficulty of achieving an absolute representation of participants' voices. This difficulty is embedded in the complexity that exists between participants' experiences, their voices and their narratives. In this thesis, participants' narratives are represented to the best of my ability. I do not however claim to have achieved a full representation, but I aim to ensure that the processes, patterns and routes taken to represent their accounts are adequately documented and analysed throughout this research process. It is important to point out also, that although at the initial stage in my fieldwork I had decided to design my work in a feminist way, I did not have a detailed outline of the routes I would need to take to succeed in the field. To claim to have one, would be to mislead my readers. One thing I knew however, was that I was ready to settle for a research method that would be designed and redesigned, gradually evolving and giving me room to retrace my steps where and when necessary. Guided by this resolution, I went on to confront the question of who I am, as a woman, an immigrant and a researcher. This critical part of me was greatly developed after reading the works of Waller et al (2015). They explained how researchers are shaped by their experiences, beliefs and culture. They therefore suggest the necessity of addressing the epistemology of the researcher, as this has significant impact on how the research is carried out and

reported. I therefore began to analyse my position as a researcher, and this I continued to do throughout the research process.

Researcher Know thyself: Researching the Researcher.

Stepping into the research field, I do not claim to be an "all-seeing", "all-knowing" researcher but one with a partial, situated and embodied vision, entering the field with an agenda (Haraway 1988). To this end, I refuse to assume the position of a passive observer in the field. Recognising the impossibility of being truly objective, I admit that contained in the baggage that accompanied me to the research field is my experiences as an immigrant professional Nigerian woman in the UK. Reflecting on my journey thus far, I can tell that the challenges I faced as an immigrant, wife, mother and job seeker in the UK served as the motivating force behind this research. To conceal entering the field with this part of me is to deny the role experience plays in the process of knowledge production, which as far as I am concerned, is what situates me in the research field not just as a feminist researcher but as one who is consciously engaged in using the feminist approach to research. Furthermore, in the bid to know myself as a researcher and a co-creator of knowledge with my participants, I addressed my assumptions, the level of reflexivity I needed to engage with and my practice of reciprocity.

To help me address my assumptions and maintain a moderate level of reflexivity, I carried out a pilot study and started a reflective journal. Many scholars view pilot study as a practice to refine research design, fieldwork measures and the process of data collection (Prescott and Soekan 1989; Kim 2011; Yin 2015). This one-sided view ascribes the relevance of pilot study to the research process, but not to the researcher. I argue that pilot study equally helps the researcher to research herself (Marshall and Gretchen 2014). The process of researching self is an unending exercise but carrying out pilot interviews helped me to challenge some of my ideas as a situated knower. This practice gave me the opportunity to record my choices, experiences and actions in my fieldwork reflective journal. Although keeping reflective journals is a common practice in qualitative research, there is limited literature on its application to the whole research process (Boud 2001 and Ortlipp 2008). In my case, keeping a reflective journal helped me to lay bare how reflexivity

helped me to shape and reshape my role in the research field. Reflexivity in this sense, is giving critical attention to the process of knowledge construction. For researchers, it is questioning what we see, how we see and what determines or affects our seeing. For example, an excerpt from my journal below shows my reflection on how I challenged my use of self-disclosure during my pilot interview session:

> …I am not sure what happened there… I could sense Cynthia raising her voice. She suddenly saw a need to defend herself. She probably misunderstood me. She repeated twice "there's dignity in labour". She added that "whatever puts food on your table is good enough as work; it doesn't matter what other people are doing". Why did she say that so strongly? She obviously was not comfortable with how I described the challenges of my experience working as a carer. This experience was my past, but it was her present and she possibly felt that I looked down on her as a carer. This was not the case though. All I wanted to do, was to share the challenges I encountered…but in a way, it was as if I was recounting her present challenges to her. I thought my story would make her comfortable to tell hers, but it was misunderstood as a show of power and superiority. Lesson learnt, watch it! I want to use my story, not to build any hierarchical barrier between my participants and me but to deconstruct any such preconceived barrier; and I must make sure I use it appropriately to achieve this (excerpt from my journal, 8:45pm, 28 June 2016).

Reflecting on my conversation with Cynthia[9] helped me to question how much is enough of myself to disclose to my participants. I engaged with this reflection immediately after the interview. I did not just sit down to ruminate over my experience, I wrote it out in my journal, read it to myself and concluded that I needed to engage with literature on self-disclosure in the research field. After careful research, I realised that self-disclosure creates a space for mutual understanding but the degree to which it is done in the research field must be varied to fit the circumstances of individual participants (Dickson-Swift et al 2007; Pezalla et al

[9] Cynthia was the first participant I recruited. She agreed that I use her as my pilot study and after the interview, she agreed that the data collected could be used for my research.

2012). My decision, thereafter, was to disclose only the necessary in the first instance, enough to build rapport but to be ready to disclose more if asked by participants to do so. With this knowledge, I moved on from just disclosing self, to practicing a level of reciprocity.

Reciprocity, according to Dickson-Swift et al (2007), can be used differently in various types of engagement. The level of reciprocity discussed in this context is described as "reciprocity of disclosure", which Maiter et al (2008) also explained as "reciprocal dialogue". I see this as a "give-and-take" system of sharing, where my participants and I share similar aspects of our experiences. This practice worked with many of my participants as some felt comfortable with my interjections of narratives of similar experiences to theirs. Although this practice helped to address to a fair extent the hierarchical nature of the relationship between me and my participants, I had my struggles with it. I sometimes could not tell if my interjections (interruptions) infringed the free flow of participants' conversation, thereby distorting their line of thought. Also, with some participants, I realised I felt compelled to give, just to make "taking" fair. Beyond sharing of experiences, I discovered that another depth of reciprocity is one that stretches beyond words to emotional connection. I choose to see this as emotional reciprocity, which Delamont (2003) describes as an exchange of intimacy and empathy.

I found this level of reciprocity challenging, probably because I was not adequately prepared for the intensity of the emotional distress that could be encountered in qualitative research. Campbell (2002) argued that the emotional experiences of researchers is not given adequate attention in the research field. Although I give credit to the university's ethics committee, for including questions about handling emotional distress in the ethics form, I think that more can be done in the area of training and creating awareness of the level of emotional demands that could be required in the research field. The little training on emotional intelligence I had before going into the research field failed me when I was faced with deep emotional breakdown from some of my participants. I could not help feeling their pain; how could I, when some of my past and present struggles resonates with their experiences? What I tried to do however, was not to become emotionally soaked to the point of burnout. I realised though, that on some occasions I left the interview scene with feelings of pain and fear for some of my participants. It became clear to

me how vulnerable I could be in the research field. The good news, however, was that keeping a reflexive journal, and the supportive relationship I enjoyed with my supervisor and family members always helped me overcome such low moments. It was for me a reflexive learning curve, where emotions and reasoning linked without constraint (Campbell 2002). I therefore view the research field, not just as one in which I engage in knowing my participants, but in knowing myself and addressing my limitations. This has informed my decision to join the long line of feminist scholars to reject detachment between feelings and research work, starting from the process of participants' recruitment through to the process of data analysis.

Recruiting Participants: Is Snowballing Really Simple?

The first step I took in recruiting my participants was to retrieve the contact numbers of Nigerian women on my phone. I had two reasons for doing this−the first was to find out how many women in my social network could potentially be my participants and the second was to know how many of those potential participants might be able to reach other women in their social networks.

I am wary of the way some scholars explain snowballing as a technique used mainly to reach the stigmatised, hidden and deprived populations (Atkinson and Flint 2001; Sadler et al 2010). While these notions may be correct, to see snowballing through such a narrow lens is to trivialise its capacity to be applied in many other qualitative research projects. Snowballing was convenient for me to use in my research because the women in my network were situated all over the UK, where they have also extended their own social networks beyond the one that binds me to them. Therefore, to be able to reach a wider population of Nigerian women, I had to rely on the people in my social network to reach out to women in their social networks. However, I was soon to find out that snowballing is not as easy as it sounds.

I compiled the names of Nigerian women in my social network and came up with twenty-four names. My network is made up of people who attend the same local church as me, my Nigerian neighbours' and my contemporaries from Nigeria, who relocated to the UK around the same time as I did. I realised however, that being part of my social network does not automatically mean that they could all be recruited. I decided against recruiting some of them because they were undocumented

immigrants. This does not in any way mean that I discriminate against them, but I considered that the sensitivity of their position may make them unwilling (Beauchemin and Gonzalez-Ferrer 2011). Besides, including them will be going beyond the scope of my research, as my focus is on professional Nigerian women, who have a legal right to live and work in the UK, either as independent skilled migrants or accompanying spouses. It became clear therefore, that although I had an established social network, I could not recruit all of them or use them as snow-ballers.

After scrutinizing my contact list, I came up with only fifteen names of potential participants and I desired to recruit between thirty and forty. I wanted this sample size not because it was cast in stone (Mason 2010), but because I wanted a fair representation of Nigerian women from different towns, cities and counties in the UK[10]. This would contribute to giving my research a broader view of women's experiences in different geographical spaces in the UK. The fifteen women on my list were close friends, so I was confident that they would be willing to be part of the research and happy to speak with women in their own social networks. I was, however, not able to recruit all of them. Twelve women gave their consent to be interviewed (see Fig.1 for snowballing chart) but two gave reasons why they would not want to be interviewed and one refused to commit to any date for her interview. Also, some potential participants, who were products of snowballing refused to commit to any date. I assume that they gave their consent to their recruiters not because they were interested in the research but because they felt obligated to their friends. When their details were passed on to me, they refused to make any commitment by refusing to pick up or return my calls, and when some did, they only apologised and complained about their busy schedule. The process of recruiting participants via snowballing can therefore be viewed as complex and time-consuming (Streeton et al 2004).

I became worried about reaching more participants, especially as the words of Beauchemin and Gonzalez-Ferrer (2011) kept ringing in my head that it is difficult to find and recruit immigrant population in destination countries. I therefore decided

[10] Leaving out the names of the towns, cities and counties from where I recruited participants is a deliberate attempt to strengthen the process of anonymization.

to speak to other people in my social network who could not be interviewed but could recruit participants. I recruited Henry, Fola and Shakirat just for the purpose of snowballing (as seen in the snowballing chart in Fig.1). Henry has been a close family friend for almost six years. Being a man, I thought he would not be interested in speaking to the women in his network. He was however not only willing to help with the recruiting process, but when it was time to interview some participants, he offered me accommodation and good Nigerian pepper-soup. Fola was another helpful hand; she recruited four women. She could not be interviewed because though a Nigerian, she did not go to school or work in Nigeria before relocating to the UK. Shakira was also not interviewed because she is not a Nigerian, but she had Nigerian friends and was able to recruit one of them. It was interesting to see how snowballing could be extended beyond the corridors of potential participants to recruiters of potential participants. In a way, I view these people as collaborators in the research field. However, I became aware of the need to guide against selection bias (Atkinson and Flint 2001), which is one complication of snowballing, especially when other people are involved in recruiting participants.

Apart from the challenges I faced, some of my collaborators (helpers), also encountered some difficulties in recruiting women from their own networks. For instance, Cynthia shared with me how her conversation with one of her friends went:

> Cynthia: I rang this madam o and after we talked, I now asked her if she will not mind an interview session with you. I explained what the research was all about. The babe come vex o! She say if na play make I stop am o[11]. She told me plainly that she was not interested. She said some stuff; I apologised and rested my case (laughs).

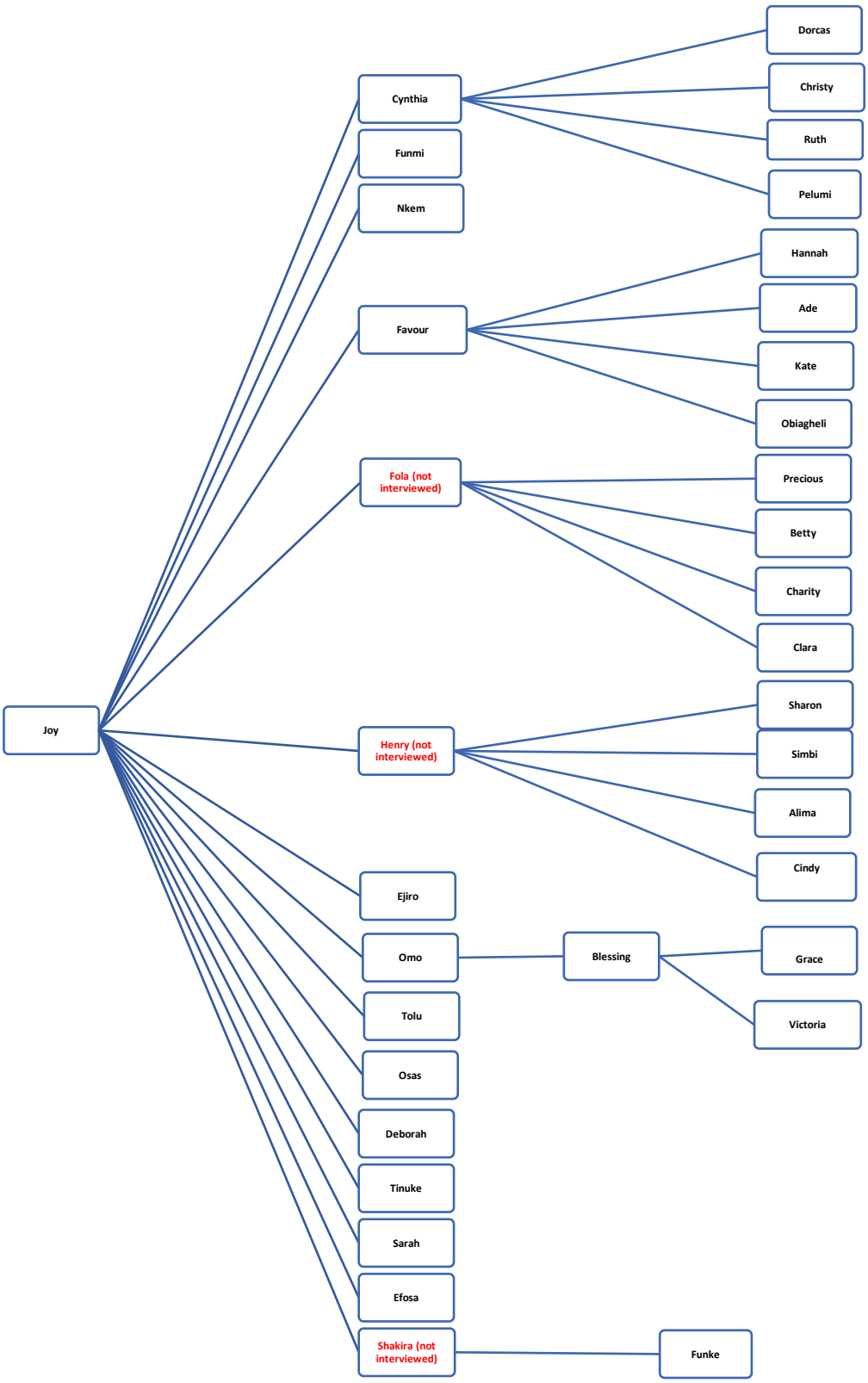
Cynthia's experience made me feel like a military officer, recruiting civilians to war. This is not to say that I viewed the research field as a combat zone or see myself as superior to my participants; far from it. It only opens to me the complex challenges that underlie snowballing. I felt I was exposing my participants and "research helpers" to sensitive issues that they may not be willing, ready or able to handle.

[11] Cynthia's conversation was partly in English and in Pidgin English (The Nigerian Creole language popularly known as "Brokin"). She explained how angry her friend was to be asked to narrate her immigration experience. The use of this language and other languages will be explained in the interviewing section.

Cynthia's statement, "the babe come vex…" suggests that her friend was angry or disappointed that she was being invited to share her personal issues on a public platform. This must have been embarrassing for Cynthia, who did not prepare to encounter such argument. All these challenges made me question the simplicity with which snowballing is presented in methodological discussions. I discovered that the idiosyncrasies and nuances that underlie snowballing are usually overlooked. It should therefore not be seen as simple as "recruiting participants who recruit other participants", but as a technique that requires complex research processes to recruit willing participants who are equipped to reach other willing participants. There is therefore a need to give critical attention to sampling methods like snowballing when discussing the intricacies of the methodological approaches to qualitative research (Noy 2008). To help my participants in the snowballing process therefore, I told them to speak only with those whom they think would be comfortable with sharing their experiences. The question this raises however, is, since they are not clairvoyant, how would they tell those who would be comfortable to tell their stories? I do not pretend to have any answer to this question, so I told them to only inform their friends about the possibility of an interview and leave the explanation for me to do. This is not because I felt better placed to pass the message across, but I was just trying to do my participants "no harm" by shielding them from any angry prospective participants.

One other challenge I encountered in using the snowballing method, which is not often spoken about, is how to stop the snowball from rolling. Mahbub (2014), who also used snowballing to recruit participants for her research on educated Bangladeshi women in the UK, expressed concerns about knowing how and when the snowballing process should be terminated. In my case, I struggled with participants who just recruited women randomly without putting the criteria for recruitment into consideration, thereby leaving me with the herculean task of explaining to a number of the women why they could not be interviewed. Despite these challenges, I was able to interview 32 women successfully. However, weeks after I ended the recruitment process, I still received phone calls from women who had just been recruited by some of my contacts; I was tempted to carry on, but I became mindful of data saturation (Sadler et al 2010) and limited my participants to 32.

Figure 1. Snowballing chart (Recruiting Participants)



Characteristics of Participants

I recruited about forty women, but only thirty-two were eventually interviewed (see table 5). These women were recruited from different towns and cities of the UK. The recruitment process was via phone calls, personal meetings and e-mails. But when it was time for interviews, I travelled to the cities, towns and streets where participants live to carry out face-to-face interviews. In the end, most interview sessions were face-to-face, but a few participants did theirs over Skype. It was fun to hang out with old and new friends after interview sessions. They often had fascinating stories to tell about their towns and neighbourhoods, as many of them had lived in the UK for several years.

The youngest of my participants is 31, while the oldest is 54 years old. Two participants however refused to disclose their age. I anticipated this problem because Nigerian women do not enjoy disclosing part of their personal identity (Fanning 2007:104). My strategy for solving this problem was to start every interview by disclosing my age. Although this generally worked, as most of my participants warmed up to me when I told them my age, some still questioned the relevance of their age to the research. I quickly reminded them that they were not under any obligation to disclose any information they did not want to. I was therefore not surprised when two of them chose not to say. All participants are married, but two are divorced and one is a widow.

My participants' marital status says a lot about the norms of Nigerian culture and tradition. For instance, it is considered an anomaly for an educated Nigerian woman between the ages of 25 and 30 not to be married or engaged to be married. The marriage age is lower for uneducated women, especially in Northern Nigeria. In 2013, the average age of marriage for educated women was 21.7 years and for the uneducated ones, it was 15.6 years (Wusu and Ntoimo 2015). Not to be married within these age ranges is to be stigmatised as irresponsible or wayward. As for me, I married at 26, immediately after I completed my degree programme. Any time later than that would have found me attending series of family meetings, where they would try to find out if I was having challenges finding a suitor! The same goes for most of my participants, apart from three who were already working before they married, thereby marrying at about 30. To be divorced is probably viewed as worse

than being a mature single woman, because divorcees are often seen and referred to as "second-hand" (Fanning 2007). These women are usually faced with cultural stigmatisation and isolation not only in Nigeria, but even among some Nigerian communities in the Western world. Widows however enjoy a level of sympathy, but they are not spared from mockery when seen in the company of other men.

Summary of the characteristics of Participants

Table 5 shows the age of participants, their reason for migration, their level of education and their occupation before and after migration.

NAME	AGE	MARITAL STATUS	NUM OF CHDRN	STATE OF ORIGIN	REASON FOR MGRTN	HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION	OCCU BEFORE MIGRATION	OCCU IN THE UK
Cynthia	39	Married	2	Western Nigeria	Family migration	Masters (MSc)	Quality Insurance Manager	Care Assistant
Dorcas	53	Married	3+	Western Nigeria	Independent migrant	Bachelors (BA)	Catering Officer	Library Assistant
Christy	52	Married	2	Western Nigeria	Family migration	MB.BS	Medical Doctor	Medical Doctor
Ruth	39	Married	2	Southern Nigeria	Family migration	Bachelors (BA)	Insurance Officer	Factory worker
Funmi	42	Married	-	Southern Nigeria	Family migration	Masters (MA)	Head Teacher	Teaching Assistant
Nkem	42	Married	1	Eastern Nigeria	Family migration	Bachelors (BA)	High Civil Service Official	Care Assistant
Favour		Married	3	Eastern Nigeria	Family Migration	Bachelors (BSc)	Banker	Unemployed
Hannah	31	Married	3	Eastern Nigeria	Family migration	Bachelors (BA)	Teacher	Care Assistant
Ade	34	Married	2	Western Nigeria	Family migration	Bachelors (BA)	Teacher	Unemployed
Cindy	32	Married	2	Eastern Nigeria	Family migration	Bachelors (BA)	Teacher	Care Assistant
Kate	37	Married	2	Eastern Nigeria	Family migration	Bachelors (BSc)	Banker	Support Worker
Obiagheli	43	Married	2	Eastern Nigeria	Independent migrant	Bachelors (BSc)	Nurse	Care Assistant
Precious	36	Married	2	Southern Nigeria	Family migration	School of Nursing (RGN)	Nurse	Nurse
Betty	39	Married	2	Southern Nigeria	Family migration	Bachelors (BSc)	Pharmacist	Pharmacist
Charity	41	Married	2	Western Nigeria	Family migration	Masters (MSc)	Accountant	Accountant
Clara	35	Married	3+	Western Nigeria	Family migration	Masters (MSc)	Investment Banker	NHS Business Partner

Sharon	33	Married	2	Eastern Nigeria	Family migration	Bachelors (BSc)	Marketing Officer	Care Assistant
Simbi	42	Married	2	Northern Nigeria	Family migration	Police Training Institute	Police Officer	Cleaner
Alima	35	Married	2	Western Nigeria	Family migration	2X Masters (MSc)	LGA Admin Officer	Care Assistant
Omo	43	Married	3	Southern Nigeria	Family migration	Bachelors (BSc)	Teacher	Cleaner
Blessing	38	Married	3	Southern Nigeria	Family migration	Bachelors (BSc)	Banker	Risk Mgt Officer
Victoria	42	Married	2	Southern Nigeria	Family migration	Bachelors (BA)	Centre Service admin	Centre Service Consultant
Tolu	42	Married	3	Western Nigeria	Family migration	Bachelors (BSc)	Business Tycoon	Support Worker
Ejiro	49	Divorced	1	Southern Nigeria	Family migration	Masters (MA)	Pub. Rel. Officer	Unemployed
Osas	43	Married	3+	Southern Nigeria	Family migration	Masters (MSc)	Medical Doctor	Unemployed
Deborah	48	Married	-	Eastern Nigeria	Family migration	School of Nursing (RGN)	Nurse	Care Assistant
Tinuke	52	Widow	2	Western Nigeria	Independent migrant	School of Nursing (RGN)	Nurse	Nurse
Sarah	37	Married	3	Eastern Nigeria	Family migration	2x Bachelors (BSc)	Health and Safety Officer	Care Assistant
Efosa	48	Married	2	Southern Nigeria	Independent migrant	MB.BS	Medical Doctor	Medical Doctor
Funke	54	Married	2	Western Nigeria	Independent migrant	MB.BS	Medical Doctor	Unemployed
Grace		Married	3+	Western Nigeria	Independent migrant	Masters (MSc)	Accountant	Unemployed
Pelumi	34	Divorced	1	Western Nigeria	Family migration	Masters (MSc)	Lecturer/ Aviation mngr	Cleaner/Care Assistant

It is evident from the table that my participants come from different parts of Nigeria. Twelve of them from Western Nigeria; nine from the Eastern part, ten from the South and only one from Northern Nigeria[12]. It is also important to note that twenty-six of these women migrated to the UK for family reasons while only six were independent migrants. In other words, although Akinrinade and Ogen (2011) stated that migration from Nigeria is becoming increasingly feminized, family migration remains one of the primary ways through which many Nigerian women migrate to

[12] Ade, one of my participants, is from Western Nigeria but lived and went to school in Northern Nigeria.

the UK (Charsley et al 2007). Another clear indication from the table is that these women were highly educated citizens of Nigeria. They all had at least a first degree or a professional certificate of higher learning; with some having two bachelor's degrees and a couple having two postgraduate degrees. In terms of their profession, all the women were professional career women when they were in Nigeria.

All my participants were fully employed in the Nigerian labour market before migrating to the UK. Five of them were teachers, four of them were medical doctors, four nurses and six bankers. Others include a pharmacist, administrators, highly placed civil service officials, an Insurance officer and a police officer. Comparing this with their present employment status in the UK, only nine of them can be referred to as professional career women. Six of them are unemployed while seventeen of them are stuck in menial jobs. I use the word "stuck" because most of them admitted to doing such jobs, not because they want to, but because they had no other choice. In the words of Deborah, one of my participants, "when the desirable is not accessible, the accessible becomes desirable".

Although I did not envisage having participants who felt cock-a-hoop over their experiences, I also did not plan for the level of ethical dilemmas that confronted me in the field. I became aware that researchers could be faced with ethical dilemmas that defy guidance from approved ethical principles (Jacobsen and Landau 2003; Burgess-Proctor 2015). What was more challenging for me was the contrast between the ethical procedures I prepared for, and the ones I met in the field. I was faced with the dilemma of maintaining ethical procedures and "doing no harm" to my participants.

Ethical Dilemmas: Confronting the Dual Imperative

"If ethics is not the engine of success, in the train of growth, it sure is a guard, with a flag, which may be green, or at times red" says Prof. Priyavrat Thareja, Director of Rayat Institute of Engineering and Information Technology, India. Ethics raised its red flag at me when I was ushered into the living room of Pelumi, one of my participants; in my bid to establish rapport, intention was found to be at variance with outcome. I entered the cosy living room, which was beautifully but moderately

decorated with green and brown furniture. I smelt beef stew cooking in the kitchen, so I could tell that she was preparing lunch. A quick glance at the living room and my eyes fell on their elegantly framed family portrait (father, mother and son). The framed picture was slightly stained with dust but looked beautiful all the same. Remembering my Nigerian manners of asking after other members of the family when you visit any home and knowing that her son would have gone to school at that time of the day, I only asked after her husband. I asked after him twice but Pelumi ignored my question and instead quickly rushed to the kitchen to attend to her cooking. She returned to the living room after about five minutes, but I could tell that she was struggling with her tears!

The reason why my question triggered such emotions in Pelumi only became clear to me, when amid her tears, she managed to explain the ordeal that led to her divorce. What an ethical blunder I had committed by persistently asking after her husband. Just as I had promised myself at the start of my research, I should have allowed her to tell me her story by herself. I felt I had just done harm, when I thought I had adequately prepared myself to "do no harm". At that point, I realised that receiving clearance from the ethics committee is not synonymous with a perfect understanding of ethical issues. It is a formal clearance to learn about and prepare to attend to ethical issues as they evolve before, during and after any research (Miles et al 2014). After writing about my experience with Pelumi in my reflective journal, I decided to examine what I had done so far to prepare for ethical problems, what I would continue to do and what I would do at the end of my field work.

The first step I took to prepare for ethical issues was gaining ethical clearance from the University Research Committee. Completing the 13-page long document was for me, a process that initiated my gradual progress from being just a qualitative researcher to a reflective field worker. It was a process that probed into how I intended to ensure trust, mutual respect, fairness, safety, honesty, accountability, openness, confidentiality and data protection in the research field (ELMPS Ethics Committee Submission Form 2015). Although tedious, I consider it a worthwhile exercise, which was to me a road map to navigate my path in the field. Obtaining ethical clearance stretches beyond filling in the ethics form, to the inclusion of an information sheet and the participant's consent form, intended to be handed out by the researcher to the participants before the interview takes place. Seidman (2013)

links the importance of the information sheet to the consent form by pointing out the need for participants to read the information sheet, which contains details about the research, before filling in the consent form. It is however difficult to determine how much detail is enough to make the participants informed and equipped to sign the consent form. The consent form is a critical step towards ensuring that participants are adequately informed and have given voluntary consent to be part of the interview process. Although my consent and information forms were approved by the ethical committee (find information sheet and consent form in appendix 1 and 2 respectively), this did not stop me from facing challenges in persuading my participants to sign the consent form.

A few participants who were very close friends and have built trust in me over the years, considered reading the information sheet or signing the consent form a waste of time. They were satisfied with my verbal explanation and ready to go straight into the interview. After explaining that it was part of the ethical process they were required to go through before the interview, some only signed the form and asked me to tick the boxes myself. However, a few unfamiliar participants (products of snowballing), did not think reading an information sheet is enough proof of who I claimed to be or what my intentions were for carrying out the interviews. There was therefore a reverse in the researcher/participant position for some few minutes, where they became interviewers, and I, an interviewee. I was subjected to a series of questions to authenticate my details in the information sheet. They asked questions about my research, my university and my intentions for carrying out the interview. One participant took down notes as I answered her questions, and she asked me to sign on her notes before she signed her consent form. A couple of participants asked for my university identity card before they agreed to sign their forms. Miller and Boulton (2007) see informed consent as participants' right to self-determination and as a process that goes beyond the ticking of boxes and penning of signatures. For me, it was the variation in my social relationships with my participants that made some willing to sign, some thinking it was an absolute waste of time, while others were sceptical.

As I progressed with the interview sessions, I began to understand what Rosenblatt (1995:155) meant by "I do not think there is a trustworthy ethical formula that one

can bring to a qualitative research interview". I realised that no two of my participants were the same, therefore, no two interview sessions raised the same ethical issues. As my participants recounted their migration stories, reminiscing about life before and after settling in the UK, some laughed while others cried. For those that laughed, I suppose it was alright for me to have laughed with them but deciphering how to console the tearful and emotionally affected was for me a dilemma. Where do I draw the line? What exactly is ethically correct? Can I put my arms around them or pat their shoulders? Do I sit silently or say something? These among other questions flashed through my mind as some of my participants tearfully narrated their stories. Apart from Pelumi's story which I shared earlier, my interview session with Simbi was another particularly emotional one that left me close to tears:

> Simbi: Walahi, I do not wish even my enemy to be in the mess I find myself (sobbing uncontrollably)
> Joy: I'm sorry Simbi, you know I did not mean to upset you. I can stop the interview if you want.
> Simbi: (still crying) don't worry ma; I do this every night. Whether you are here or not o I will still cry. It's the only way I know to relieve myself of my pain; no friend, no family… (bursts into fresh tears)
> Joy: I understand how you feel but …
> Simbi: (laughing amid her tears) do you say you understand? It makes me laugh when people say they understand. How can you understand?
> Joy: I...; I…
> Simbi: (interrupting)…yes; you may have experienced migration and some challenges but please don't tell me you understand when you have not been abandoned in a foreign country with children, difficult step children and a telephone husband who you can only hear but not see. As you see me so, (pointing to herself) I am an abandoned woman; chai…

It was emotional for me to watch Simbi cry uncontrollably as she narrated how her husband convinced her to relocate with him to the UK and after a while, he returned to Nigeria, leaving her with her children and stepchildren. This was one of the occasions when I felt emotionally drained and wished to discontinue the interview. She however insisted that I continue; she said she felt better when she cried and/or

talked about her predicament. I was however careful not to turn the interview session into a counselling or therapy session as Seidman (2013) warns researchers never to be tempted to assume the position of counsellors or therapists in the research field. Instead, I supported Simbi by sitting quietly by her side pausing the interview until she was ready to continue. The lesson learnt was to resist the urge to tell participants that I understand their predicament when truly I may not have a full understanding of the intensity of their struggles. Addressing some of these challenges helped me to appreciate the importance of following ethical procedures in qualitative research.

I became more and more ethically sensitive, engaging in continuous reflexivity and following processual consent procedure in communicating with my participants. Processual consent procedure is continuously checking with participants to be sure that they are comfortable with the interview process, assuring them that they may choose not to answer some questions and they may withdraw any part of their story already told (Rosenblatt 1995). For me however, the practice of processual consent was two-sided. Just as I stopped to check if they were comfortable with answering certain questions, some of my participants stopped to check if I was comfortable with listening to certain sensitive aspects of their stories without recording them or including them in my research. It suffices to say at this point that the social interaction that takes place in the research field should not be viewed too differently from everyday interaction, with the possibility of a speaker whispering "for your ears only" to her listener. During these processual consent episodes, I had a lot of thought provoking "for your ears only" narratives, which would have invariably enriched my data, but ethics forbid me to share. It was therefore a journey of co-constructing ethical realities with my participants in the research field.

The adherence to ethical procedure does not stop in the research field. After the interviews, I had to think about storing my data, maintaining confidentiality, achieving anonymity and finally transcribing the data. See Figure 2 for details of how I followed ethical procedures after leaving the research field.

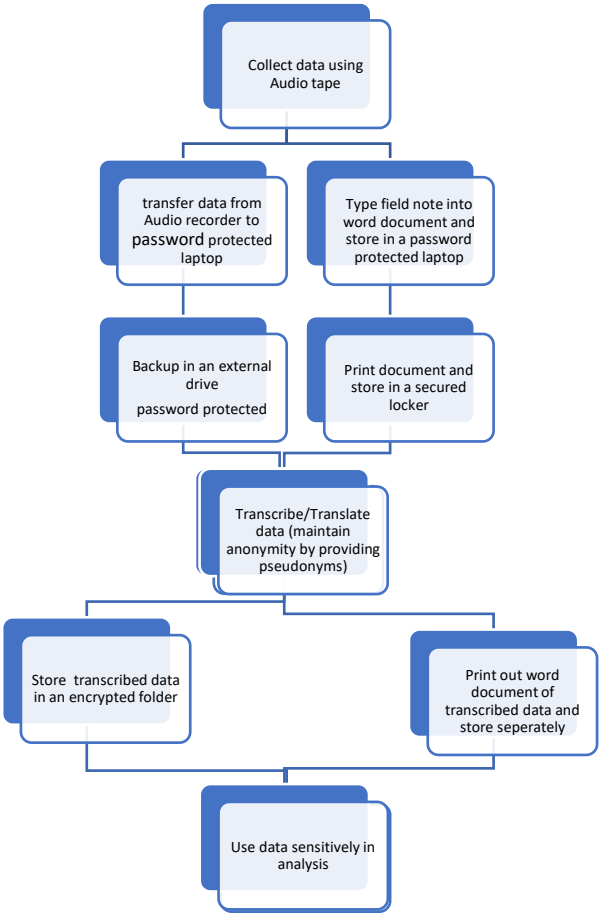


Figure 2. Chart showing ethical process of data storage

Presenting my process of data storage using the chart above does not in any way suggest that I believe in a prescriptive way of handling any part of qualitative fieldwork. My singular reason for presenting it thus, is to avoid boring my readers with too much detail. Also, presenting it in this manner is not suggestive of a hassle-free process. A failed audio recorder and a crashed laptop were some of the challenges I encountered in the process of capturing and storing my data before going on to transcribing.

The procedure followed to transcribe my interviews is discussed in a later section, but I faced some ethical challenges linked to transcription which are worth mentioning here. This has to do with my failure to represent a participant's story to her satisfaction. I made the transcribed data available to two of my participants who wanted to read through their story, but one participant was not happy with my transcribed representation of her account. She refused to tell me if I was wrong in my transcription or if she regretted revealing certain aspects of her experiences during the interview. She however made some amendments, deleting certain aspects and

(re)interpreted some part of the data. This clearly supports the declaration of Miles et al (2013:11), "indeed the words we choose to document what we see and hear in the field can never truly be objective". Despite my commitment to following ethical procedures in the research field before, during and after every interview session, it cannot be said that I did not cause any inconveniences to my participants. What can be said however, is that being ethically sensitive, reflexive and engaging in processual consent during interviewing, helped me to reduce potential harm to my participants.

Interviewing is like Marriage

> "Interviewing is rather like marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets." (Oakley 2005:217)

Ann Oakley likens interviewing to marriage because many researchers engage in interviewing but fail to explain or give details about the interview process, just as married couples keep practical marital issues to themselves. Researchers talk about the number of participants interviewed, the length of the interview sessions and how they were recorded. They, however, leave out crucial details such as the feelings of the researcher and her participants, relationships built or marred, and other challenges encountered. It is important to talk about these key issues, without ignoring the others. I therefore discuss how I engaged with interviewing, not as a tool but a process. I go on to explore how I refused to objectify my participants, how I negotiated the challenges of interviewing friends, and finally, I examine my experience of exiting the research field. These accounts show how I negotiated different complexities to make interview sessions as informal as possible, breaking down hierarchical barriers between the researcher and the researched and creating an atmosphere where participants were willing to tell their stories.

Interviewing: A Process, Not a Tool

As a feminist researcher, I engaged with interviewing, not as a tool, but as a process where the interviewer and the interviewed become participants, learning to discover, uncover and generate varying ways by which we tell our stories. To achieve this

therefore, I argue that there is no "one size fits all" kind of method. Waller et al (2015:17) declares: "Just as there is no one 'best' way to live a good life, and no one 'best' way to travel to work, there is no 'best' or single correct way to approach or conduct qualitative research". My belief in this statement helped me to move away from any prescriptive recipe for carrying out qualitative interviews. My first move towards engaging with interviewing as a process was to use semi-structured interview questions. The semi-structured interview is a qualitative interview method, where the interviewer prepares a list of interview questions not to be used as standards to be religiously adhered to, but as a guide (Fylan 2005). They were formed based on the focus of my main research questions which include:

1. Why do professional Nigerian women migrate to the UK?
2. How do they narrate their experiences of immigration and adaptation?
3. How do they experience the UK labour market?
4. What are the impacts of their experiences on their identity?

The semi-structured interview questions can be found in (appendix 3). It should be noted however, that the questions were only used as structuring guides during interview sessions. I relied more on being guided by responses from my participants to decide on questions to examine further. This level of flexibility gave them the liberty to explore their experiences. The danger, however, was that I opened the door for some participants to digress in their narratives. Knowing the danger of allowing participants to digress during unstructured or semi-structured interviews (Magusson and Marecek 2015), I decided to allow them to stray a bit, thereby enriching my research data, but to politely guide them back to focus on the question at hand. My interview with Ejiro is an example of when I had to apply caution to avoid distraction:

> Joy- You mentioned leaving everything behind and coming to the UK after your wedding. What do you mean by everything?
> Ejiro- You know I was away running family business before I went back to Nigeria to join my sister. Business was booming and I was enjoying life. In fact, I was able to sponsor some of my younger ones in school as a single girl, but do you know they started taking advantage of me? Even when I got to this country, you won't believe that at some point, I became depressed …

Ejiro went on to talk about her struggles and challenges in the UK. Although she strayed from the question, her narrative was very relevant to the overall context of the interview. She also answered some questions I would have asked later. I however had to stop her from straying too far away, as I politely guided her back by commenting on how interesting her story was and asking her to elaborate on points I considered relevant from her narrative. The advantages of allowing participants to "stray" into their own world of narrative clearly outweighs the disadvantages. The result of such liberty is mutually beneficial to both the researcher and the participants. While I gained rich data, my participants enjoyed the liberty of exploring their experiences and willingly presenting their reflexive narrative which further enrich my data. It was interesting to know that many of my participants enjoyed the level of retrospective construction that the interview session allowed them. One of my participants sent me a text message some few minutes after the interview session and it reads:

> Thanks so much for that interview, really enjoyed it. It's great to know and reflect on how good God has been to us despite all the challenges. We're in the journey together, and thus far He has been our EBENEZER! God's grace ma - Omo (Saturday 15 October 2016, 15:27).

During my interview session with Omo, who had been a close family friend, she recounted how we built a small social network during the first few years of our arrival in the UK. Sharing those stories made us cry and laugh together. I was glad that she considered it a reflective moment for her, and one that she was thankful for.

Tolu was another participant who paused during the interview to reflect on her story and chipping in a bit of pidgin English, she said:

> Tolu- na wa o Joy. It is interesting the things you remember when you sit to talk about these things. Hmmm (nodding her head) so much water has passed under the bridge. Yet some lazy brats will sit down in Nigeria calculating how much you should be earning and demanding for thousands of pounds as

> if their papa give me work do for here[13] (hisses). But when we sit to talk about our journeys like this, we are grateful for the hurdles we have crossed and remember to keep hope alive. Abeg[14] what else do you want me to talk about …

The excerpt above shows a level of regret, anger, gratitude and hope, all enveloped in a few minutes of reflexivity. The ability to capture the reflection from such participants would have been impossible if I had employed the use of quantitative measures or used highly structured interview questions. The fact that I connected very well with my participants, and the interview sessions were seen as beneficial to them, justified my decision to view the sessions as woman-to-woman talks.

Woman-to-Woman Talk: Refusing to Objectify My Sisters

My major goal as a feminist researcher was to ensure that the interview sessions I had with my participants were held with them and not about them. This, in my view, is a strong move towards refusing to objectify women, who I have come to relate to as co-participants and sisters in the research field. I find it disturbing that objectification is commonly reduced only to the dolled up, heavily photoshopped image of female bodies that permeates both print and social media. While this anomaly known as sexual objectification is a troubling phenomenon today, it is only one face of what objectification really means (Goh-mah 2013). The objectification I speak about here, is the one that views women as passive objects to be acted upon, beings with thoughts and feelings that do not count (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997; Goh-mah 2013).

One of the means by which I moved away from objectifying my participants was involving them in every aspect of the interview process, like choosing the date, time and venue for their interviews instead of imposing my agenda on them. For some of my participants, their idea of a research interview was to come to a formal setting, probably an office, on a specific date and time, to provide answers to questions

[13] The phrase "as if their papa give me work for here", is pidgin (broken English). She was expressing the fact that she did not get any support from anyone, yet people (family members and close acquaintances in Nigeria) do not stop asking her for financial support.
[14] "Abeg" is word for "please" in pidgin English.

thrown at them. Betty, one of my participants even asked for the dress code to wear to the interview venue! I also had an interesting conversation with Simbi, who halfway through the interview, stopped to ask, "so, when are we going to start the real interview?" As far as she was concerned, our session was too relaxed for it to be a "proper" interview. I explained the nature of the interview and how much I wanted every session to be fully participatory.

Most of my interviews were held in participants' homes, as far as they were comfortable with that. While many happily chose the comfort of their homes, others chose nearby restaurants. For one of my participants who chose to come to my house, we held the interview in the kitchen, where we prepared a Nigerian delicacy, moi-moi (beans cake) while we continued our woman-to-woman talk[15]. Just as expressed by Bernard (2012), the right setting for any interview depends on the type of interview carried out and the intricacies involved. I particularly enjoyed the interviews I had in participants' homes; I was able to step into their spaces, and to understand their individual construction of their worlds and experiences. I noticed that stopping to attend to children, preparing food and doing other chores with my participants allowed them to speak from the position of their everyday self, while adding meaning to my data.

