COMPLICATIONS AND COMPLEXITIES IN THE SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG NORTHERN NIGERIAN WOMEN LIVING IN ZARIA

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Felicia Salome Jatau alias Mao for the many sacrifices she made to ensure that I went to school, to my children Yohane and Mercy, to my family members, and to the women whose stories I tell.

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to share and interpret the stories of young women in Zaria, an urban city in northern Nigeria, in order to illustrate how their unique positions framed their identity and their attitude toward schooling. There has been a huge concern about the increasing school dropout rate among women in the country, particularly in northern Nigeria. The gender gap and inequities that pervade the educational system have remained daunting challenges. Many stories have been told and are still being told about these women and their ability or inability to access formal education. Most of the literature that examines this phenomenon comes at the problem from a quantitative research approach which beclouds important nuances. As such, a one-size-fits-all approach has been used to promote women's education in Nigeria without recognizing difference.

In my research, the complexities and complications involved in the schooling process of these women were uncovered in order to deepen understanding about the issues that they grappled with as they went to school. Qualitative research methods, particularly interviews and deep conversations, were used to elicit the seventeen young women's (between the ages of 18 and 30) experiences. I chose these women purposively using criterion sampling and snowballing. Some women self-selected themselves to participate. Postmodernism, postcolonial feminism, socio-cultural perspectives on literacy, and funds of knowledge were theoretical frameworks that helped me to understand the forces at work in these women's schooling. These forces included

poverty, ethnicity, religion, and lack of proficiency in English language, which together informed their identity construction and in the end complicated their schooling processes.

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Chapter One

Introduction

> *What nutrition and reproduction are to physiological life, education is to social life. This education consists primarily in transmission through communication. Communication is a process of sharing experience till it becomes a common possession.*
> *John* Dewey, *Democracy and education.*

When I got to the field and the women began to share their stories the link between education and social life became more real to me. As they narrated their stories about the struggles they had been having with schooling, and in spite of all the theories I had learned and formulated as I took my courses, wrote my final papers, passed my comprehensive examination, and defended by proposal, it came as a shock to me to discover the great emphasis that these women placed on how their social life impacted their schooling. They talked little about classroom experiences. I worried about this and went back to my proposal to find out if I was asking relevant questions. I was genuinely puzzled. This puzzle, however, joggled up memories in my head about my own schooling experiences, all the more so when most of the stories these women told me resonated with me in interesting ways. The Nigerian educational system, just like those operated in other parts of the world, has been preparing students as a work force for her economy, but in this age of capitalism and globalization, I am continually bothered about whether that is the kind of education we need. Although the *National Policy on Education* (2004) says that "the country's educational goal shall be clearly set out in terms of their relevance to the needs of the individual and those of the society, in consonance with the realities of our environment and the modern world" (p. 4), in practice, this reference to the society,

the environment, and the modern world is catered for by a curriculum that is geared towards preparing the populace for economic survival and not necessarily for the recognition of their sense of being as humans. This kind of education which prepares people as a workforce depends on what Freire (2000) describes as the "banking method