Another means of avoiding objectification is sticking to face-to-face interviews, where the practicality of "sharing" between the researcher and the participants go beyond mere words. The use of non-verbal cues like eye contact, tone of voice and gestures added meaning and depth to participants' spoken words (Iacono et al 2016). The non-verbal cues helped to build rapport and connection between me and my participants. The absence of this connection, which is often the case with telephone interviews, tends to reduce participants to ordinary tools through which data are collected. I was not only interested in their stories, but in how they told them and how they expressed what their stories meant to them. Therefore, for a few participants, who due to distance or a tight working schedule could not commit to meeting in person, Skype and Face-Time interview sessions were conducted. Although there are limitations to these Voice over Internet (VoIP) technologies

[15] Our woman-to-woman talk ranged from discussion about healthy diet, latest fashion and high street sales of 70% off. We drifted in and out of these chats as we continued with the interview.

(Iacono et al 2016), they were preferred to telephone interviews. I noticed however, that in my Skype interviews, despite the use of some non-verbal cues, the act of touching your listener on the back or arm as you talk, which is a common gesture among Nigerians when discussing interesting topics (Global Affairs Canada 2014), was missing. Although interviewing via Skype takes away geographical limitations (Lacono et al 2016), the ability to build rapport between the researcher and the participant is reduced. Despite this shortcoming, I ensured as much as possible, that all my interview sessions were fully participatory.

I realised that in addition to speaking face-to-face with my participants, creating a space for them to speak not only in English but in Nigerian local dialects especially pidgin English, was my trump card in establishing trust and rapport. This made the interview sessions as much theirs as they were mine. Although all my participants could express themselves fluently in the English language, many of them chose to garnish their stories with pidgin English and/or Yoruba[16]. One participant spoke a bit of Hausa[17] while another greeted me in the Ebira[18] language. Until this time, I had never considered it of any importance that I speak about five Nigerian languages. Speaking in participants' local dialect strengthened our bond of sisterhood and made it very easy for them not just to share but to care about what my research represents. Although pidgin English is not a local dialect of any specific ethnic group, it is a creole language that has become an unofficial lingua franca that is generally spoken across Nigeria. According to Akande and Salami (2010) speaking in pidgin English connotes a mark of identity and camaraderie among Nigerians. This was the case with many of my participants who made some remarks in pidgin English to either lighten the mood, explain a point deeply or simply build rapport. Sarah, one of my participants, is a friend who I had not visited in two years. When I arrived at her doorstep, her opening remark was in pidgin English:

[16] Yoruba is a general language in South-Western Nigeria and one of the most widely spoken languages in Nigeria.
[17] Hausa is a general language in Northern Nigeria and has become a lingua franca in many West Africa countries
[18] Ebira is spoken in Kogi state, in North central Nigeria

> Sarah: This one wey Joy come my house today, fowl go grow teeth o! Because you wan come ask me about my BBC[19] work for UK na him bring you abi?
>
> Joy: Na which one be bbc again? (Slightly confused). You don get work for BBC? Abeg come gist me.
>
> Sarah: You no know how far (laughing) … BBC- British Bottom Cleaner! That na my occupational acronym. No try me o (bursting into laughter).

Sarah's first statement was to express how unusual my visit was (since I had not been to see her in 2 years). She likened the rarity of my visit to the possibility of fowls growing teeth. She added that the only reason why I was at her door, was to interview her about her job, which she jokingly referred to as "BBC". I immediately thought she worked for British Broadcasting Corporation, but to Sarah, this meant British Bottom Cleaning! She employed the use of pun to make light of her job as a Care Assistant, thereby distancing herself from, and at the same time confirming the negative connotations that are usually associated with such jobs (McGregor 2007; Knight 2014)[20]. Starting the interview session in such a light note created a relaxing atmosphere where we both spoke and listened to each other for about two hours.

Towards the end of the interview, at the point where I asked Sarah if she had anything else to add, she became interested in talking about the relevance of my research and how "we" could work with some agencies to support immigrant women after the completion of my research. I felt fulfilled to see my participants assume the position of stakeholders, which in a way, suggests that they did not see the process just as "my research" but also as "our" research. Although Seidman (2013) argues that building a "we" relationship with interview participants will reduce the interview discourse to mere conversation, I however disagree with his point of view as this was not the case with me. Making my interview sessions participatory and maintaining a healthy balance of reciprocity did not in any way reduce the value of my interviews, instead it expresses the value I have for my participants as co-creators

[19] BBC in this context means British Bottom Cleaner, a derogatory term used by some immigrants to describe care work in the UK (this is fully discussed in chapter 7).
[20] The use of BBC—British Bottom Cleaner is further explained in chapter 7.

of knowledge, which illuminates my stand against objectifying my sisters. Nevertheless, I recognise the complexities that emanate from the different relationships that exist or begin in the research field.

No Position is Permanent: The Insider/Outsider Debate

The pre-existing friendship I have with some of my participants and the inter-connected identities[21] I share with all of them supposedly earned me the status of an "insider". To earn this position in the research field, the researcher must be seen as someone who shares some characteristics, identities and/or experiences with participants (Ganga and Scott 2006; Dwyer and Buckle 2009; Couture et al 2012). As an insider, I had no problem building rapport with some of my participants and understanding their use of colloquial words from local Nigerian languages. Many participants were very willing to share their experiences and fully participate in the research process. I admit however, that I did not enjoy such privileges with all my participants. For instance, some were unwilling to share certain aspects of their experiences, and only touched on the peripheries.

Another surprising experience is finding out that some of the identities and characteristics that identified me as an insider, also situates me as an "outsider". For instance, my academic background as a university graduate placed me on the same level with my participants as educated Nigerians. However, my status as a PhD researcher made me an outsider and affected the way some participants related with me. They perceived this academic attainment as higher than having a first and/or second degree, which therefore introduced a new power dynamic to our relationship. Furthermore, some participants accepted me as an insider because we share cultural background, language, class and religion but immediately considered me an outsider because of difference in age, family structure and occupational status. It can be argued therefore, that the heterogeneity of any group of people means that nobody can actually be a complete insider all the time (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). Some participants also shared sensitive information that situated me as an outsider, when I had previously seen myself as a complete insider who knew her friends inside out.

[21] The intersecting identities we share include educational background, immigration status, language, culture and gender.

This made me feel like a pendulum swaying back and forth, sometimes to the position of an insider and sometimes to that of an outsider. It can be argued therefore, that there is not always a clear dichotomy between an insider and an outsider in the research field, as different or shared experiences blur the line and present a fluid passage between both positions. Also, discussions of insider/outsider, same/different in the research field should always be in relation to context, space and time, with the full awareness that none of these positions are permanent or static (Browne 2003).

Apart from examining the insider/outsider relationship between me and my participants, I explore the power relationship between the researcher and the researched, and how this relationship affects the production of knowledge from a feminist standpoint. There are different views from feminist writers on what Standpoint or Feminist Standpoint theory really means (see Haraway 1988; Smith 1997; Harding 1997; Hartsock 1997; Anderson 2000). In one way or the other, they all agree that politics and epistemology are inseparable, thereby establishing a relationship between knowledge and power. They argue that the relationship between knowledge and power in representing people's stories is complex and this complexity produces partial and situated knowledges. Despite the fact that I was familiar with some of my participants, there was still a level of power imbalance between me and them that shaped how knowledge is created.

My present social network was the springboard from which my initial participants were recruited. My first few participants therefore were women with whom I had enjoyed pre-existing friendships for some years. However, exposure to the complexities and multiple subjectivities of human experiences made it clear to me that the concept of friendship and/or sameness should never be addressed as fixed, but as heavily negotiable positions (Browne 2003). I did not have much problem establishing rapport with many of my participants; what appeared problematic however, was how to "mix pleasure with business". Without disturbing our usual chit chats, I had to seek for practical ways to draw my participants' attention to some key elements in order to move the interview sessions forward. DeVault (1999) is one feminist scholar who argues that everyday chit chat, sighs and expressions should all be seen as part of data. This I did, but still had to look for a strategy to bring focus to our discussion.

Switching on the audio recorder seemed to do the magic, as to my participants, it marked the beginning of the interview. Although the presence of an audio recorder helped me to achieve focus, it made a difference to the behaviour of my participants. Actually, it is difficult to tell if this is good or bad, but I cannot deny the fact that as soon as I announce that the audio recorder will be switched on, many of my participants become serious, adjust their sitting position (as though it is a visual recording) and more surprisingly, some modify their voices (as though it is time to speak to an all-English audience, when their accent needed to be adjusted so as to be heard and understood) [22]. It means therefore, that the impact of recording devices in qualitative research cannot be overlooked (O'Reilly and Kiyimba 2015). This made me see the audio recorder not as a neutral entity in the interview scene, but as a social actor and an instrument of power in the hands of the researcher, and sometimes in that of the participants.

As the researcher, I had the power to determine when to switch on the recorder (to capture data), and when to switch it off (end data collection). However, the participants had the power to decide what to say (data to be recorded) and how much to say (extent of data). For instance, Tinuke, one of my participants, had this to say halfway through the interview:

> Tinuke: …you can never tell how far written or recorded scripts can travel. I am happy to tell you some of the challenges I faced in …. but I do not want it recorded and please do not use it in your analysis. So please switch the recorder off for 2 minutes …

More than once was I faced with this kind of situation, where I felt powerless in terms of the depth of data captured for analysis. Once the audio recorder was off, Tinuke shared with me some sensitive information which I would have considered very rich data. However, she was clear about not wanting such part of her story in my research. At this point, it became clear to me that there is a constant power shift from the researcher to the participant and back again. Furthermore, I realised that though as the researcher I have the power to interpret data, I must rely on participants to produce the data. According to Stanley and Wise (1983), there is a

[22] As the interview session continues, they become more relaxed as I try to use informal language to help them feel comfortable. They eventually ease up and begin to speak in their everyday voices.

power imbalance in favour of the researcher in the research field; Oakley and Roberts (1981) on the other hand, argue that equal power distribution can be shared between the researcher and the researched. However, the power relationship that exists between the researcher and her participants is complex, fluid and negotiable (Cotterill 1992; Browne 2003). This does not in any way deny the fact that the final power lies with the researcher, who is the interpreter of the data collected.

Exiting the field: The Politics of Fieldwork.

It is surprising that there is a scarcity of academic literature on exiting the research field. Could it be that researchers consider it of less importance to record such experiences? Is it seen as an insignificant aspect of their research? Or is it just an oversight? Surely, if their experience of exiting the field is anywhere close to mine, then I would argue that it is worth writing down. One of the questions I asked myself when I started my field work was "where exactly is the field?" As Hyndman (2001:263) rightly admitted, "what constitutes 'the field' is contentious." Like her, I argue that 'the field' extends beyond a geographical location waiting to be explored. While Chughtai and Myres (2016) described the concept of the research field as a hermeneutic circle where researchers are able to make sense of the world and the phenomena concerned, Hyndman (2010) defines it in relation to specific political goals that cut across space and time. For me, the research field involves the (re)negotiation of my established social space and the entering into other connected social spaces either at home, or away from home. This is not too far from Hyndman's explanation that the fieldwork is made of contesting boundaries between "here" and "there". I suppose the "in-betweenness" of my fieldwork accounts for the complexity of my experience of leaving the field. Or did I really leave?

Leaving the research field for me, is more of a sociological transformation than a physical relocation. Although I enjoyed my short trips all around UK, going to big towns and cities, I must confess that I did not leave the research field the way I entered (if indeed I ever left). There were remarkable shifts in my perception of myself, people and the world at large. It was a journey of (re)discovering myself and an opportunity to interpret the world I share with my participants as we jointly

explore our differences and shared experiences. The only comfortable way for me to recount my experience of leaving the field therefore is by engaging with the three questions raised by Steven Taylor, in Shaffir and Stebbins (1990:238): How to end a study, how to manage relationships formed in the research field and how to handle the social, political and ethical implications of the research.

Regarding the first question, my own dilemma was not so much how to conclude my study in general, but how to end individual interview sessions, especially the ones that were emotionally laden. My interview session with Pelumi remains fresh in my memory because of how difficult it was for me to end the interview session with her. Long after the audio recorder had gone off, Pelumi continued to repeat her already recorded story about her ordeal at work, family stress and her present state of mind. She did this tearfully, refusing to be consoled. She talked for such a long time that I decided to cancel my next appointment, sit quietly with her and just listened. Through the course of my study, I have learnt to listen more than I talk, especially during interviews. Seidman (2013) explained the importance of active listening, which is a practice I have decided to keep even outside the research field. Apart from helping me to take field notes and to understand my participants better, I realised that the act of active listening makes my participants more comfortable and willing to talk. This was the case with Pelumi, who admitted thus:

> Pelumi: I'm sorry I'm talking like this; I hope I'm not boring you with the story of my life?
> Joy: No o; not at all. Please I really appreciate your telling me about these things.
> Pelumi: it's just that it frees me of a lot of burden to talk about it like this. Nobody has ever cared to listen to me; who has my time? Everybody has their own problems; they have even given up on me (pshew…. she hisses and continues her story).

Pelumi went on for a while; to show her my genuine support, I stayed on and listened to her re-tell her story. It was difficult to leave her in the emotional state she was in, as she was the only one at home. I felt guilty at the thought of leaving. I was wondering what Pelumi would think of me; a new-found friend who is genuinely interested in her wellbeing or a distant researcher who has come to re-open her

wounds and cause her so much pain? I was more concerned with how she would take care of herself if I left her in such emotional state. I therefore concluded that it was better for me to spend some time with her. But then, how long is good enough time to spend? I faced this dilemma with some other participants, some due to their emotional state and others because of sensitive issues in their lives to which I had no solution, but they chose to confide in me all the same.

It is difficult to answer the question of how to manage relationships formed in the research field because I suppose there is no one right answer. Relationships that extend beyond the research field depends on how the researcher sees her participants and the nature of the relationship developed with them (Shaffir and Stebbins 1990; Scheyvens 2014). For me, the nature of the relationship built with my participants varies considerably. To some, I was already a very close friend. To a few, I was only a friendly researcher and our relationship was short lived. To some others, I became a casual friend who could be invited to parties (I was invited to a couple of participants' birthday parties). I became a customer to one of my participants who sells Nigerian food stuff at affordable prices. I equally built very strong friendships with a few, who kept in touch and became very cordial. An example of such deep relationship is the friendship built with Dorcas, which started in the field and has extended beyond it. We were immediately drawn to each other during her interview session, when we realised that we have a lot in common. We started building our relationship by exchanging regular phone calls, then visiting each other and spending time together. We have been able to extend our friendship to other members of our families and now we see ourselves as "family friends". I am aware that there is no practical obligation that necessitates any relationship between the researcher and her participants outside the field, but it is always a good practice to leave behind an accessible space for future contacts (Shaffir and Stebbins 1990). Moreover, for me, with a relationship such as the one I developed with Dorcas, I feel very much still part of the field.

The last question is about handling the social, political and ethical implications of the research. As I have fully discussed my ethical dilemma in a previous section, I will concentrate on discussing actions I took immediately after I completed my fieldwork, and how I managed participants' expectations that extended outside the field. Part of the actions I took included sending a "thank you" email to participants

after my session with them. To others, especially those who are close friends, I chose to make phone calls instead of sending mails. For some participants, it was another long chat over the phone, as though it was a continuation of our interview session. They saw it as an opportunity to ask for feedback on how well I thought the sessions went. I re-affirmed how well the sessions went and thanked them profusely for their time. Some, after they had taken time to reflect on their responses, saw my phone call as an opportunity to retrieve some part of the interview. For instance, Sarah told me, "you know the part I talked about …? Please remove it. I don't want trouble for my life. They say walls have ears."

In hindsight, I think sending an email to all participants would have sufficed; however, I suppose it was only ethical to create a space for them to redact any information they were not comfortable to share. Another action I took was to reach participants who had earlier requested to read their transcribed data as soon as it was ready. Only two were interested in reading the transcript. One made only a few corrections, but the other, as earlier mentioned, was not fully satisfied with her transcribed data. According to Kaiser (2009), though sociology may lack clear prescription for using participants' data, it is good practice to share final data with participants before using. Sharing transcribed data with participants may however be challenging and may lead to a lot of hassle.

Managing participants' expectation outside the research field is marked by the complexity between the desirable and the practicable in researcher/participant relationship (Bryman 2013). Participants often want researchers to do or say something to solve their problems or turn their situations around for the better; but unfortunately, researchers are not problem solvers who can wave magic wands and make wishes come true. Simbi was one participant who, despite my explanation, thought I represented the government and I could contact agencies to turn her situation around:

> Joy: thank you so much Simbi. Do you have anything else to add or any question?
>
> Simbi: Ma, I'm happy that we have people like you to represent us and help us fight for our right. Honestly, I wish we have more people like you. We need to register our disappointment and cry out against discrimination. Tell

> them I am suffering o. Right now, my case is in court, I'm tired, I… I'm…in fact, am frustrated; it is only people like you that make us think there's hope. Please aunty, any way you can help with my case in court, any agency at all, I'll appreciate.

Although I sympathise with Simbi, there was nothing I could do to alleviate her problems, apart from suggesting that she seek help from Citizens Advice Bureau and create a platform for her voice to be heard through this research. In general, leaving the research field is just as challenging and complex as stepping in; it must therefore, be seen as an indispensable part of fieldwork. My engagement with different women in and after the fieldwork, and the complexities of building different levels of ongoing relationship with them, made me conclude that there is no one "right" way of exiting the field and there is the possibility that researchers never fully leave (Shaffir and Stebbins 1990; Scheyvens 2014).

Finding Order in a Chaotic Pile of Data

Despite the physical and emotional pressure that marks qualitative fieldwork, I felt very happy and fulfilled with having a pile of collated data. It was almost like giving birth to a baby; you forget the pain of the birthing process and take the baby home to nurture. The words of Marshall and Rossman (2016) make it convenient for me to liken my data to the arrival of a newly born baby:

> There is no substitute for intimate engagement with your data. Researchers should think of data as something to cuddle up with, embrace, and get to know better. Reading, rereading, and reading through the data once more force the researcher to become intimate with the material. People, events and quotations sift constantly through his mind (Marshall and Rossman 2016:217)

Like a baby, I realised that my data needed cleaning up and taking care of. This I did by transcribing, developing themes, coding and analysing the data. I view this as a strategic move from talk, to text, and then to theory. Reading through some available literature (Miles et al 2013; Marshall and Rossman 2016), I applied some of their data analysis processes as my "cleaning up" tools, starting with data transcription.

What I Think of Transcription: Moving from Talk to Text.

As earlier pointed out, all interviews were audio recorded and notes were taken to record the setting and the non-verbal cues that added meaning to the participants' recorded stories. The process of storing and managing the collected data is represented in Figure 2 above. After transferring my data into a password protected laptop, I knew that the next step was transcription—the process of converting talk to text (Miles et al 2013). I was, however, not sure how or what to transcribe. I therefore decided to consult my supervisor and other colleagues who are experienced qualitative researchers; after all, a Ghanaian proverb reads: "If you go through the high grass where the elephant has already gone through, you do not get soaked with the dew". My supervisor, as always, gave her candid advice:

> Supervisor: Transcription is tedious but when you transcribe by yourself, you stay close to your data, and this helps with your analysis.
>
> Joy: Do I need to transcribe verbatim? (wishing the answer will be "no" …. but now I know better).
>
> Supervisor: Oh yes. You have to. The closer to that you get, the richer your data for analysis.

I only gained the full meaning of the word "tedious" when I started transcribing. Several times, I dozed off while the recorder played on and the voices of my participants lulled me to the heavens! I would wake up to see that the tape recorder had stopped playing and needed rewinding to continue from where I stopped listening. Despite these pitiful episodes, transcribing my data personally was one of the best decisions I made. Seidman (2006:115) commenting on who should transcribe the interview data, declares, "the ideal solution is for the researcher to hire a transcriber". I found out however, that as much as I would have preferred that option, it was not the "ideal" solution for me. I realised that transcribing the data personally, is part of keeping my promise of confidentiality made to my participants. Moreover, some of them had requested that some sensitive aspects of their interview be deleted and not accessed by another. Employing a transcriber would have made it impossible for me to keep that promise. Equally important was staying close enough to my data to establish the link between what is said and how it is said. These are

nuances that would have been impossible for a hired transcriber to capture and too relevant for a researcher to ignore.

According to Miles et al (2013:70), it is "a big mistake" to complete data collection before embarking on transcription. Although I appreciate the ease of recollecting the vividness of events when data are transcribed during the fieldwork, it may not be practicable for all researchers. This is because, in qualitative research, different events and experiences in and outside the research field determine when transcription takes place. Furthermore, the contrast in the experiences between Agha (2015) and Prashad (2016) who are both contemporary feminist researchers shows that there is no "one size fits all" experience in transcribing qualitative data. While Prashad explained how she transcribed her data immediately after each interview in order to work within a tight schedule, Agha postponed transcription until after the completion of her field work, to enable her to concentrate on writing and updating her reflexive fieldnotes.

In my case, I transcribed my pilot interview immediately after completing it. This helped me to reflect on and modify some of my questions and how I asked them, but I could not keep up the momentum of "transcribing as I go", for two reasons. Firstly, I had to share my time between research work and family commitments. Secondly, I found some of my research interviews emotionally engaging and needed to step away from them for a while to gain my emotional balance. I therefore ended up transcribing my data after completing the interviews. Although challenging, keeping very detailed fieldnotes helped me to recollect and relate participants' verbal accounts to their non-verbal cues. It was an eye-opener for me to notice how some sentences would be meaningless without reference to such cues like pauses, silences, gestures and emotional state. This made me draw the conclusion that in qualitative research, recording the non-verbal cues is nearly as important as the words used by participants. Engaging with transcribing helped me to appreciate the link between feminist reflexivity and the complexity of representation. This made me to question why, despite the complications involved in transcribing data, very little is said about it in research journals. Lapadat and Lindsay (1998) and Davidson (2009) point out how lightly the transcription process is explained and described as a transparent research process in research literature. However, not only is transcription not

transparent, it is a complicated process which should always be reflexively considered and given theoretical and methodological attention.

I realised that carrying out a verbatim transcription of my interview data will help to illuminate the way my participants engaged in telling the stories of their lived experiences. While some researchers carry out content-oriented transcription of their data, others engage in broad verbatim transcription (Nikanda 2008). For instance, Prashad (2016), whose research is based on the labour migration of Trinidad and Tobago women, said that she cut out unrelated conversations and transcribed only data that related to her topic. Mahbub (2014) and Chin (2016) on the other hand, talked about carrying out verbatim transcription in order to create space for other relevant and emergent themes as they carried on with their data analyses. This they did, but also pointed out that any form of transcription can only be a partial and approximate representation, irrespective of the strategy used. I found this to be true, as I realised the inability of my recording device to produce a complete coverage of any interview session. While the recorder could record audible verbal words and sounds, gesticulations and other actions were left out. Even keeping a field note is incomplete, as describing events and occurrences are only at the mercy of my choice of words, which may, or may not paint a vivid picture. Although I transcribed verbatim, I did not ignore the limitations of my position as a partial knower.

To help enrich my word-for-word transcription, I adopted the naturalised form of transcription as proposed by Oliver et al (2005), who described transcription in terms of "a continuum with two dominant modes": the naturalised and the denaturalised. In the naturalised form of transcription, all words, both verbal and non-verbal, gestures and actions are all transcribed as much as possible. The denaturalised form on the other hand, is transcribing only spoken words, without including non-verbal words, pauses and silences. Without choosing either as the better method to use in transcribing qualitative data, Oliver et al, advise that researchers should ensure that they consider their research objectives before deciding on an appropriate form of transcription. I used the naturalised form of transcription because there were many non-verbal cues in my participants' narratives which if ignored, will either change the meaning of their story, or render it meaningless. Sarah's statement gives a vivid example of an account that would have been misunderstood without the complementing non-verbal cues:

Joy: So, with such a busy schedule, how do you manage to achieve work and family life balance?

Sarah: You don't even need to ask me how I achieve work-life balance. Just taking a good look at your beautiful sister (laughing…. she removes her cap and runs her fingers through her unwashed and uncombed hair) should convince you that life is good!

Without the non-verbal cue in this statement, the sentence could have been taken to mean that Sarah enjoys a very good balance between work and family life, when she actually meant the opposite.

In transcribing my data from talk to text, it is important to add that some few words were written in participants' local dialect (to the best of my knowledge, meaning is written in the footnote). As discussed in an earlier section, even when having a formal conversation in English language, it is a common practice among Nigerians to spice up their discussions with their local dialects. I wish to also point out that I did not translate all words spoken in pidgin English, as I considered some clear enough for readers to understand. I mainly translated words spoken in Yoruba, as many of my participants were Yoruba. As soon as they became comfortable with the interview session, they did not hesitate to switch back and forth between Yoruba and English, especially knowing that I speak Yoruba fluently. It was however impossible for me to translate some colloquial words commonly used by Nigerians to show emphasis, uncertainty, regret or pain. For instance, words like "chai", "abi", "na wa", "nna" "ehn" etc. Since there are no English words to explain these expressions, I tried to identify the emotion behind the phrase and translate as angry, emphasis, pained etc. My experience with translation is in line with Willig's (2012) statement that translation is not only political, but also untidy and partial. I further realised that with translation, it is easy to lose, add or change the meaning of an original statement. My exchange of greetings with Ejiro, an elderly Urhobo lady from South-Eastern Nigeria is a very good example:

Joy: Migwo (I am kneeling)

Ejiro: Vrendo (rise)

Although “migwo” means “I am kneeling to greet”, I did not have to literally kneel to make this statement (In Urhobo dialect, this statement is equated with the act of respectfully greeting an older person). This can also be said in place of good morning, good afternoon and good evening (it is used at any time of the day). It can also mean “thank you”. “Vrendo” on the other hand, simply means “rise”. Again, I do not have to literally change my position as it simply means a positive response to the greeting. This expresses the extent to which culture is ingrained in language and how meaning is lost or changed when translating from one language to another. This goes to show the complexity of both transcription and language translation.

Addressing the complexities of data representation stretched my reflexive capability to another level. Looking at the pile of carefully transcribed data gave me a sense of fulfilment knowing that I had been able to move my data from “talk to text”. I was however reminded that since transcription can only be representative and interpretative, my pile of transcribed data which represents the voices of my participants, only presents a partial account of their stories.

Are Pseudonyms Enough? Confronting Anonymization.

Developing my reflexive muscles through different experiences in the research field also helped me to confront the question of how I represented my participants through anonymization. Corti et al (2000) argue that there is almost nothing written on how pseudonyms are formed or applied in research texts. This, I must say, is shocking to me, as I do not view it as a trivial “behind-the-scenes” routine, but as a critical political exercise that has a bearing on how the whole research process is viewed and thus worthy of exploration alongside other research processes. The first question I addressed therefore, is “is it right to anonymize participants or not?” Wiles et al (2006) argue that there are pointers in recent research records that increasing number of research participants desire to be identified and not anonymized in research texts but Riazi (2016) posits that although the autonomy of participants must be respected in this matter, maintaining anonymization remains an ethical norm in research processes. He explains that there are two ways through which participants can be anonymised: the use of pseudonyms or number coding. I view the use of numbers as

objectifying my participants, which I have refused to do. I therefore chose to use pseudonyms to achieve anonymity.

The question this poses however, is whose responsibility is it to provide pseudonyms: the researcher or the participants themselves? According to Wiles et al (2006), while some researchers view this as their responsibility, others believe it is the responsibility of the participant to choose a name or code they would like to be disguised as. In my case, however, I explained through participants' information sheet (see appendix 1) that pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. I also explained this to every participant at the beginning of every interview session. Fortunately for me, none of my participants raised objections to using pseudonyms and they all gave their consent for me to provide the pseudonym. I did not employ any special formula to produce the pseudonyms; all I did was to use common names from the three major Nigerian tribes- Yoruba, Ibo and Hausa and some common English names as well. I was careful not to use any participant's real name as another participant's pseudonym. Given (2008) posits that the use of pseudonyms could pose both practical and ethical challenges as fictitious names may (re)define the character of the pseudonymised. The chosen pseudonym may also be a participant's unknown nickname or middle name; and sometimes these names could carry with them emotions that may affect participants. Apart from participants who asked to read their transcripts, I did not inform them about the pseudonym they were given. However, I am aware that naming is an important social phenomenon that means much to Nigerians (Olatunji et al 2015), therefore I did not use any name without first understanding its meaning and ensuring that it connotes only positive attributes.

The question that seemed to bother me more though, is "is using a pseudonym enough to achieve anonymity?" To answer this question, Riazi (2016) admits that the achievement of anonymity by using pseudonyms is open to question, especially in qualitative research. Indeed, there is limited discussion as to how identity can be properly disguised. In my case, apart from using pseudonyms for participants, I ensured that their addresses and towns/cities of abode were not included in the transcripts. Furthermore, some participants had requested that some sensitive aspect of their interviews be deleted, and this was done. I was however careful not to tamper too much with data because according to Wiles et al (2006), there is the possibility of researchers encountering problems in their bid to get a balance between

disguise and distortion. Although I do not claim to know the best approach to these issues, critically reflecting on them and following ethical guidelines as I represent my participants has not, and I believe will not cause undue harm to them.

Developing Themes and Analysing Data: From Text to Theory

My research approach, strongly influenced by symbolic interactionism (Mead 1964; Blumer 1986) seeks to pay attention not only to what participants say about their experiences, but also how they engage in describing the impact of their experiences on their everyday lives. This informed my decision to pay attention to the different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning participants give to their lived experiences (Squire et al 2013). When I finally reached this stage of my research process, I felt it was time to bring everything to the table and make sense of my long journey. "Everything" here refers to my research experiences, my field notes, my transcripts, personally recorded and unrecorded reflections and reviews of literature. It was good for me to know that finding order in my chaotic pile of data, according to Marshall and Rossman (2011: 207) is "messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative and fascinating". As usual, I decided to search for guidance from research texts on how I could make sense of my data. My search reminded me of the wise words of Abraham Lincoln, "you have to do your own growing no matter how tall your grandfather was". In other words, I had to map out and settle for myself how to analyse my data, knowing that like most other aspects of the research process, there is no recipe for "the right way" of handling qualitative data. This leads me to describe data analysis as a disorganised process of sense making. At this point, Miles's (1979) description of qualitative data as "an attractive nuisance" began to make sense. Attractive, because of its depth and richness, but a nuisance because of the challenges of identifying and negotiating analytic routes through that depth. This creates an awareness that the process of analysing qualitative data is essentially complex and multi-faceted, which calls for a laying bare of the data analysis process.

Morse (1994) argues that although qualitative research methodology is widely used, the actual process followed by researchers to analyse their data, create categories and synthesize these categories remain a mystery except to the researcher. I do not claim to present an orderly flow of the process I followed but using the inductive approach to data analysis helped me to remain transparent about the way I engaged with my

data. Unlike the deductive approach, the inductive approach is flexible and data-driven (Braun and Clarke 2006; Burnard et al 2008). There are many inductive data analysis approaches, but I settled for the combination of thematic and narrative analysis. Although each is distinct, they are complementary analytical methods (Shukla et al 2014).

There is no agreed or clear definition of what thematic analysis is, but it should be seen as a method that identifies, emphasizes, examines and records patterns within data (Boyatzis 1998). It is arguably one of the most widely used qualitative analytic methods but according to Braun and Clarke (2006), it is "poorly demarcated" and "rarely acknowledged". The main advantage of using thematic analysis is its flexibility. Narrative analysis, according to De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2019), is the study of stories told by ordinary people in diverse environments. Squire et al (2013) however argue that "narrative" itself, is a disputed term, and unlike many other qualitative methods, narrative research has no defined starting or finishing points, but carries traces of human lives that we want to understand. The combination of thematic and narrative analysis helped me "to take account of the effect of particular narratives within the interview conversation, as well as the societal contexts within which they gain currency" (Shukla et al 2014:22). Using both analytic tools therefore, enabled me to examine participants narrative both as resource and topic—analysing what they say, as well as how they say them.

As a feminist researcher, directed by my main research focus, which is exploring my participants' narratives of immigration and adaptation to life in the UK, and guided by suggestions from Braun and Clarke (2006), I started off by first familiarising myself with my data. Afterwards, I read through again, but this time using a pencil to underline aspects which give answers to my research focus and/or provide a new but related insight to a broader overview of my research. I also decided to use NVivo, a computer-based software, a type of the Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). However, I only used it at the initial stage of my qualitative data analysis to organise my data. John and Johnson (2000) argued that using computer software programmes to analyse data can save time and increase flexibility. I believe this is true, but I realised it could also be distracting and may create a distance between me and my data. Since my desire from the outset was to be very close to my data, after using the software for organisation, I decided to analyse

my data manually, starting with the initial scrutiny of data which is often referred to as the initial stage of identifying themes (Bryman 2012:576). I started off creating categories, putting together related and contrasting narratives based on the different themes.

To engage with my participants' stories, I analysed both the broad themes of their stories (big stories) and the stories they tell in passing (small stories). Big stories are the contents of participants' autobiographical accounts while small stories are the under-represented narrative data from words said in passing in everyday communication (Georgakopoulou 2006; Phoenix 2008). This approach gave me insight into how the "told" and the "telling" of participants' stories can aid the examination of their lived experiences. Therefore, attending to the form of what is said and how it is said in relation to identified themes, helped me to make sense of my data. Using this strategy repeatedly as I continued to scrutinize my data, helped me to develop many themes, which I grouped under four main sections, forming my four analysis chapters (see chapters 4 to 7). These chapters present the analysis of my participants' retrospective narrative of their lived experiences in Nigeria, their migration decision making processes, how they have adapted to life in the UK and the impact of their experiences on their identities.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this methodology chapter, I likened my research process to a journey. This cannot be compared to the experience itself, which was truly fascinating. It was intense, complex, emotional and above all educating. I became aware of how impossible it is for me as a researcher, to stay "outside of" my research, as I shape, and am shaped by the research process.

Using the feminist approach to qualitative research helped me to negotiate the "muddy ambiguity" (Finlay 2002) which marks the research process and appreciate the intersubjective elements that inform research outcomes. It enabled me to lay bare some of the methodological quagmires I faced in the research field and challenge a few of the research processes that over the years, have been overlooked and oversimplified in research texts and academic theses. Furthermore, the knowledge of the complexity of multiple realities and multiple ways of knowing enabled me to

appreciate the individual construction of self, in relation to the social and the psychological (Ribbens and Edwards 1997).

Overall, designing this research has helped me to grow as a feminist researcher. My rigid epistemological stance has been greatly challenged and my practice of reflexivity has been sharpened. Despite the thread of complexity that runs through my methodological choices and research process, my goal was to present my journey in the most comprehensible way possible, laying bare my mistakes and my successes. This approach helps to build the blocks of knowledge formation, which is further explored in my analysis chapters. In the next chapter, I examine participants' narratives of their lived experiences of womanhood in Nigeria.

Chapter 4. Reconstructing the Past from the Present: Participants' Lived Experiences in Nigeria

Introduction

During my interview sessions, I asked my participants to tell me about their experiences of growing up in Nigeria. Some saw this as an opportunity to construct accounts of their lived experiences from childhood to adulthood in Nigeria. Taking inspiration from Bruner (1986), while focusing on participants' stories, I paid attention to constructions of their lived experiences formed from their reflections, words and images, within which they made sense of the past. Although narratives are fragmentary and partial (Lawler 2002) and are not transparent renditions of reality (Eastmond 2007), my participants' reflections on their childhood, marriage and womanhood create a historically and culturally constituted world, which tells a great deal about them, their social world and their experiences. Engaging in personal narratives helped them to make sense of their past experiences from their present positions. I became especially interested in how their constructions of the past tie into decisions about the present and for the future. Their narratives illustrate "the temporality, reflexivity and sociality of the self" (Jackson 2010:123). Jackson, who draws on George Herbert Mead's theorisation of the self, argues that narratives of self are symbolic constructions, but this does not negate activities of past events and experiences.

George Herbert Mead was an American philosopher, whose work influenced the development of the symbolic interactionist approach to sociology. In his writing, focusing on time ("temporality"), he argues that people's narratives of their past and their future are interpretations of the present (see Mead 1964; Flaherty and Fine 2001; Jackson 2010). Instead of the deterministic narratives of how the past explains the present, the past is to be viewed as a creative construct in specific contexts of the present. Thus, because the past only exists through the way we "re-see" it (Flaherty and Fine 2001), biographies are constructed and presented in the light of present circumstances, identities and available vocabularies. George Mead succinctly summarises this:

> "The past which we construct from the standpoint of the new problem of today is based upon continuities which we discover in that which has arisen, and it serves us until the rising novelty of tomorrow necessitates a new history which interprets the new future" (Mead 1964: 353).

In this chapter, drawing on G.H Mead's concept of the symbolic reconstruction of the past from the standpoint of the present, I seek to present my participants' reflections on, and interpretation of their experiences in Nigeria. Their narratives not only expose the different social and cultural constructions of womanhood, but how they endured, enjoyed and challenged such constructions through their journey to adulthood. I present the different ways in which their experiences of gender and womanhood are reflexively integrated into their self-accounts. Participants' accounts are viewed both as resource and topic (Gubrium and Holstein 1997; Seale 1998; Plummer 2001; Elliot 2011; Ho et al 2017). This way, in addition to exploring participants' personal narratives as empirical resources, I examine the narrative features of their stories, paying attention to the social and cultural contexts within which these narratives are shaped. As resource, I examine the presentation of their experiences of womanhood in Nigeria—from childhood to life after marriage, which tells us something about their background. As topic, I explore how they create a sense of social order through their narratives. I need to stress that events in their lives were not recounted in a linear chronological order. However, despite the back-and-forth messy construction of personal narratives, in this chapter, to make sense of their stories, I first present participants' narratives of childhood experiences, exploring gender and household dynamics, and challenges faced in accessing formal education. I then discuss how participants' make sense of their experiences of marriage, examining how they exercise agency in marital negotiations, and how they presented their positions as wives and mothers in a trado-modern family. It is a journey through participants' memory, starting with childhood experiences.

Going Down Memory Lane: Childhood Experiences

Many of my participants talked about factors that shaped their childhood experiences. Understanding that childhood stories are partly constructions from our memories and/or stories told us by significant others (Barger and Luckman 1991), enabled me to engage with their stories as retrospective constructions of the past

from the standpoint of the present. I explore participants' reflexive narratives of how family structure, background and socio-economic situations determined the level of their struggles as children. I present an analysis of their accounts of how gender, cultural and familial practices shaped their experiences, which had diverse impact on, but by no means determined their later adult lives.

Family Structure: Gender and Household Dynamics

Many of my participants grew up in very large families, with more than ten children. In most cases, the more siblings there are in a family, the less family resources they will receive in infancy and childhood (Blake 1981). Furthermore, there is a difference between the impact of family size on a polygynous and a monogamous family. Many of my participants are from polygynous families. Simbi for instance, without telling me her position in the family, said her father had over 50 children from nine wives. Nkem is the fifteenth of nineteen children but first of her mother. Efosa is the eleventh of 27 children from five wives and six concubines. Ade, whose father had two wives and twelve children, is the ninth of her father but the third of her mother. Tinuke is the third of five from her mother but her father had fourteen or fifteen children from five wives. These accounts make me question if there is a surplus of women in Nigeria, which makes polygyny so commonly practiced. After all, statistics reflect that population distribution by gender in Nigeria is almost equal. Ware (1975) and Timaeus and Reynar (1998) however argue that the high rate of polygyny in Nigeria is not in any way due to a surplus of women, but due to men marrying seven to eight years later than women in a viable and rapidly growing society. This creates a surplus of young women of marriageable age, which leads to an increase in polygynous marriages. Care must be taken however, not to ignore the intersecting effects of culture, education and religion which go a long way to determine whether a woman ends up in a polygynous relationship or not. Of the three intersecting factors, education is possibly the strongest determinant of the type of marriage people settle for, as Western education has eroded the practice of polygyny (Fenske 2015). Fenske likened the erosion of polygyny in the whole of sub-Sahara Africa to the dramatic rise of divorce in America and the drastic decline of arranged marriage in Japan. This comparison may be over stating the point,

because in some cases, Nigerian educated women's unwillingness to admit that their husband has other wives (probably outside the family house), does not erase the possibility of the practice of polygyny. However, a relatively recent study shows a decline, albeit slow, in the rate of polygynous marriages in Nigeria. In 1990, 40.8% of marriages were polygynous while 32.7% were in 2008 (Munro et al 2011).

The origin of polygamy is not known but Vallely (2010) suggests that it is popular in societies where subsistence farming is the main occupation. This was the case in pre-colonial Nigeria, when citizens were predominantly farmers and needed many hands to work on the farm. To achieve this, families were usually very large, with many children. Furthermore, children are seen as a measure of wealth in Eastern Nigeria (Nwoko 2012), and a gift from God in Northern Nigeria (Wolf et al 2008). Despite the possible economic value of such large families, children who grow up in polygamous families, are sometimes faced with precarious situations. One of my participants who came from such a family, explained how difficult it was for them to make ends meet, much less enjoy parental love and care. Tinuke (one of fifteen children), presents a vivid picture of the situation:

> Who has your time? Everybody just do, does their own thing. You see the wives, struggling to support their own children individually; you know, I mean, it was survival of the fittest. I don't know how to describe it; you know, it was sometimes fun and sometimes jagajaga[23]…. I remember the noise growing up; you cannot differentiate when we're playing from when we're fighting; we were always loud (she laughs).

Tinuke's reflexive account here, (re)produces a narrative of a struggling and chaotic large family, which places the construction of her experience in an authentic historical context of the structure of many polygamous homes (Brooks 2009; Bamgbade and Timo 2014). She speaks retrospectively from her modern and enlightened self, about the struggles of her past (childhood). She also constructs a narrative of a collective self (self and others) in the same social space. Tinuke's sense-making about her past therefore, while shedding light on her childhood struggles, suggests that the storied self is not always constructed in isolation but

[23] "jagajaga" means chaotic

situated within inter-personal relationships and emphasises how the self is shaped by these relationships (Plummer 2001).

Efosa, (11th of 27 children) had a slightly different story to tell. Her father was very wealthy so, she said, they were adequately catered for, in terms of material needs but definitely not in terms of parental care and love. This is an example of affluent polygamy, which Nwoye (2008) describes as a situation where men marry many wives to show off their wealth. Efosa however told me about rivalry among her siblings, unhealthy competition and lack of adequate parental attention which they all suffered growing up.

Nkem, who also grew up in a very large family with19 children, explained that her difficulty was not only due to the size of the family but due to discrimination against her as a girl child. She added that her father, who had children older than her mother (from his older wives), and had many sons and daughters, was only happy over the birth of boy children. She narrated how unwanted she felt, when as a child, she was given away by her father to her uncle.

> My mum had a son, who died, then she had delays for years before I came and when I came, they said 'oh she is only a girl.' My dad did not provide clothes for me because I was a girl; meanwhile, he had a clothing shop. Don't forget that at that time, he already had many sons o. When my mum had a son after me, wow the celebration was great. He was the son after his father's heart; in fact, he named him after himself. When my uncle wanted to take me [to live with him], my father said, 'take her; after all, she is only a girl. I felt very unwanted.' But when another uncle wanted to take my brother, my father said he would rather die than live to see his son grow up in the home of another.

Here, Nkem demonstrates the reflexivity of the self, being the object of her own self-reflection (Jackson 2010). She (re)constructs stories of her past self, which appears to be divided into two: the past she could make sense of and the past she was not aware existed until it was constructed and related to her by a 'significant other' who witnessed part of her past. This is in line with the explanations from Scott and Scott (2000) and Plummer (2001) that the stories we tell about ourselves are often collaboratively constructed. For instance, it is impossible for Nkem to have been

aware of what was said at her birth. Her construction of her past therefore is made up of reflections on her experiences and reflections on stories told to her about herself. This also indicates how the stories told to us by the groups we belong to—significant and generalised others, shape our identities. We listen to these stories, internalise and tell them to ourselves, which leaves an impact on our identity (Mehl-Madrona 2007).

In South-Eastern Nigeria where Nkem was born, as well as other regions in Nigeria, male-child preference has remained an ingrained cultural value. When compared to their female siblings, male children are esteemed more highly and seen as protectors of the family lineage, a symbol of strength for the father and legitimacy of marriage for the mother (Nwokocha 2007). In other words, the desire for a male child transcends gender boundaries, as both the husbands and wives desire male children. Surprisingly, even educated parents from monogamous homes are not immune to the preference for male children. Betty, (5th of seven children), is from a monogamous home; her mother a Nurse and father an Engineer. She explained that her parents had six girls and a boy. She also added, "Although they were educated, they kept on giving birth because they were looking for a boy child; you know the thing, don't you? No fulfilment until you have a boy (hisses)"

Just like Betty, some participants told me that they grew up in monogamous families as well, but their experiences differ from one another. Cynthia, the second of five children, described her family as very large. This suggests that even monogamous families can be large, because the mother has many children, or because extended family members are received into the home. In Cynthia's case, they had many extended family members living with them. She talked about the implications of living in a large family:

> I grew up in a very large family. It was an open house, with aunties, uncles, cousins and friends. There was always a minimum of ten to fifteen people in our house per time. It was actually when we grew up that we realised it was five of us and our parents that made up our immediate family. That is because in Nigeria, everybody is brother and sister. Looking back now, I can say my parents had the financial capacity to give us the best in life, but because the family was widely extended, and they had to take care of many relatives; we were barely provided with the basic necessities of life.

Cynthia's account suggests that some of our experiences remain "unstoried," and uninterpreted until a situation calls for its construction. Her expression, "Looking back now…" reflects a past that is constructed and given its meaning from the point of view of the present. Drawing from Mead's theory of time, Jarvinen (2004:47) stated:

> From the point of view of the present, there is no objective past in the history of individuals, institutions or societies. There is no past to be captured, understood and described in its pure essence. There is only a past – or a plurality of pasts – constructed from the point of view of an ever-changing present. The "what it was" is always established through the "what it is".

Furthermore, it is important to know that African societies, as is reflected in Cynthia's account, are known to celebrate community. Kinship ties build one of the strongest communal forces in Nigeria. Kinship ties are seen as biological relationships that explain who one's relatives are; however, because of its multi-layered social and cultural construction, the meaning of kinship goes beyond genetic relationships. It is a network that gives its members a strong sense of belonging, irrespective of biological ties. It is a case where my father's best friend can be seen as and referred to as my father, and every older person responsible for me in one way or the other is my uncle or aunt. Many sociologists have commented on the benefits of having such a level of communal living, celebrating interconnectedness and building support networks (see Nagler and Weibull 2010; Nordman 2016). However, the impact of such networks on the nuclear family, especially children, has been largely ignored. In Cynthia's case, we see through her reflective recollection that she (and her siblings) were denied certain necessities of life because of demands from extended family members who had been adopted into the household. Nevertheless, it must be noted that a nuclear family is not a guarantee of an "easy" life, as this is dependent on many factors.

Osas, who is the second of eight from a monogamous home did not mention interference from extended family, but painfully narrated how difficult life was growing up. She said, "Growing up, life was tough; from when I started my menstrual period, I never got sanitary towel from them [her parents]. I had to cut old dresses to use as pad." Although the use of pieces of old cloth as menstrual

absorbents by young girls and women in Nigeria is a common phenomenon, in many cases, it is a result of poverty and lack of education (Abioye-Kuteyi 2000; Onyegegbu 2011). Osas however singles out this particular event in her past to strengthen her reflexive construction of a self that had suffered hardship and lack. Cynthia and Osas' accounts suggest that growing up in a monogamous home in Nigeria may not be as chaotic as many polygamous homes, but it is also not free from its own struggles and complexities, depending on its structure, size, economic state and family values.

In contrast to the prevailing stories of struggles, some participants recounted their experience of growing up in relatively small, middle-class monogamous homes, with between four and six children. Blessing (first of four children) and Charity (third of six), are two participants who grew up in such homes. They both talked about how much they enjoyed their childhoods, with Charity attributing this to the educational level of her parents: "Both my parents are university graduates; they are both accountants and they know what holds, so they made sure we all had the best of childhood". Both participants however explained how hard they had to work on their education to meet parental expectations, since it is the norm that children are expected to out-perform their parents in Nigeria. According to Ayling (2015), this is a problem with the elite population in Nigeria, where children are pushed really hard to maintain the high status. Both participants' accounts reflect narratives of privilege in relation to class, self and identity, which suggests their consciousness of their privileged background. Even the challenge of meeting high educational goals is not necessarily internalised as a sense of oppression, but as a reflection of their parents' investment in the lives of their children.

The accounts of participants' childhood experiences reflect a "struggle versus privilege narrative". Participants with struggle narratives construct accounts of specific parts of their childhood experiences and how they negotiated such experiences. Their accounts suggest how the story-telling self, constructs narratives that reflect the storied self and the identity it seeks to present. Their narratives are marked with themes of struggling, neglect, hardship, poverty and discrimination. The few participants with privilege narratives on the other hand, present a different construction of their storied selves in relation to class and identity. Unlike other participants whose reflections present the cultural context within which they grew up

as marked with struggles and constraint, they construct narratives of support and encouragement, emphasising the active roles of their parents in their educational pursuits. The participants with privilege narratives spoke from a position of awareness, attributing this to the educational background of their parents. Generally, the narratives of all participants wove together a retrospective construction of their fragmented and disorganised memories into a coherent storyline of their past. They were not passive recipients of their cultural self-identity, but they exercised agency in negotiating their social and cultural sphere (Rahman and Jackson 2010).

Going to School: Stop that! You're a Girl.

"About 10.1 million children aged 5-14 are out of school in Nigeria" (UNICEF 2016:2). Although records are patchy, Nigeria has the world's highest number of out of school children and about 60% of these are girls (Ajikobi 2017). It is shocking that despite the declaration of a Universal Basic Education for all, initiated by the 1999 Nigerian constitution, backed up by The Child Act implemented in 2003 and other policies like the National Gender Policy (2006) and National policy on Education (2013), there is still a very high number of out-of-school girls in Nigeria. This suggests that although policies and constitutions are drafted, implementation is very poor. Other challenges affecting female education in Nigeria include household poverty, culture, religion and traditional beliefs. Despite these challenges, most of my participants recounted how they struggled against all odds to succeed academically, with all of them having completed at least a higher education degree.

Funmi told me that her father took the education of the male children more seriously than that of the female children because of the popular belief that a girl's education ends in the kitchen of her husband's house. She explained her ordeal when she gained admission into the university:

> "I remember when I gained admission, my father said there was no money; but my mum put her feet down and said, 'my daughter will go to school [university]'. What she did was so surprising because she brought out her capital for her business and she said, 'get your things, you're going'. So that was the beginning; else, I would not have gone to uni…. I am the third in a

> family of seven. I have four brothers. When it was time for the boys to go to school, there was no struggle for school fees; my dad was able to find their own school fees".

In the face of scarce resources, it is not uncommon for children to be left in the care of their mothers, especially girl children. For instance, Funmi's narrative here, contains themes constructed around gender discrimination and social values. More importantly, she presents her mother as "the heroic other", who contributed positively in ensuring a path is created for her upward mobility. Two other participants, Omo and Tinuke talked about similar experiences, where their mothers had to sell some of their belongings to support them in school. Their mothers are constructed as agents determined to ensure that their daughters excel above their own experiences of class and gender struggles. It is this strong determination that makes some mothers either use up all their savings to support their children as in the case of Funmi's mum, and/or sell their belongings to raise money as discussed by Omo and Tinuke.

> Omo: My mum went as far as selling her clothes and wrappers to get our school fees and she also had to sell her sewing machine to pay for our fees. These were sacrifices I would never forget. Selling her clothes, her sewing machine and her gold jewellery. When I was in my third year in secondary school, they were calling out for school fees defaulters, I was called out. When I got home, there was no money; so, I went to school crying […] For me, it was not the girl-child discrimination but poverty that we suffered. It was just my mum and there was no help to support us.

Omo's parents were separated, and the mother was solely responsible for her children. Unfortunately, there is no provision of any kind under the Nigerian welfare system to cater for the less privileged. Although there might be claims of social welfare services in Nigeria, there is a huge gap between policies and actual service provision. The only accessible known system is the locally arranged extended family system of social welfare. Children are sent to distant uncles and aunts, kinsmen and relatives, to live with them, support their trade, do chores and take care of their children, and in return for such services, they are given access to Western education. This was the case with Nkem and Deborah (both from polygynous homes). At some

point as children, they said they were sent to live with some distant older relatives to help out with chores and childcare, in exchange for access to basic Western education. Tinuke also said that although she and all her siblings had access to education, the boys went to private schools while the girls went to public schools[24].

> When it was time for secondary school, I had opportunity to go to top schools; I passed erm… 1, 2, … in short, I can't remember how many, but I passed all the entrance exams. My father said he was not going to waste his money on girl children because they only bring pregnancy. So, I went to a closer secondary school, but a good one in its own right. He'll just pay the school fees and that's it. My mother sold her gold and her properties just to support me. My mum was not happy that she was denied education, so she did everything possible to support me. As for my dad, he said I should go learn how to sew.

Another participant, Blessing, who like Tinuke attended a public school while her brothers attended a private one, added that her father's justification was, "boys have the tendency to misbehave, so it is better to give them adequate attention". There is a huge difference between privately owned schools and the government (public) schools in Nigeria. The acceptance of private schools in Nigeria is a relatively recent development, created to correct the deficiency in the standard of education provided by the public schools. Public schools in Nigeria today lack quality instructional materials, standard school buildings and a conducive learning environment. The buildings are dilapidated and the classrooms are overcrowded. Instead of addressing these major problems and overhauling the educational system, Nigeria, being a capitalist society, embraces the creation of private schools as the solution to the poor educational system. This, in addition to enriching capitalists, exacerbates the class distinction between the rich and the poor. The only way out for lower income earners, therefore, is to decide to send one or two of their children to these private schools, while the others attend the public schools. More often, it is the girls who are sent to the public schools while the boys are sent to private schools, as seen in

[24] Public schools in Nigeria are government schools. These schools are not adequately funded therefore the standard of education is very low. Private schools are owned by individuals and corporations, who fund the school by charging exorbitant fees.

Blessing and Tinuke's cases. Ruth talked about how she and her sister supported their parents in raising their own school fees and those of their brothers:

> Their school fees was about five times more than that of me and my sister. So, after school, we [she and her sister] had to hawk roasted fish round the market to raise money to support the family. And as per their needs, ha; don't go there o. They get everything they want; new books, new uniform and anything they just want but when we ask, my father will say there is no money and when I protest, my parents will say 'stop that; you're a girl; you must learn how to manage what you have'. That thing used to pain me (wearing a frown).

Ruth re-enacts the pain of her storied self by wearing a frown, which provides an insight into the emotional impact of her engagement with the retrospective construction of her past experiences. However, her narrative tells us something about a resilient self, who, in the face of harsh economic realities, still acquired university education. It is important to note that in the long run, students from public and private secondary schools sit for the same national and international examinations into universities and other higher institutions. These examinations, among many others, include the West African Examination Council (WAEC) examination, the National Examination Council (NECO) and the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) examinations. The difficulty for students in public schools to pass these exams probably explains why girl children in Nigeria do not necessarily go beyond secondary school. It also suggests how my participants, who all had university education, with some having more than one degree, must have worked twice as hard, negotiating many obstacles, to attain the requirement for admission into universities or any higher institution of learning. However, not only did they gain admission into these institutions, they worked hard, and excelled in their fields of studies. Despite their constructed narratives of struggles and hardship, I argue that this feat in their academic pursuits situates my participants as part of the few privileged Nigerian women who, against all odds, had access to university education. There remains a higher percentage of women in Nigeria, who despite their struggles and hardship, either have no access to education or drop out of school for different reasons.

The scarcity of access to public funds, grants, loans or scholarships in Nigeria makes it more difficult for children from working class families to access university education. Girls are particularly disadvantaged in this situation because the need to invest in them is usually treated as secondary. Some of my participants spoke about how they were left to fend for themselves in university. Their stories are very much in line with the life-story plot of "pulling yourself up by the bootstraps" depicted by Coltart (2007). Coltart explores her participants' reflexive constructions of how their resourceful selves negotiated an oppressed and embattled background by pulling themselves up by the bootstraps. Many of my participants could relate to this life-story plot in making sense of how class and gender shaped their experiences in university. Osas gave an account of her ordeal in medical school:

> My father was in love with education; so, he really, really wanted his children to go to school, so from an early age he made sure we went to school…He tried his best for our school. To a good extent, my siblings and I had equal access to school. School was fun, he wrote my names on my books by himself, which meant a lot to me; but this was for only primary and secondary school o. In the university, it was O.Y.O[25] totally on your own. Uni was difficult… Provisions for clothes and shoes were never made. My first wristwatch was from my aunt and my first bras were used ones from her. My first pad was from a friend who gave me from hers in university, after seeing what I was using, pieces of cloth from old dresses. I'm not joking. They [parents] assume you will have boyfriends who will cater for your needs, yet they want you to be focused. It's funny how they want you to remain chaste but expect you to get money to use. Getting books in medical school was a challenge. Medical school was expensive, Clinical books, for the rest of the clinical years, I had to borrow from people. So, all through, I had to get on all by myself.

Osas' account reflects a self that had suffered neglect and poverty, but had held strongly to her moral values, exhibiting resilience and courage to pursue her academic goal. She used some significant items like her first wristwatch, her bras

[25] O.Y.O is an acronym for "On Your Own". It is a popular Nigerian slang to explain the state of being left alone.

and pad, to amplify her theme of struggle—pulling herself up by the bootstraps. There are a few participants however, who faced similar level of struggles but did not convey a deeply internalised sense of lack or neglect, instead they presented a resourceful self by telling how they engaged in some form of work or trading. Ruth for instance, shared her university experience:

> I was a very hard-working girl; you know me, even now, I still am (laughs). I learnt well from my mum (laughs), so I use to sell little things in Uni,, just in the residential halls, you know, like under-wears, that is ladies' pants and bra, sometimes even second-hand bra, you know okrika? Ehn ehn[26]. Then I also used to do baking. Like birthday and valentine cakes; all just to keep soul and body together. So, by the grace of God, I did not lack while in the Uni, it was just that I didn't have time to socialise like my other friends and colleagues.

Like Ruth, during my university days, I had to hawk fresh bread and eggs to be able to pay my tuition fee and fend for myself. It was difficult juggling those chores and my academic work. The most difficult part for me however, was being referred to as "fresh bread and egg" by my school mates. While some called me that jokingly, others did out of mockery, not sure why I could not give up schooling for trading or trading for schooling. It was difficult to explain, but I could not give up schooling for trading because I wanted to become a teacher, not a trader. I could not give up selling fresh bread and eggs, because it was my only means of sustenance. Telling my story here, suggests how connections are made in the telling of stories between the researcher and her participants (Smart 2007).

There are two other groups of participants whose reflections present a different view of experiences in university. Unlike most participants who drew on themes of struggling, neglect and gender discrimination in their access to quality education, Alima and Ade, from Northern Nigeria, construct their narratives around the theme of sheltered living all through school. Alima proudly narrated how she and her sister enjoyed "preferential treatment" compared to her brothers while at university. She however added, "My father and my brothers did that so that we, the girls, will not go astray". Ade, who also grew up in the north, said that in addition to the poverty level,

[26] Ehn ehn is just a common sound made to show approval.

it is the sheltered life required for girl children that stops northern parents from sending their girls to school. She explains:

> In the north, female children are very precious and that's why they are not even sent to schools. Most parents want their girl children to be well cared for, not suffer any lack and not be molested by any man, so that is why many girls in the north are kept at home instead of going to school, because they think they will become "spoilt" if allowed to go to school.

Alima and Ade consider themselves lucky and privileged to have been allowed access to Western education, because it was contrary to the general practice in their social and cultural circle in Northern Nigeria. However, it can be assumed from Alima's narrative that receiving preferential treatment compared to their brothers was a conscious effort by their parents to ensure that the girls operate within the confines of their cultural, traditional and religious belief system, and were not tempted to drift into the "moral laxity" that comes with Western education (Niles 1989). Niles states that the civilisation that comes with Western education is viewed as dysfunctional, alien and contrary to the conservative traditional lifestyle expected of girls in Northern Nigeria. Hence, some girls in this part of Nigeria are denied access to Western education. Contrary to the dominant rhetoric of gender discrimination in Northern Nigeria, Alima and Ade drew on themes of care and protection in their retrospective construction of their experiences in the university.

Also, Christy and Victoria are two participants whose reflective construction of the past presents a supported and nurtured self, especially with regards to their education. For instance, Christy said that her parents, who are both academics, made sure they all had equal access to education without any preferential treatment and they all had equal support without limitations.

> Christy: We had a nice middle-class upbringing. Both of my parents are graduates and they both went into teaching. We are six children in my family, and I am the eldest. They wanted us to be professionals, at least have good education. You see, my father drove about 10 miles to take us to school and I had a fun childhood. There was early introduction to books, we lived in the school compound but no wide circle of friends. The expectations and desire to excel were sown early enough.

> Victoria: My dad was a proper educated man, and he always told us that life is what you made of it; so, he wasn't bothered with gender. He loved and respected us all, alike. Growing up at home was sweet. There was no difference. I could not reconcile with my friends who had challenges in terms of not getting parental support for female children."

It is interesting how in the process of making sense of their experiences, both participants attributed their parents' promotion of gender equality to their level of education. While this may be the case, it cannot be taken as a general notion because patriarchy, which sets the parameters for gender inequality, thrives in Nigeria irrespective of the level of education (Makama 2013). Unlike many of my participants whose reflective accounts present experiences of growing up in working-class families, Victoria's and Charity's accounts reflect their construction of a middle-class background, which they linked to the educational attainment and profession of their parents. Also, their experience of relative comfort and the social values they were exposed to, helped them to form a sense of belonging to a middle class. This resonates with hooks' (2000:3-4) explanation of class:

> […] class involves your behavior, your basic assumptions about life. Your experience (determined by your class) validates those assumptions, how you are taught to behave, what you expect from yourself and from others, your concept of a future, how you understand problems and solve them, how you think, feel, act.

Victoria and Christy constructed a coherent identity through which they emphasised the interconnection between the storied self and class, using such narratives to make sense of their positioning in relation to the wider society (Reid and West 2014). The class system holds strongly in Nigeria, and as many as manage to acquire Western education strive to climb up the class ladder. However, only 23% of the Nigerian population belong to the middle class, and 92% of them are well educated with post-secondary education (Robertson et al, 2011). For this group of people, educating their children comes as a top priority in order to maintain their class position. Despite the clear class difference that marks the background of my participants, they were all able to achieve their academic goals, albeit at a different pace and under different circumstances. Although there are pockets of research indicating a gradual

increase in the number of girl-children gaining access to formal education, the condition and circumstances under which such access is gained is largely ignored. The overwhelming challenges faced by girl children accounts for why many do not go beyond primary or secondary school before they drop out of formal education. My participants, through the retrospective accounts of their past experiences, constructed themes of struggles, hardship, resilience and hard work in their determination to acquire Western education.

Through participants' retrospective narratives of their childhood selves, they managed to construct coherent and culturally recognisable plots of their experiences around intersecting themes of hardship, struggle, neglect and gender discrimination. A few who consciously present themselves as growing up in middle-class "enlightened" families drew on themes of care, support and expectation to attain very high educational standards. Irrespective of the background stories told by participants, their narratives reflect a bit about some of the conventional social, religious and cultural norms they had to negotiate on their journey to acquiring higher education. However, their ultimate attainment of higher education situates them as members of a distinctive group of women who were "privileged" to be educated. This theme could have formed part of their stories, but the silence over this in the account of most participants, in a way, colours their narratives. It reflects how certain plots in narrative accounts are selected to illuminate desired themes. Indeed, what is remembered and told in retrospective narratives of lived experiences is situated within and shaped by the context within which the account is given (Eastmond 2007). Furthermore, it reflects the intersubjective relationship that exists between self, memories and experiences, which is open to construction and reconstruction by the story-telling self (Coltart 2007). Participants' accounts reflect how differently people internalise, reflect on and construct stories of past experiences. In addition to being highly educated, all my participants migrated to the UK as married women[27]. Examining their stories as married women in Nigeria tells us something about the past they were closely linked to, within which the decision to migrate was considered.

[27] All my participants migrated to the UK as married women, but two were already divorced before the time of this research.

Marriage: Experiencing it the Trado-Modern[28] Way

In recent times, the meaning of marriage has evolved so much that it has become a hot topic of political debate. In every Western nation, before 2001, marriage was commonly defined as the formal union between a man and a woman, recognized by law, to become husband and wife. Although other unions existed, for a long time, they did not enjoy state recognition. After constant deliberation, changes to this common notion happened in 2001, when same sex marriage was legalised in the Netherlands (Emerson and Essenburg 2013). However, same sex marriage is yet to be recognised or legalised in some countries like Nigeria, where homosexuality is still illegal. Basically, there are three legal systems of marriage in Nigeria, which can only be contracted between opposite sexes: statutory, customary and Islamic marriages.

Statutory marriage is contracted in accordance with the Marriage Act Chapter 218, Laws of the Federation (1990). It is a voluntary contracted marriage between a man and a woman (monogamy). According to the marriage act, there is no minimum age limit within which the marriage must be contracted, as long as there is a written consent given by either the parents or guardian of the individuals involved. However, the Child Rights Act, which was passed in 2003, set the acceptable marriage age at 18 years. But the act has raised so much controversy, as some groups from different parts of the country, especially the north, argue that the act contravenes religious and cultural norms and practices (Toyo 2006). In the light of this conflict of interests, in some parts of the country, marriage is still contracted with girls as young as 12 years old.

Customary marriage takes place under the customary law, and it is largely polygynous in nature (there is no limit to the number of wives the man can marry). Under this system, the woman is said to be married not just to her husband but into the husband's family. It should be noted however, that customary marriage, (also known as traditional marriage), is generally required of couples who intend to undertake either the Statutory or Islamic marriage. This requirement is to acknowledge acceptance of the culture and tradition of their ethnic groups. It is at

[28] Trado-modern is a term I adopted from mass communication literature (for example, John 2015). It is used to explain the fusion between the traditional and the modern.

this point that the bride price[29] is paid to the family of the bride. If, after the traditional marriage, the couple decides to go on with the statutory marriage, then the marriage would have to remain monogamous. Islamic marriage, just like customary marriage, is polygynous in nature, where the man can marry up to four wives. One main difference with the customary marriage however, is that the bride price (Sadaki or Dower), is paid to the bride and not to the parents of the bride (Boparai 1982; Efagene 2015).

According to my participants, they all had either statutory or Islamic marriages, but not before they had undergone the customary rites, where their bride price was paid. They all told me they have monogamous marriages, although many of them were born into polygynous homes. They are all in heterosexual relationships and they all profess to be practising Christians or Muslims. Many of them have inter-tribal marriages (marrying from another Nigerian tribe that is different from theirs.). Two participants are married to white men. All participants migrated to the UK as married women, but two are presently divorced while one is a widow. More than half of my participants (20) married either in their final year in the university or immediately after. Almost all my participants married before their 30th birthday. Two participants, Tinuke and Christy were pregnant before marriage, with Christy explaining that her wedding date was fixed immediately after she realised that she was pregnant, because she did not want to have her child outside wedlock. It is an open secret that very few uneducated girls in Nigeria escape child marriage; it is however, also an unspoken truth that there is a very high pressure for girls with university education to marry immediately after graduating. As a matter of societal norm, every woman is expected to marry, and to do so by a certain age. This view is illuminated by a recent Demographic and Health Survey, which reflects the fact that 94.2% of Nigerian women are married by age 34 (Ntoimo and Isiugo-Abanihe 2011).

In my case, during my final year in the university, I was always faced with the question "so when will the wedding bells ring", or "when will your wedding card be out?" Somehow, society has it all planned out that the next thing on the agenda for a girl-child after graduating (for those who made it that far), was marriage. A friend

[29] Bride price is the sum of money and itemised goods presented by the family of the groom to the family of the bride in Nigeria. The amount of money and quantity of goods differ from one tribe to the other.

also complained to me after our graduation from university, that she could no longer stand the pressure from her mother, who could not stop warning her, "my dear you have to do something; every good girl marries immediately after "school"; time's not on your side". This statement reminds me of Adankwo's question to Nnu Ego in Buchi Emecheta's novel, *The Joys of Motherhood*: "Have you ever heard of a complete woman without a husband?" (Emecheta 1994:158). Both statements display the level to which traditional patriarchal hegemony is internalised and enacted in Nigerian and indeed many other societies: A woman without a husband is an incomplete being, one without an identity; hence the pressure to marry. This pressure is further heightened by the belief that young men are threatened by single independent women with lucrative jobs, as they fear that they will not be submissive wives. Another reason is that single female graduates who are not betrothed to any man, are thought to be of loose morals. Therefore, the acceptable norm and societal right order is for a girl to complete her university education, marry a middle-class man (or upper class if lucky), and settle into married life. In addition to presenting how participants make sense of their marriages, I explore the reflexive accounts of their roles in choosing spouses, leaving home and experiencing marriage in contemporary Nigeria. I also present their narratives around themes of resistance and resilience in negotiating a balance between motherhood, domestic work and paid work.

Choosing Marriage Partners: Contextualizing Women's Agency in Marital Negotiations

My participants' narratives of how they met and chose their marriage partners suggest that there is a relationship between their educational/professional status and how they exercised agency in choosing spouses and confronting other marital issues. Sahu and Jeffery (2016) however, warn that the link between education and agency in marital negotiations should never be viewed as always linear and positive. It can be complex and problematic, especially if there are any strong objections from either family, which could determine how far agency can be exercised.

Agency is a complex concept, which Hitlin (2009) describes as a slippery term, and Burke (2012) as an elusive and highly contested term within the social sciences. Rahman and Jackson (2010) however give a clearer insight, explaining agency as the

ability to reflect upon and interpret situations before taking suitable action(s). Agency can therefore be said to be important in every facet of human life, one of which is choosing a marriage partner. Sahu and Jeffery (2016) identify three types of agency in relation to marital negotiations, which are convinced, resistance and complicit agency. Convinced agency reflects satisfaction with marital arrangements, resistance agency expresses disapproval of marital arrangement, while complicit agency is complying with marital arrangements to maintain the status quo. In their retrospective narratives, my participants described how they exercised agency to tackle ethnic, cultural and religious controversies within marital negotiations and familial boundaries.

Nkem talked about how she was close to being rejected by her own family because she was going out with a white man, who she had agreed to marry. A level of liberty enjoyed by many educated women in Nigeria is that they are often allowed to choose their own suitors; however, class, ethnicity, culture and religion must always be put into consideration. Uneducated underage girls on the other hand, often only have the capacity to exercise complicit agency, where they choose to conform to societal norms—their suitors are often chosen, and the marriage process already instituted before the girl is informed. It should be noted however, that although educated girls can present their suitors, the family must give their consent before the marriage contract can be issued. Any woman who goes against the decision of the family is considered rebellious or an outcast (Swai 2010). This was Nkem's situation, but because of her educational and professional status as a university graduate and a top government official, she said she could not be considered an outcast. She narrated her story, pointing out that she met her husband on a flight and they became friends, but when she presented the idea of marriage with him to her family, it was very challenging for them to accept a white man as their in-law:

> I am an Igbo lady and where I come from, they frown at our girls marrying white men. Sometimes they think you are a prostitute from a club so, I struggled to break the news. I told my brothers and they were cool with it; but my uncle raised dust. He called my mum, rained insults on her, then I told my uncle that I am an adult and I was going on with it. They did not really respect me, but they respected my status, so they were compelled to give their consent. I was 28, I was not getting younger and I wanted to marry.

> Some agreed grudgingly, some said, “let’s see how long it will last” and some said, “don’t worry she will come back”. So, it strengthened me, and I was determined to make my marriage work.

Here, Nkem presents an independent self, who, adequately equipped with cultural capital, employed resistance agency to challenge the cultural, hegemonic and patriarchal sentiments surrounding whom she chooses to marry. However, her statement, “I was 28, I was not getting younger and I wanted to marry”, disrupts her narrative of “an independent self”. It reflects how her desire to marry is informed by cultural expectations, and also presents the personal as inextricably linked to the social (Phoenix and Brannen 2014).

Tinuke and Christy both talked about how they were under intense pressure to marry as soon as they realised, they were pregnant outside wedlock. Premarital pregnancy is frowned on and seen as a thing of shame in most communities in Nigeria, with the woman either opting for abortion or rushing into marriage. However, there are a few communities where premarital pregnancy is encouraged, celebrated and seen as a test of fertility. As soon as the bride-to-be is declared pregnant, the wedding date is fixed, and customary rites are conducted to complete the marriage process (Feyisetan and Pebley 1989). If on the other hand, pregnancy fails to occur after a certain period, then all ties are severed, and another relationship sought. In a general sense however, the prevalence of premarital sex is attributed to the erosion of Nigerian traditional practices caused by modernization. The factors underlying how premarital sex is viewed include religion, ethnicity and level of education. Yoruba women are said to be more likely to engage in premarital sex than Igbo and Hausa women, educated women are more likely to be sexually active before marriage than uneducated women, and Muslim women are less likely to engage in premarital sex (ibid). Tinuke and Christy had to employ complicit agency to ensure that they were married before having their babies, in order to maintain the status quo and cultural norms.

There were two participants, Grace and Ruth, who proudly stated that they married as virgins. Ruth said, “I wasn’t a spoilt girl, I married as a virgin,” and Grace also told me, “I got married as a virgin because I did not want to disgrace my brothers. I wanted to make them proud. I was second to the last child. I promised them that I

would do them proud and I did." Both narratives are constructed to fit into the traditional Nigerian ideology of a "good girl", where girls are expected to marry as virgins and those who do not are seen or referred to as girls with loose morals or "spoilt" girls. During marriage rites, such girls are referred to as "incomplete brides" (Feyisetan and Pebley 1989). However, the advent of Western education has gradually led to a change in certain of these ideologies in Nigeria, but the impact of these changes remains open for discussion. Most of my participants constructed retrospective narratives of how they exercised convinced agency in their choice of marital partners. They reflected on how, because of their educational status, they enjoyed the liberty to choose their marriage partners, but not without input from family members, who ensure that certain cultural, religious and economic standards are met. The relationship between self and others in the choice of marriage partners suggests that even when one type of agency is predominantly used, there is always an overlap of other agencies in negotiating the complexities involved (Sahu and Jeffrey 2016).

Getting Married: Leaving Home or Going Home?

It is a common practice and part of the societal norm in Nigeria for girls to live with their parents until marriage. This practice is encouraged even when it is not convenient, because girls who live on their own (except for educational purposes), are said to be loose and wayward and may not find the right suitors. Since many of my participants either married while in higher education or immediately after, their only idea of "home" was their parents'.

The act of "leaving home" for the purpose of marriage cannot be discussed as a simple and straightforward event in people's lives. It is a complex and sometimes emotional phenomenon, with varying possibilities and sometimes layered with some complex sets of social rules (Suzuki 2001; Zang 2004). In contemporary Nigeria, it is common practice for the wife to leave her parental home and move into either a conjugal household (husband and wife) or husband's extended family household, immediately after the marriage rites have been completed. How this transition affects their lives is however seldom discussed. It was after my interview session with Ruth, that I stopped to reflect for the first time since my marriage, on my own transition from my home (parents' home) to my home (husband's home) and how I felt (or still

feel?) in a space occupied not just by me and my husband, but by his people, who have become my people. I realised how much there was to unpack, to feel "at home" at home! Ruth's words kept ringing in my ears for days after our interview:

> Joy- you said you married immediately after Uni….
>
> Ruth - (interrupting) in fact, it was immediately after my final exams. My final result was not even out…you know the thing er… I think it was ASUU[30] strike or something sha; but there was a strike that caused delay that semester, so we had a delay of two months or so, meanwhile, the date for the wedding was already fixed and my parents said the date cannot be shifted. I had no choice now…I had to play along and thank God the wedding was a success.
>
> Joy- wow, so did you stay back after the wedding to collect your result before leaving?
>
> Ruth- (chuckling silently) ha; it was immediately I left o. I left immediately (quiet for a while) … Some of the things they say during wedding ceremonies just makes me laugh. After the bride price had been paid, my parents took me (holding my hands to illustrate) to sit among my in-laws, and said "this is now your home o, you no longer have a room in ours; these are now your people. You can only visit us now". You see, sometimes, erm, I wonder if a woman belongs anywhere. You understand? I feel when I was with my parents, they were preparing me to leave home and with my husband's family I don't know if I'm actually fully at home? You wonder if you're leaving home or going home. Which one is really yours?

Ruth's deep reflective account calls for a need to interrogate the meaning of "home" for women, especially in the Nigerian context. Although my intention was to ask about transition in geographical space, Ruth's answer stretches beyond that to interrogate the meaning of home for (Nigerian) women as associated to the level of relationship built with significant others in the same space. The ability to accept the people and be accepted in this space, could be conceptualised as a life-long

[30] ASUU is acronym for The Academic Staff Union of Universities, which is a union for all academic staff in Nigeria founded in 1978.

adventure of "going home". In the course of Ruth's reflexive account, she mentioned how when her in-laws are happy with her, she is referred to as "our wife" but when things go wrong, she is considered a complete outsider and reminded that she is in "her husband's house". Para-Mallam (2010) described the use of the phrase "husband's house", as a social construct to establish male dominance and female subordination in many marriages in Nigeria. This suggests that Ruth's personal narrative is of much social significance. The position of the woman in the "husband's house" is relative to the success of the marriage (it could be a place of temporary abode), from where she can be thrown out if things go wrong. Para-Mallam also added that a woman is equally seen as a mere tenant in her father's house; after all, Ruth was warned by her parents that she had lost "her room" with them, which is a metaphor to explain that her place is no longer with them, and if ever she returns, it will be as a visitor or a guest. It could be argued therefore, that for many women in Nigeria, while their parents' home is temporary, their marital home is contingent; which truly begs the question, "when women marry, do they leave home or go home?"

Experiencing Marriage in Contemporary Nigeria: A Trado-Modern Culture

All my participants, unlike many of their parents, have monogamous marriages. Under the influence of Western education and religion, people began to embrace monogamy as the ideal marriage structure. The advent of education produced a post-colonial population who try to imbibe Western culture. This does not however undermine the need to meet some cultural expectations. Instead, it situates the family within a hybridized social order, where traditional precolonial culture and Western practices are fused (Okeke-Ihejirika 2004). This fusion brings with it the similitude of a new culture in marriage, which I would call "trado-modern". I think this a more appropriate term because while preserving some old traditional practices, others are rejected in the light of modern Western mores. It is important to note that this phenomenon is not peculiar to Nigeria. According to Jackson et al (2013), there is the fusion between modernity and traditional practices, which co-exist and shape some of the practices among British and Hong Kong families. The changes in personal lifestyles and within families is not solely a result of cultural diversity and change, but much more a result of the socio-economic and the political situation of

the country. This has caused major structural adjustments within families, which has led to the rejection or "re-shaping" of some traditions (Jackson et al 2013). For instance, in Nigeria, there is a decline in the number of polygynous marriages, and having many children is no longer seen as a sign of wealth (Hollos 1991; Okeke-Ihejirika 2004). There is now a gradual interest in giving girl children proper access to formal education, which gives them a better chance to compete in the labour market and enjoy a level of economic independence.

All my participants lived and worked in different big cities and towns in the urban parts of Nigeria before migrating to the UK. In addition to having monogamous marriages, the average number of children per family was three. They all said that they are committed to treating their children equally, without exhibiting any gender preference. Their children, boys and girls alike, attended very good private primary and secondary schools within Nigeria. This is the picture of the growing modern day, middle-class, nuclear family in Nigeria (Hollos 1991). But this does not erase the financial responsibility to extended family members ingrained in the old traditional culture. Parents are still very reliant on their children for financial assistance, because of the belief that they have invested so much in training them. Not only are they financially responsible for their parents, they are also expected to cater for their younger siblings who are still in school. This is one cause of financial pressure for the middle-class population in Nigeria (Ekpe 1983). It is equally one reason why many of my participants considered migration to the UK, to better their lot, improve their financial state and be able to meet financial demands from both nuclear and extended family members.

Osas, for instance explained, "My husband's parents did not spare cost to train him; so, they expected returns as soon as he started working and they expected more, since he was also married to a doctor; but we also had my own siblings to cater for…" This suggests that although the modern concept of contemporary marriage in Nigeria seeks to move away from the culture of having large families with many children, the responsibility towards extended family members is not reduced. This is due not only to cultural expectations but to the poor economic state of the country.

One key feature of the trado-modern family is the gradual shift from breadwinner husbands and homemaker wives to dual-earner couples. According to Nkemdili and

Anigbogu (2013), this shift has a remarkable impact on gender roles. While men are relieved from carrying the family's financial burden in the face of harsh economic realities, the women are said to enjoy some economic independence and high self-esteem. Furthermore, Nkemdili and Anigbogu claimed that women gain more negotiating power in the household than in the public sphere as the couple move towards a more egalitarian relationship. Hollos (1991) however argued that it is women's household negotiating power that is eroded, while their public power is enhanced in such relationships. Hollos' argument is that the tendency for husbands to earn a higher income puts their wives in a position to still be financially dependent on them. And since marriages are monogamous, the woman suffers a decline in her autonomy and independence to oversee the affairs of any unit of the family. Both arguments are flawed or overtly simplistic. They ignore the impact of complex and multiple factors such as type of job, husband's perceptions and values, culture, religion and the level of understanding with extended family members. Two of my participants gave accounts of how their private/public life practices shape their identities in their dual-earning relationship.

> Osas- Even though we are both professionals, when it comes to money, they [in-laws] remember you're the same and equal, but when it comes to respect, you are a nobody. When you go to work yes you're respected; but as soon as you pass through the door home, you're a wife and their definition of a wife is the cook, the servant, the cleaner, the driver and you are to serve everybody and that's hard; especially when you know who you are […]. At work, I was a decision maker, I was an adviser to the government. Yes; I had a secretary, a driver and a messenger. I had people saying yes sir, yes ma to me at work; then to get home and face all that, was hard…

Osas' retrospective construction of her public/private life suggests that she enjoyed a very high public status, but her domestic status was very low (Hollos 1991). The reasons she gave for her low domestic status are however, tied to the cultural hegemonic belief system that is prevalent in a patriarchal country like Nigeria. Using vivid description of her roles and relationships, she presents herself as the protagonist of her story. She appreciates the full recognition of her status in the public space but represents her position in her domestic space in stereotypical ways

to illuminate her low status. Charity on the other hand, who is a Chartered Accountant and married to a highly placed civil servant, has a different story to tell:

> As for us, we have this understanding; we do everything together. Actually, my husband is Yoruba o but he does not hold on to any nonsense culture. He is very hands-on and can do anything. He doesn't see that as anything at all. He can … even before I come back from work, he has done the chores and sorted the children. On that one, I think I can consider myself blessed…

Although Charity did not comment on her public status here, she describes an egalitarian status with her husband in the domestic space. Her statement, "Actually, my husband is Yoruba o but he does not hold on to any nonsense culture", presents her awareness of traditionalism and the feminization of household chores that is prevalent among the Yoruba people in Nigeria (Labeodan 2005; Akanle and Oluwakemi 2012). But she presents her husband as having a more modern and egalitarian view on doing domestic chores, thereby giving her very high status in the private sphere. The accounts from these two participants suggest that the public/private status of women may be dependent on individual family values, and there may be room for negotiation as highly educated women enter into trado-modern marriages.

Omugwor[31]: Nobody can "Mother" Alone

In Nigeria, pregnancy and childbearing are expected to follow soon after marriage. If this does not happen, there is bound to be interference from in-laws, asking the couple what the problem might be. In Ruth's case, not being pregnant within the first two years of her marriage was a big challenge:

> "I had challenges because the children did not come early. The first two years of my marriage na war. I don't need to tell you; I'm sure you know what happens when a woman is not pregnant immediately after marriage. Three months after marriage, when they greet you, they are looking at your tummy to see if it is shooting out (laughs). At some point, my mother-in-law could no longer bear it; she started asking questions like "what are you doing about

[31] Omugwor is an Igbo term, but generally used among Nigerians for the traditional custom of postpartum care.

> your condition" and many funny comments like that. We did not know what the problem was; I wasn't a spoilt girl, I married as a virgin but who would listen to you especially when you're a graduate? Ha; dem go say "she don kill all her pickin through abortion for school"[32]. My social life was zero because I was trying to avoid people; but God answered me after two years that seemed like 20 years. My life became better when I got pregnant. My in-laws were particularly happy when it was a boy."

Based on her awareness of social expectations (Flaherty and Fine 2001), Ruth tells two related but distinct stories. With her statement, "… they are looking at your tummy to see if it's shooting out …", she creatively construct an embodiment of the cultural expectation of women to be pregnant soon after their wedding. Thereafter, she gave a retrospective account of her own experience, recounting how her mother-in-law described their challenge of infertility as "her condition". Ruth did not say anything about her own reaction to her mother in-law's description of the infertility, despite the fact that it could have been a natural challenge or even an issue with the husband. It is either that this is an untold part of her story, after all, narratives are fragmentary (Lawler 2002), or she also blamed herself for the problem. However, her switch from "we" to "I" in her statement, "we did not know what the problem was; I wasn't a spoilt girl, I married as a virgin", could be seen as her attempt to admit her awareness of the cultural construction of infertility as the woman's problem, and to establish that her upright living should exonerate her from any blame for her predicament. Pointing out that she wasn't "spoilt", and she married as a virgin, are culturally seen as marks of fertility and purity; however, those culturally celebrated virtues do not count when a woman is faced with the challenge of childlessness in Nigeria (Ekwere et al 2007; Ahamefule and Onwe 2015). Infertility, among other issues, was a reason why another of my participants decided to migrate to the UK, to avoid the social stigma, and seek advanced medical help.

Most of my participants had some or all of their children in Nigeria before migrating to the UK. Precious explained that she had no problem with childcare in Nigeria; "I had my mum, in-laws and house help. You just always had people around who could

[32] "She don kill all her pickin through abortion …" means she must have undergone series of abortion while in the university and she may not be able to have any more babies.

help with children. It was never a problem." Christy, whose husband left Nigeria for the UK while she was pregnant, also recounted how she moved in with her mother-in-law:

> We moved in with his mum; she took care of the baby and prepared my meals; so, I decided to support with preparing dinner. My in-laws were very helpful; they were not like the traditional in-laws we hear about.

Osas and Ruth on the other hand, gave a different account of the help they received from their mothers-in-laws when they had their babies. Osas, who has an inter-tribal marriage, explained, "In my culture, when you are a nursing mother, mothers come in to do the chores; but my mother-in-law expected me to do the chores, prepare the bath water and sit with her while she baths baby. That was difficult for me." Ruth also recounted her own challenges with her mother-in-law, explaining a quarrel they had when her baby was born:

> When the baby finally came it was rejoicing everywhere. My mother-in-law was sent to come for omugwor; you know, nobody can mother alone […]. Anyway, where the wahala[33] started was when she started saying there are some traditional rubbish they needed to do to protect the baby; ha; I refused (standing up). I was ready to fight for my child o. I tried to explain that we are Christians and we are born-again; so, we cannot do anything diabolical. She said I insulted her; that I called her diabolic. No be small matter o (laughing and clapping her hands together) oro buruku toun terin[34]. I had to kneel down with my husband by my side to beg and pacify her o. I don't even know how my husband was able to convince her not to do anything on our baby... it was tough"

Participants' narratives here, can be said to be wrapped around either themes of support or distress depending on how they viewed their relationship with the 'others' in their stories. However, the theme they chose to promote in their retrospective narratives influenced the construction of their stories. Ruth's narrative presents one of the practical challenges faced by the growing middle-class trado-modern families in Nigeria. Some traditional practices which are still honoured by older parents,

[33] Wahala is a colloquial word for trouble
[34] "oro buruku toun terin" is a Yoruba saying, meaning "serious issues mixed with humour"

especially those in the rural areas, are rejected by the highly educated middle-class couples, especially those who have embraced the Christian or Islamic religions. Ruth stood up during the interview session, to emphasis her rejection of her mother-in-law's intended traditional practice on her baby. This reflects how she employs the negotiation between the self in the present and the self in the past, to amplify her response to an already concluded issue. Despite some of the challenges that may arise from having parents, in-laws, relatives and housemaids help with childcare and chores, they offer immense support to the present day growing trado-modern families. For many of my participants, having this support network is a strong determining factor in their ability to manage paid and domestic work both in Nigeria and the UK.

Conclusion

Bruner (1986) suggests that with accounts of lived experiences, there is the need to distinguish between life as lived, life as experienced and life as told. This is however a complex exercise, as "we can only know something about other people's experiences from the expressions they give them" (Eastmond 2007:249). Treating participants' narratives as both topic and resource enabled me to explore the link they construct between their complex social position, experiences and sense of self.

Viewing participants' accounts as a resource provides an insight into the social life of many Nigerian women, by presenting the struggles of their childhood and the different ways they experienced womanhood. Their retrospective constructions shed light on how girl-children experience and negotiate gender stereotypes, familial gendered roles and the cultural production of hegemonic masculinity which creates visible gender discrimination in every aspect of their lives from childhood to adulthood. More fascinating in their narratives is their construction of stories of struggling against all odds to attain educational and career success, which earned them the status of middle-class professional women. It is clear from their narratives that for many of them, their status was not inherited, neither was it handed to them on a platter of gold. Many told stories of pain, hard-work, patience and resilience to explain how they attained their professional middle-class status. Even as

professionals in dual-earning relationships, their narratives reflect the different ways they negotiate and interpret their public/private status within trado-modern families.

The way they engaged with the "telling" of their stories contributed to my treating their narratives also as a topic. I became interested not only in the content of their stories but also in how and why they construct them in the ways they do. Paying attention to the cultural framework within which participants' stories are shaped, reflects how many of them artfully choose stories from their past to retrospectively construct a self who struggled against all odds to achieve academic and career success in Nigeria before migrating to the UK. Engaging in both the naturalist (narrative as resource) and constructivist (narrative as topic) approaches to participants' narratives (Elliot 2005:18) has enabled me to present their accounts of their past experiences and how they made sense of those experiences from their present position.

I began the exploration of my participants' narratives from their lived experiences in Nigeria because it presents the background and the space within which deliberations on their decision to migrate were made. Since the act of decision making is complex and takes place within a social context, it was important to take this journey down memory lane with my participants as they tried to make sense of their past. It was clear that their childhoods did not necessarily determine their adulthoods, but events in their everyday lives built in them courage, determination and resilience, not only to challenge the status quo, but to carve out a route for negotiating the world by themselves and for themselves. This act of sense-making will therefore still be applicable as I further explore participants' accounts of their decision to migrate to the UK.

Chapter 5. Migration Decision Making: Linking Possible Selves to Imagined Futures

> "…immigration is a journey: it involves the packing of cases, tearful goodbyes, a fluttering in the stomach…an eagerness for new worlds shot through with nostalgia for abandoned ones, a web of kept and broken promises, surprises and disappointments. This tends to be overlooked when debates deal in numbers, and are fuelled by defences of or attacks on our 'record'" (Winder 2010:8)

Introduction

Deciding to migrate as suggested by Winder (2010), is indeed a life changing process and usually not an easy one to make. This is more so because international migration takes place under dynamic and complex processes which are the results of the intersection between agency, structure and consciousness (White 2016). Although there is a dearth of up-to-date data and information on these dynamics and complexities, it is clear that there are significant changes over time in the patterns, processes and reasons why people decide to migrate and engage in migration. My participants gave different reasons why they decided to migrate, but the main reason is always linked to imagined futures—finding a better life in their destination countries. However, the fragmented ways in which participants told their migration stories presents their reasons not just as multifaceted (Hiller and McCaig 2007), but also as gendered. The intersection between gender, marital status and migration is under-researched (Brettell and Simon 1986; Williams et al 1986, Clerge et al 2017). In addition, there are complex roles played by women during the incubation period leading to family migration. This often situates women as negotiators and stakeholders in the migration decision making process, although they are not often represented as such. Many of my participants (26/32) identified as dependent migrants and at the same time, as active contributors in making the decision to migrate. I suggest that their social class, academic attainment and employment status play significant roles in making this happen. However, one participant constructed herself as a passive victim in the migration decision making process.

The desire to migrate is linked to various reasons and countless underlying factors, but the cliché "going for greener pastures" is often used as a way of constructing this desire. Also, travelling out of the country, in itself, is seen as a major achievement

and highly celebrated among Nigerians. I once asked a group of primary school pupils in Nigeria to talk about their future ambition. While many said to become a doctor or a lawyer, a little boy proudly announced that his future ambition was to travel out! It can be argued that although very many Nigerians, like the little boy, aspire to "travel out" of the country, not many are able to go beyond the level of aspiration because of the many underlying factors that determine migration. As Sly and Wrigley (1985:80) warn, in discussing migration decision making, aspiration does not explain much, as it must be combined with adequate economic capital and "an active awareness of moving as an alternative to staying". This active awareness must stretch beyond individual circumstances to gaining significant knowledge of immigration policies in current political and socio-economic contexts. As a starting point, my participants' accounts of how they reached the decision to migrate inform my argument that without denying the dominant economic factors as the main reason for migration, many non-economic factors like motivation, values, expectancies, social networks, kinship and family structure influence how and why people decide to migrate (De Jong and Gardner 2013). These non-economic factors, which build into career aspirations, anticipated job benefits and ideas of upward mobility run through participants' narratives of how they linked possible selves to their imagined futures in making their decision to migrate.

The theoretical construct "possible selves", which is described as a recent social psychological concept developed by Markus and Nurius (1986), chimes with the pragmatist thoughts of George Herbert Mead on the theorisation of the self (1934). Unfortunately, according to Flaherty and Fine (2001) and Jackson (2010), many contemporary writers engage with the concept without any due reference to Mead (for example, see Dunkel and Kerpelman 2006; Meek 2011; Yang and Noels 2013). The concept of possible selves as explained by Markus and Nurius (1986) seeks to provide a synergy between cognition and motivation by representing individuals' ideas of what they anticipate becoming (expected possible selves), what they would like to become (hoped-for possible selves), and what they are afraid of becoming (feared possible selves). From the position of present selves, possible selves are constructed based on experiences from the past and aspirations for the future. In light of this, my participants gave retrospective accounts of how their envisioned future contributed to their migration decision making. This again, beckons to the narrative

interactionist framework informing this thesis. Laying bare participants' self-conscious and reflexive accounts emphasises how the 'storied' self is situated in the cultural and the socio-political contexts within which multiple possible selves are imagined during migration decision making. According to Dunkel and Kerpelman (2006), the concept of possible selves is located in diverse disciplines, including psychology, sociology, nursing, business, social work, counselling, medicine and education. It is also applied to therapeutic and educational goals. It is, however, hardly mentioned in migration or migration decision making studies but generally linked to studies on youth transitions and increasingly associated with the concept of imagined futures (Hardgrove et al 2015; Rathbone et al. 2016).

The imagined future is described as the motivational catalyst that influences the construction of possible selves, starting within the immediate and towards the imagined (Vigh 2009; Cole 2010; Hardgrove et al 2015; Patel 2017). Bulbeck (2015:15) also explained narratives of imagined futures as stories framed "between hope and expectation—an interplay of embellished desires, utopian dreams and realistic plans". This is evident in how both concepts, possible selves and imagined futures are generally linked in theorising youth transitions (see Edley and Wetherell 1999; Stevenson and Clegg 2011; Hardgrove et al 2015; Rathbone et al 2016; Patel 2017). I however propose that the link between the concept of possible selves and imagined futures can contribute significantly to migration studies, specifically the process of migration decision-making. Researching the imagined future trajectories constructed by individuals who aspire to migrate to other countries can provide an understanding of how possible selves are conceptualised under the influence of multiple structural factors from past experiences and present circumstances, which act as a motivational force in migration decision making.

Although my participants migrated for reasons similar to those identified in other migration research (for employment, further education, better life etc.), the process of how migrants perceive the future and how their knowledge of the past impacts on decisions taken in the present has been largely ignored. Again, as De Jong and Gardner (2013) and Thompson (2017) argued, many migration theories ignore intentions, aspirations and the migration decision making process. Although they explain that economic factors could encourage relocation, with social networks facilitating it and political systems regulating it, these factors on their own cannot

explain how migration decisions are formed. Therefore, in this chapter, I focus on participants' narrative constructions linking imagined futures to possible selves. Using this link as an analytical construct, I seek to explore person-level factors such as expectations, values and beliefs (Hoppe and Fujishiro 2015), in addition to other social and economic predictors of migration decision making. I examine participants' concept of "going in search of greener pastures" in relation to conceptualising an imagined future. I also explore participants' emotional narratives of "leaving everything behind" as the price to pay for their imagined future and decision to migrate. It goes without saying though, that participants' narratives of their migration decision making are fragmentary and never told in a linear outline. Many of my participants were comfortable to start their story of migration to the UK from the point of deciding to go in search of greener pastures.

Imagined Futures: Searching for Greener Pastures

It has been argued that not even the Neoclassical theory can adequately explain migration decision making (De Jong 2000; Boneva and Frieze 2001; De Jong and Gardner 2013). Migration theories are generally based on the "Marxist-oriented poverty-induced thesis" (Akinrinade and Ogen 2011). However, emphasising poverty and unemployment as major reasons for migration, without considering other specific human, economic and social capital which many economic migrants must acquire to facilitate international labour migration may be deemed as myopic and overtly simplistic. In other words, people who engage in legal labour migration are not usually the poor and unemployed but upper and middle-class, highly paid professionals who have the capacity and means, not just to decide to migrate but also to actualise their dreams and plans of migrating. Although many of my participants' narratives are constructed around themes of searching for greener pastures, they were evidently highly educated, belonging to the class of high-income earners in Nigeria. Their economic capital was what qualified them or their spouses to apply for legal migration in the first instance. What makes this class of highly placed citizens decide to migrate therefore, sometimes goes beyond their present economic state. A projection of their possible selves into an imagined future acts as a motivational factor in migration decision-making. I therefore present participants' narratives of

how their imagined futures—feared possible selves (if they remained in Nigeria) and their hoped-for possible selves (if they migrate to the UK) activated their decision to migrate. Finally, I explore the construction of in-betweenness of feared and hoped-for possible selves as expressed by a few participants who were ambivalent about the future.

Present and Imagined Future: Escaping Feared Possible Selves

The day-to-day living realities in urban Nigeria left many of my participants despondent and created in them a perpetual sense of fear for themselves, and much more for their children. They constantly imagined a feared future because of the realities of their present. Hannah was one of the participants who encouraged and supported her husband in their migration decision making. She tries to paint a picture of her fears:

> Ok; it's like this… let me put it this way; it got to a point I could no longer sleep with my both eyes closed. You hear sound, you jump up; even when a rat is scattering the bin, you're already pleading the blood of Jesus, thinking armed robbers are trying to break down the door. You get what I'm saying? The government is doing nothing about the state of insecurity, and I was scared that if I continue like this, I will lose it altogether…

Hannah explains how she wholeheartedly supported her husband's decision to migrate. Not only did she recount her despair about the level of insecurity in Nigeria, she expresses a level of fear and hopelessness for the future. The state of insecurity and crime in Nigeria is said to have grown from bad to worse in recent times, with an increase in cases of kidnapping and armed robbery (Okoli and Agada 2014; Umar 2015). Hannah could not see an end to these problems as the government had been unable or unwilling to address the situation; instead, they perpetuate corruption and nepotism which creates a deep sense of insecurity. Her words, "...I could no longer sleep with my both eyes closed…" paints a picture of perpetual fear. It is a case of living in a fearful present and admitting fear for the future. The effect of this state is suggested in Hannah's construction of her plans to escape a feared possible self—a self who could "lose it altogether". Her expression could mean anything from living in perpetual fear, to actually losing control of self. According to Dunkel and Kerpelman (2006), women are more likely than men to construct feared possible

selves and to relate these possible selves to well-being and mental illness. However, despite the reality of the present, Hannah's construction of a feared possible self can only be explained as imagined but to her, the situation was bad enough to consider migration.

Osas, a medical doctor who held a very high public position under the Nigerian Ministry of Health also complained about the state of corruption which made her "run for dear life":

> Osas: Come and see corruption in high places! My sister, it was shocking; because of my office, if I don't chop[35] money, the other officers under me will not be able to chop and this used to *annoy* them…. You don't understand what I'm talking about; I say they even went to report to my parents, and they called family meeting on my head that if I don't need money, I should just pass it to them. I tried to explain that I'm a Christian and it's a sin for me to touch government money…
>
> Joy: That must have been difficult for you as a Christian.
>
> Osas: Do you know the scary bit, my family told me that I was joking with my life and that sooner or later, they (my subordinates) will get rid of me because I was blocking their way. I was at a crossroad; it was either I compromise my faith or prepare for war. At that point, I knew I needed to run for dear life. My children were too young, and I was not ready to make my husband a widower… That was how my husband and I started looking for means to travel out, and we heard about PLAB[36] and (HSMP)[37]. As doctors, we were both eligible so, Kpakpakpa[38] we started processing …

Osas explains the situation she found herself in as "frightening". She constructs a feared possible self, whose life and job security could be at stake, or who could be forced to compromise her faith, values and ideals. Although they faced different

[35] "chop" is the pidgin English word for "eat", which is used here to connote embezzlement.
[36] PLAB (Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board) is a medical examination taken by international medical graduates from outside the EU and Switzerland before they can practice medicine in the UK.
[37] Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP) is a point-based system through which labour migration rights are issued. This will be explained in the next section.
[38] "Kpakpakpa" is a common Yoruba slang for "quickly"

circumstances, the imagined feared possible selves constructed by Hannah and Osas, their realisation of a legal route (HSMP), through which they and their families could relocate to a developed country where they imagined they would enjoy relative peace and security, and their economic buoyancy, were presented as the determining factors for their migration decision making.

Sarah, a young married woman with three children, explained that she was the main brain behind the decision to migrate; but she had to rely on her husband to make the ultimate decision. She said her desire to migrate to the UK was because of her children. She explained how she desperately wanted a higher standard of education for them compared to the Nigerian standard and the only way to achieve that was for her to persuade her husband to migrate. She said:

> He wasn't actually willing to come because, let me not lie, as a medical doctor in Abuja, the federal capital, he was relatively comfortable. He was a small big boy (laughs). I was the one bent on British education for my children. Anyway, but the truth is, I cannot imagine my children going through the kind of suffer-head[39] school that I went to. Ehn, I can't even imagine. You know what the education system is even like right now? And me, I have always dreamt of British education for my children. But as a woman, you know, the decision to move can only be taken by my oga[40] [laughs]; so, I had to push until he came […] yes o; just to secure their [children's] future. After all, why are we working? […]. One year later, we came to join him; so here we are (she smiles).

According to Sarah, her motivation to migrate was to help her children escape the crumbling educational system in Nigeria. In her imagination, she could not picture a better educational system, and she feared that the deteriorating level may have an adverse effect on her children's future. Although this was not necessarily a strong enough reason to convince her husband to migrate as there are still pockets of very good schools in Nigeria, Sarah explained this as her own motivation for initiating migration plans. This reflects women as relational selves, where they generate their

[39] Suffer head is a phrase used to explain hardship and stressful conditions caused by poor and very low standard of living.
[40] "Oga" is a colloquial word for boss or master, and in an informal conversation it can be used to address or refer to husbands.

sense of fulfilment from protecting and enhancing the future of significant others, especially their children (Dunkel and Kerpelman 2006). However, her narrative can be said to be slightly different from the common migration rhetoric of economically active heterosexual couples, where the desire and decision to migrate come from the husbands. In Sarah's case, the desire was from her, however, the power to act only came from her husband, who was the one to play the key role of making the decision and initiating the move. Sarah's use of the word "oga" which can be loosely translated as master, suggests her acknowledgement of the cultural hegemonic position of the man in traditional Nigerian homes. Furthermore, her statement, "as a woman, the decision to move can only be taken by my oga…" suggests not only her acceptance of the normative gendered role of male dominance within the family unit, but her construction of herself as an "exemplary" wife and possibly one in favour of the status quo.

Grace, a mother of five and a highly placed HR manager in the banking sector in Nigeria, like Sarah, said she desired British education for her children. Months after receiving her visa and entry clearance to enter the UK, Grace said she was still contemplating whether or not to move. She told me she had a very good job, a loving husband and five children. While her children were eager to leave Nigeria, her husband, who was a university lecturer, was not. She wallowed in this dilemma until her visa almost ran out. She recounted:

> I had a good and enjoyable job with good salary. All I wanted was a change of environment for my children. I was afraid of what the future holds. Who wouldn't be? And I have 5 of them (children) (laughs)… It wasn't for my own economic interest that I decided to relocate because I had a good economic stand in Nigeria. I was earning about £25,000 per annum in Nigeria before I left. I did it for the children. I wanted them to have better options in life. So, I can say, for me, it was a sacrifice on my part, to help them escape the crumbling economy. You know, if I'm sorted and my children are not, I'm still in trouble abi no be so?[41]

Although Grace appears satisfied with her work and economic position, she however imagined a future that is coloured with fear. Judging from the educational and

[41] "abi no be so" is a colloquial pidgin English for "isn't it"

economic state of Nigeria, she envisions a fearful future which may not be comfortable for her children. Despite her very good economic position, she constructs a feared possible self through her explanation, "if I'm sorted and my children are not, I'm still in trouble." Here, Grace is possibly affirming the mother-children bond, where mothers perceive their children as an extension of themselves and their success is measured through the lens of their children's achievements. It suffices to mention that Grace's husband, although supportive of the decision for Grace to resign her job and relocate with the children to the UK, was himself unwilling to give up his career and migrate with his family. This presents relational selfhood as very gendered, and in a way, supports Dunkel and Kerpelman's (2006) view that while women are relational in their construction of possible selves, men's constructions portray themselves as unique and independent. Although many mothers in Nigeria share Grace's fears, it is important to add that not many can do anything about it as they lack the cultural backing, economic capital and/or legal requirements to migrate. This emphasises how much desire and aspiration depends on culture, economic capital and knowledge of legal process among other things, to activate migration decision making.

A few of my participants talked about domestic abuse as their basis for deciding to migrate. These women migrated independently, seeing this as an opportunity to be separated from their spouses for a while, or completely divorced. At this point, I must add that although for some, their narratives are underlaid with themes of domestic abuse, they were not willing to talk about it, which may be due to persistent fear, shame or pain (Herman 2015). Tinuke, a senior psychiatric nurse in Nigeria before migrating, was however willing to share her ordeal, though her body language—facial expressions, gesticulations and long pauses still showed anger and pain:

> Tinuke- I hate to talk about it; it scattered my plans in life and I [pause] I know this is not what you want to hear but let me say it as it is, so you will understand. It was not job per say that made me relocate in the first place o. I mean as a nurse, yes, I knew I stand a better chance but my dear, I did not have that kind of energy or funds to pursue career outside the country. It was not part of my plan, but our people say "whenever you see a toad jumping in

broad daylight, then you know that something is after its life"[42]. My life was in danger and nobody understood what I was passing through. My husband was abusive both emotionally and physically […] you know what it means to suffer in silence [long pause] I became lost and life became meaningless to me … in fact, I damned the consequences and left in the first instance without my children; it was after I settled down that I fought to bring them to join me […]

Joy: hmmm… you mentioned you did not have the funds so, how and at what point did you decide on migrating?

Tinuke: It was not planned […] Then we learnt that they needed nurses in UK so, we went for the interview, written interview. It was under a professional body called UKCC[43] so, before you come in, you pass through different stages. Each stage requires one thing or the other. Once I heard about it, I started the process, there was no going back. I decided to leave Nigeria and leave the marriage for good. I was ready. The last stage gives opportunity to apply for work here. I had a bit of money, but I already used it to buy two plots of land. I called all my siblings to start looking for money. When I told my mum, I explained that they needed nurses in UK and my application has been successful; I told her I needed some money for a start to get my results, then it will involve a lot of travelling round to gather all my credentials and other necessary things. After that I would need a total of £4,000[44]! Where will I get that kind of money from? My mum said, "if this is your heart desire, you will go". Her father, who is my grandfather was very rich. She said she would go to her father and ask him to raise a loan for us. That was how my mum tied the money in her headgear, whispered to ask about my husband, I told her he was away, and she removed the headgear and gave me the money. So, she said her father said even his friend's son had to do the same. I went to thank Baba (grandfather) and told him I would return the money as soon as I start working in the UK; but Baba refused to collect

[42] This is the same proverb found in the novel, Things Fall Apart (Achebe 1958) meaning when one takes an unusual step, it is because they find themselves in unusual situations.
[43] UKCC is the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (now Nursing and Midwifery Council)
[44] Using present day conversion rate, £4,000 is approximately ₦2,000,000.

> the money. He said the money is the money he should have used to send my mother to school …

Among other things, Tinuke recounts what her fearful present looked like, and her resolution to escape an imagined feared future, one in which she would possibly continue to suffer in silence. She describes a resolute self, who had suffered a level of depression, despair and disengagement due to domestic abuse, which informed her decision to migrate. Therefore, Tinuke's migration decision making was activated by her marital issues, the knowledge of the UKCC programme which provided the needed documents for professional access and funds from her grandfather which provided the means to migrate. This suggests that the ingredients that form and activate migration decision making is not one thing or another, but a combination of many things, with needs, desires, legal access, human and economic capitals playing major roles.

My participants' retrospective narratives suggest that although migration decision making is usually explained by concrete economic push factors, the fears, pains, disappointments and frustrations which may be underlining the visible factors must also be emphasised. They express how fears of present circumstances can lead to the imagining and construction of fearful futures and feared possible selves. In relation to migration, the desire to escape feared possible selves and create hoped-for possible selves appears to be the major motivating factor in decision making.

Imagining a Better Future: Constructing Hoped-For Possible Selves.

Many of my participants told stories of how geographical imagination influenced their decision to migrate. Their imagination of life in the UK helped them to envision diverse hoped-for possible selves, which supports Van Dalen et al.'s (2005) argument that the major driving force behind migration intention is optimism about the benefits of the destination country. While a few of my participants said they had travelled to the UK or other Western countries before their migration, many admitted having never left Nigeria. However, most of their retrospective narratives were marked with their imagination of a better place, a place without stress and sorrow. Ade said she used to refer to it as "the land flowing with milk and honey", while Cindy explained that her father proudly announced to other members of their family that his daughter was leaving for "the only country where their currency has a

surname—"Pounds Sterling!" Questions worth asking however, are why do people bestow so much praise on, and have very high expectations of a country they have never visited? What or who feeds their imagination? Their imagination is possibly rooted in colonial narratives of Great Britain. Drawing from postcolonial studies on oppression (Fanon 1965; David and Okazaki 2006; David 2009), it can be argued that internalised oppression can lead the colonized to self-doubt, identity confusion and a strong desire to, as much as possible, become like the colonizer. This colonial mentality is further strengthened by the global hegemony of Western media, where Western values and lifestyles are presented as "the way of life" (Marsella 2005). Furthermore, Nigerians appear to be particularly interested in the United Kingdom because of the mythology of Britain as motherland and the ubiquity of English as the official language, which is a product of the colonial link between Britain and many African nations.

Cynthia talked about the influence of the media in helping her to construct an "oyibo[45]" possible self, who speaks through the nose, lives in nice, clean houses, and lives a stress-free life. Cynthia explains, "when you watch white[46] films on TV, you will think they live in heaven; peaceful and without stress. You know, just cross your leg in the balcony and sip from your glass of juice as you see in films (laughs). That was the life I wanted and that was why I made up my mind to come and hide my head and raise my children here". Based on media representation, Cynthia could only imagine a secure possible self in the UK. It was about envisioning a place where her family could "live happily ever after". Such accounts possibly reflect why Mbah (2017) argues that the notion of finding greener pastures abroad is a myth, as it is not based on sound empirical evidence. In addition to emphasising how media (mis)information can create in people an irresistible urge to migrate, Mbah also points out how selective observations and assumptions formed from narratives of migrants/return migrants could create such an urge. One of my participants, Ejiro, explains how her maternal aunt who had lived in the UK for several years came home (to Nigeria), to "dish out" money to relatives and build an impressive house in their village:

[45] Oyibo is a pidgin English word for white person
[46] "White" here, is used to describe Western films. Without putting race into consideration, many make the mistake of seeing the human race as either black or white.

> Ejiro- If you see how my aunty was spending money yafuyafu[47], you will join me to think that money grows on trees in the UK. She was behaving very posh and speaking through her nose [demonstrating it]. In fact, she built a gigantic three storeys building in my village within three months! When I asked her about life in the UK, she just laughed and said, "You need to hustle and come and join me". From then on, I silently wished to travel out. I was happy when I met and married a white man in Nigeria; he had a business in Nigeria which was flourishing, and I was also doing well in my business, but I wanted better. When he decided it was time to relocate to the UK, I did not need any convincing because of the testimony of my aunt; so, I did not raise any objection….

The public display of affluence by her aunt made Ejiro imagine a better life in the UK compared to the one she had in Nigeria. Although Ejiro had a thriving business, her imagination of a better future and a richer possible self, became her motivating factor to migrate.

Some other participants described having more specific goals and aspirations which helped them to construct career hoped-for selves. Clara said she was very excited about her migration; "I had it all planned out. In UK, professional courses are known to be straightforward because the system works. I was newly married, no much responsibility. So, get here, take my professional exams and develop my career, simple. I was tired of the nonsense I was facing in Nigeria". Clara was able to construct a career-oriented self because she imagined a future where the system works, where she would enjoy linear progress. Dorcas also shared similar views:

> Dorcas: I worked as a catering officer. Afterwards, I got fed up of Nigeria.
>
> Joy: What do you mean when you say fed up of Nigeria?
>
> Dorcas: I just hate doing the same thing over and over again without any change and motivation. I get bored and tired; so, I said fine; I've had enough of Nigeria. I wanted to enjoy what I do. You understand, I'm like for how long will I continue like this? Abba[48] life can be better than this rat race

[47] "yafuyafu" is a pidgin English word for excess (excessively)
[48] Abba is a colloquial term without any strong meaning, but used to express terms like "I mean …"

> now…and I was single then[49], nothing was keeping me back […] At first, I was coming over to the UK to buy materials to further my catering business. Later, I stayed and decided to further my education so, I decided to go to the Polytechnic of XXX (now University of XXX) so I reverted to a student's visa. I studied Business and Finance, so I began to extend my stay and after some few years, I got my indefinite stay.

Examining the inter-relationship between selfhood, story and identity, reflects how not just gender, but other factors are subjectively embedded in my participants' narratives of migration decision making. For instance, Clara and Dorcas' stories feature numerous expressions of dissatisfaction with their jobs in Nigeria; however, it can be argued that their employment status explains much about the ease with which they came to the decision to migrate, which suggests the material privilege that comes with their social class. Furthermore, they both implied that at that stage they did not have caring responsibilities (they did not have children yet), so it was easy for them to imagine and construct career-oriented possible selves, compared to women who may not have such economic capital and do have dependent children to cater for. Therefore, in addition to gender, class and life-stage play pivotal roles in self-identity and migration decision making.

Deborah was one participant who imagined a multifaceted possible self. She constructs a pregnant possible self, a secure possible self and an intellectual possible self who had always dreamt of attending a British university:

> Joy: You said you were excited when your husband mentioned relocation. Why were you?
>
> Deborah: It was like everyday gist o. He started like a joke but when he saw that I was serious, the truth is I was for it, let me put it that way. Ehn. It's Great Britain we are talking about here o. So, he took me seriously […] Our coming was hope for me at last […]. We had always wanted to travel abroad for medical attention concerning this our issue (referring to childlessness) but the cost has always been scary. But with relocation and free NHS my hope of becoming pregnant was rekindled. I said to myself that at least I can also hide

[49] Dorcas eventually married before finally migrating to the UK. But this only happened after she had her Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK (ILR).

> from the prying eyes of family (hisses). Ah; yes, again, I thought my dream will come true […]. I always dreamt of schooling abroad right from my primary school days. I wanted to apply for scholarship but no way. At least I felt I could enhance my career so […]

Deborah displays a belief in attaining self-realization by migrating to the UK; she did not hesitate to construct a pregnant possible self if she was able to relocate to the UK. She also envisions an escape from her stigmatised present self (due to childlessness) to a secure possible self in the UK, away from the prying eyes of family members. It was for her, an opportunity to recast her identity and escape hurtful ties. Migration should therefore be viewed as aspirational, not just in the sense of possibilities, but also in the hope of becoming a better self (O'Reilly and Benson 2009). For instance, by recounting her childhood dreams and aspirations of going to a British school, Deborah reaches from her current situation into her past and her future, unifying perception of what currently is with what once was and what one day might be. This reflects how the "psychological closeness" between the past and the future can impact on present self-evaluation (Dunkel and Kerpelman 2006). Indeed, "the self-system is multifaceted and dynamic, with different self-representations activated at different times" (Teraji 2009:45).

Another group of participants spoke about their extended family-oriented hoped-for possible selves which reveals the characteristics of a collectivistic culture (Waid and Frazier 2003), where hoped-for possible self is not necessarily constructed by the main emigrant, but by (extended) family members, who hope to benefit from the migration. Their expectation makes the main emigrant assume responsibility in her construction of possible selves. Rathbone et al (2016) noticed this cultural practice among Asian American families, but it is also a common practice in Nigeria for a member of the family, especially the eldest sibling, to have a sense of responsibility towards younger siblings. Cindy for instance recounts the sense of hope that the news of her migration to the UK brought to her extended family, particularly her siblings, "when I was coming to the UK, you know I'm an Ada[50], so, they were all happy for "small mummy"; they were sure our lives (collectively) will become

[50] Ada is the special name given to the first daughter, which connotes a very respectable status among Igbo families in South-Eastern Nigeria (Nwoko 2012)

better". As the first child, Cindy was expected to be largely responsible for the well-being of her other siblings. The news of her migration helped her family to construct in her a "saviour" hoped-for self. To them, life will be better, because "small mummy" will be rich enough in the UK to take care of all their needs. Interestingly, she happily constructed the same position for herself, as she explained how she promised them, "as small mummy concerned na, I sat my younger ones down and told them to face their studies and if they worked hard, I will support them one after the other to come to the UK; you dey see me…". Possibly, Cindy's construction of a "saviour" self, is as a result of her desire to fit into the roles expected of a traditional first child—carrying the family responsibilities. This account suggests the significant role culture plays in both present and future self-construction (Waid and Frazier 2003). For instance, the phrase "small mummy", used by both Ada and her family suggests how the construction of self is pulled from every side by normative ideologies and socio-cultural practices. Aspirations, motivations and decision-making can therefore be said to be 'significantly tied to how the self is constructed, interpreted and projected in social life.

Although most of my participants construct multifaceted and successful hoped-for possible selves in the UK, Van Dalen et al (2005) warns that many immigrants have expectations that are out of touch with the actual circumstances in the destination countries, which motivates them to build unrealistically optimistic views of successful selves that will be without stress and worries. However, a few of my participants could be said to be realistic in their views as their narratives suggest a level of ambivalence and in-betweenness in their constructions of feared possible selves and hoped-for possible selves.

Dealing with In-betweenness: The Uncertainty and Malleability of Possible Selves

Departing slightly from generally established approaches to the conceptualization of possible selves, I present some participants whose narrative of imagined futures reflect an in-betweenness in their construction of feared and hoped-for possible selves. This type of self-construal exposes the malleability of ways of being, which for most women incorporates considerable overlap in their own aspiration and the aspirations others have for them (Knox 2006). In this context, participants present

the complexity of migration decision making by constructing a mixture of willingness and unwillingness in making the decision to move, swinging between passive subordinate selves and active agents in migration decision making. Omo, a highly qualified teacher before migration, gave a retrospective account of the ambivalent negotiation that took place before their migration:

> I never wished to leave Nigeria because I hate to be called a foreigner. It's just that I hated the word "foreigner". I was not very rich, but I was happy with my teaching job and I mean, I was successful. I was progressing in my career, and my husband was progressing too. To be fair on him, … [pause] he had told me even before we got married, that he would not settle in Nigeria. Although, when it was time to move, I was a bit reluctant. It's not easy; I did not know what lies ahead… for instance, I had never travelled out before, but he had. So, first thing first, I now asked him to allow me to visit UK first before I make up my mind. […] guess what caught my fancy? Bag of mixed veg! I was surprised at how cheap provision[51] is here, but my biggest fascination was how carrot, peppers and peas are already chopped, bagged and preserved [laughs]. I'm like what! I enjoy making fried rice with plenty of veg, but I always dread chopping up all the orishi-rishi[52]. Life couldn't be easier for me; besides, I had accepted his hand in marriage, so I had to accept all he stands for. You no fit eat fish finish say you no fit swallow bone[53][giggles]. If not for him, to be honest I would not have loved to come into another country and be seen as a foreigner.

Omo's story here explains her dislike for the word "foreigner", and an imagined future where she may be seen as "the other". This creates an image of a feared possible self who may not be accepted and may be regarded as an outsider. She therefore presents a self who was contented with her job and unwilling to let go of certainty for uncertainty. Furthermore, her statements, "I did not know what lies ahead…" and "…life couldn't be easier for me", presents her ambivalent self, caught between images of feared possible self and hoped-for possible self. But her adage,

[51] Provision is a (colloquial) pidgin English term for groceries. Speakers sometimes unconsciously slip this in when speaking in English language.
[52] Different things. In this context, extra things added to spice up a meal.
[53] An adage in pidgin English, meaning every good thing has its bad side.

"you no fit eat fish…" expresses the sacrifice of the relational self, as she ignores her feared possible self and accepts her husband's aspiration as hers. These statements express the uncertainty and malleability of possible selves (Marshall et al 2006), which reflects how social relationships shape the construction of envisioned images, debunking the myth of a singular, unique and stable self. Although Omo's narrative suggests that she exercised agency by requesting to visit the UK before consenting to the migration plans, her in-betweenness may present her as caught between culture and conviction. As Paul (2015:273) argued, women "cannot completely escape normative ideas of femininity, motherhood and domesticity" in migration negotiations. It can however be argued that because of Omo's status as a middle-class career woman, she was not without a voice in the migration decision making process, which differentiates her from the class of women discussed by Williams et al (1986) who can offer little or no resistance when the decision to migrate is imposed on them. It therefore appears that although many women migrate for family reasons, they are not always without their own choices, aspirations and desires, but because the self is interpreted and projected through sociocultural ideologies, their constructions of their imagined future sometimes become malleable to accommodate the aspirations and decisions of significant others, in this case, their husbands. This level of expressing the relational self is employed by Marshall et al (2006) to explain the conceptualisation of possible selves as joint projects between socially connected individuals. However, Pelumi's account suggest that irrespective of her class and background, she was treated as a passive victim of migration in their migration decision making.

Pelumi, a lecturer and a part-time aviation agency manager in Nigeria, explains how her culturally ascribed gender role determined her stake in the migration process:

> For me, it was not a case of whether or not I wanted to leave Nigeria. We have a common belief that wherever your husband lives, is home; so, at that time, it was an already made decision. I was newly married, did not have problem with visa[54], so it was only logical to resign my job(s), and go to join my husband; no room for negotiation.

[54] Her husband already had an Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) status in the UK, so she would only apply for a spousal visa.

Since this account, like all other migration stories, was given post-migration, it is difficult to tell if Pelumi would have given the same account pre-migration, or if this is only a retrospective account of her past experiences told from her present position (Jarvinen 2004). What is however clear is that her account presents how her right to any negotiation was constrained by prevalent socio-cultural structures, representing her as a tied mover or trailing spouse, who cooperates with the decision to migrate in order to maintain the status quo and fulfil traditional norms. The tied mover or trailing spouse hypothesis is explained by Clerge et al (2017) as based on the New Economic of Labour Migration (NELM) theory, where the decision to migrate is not constructed as a personal choice, but as an obligation to relationship and family. The tied mover model though supposedly gender neutral, is mostly applicable to women who, compared to their husbands, are expected to give up their career aspirations for the sake of their families. I however propose a shift away from the use of derogatory models like "trailing spouse" or "tied mover", to more positive models that represent migrant spouses as equally capable of having aspirations and the ability to construct possible selves in the destination country. This positive shift is needed to reflect the gap in immigration policies in many destination countries where women migrants are generally conceptualised as trailing wives.

My participants' accounts of their migration decision making begin with why they decided to migrate. Although "going for greener pastures" is a general rhetoric, it was important to explore the way participants imagined their futures through constructions of feared and hoped-for possible selves. Examining how these constructions are gendered, sheds light on the dynamic and complex nature of migration decision making. This suggests that migration decision making goes through an incubation process, where aspirations, desires, expectations, fears and convictions are nursed over the decision-making period. Hiller and McCaig (2007:469) warn that like all other stories, migration stories told after migration could have undergone "post-facto reframing", which makes it difficult to tell if participants' narratives on migration decision making would have been told differently before migration. It is however clear that making the decision to migrate is never a straightforward process but one full of ambivalence, dreams, aspirations, fears and compromise.

Leaving Everything Behind: The Cost of an Imagined Future

> "Migration involves loss. Even when you're privileged, as I am, and move of your own free will, as I did, you feel it. Migrants, almost by definition, move with the future in mind. But their journeys inevitably involve excising part of their past. It's not workers who emigrate but people. And whenever they move they leave part of themselves behind. Efforts to reclaim that which has been lost result in something more than nostalgia but, if you're lucky, less than exile. And the losses keep coming […] because your life is elsewhere" (Younge 2015: n.p).

The loss incurred for the sake of migration as pointed out by Younge (2015) is often overlooked and never fully discussed or covered in public policy debates; instead, migration is often constructed as loss only to the national economy of the home country. Efforts have also been made to explore the impact of immigration on migrants' left-behind family members (see Battisella and Conaco 1998; Asis 2006; Antman 2013). However, the countless tangible and intangible costs which form part of the hidden costs borne by immigrants themselves as they leave their home countries are often ignored. Therefore, exploring my participants' narratives, I pay attention to how their migration decision making stories are marked with reflections on emotional losses and the pain they felt in parting with loved ones, good jobs and properties for the sake of their imagined future in their host countries. A few constructed this part of their story as "leaving everything behind".

Leaving Children Behind: The Better Part of Me Was Still in Nigeria

Tinuke, who was fleeing an abusive marriage, and saw taking a Nursing Adaptation Programme in the UK as an opportunity to do so, expressed her joy over having an opportunity to start life afresh. Her pain however, was her inability to migrate with her two children. She told me how she had taken solace in the bond she shared with her children, which had been the only thing that had kept her going in her marriage. Despite the emotional attachment, Tinuke constructs an imagined future of feared possible self (who may continue to suffer domestic abuse if she remains in Nigeria and in her marriage) and a hoped-for possible self (a peaceful and better future) for herself and her children if she relocates to the UK:

> "I had never been to the UK before, I don't know what holds there, I just knew it was the white man's country. When I was offered a place in the adaptation course, […] My only pain was leaving my children behind…my dear sister (shaking her head) it was like the better part of me was still in

> Nigeria. I knew I would not rest until my children join me in the UK; after all, the sacrifice was for them more than for me. I wanted my peace no doubt, but I also wanted to create a better future for them. They were young and innocent, but I had no choice; … I could barely raise money for my own journey, so I could not think about taking them along; besides, I knew nobody in the UK. So, I had to sacrifice the bond we share—the three of us; myself and my two kids we were so closely knitted together but I had to face it and fight for their future …I cried, they cried. I felt guilty and wicked to be leaving those little ones behind; but I held on to the picture of my future and their future and no looking back.

Tinuke, presents a self that deeply felt the pain of parting with her children, but the strength of her imagined future motivated her to develop a resolute self who was able to strike a reasonable balance between action and emotion. It was a case of leaving feared-for, for hoped-for, possible self. However, Tinuke told me how guilty and wicked she felt to leave her children behind. She talked about how she thought everybody was judging her for travelling out and leaving her children. While transcribing this interview, I stopped to think for a second why Tinuke would feel guilty and wicked. Will a man in her shoes admit feeling the same way? The reason why there could be a difference in feelings could possibly be explained by the normative gendered identity of the man as the breadwinner[55], who is expected to go outside and provide for the family while the woman as the housewife is expected to be at home, engaged in care giving and chores. Therefore, engaging in migration on her own, will be culturally viewed as against the norm. It can also be argued that the same gendered division of labour explains why migration literature does not pay attention to migrants' accounts of the struggles and pains they go through by leaving family behind. Zlotnik (2003) argued that until recently, only men were seen as "the migrant" while women (care givers), are often conceptualized as "left behind" with children. Since men are said to be less emotionally expressive (Parkins 2012), there are no accounts of their feelings of pain or detachment in leaving family behind; instead, a good number of studies focus on the emotional pain and sufferings of

[55] Women are breadwinners in some societies but in Nigeria, though women work and support the family, only men are conceptualised as breadwinners (Lindsay 2007).

those left behind (See Battistella and Conaco 1998; Hadi 2001; Nguyen et al 2006; Antman 2013).

Tinuke explained the depth of her pain by describing the feeling as "leaving part of herself in Nigeria". Again, this emphasises women's interdependent self-construal, as representation of others (their children) is treated as part of the self. Such is the inexpressible emotional pain experienced by mothers who leave their children behind. Apart from the pain of separation, mothers worry for the welfare of their children—their health, safety, academic performance and general wellbeing. Few of my participants had this challenge, as many migrated at the same time as their children; but some spoke about how emotionally attached they were to their jobs and the pain of leaving those behind.

Leaving Jobs Behind: I Was Enjoying Myself

I did not know how sentimentally attached I was to my teaching job until it was time for me to resign. To be clear, I was very excited about relocating to the UK, but I was not happy to leave my job. When it was time to leave, it was very difficult for me to construct my resignation letter. I thought about how many application letters I wrote before getting that job in a prestigious private school. I remembered the joy I derived from waking up in the morning and dressing up to go to work. I thought about how I had come up through the ranks. I reflected on the joy, the laughter and the challenges. I remembered my special awards and recognition ceremonies. I did not know how to say goodbye to all that. Of course, like all my participants, I envisioned a better future in the UK, but I worried whether I would find another job in a good place where all the pieces in my jigsaw would fit into a perfect whole.

My story is not too different from that of Funmi, the head of a private secondary school and wife to a Pentecostal pastor in Lagos, before she came to join her husband in the UK. She worked both as the head of a section of a private school and as a women's co-ordinator in a local church parish before migrating to the UK. She passionately explained her attachment to her job:

> "I was comfortable with my work. I was enjoying myself, because I was getting good results, seeing my students graduate with good grades, and my work gave me enough time to be involved in church, supporting my husband

> in church ministry work. When it was time to come [to the UK], I knew I had to sacrifice a lot, especially the satisfaction I enjoyed at work. Oh, my dear, I had grown to love my job, growing gradually from a subject teacher, to a form head and then to the principal of the junior school. It was an enviable position. I thought about the hassle of starting all over again… I knew if I dwell too much on it I will feel depressed, so I just decided to look at the bigger picture and have faith in God. My school wanted me to stay, they were asking if I wanted a pay rise because they thought I was leaving for another job, but I explained that I was leaving the country. They had a massive send-forth party for me…. It was memorable (smiling). Leaving my friends, and already established social network especially from church was hard; ha; it was hard, but what can we do? … I had to close my eyes to everything …

Sitting on the couch in Funmi's living room on a cold winter morning during our interview session, I can still remember the switch in her show of emotions as she recounted her story. The broad smile as she recollected the grand send forth party that was held in her honour, and her fallen countenance as she used her hands to cover her eyes to demonstrate "…close my eyes to everything…". It is difficult to tell what was going through her mind at that point, as she paused before continuing her conversation. I guess she stopped to think about what "everything" meant to her. Funmi told me how she had to resign a previous job to take up teaching after her wedding. She had to give up a very high marketing position in a shipping firm as she could not get a balance between work and family life. Although she earned less, Funmi said she was very happy with her teaching job, as she enjoyed a rapid rise through the ranks, and it afforded her a good work/family life balance. To this end, she presents a contented self who was comfortable and happy with her career progression. Her statement, "I was enjoying myself…", though it sounds like a simple statement, helps me to unpick the complex intersection between self-reflexivity, identity and gender narratives in the context of social interaction, where the psycho-social relationship between the "I" and the "me" is explained as both the source and the object of reflexive behaviour (Mead's (1934). "Myself" as used in this context, expresses her reflexive sense of self and the social shaping of her identity as a woman, who had struggled to attain a middle-class status and be able to achieve balance between her career, cultural norms and expected gender roles,

thereby bringing satisfaction and contentment to herself. Mead stresses that the "I" and the "me" are both functional parts of the self, used in the theorisation of self-reflexivity. Engaging in this level of reflexivity expresses how the self becomes conscious of itself, monitoring and evaluating outcomes of its actions (Markus and Wurf 1987; Crossley 2001; Delamater et al 2015). However, Funmi's statement "…I knew I had to sacrifice a lot …" suggests the perceived cost of giving up her already acquired sense of self, which explains the emotional reality of self-sacrifice often required of women in family migration.

Cindy also expressed the same kind of pain: "… I thought about my job…the challenges I passed through before getting it, how much I had come to see my job as part of me and how well I get on with my colleagues…where will I start from?" Unlike some participants whose imagined futures were filled with only constructions of hoped-for possible selves in the UK, Funmi and Cindy were not oblivious of the challenges they may face in building their career again in a foreign land. Cindy saw her job as part of her self-identity, or better still, as an extension of herself. According to Fryers (2006), jobs are hard to relinquish even when people complain about them because jobs are viewed as a major source of life satisfaction, without which people may lose their identity, feel lost and unvalued. However, Funmi's statement, "… I just decided to look at the bigger picture and have faith in God", expresses her sense of faith as a Christian, whose view of the world presents God as the ultimate determiner of the future. Without ignoring the reality of their situations, this level of faith is shared by a significant number of my participants. In addition, drawing from their narratives, I observed that many of my participants told stories of starting off life from working class backgrounds but through education and their employment status, they achieved upward mobility, progressing as middle-class citizens (see chapter 4). Therefore, in spite of their faith and their imagined hoped-for possible selves in the UK, they feared to give up their present economic position with all the benefits that came with it. Their perception of self-worth and self-esteem as women, is to a large extent tied to their profession; leaving that behind, for some of my participants, was almost seen as leaving everything behind.

Leaving Property Behind: A Bit Like Death. Isn't it?

"Have you ever cried and laughed at the same time?" These were the words Ruth used to describe the emotional state she found herself in when she was leaving Nigeria. Ruth, an Insurance Officer and mother of two, recounted what she suffered at the hands of her in-laws after her husband left Nigeria, a year before she came to join him:

> "…hmmm; while my in-laws were showing me pepper[56] because they thought my husband was sending me millions of pounds which I was not sharing with them, my friends were taunting me saying 'your husband don go marry oyibo; he no go come back o" […]. At this point in my life, I was almost choked with stress and worries; it was as if the whole world was against me. These people (her in-laws) were angels before o; hmm, if you see what his sister showed me… abeg make we leave that talk for another day… we lived in peace until we decided to leave Nigeria, you will think they suddenly became demon possessed…. When it was finally time to come nko[57], come and see battle, they were ready to clear the house even before I left. My parents and siblings live far from me so, they could not help; the truth is that my people did not have mouth to talk because they said the property belongs to their brother. Even our car, my mother-in-law called my husband, told him we cannot sell it when he still had younger brothers without car in Nigeria. Ha, I looked at my life and cried… I cried because of two reasons; one, the stress was just too much for only me, and two I wondered, God forbid, what if my husband had died…that means I would have faced worse treatment from my husband's people. Ordinary travel out and they were treating me like this; but I also laughed because I knew where I was coming from and I told myself, as soon as I land UK, I will say bye-bye to all their rubbish so, I didn't mind all they were doing. I told my husband not to fight or quarrel with them, let them take everything, after all, nothing last for ever even though it costed me my peace of mind for many days, I knew it was for a short time…".

[56] "showing me pepper" is a phase in pidgin English meaning to be victimized
[57] "Nko" is a slang word borrowed from the Yoruba language to mean "what about"

Ruth, like many of my participants, did not migrate at the same time as her husband though they both had legal permission to do so. For many reasons, it is often expected that the husband migrates first, finds a job, finds accommodation then his family goes to join him. Such discussions are found in accounts of family reunification, spousal migration and family-related migration (Kofman 2004; Bailey and Boyle 2004; Charsley et al 2012). Although some of these accounts vaguely address the integration challenges faced by "accompanying" spouses in their destination countries, the hurdles they have to jump and the challenges they face during the migration process are largely ignored. For instance, Charsley et al (2012) pointed out that wives in Nigeria conventionally move to live with husbands; this is often the case even in international migration, but the process between the "move" and the "live with" is usually overlooked. In addition, travelling out of the country is considered a rise in economic status therefore, the closest person to "the migrant" (usually the wife), is considered the custodian of the "goodies" coming from abroad and failure to share the supposed goodies with family members is seen as selfishness and wickedness. This was the state Ruth found herself, before she moved to join her husband. Her words, "… because they thought my husband was sending me millions of pounds which I was not sharing with them …" shows the level of remittance expected by family members from their relatives abroad[58]. Also, because the home and all that is in it is often viewed as the husband's property in Nigeria (Adikema-Ajaegbo n.d; Para-Mallam 2010; Sukore 2012), the man's family are always in a hurry to lay claim to it in his absence. This possibly explains why Ruth constructs a feared possible future (in the case of death): "… God forbid, what if my husband had died…that means I would have faced worse treatment from my husband's people …" Ruth's fears are not unfounded as, despite Nigeria's ratification of Article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the solemn declaration to promote the legislation that guarantees women's right to land, property and inheritance, women are still disinherited in the case of death of their spouses. Adikema-Ajaegbo (2015: n.p) argues that these charters, conventions and legislations on women's rights, "have remained paper tigers, mere theoretical postulations without any practical bearing on the lives and conditions of the Nigerian women". Ruth puts her self-construction in a clearer

[58] Engaging in this kind of remittance is discussed in chapter 7.

perspective by using the expression "… cried and laughed at the same time …" She uses this to retrospectively express the paradox between a present reality[59] and a hoped-for imagined future. While the migration process was marked with struggles, pains and tears due to problems from her in-laws over property, her imagination of what the future holds enabled her to let go of everything. The act of letting go of everything is equally conceptualised by Cindy in an intriguing way:

> "… I looked at our property. All we had managed to gather for the past five years of our marriage. It's funny because it was just at the point when we were beginning to "settle down" in our marriage that we started looking at starting afresh….is that not ironical? […] my mind kept running through how I will discard our property as obviously I could not travel with much load since I had two little children to attend to in the long flight to UK. […] I sold some of our stuff and dashed out[60] some. That was how I scattered all we had ever worked for. A bit like death isn't it? You gather, gather, gather but when it's time to leave, you take nothing with you. Vanity upon vanity … My sister that was how we came to the UK to start life afresh…"

Cindy likened the act of leaving property behind to death. As scary as it sounds, I consider this level of comparison fascinating. Truly, just as we cannot take our treasured property with us at death, it is very unlikely that (international) migrants take valued property with them when they leave their home countries. Quoting from the famous book of the Bible written by Solomon (Ecclesiastes 1:14), Cindy qualifies the act of acquiring property, then leaving them behind as "vanity". However, her narrative also contains constructions of class and social status: "… I looked at our property. All we had managed to gather for the past five years of our marriage. It's funny because it was just at the point when we were beginning to "settle down" in our marriage that we started looking at starting afresh …". In Nigeria, as in many other countries where lifestyle is hierarchically structured, and the accumulation of property reflects social status (Fligstein et al 2015), it takes years to acquire property enough to fit into the middle-class. This is possibly the status Cindy believes she had attained before leaving Nigeria. She said that it took

[59] "Present reality" here refers to a present that existed in the past (just before she migrated to the UK).
[60] "dash out" is used colloquially by Nigerians to mean "give out".

them five years to accumulate their property which they eventually left behind. Cindy's use of the phrase "settle down" means it was at the point when they were beginning to live a lifestyle that reflected their social status that they had to migrate. The competitive component attached to the lifestyle of the middle class in Nigeria reflects a level of "keeping up with the Joneses" or even distinguishing yourself from them. As Ekwe (2011) pointed out, the middle class in Nigeria measure their worth by their level of consumption, acquisition of property and appearance of the home among other things. To migrate and leave behind this level of attainment as in the case of Cindy, indeed can create an imagined feared future marked with the struggle of "starting afresh".

My participants gave retrospective accounts of the emotional costs of leaving their children, jobs and properties behind for the sake of migration. A very crucial aspect of their narratives which is often absent from migration stories is the complexity of the process of wives migrating to join their husbands in the case of family migration where the man migrates before other members of the family. Also, from participants' narratives, it can be argued that the socio-cultural factors and prevailing gendered social norms in Nigeria shape the reason why women may feel a sense of guilt when they engage in independent migration (leaving their children and/or husbands) behind. Therefore, accounts of the complexity of migration decision making should be considered incomplete without exploring the hidden costs of migration and its impact on the emigrants.

Conclusion

There exist multi-disciplinary reviews of literature on migration decision making in individual, household, state and national levels; however, the persistent gap in the empirical details on the dynamic and complex processes that underpin how migration is experienced and transacted is my main focus in this chapter. Based on participants' retrospective narratives, a framework is developed through which the reflexive nature of selfhood and identity is explained in relation to migration decision-making. By linking the concept of possible selves to imagined futures, I explain how the constructions of expected possible selves, feared possible selves and hoped-for possible selves (Markus and Nurius 1986), are symbolically embedded

into narratives of expectations, anticipations and ambivalence in participants' accounts of how and why they made the decision to migrate.

Drawing from my participants' narratives, it can be suggested that the reasons why people migrate are both real and imagined, involving tangible and intangible costs. This is evident in the ways they engage in contemplating migration, visualising themselves in a future time and space, and constructing their (imagined) gains and losses prior to making the actual move (Koikkalainen and Kyle 2016). Also, the substantive analysis of their accounts reflects the intersection between gender, class and marital status in migration negotiations, which suggests that even the migration decision making process is gendered. I present how the hierarchical and gendered social order is particularly reflected in the heteronormative assumptions found among participants who are engaged in family migration, where the husband migrates first, before wife (and children) go to join him, and also among mothers who migrate alone, leaving children and/or husbands behind. The analysis of my data shows how some gender ideologies underlie social practices that shape women's mobility and decision-making but also presents multiple and contradictory ways by which they exercise agency even in decision-making. This, in a way, queries the fixed and given ways in which decision making is often presented in relation to migration.

The accounts of my participants further suggest that irrespective of class and social status, the decision to migrate is not always taken in isolation without input from significant others, especially kin and family members. This presents families as dynamic sites, where the roles and responsibilities of members involve juggling tasks of production and social reproduction which impact on migration decision-making processes. Although the impact of extended family members on migration decision making is not often explored (Fleischer 2007), I argue that it reflects the social and cultural aspects of migration decision-making.

I do not in any way claim to have fully explored the reasons why women decide to migrate, how they do so and the impact of the process on their self-identity, as I am aware that the reasons and processes are multifaceted, complex and sometimes difficult to articulate. I am however, convinced that incorporating the dynamic components of self-construction and its complex linkages to (imagined) future

attainments, tell us something about the multiple ways in which individuals narrate the self. Their narratives reflect self as situated within past experiences, events in the present and future aspirations which facilitate migration decision-making. I am not only interested in how the different phases of my participants' life course narratives reflect their retrospective construction of selfhood in migration decision making, but also in their narratives of how they engaged with the move, integration and settlement in the UK. This will be the main focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 6. You're "On Your Own" (O Y O): Negotiating Early Days Experiences and Integration in the UK

Introduction

It was in the early hours of the 17th of October 2007 when I set my feet for the first time on the soil of England. As I walked down the aisle of the plane amidst other travellers, with exhilaration overtaking exhaustion, many thoughts ran through my mind. It immediately dawned on me that I was stepping into another phase of my life. I rang my mum to inform her that I had arrived, and her prayers startled me to another realisation. After praying and thanking God for journey mercies and safe arrival as was her custom, she added "May you find favour as you are entering into the country." At that moment, I became fully aware that there is a difference between 'arrival' and 'entering'. While arrival happens in an instant, all at once, entering is a process and happens in phases. The process of 'entering' takes place at many different levels, and it may require emotional, psychological, behavioural, cognitive and physiological adjustments from individuals (Furnham and Bochner 1986; Pedersen 1994). Therefore, examining participants' retrospective narratives of how they negotiated these different levels, and exploring how they made sense of their individual gradual process of settling and integrating into the host country are the main concerns of this chapter. Based on the reflexive nature and narrative perspective of this research, I aim to analyse participants' self-conscious accounts of the nuances and complexities involved in their individual construction of a sense of being and belonging within the negotiations of developing a bi-cultural identity in the UK.

The unfamiliar situations that travellers, sojourners and immigrants face in a new country are often collectively referred to as "culture shock", even when some of these challenges are not cultural. While there is no clear definition of culture shock, Furnham (2012:11-12) explained it as "a ubiquitous and normal stage in any acculturative adaptive process that all "travellers" experience". Culture shock is a term attributed to an anthropologist, Kalervo Oberg, who popularized the term as the

"anxiety that results from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (Oberg 1960:177). My participants' multi-perspectival and reflexive narratives, however, make it clear to me that experiences of settling in a new country is neither a unidimensional nor a simple phenomenon as popularly represented in literature, but a multidimensional and complex process. I realised that following some 'catch-phrase' textbook definitions of stages of culture shock would mean treating experiences of cultural differences as a unitary phenomenon assumed to follow a linear natural order. This, I realised, could amount to forcing the accounts of my participants' experiences into some prescriptive categories instead of exploring them as "internalized constructs or perspectives developed in reaction or response to the new unfamiliar situation" (Pedersen 1994: vii). Moreover, while most of my participants explained their surprise at some of the cultural differences they faced, they cannot be defined as "candidates for a valid case of culture shock", but as individuals faced with "the subtle nuances of subjective culture" (Furnham and Bochner 1986: xvii). "Shock" is explained by Furnham and Bochner as "something serious, like tonic immobility…". I therefore argue that "shock" is too strong a word to explain the unfamiliar experiences faced by my participants.

Despite enormous variation in participants' circumstances, as middle-class professionals in Nigeria, many had lived and worked in places where they were exposed to information, (however partial), about some of the cultural differences in the UK. A few also had opportunities to visit the UK and other Western countries on holidays, for conferences and other official assignments, which equipped them with a level of adaptive resources. These resources and social skills helped them in some ways, to avoid, navigate and deal with certain aspects of the situations they faced. For instance, Omo told me that she visited her husband before she finally agreed to migrate. Christy said she came on holiday with her parents as a teenager. Dorcas and Alima had earlier come for further studies. Betty and Charity also talked about their initial visits to the UK which were work related. Moreover, most of my participants talked about relatives, friends and acquaintances who were migrants and/or return migrants who shared their experiences with them. But more importantly, many had husbands who migrated to the UK before them, from whom they received first-hand information. This is not to say that my participants were immune to cultural differences, but the core of my argument is that their individual experiences of

different ways of living, being and belonging were shaped by the extent of their acquired personal and social skills.

The inadequacy of the concept of culture shock is further evidenced by some participants who explained that their encounter with the new ways of living in the UK did not contain only disorienting anxieties and traumas of geographical dislocation (Akhtar 2010), but it also had some exciting, stimulating and rewarding impact on their way of knowing, which led to considerable ethical socio-cultural adjustments. Since culture shock is only "minimally relevant" (Furnham and Bochner 1986: xvii) to my participants' situation, and their acquired skills, resourcefulness and social networks helped them (to a fair extent), to anticipate and prepare for how they would adjust, I therefore adopt a "person-by-situation" approach in analysing participants' accounts of the unfamiliar experiences they faced in the UK. This approach is appropriate, as the ability to adapt to unfamiliar situations in a new environment is highly dependent on variations in both situations and persons (Furnham and Bochner 1986). Furthermore, my participants' accounts suggest that the different ways of internalising and interpreting these unfamiliar situations are highly susceptible to cultural, social and linguistic influences (Bruner 1987). This also informs how they engaged with their stories of integration in the UK.

Integration is suggested as the best way of explaining acculturation; and acculturation refers to adjustments that may occur as a result of intercultural contacts (Bhugra 2004; Schwartz et al 2010; Ryabichenko and Lebedeva 2016). Participants' accounts of how they engaged in integration while at the same time retaining some of the values, practices and beliefs of their own cultural heritage negates the old conceptualization of acculturation as a unidimensional process where immigrants are expected to discard their home country's cultural beliefs, values and practices to acquire those of their destination country. Schwartz et al (2010) argued that the old concept sees the retention of the heritage culture and acquisition of the receiving culture as opposing ends of a single continuum. However, since the early 1980's, cultural psychologists have recognized that there can be an integration of both cultures instead of discarding one for the other. This explains acculturation as a complex, interactive and "multidimensional process consisting of the confluence among heritage-cultural and receiving-cultural practices, values, and identifications"

(Schwartz et al 2010:237). Therefore, drawing from my participants' reflective narratives, I explore their experiences of acculturation by examining their different ways of interpreting integration, and how this affects their ways of being and becoming. I start their stories from their early experiences in the UK.

Negotiating Early Days Experiences: I was only a JJC (Johnny Just Come)

There is no gainsaying that some level of adjustment was necessary for all my participants, albeit to varying degrees. However, irrespective of the level of their acquired social skills, many did not complete the story of their initial experiences of some of the unfamiliar practices and culture in the UK without referring to themselves as JJC. JJC is an acronym for Johnny Just Come. It is a street slang in Nigeria, used to describe one who is naïve, performing a task or visiting an unfamiliar terrain for the first time (Ogunfowoke 2015). It started as a phrase used to refer to newly arrived Westerners, who were often unfamiliar with local customs in Nigeria but presently it is a general phrase used by Nigerians within and outside Nigeria to refer to anyone experiencing a new culture. All my participants, employing the dynamic inter-play between experience and expression in their narratives, talked about how at one point or another during their settling days and weeks, they considered themselves, or were considered by others, as JJCs. I therefore discuss their self-reflective accounts of how they experienced interaction and negotiations within environmental, interpersonal, social, and socio-cultural challenges, which created in them an awareness of the dynamics, problems and implications of cross-cultural experiences.

Welcome to Britain: The Weather was my First Challenge

My participants' accounts of their first and early experiences in the UK differ from person to person, with some referring to the weather as their first challenge. While some participants said they arrived in the winter, others told me they came in summer; but five of them, three who had visited previously, were the few who explained that they came prepared for the weather. From their accounts however, I realised that many came with only a patchy knowledge of the weather and were surprised at the realisation of the difference between the weather in Nigeria and the UK. Cindy who arrived in the UK in the winter recounted how her husband warned her to prepare for the weather, but she only made sense of what cold weather could

feel like by thinking about the cold season in Jos, Plateau state[61]. She gave a detailed account of her first day in England:

> After all the checks palaver, we collected our suitcases, dragged ourselves, because of course we were already tired; you know how tiring it can be […] As I came out of the immigration clearance, the December breeze that slapped my face was harshly cold. It was unbelievable! It was my first shocker! I mean, it was dark, quiet and wickedly cold. It was not anything like Jos weather. True, I had been warned by my husband to wear layers of clothes and very thick cardigan because of the cold but I had ignorantly treated the warning lightly because my only knowledge of cold weather was the harmattan season in Jos, Plateau state. I convinced myself that if I could stand the cold in Jos, then I would be fine for England. How wrong I was; I still remember how I stood there like a statue, with my feet frozen and my two children helplessly clinging to me. I was really confused because by this time, my little girl was already crying and shouting, "mummy tell them to switch the AC off!" (laughing). Poor thing, the only time she felt cold in Nigeria was when the air conditioner was on; so, she could only relate to that […] I was not just cold, my heart was frozen; (long pause, shook her head) … I tried not to think of anything. We just stood there like motherless children shivering in the biting cold, just watching people, going and coming, their faces either straight or bowed, everybody in a hurry because of the cold… When I saw XXX (husband) coming towards us, I quickly forced a smile, but we could not run to meet him; […] I noticed that he himself was different from the picture I had of him. His hair and his beard were full (laughs). And he was coming with cups of tea in his hands. It was funny to me; my husband, tea? He never took tea in Nigeria; he preferred his solid[62] even in the morning; so, I wondered what the weather had done to him…

[61] Jos, popularly referred to as J-Town, is the capital of Plateau State. Situated in the middle belt of Nigeria, Plateau State is the twelfth largest state. It can be as cold as 17 °C during the harmattan season (from December to February). It can be compared to Spring or Autumn in the UK but definitely never as cold as winter.

[62] "solid" refers to heavy Nigerian meals like cassava meals. Usually made out of starchy food and taken with vegetable soup

The disjointed and fragmented way in which Cindy engaged with her story, starting from the collection of their suitcases, to a vivid description of the weather and to the changes in her husband suggests her recollection of a state of bewilderment at her point of entry into the UK. I was particularly fascinated by her use of the familiar to conceptualise the unfamiliar, describing how she expected the winter in the UK to compare with the cold weather in Jos with which she was familiar. To buttress her point, Cindy added her daughter's comment about requesting that the AC be switched off to control the cold. This act of 'storying' her daughter's comment into her narrative suggests that what is remembered and told in retrospective narratives is always situationed and shaped by the subject of discourse between narrator and listener (Eastmond 2007). In other words, narrative frameworks are often subject to the context within which the story is told, where items added to or omitted from the story are determined by the topic of discussion. However, using both accounts of mother and daughter here, explains how seeing the unfamiliar through the lens of the familiar, could sometimes lead to some unsettling realities. Also, Cindy's further comment made me to ponder on how complex the telling of life stories must be. For instance, her expression, "… I was not just cold, my heart was frozen; (long pause, shook her head) … I tried not to think of anything, …" could be said to reflect a deep emotional display of despondency. It is however difficult to decipher if the emotional display reflects her feeling then, at the point of her experiencing cold winter, or at the point of telling the story, when experiences are possibly already coloured by processes and events of immigration. This, in a way, expresses the complex relationship between storytelling and the 'storied' self (Plummer 2001). Cindy also explained how she noticed some changes in her husband, attributing this to the weather. Again, since narratives are not transparent renditions of reality (Eastmond 2007), it is difficult to tell if Cindy's way of engaging with her story is a product of her way of making sense of the past from her present position. Her story however depicts a woman who on her first day in the UK was perplexed, unimpressed and wondered about the multiple effects the weather was going to have on her and her family.

Similarly, Pelumi said she arrived UK in the winter of 2010, but unlike Cindy, she explained that she had a fair knowledge of the weather which was based on stories she had heard from friends and family in Nigeria. She told me that she had heard a

lot about winter and was particularly thrilled about snow, looking forward to seeing and touching it. However, stories about the UK weather told in Nigeria could be sometimes exaggerated or not detailed enough. Nevertheless, she explained how an accident convinced her of her ignorance, as winter is better experienced than explained:

> I came to the UK in January 2010. Does that ring a bell?[63] It was as if the snow was waiting for me. It was as if the heavens opened. Actually, after that time, I have not witnessed another winter like it. I was very thrilled to see everywhere white; it was like a heap of salt; was a beautiful sight. I was surprised, but excited and satisfied to finally see it. And at first, the cold was not as bad as I thought o; honestly, after all the kind of gist they told us about winter before coming, I kit up like Baba Sala[64] (chuckles). It was after taking hundreds of pictures in the snow that it dawned on me that I was stuck… I could not continue my journey for two days because of the snow. […] wait! you have not heard the worse bit; when it was finally time to go, because I was JJC, I wore my pair of new trainers and as soon as I stepped on the already hardened snow, … gbruuuu…gbam! I was lying flat on my back, facing heaven! (laughing) It was my first adult fall. Now that was a shock for me. I realised that omode ti o mo ogun ohun pe le fo[65]. At that point I began to question if it was the will of God for me to come to the UK. […] that experience stayed with me for a long time.

Pelumi told the story of her first winter experience by explaining that after then, she had not experienced any other like it. This expresses how retrospective narratives not only create space to make sense of the past (Maines et al 1983), but also provide opportunities to compare the past with the present. Also, using humour, she creates some distance between her present self and her earlier naïve self who wore many

[63] Pelumi asked that question because the winter of 2010 in the UK was popularly referred to as "the big freeze 2010" due to the severity of the weather. And it was suggested as the coldest winter the country has experienced since 1962/3 (Mesure et al 2010).
[64] Baba Sala is the stage name of Moses Olaiya Adejumo, a renowned Nigerian comedian, dramatist and actor, who is popular for wearing many layers of multi-coloured clothes to mimic the blend between Western and Nigerian culture
[65] This is a Yoruba proverb, translated as "a child being ignorant of medicinal herbs, trivializes them as vegetables (meaning: one is ignorant of the seriousness of the situation)

layers of clothes to contend with the winter cold she imagined from the stories she was told in Nigeria. She presents a double layering of storytelling as she narrates the story she was told within the story she was telling, to give expression to her level of preparation. Also, the plot twist between her excitement and her accident which marked the latter part of her story expresses how fragmentary and subjective the stories we tell and receive can be (Kadmos 2014). In other words, although Pelumi had heard stories about winter before migrating, her knowledge was only partial, and did not adequately prepare her for her journey. This is often the case as stories are told with an agenda in mind, establishing a coherent linkage between how and why the stories are told. In addition to how stories are told, the receiver often engages in selective listening, only taking in supposedly relevant information to their situation. Whatever the case, Pelumi's narrative suggests that her interpretation of the information she gathered about winter only helped her to prepare herself in terms of appropriate clothing but left her ignorant of other necessary precautions.

Sarah on the other hand, said she arrived in the UK during summer, but unlike Cindy who described the weather as dark, quiet and wickedly cold, the brightness of the night was what Sarah talked about. She recalled her reaction when at 10pm she could still read outside without the aid of electricity: "Do you know I thought my eyes were seeing double when on this particular night, my hubby opened the door to go to work and it was as bright as 3pm in the afternoon? I had heard it before, but it did not make much sense to me. No way! It was absolutely unbelievable; I screamed, and everyone laughed at me; but we really liked it then…". It is interesting how the future suddenly becomes the past. Sarah's statement, "I had heard it before…" refers to stories she heard in the past about a future that has now become a past. Mead's (1964) theory of temporality explains the existing complex connection between constructions of past and future narratives. According to him, the past arises through memories and the future exists only in our anticipation; therefore, the past is as hypothetical as the future and only the present, where memory and anticipation meets, is real (Maines et al 1983). Therefore, Sarah, based on her memory of her early experiences in the UK, gave an account of her excitement at the brightness of summer. Christy, another participant who as a teenager had visited the UK on a two-week holiday with her parents in summer, explained how she proudly convinced her husband and friends that she understood the weather because she had been before.

She said she was however shocked when she arrived, it was dark in the afternoon and the weather was unbearably cold. She explained, "somehow, I knew it would be colder than the time I visited but not that type; I mean, it was bad…I was in the house for more than two weeks without stepping out…"

The accounts of these participants show the different linking factors that informed how they made sense of some of their early experiences in the UK, and how this shaped the retrospective elements with which they constructed their initial thoughts about the British weather. Their experience of the weather therefore, can be said to be relatively linked to the level of information they had and their level of preparedness. Although it is often the case that the winter season is the most prominent in immigrants' accounts of British weather (see Emecheta 1994, Prashad 2016), my participants talked about some surprising elements which are linked to other seasons like the bright nights in summer, which is always a welcome experience. I suppose in accounts about immigrants' experiences of the British weather, it is always easier to engage in discussion about winter because it is erroneously believed that immigrants' encounter with new ways of living in their new countries are only negative. By and large, the season within which people arrive in the UK affects their initial impression of the British weather until they gradually settle to the realisation that no season lasts forever.

Welcome Home: The Boys' Quarters Experience

The adjectives my participants used to describe the houses in which they first lived in the UK reminded me of the ones used by Adah to describe her house in England, in Buchi Emecheta's novel, *Second-Class Citizen*:

> "… They all look like churches, you know; monasteries […]. He opened the door into what looked to Adah like a tunnel… and it seemed at first as if there were no windows […]. Then Francis opened one door and showed them into a room, or a half-room… (Emecheta 1994:35).

Like Adah, my participants used words like box room, rat hole, prison yard, hostel, guard room, mushroom, and the one that stands out is using the term, "boys' quarters" to describe their houses. Ruth, who had never visited the UK before and had very high expectations, was one of the participants who compared her house in

the UK to a boys' quarter in Nigeria. She creates a vivid picture of the contrast between her house in Nigeria and the one in which she first lived in the UK:

> In Nigeria, I lived with my husband and two children in a 4-bedroom house, with two en suites, a family bathroom and a play area. I never tried to picture what my house in the UK would be like. I mean, I did not think I had enough pictures in my mind to imagine how beautiful it would be […]. O girl the thing shock me. When I finally landed ehn…the house wey I see, he be like say na boys' quarters for Nigeria (laughs). So, settling down was really difficult. The house was a three-bedroom terrace house which we shared with another Nigerian couple. Kai! The house was so old; it was older than my grandfather's. The rooms were small and uninteresting. It was dull and depressing. I suddenly became cold. To tell you the truth, those type of houses do not exist in Nigeria (laughs again). Do you know there were rats in the house? In UK? Even the oven in the kitchen was infested with rats…ayama; it was disgusting! I tried to hide my feelings; my crying was done in the night; I felt confined; honestly, it felt like a hostel not a home. So, I refused to give my friends our address o; ehn I could not stand it. I just told them that it was shared accommodation […]. My husband was busy with work, so it was totally OYO; and we lived like that for like, ehn …2 years?

Ruth, speaking in pidgin English, compared her shared accommodation in the UK to a boys' quarters in Nigeria. Boys' Quarters, popularly referred to as BQs are small rooms attached to the main house to accommodate domestic staff. These houses have basic features of post-colonial house structures belonging to wealthy Nigerians. Enahoro (2013) stated that having BQ's became fashionable in Africa during the colonial period when expatriates occupied exclusive Government Reservation Areas (GRA). Africans were not allowed to rent houses in those areas and the ones employed as servants were not allowed to live in the same houses with their masters, therefore, small houses were built at the back of main houses for servants to live in. Boys' quarters are the type of houses described by Girouard (1978) as Servants' quarters in Britain, which are extensions of private houses, built as domestic offices and staff accommodation. These existed within the late 17th century and early 20th century Britain.

Ruth's description of her first house in the UK might contain some element of exaggeration as she compares it to a BQ in Nigeria, a hostel and her grandfather's house, finally concluding that there are no such houses in Nigeria. There are of course as many dilapidated buildings as there are luxurious ones in Nigeria. However, Ruth's big house in Nigeria tells us something about her social class, and as I mentioned in the previous chapter, in Nigeria, one of the criteria for measuring class and social status is the size and outlook of one's house. Ruth was possibly deeply affected by the realisation that migration had stripped her of her social status (one that she had worked so hard to attain—see chapter 4). Her retrospective narrative therefore suggests a state of discontentment with her perceived loss of class. She also talked about suffering a period of isolation and depression, which must have been worsened by a feeling of confinement. Her statement, "my husband was busy with work" presents a complex situation with no one to blame. This was the case with many of my participants, especially those who came (with children) to join their husbands. Because it is often the case that the children are left with their mothers while the men migrate first, men tend to have ample time to mingle with the resident population either at work or after work, overcome many of the cultural challenges quicker and integrate faster. Once a job is secured, they invite their families (wife and children) to join them. While the man works very hard to sustain the family, the wife may be neglected and not adequately supported to overcome challenges and unfamiliar practices. Saddled with the responsibility of taking care of the children and keeping the home, which (at the initial time may not be comfortable accommodation), could really be likened to the Boys' Quarters experience.

Similarly, two other participants, Clara and Christy, explained how they started life in the UK by living in box rooms in shared accommodation. A box room is a small room usually used for storage in the UK. Clara, who described her situation as a rude shock, explained that the room was so small that it could only take a single bed; so, while she slept on the bed, her husband slept on the floor. Christy, without giving too much detail, explained that she, her husband and her son lived in the box room until they were able to raise money enough to rent a one-bedroom apartment. Although facing the same situation, I noticed a huge difference in the accounts of these two participants. The size of the rooms was a serious challenge for Clara who had high expectations but had never visited the UK prior to migration. Christy on the other

hand, explained her situation as a difficult but expected reality; because she had visited the UK earlier, she was relatively aware of the size of UK houses. The experience they had in common however, was the feeling of isolation:

> "I did not feel any sense of belonging. We just stayed inside our mushroom. We did not even know our neighbours in the next flat. Nobody talks to you, nobody greets you, … I mean, except for the fake smile. Neighbours will not even say hello to you let alone befriend you. I don't understand that bit; in Nigeria when you are new to a street everybody will come to say hello and ask if you need any help but here, you are on your own; totally O Y O. Haba! I thought that was a very strange way to live…"

Christy also told me that when she first came on holiday with her parents, they all stayed with her uncle and aunt, who lived in another city with their four children. She did not notice the solitary lifestyle as she had many people around her. However, now in a different city, with just her husband as the familiar face, she felt isolated. She further spoke about how depressed she was when she gave birth to her baby and there were no neighbours trooping in to congratulate her and offering her baby presents. She explained that this was very different from the practice in Nigeria, where you enjoy ceaseless visits from friends, relatives and neighbours at the sound of a newly born baby. She added that mother and baby are often given large rooms where they are both nursed, with older women taking turns to bath the baby and preparing special delicacies for the nursing mother.

From Clara and Christy's accounts we can deduce that of all the many elements that make a house a home in Nigeria, the most important is people. Although the middle-class population in urban Nigeria are gradually moving away from communal lifestyle and building huge gates to guard their spaces, there is still a level of community among neighbours. Kinship ties and extended family relationships are also still very strong and regular visits from these people are always expected. The possibility of suffering isolation is therefore very slim, but the opposite seems to be the case in the UK today, where individualism appears to be the preferred way of being. This way of living was a huge challenge to many of my participants and two of them, Osas and Sarah explained that the level of isolation they suffered after childbirth led to post-natal depression.

Some of my participants mentioned that depending on their social networks was one of the ways they were able to familiarise themselves with cultural and social norms in the UK. A few said they started off living with relatives or close family friends. However, the experiences of some of them could still be likened to 'Boys' Quarters' experience, as they recounted their ordeal of living in small and/or overcrowded rooms. Cindy spoke about sleeping on an old couch in a damp room, for which she had to be grateful. For some, there was also the straining of long-standing relationships because of changes in social behaviour and expectations. For instance, Cindy tried to explain her experience further, "We started off with my husband's cousin in XXX. We had it rough…. something like a funny time; (chuckles, then went silent) … I will never forget (laughs again) …please can we not talk about that … ok; I will just move on". She failed to articulate her words, perhaps out of reluctance to revisit past hurt, or unwillingness to express her views on family issues. A feeling of pain and disappointment can however be perceived from her way of engaging with her story. Efosa on the other hand, was an independent migrant who said that she felt fully supported by her brother with whom she lived for 5 months before renting her own accommodation. She added that it was not very convenient, but she was very grateful. Efosa's account and her display of loyalty and gratitude to her brother, though, may veil some unpleasant experiences, reflects immigrants' dependence on already established social networks to enter and settle in the UK. Having such networks however are not always without their own challenges.

Blessing was one of the few participants whose account does not reflect "BQ experience". She told me that her husband had already rented and furnished a two-bedroom house before she came to join him. Although Blessing had her own challenges, accommodation was not one of them. She explained that she enjoyed a very good start because her husband had relocated to the UK about a year earlier, even before they married. In other words, their situation was slightly different from my other participants who started the immigration process together as a family before relocating. Among other things also, settling in a small town in Northern England could possibly explain why Blessing's husband (at the early stage of his career) could afford comfortable accommodation. Housing prices differ from one region of the UK to the other, with a better chance of lower rates in some parts of Northern England compared to accommodation in South East England where most

of my participants started from. This suggests that immigrants' experiences of entering and settling in their destination countries differ from person to person, depending also on the different situations.

Many of my participants' narratives suggest how they continually compared their middle-class homes in Nigeria with their first homes in the UK. Many were very disappointed to see some of the dreams of their 'imagined future' for what they really were—fantasies. More importantly, they were deeply affected by the loss of communal living, the regular visits from family members, friends and neighbours. However, one important hint from their narratives is that there are different factors that determine how people adjust to their new spaces, which therefore suggests that there is no "one-size-fits all" experience of migrants' settlement.

Hiya…Y'rite? I Thought I Could Speak English: Experiencing Languaculture

Anthias (1992), who researched Greek-Cypriots migration to Britain, and Wei (2011) in her research on Chinese wives' migration to the UK explained that their participants admitted to having low proficiency in the English language. This, however, was not the case with my participants, who did not foresee any problem with their proficiency in English language before arriving in the UK. It did not come to me as a surprise because, like them, I thought my level of proficiency in spoken English was good enough for the UK, so, in my preparation, I did not give any attention to language learning. I suppose many Nigerians travelling to Western countries share this level of confidence because of the Western system of education we are exposed to. Being a former British colony, Nigeria has English as her official language. Generally, people are schooled in English from primary school to university level. All my participants who were middle-class citizens and lived in urban cities in Nigeria believed that because of their proficiency in English, they did not need any elaborate preparation to live in the UK. However, it takes not just visiting, but settling in England to realise that in whichever way we define it, proficiency in the English language is but a fluid term, and language is only fully learnt in relation to a culture (Furnham and Bochner 1984). Moreover, Agar (1994:29) warns, "you can master grammar and the dictionary, but without culture you won't communicate." Many of my participants talked about their embarrassment

when upon their arrival in the UK, their knowledge of English Language was challenged. Favour expressed how disappointed she was when she realised that she was struggling to hold meaningful conversations because she could not quite hear the words spoken by native speakers:

> My greatest shock was the language. I just could not believe it. Me, that used to speak posh English in Nigeria, I reached here and ordinary conversation I struggled to hold. I could not pick a word. I could not hear them, and they could not hear me. Chai! … (clapping her hands), irony of life; and to think that I became shaky when I want to talk, me that was a very confident soul before. They were just too fast for me and surprisingly, they thought I was too fast too. For the first few weeks, I found myself turning to my husband to interpret. See, it was bitter for me because, if I did not understand English before, I'll understand, but for them to speak and I kept saying pardon, pardon that was a blow.

There were many participants who, like Favour explained how they struggled to follow simple conversation in the first few weeks of their arrival. Favour explained that she found her language inadequacy extremely painful, frustrating and embarrassing. Also, in a manner of self-reflection, she emphasises "me" (herself), in her statements, "me, that used to speak posh English…" and "me that was a very confident soul…", constructing a link between the social constitution of self and identity (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Plummer, 2001). She expresses how much her level of self-confidence depended on her supposedly proficient use of English language. As a banker, she was highly skilled, and must have been a confident communicator and one with a very high command of spoken English in Nigeria. No doubt, to lose such status had a very negative impact on her self-esteem. This, I argue, may have nothing to do with her knowledge of the English language, but as pointed out by Furnham (1993), language use and social interactions are culture specific, and the ability to communicate in one culture may not always be fully transferred to another until one is integrated into the new culture. Kate, a very soft-spoken lady, was another participant who explained her own ordeal, and how long it took her to adjust to the new culture:

> It took me a while to adjust. I was just scared of everybody I don't know why, because I was used to English and American films and I used to be able to hear and understand what they say but I was shocked that I just couldn't hear them; so, communication was difficult. Even they did not understand me when I speak. You know, language was never one of the challenges we thought we would encounter because we were taught in English language, we thought English was English without recognising that accent could be a massive issue. Gradually, I started getting my confidence and started communicating with them. I won't lie to you when I came, I really felt low. They live lonely lives here. I just could not understand it. You know, back home you greet, and ask after people's welfare. Here, I greet, and people are wondering why you are greeting. At times, I greet, and they will not even respond. It was different from what I was used to, but they said when you get to Rome, you behave as the Romans, so I had to join them. If people show me their teeth, I show mine although I hate the fake smile…

Kate, by using "we" in her statement, "…language was never one of the challenges we thought we would encounter…", creates a level of distancing, but at the same time, solidarity in her use of language. She creates a distance between herself and the language problems she was having, but at the same time, carefully establishes solidarity with other Nigerian migrants by expressing that the communication challenges she faced was not a personal but a collective one, and one that was not envisaged. One other interesting point raised by Kate was greeting, which is clearly a very important part of the Nigerian culture. It is customary not to rush the greeting process, whether it is done in English or indigenous language (Commisceo 2017). It is always taken as a serious offence or a sign of rudeness not to greet or to do so 'inappropriately'. This explains why the simple, and sometimes non-verbal, way of greeting in the UK, is questioned by my participants, as they interpret these gestures as unfriendly and unwelcoming.

Hannah, a graduate of English language and an English language teacher before migrating, was very practical in her own account. She did not only complain about the manner of greeting of the English, but also listed some words and phrases which had completely different meanings from the ones she was used to:

> Well, […], it was the greetings that first did my head-in (laughing). What is "hiya…y'rite?" I'm telling you, I say good morning, and they go…hiya, y'rite! At first, I did not even hear what they were saying, until I was told they were saying "hello, are you alright?" Even that was a shock to me because, how is that a response to "good morning?" In Nigeria, to ask somebody if they are alright is to insinuate that they are insane! (Chuckles) Can you imagine that? Also, they use phrases like "being sick" instead of "vomit" and …there is another confusing one, … yes; lunch is now dinner, and dinner is now tea. And again, since when did pumpkin, chicken and duck become a form of endearment? You hear them say stuff like, "hello chicken" … I could not get my head round all that […] and worse of all, they swear. Kai. They love to swear; I don't know why. It is always f…king this, or f…king that…which is common among those that just roam aimlessly about in city centre …

Hannah's account suggests a level of unlearning and re-learning of English that some of my participants had to undergo in the UK, not because they could not speak English, but because language is culturally transmitted (Agar 1994), and their use of English language was specific to, and transmitted from the context of the Nigerian culture. Furthermore, the different accents with which the English language is spoken, and the use of some phrases which are region specific appears very confusing. For instance, a friend once told me that in Lancashire, it is popular for people to use "chicken", or "duckie" as a form of endearment, which may not be very popular in other regions. Also, using swear words is arguably associated with class in the UK. Hannah's words "…which is common among those that just roam aimlessly…" could possibly mean that she was pointing to the lower class and working class in the society. However, Wen (2016) argued that using swear words in the British culture is not particularly associated only with the lower class but more with the upper middle class, who care less about the effect of their language. She further argued that swearing as a cultural thing in Britain, could sometimes be associated with politeness, familiarity, solidarity, easing tension and equalising members with different levels of power. This complex linkage between language and culture is explained by Agar (1994:76) as "Languaculture", expressing that embedded inside every language is not only grammar and vocabulary, but culture,

habits and behaviour. This is also succinctly summarised in this extract from Mahadi and Jafari (2012:234):

> "… languages themselves cannot be fully understood otherwise than in the context of the cultures in which they are inextricably embedded; subsequently, language and culture are studied together […] it can be concluded that there is a very close relationship between language and culture in general, and a specific language and its culture in particular. That is, culture has a direct effect on language. In fact, the two issues are closely correlated and interrelated. Language is the symbolic presentation of a nation or a specific community. In other words, language is the symbolic presentation of a culture".

It was a challenge for my participants to come to terms with the British way of living and having to (re) learn the English language. This was the case because they did not anticipate any such challenge. There was however, an interesting twist in some participants' account, as they tried to make sense of some natives' responses to them about their skills and language proficiency. For instance, Omo reminisced about her encounter with a woman she met at the library:

> … the shocking thing was that she asked me how come I could speak good English. She asked how long I had stayed in England and was shocked to realise that I was practically new. I found that really funny; I mean it boosted my ego, as I tried to clear her ignorance. I explained to her that in Nigeria we speak English language, we are taught in English language, as you know… in fact my father and mother are not from the same place, so I have had to speak English all my life […]. The bit that vexed me was that she told me she had met an African lady who could not speak English, as if we …. I felt like screaming at her that Africa is not a country and […].

I found Omo's account fascinating, as it strengthens my resolution to embrace the person-by-situation framework in analysing participants' narratives. For instance, the impact of the way of life and idiosyncrasies of immigrants on people of the destination country and the reverse impact on the immigrants themselves is not given adequate attention in literature. This explains some of the complex layering of immigrants' experiences and their different ways of making sense of those

experiences. Omo's story of her encounter suggests the varying stereotypical assumptions held by some natives. While some are disappointed that immigrants cannot speak English with "the right accent", some others assume (I have experienced this), that immigrants are uniformly unskilled (Kofman 2000), deficient in English language, and are possibly illiterate. It is however the case that for some immigrants, not only are they highly skilled, they are highly qualified with many years of experience (Altorjai 2013); although the question is the extent to which these qualifications are acknowledged.

Cindy, another participant, recounted playing and winning a scrabble game with one of her colleagues, who became very angry, because she had assumed that she was supposed to be teaching Cindy how to play. While these assumptions are often embarrassing and seen as insults by some immigrants, some natives are also surprised by their own ignorance of the heterogeneity of immigrants. Besides, referring to Africa as a country is a very common mistake made in the UK and possibly in many other places. Many Black people are often asked the question, "are you from Africa?" The general notion of Africa as a country comes as a surprise to many Black immigrants and the fact that it is not a country, but a continent is confusing to some natives. Some participants recalled some other (Nigerian) cultural practices and ways of being which were unfamiliar to some natives, like braiding of hair, wearing colourful Nigerian attire and carrying their babies on their backs. The fact that some natives are unfamiliar with these acts, sometimes comes as a surprise to the immigrants too and sometimes it is merely amusing. There is no one way of recording how these participants feel about being put on the spot and questioned about these things because while some of them feel excited to engage in such conversation, others express their disappointment and feel insulted to be confronted with such questions.

As Agar (1994:16) argued, "language carries more meanings than you ever dreamed, and culture is where you find them". All my participants came to the UK equipped with a level of proficiency in English language, but it was a huge disappointment for them to notice deficiencies in their ability to communicate. These deficiencies are greatly due to their lack of familiarity with the English culture and since language is embedded in culture, they had to learn some of the nuances of the English culture in order to communicate effectively. As my participants already had a background in

English, it did not appear too difficult for them to adjust to the English culture. However, there were some obstacles to their learning, vis-a-vis their inability to correct the misconception that immigrants cannot communicate properly in English, learning to use acceptable accents, and addressing issues with self-confidence due to fear of rejection. Moreover, some of these women were not able to have frequent personal contact with natives because of childcare, so, gaining the confidence to express feelings, emotions and ritualised routines like greetings, self-disclosure and asserting self, came slowly to them. But, as they began to gradually achieve a blend between their home and the British culture, they began to build their self-confidence and notice some positives in the British way of living.

Noticing the Good, Not Only the Bad and the Ugly

One other reason for abandoning culture shock as an analytic concept is the tendency to use it to imply only negative effects on the individual(s) experiencing it. Finding a particular way of life unfamiliar does not necessarily mean seeing it as bad, evil or unacceptable; at least not every aspect of the culture. Some of my participants told me about some very positive aspects of the British culture which to them, was a pleasant surprise. It was Blessing's first time in the UK, and among other things, the British sense of time keeping was a pleasant surprise to her:

> I now know the true meaning of the song "time na money"[66] (we both sang a part of the song) …ehn; we just dey sing the song we no know the meaning at all. The true meaning of that song is in the UK. Have you thought about it—most jobs in the UK are calculated per hour. Train o, bus o, even childcare is all timed. If you waste time, you lose money; so truly, time na money. Tell a Briton that a party starts at 3pm, sharp on the dot, 3pm, oyibo will be there. Just try and tell a proper Naija person that your party starts at 3 (laughing loudly), O Y O—you're on your own; Naija will turn up at 5pm, believing that 3 is African time[67]. …Yes; I liked the good sense of timing because it has helped me to be organised but that's not to say I don't do

[66] "Time Na Money" is a popular Nigerian song by a Nigerian songwriter, Mike Okri.
[67] African time connotes a very relaxed attitude towards time. It is a lack of time consciousness which is a common practice in Nigeria or among Nigerians.

> African time o (laughs) that one's already part of us but at least I'm way better and it's really helped me…

I enjoyed joining Blessing to sing Ben Okri's old "Time Na Money" song and for the first time in decades, I gave attention to the lyrics of the song and not the melody. I realised how much time is actually quantified and commodified in the UK, and not in Nigeria. An experience I had in December 2007 reminds me of how much I share Blessing's view about the direct relationship between time and money in the UK. I was to catch the 8:02 p.m. bus going from my street to the train station, then get on the train to work at about an hour later. I was about 3 minutes late to the bus stop, so I missed the bus. I waited for the next bus which was in another 20 minutes; this meant missing the train that would get me to work in good time, which meant missing 30 minutes of my work time. I rang my manager to explain that I was running late, and she thanked me for informing her. I was happy that all was sorted but to my uttermost surprise, when I received my pay slip at the end of the month, the 30 minutes was deducted. This was really surprising to me, because I knew if that had happened in Nigeria, my explanation could have sufficed. Akhtar (2010:11) however gives an interesting perspective to the worth of time measurement, explaining it as the "subjective experience of time". He argues that such experiences are guided by cultural forces. His idea is better summarised in his further explanation:

> "… in industrialized nations, time was gradually rendered into a commodity, while in nonindustralized nations it was not. In the former, passing moments were captured, named, measured, and sold. Like water, time was put into a tray and frozen into ice cubes of designated length. Each cube has its price, depending upon the size. Hiring of labor, operation of production lines, and rental of property all became time-dependent and tied to capital generation. Efficiency and punctuality became nearly synonymous. Thus, was born what I call the "time of the mind" or the "time of money." In contrast, the non-industrialized nations, where planes, trains, phones, faxes, and e-mail did not create rapid access to others and where the manufacture of commodities did not take over the community, the beginning and ending of various social get-togethers continued to depend upon the arrival of loved ones (often by treacherously unreliable means) and the permissive winks of gods and

> seasons. This is what I call the "time of the heart" or the "time of love" (Akhtar 2010:11).

Akhtar (2010) links the "time of money" to industrialised countries, and the "time of love" to non-industrialised countries; and without choosing one sense of timing over the other, argues that when people migrate, they carry with them their sense of time. This was very much the case with my participants. Because they were accustomed to working within very relaxed time frame or no time frame at all (African time), they struggled with the rigid sense of timing in the UK. They were however happy to adjust to a bi-cultural sense of timing, which Akhtar refers to as "bicultural punctuality", where they practise "time of money" for official and formal occasions, then switch to "time of love" for informal and unofficial gatherings especially within their social groups. Other positive practices pointed out by my participants are the show of courtesy and politeness irrespective of age, class and gender. Pelumi, talked about thanking the bus driver despite paying the travel fare. Many of my participants were amazed at the use of "please" for every request made, and "thank you" to show appreciation, even for the slightest favour done. In Nigeria, it is only an obligation that the younger owes to the older and in some cases, women to men. It was therefore, another pleasant surprise, but one that takes getting used to. I remember being asked by a cashier in a shop if I needed a bag and I answered "yes". He gave me a stern look and under his breath, he muttered "yes please." In this sense, the British culture can be said to expressly promote politeness and courtesy; but there is another side to the story.

The casual manner of greeting elders and calling people by their first names irrespective of age, gender and position in the UK, may be viewed as a contradiction to the excessive display of politeness. In Nigeria, greeting entails many symbolic practices which differ from one ethnic group to the other. For instance, in the Yoruba culture, the men are meant to prostrate while the women are meant to kneel to greet elders. One thing all cultures hold in common however, is the acknowledgement of hierarchy among siblings, extended family members and even the larger community. To celebrate this hierarchy, the use of appropriate prefix must be used, like "broda" used for older brothers, and "sista" or "auntie" used for older sisters (Cover9ja 2018). Also, elders, irrespective of the relationship shared, are referred to as uncle, aunty or daddy and mummy. Titles make people's names go into extinction, because

important people are called by their titles and not their names—Doctor, Pastor, Reverend, Chief, Professor etc. Pelumi explained the shock on her face when on her first day in church, she met her pastor, an elderly man, who was probably in his late sixties but was called by his first name. I struggled with this too. When I started my first job, I realised that my manager was called by her first name; I could not call her just by her name, so, I requested to call her Manager XXX until I became comfortable with using her first name. These different and contradictory ways of greeting and displaying politeness may not necessarily put one culture over the other but establishes difference in cultural standards and as Akhtar (2010) puts it, when people migrate, a part of their culture travels with them, and when they come in contact with a new culture, there is a fusion of both, which is a forever journey into integration.

My participants' stories reflect how their "well-learnt template of how things 'should be' between people and things and people and people" (Furnham and Bochner 1984:xvii), was challenged in the UK by the many unfamiliar experiences they were faced with during their early days of settling in. The unfamiliar experiences they faced, contrary to popular representation in academic literature, were not only cultural, but social, interpersonal and environmental. The analysis of participants' narratives therefore challenges the use of culture shock as a blanket term capable of explaining the complex and nuanced experiences that people are confronted with as they enter and settle in their host countries. Since culture shock as a concept arguably flattens out actual experiences, restricting the exploration of migrants' transitional experiences which are shifting, and shaped by different factors and circumstances, using a "person-by-situation" approach has helped me to explore some taken for granted details in participants accounts of settling in their new country. I therefore employ this same approach to examine participants' accounts of their different ways of making sense of how they embraced integration in the UK.

Being and Becoming: Telling Stories of Integration

It was intriguing for me to hear that even at the point of interviewing my participants, not all of them see themselves as fully integrated. What actually is integration anyway? What are the criteria for measuring it, and how exactly do we know when we hit the mark? Integration is another slippery term that can be used or

(mis)used with a particular agenda in mind. Irrespective of existing definitions and explanations of integration (see Remennick 2003; Schwartz 2010; Ryabichenco and Lebedeva 2016), it should be conceptualised as a process and not an end situation. Penninx (2005:141) succinctly explained it as "the process of becoming an accepted part of the society". This basic and simple definition not only emphasises integration as a process but presents the requirements for acceptance as open-ended. Care must be taken however, to interrogate the subtle misconception of integration as a 'one-sided' phenomenon in favour of Western universalism. Also, the lack of mutuality in the acculturation strategies of ethnic minorities and acculturation expectations of the native population should never be ignored (Joppke 1996; Ryabichenko and Lebedeva 2016). Emphasising a bi-cultural approach, Penninx (2005:141) argues that integration "covers at least three analytically distinct dimensions of becoming a part of society". These analytical dimensions which provides a framework for my participants' narratives include legal/political, socio-economic and cultural/religious dimensions. I present how the legal regulation on immigration and integration in the UK impacted on their social and cultural integration. I also explore their accounts of the impact of social networks on their settlement experiences.

Integration Stories: Negotiating Dependency Status and Migration Policies

My participants' integration stories present a deep and complex inter-connectedness between the UK legal policies and their integration process, which makes it extremely difficult to separate the legal/political from the socio-economic and cultural/religious parts of their integration stories. I present the stories of two participants which reflect how the social and the cultural integration of immigrants is strongly influenced by national legal regulation.

> Osas: […] the other problem was changes in the immigration rules. We could not sort out visa, erm, … no; … I mean Indefinite Leave to Remain, you know, ILR. This was because we came through HSMP and the rules were changed. It was changed, in fact it caused a lot of anxiety for us, it made life really difficult, all the uncertainty and lack of stability. We were not sure of what to do, getting back to my profession was out of the question; we needed to, you know, get a view of what next, and my visa was dependent on my

> husband's and he had to sort out the stay issue first. Then I had a baby (laughs and shakes her head). Another ball game altogether. My dear, it was chaotic. In fact, when we came, I was not taking care of myself. Who cares? To make matters worse, we started off from an all-white community, many were not welcoming at all, though a few were. It was difficult. We could not afford childcare, I always had house-helps back in Nigeria so, it was difficult coping without any help here, you know. I found out I had to do things all by myself. Social life was zero; no one to help with the children; I was stuck. When I had the baby, my husband assisted, but erm, … he had to keep up with the demands of his training programmes, staying up late to cook and wash. It was emotionally draining for both of us; I was sick, at every point throughout the day I had to be caring for children. Well, my church community was helpful on a voluntary basis; they became my solace. But to learn the culture and the social expectations was wahala; being conscious of not saying wrong things in social settings and all that was a new learning curve for me….

Although the legal aspect is often ignored in immigrants' integration narratives, Osas' explanation draws attention to legal integration as a necessary precondition for social and cultural integration (Waldrauch and Hifinger 1997). The legal policies on immigration at the point of entry, determine, to a great extent, how immigrants integrate in their host countries. Osas and her family, as well as many other participants came on the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme, HSMP (see chapter 3 and 7). However, gaining entry clearance should never be viewed as an end in itself, because the process to gaining full citizenship could be long and complex. And as Hill (2018: n.p) stated, many immigrants on HSMP live in precarious conditions due to "Home Office's reckless, inhumane and unlawful policies". Unpacking Osas' story expresses how their state of instability was linked to their immigration status and for her particularly, as a dependant on her husband's visa, she could not work until her husband's status was regularised. Boyd (1997) blames the state policies for promoting the dependency of women on men through discriminatory measures in settlement processes. For Osas, the impact of this was her inability to pursue labour market integration. According to Barslund et al (2017:5), labour market integration is a stepping-stone to social inclusion; they added that "working is more than a

means of economic support and the non-monetary value of work manifests itself in a feeling of being part of the society and imparts a sense of purpose". Her statement about neglecting herself indeed suggests a woman who was despondent and struggling to find a sense of purpose.

Osas' reference to her community as an "all-white" community to which she felt no sense of belonging and her flash back to her middle-class life style in Nigeria where she had house helps, suggest a new identity construction, "where gender, skin colour, class and ethnicity were defined by categories of "otherness"" (Benmayor and Skotnes 1994:139). She also explained that they could not afford childcare and due to the restriction on their visa—"no recourse to public funds", they had no right to claim any welfare benefit for childcare. This policy, under Section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, states that persons subject to immigration control are excluded from entitlements to a number of welfare benefits (Gov.UK 2014; Home Office 2016). These legal policies arguably affect women disproportionately as they are marked by gender-specific ideologies. For instance, Sarah, who said she was no longer under immigration control when she requested free nursery spaces for her twins, explained that she was denied on the ground that her family's joint household income was higher than the threshold for free nursery space allocation. She painfully narrated how her explanation that she did not have a 'joint' household income with her husband and that she was unemployed was rejected. As Boyd (1997) argues, the state welfare programme is possibly structured based on the assumption that women and children have access to men's income. Although Boyd's discussion is based on the migration policy and female dependency in Canada and Germany, I argue that this is the case in many welfare states. For instance, the UK as a welfare state claims to care and promote the well-being of its citizens, but neither citizenship nor the welfare state is gender neutral. Its overtly discriminatory policies reveal gender inequality to the detriment of women. This is further reflected in Pelumi's story.

> Pelumi: I came to join him (husband) in 2010 […]. In the midst of all these, my husband left me. He left; he turned his back on me and his only son. He came with a van and virtually emptied the whole house and left. […] I wanted my marriage to work. I told him if it was money, I would work. But I wasn't working then; So, I was in debt; where will I go, what will I do? OK, I

> now had to look for any work, tried to do care work and carried on like that. I… I … (stammers a bit, then continues her story tearfully) was not entitled to any benefit because he blocked everything. He was the only one that can claim child allowance for my son. He was collecting it and when he moved out, he took everything. He said he was happy for both of us (she and her son) to go back to Nigeria. After my explanation, the authorities saw it as domestic violence, but I refused because they will have to involve the police, and I didn't want it. They gave me two options: either my child gets his British passport and I file in to stay as the mother of a British child, which means I start afresh to apply for my own stay which will take 10 years, or they help me to ship all my stuff and sort out everything and I return to Nigeria. So, I proceeded to apply for my child's passport, and I applied all over again. I was given 93 days to leave the house. At 93 days, a lawyer came to ask me to leave. The officer spoke with the letting agent, my church intervened, and I got a guarantor from church. […] I had to work. I had no choice I picked up cleaning during the day and care work at night. That was how I started from square zero… I was careful even in church because you know, to be seen as a divorcee, … and in my neighbourhood, small, small whispers among the oyibos; so, it was to your tent. My visa came through, so I was given 10 years to stay but 'no recourse to public funds'; so, it was a new fresh start. The few years I had spent previously were not counted because that one was based on marriage but now it is based on the mother of a British child. They resolved the case of the child benefit but other claims I couldn't get.

According to Pelumi, she was married to a British citizen, who divorced her before she attained full citizenship status in the UK. Her retrospective narrative marked with painful reflection expresses her vulnerable position at the break-up of her marriage. Her statement, "I wanted my marriage to work I told him if it was money, I would work. But I wasn't working then; So, I was in debt; where will I go, what will I do? OK, I now had to look for any work, tried to do care work and carried on like that" suggests a level of financial crisis. Pelumi, who was previously a lecturer and a part-time aviation instructor while in Nigeria, was possibly unwilling to take up a menial job in the UK. It can be argued that it was out of desperation to save her

marriage that she decided to settle for "any" work without fully exploring her chances in the labour market which already stands as a difficult space to negotiate for immigrants. However, the outcome of her marriage breakdown tells us something about how legal policies surrounding immigrants' settlement and integration in the UK perpetuate the dependency of women on men, and how this dependency status can be abused. Although she said she had lived in the UK for a few years, the break-up of her marriage immediately affected her legal right to remain in the UK; and to continue to occupy this "privileged" space, there had to be an alternative. This alternative was only found in her being the mother of a "British child" It is interesting how society appears to always measure the worth of a woman by her attachment to another—husband and/or children.

Apart from the legal implication of Pelumi's dependency status, her socio-economic and cultural integration were also hugely affected by the outcome of events. Since she had no recourse to public funds, she had to settle for menial jobs, working day and night to fend for herself. She explained how she suffered a feeling of alienation from her community, stating "… I was careful even in church because you know, to be seen as a divorcee, … and in my neighbourhood, small, small whispers among the oyibos; so, it was to your tent". Although Pelumi in her reflexive narrative attempts to present other people's perception of her (in church and in her neighbourhood), she however engaged in actively 're-storying' the self, (Holsein and Gubrium 2000) by unconsciously expressing an internal feeling of a crushed self-identity, and possibly a self who is afraid to be seen in the same way she sees herself. The legal status of 'dependency' indeed affects migrant women more than the men (Boyd 1997) and the consequences impact on both their socio-economic and cultural integration.

The accounts of both participants suggest that there is a complex relationship between immigration status and integration in the UK, which plays out in the way legal and integration policies impact on migrants' cultural and social-economic integration experiences. Furthermore, their narratives express the subtle discriminatory and gendered ideologies entrenched in the UK immigration and integration policies which negatively impacts on women's integration experiences. However, both Osas and Pelumi spoke about the support they received from their local church community, where they had possibly built good social networks. But Maher and Cawley (2015) argue that networks can channel migrant groups to

different destinations. It is therefore important to examine the reported impact of different social networks on participants' integration experiences.

Meeting My People; a Blessing and a Problem: Interrogating Social Networking

Almost all my participants spoke about some level of ties to and support from kin and friendship networks in their immigration and settling processes in the UK. What I found interesting in their accounts however, is, in addition to the general notion in burgeoning literature on the practical and emotional support received from social networks, my participants narratives are also significantly marked by the diverse challenges they encountered with members of their social networks. This calls for a re-consideration of the complex and dynamic links between migrants and their social networks. Although the strength of immigrants' social capital could be seen as central to the process of integration in the destination country (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; and Putnam 2000) my participants gave another layer to the discussion on social networking by explaining some of the challenges and complexities of relying on these networks. Cynthia is one of the few participants who relocated at the same time as her husband and children. She gave an account of her experience starting off with friends in London:

> We arrived London in August 2008. My husband's friend picked us from the airport. They were classmates in University in Nigeria. He was the one that picked us from the airport, took us to his house to freshen up and … then what else? … you know, just relaxed for a bit. From there, they spoke with another of their classmate, who wanted to share his already rented two-bedroom apartment... that's how they rock in London…they say there is no free lunch in London, no be so? (laughs). He was married with one son, and we also had a son and expecting another. So, each family had a room to themselves, but we shared practically everything else. They were a good couple, ... but London is a different ball game. I don't understand…everything is rationed; water, light, electricity, you have to be careful about everything…is like there is no liberty. And you know, I was heavily pregnant, … but these people can only sell to you from their own

> experiences. We started listening to stories of how people settle in the UK; the challenges and the stress. First, people were surprised that my husband just relocated and took his family with him despite the uncertainties. People couldn't understand us; they were like who does that? That way, settling down was not easy but the good thing was they showed us around and helped us with understanding the system….

In Cynthia's case, as in the case with many of my participants, the initial place where they connected with an already established social network determined where they decided to first settle but I realised that the experiences of their early days, colours their narrative of integration in the UK. Cynthia was quite evasive in giving her account about the level of support they received or challenges they had from their immediate social network. She sounded very much like Cindy (earlier mentioned), who was reluctant to share her experience of starting off with her husband's cousin. In wanting to point out that there is a price to pay to gain support from their social networks, they were careful not to appear ungrateful for the opportunity given them. Cynthia's statement, "They were a good couple, ... but London is a different ball game…" expresses her struggle in drawing a link between the couple's kind gesture of offering them 'cheap' accommodation and the rigid conditions under which they had to live. Despite the overt traces of discomfort in her account, she was unwilling to admit this, and instead blames the system and not the people for their way of life.

Precious, another participant, explained this more vividly by explaining how upon her arrival in the UK, she and her son stayed few months with her aunt while her husband went back to Nigeria briefly to sort out unfinished business. She told me how she became a child-minder, cook and cleaner in her aunt's house:

> […] I was not sure why the sudden change. All of a sudden, all the pleasantness over the phone was gone. I became like a house-girl. I did school runs, cleaned the house, prepare the meal… I mean everything. She will just book more and more extra shifts, tell me what she wanted me to do before she comes back and off… she's gone, she will later call from work just to find out if we were alright. Seriously? It was an eye opener. To me, I will say, … well, starting off with her was a blessing, because, yes, we needed that leverage; but the problem was my own work. There was no much

> talk about me, my work or anything like that…that was my cup of tea. I had to call my husband to return quickly; I did not want to do anything silly because it will get to my family and they will call me ungrateful1…

Without denying the support from social networks, Precious' account expresses the possibility of exploitation occurring, which often leaves the new migrant in a complex position where reporting the incident is never considered an option. It is a possibility that the time difference between when participants encountered these challenges and the time of telling their stories can account for their unwillingness to blame their hosts as they could now interpret their past encounter from a more objective angle. The possibility of exploitation, however, calls for a re-examination of the simplistic way of thinking about the social networks on which people depend when they migrate (Ryan 2011). No doubt social networks remain good sources of social capital (Bourdieu 1986), and the Nigerian culture fully promotes reliance on them (Akanle and Olutayo 2011), my participants narratives here, however present an overview of not just the benefits, but the underlying challenges that immigrants may encounter as they rely on these networks in destination countries (Ryan 2011; Fine 2018).

Despite the challenges mentioned, it is still the case that immigrants depend significantly on their social capital to negotiate their way in their new countries. It is also the case that of the four forms of capital recognised by Bourdieu (1986): social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital, none of them is self-dependent. They are inter-related and the effect of one feeds into the other (Mahbub 2014). Social capital is the value of social relationships and durable networks; it connects us to other resources and fosters economic growth. Economic capital on the other hand, refers to material assets which directly impacts our cultural capital, where cultural capital is seen as education, skills and knowledge. Symbolic capital encompasses all resources available to an individual on the basis of honour and recognition, having roots in all the other forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986). These definitions establish the overlapping qualities of the different capitals. Some of my participants in their own way, explained this overlap in their capitals by drawing a link between their social network and the kind of jobs they started with. It is however interesting that while some expressed satisfaction about this, others in their retrospective narratives,

regretted the influence their social network had on their economic integration. Blessing for instance explained:

> … I got a good job. It wasn't a graduate role, but it was fair…I was happy I didn't have to do 'care'. […] we had a friend who was already working there, so when I told him about my qualification, they helped me to understand how to apply so I was able to get the job. My feeling is, who you mingle with from the beginning of your stay matters a great deal in terms of the jobs you start with. Err… it is pretty much a function of who you meet. We had…my husband started a group, which we called XXX- for master's students in his church and with good teaching, they become very career focused even before they marry. We talk about jobs and career opportunities so, that strong social network is really very helpful.

Blessing, who was a banker in Nigeria before migrating to join her husband, was one of the few participants who expressed satisfaction with her very first job in the UK. She links this early breakthrough in her career to her social network and added how this was a motivational force for them to start a career training session for young graduates. This move suggests that despite Blessing's early career breakthrough, she was not unaware of the challenges other people like her were facing in the labour market and felt that building a strong social network would be helpful. Clara, on the other hand, believes that advice from her social network was the reason why she had to start with menial jobs:

> To be honest, … it is rubbish what our people do. Up till now I am still angry; and I tell you, … ok let me explain. Do you know that when I came, I was proudly telling everybody about my qualifications, so they can give me some advice on how to go but do you know that one by one they told me to forget about qualification and go and look for menial jobs? As JJC na, anywhere they push me, I follow. In fact, one lady told me clearly to go and put my certificates under my portmanteau because nobody will look at them. Another one introduced me to her agency and that was how I resumed care work. It took me years to know that I began to fight to do something better with my life…

Clara narrates how she bought into the advice from her social network that her qualifications would not be recognised in the UK which led to her settling for menial jobs. The question worth asking however is, would Clara have had the same view some years back when she was probably desperate to find a job, or is her narrative only a retrospective construction of what should have been? In any case, from her retrospective narrative, it can be gathered that relationship with her social networks impacted upon her integration process into the UK. This explains the situation of many immigrants (especially women) who are stuck in menial jobs because of lack of proper information (IOM 2012). Some immigrant women settle for menial jobs out of ignorance and advice from their social network, which makes Maher and Cawley (2015) argue that even social networks among migrants are gendered.

Ejiro and Nkem were both married to English expatriates in Nigeria before migrating with them to the UK. As wives to White men, they explained their own peculiar ordeal. They spoke about the effect of their position on their sense of belonging to any social network, and how this impacted on their personal lives.

> Nkem: When I came to England, for 5 years I did not have any friends. I was the only Black in my neighbourhood. My husband was the only friend I had, and he refused me to work. He said he could provide for my needs so no need but…ha…yes; my mother-in-law. My mother-in-law was great. […] my first friend was found by her. She met this Black lady at the supermarket and asked where she was from, then she told her that she has a daughter in-law from Nigeria with no friend and asked if she could be my friend. They exchanged mobile numbers, and like magic, I found a friend. She did this because she was worried that I would want to go back if I was lonely, so she tried to make me comfortable …

> Ejiro: When I came, I tell you… see it is not … now I can laugh, but that time, water almost pass garri o[68]. I said hia! what is this? ... it was difficult to fit in. It was as if I didn't belong anywhere. The Blacks did not relate with me as full Black and the Whites did not want me. The White didn't see just a

[68] A local idiomatic expression, meaning having more than one bargains for.

> woman, but a Black woman […] Well, my husband saw things differently; he'll just wave it off; then, I said no, no no; this is not me. I was never a caged bird; at least that was how I met him in the first place …

Nkem and Ejiro married to White British men, explained how they felt totally out of place when they arrived in the UK. I wonder what it would have been like for Nkem who said she had no friends for five years! However, unlike Ejiro, whose husband was oblivious of her situation, Nkem said she found friendship in her husband; but her statement, "… he refused me to work…" makes me want to consider that friendship with a bit of caution. I wondered if his right to decide whether she worked or not, stems from a place of friendship, or from the corridors of patriarchy and tainted with some hegemonic feelings of ownership. Also, I find her second statement, "I was the only Black in my neighbourhood", very interesting. Why was she looking for Black people in her neighbourhood? What about befriending White people? It is possibly the well-founded fear of rejection, otherness and discrimination that create the quest for the search of sameness (Mas Giralt 2011).

Nkem and Ejiro's narrative hinges on the conceptual construction of race and racism[69]. Although both terms, according to Solomos (1993) and Ladson-Billings (2004) are fluid and shifting in meaning, from Nkem and Ejiro's accounts we see how race impacts on their sense of belonging and drives the quest to search for sameness, and how racism is expressed through racial categorisation of "not being wanted". Also, Ejiro's words, "the Blacks did not treat me as full Black and the Whites did not want me …" suggests a feeling of alienation from both sides of the Black/White binary race categorisation. It was probably the case that she was considered "privileged" by Black people, and therefore treated as 'no longer one of us', while the Whites saw her as an intruder, a space invader, who, despite being an insider, does not have full rights to occupy the space (Puwar 2004). The position in which these women found themselves fits into the category of migrants described by Furnham and Bochner (1986:29), as individuals who "vacillate" between two cultures but feel comfortable in neither. This effect, they referred to as "marginal syndrome". It is a complex and disturbing situation of being neither here nor there.

[69] Race and racism will be further discussed in the next chapter.

My participants in their different ways, engaged in reflexive narrative of how their social networks have impacted their lives. Through their retrospective accounts of how relationships were developed, sustained and restrained in their new spaces, they presented intersecting and sometimes contradictory ways in which they experienced emotional and material support, but sometimes within varying obligations and vulnerabilities. Without denying the importance of building and belonging to good social networks, my participants provided nuanced insights into some taken-for-granted challenges arising from, belonging to or relying on social networks.

Conclusion

Discussion of migration, integration and settlement is hardly new in academic literature. What is however lacking is the appreciation of the ways in which immigrants themselves make sense of their own experiences (instead of seeking an objective analytical construct). I therefore set out to present in this chapter, the complex, multi-dimensional ways my participants retrospectively make sense of their 'early days' experiences of settlement and integration in the UK. I have also examined how legal immigration and integration policies impact on their sense of belonging in their new spaces.

The 'self' itself, is said to be narratively constructed and ubiquitously communicated (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). But in the midst of these constructions, my participants were able to reflect upon and communicate the self they believed they were and differentiate the self they wanted to be from the perspective of the self they are and are becoming in the new spaces they now occupy. Therefore, rejecting the linear unidimensional tendency of the concept of culture shock to group human experiences into some defined stages, I adopted a "person-by-situation" approach to explore the variety of migrants' experiences and their different ways of engaging with their stories. Furthermore, in addition to their retrospective narratives, their choice of words, the jokes, expressions of pain, anger, tears and pauses all tell us something about what entering, settling and integrating in the UK meant to my participants and their self-identity.

I realised that settling and integrating into a new country is not only complex but varies both at societal and individual levels. I argue that the cost for this venture is enormous and is disproportionately borne by immigrant women. I therefore began to

explore my participants' narratives of how state policies and social networks impact on their integration processes. It is important to point out that their experiences are ongoing. Therefore, my focus in the next chapter will be to examine their sense making and on-going self-reflections on the intersection between working, wife-ing and mothering in the UK.

Chapter 7. Working, Wife-ing and Mothering in the UK: Trajectories of Life Changing Experiences

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored participants' accounts of entering, settling and integrating in the UK. I established that the journey into integration is complex and unending, one in which immigrant women are disproportionately affected. In migration literature, I realise that it is often the case that discussions on economic integration focus mainly on the challenges faced by immigrants in the labour market, stressing how the socio-economic dynamics can limit them to certain labour market sectors. While this is a key area that must be discussed, "the interaction between the internal cultural and social differences and the wider structural and ideological processes of the country of residence" must also be interrogated (Anthias 1992: viii). Such deep exploration will contribute to the examination of my participants' accounts of their experiences of the intersection between gender, identity and social mobility within the labour market and their personal lives. In this chapter, based on individual accounts, I present how personal narratives can illuminate often hidden complexities which help to avoid generalisations and essentialism.

I pay attention to the different ways participants engage with their stories about negotiating the labour market, which lays bare some of the limits and gaps between policies and practices in post-industrial labour market. I present how the different ways they engage with narratives of their experiences in the labour market is very telling of the far-reaching impact their experiences have on their self-identity and well-being. As a feminist researcher, and one whose life is also marked by migration experiences, I go beyond examining the process of deskilling to exploring how participants make sense of their experiences, the impact on their lives, and their present sense of identity. I begin by examining stories told by some participants who identify as care workers, emphasising their downward mobility in the labour market. I explore the accounts of a few of my participants (9 out of 32), who were able to continue their professional career in the UK, but not without facing their own challenges.

I also seek to unpack some of the gender-sensitive issues which contribute to restricting women to family rather than market roles (Boyd and Grieco 2003). This provides a background to explore my participants' accounts of exclusions and social vulnerabilities. Exploring participants' accounts of their connection between work and family life, I discuss the link between family, patriarchy and reproduction (Carby 2007), which has received little mention in migration literature.

Shattered Dreams and Crushed Hopes: Negotiating the Labour Market

> The most distinguished advocate and the most distinguished critic of modern capitalism were in agreement on one essential point: the job makes the person. Adam Smith and Karl Marx both recognised the extent to which people's attitudes and behaviours take shape out of the experiences they have in their work (Kanter 1977: 3).

Many of my participants' narratives were marked by the level of disillusionment and disappointment they experienced at the realisation of the huge gap between their expectations and the realities of the UK labour market. Not only did they mention the professional setbacks they suffered as unexpected, their different constructions of their present identities are largely coloured by expressions of pain and regret. This explains their use of sharp and vivid phrases like "shattered dreams", "crushed hopes" and "forgotten plans," to explain their labour market experiences in the UK. Their narratives are particularly intense as many of them highlight a disjunction between their 'hoped-for' possible selves (see chapter 5) and their present realities.

They Took My Heels Off Me: Experiences of Deskilling and Downward Mobility

I once met a 'gentleman', a lecturer in a reputable university, who was interested in knowing about my research. After telling him the subject of my research, his dismissive response was "Well, yeah, their certificates are not recognised; what else is there to research about them?" I felt it was a waste of time to try and explain any further but on second thoughts I felt he could probably be better educated if he had an opportunity to listen to how Ruth made sense of her experience:

> …it's not what I'm doing now that's my greatest pain; it's where I'm coming from. The struggles, the sacrifice, the pain and the hustling to become somebody. See, it's not easy to explain, but I know what I'm talking about.

In the eyes of my people, coming abroad has already made me somebody. Do you know what I do? Whenever they're visiting (relatives and friends from Nigeria), I dress up like an office worker, just like they used to know me. I put my factory uniform and boots in my car to change when I get to work. See … I'm not pretending is just that, which mouth will I use to tell them that I'm a labourer in the UK? It used to be a thing of joy to be corporately dressed to go to work in Nigeria … ha-ha; I say most of my clothes and accessories were ordered from UK […] but, well, coming here, they took my heels off me; I wear boots now (laughs silently). Ehn … especially my mother will cry for me […]. I suffered; I suffered, it wasn't easy; I mean, I already told you the condition under which we went to school those days. But I went through that stage of my life with hope for the future. Yes; I was hopeful coming here but is this it? I mean, my hope's been crushed; this isn't it at all […].

Joy- but with your certificates and your years of experience, what did you do to further your career here or did you just settle for this job?

Ruth- No, no, no. Not at all. In fact, when I arrived, and people told me about issues with jobs, I did not believe; I thought that was bullshit, pardon my French. After all, I told myself I am not an illegal immigrant; I did not gate-crash, and I have my certificates handy. So, what are they talking about? I went to UK Naric to verify my certificates, I went from pillar to post, I took different short courses, all na lie. They will tell you just do this course, then you can apply for this and that job, for where? I went to Citizens Advice, went to job centre, …. pssss; all na banzer[70]! The more I attended interviews or got rejection mails, the more I watched myself go down until I ... I don't even know. I was just like that (shrugging her shoulders) … left with shattered dreams. When I realised I was just piling up certificates with no job, I told myself that to lie down resigned to fate is madness, so, that was how I did a bit of care (care work) don't ask me about my experience; I absolutely hated it, so, I applied to this warehouse …

[70] Banzer a Hauser slang used to express a futile mission or nothingness

Ruth, (a graduate of economics and an insurance officer before migration), like most of my participants, told a story of downward mobility and the multiple dilemmas she faced in her bid to further her career in the UK. Creating a synergy between time and self (Mead 1934), she retrospectively organises fragmented experiences in the past into a storyline establishing a sense of order and coherence, linking the past to the present: "…it's not what I'm doing now that's my greatest pain; […] The struggles, the sacrifice, the pain and the hustling to become somebody […]." Ruth's account, among other things, suggests a great desire to "become somebody". Hattam and Smyth (2003) explain the term "becoming somebody" as an evocative phrase used to reflect a desire for recognition, a fight for economic independence and the construction of a sociocultural identity. Also, Ruth's words, "it's not easy to explain, but I know what I'm talking about", reflects the inadequacy of words to always create an image of the meaning we give to life experiences. One thing she was able to communicate however, was her strong wish to be "somebody".

In her desire to adequately present credible reasons for her aspirations, Ruth explained how she expected her institutionalised cultural capital to be converted to economic capital (Bourdieu 1986), which was also the expectation of her family members. She said, "in the eyes of my people, coming abroad has already made me somebody". She seems to be saying she was aware of the high expectations from her family even when it may not have been verbally communicated. I believe it is a reasonable expectation, that with her educational qualifications, and since she had attained a particular height in her career in Nigeria, she would do better in a Western country, where knowledge and experience supposedly count. However, contrary to Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, there is no guarantee that immigrants institutionalised cultural capital will be recognised in their destination countries (Riano et al 2006). Through her narrative, Ruth presents in a dramatic way, the middle-class professional status to which she belonged in Nigeria and from which she had fallen in the UK.

Ruth's self-narrative sounds very much like the "pulling yourself by the bootstrap" phrase. Through her retrospective account, marked with expressions associated with a working-class childhood (see chapter 4), she re-tells the stories of some episodes of hardship during her childhood and school years, explaining how she 'pulled herself up by the bootstraps' to become an Insurance Officer. Ending up as a factory worker

in the UK can be seen as her bootstrap snapping, which is also the case with Cindy, (a teacher, now care assistant), whose narrative equally fits into the 'bootstrap' plot. She recounted the hardship and poverty level she suffered as a child, to attain a relatively high status in her career in Nigeria, only to suffer downward mobility in the UK:

> I feel ..., you see, money is not everything. Yes, back home I was a teacher, earning peanuts, but I was imparting knowledge. I was good at what I was doing; I enjoyed it and that was me. If I am not careful here, very soon, 1+1, I will not know because my brain is sleeping. It's depressing. You know, if you did not go to school and they give you all this shit, you will understand. But after stressing, struggling against all odds to gain university education and you come here and they treat you like dundy[71], it's reverse gear now. The place you struggle to free yourself from by going to school, they push you right back into it. What do you do?

Cindy accords some authenticity to her self-identity by her statement "… that was me". She presents a self that was driven by and found fulfilment in imparting knowledge as a teacher. A self who is highly motivated by 'self-actualisation' (Maslow 1943). She contrasts her self-motivated intellectual self with her present self in her statement, "My brain is sleeping. It is depressing". Her statement reflects the construction of her downwardly mobile self, who like Ruth, could be said to have her bootstrap snapped. Some other participants whose narrative fit into the "bootstrap" construct include[72]:

> Funmi: … you remember what I went through to be able to complete my university education, my mother and I passed through tick and tin [thick and thin] to complete school" … (*Head teacher, now support worker)*

> Deborah: we struggled to meet our daily needs, I remember when I was in secondary school, I had to pay my way through school. I go to different families to support me. From a very young age, I started living with different

[71] "Dundy" (or dundee united) is a slang for "idiot" in Nigeria. Although there is a debate about its origin, it is believed that the slang stems from Dundee United's disastrous pre-season tour of Nigeria in 1972 (Simpson 2013).
[72] Some of these narratives have been explained earlier

families to help them with childcare, so they can support my education … (a nurse, now care assistant*)*

Omo- She (mum) did her best to make us comfortable and I had to make a hard choice between material things and academics. […] She went as far as selling her clothes and wrappers to get our school fees and she also had to sell her sewing machine to pay for our fees (a teacher, now a cleaner)

Osas: … from when I started my menstrual period, I never got sanitary towel from them (parents). I had to cut old dresses to use as pad. Uni was difficult. My first wristwatch was from my aunt and my first bras were used ones from her. My first pad was from a friend who gave me from hers in university … (a medical doctor, now unemployed)

These women explained how they endured such hardship because of their hope of a better future. Their stories of how they made it through education and became professionals in their own right, tells us something about their remarkable class transformation. For instance, Ruth flaunts her middle-class status in Nigeria saying, "It used to be a thing of joy to be corporately dressed to go to work in Nigeria … ha-ha; I say most of my clothes and accessories were ordered from UK …". Her story however culminates in how she constructs her present identity: "they took my heels off me; I wear boots now ...". This is a vivid symbolic description of the impact of the physical comportment expected in professional versus menial jobs. Ruth uses her relationship with her shoes (heels and boots) to create a visual representation of her self-image as an insurance officer and as a factory worker respectively. According to Belk (2003), shoes are the foundation of our sense of self, informing our ideals of beauty, character and sexiness and like the magical transformation envisioned in Cinderella, Ruth uses her relationship with her shoes to explain her self-transformative experience although in her case, from heels to boots connotes downward transformation. Ruth's words, "It used to be a thing of joy to be corporately dressed to go to work in Nigeria", reflects a sense of self-pride, joy and fulfilment in her job. However, her statement about wearing boots instead of heels signifies a sense of disappointment, demotion and downward mobility. As Belk (2003) stated, the right pair of shoes can provide a magical transformation of self, while their lack can be devastating. Ruth further talked about her reluctance to

disclose her present job to friends and family who come to visit her from Nigeria, explaining, "Do you know what I do? Whenever they're visiting (relatives and friends from Nigeria), I dress up like an office worker, just like they used to know me. […] I put my factory uniform and boots in my car to change when I get to work". According to Hertz (2007), clothing generally is a silent but visual marker of social identity; and uniform in particular, is a symbolic and negotiated object which offers visual clues to the wearer's social status and identity. Hertz explained that the symbolic communication of uniform is subject to interpretation; Ruth sees hers as an object of shame and regret. Her narrative expresses how difficult it was for her to come to terms with the reality of the job market, which led to her taking on many short certificate courses before settling for menial jobs. This was the situation with many of my participants, who expected that their status as "highly skilled migrant women", would automatically be converted into access to "highly skilled jobs" in the UK labour market. This explains why Grace considered the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP) a fraud:

> … that is something that is not good about the HSMP. You bring somebody into this place, you do not come empty-handed, yet they see you as a usurper. And they'll be shouting 'immigrants have come to take our jobs'. What kind of dirty job is that? Where is the job? They think we're interested in menial jobs and claiming benefit … (laughs) … see, the average Nigerian professional is too proud to take up those rubbish jobs or queue up to ask for err… handouts kai; God forbid! The trouble I see in all these things is that there are some hidden facts in the employment law in this country full stop! If you stick to the fact that you were a professional back home, you will be hungry before you know it. I went for interview and after two stages, they dropped me. The truth is that they doubt our skills and the default position they give us is that we don't know anything, until proven otherwise; why? HSMP is a fraud; it's a rubbish programme. By the time we came in, they did not tell us that we will have to meet an earning capacity, so they were ready to kick us out. We said no; this is not possible because it was not part of the bargain before we came. I think it was £24,000 earning capacity that was recommended? I was already earning more than that before I came so what was the fuss about? My anger was that there was no place for you in the

> labour market, yet they expected us to earn £24,000. How many of their children earn that? Mtschew (hissing) I'm glad they have scrapped it [HSMP]; good riddance…

Grace, in her criticism of HSMP, presents the disparity between the appealing package of the highly skilled migrant programme and what it actually delivers. She emphasises the lack of recognition of the huge human capital with which immigrants enter the labour market stating, "you do not come empty-handed, yet they see you as a usurper …". The goal to attract only people with huge human capital to the UK is a strategic one; Theresa May, in a written statement to parliament, declared that it was the desire of the UK to only attract and keep the "best and the brightest" among immigrants (Waldron and Sanwar 2015; Portes 2018). The painful reality, however, is that these immigrants are never treated as the "best and brightest"; instead, they are demonised as benefit cheats, welfare scroungers, street beggars, thieves, deviants and the cause of societal disruption (Reynolds and Erel 2016; Chaloff and Lemaitre 2009). According to Chaloff and Lemaitre, this ignominious perception holds without acknowledging how the government and the "economic power brokers" in Western countries foster immigration to form pools of cheap labour to boost their capitalist-driven economies. Reynolds and Erel (2016: n.p) discussed how the skills of migrant mothers are largely ignored or undervalued, and how they are "primarily blamed for reproducing dysfunctional families and bringing up families with a deficit of cultural values".

Also, although the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme supposedly grants equal status to the primary migrants and their dependants, in practice, women are clearly disproportionately affected, which could explain part of the reason why Grace concludes that "HSMP is a fraud and rubbish programme". Although the criteria that qualify immigrants as "highly skilled" may differ from one country to another, Chaloff and Lemaitre (2009) in their response to the question "how skilled is highly skilled?", explained that in most OECD countries, there is an overlapping requirement of education, occupation and wage level, used to determine the eligibility of candidates. These three criteria are the most important part of the points-based system through which immigrants enter the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Denmark (Chaloff and Lemaitre 2009). Many of my participants gained legal entry and right to settlement in the UK through the points-

based system which qualified them to legally migrate to the UK as highly skilled migrants[73] (see table 6 for different point allocations):

Table 6: Points attributed under different points systems for permanent residence in selected countries (Culled from Chaloff and Lemaitre (2009)

Characteristic	UK/HSMP	Australia/GSM	Canada Skilled Worker	New Zealand Skilled Worker
Language ability	10	15-25	0-24 (16+8)	Obligatory
Sufficient funds for initial period	10		Obligatory	
Age (younger = more points)	5-20	15-30	0-10	5-30
Qualifications/Academic	30-50	5-25	0-25	50-55
Skilled Occupation		40-60		
Work experience in occupation		5-10	0-21	10-30
Recent earnings	5-45			
Spouse/partner skills		5	0-10	50
Shortage occupation		15-20		20
In-country work experience	5	10	0-10	5-15
Regional Study		5		
Designated area sponsorship		25		
Job Offer			0-10	50-60
State/Territory of settlement		10		10
Professional Language skill		5		
Number required	**95**	**100 - 120 Pool - Pass**	**67**	**100 – 140 Pool – Pass**

Obviously, meeting these criteria of the point-based system is used to "lure" or invite "the best and the brightest" to the UK, after which they are left at the mercy of repressive immigration policies, domination and exclusion in the labour market. Some of the issues with such policies include the continuous changes in the UK immigration rules and requirements, making it confusing, nerve-racking and sometimes impossible for immigrants to attain citizenship. For instance, Grace referred to the shocking changes to HSMP and immigration rules that was announced on the 7th of November 2006, which affected about 49,000 immigrants (WorkPermit.com 2007). The most difficult of the changes at this time was the increase in earning requirement, without which immigrants could not apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). HSMP was later scrapped but replaced by some other highly skilled points-based systems—Tiers 1 to 5 (workpermit.com n.d). In April 2016, migrants with Tier 2 visa were required to earn £35,000 or more, to qualify for Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK (Waldron and Sanwar 2015) and in 2017, under the Immigration Act 2016, a series of changes were made to the requirements of immigrants wanting to switch from other visa types to the Tier 2 working visa (Waldron and Sanwar 2017). These continuous changes disturb,

[73] A few were the primary migrants while others were dependant migrants

distract and debar immigrants from focusing on career advancement and, from my participants' accounts, women are more at the receiving end of this confused state. The men, often viewed as the "independent" migrants, conventionally constructed as the breadwinners and possibly having a higher earning capacity, are encouraged to invest the family resources into enhancing their own career, and focus on earning enough to meet the requirements of the immigration rules, while the women either stay at home as housewives, or settle for random menial jobs that allow them time enough to take care of the home. This explanation presents the continuing interaction between two interlocking systems—patriarchy and capitalism, where one feeds into the other to negatively impact on women's chances of attaining the full development of their human potentials in the labour market (Hartman 1976).

Hannah, a teacher in Nigeria, explained how because of immigration rules, they agreed as a family to put her career on hold and focus instead on her husband's. It appeared to be the only reasonable decision to make as her husband was the primary applicant who had to earn a certain amount to prove his right to settle in the UK. Though easy and logical as it may sound, issues like these reflect how immigrant women's right to labour market integration is being subtly and offensively disregarded. Baghdadi Wastl-Walter (2006) however argued that many immigrant women do not passively accept these unfavourable conditions, as they strive to re-skill and/or take up voluntary unpaid jobs to gain "UK experience" which they expect to make them fully eligible for skilled paid jobs; but Hannah, who took the route of re-skilling after her husband had settled in his own career, tells a different story:

> … I applied for PGCE[74] but I was not shortlisted. They said my application was not successful because I did not have enough experience so, I needed to do a diploma before I could do the PGCE. You see what I mean by it's all frustrating… Anyways, I enrolled to do Award in Education and Training but after then I couldn't even get any job as a teaching assistant. There was another diploma they said I could apply for but at that stage, I was becoming discouraged and frustrated. I needed to be working to be able to do that diploma and no one would employ me, so it was like a vicious circle; no one

[74] PGCE is a Post Graduate Certificate in Education

> was giving me the job, so I couldn't do the training; unfortunately, I lost both. That was a decision point for me; I mean, I just had to take up care work …

Hannah's narrative reflects how immigrants institutionalised cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) is affected by "policy constructions of national economic interests, and protectionist professional policies" (Erel 2010:646). This leads desperate immigrants like Hannah into acquiring more academic qualifications. The accumulation of professional qualification is described by Khalanyane as "credentialism" and "diploma-disease". This is a case of credential inflation, where the lack of recognition of immigrants' skills and acquired professional experiences make them acquire more and more training and qualifications in their bid to "maximize their chances of being included in the group of the eligibles" Khalanyane (2012:227). The real challenge, however, is knowing exactly what to do to be "good enough." In my case for instance, I acquired so many certificates that I was told that I was "over-qualified" for entry level jobs, yet underqualified for top level jobs due to a lack of UK working experience. Either way, I was stuck. At some point, just like Hannah, I had to settle for care work.

Settling for BBC Jobs: Na Me Be Dis?

Sarah, a graduate of Geology, who worked as a senior Health and Safety Officer before migrating to the UK, talked about the only readily available jobs for immigrants at the time she came to the UK:

> … everybody around me were care workers, so I got myself into care work, I started working night. I no believe say I go leave Nigeria come this land come do dis kind job. I looked at myself; na me be dis? Dem say na condition make crayfish bend[75] so, as no choice na, I gat to join the club of BBC. I think say we … do you think I'm joking, that's what it's called around here o, BBC—British Bottom Cleaner! (laughs) …that's where they believe we belong irrespective of the kpali[76] we hold. When I arrived, I tried and tried on my own, nothing. So, I met some good friends who advised me to go to job centre and told me how to go about it. I made some calls; I was called for

[75] An adage in pidgin English meaning circumstances can alter one's position.
[76] Kpali is a colloquial pidgin English word for certificate.

> interview and that was how I started BBC. What do you think; na so na, when there's nothing else to do, you swallow your pride and face reality…

Sarah read the confusion on my face when upon my arrival to her house, she jokingly introduced the new term, BBC to me (see chapter 3). I had heard of care work described as a type of the "3D-jobs: dangerous, dirty and dull" (Knight 2014) but Sarah, employing some sense of humour in her narrative, describes it as British Bottom Cleaning. I thought of the various reasons why Sarah (and probably some other people) would choose to conceptualise care work like this. After careful research, I realised that McGregor (2007) who carried out research on Zimbabwean migrants and the UK care industry also explained how care work is derogatorily described and caricatured as British Bottom Cleaning. Knight (2014) also provides useful explanation, pointing out that in most destination countries, when the native workforce moves up the division of labour, a shortage of labour is created in the bottom of the labour market, which immigrants are expected to occupy. Therefore, while the term BBC may be a literal symbol of part of the duties expected of a care-worker, it could also be a metaphor for the ranking of care work in the labour market.

The new but derogatory term BBC reflects a very low level of appreciation for care workers in the UK, where it is fast "becoming known as a "migrant job" in the low-level feminized service industry" (IOM 2012:43). Unfortunately, the educational attainment and professional experiences of these migrant carers are disregarded in a field that requires little formal education, resulting in a significant waste of their expertise. The deskilling of migrant care workers and lack of due recognition given to care work in general, contributes significantly to how carers view themselves. Although McGregor (2007) argued that care work has helped many immigrants to raise funds to support their families and could serve as stepping stone in the career progression of some sort, the impact of their experiences of deskilling, loss of status and self-identity are the major issues that shape the construction of my participants' narratives. For instance, Sarah's construction of her self-identity in relation to her social position as a care worker is embedded in her rhetorical question, "na me be dis?", asked in pidgin English and translated "is this me?" Her question connotes a reflexive awareness of self, where she becomes 'other' to herself in order to reflect upon herself (Mead 1934; Coltart 2007). Sarah possibly draws from the success of

her past career progress and compares that with her present situation, trying to evaluate her status.

Much more than the job itself, from my participants' narratives, it appears that the challenges of working in the care sector, shape how they engage with their stories. According to McGregor (2007), these challenges are created by an existing 'care gap' in Britain, which is a combination of demographic, social and economic changes, and heightened by the privatisation of home care services. McGregor argues that the level of privatisation has worsened conditions of employment, which invariably makes care jobs unattractive. There is therefore severe labour shortage in the care sector, which creates a care gap that is increasingly filled by immigrants; however, the restrictive migration policies coupled with the 'invisibility' of carers' contributions, pave the way for exploitation and unfair treatment at work. For instance, racial discrimination is one of the issues stressed by my participants. Cindy gave a good overview of some of her experiences:

> Joy- you don't want to work day shifts?
>
> Cindy-my sister, ehn; as if it's not bad enough that I do care work. I can only work night if I want to keep my job.
>
> Joy- how do you mean?
>
> Cindy- care work is drama and day care work is double drama (clapping her hands together for emphasis). The staff don't like you and the service users don't want you (laughs); night is better, at least fewer staff and sleepy service users to deal with so it's lesser evil with less trouble to deal with. It's just wisdom my dear; you know, the Whites don't want to work night. They prefer to go to the pub, so we book all the night shifts. Since I cannot afford not to work, my poor mother is there with her battalion; so, I have to support as per small mummy and I'm real mummy to my two soldiers too[77] (laughs).
>
> Joy- what do you mean by staff don't like you and service users don't want you?

[77] Cindy is referred to as small mummy by her siblings and she has two children who she refers to as soldiers here.

> Cindy- (laughs) the staff clearly don't like you. Of course, they want you to do the dirty job while they boss you around, but they still hate you because, you know, "you came to take their jobs, blah, blah, blah. They ask you questions like "so, why did you leave your country" or "so, when are you going back?" God help you if anything goes wrong; you are already in trouble before they hear you out. The service users are the same. You hear some of them saying something like, "I don wan that blackie to touch me" or they'll say "go and get the real staff" but everybody just smile and they say … they, you know, try to explain that it's dementia, they don't know what they're saying…

Cindy gave an interesting but unexpected reason for why she does night shifts—to reduce her encounters with staff and service users. However, lack of childcare was the main reason given by some of my other participants who are care workers and work night shifts. For most of my participants, as is the case with Cindy, their husbands are highly skilled (mostly doctors and engineers), who work during the day while they (my participants), take care of the children during the day, and work at night when their husbands are back from work. Cindy, a mother of two, did not include this aspect of her story in her narrative, but artfully chooses from what is experientially applicable to articulate her story of racial discrimination at work. Cindy may have chosen to tell this aspect of her story to buttress her feeling of alienation from the person she knew herself to be. She had earlier on in the interview recounted her success as a Maths teacher who had won awards and accolades. Now in the UK, she said she feels stuck care work, where some service users refer to her as "blackie" or ask her to fetch "the real staff". Funmi, a support worker, commented on her own experience with a service user:

> There is this lady who will not let me serve her food and if she accepts the food, she spills (spits) it out at you and make comments like you "black bugger" […]. It made me feel I was not welcome. I mean, it made me feel like everyone is asking "what are you doing here?" It was challenging because it was bad enough that I was doing a job I did not like but to be discriminated against just breaks me. It feels like double punishment…

Listening to Cindy and Funmi tell their stories makes one almost tempted to blame individuals and label them as racist; but as Essed (1991: viii) argued, "to talk about "to be or not to be a racist" simplifies the problem". The real issue to be addressed is the structural conflict which results in racist practices and to which individuals are merely agents. The increasing awareness of incidents of racial discrimination has led to the passing of several Race Relation Acts (Davidson 1997), which were recently replaced by the Equality Act 2010.[78] Racism however remains a complex system of power (Essed 1991), where the intersection of gender, discrimination, class and prejudice among other structural factors fuel its course. This is succinctly explained in the excerpt below:

> …it may be concluded that on a macro-societal level, (gendered) racism operates through various mechanisms. Black women are (a) marginalised, (b) culturally problematized, and (c) impeded in social mobility. They encounter paternalism, they are underestimated, their work is ethnicized, and they generally have fewer career opportunities than men and White women, respectively. These mechanisms operate simultaneously and probably stimulate each other (Essed 1991: 35-36).

The underemployment and deskilling of skilled migrant women and the various structural mechanisms in operation negatively impacts their overall well-being. These phenomena are described by Liversage (2009) as "brain waste" or "brain abuse". I find these terms very applicable to my participants' situation because of the difficulty they face in transferring their social and cultural capital to the UK labour market. To take up menial jobs and still be confronted with discrimination is explained by my participants as double punishment. It is worth mentioning that the lady in Funmi's story may possibly be an old lady who was used to racist comments like "black bugger", when she was younger, (when such expressions were not necessarily questioned), but now, possibly suffering from dementia, she becomes disinhibited; this however does not make it any less hurtful for those at the receiving end. Funmi gave a glimpse of her emotional state in her words "to be discriminated against just breaks me". The failure of immigrant women to find suitable

[78] The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.

employment has been reported as increasing the risk of mental illnesses such as anxiety, distress and depression (IOM 2012). It is important to mention however, that much contributes to what qualifies as "suitable employment." For instance, some of my participants, despite enjoying upward mobility in their jobs, spoke about their own challenges.

Is This a Game or What? Confronting Discrimination in Skilled Employment

> The shift in the structure and character of work has created a demand that work produce more than purely economic benefits. To make a living is no longer enough. Work also has to make a life (Peter Drucker as cited in Kanter 1977; 2008).

Although the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) group is said to attain a gradual rise in employment, reaching 64.5% in November 2016 as compared to 63.7% in Jul-Sep 2015 and 63.9% in Apr-Jun 2016 (ONS 2016), they are still almost twice as likely to be unemployed as their white counterparts. Moreover, more than half of the BME workforce is stuck in 'elementary' low-level menial jobs, with the employment rates for BME women said to have dropped overall (BITC 2016; GOV.UK 2018). Only nine out of thirty-two of my participants told me that they presently work as professionals in the fields of their expertise. I expected that these participants would be satisfied with working in their professional capacity; Betty, a Pharmacist, however, has this story to tell:

> […] during lunch I found out they wouldn't sit with me, I don't know why, but they just don't. I was always on my own. At some point, I stopped caring about it. Once, there was a band 6 role available which we applied for. The White girl who applied was junior to me. A Black senior pharmacist already warned me that the post would go to the White woman. I thought it was a joke but that was exactly what happened; she got the job. It was a big blow because based on experience, she was meant to be a step lower than me. It happened a second time, then I decided to complain to my manager who was not very assertive; just like I thought, he did not take it up. There is indeed a lot of politics going on. Their social life influences a lot of decisions; but I do not belong to their social circle, so I think that is one of the problems I had with them.

Clara, a Business Finance Partner, tells her own story:

> […] everybody treats you like a nobody… they crush and downplay whatever you feel you're worth. They never see us as good enough. I was told that the only reason I was accepted for my role was because I did extremely well in the test. Even then, my manager made it tough for me; she told me I had an accent and that she could barely hear me. She blocked her mind and would not even listen. I'm like, is this a game or what? Like they want you and they don't want you? … I remember after three years in the industry I had a baby. My baby was 9 months old when one day I was rushing to go home to attend to her, and my manager said the worst statement I have ever heard all my life. He said, "are your children more important than this job?" Honestly, I will never forget that statement. The case was reported but I was only a contract staff, so nothing was done. That was painful. They think they're doing me a favour, but the truth is that I would've been a director by now. That's forgotten plans anyway, I don't care anymore. They treat me as though I don't know what I'm doing. Even being British doesn't change anything …. we are fake British (laughs). When push comes to shove, they know who the real British is. At the end of the day, your passport may even get you the job but does not determine how you're treated, does it? It's there; it's everywhere. I mean racism; it's everywhere …

Embedded in the accounts of both Betty and Clara are narratives of discrimination, stereotyping, isolation, performance pressures and limited opportunities for professional advancement. These type of challenges are described by Kanter (1977; 2008) as consequences of tokenism. Here, tokenism is treated not only as a function of numerical representation, but also of gender, race and other social factors (Stroshine and Brandl 2011). Although these women enjoy a level of upward mobility, their stories however suggest that in many ways, they are denied the satisfaction that should accompany such attainment. The line between hypervisibility and invisibility appears to be blurred due to their race and gendered status (Harris-Perry 2011). The combination of race and gender discrimination, which is termed "doubly deviant" (Stroshine and Brandl 2011) status, exposes minority women to more tokenism dynamics which could cause intense job dissatisfaction. Furthermore, Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), who coined the term "intersectionality", recommends

intersectionality as a framework that can adequately reflect the interaction between race and gender. The framework is considered a "handy catchall phrase that aims to make visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it" (Phoenix and Pattynama 2006:187). It is therefore used to further analyse some of my participants' narratives reflecting how the intersection between race, gender and class affect their work experiences.

The gendered and racist ideologies which portray Black women as maids, janitors and prostitutes (bell hooks 2000) still hold sway over how upwardly mobile Black women are perceived in the workplace. It is convenient to view Black women as uneducated, of low intelligence and belonging to the working-class; to attain upward mobility is to risk being perceived in the same light, disturbing the status quo and being seen as space invaders—bodies out of place (Puwar 2004). This was the case with some of my participants who work in the health sector. Henry (2008) explained that since the middle of the last century, the UK healthcare system has suffered severe labour shortages which has led to the recruitment of many overseas trained nurses, who presently make up nearly half of new entrants into the Nursing and Midwifery profession. However, for many of them, their skills are not fully utilised due to some institutionalized exclusionary practices (IOM 2012). Tinuke, who was a senior nursing officer in Nigeria, told me how she was recruited to work in the UK, explaining some of her experiences as demoralising and demotivating:

> […] they sent our document to NMC (Nursing and Midwifery Council). After signing the document, we did orientation, then training, then they get you a mentor, so they signed me off at 3 months. Gave me my pin number so I was free to practise. Me, practise in the UK? I was happy; my joy knew no bounds. They posted us all around the UK, everywhere, and I was ready; but guess what, they posted us to care homes; not to work as nurses but as carers. That was a shocker!! Many went back home because they could not cope with the disgrace. Many of us were actually already managers in different hospitals in Nigeria but they brought us in, and after the orientation they subjected us to care work and not nursing, making us to do domestic work instead of nursing patients. They said we will have to start with care work instead of nursing. Then when you apply for nursing jobs, they make you feel like a carer applying for a nursing job. It was absolutely demoralising and

> demotivating for me, after all the whole rigorous process we had to go through …

It is intriguing how Tinuke plotted two contradictory themes—excitement and demotivation in the same story. She started her story on a positive note, expressing her joy in making it to the UK to practise Nursing. Her story however ends on a sad note, as she explained issues with status degradation leading to her eventual state of demotivation and demoralisation. Engaging with her story in this way, paints a picture of the contradictions between the level of expectation with which many immigrants enter the UK labour market and some of the shocking and harsh realities they meet. Efosa, a Medical Doctor also related an episode that happened to her at work:

> I walked into the room of this old lady (a patient) to go through her chart, then suddenly she was sick on the floor. I asked if she was ok, but she turned to me and said "you need to change my sheet please"; I smiled and told her I would get the cleaner in charge of her ward to change her sheet but she gave me a stern look and said "oh, are you not one of them then? I thought … never mind." Something in me wanted to scream "never mind what" but I felt the poor old woman was only reiterating the general racial stereotype with which Black women are associated. Can I blame her? I felt very dejected …

Tinuke and Efosa's accounts suggest how the intersection of gender bias, racial discrimination, stereotypes and other institutional discriminatory practices can evoke negative feelings in immigrant women. These feelings, when internalised often cause intense frustration, stress and lack of fulfilment at work. Tinuke, in her statement, "it was absolutely demoralising and demotivating for me, after all the whole rigorous process…" presents the effect of such challenges on her, after paying the price of re-skilling. Also, "rigorous process" to her, probably entails the complex process she had to go through to be licensed. One significant point raised by Reitz (2001) is how highly professional jobs often belong to the licensed more than the non-licensed occupational fields. And in the case of the licensed sectors (e.g. health professionals, lawyers, accountants, engineers), licenses from some home countries (such as Nigeria) are rejected and immigrants are subjected to rigorous processes of (re)accreditation which may be too expensive or too cumbersome for women to

manage in addition to the other requirements of immigration. With much resilience however, some make it back to their professional levels especially in the health sector, but not without facing pay gaps (in addition to some or all of the other challenges mentioned earlier).

According to Wickware (2019), BME workers in the UK face an annual pay gap of £3.2bn. Among doctors for instance, 41% of all hospital doctors and 37% of medical consultants were said to be from "non-white" ethnic groups in 2016 (Rimmer 2016) and for NHS doctors (excluding GPs), BME staff varies from 37% for Foundation year 1 doctors to 60% for specialty doctors (BMJ 2019). BMJ records suggest that the pay gap for nearly all grades and types of doctors is small. And there is about £4,644 annual earning pay gap between White consultants and BME consultants. Also, with regards to pharmacists, 44% of those on the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) register identify as being from BAME background; however, there is a 16% pay gap calculated based on estimated median pro rata salaries of £50,960 for White pharmacists and £43, 056 for BME pharmacists, assuming a 40-hour working week (Praities and Kam 2018). These statistics are useful in analysing the subtle structural discrimination that exist in the skilled labour market.

Accounts of my participants' experiences in the UK labour market suggest how the discriminatory concepts embedded in migration policies, public discourse, social attitudes towards immigrants, the undervaluation of immigrant educational qualification/work experiences and the intersection of race, class and gender can cause deskilling and subsequently a loss of self-worth and social identity. Such experiences have been described as visibly minority women being "triply disadvantaged" (IOM 2012): facing challenges generally encountered by immigrants, dealing with the social, political and economic issues that women from the host society are combating and facing challenges related to ethnicity. While these forces subjected many of my participants to jobs in the "bottom" of the labour market, a few were able to gain access to highly skilled professional jobs, but encountered a ceiling made of concrete and not mere glass (Davidson (1997:18). There is however another facet of my participants' lives which is yet to be fully discussed but which impacts heavily on their ability to engage in the labour market fully and adequately—the ability to cope with working and family life as immigrant women in the UK.

Post Migration Stories of Working, Wife-ing and Mothering: For Better or For Worse?

The practice of trado-modern marriage, (the fusion of traditional precolonial culture and Western ideologies of marriage) which marks many middle-class Nigerian marriages, was substantially discussed in chapter 4. Contrary to my participants' expectations, migrating to the UK did not change this practice, nor did it erase the patriarchal notions of the familial power equation between men and women in marriages. Instead, it reinforced such notions in some ways and modified them in others. Therefore, drawing on Mies (1998) concept of "housewifization", I explore the stories of participants who as at the time of the interview, were unemployed; their loss of professional identity, reducing them to seeing themselves as "just housewives" is critically analysed. Also, I examine narratives of coping with challenges of work and family life among participants who were still actively working whether in high or low skilled jobs as at the time of the interview. I go on to examine the extent to which my participants were engaged in transnational care; caring for relatives left behind in Nigeria, or when they come to visit in the UK. Lastly, I pay attention to how my participants maintain a façade of strength, faith, hope and resilience in their construction of what their future holds.

Facing Housewifization: That Which I Feared Came Upon Me

As at the time of our interview sessions, six of my participants told me they were unemployed. Two participants specifically said they were "stay-at-home" mums and Favour described herself as "just a housewife":

> It's not as if I did not work before o…I mean tried bits and pieces, did some voluntary, then some small, small work … but my dear, I had to face it, I no fit. It was too much for me. As soon as XXX (husband) passed his qualifying exams and started practising (medicine), I just hand's up. […] The truth is, I was already struggling (with work and family issues), it was telling on my health, childcare issues and as soon as we realised that XXX (son) was struggling academically, … it just wasn't easy sha, so we (she and her husband) decided I should stay home for now. […] surely, I will pick up my career but no set time yet (laughs) but I'm looking into it… for now, just a housewife thinking of the next step to take (laughs again).

Favour's story is not too different from some of the general reasons given why immigrant women are unable to actively engage in the UK labour market (See Liversage 2009; IOM 2012). However, a careful unpacking of her statements suggests the construction of narratives around themes of shame, subordination and vulnerability. For instance, in her statement, "It's not as if I did not work before o…I mean tried bits and pieces, did some voluntary, then some small, small work … but my dear, I had to face it, I no fit" without giving too much details, she tries to explain her struggles in the labour market and, "small, small work" possibly refers to menial jobs with which she was dissatisfied and not proud to talk about. She therefore brushes through her story and quickly concludes that aspect of her account, reflecting how narratives of self can involve choosing some implicit words to "save face" and protect self-esteem. Furthermore, Favour enumerated some challenges which justified her decision to quit her job. The main point however, is her explanation that she resigned her job after her husband had passed his qualifying exams. Also, she presents the decision to quit her job as a joint one (between her and her husband) and a better choice for her personally. The concept of Work-Lifestyle Choices is stressed by Hakim (2000), who argues that women enjoy freedom of choice either to or not to work, based on their preference for a lifestyle that is either work centred, home centred or a combination of work and family care. I however argue that Hakim's preference theory is flawed. She fails to appreciate the fact that preferences cannot be considered without giving due consideration to the complex social context within which they are taken (Leahy and Doughney 2006). For Favour, beyond the obvious challenges listed, her inability to find a suitable job in the labour market and her husband's upward mobility possibly informed her decision to resign to becoming a housewife. Mies (1998) explained how the housewife can be linked to the wage-earning breadwinner, arguing that this link suggests a close connection between colonization and housewifization, where "the little white man" controls his colony just as the male wage-earner controls the overall income in the family. She defines housewifization as the manipulation of the sexual division of labour and aptly summarizes it as, "The externalization or ex-territorialization of costs which otherwise would have to be covered by the capitalists. This means women's labour is considered a natural resource, freely available like air and water." (Mies 1998:110).

What makes the state of "housewifing" difficult for my participants is the fact that none of them was a "stay-at-home" mother in Nigeria. They were very busy career women, who spent most of their daytime at work and were only at home in the evenings and at weekends. Although it was their full responsibility to sort out childcare and other support needed, my participants felt the sting of this challenge more in the UK because of the absence of the much-needed support network. Ade who was a teacher and a part time businesswoman in Nigeria but presently unemployed, said:

> When I realised that I had no choice but to stay and take care of the home, I said kai that which I feared came upon me. Ask my husband; he'll tell you that my legs never stayed in one place in Nigeria. He was not bothered; I had my freedom; I mean I never trouble him with housework. I had people to sort me out. So, I was always on the move but to come here and be confined to the house, doing school runs and cleaning up was foreign to me. The thing humbled me. And erm …then, the most annoying part for me, is when the postman brings letters and I hurriedly want to check for mine and my husband will jokingly say "the only letters you get are magazines" I mean, it just makes me feel down and irrelevant…or when there is a request from home and he goes "are you working? Tell them you're not working"… that one just makes me feel very bad…

Ade's account suggests that the gendered division of labour in the home to which women are subjected in the UK is more challenging than the family lifestyle in Nigeria. The absence of the traditional support network makes a lot of difference to how women manage their career and family life in the UK. The unappreciated return to the traditional house-making roles in the UK robs women of their freedom and power which they managed to acquire through education (see chapter 4). Ade presents her husband's words, "the only letters you get are magazines," as a joke; but such comments could be perceived as flippantly trivialising her role as a housewife, who has no connections with the public sphere. Also, the response, "tell them you're not working", which Ade explained as her husband's response to requests for financial help from Nigeria, suggests that the notion of a "joint family income" may not hold in this family. In a way, she is reminded of her inability to give financial support to her extended family, which is a cultural expectation among Nigerians (see

chapter 4). She expresses the impact of such words, using phrases like "feeling down and irrelevant," and "feel very bad". The determination to reject such vulnerable position could explain why some of my participants said they refused to settle for being full housewives, even when their husbands told them they were able to financially cater for the family.

Managing Work and Family Life: I Work, I'm a Wife and a Mother

Many of my participants, (26 out of 32) identified as workers while 6 said they were unemployed. All participants except two who were divorced as at the time of the interview, are married and all except two, had children. 17 of the 26 employed participants do menial jobs while 9 have professional careers. They all complained about the challenges of managing work and family responsibilities albeit to different degrees. Participants who are employed are in dual-earning relationships, and many of them said that their husbands earn more than them. If the only consideration for paid work is the standard of living achieved for the household, then it could be argued that most of these women do not necessarily need to work; but they all had their different reasons why they needed to work, even when they had to spend a substantial part of their income on childcare. Betty, a Pharmacist complained that more than half of her salary went to childcare; she however added that she would not have it any other way. She explained:

> My first son was starting primary school and the second was in nursery. My early days in the profession, my monthly take home was only about £1400 then, and I was paying £800 on childcare. I had to pay because the only other choice was to stay at home; lai-lai[79]! I can't do that one. It's difficult juggling work and family o but it's ok. In all honesty, my husband tries his best, but he is a very traditional person because of his upbringing; (whispers into my ears, "I thought coming to the UK will change him; but now… not sure if he is better or worse). I just jeje[80] understand; so, I juggle everything at home. When I get home, I start the chore and preparation for the next day. Can you picture that? It's insane; I work, I'm a wife and a mother with little or no help. I run around like a headless chicken (laugh); but I will lose my sanity if

[79] Lai-lai is a slang for "never"!
[80] Je-je is a Yoruba word for "quietly"

> I stopped working. It can't even happen; it won't be me anymore. That's all I know to do. And I've tried getting help, parents coming over, my baby going back to Nigeria, I almost lost my mind […]. So, I changed jobs; you think NHS is very flexible with working mothers, but when I asked, they refused to budge. All those things are only paperwork. They are only implemented on paper. It was painful because I should have stayed with my old job; so, I was not sure if changing jobs was for better or for worse. At some point, I thought of an au pair[81] but my husband would not have it. He said we could not have a strange person living in his house. He said I should consider quitting my job for some years until when the children were grown. I said no way! I tell you it was hard. But, I mean, I had to do it so that when they [children] grow and leave the house I will not have to start from the scratch; you know what I mean? So, we rough it together, now I'm gradually climbing up my career ladder so when they become independent then I can fully climb to the top. It will be more difficult to start thinking of work later. Besides, I cannot be a stay at home mum. Never! I did not bargain for that at all. And with pharmacy, if you don't practise for a while, then you have to redo exams…

Betty's narrative reflects the complex challenges of maternal employment. She described some of the institutional practices embedded in public policies as only written but never implemented, which impacts on her ability to manage paid work and family responsibilities. She also highlights some of the traditional hegemonic patriarchal ideologies held by her husband, for which she refuses to blame him, but the agents of his socialization. Her story suggests how immigrant women's paid employment can be affected by the link between family, patriarchy and reproduction. Carby (2007) argued that although the link between family, patriarchy and reproduction is central to feminist theory, Black women experience it differently from White women, because due to racism and imperial power dynamics, Black women are marginalised, their peculiar needs are ignored by public policy makers and they contend with the gendered division of labour at home. Duffy and Pupo (1992:13) also stated that "the conflict between women's domestic and child-care responsibilities and their paid work obligations has never been adequately resolved."

[81] An Au pair is a young person, typically a woman employed from another country to help with chores and childcare in exchange for food, a room, and an agreed wage.

This is especially true for immigrant families as they are rendered invisible in the work and family life discussions.

From my participants' narratives, it can be gathered that there is more to work for immigrant professional (middle-class) women than the economic model with which immigrants are generally associated. Although the financial benefit of working stands as a very strong motivation for any class of immigrants (Grahame 2003; McGregor 2007), there are other factors that equally motivates this class of women to work, which include maintaining their class, measuring up to their husbands' social status, enhancing their self-image, identity, and enjoying a sense of economic independence. Unfortunately, not many are able to secure suitable jobs that enable them to attain this level of self-actualisation; but in their resolution to enjoy some level of economic independence, many (reluctantly) pick up menial jobs, hoping that such jobs will serve as stepping stones to their professional career in the future. Cindy is one participant who for the sake of securing her economic independence did not only take up menial job (health care assistant) but resolved not to have another child until there was a change in her job circumstance. Her account though hilarious, reflects the words of a woman who is saddled with multiple issues but determined to have a life:

> Cindy- … ha; the one wey I dey so, I will not think of another child o. My circumstance needs to change in terms of getting a permanent job. You should understand what I mean. I cannot think of pregnancy with this my night work na, I will be signing my death warrant. And remember that I only work through agency so, there is nothing like maternity pay….no work, no pay. So, I have told my husband, no "show" until further notice (sits upright and tucks her skirt in tightly)
>
> Joy – So, you mentioned your concern about pay, would you want to talk about how you manage family expenses?
>
> Cindy- Don't just go there. Our own and my own are two different things; they are not the same at all, at all. I can only speak for my own money and that frees me; I don't know what happens to his, and I have rested my case. At least, we're on the same page on the "no child" issue. For as long as I work night, no other baby.

Cindy tucks her skirt in tightly as an act of keeping pregnancy away. She re-enacts the past, possibly to display an element of seriousness with which she must have dealt with the issue in the past. For her, the precariousness of her job—a care worker, working night shifts with a part-time temporary contract and the absence of any form of financial security informs her decision about having another child. Her statement about her family's financial situation, "… our own and my own are two different things …" problematizes the concept of "household income", which according to the ONS (2019), is the joint income of adults living within a household. Using such definition to determine the economic state of individuals in a household may be dangerously wrong, especially in cases like Cindy's, where income is treated as personal and not household. Her expressions, "don't go there", and "I have rested my case", suggest that she had probably had some unpleasant experiences with her husband over financial issues and she was not willing to re-visit the subject. Whatever the case, she sounded determined not to interfere with her husband's finances and also to maintain a level of economic independence. Postponing the birth of another child was therefore one of the measures she put in place to secure her position. Cindy's narrative, like Betty's, draws a link between family, patriarchy and reproduction. For immigrants, especially Nigerians, the notion of family care extends beyond the nuclear family and indeed across borders. Exploring the negotiation between caring for the present nuclear family and transnational extended family members is another complex layer marking the narratives of some of my participants.

Caring Beyond Borders: Exploring Transnational Care

For most of my participants, the discussion of managing work and family life extends beyond concerns for their immediate family, to distant family members abroad. The exchange of support and care across distance and national borders is described by Baldasser et al (2007) as transnational care. The fulfilment of moral and cultural obligation is the driving force behind transnational care (Dhar 2011). Among the Chinese, this culture is referred to as "filial piety"[82] (Mujahid et al 2011). For Africans, especially Nigerians, it is a traditional belief that parents train up their older children, who in return take care of their parents and younger siblings (Adesina

[82] Filial Piety (in Confucianism) is the important virtue and primary duty of respect, obedience, and care for one's parents and elderly family members.

2011). Masselot (2011) argues that only few studies have addressed transnational care; however, Baldasser (2007) substantially discussed how moral and emotional support is given transnationally through routine care (day-to-day conversation), ritual care (celebration of specific dates and feasts) and crisis care (support during illnesses and death). What I set out to do is to add financial care to the category of transnational care practices. From my participants' accounts, the financial aspect of transnational care is a major challenge for immigrants as they strive to manage work and family life in the UK, and the financial demands from extended family members in Nigeria. The tension between caring for immediate family members and extended family members across borders is described by Masselot (2011:301) as raising "an emotionally charged quandary", where there is tension between working to meet the needs of immediate family members and the needs of homeland kins. Cindy, who said she earned the title of "small mummy" because of her position as the first child and the responsibilities that go with that, also explained that she could not deliver on her promise to bring her younger siblings to the UK (see chapter 5) but she added to her story:

> … but I don't joke with my mother's health. I send her "chop money"[83] and money for her medication every month. But that's never enough, is it? Everybody needs your help in Nigeria. I feel like crying because the load I carry pass lorry[84]. They don't want to know what you're going through. One day, I asked my brother "if you don't work in Nigeria do you get paid? and he answered "no". I told him it's exactly the same here; if I don't have a job, I don't get paid. But it does not make sense to them; to be abroad is to be rich and to meet their every need. If my husband says he doesn't have, they blame me and if I say no, I'm a stingy woman. This is why, … before, do you hear of depression among Black women? It's there now, even though we don't say it. We cover it with Mary Kay[85] (laughs) but we're crying inside because we have been reduced to nothing. At work, you are a nobody, in the community you are a nobody, at home you are a nobody, even in Nigeria you are now a

[83] Money set aside for food and household expenses.
[84] "The load I carry pass lorry is in pidgin English, and the literal translation is that her responsibilities are more than a lorry load!
[85] Mary Kay is a beauty product brand name, one of the products is facial powder popular among Black women.

> nobody because you cannot support them as they want…you see the thing, where do we start to pick the pieces of our lives from?

Cindy's account reflects a twist between her present and her earlier narrative, where she spoke about her expectation of the UK. Then she explained how she and her family envisioned 'a saviour self' in her, who would save her family from poverty (see chapter 5). Her present narrative, especially her statement, "but it does not make sense to them; to be abroad is to be rich and to meet their every need", however reflects her disappointment in her family who see her in the same light she saw herself prior to her migration to the UK. This suggests that there is a general social expectation in Nigeria of a life of affluence in the UK, which is far from real, and until this myth is debunked, expectations will continue to be unrealistic.

Although Cindy resents the incessant demands from family members in Nigeria, her statement, "I don't joke with my mother's health. I send her "chop money" and money for her medication every month", however confirms her as an advocate of the moral and cultural expectation of care between children and their parents. She also reiterated some of the nuanced cultural and media stereotypes that mark "in-law" relationships, especially in Nigeria; "If my husband says he doesn't have, they blame me and if I say no, I'm a stingy woman". These issues no doubt cause a lot of challenges for immigrant women as better part of their culture migrates with them, and with immigration comes greater expectation from family members. With her statement, "even in Nigeria you are now a nobody because you cannot support them as they want", Cindy constructs the effect of the inability to meet such demands on the self: "becoming a nobody". For many of my participants, in their desire to still be reckoned with as "somebody", they strive to fulfil cultural obligations, trying as much as possible to maintain a façade of the middle-class status within which they were placed in Nigeria. Betty for instance, told me how she had to take drastic measures to save face:

> My siblings rang and told me that we needed to change mummsy's car. They gave me the largest share, because I'm abroad; so, I needed to raise £2,000. I discussed with hubby, he just said "where are we going to get that kind of money from?" He said I should tell them that the car can wait since we could

> not afford it. Hei! The truth is I couldn't tell them that. You know what I did? I just went ahead and booked extra locum[86]; it was hectic, but I survived …

Betty's statement, "I just went ahead and booked extra locum", sounds quite easy for her to solve her problem because as a pharmacist, not only did she have access to a relatively good and steady income, she said that she had the opportunity to book extra shifts when needed. However, her subsequent statement, "it was hectic, but I survived", suggest that it was not as easy as booking extra shifts and making more money, but other structural adjustments must have been made, especially arranging for childcare. Also, access to locum work is only open to a privileged few, therefore, many of my participants (especially those who have low and/or fixed income) find it difficult to fit demands from 'home' into their budgets. When unable to meet such demands, family members become disappointed in them and they become disappointed in themselves, leaving them feeling like "nobody". Another way of practicing transnational care, is when aged parents are the ones to cross borders to visit the UK. Kate said little about her mother-in-law's visit:

> The plan was for her to come and care for her grandchildren o but it turned out that she herself needed care! […]. Besides, she had her own agenda; if you see the long list she came with. [Clapping her hands] it was unbelievable. List of what she needed and what she needed for other people. I mean, it was ridiculous. We paid for the flight to and fro, shopped and shopped and shopped and she still expected substantial money to go with. By the time she finished with us, honestly, it would have been way cheaper and less stressful if we went for an au pair. As in, you do these things to cut cost and feel their warmth but no; when they come, they want to return with heaven and earth. So, we resolved to helping ourselves. It's better that way. That's why I can say that for a long time now, I have had to work night. Even now, I still work night. I can't do anything except work night; but I have to work; I do long night hours and do school runs during the day.

[86] Locum is a short for locum tenens, which is a Latin phrase that means "to hold the place of" or "to substitute for". In simpler terms, it means to book extra shifts without or outside a fixed contract. For example, Betty, a pharmacist, booked locum shifts to work in the place of the regular pharmacist.

Grandparents play an integral role in sorting out childcare irrespective of geographical distance, especially for working parents (Masselot 2011). Research on transnational care however is one-sided, focusing mainly on the care provided for aged parents across borders and ignoring the possibility of aged parents crossing borders to provide care. Lack of research in this area makes it difficult to explore how such care is negotiated. Kate's retrospective account however touches on the financial implication of such care without mentioning the advantages (there are definitely some) of such arrangements. This suggests how the topic of discussion in the present could lead to the picking and choosing of only certain aspects of our past stories to buttress our point. Kate's narrative however suggests that having family members across borders to help out with childcare is not a simple event, but a complex adventure. There is therefore the need to explore fully the cost (financially and emotionally), the impact and the challenges of transnational care. Kate's conclusion, "we resolved to helping ourselves" suggests collaboration and a joint effort (expected between husband and wife) but she mentioned that she had to resolve to work permanent night shifts, while she does school runs during the day. This suggests the disproportionate ways in which women may be affected in familial negotiations.

Cindy mentioned that there is an increase in the cases of depression among Black women, although it is not always discussed. She explained that the complexity of the challenges they face with regards to managing work and family life (both immediate and extended family) is a factor that could lead to depression. Employing humour to reduce the effect of her statement, Cindy links black women's love for facial cosmetics (Mary Kay products) to their desire to cover up their inner pain and depression. Although there is no proof of the validity of her statement, what is discussed however, is that the socialisation from "home" affects the disclosure and help-seeking practices of Nigerian women. Their ability to conceal pain while bearing the burden of the family is seen as strength as they hold strongly to values of familism[87] (Garzon 2003; Femi-Ajao 2018). One of the important points from Cindy and Kate's narratives is that women are still at the centre of ensuring that transnational care arrangements are properly implemented, whether it is giving the

[87] Familism is a social structure where the needs of the family are more important and take precedence over the needs of any of the family members.

care or asking for support with care from aged parents. Also, geographical boundaries do not in any way change the traditional expectations (some fair and some unfair) of family members. Therefore, transnational care should not be discussed uncritically, as it can be challenging and can lose its essence if not properly done. By and large, the level of care expected by family members both immediate and transnational from my participants is enormous and more challenging than what they were used to. This compounds their stories of multiple challenges. Although all these challenges shape how they see their present selves, many of my participants ended their stories with constructions of a resilient self, employing themes of future hope and success for themselves and/or their children.

It's Not Over: The Strong Black Woman Construct

For many of my participants, realising that their pre-migration expectations are mostly at variance with their post-migration realities, and without ignoring their disappointment, discouragement, discontent and present vulnerabilities, they construct narratives of strong, resolute and resilient selves in their stories of hope for the future:

> But it's not over until I win[88]"; after 10 years of leaving academics and going from pillar to post, I decided to go back to school, …you know the story; but listen I still proved myself; I passed all my exams. You see, I'm not dumb after all. I will continue until I get my dream job. The good of this land is my portion, so no giving up … (Omo, unemployed)

> I see myself as sacrifice for my children. We only came to pave way for them. You see, the generation after us will not suffer what we suffer. That's my consolation. Now, I live for them; I always say that it's because of them I did not go back. They are not like us, they have their accent, they went to their school, so what else? I will spend my last dime to send them to the best school. With that I'm fulfilled; after all, the struggle is still for them anyway. My future is in them and I just invest myself in taking care of them … (Sarah, Care Assistant)

[88] Omo reiterated words from Les Brown, a popular American motivational speaker

> I think our women should redefine their purpose. I've seen it. Everything's a calculated attempt to hold us down and shut us up. The problem with us is that we only consider one way as the solution to our problem but there are many ways to solve our problems. What is wrong with starting our own business? That's what the Asians are doing isn't it? I just completed a master's programme, yet no job and ageism is a negative factor. In the labour market, I realise I'm competing with people 10 or 15 years younger than me so what are my chances? Will they even look at my face? Now it's time to change plans. I can't be looking for work at the age I should be retiring. I'm looking for collaborators now as soon as I get people of like passion, we start something. I'm already on it … in this country, I will become an employer of labour in Jesus name … (Cynthia, Care Assistant).

> I've picked myself up. I'm still confused about what to do, but I refuse to be broken; I will not stay down forever. I realised that a lot of women are in this, so I'm not alone. So, I need to make myself happy. I'm not happy I have to go through this struggle again, but when life gives you lemon, you make lemonade. I can still push myself; I need to be better and improve myself, work hard, push beyond the ordinary and prove myself … [becomes tearful at this stage] (Pelumi, Cleaner/Care Assistant).

> The only gain for me is the children. I never bargained for all that I'm facing but to the glory of God, my son is a graduate and my daughter is doing her PhD… you see what I mean? God has already compensated me so when I think of that, I just tell myself that my future is secured. Many waters have passed under the bridge, but the end it will be worth it but please tell other women planning to come to think twice before embarking on the journey o … (Tinuke, Nurse).

It is intriguing how despite the economic deprivation, experiences of exclusionary social closure, crushing family responsibilities, countless forms of discriminations and the hegemonic gendered division of household chores that informed my participants' post-migration narratives, they employ the combination of resilience, faith, determination and hope to construct a positive future. In the concluding part of their narratives, they engaged in the self-construction of "the Strong Black Woman"

(SBW). SBW is defined differently by different scholars (see Wallace 1990; Romero 2000; Beauboeuf-Lafoutant 2009; Harrington et al 2010; West et al 2016). However, while Romero (2000) presents it as a compelling image that mirrors Black women as strong, independent and caring, Wallace (1990) explains it as the myth of the superwoman and Etowa et al (2017:379) conceptualise it as "both an aspirational icon and a constricting burden for African-heritage women".

I believe my participants' constructive narrative of their future contains a complex mix of the Strong Black Woman as a myth and a reality (Etowa et al 2017). For instance, Omo's account of excelling in her exams after 10 years of leaving school, depicts determination, resilience, strength and persistence; however, her positive self-talk, "I'm not dumb after all", and her display of faith may be seen as a SBW strategy of coping with multiple oppressive forces, suppressing the pain of unmet needs and inciting self- assurance. Also, Pelumi's statements, "I've picked myself up… but I refuse to be broken; I will not stay down forever", when contrasted with the emotional tears that followed her statement, appears to be her "weak" attempt at embodying the notion of a super woman, who is strong, self-sufficient, resilient and possesses the power to defy pain. Although I do not in any way consider tears as a sign of weakness, but in this case, I suppose it unveils the paradox in her statement, exposing her hidden struggles and vulnerabilities.

Another character embodied by some participants that portray them as Strong Black Women is the "self-sacrificing" role of motherhood, which is described by Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2009:25) as being "infinitely maternal". Ignoring (or denying) her own needs, challenges and personal aspirations, Sarah depicts a compelling image of a self-sacrificing self, who is sold out to nurturing and supporting her children. Embodying this level of selflessness validates hegemonic gendered expectations which measures the success of the woman by the well-being of her family (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2009). Tinuke also, expressing gratitude to God, explains how her success is only visible through the lens of her children's academic exploits. Although she acknowledges passing through challenges and personal struggles, she declares her children's academic success as her compensation. At this point, Sarah and Tinuke envision the future from their present position, reflecting an imagined future that is no longer strongly linked to "hoped-for possible selves" (see chapter 5) but to the possible success of their children. Therefore, their accounts of

future aspirations, while suggesting a narrative of strength, resilience, hope, fortitude and contentment, could also be masking feelings of defeat, exploitation and dissatisfaction.

Cynthia, in her attempt to embody the Strong Black Woman, engaged in blaming the generalized other (in a collective sense "our" , "their") in her statement, "I think our women should redefine their purpose…The problem with us is that we only consider one way as the solution to our problem but there are many ways to solve our problems. What is wrong with starting our own business? That's what the Asians are doing isn't it?". She appears to be addressing Black (or specifically Nigerian) women; although she began her statement by distancing herself, she eventually includes herself in her construction of the solution, using collective terms, "us" and "we". I suppose she tries to present a self, one who has the solution to the problem facing herself and other women like her. In so doing however, she employs the intersection of race and gender— "our women" and calls for a collective alternative approach by depicting independent, self-reliant, self-sufficient and invulnerable selves who can achieve their goals by becoming entrepreneurs. Although she contrasts her construction of positive possibilities with the harsh reality of her labour market experience, her final declaration, " I will become an employer of labour in Jesus name", portrays a woman, who in spite of her challenges wants to remain hopeful, emotionally strong, socially smart and spiritually connected (Ward 2000).

Towards the end of the interview sessions with some of my participants, it was surprising for me to see how their responses to questions like "so what does the future hold?" or "what's the plan for the future?" is informed by a certain urge to appear strong and inspired. It became clear to me that, "the selves we share with others can shift rapidly in response to the changing demands of being the "right" person at the right place and moment" (Gubrium and Holstein 2001). Therefore, repeating some of the popular rhetoric of hope and selflessness expected of the "Strong Black Woman" who never gives up in the face of adversity, they embody "a façade of strength, self-sufficiency and resilience" (Davis 2015) to envision the future. I suppose hooks (1989:152-153) says this better, "it is not that Black women have not been and are not strong; it is simply that this is only a part of our story, a dimension, just as the suffering is another dimension— one that has been most unnoticed and unattended to". I therefore argue that my participants' final

construction of ‘a more satisfying future’, is their way of invoking strength, hope and resilience amid multiple challenges and realities of over-lapping oppression, vulnerabilities and disappointments.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to present my participants’ nuanced ways of presenting constructions of their present identities as wives, mothers and workers in the UK. Again, for many of them, their narrative constructions are marked with an unintended return to appreciating their pre-migratory lives, as they retrospectively compare it with their present lives. Telling stories of their labour market experiences in the UK was for them an opportunity to construct and reconstruct their understanding of themselves and their present complex identities shaped by experiences of exclusion, racism, sexism, alienation, isolation and downward mobility. These interlocking forms of marginalization heightened by unfair immigration policies, inform my participants’ construction of who they are and what they have become in the UK. Also, their accounts of domesticity and housewifization reflects how the interaction between patriarchy and capitalism reinforce the oppression of women and lead to the re-feminization of women’s roles both at home and in the labour market. At home, they contend with gendered division of labour and are saddled with the responsibility of seeing to the welfare of both immediate and extended family members, and at work they are plagued with economic vulnerabilities, gender and racial discrimination. I therefore argue that there is a need to broaden existing literature on skilled migration to uncover the impact of the intersection between patriarchy, capitalism and gender.

In addition to identifying the interplay of some oppressing factors affecting professional immigrant women, I pay critical attention to how my participants “storied” their experiences, and the impact it has on their self-construction. They presented their reflexive selves as they retrospectively reformulated their immediate past stories from the perspective of their present social circumstances. Internalizing the socio-cultural situation in which they find themselves, they draw on themes around shame, loss of identity, pain, despair and disillusionment, to make sense of the impact of the multiple challenges that mark their post-migration experiences. I intend to tread cautiously here, not suggesting that my participants’ post-migration

experiences are all dull, gloomy and unfulfilling. This is certainly not the case, as there is a need to point out that narratives as a sense-making tool, reflects how our life experiences are selected, connected, evaluated and creatively (re)shaped as meaningful for different audience and within different positions of time and space (Macias-Gomez-Estern 2015). How and why they choose to construct their narratives in this manner tells us something about how they make sense of some aspects of their post migration experiences as professional immigrant women.

The narrative of their post migration experiences therefore, informed by their unmet desires, culminates in their construction of the Strong Black Woman, who in spite of all odds envisions a better future. Their different ways of engaging with different aspects of their stories reflects the complexity of exploring the relationship between selves, identities and the stories people tell (Phoenix 2008). It is however such complexities that provide insight into the multi-layered structural factors that shape how immigrant women make sense of their lived experiences.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

"Into a daybreak that's
wondrously clear
I rise" (Angelou 1986)

Overview

To engage fully in exploring my participants lived experiences of immigration and adaptation to life in the UK, I analysed not only the stories they tell, but their different ways of engaging with telling their stories. I focus mainly on how they retrospectively construct their narratives of past experiences from the standpoint of the present. This helped me to explore participants' narratives both as a resource and a topic (Gubrium and Holstein 1997). I do not claim to know how women experience immigration and adaptation but to have opened up the multiple interpretations of the complex structures that shape women's experiences. In this concluding chapter, I discuss the key contributions of the research, suggested areas for new enquiries and the impact of my research beyond academia. I first reflect on the impact of this intellectual voyage in my life.

Two weeks before I began my research, I had a conversation with a friend who herself had just completed a PhD, but in a different field from mine. She asked about my research and I excitedly told her about my topic, explaining that I had just received my acceptance letter from the Centre for Women's Studies. "You're going to be carrying out a feminist research?", she asked, raising her voice and rolling her eyes. "What's wrong with that?" I asked, a little disappointed that she did not share my joy and excitement. She quickly added, but this time, in a quiet but firm voice, "It's fine; it's just that nobody does that kind of research and remains the same". The woman you are now, will not recognise the woman you will become at the end of your research." I was too shocked to respond; it was the first time I was hearing such comments. I was not sure whether to be scared or excited, but I felt I had heard enough; I did not want any further explanation. I quietly changed our subject of discussion.

I am not sure why I did not want my friend to elaborate on her point; was it fear? What could I have been afraid of? Change? Probably. Although I do not claim to

know what my friend meant by her statement, whatever she meant, she was right. I did not remain the same; I am not the woman I was before I commenced the research (not sure if the woman I was would recognise the one I am now), but the change is positive. I have been shaped and re-shaped and the new product is a better me; a self-aware and reflexive me. I have become aware that "knowing" starts with exploring "me", and as a woman, what situates me in my present position extends beyond me. This transforming knowledge formation all started during the first year of my study, when I learnt that "the personal is political". For me, this knowledge was liberating; for the first time, I felt the numerous unanswered questions in my head were taking form and becoming tangible. I felt equipped and confident not just to examine women's personal experiences but to evaluate them from the view of wider social structures, tearing open the hierarchical systems of power relationships that shape the experiences of women. This knowledge formed the lens through which I approached my research.

I likened the research process to a journey to a new destination (chapter 3). It was indeed for me a new destination. It took me out of my comfort zone, stretched my mind intellectually, and propelled me to heights unthinkable. The whole process shaped my ideology and sharpened my reflexivity. It was intense, complex and emotional but it opened me up to appreciate my position as a partial knower, identifying my strength and admitting my vulnerabilities as a social actor. I became comfortable in my skin, and less worried to admit that the complex relationship between my thoughts, feelings and experiences colours my view of the world and it is from this premise that I engaged with my participants' narratives.

When I embarked on this research, I was curious about the academic representation of Nigerian women in the UK. I assumed that since Nigerian migrants constitute the largest sub-Saharan African community in the UK (SIHMA 2014)[89], there would be available research on them. But according to Harris (2006:2), "in the plethora of analyses of race and ethnicity, now as then, the Nigerian diaspora is hardly mentioned". I realised that they are often categorised as Africans or Blacks in academic research (Akinrinade and Ogen 2011). There is however, a gradual interest in recent times to research Nigerians in the UK (See Oucho 2011; Worlu 2011; Umar

[89] SIHMA is the Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa

2015; Alakija 2016). But the gendered structure of migration and the "conflicting interests and hierarchies of power and privilege" (Salih 2011:1) that differently shape the experiences of women are yet to be fully explored. Furthermore, there are pockets of research that focus specifically on Nigerian women; they however concentrate on trafficking, smuggling and prostitution, while ignoring other Nigerian migrant women who are not involved in such activities. Carrying out this research is my conscious attempt to contribute to addressing this knowledge gap. My research is therefore original in terms of the social group on whom I collected data. Not only does this group present Nigerian women as professionals, but also as legal migrants who come into the UK through skilled and/or student migration routes.

My methodological choices throughout the research process were informed by a feminist approach to qualitative research which is key to adopting a framework that explores the complex relationship between women and their different ways of engaging with their narratives. This framework enabled me to explore women's experiences as fractured and complex (Stanley 2013). I do not pretend to have a single definition of exactly what feminist research is, because I realised that a definition would only fit such a fluid and multi-dimensional approach into a monolithic term, thereby re-establishing the rigid principles I seek to destroy. Engaging with it however, helped me in my attempt to demystify research by relating to my participants as collaborators and co-creators of knowledge, supporting them to make sense of their own experiences. As a feminist researcher, I committed to exploring my participants' many ways of reflexively constructing their complex stories of multiple factors that shaped their lived experiences as Black women in the UK. Based on Mead's approach to time, I was able to engage with how my participants retrospectively constructed their past experiences from their position in the present (chapter 4). Using this concept is my conscious attempt at engaging with a research methodology that connects with how people construct the meanings of lived experiences. It became clear to me that the present is the lens through which narratives of the past are told.

After careful review of some established scholarship on migration research, I realised that not much is usually discussed about migrants' background in their migration stories. I find this surprising, not because their background determines their present state, but exploring their background tells us something about the social

space within which they make their decisions to migrate. More importantly, encouraging them to talk about their own background presents how they reflexively make sense of the past, and how their stories are coloured by the position in which they find themselves in the present (chapter 4). I moved on from exploring their backgrounds to their conceptualisation and perception of their personal and social future, which informed their migration decision making (chapter 5). Linking how they constructed images of their possible selves to their imagined futures in the UK, I introduced the concepts of Possible Selves and Imagined Futures which are often associated with the theorization of youth transition in psychological literature. This is a very useful contribution to migration literature as it accommodates the theorization of the link between imagined possibilities in the future and the motivation to act in the present (Hardgrove et al 2015).

Exploring how my participants negotiated their early days experiences and integration in the UK (chapter 6) made me evaluate the use of the term "culture shock" to explain migrants experiences of unfamiliar situations faced in the UK. I rejected the use of the term, as it does not adequately explain the complexity of people's experiences. It appears to unify all migrants' experiences of unfamiliar circumstances as both cultural and a shock, when in actuality, their new experiences may not only be culture related and not necessarily experienced as a shock. I therefore adopted the person-by-situation approach to accommodate the diversity of my participants' experiences and the complex ways they engaged with their narratives. This helped me to establish that migrants' integration and settling experiences in their destination countries are not only different but gendered and should only be analysed through a gendered lens. From a feminist perspective, this adds another layer to the critical evaluation of migration research.

Using an intersectional approach in the last part of my data analysis (chapter 7), I examined how my participants engaged in making sense of their experiences of working, wife-ing and mothering in the UK. In the labour market, I identified the social signs of their experiences of gender, race and class as they were faced with different layers of discrimination. Emphasising their different ways of engaging with their stories of downward mobility, I evaluate the link between institutionalised cultural capital and upward mobility in the labour market (Bourdieu 1986), arguing that for immigrant women, there is no guarantee that their institutionalised cultural

capital is converted into economic capital in the labour market. Writing from a feminist perspective and in my bid to embrace reflexivity, I went beyond exploring participants narratives to the meaning they make when they link symbolic representations to self-identity. They draw on themes of shame, loss of identity, pain and despair, to describe the impact of their downward mobility in the UK.

I discovered that there are subtle as well as obvious challenges that immigrant women generally contend with, caused by multiple inter-connecting factors that link the situation at home and in the workplace. To explain some of these multiple factors, I propose a need to broaden migration research to cover variable intersecting factors beyond gender, race and class. I recommend that the relevance of the intersection of gendered policies, patriarchy and capitalism be acknowledged in examining the place of immigrant women in the productive and reproductive labour. My participants' accounts suggest a complex connection between gendered immigration policies, their roles at home and in the workplace. And according to Kofman and Raghuram (2005), "virtually all studies on skilled migration have concentrated on the workplace and on career trajectories, leaving aside the incorporation of familial relations and other social networks." In this research, not only did I explore the impact of participants' gendered roles at home but also their transnational care responsibilities and the impact these have on their position in the labour market.

Throughout this research, inspired by Mead's (1934) theory of the self and time, I explored the narrative linkages my participants built between the self and personal experiences of migration and adaptation to life in the UK. I consider this to be a key contribution to the growing body of scholarly research on gender and skilled migration, because creating a connection between self, time and narrative (Jackson 2010) allows participants the flexibility to reflexively and retrospectively construct and re-construct their lived experiences. This enabled my participants to situate their experiences within historical, cultural and structural contexts, making meaning by and for themselves from their way of "seeing" in the present.

At this point, I consider it necessary to clarify some points about my research. It is clear that of the 32 women who took part in this research, only 6 were independent migrants to the UK. The other 26 came under the family migration system as

dependants of their husbands. Despite labour migration from Nigeria becoming increasingly feminized (Akinrinade and Ogen 2011), spousal migration remains one of the popular means of legal labour migration for women. Unfortunately, because of the focus on the primary immigrant as "the skilled one", the economic significance of family migration has been neglected and the skills of the dependent migrants have been discounted (Kofman and Raghuram 2006). This possibly explains the interest among feminist migration researchers to establish migration as increasingly feminised. While I view research on the increase in the number of women involved in independent migration as a move in the right direction, I have two arguments against this move. My first argument is that there is too much attention given to increase in numbers at the expense of examining how gendered migration policies, the series of barriers faced by women in destination countries and the gendered labour market affect immigrant women's lives irrespective of immigration status. My second argument is stronger than the first: Immigration status itself is gendered. This explains why immigrant women are treated as dependants, irrespective of their immigration status. And dependants are never given the same attention as the primary immigrants, even when they are equally educated and skilled as the main migrants. All my participants, irrespective of their immigration status, are highly educated and skilled but their huge human capital is obscured by many intersecting factors.

In spite of the key contributions and impact of my research, I am aware that my findings cannot offer a complete picture of Nigeria women's experiences of immigration and integration in the UK. My sample size is relatively small, and majority of them were dependent migrants who were engaged in family migration. The experiences they share therefore, do not present a generalised understanding of immigrant women's experiences. This challenge was envisaged, considering my research methodology and the participants' recruitment technique used. The most applicable recruitment technique for my research was snowballing, because my target population is only sparsely distributed throughout the UK. Also, the characteristics of potential participants further limits the number of eligible participants—Nigerian women, who were professionals in Nigeria and are legal immigrants in the UK. Using snowballing, I had to start by recruiting participants from my immediate social network, who also recruited women from their networks.

The effect of this method is that most of the women recruited have much in common, especially in terms of social and immigration status.

Adopting a feminist approach to qualitative research interviewing created a space for my participants to reflexively engage in a retrospective narrative of their experiences. I am however aware that their narratives cannot be viewed as a transparent account through which truth is learnt, but as a medium through which they give meaning to their experiences. Time, space and other complex factors also shape the way participants engage with their stories. To put this clearly, "Over time stories may change, adapt or modify, they may be exaggerated, things may be taken out as well as added in, but what does not change, adapt or modify is that stories give meaning, thus they shape identity" (Sian 2013:2). Furthermore, as a researcher who has the responsibility of analysing participants narratives, I do not position myself as a neutral objective observer, but "… the interpreting I do as a writer (or reviewer) tells as much about me as it does about the others whose stories are being told […] I can never separate my own experiences from the experiences of those I write about" (Alvermann et al 1996:117). Therefore, the way I analyse participants engagement with their stories and the way I represent their told stories, are all coloured by my way of knowing and interpreting the world.

New Enquiries: Focus for the Future

Scholars have succeeded in bringing women's migration out of the shadows (Boyd and Grieco 2003; Donato et al 2006). And though painfully slow, there is a recognition of gender in mainstream migration literature (Kofman 2000), but there is much work still to be done in this area. For instance, there is no adequate attempt at theorizing women's international migration in a comprehensive manner and, as a result, existing migration theories fail to address the gendered nature of international migration (see chapter 2). This may explain why only partial success has been achieved in incorporating gender into our understanding of migration (Boyd and Grieco 2003). In order to situate gender fully in the centre of migration studies, more robust migration theories that establish gender in their application will be needed.

Establishing a feminist methodology is another aspect I consider key in fostering migration studies. Feminist research is unorthodox, and it challenges conventional ways of doing research. Paying attention to "power and dominance, majority and

minority positionings", it employs the concept of intersectionality to evaluate the "complex, ambivalent and relational nature of identities and sociocultural categories" (Buikema et al 2012: 1; 51). This insight is useful and should be promoted for the study of migration as a gendered phenomenon, where gender is situated as relational, contextual, power laden and dynamic (Donato et al 2006). What is therefore needed, is conceptualising feminist methodology beyond the relationship between the researcher and the researched, to exploring how knowledge is collaboratively produced. This will involve demanding that women's lives be addressed in their own terms, research be carried out for and not just on women, and the researcher be situated in the process of knowledge production (Edwards 1990).

Lastly, I call for the theorising of Black women in feminist research to go beyond the "add and stir," to creating the fundamental awareness that there is a difference in the construction of gender and femininity between Black and White women because racism is a structuring feature in the construction of Black women's experiences (Carby 2007). It is about time that the story of Black women in Britain is told in full, from the exploits of our foremothers, (see chapter 2) to how Black women are negotiating their spaces in contemporary Britain. Who best to carry out such research than Black women themselves? In the words of Carby (2007:120),

> "The herstory of black women is interwoven with that of white women but this does not mean that they are the same story. Nor do we need white feminists to write our herstory for us, we can and are doing that for ourselves. However, when they write their herstory and call it the story of women but ignore our lives and deny their relation to us, that is the moment in which they are acting within the relations of racism and writing history."

The herstory of Black women before they came to Britain and after, has never really received full attention. In this research, I began with examining the herstory of Nigerian women in Nigeria, confirming that they were never inactive, irrelevant or silent (Nnaemeka 1998), I also explored the hidden herstory of our unsung heroes in Britain. I discovered that they were never passive victims but brave and strong workers, whose exploits have been largely ignored. There were Black women, and more specifically, there were African women in pre-historic Britain. But if we fail to

tell our stories by ourselves, what we will see, will be "how she is permitted to appear" (Mirza 1997:5).

Hearing Our Voices: Raising Platforms

I mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis that Maya Angelou's (1986) poem, Still I Rise, has become my anthem since 2013. Writing this chapter now, makes me feel awake, "leaving behind nights of terror and fear, I rise. Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear, I rise" (ibid). Rising up in this context is not "just to voice our experiences, to shout from the roof tops "we have arrived!"" (Mirza 1997:4). It is about owning our stories and telling it our way. One way to tell our stories by ourselves is to raise platforms for our voices to be heard. Whenever voices and platforms are mentioned, they are often associated with political rallies, protests and demonstrations. This research however, has helped me to see beyond the horizon and given me another meaning to creating platforms. It helped me reason that true liberation should not be measured by how free I feel but by how free I can make others feel. Based on this reasoning, the first platform I raised is a foundation to support mother and children from economically deprived areas in Nigeria. Mother and Child (MAC) foundation was established and launched in October 2016, during the 24/7 annual Boot conference[90] held in Osun state, Nigeria, in 2016. My family decided to embrace this cause, to contribute to educating children in the rural parts of Nigeria. So far, five children, (four girls and a boy), have been supported to complete secondary school, and two mothers to start a trade which helps them to support their children.

Another platform was raised on the 13th of June 2017, when I emerged as one of the 10 finalists of the 3MT (Three Minute Thesis) Competition at the University of York. It is an annual competition held in many UK universities, where researchers present the relevance of their research in three minutes. Taking part in that event opened doors for me to engage in public speaking. I simply present the relevance of my research to audiences in different public spaces. I always receive positive feedback, especially from Black women who could identify with some of the stories in my presentation. My public speaking events have just recently metamorphosed

[90] 24/7 Boot Conference is an annual innovative conference held in Oshogbo, Osun state, Nigeria. https://bootconference.wordpress.com/

into the raising of another platform—"Boots to Heels Network"[91], formed on the 21st of March 2019. This time around, it was a couple who approached me after one of my talks and passionately discussed how interested they were in helping to set up a platform where immigrants can build support networks and obtain useful information on how to negotiate the UK labour market. They are willing to run training sessions and organise job fairs after formal registration is completed (registration in progress).

We had our first meeting on the 25th of May 2019, where we listed some of the issues discussed during one of my research presentation which include:

- The policies guiding immigration and integration into the labour market are gendered. The available resources, networks and power dynamics are all shaped by gendered policies.
- There are still derogatory assumptions and stereotypes about Black people, especially women that need to be addressed.
- There is a need for a very strong network in every part of the UK, where immigrant women can find help, support and information on how to negotiate their new spaces and integrate into the labour market
- The impact of childcare policies on immigrant women should be addressed
- It should be made clear that the "no recourse to public funds" policy affects immigrant women disproportionately
- Explaining women's economic status based on "family income" obscures financial issues women could be facing in the home.
- The need for a platform to signpost immigrants, especially women, to the right training organisations where they can gain or enhance valuable skills to help them secure suitable jobs.

The greatest joy of this research is the collaborative turn it has taken. This authenticates my stand as a feminist researcher, resolved to carry out research not on, but with my participants. This conclusion chapter, therefore, does not mark the end

[91] Boots to Heels is coined out of an expression used by one of my participants to describe her present informal outfit to work compared to her formal corporate way of dressing to work in Nigeria (see chapter 7). Boots to Heels Network intends to support immigrant women who need help to negotiate the labour market in the UK.

of this research, but the birth of an impactful vision to build support networks for and with immigrant women in the UK. The main goal is to help these women in their pursuit of suitable career and the attainment of self-actualization; according to a West African proverb, “knowledge is like the baobab tree; one person’s arms cannot encompass it”.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Information Sheet

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

RESEARCH TOPIC:

Professional Nigerian women immigrants in the UK: Experiences of Immigration and Employment.

INTRODUCTION:

My name is Joy Ogbemudia and I am a PhD student at the Centre for Women's Studies, University of York. Through this research, I seek to critically explore the immigration and employment experiences of Professional Nigerian women who immigrated to the UK. I would therefore be very grateful if you would agree to be interviewed for this project.

WHY IS THE RESEARCH BEING CARRIED OUT?

Some Nigerian women, though professionals in Nigeria before migrating to the UK, encounter difficulty in integrating into the labour market in the UK. Although there is existing research on African women in the UK, the stories of these professional Nigerian women will add to the body of knowledge in this area. It is therefore important to explore the immigration and employment experiences of professional Nigerian women in the UK.

WHAT WILL YOU HAVE TO DO IF YOU AGREE TO TAKE PART?

- We will arrange a date and time to meet; you will be free to decide time and venue that suits you best. It could be your home, the café or any other safe space you may prefer.
- There will be a single interview involving only you and me. You will sign the consent form and fill a very brief demographic questionnaire after which the interview section will start. This should be for between one to two hours and it is a one-off event. I will ask you questions about your employment

experience in Nigeria, why and how you migrated to the UK, your employment history in the UK and marriage/family life.

- The interview will be recorded by an audio recorder, which will be transferred immediately to my personal laptop. The data will later be transcribed and analysed for my research. Confidentiality will be ensured as only my supervisor and I will have access to the raw data. The completed research work will be available for you to read if you are interested.
- If you have any further concerns or questions, you can enquire from the ELMPS Ethics Committee or my supervisor.

HOW MUCH TIME WILL BE NEEDED?

The whole process should last for between one and two hours.

WILL CONFIDENTIALITY BE MAINTAINED? IF YES, HOW?

If you agree to be part of this project, only the two of us (me, the researcher and you, the respondent) will be involved in the interview process. The interview will take place in a venue of your choice. It will be audio recorded but this recording will be completely deleted immediately after I have transferred the data into my personal laptop and other backup devices. A pseudonym will be used in place of your name. You will be completely anonymous and names of spouses, place of work, and any other information that may identify you will be completely disguised. Your response during the interview will be analysed and used for the purpose of my research. I intend to archive my interview transcripts and field notes in the UK data archive; but this is only if you are comfortable and agree to this.

Do you have to take part?

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to take part and you are free to withdraw for any reason and at any time up to 6 months after the interview. You do not need to give any reason for your withdrawal and you will not be contacted again regarding this. If you decide to withdraw, all data relating to you will be completely destroyed.

I sincerely wish you will be happy to participate in this research. Your participation will be very much appreciated.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. For any further enquiries please contact:

Researcher: Joy Ogbemudia

Centre for Women's Studies

University of York, UK.

YO10 5DD

E-mail address: joao500@york.ac.uk

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The ELMPS Ethics Committee, University of York

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Appendix 2. Consent Form

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Full Title of Project: Professional Nigerian Women in the UK: Experiences of Immigration and Employment.

NAME AND POSITION OF RESEARCHER: Joy Ogbemudia. PhD student, Centre for Women's Studies, University of York.

PLEASE TICK THE BOX

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reasons. ☐
3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐
4. I agree to the interview consultation being audio recorded ☐
5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications ☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix 3. Interview Questions

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

QUESTIONS ON EXPERIENCES BEFORE MIGRATION

- **Tell me about yourself.** (This may help them to talk about stuff I did not think about before the interview and asking at the beginning of the interview will help me to probe further on those stuff as the interview progresses)
- **May I ask how old you are?** This will help me to know the age range of my respondents
- **What part of Nigeria are you from?** I intend to ask if they were raised in their town of birth; this may explain some of the reasons for rural-urban migration. This will explain their ethnic background and probably support the notion that most Nigerians migrate from the southern part of Nigeria to the UK.
- **Tell me about your experience growing up in Nigeria.** I intend to explore their childhood experiences (in line with gender discrimination among children in Nigeria).
- **Can you please talk about your educational background in Nigeria?** I will be interested in knowing their experiences of the Nigerian educational system, the kind of influence their parents had in their choice of schools and courses, their highest academic qualification and their experience after school.
- **What is your marital status? Would you want to talk about how you met your husband?** I will be able to ask the married ones at what age they got married. This may show the average age at which educated Nigerian women get married (the assumption is that they get married soon after their first degree). If this is the case, I will ask to know why. I will ask the married ones about their experiences of marriage, the single ladies their intentions about marriage and the divorcees (may want to share why they divorced-this will be optional).
- **Do you have children? Tell me about your children.** For those with children, I intend to ask for the age of the children when they migrated to the UK or if the children were born here. If some of the children were born here and some in Nigeria then I can ask them to compare the experience of working and raising kids here with their experience in Nigeria. I will ask the question in different ways, depending on where the children were born and raised.
- **Tell me about your employment history in Nigeria (before migrating to the UK).** I will prompt them to tell me about their experiences of searching for and gaining employment, what they liked and disliked, and for those with children born in Nigeria, how they coped with work and family.

QUESTIONS ON HOW AND WHY THEY MIGRATED

- **Why did you migrate to the UK?** I will ask for the reason(s) for migrating, who came first (in the case of the married women and the process they followed to migrate legally to the UK
- **How did you make the decision to migrate?** I will be interested in knowing the strength of their decision making power in the home, whether they had a say in their decision to migrate (whether they are trailing spouses or accompanying spouses) and how they decided on where to live in the UK (here, I will be interested in knowing about their network)
- **Tell me about your expectations of the UK before you came.**

QUESTIONS ON THEIR LIVES AND WORK IN THE UK

- **Can you please talk about how you settled in the UK?** (I will explain that they may start from their first day in the UK)
- **What are your experiences of the cultural changes between Nigeria and the UK and how has these changes affected you?** Here, I want them to explain the effect of the cultural change on their identity.
- **Tell me about how you found your first job in the UK. What kind of job was it?** I will prompt them to explore their position and their job description
- **Did you move on to other jobs after the first? Please talk about the type of jobs and the experiences you had up to your last/ current job.** (In case they worked but are presently unemployed, I will ask them to explain the reasons. If they never worked, I will also ask them to explain what formed their decision never to work. I will also ask if they had to retrain to get higher qualification and the impact this had on their employment.
- **Can you please explain how satisfied or dissatisfied you were/are with working in the UK?**
- **How does your work status in the UK compare with your work status when you were in Nigeria? (**How do you feel?)
- **How has working in the UK impacted your life? What impact has your work on your identity?** I will allow them to answer this question from their own perspective

- **Would you consider yourself a skilled worker in the UK? Would you say you are on the same professional status as you were in Nigeria or is your status better now or worse?** I will ask them to elaborate
- **How are you able to achieve work/life balance? How would you describe the domestic division of labour in your home? How do you cope without house help and family support?**
- **How would you say your expectations have been met or not met in the UK?**
- **What else would you like to tell me?**

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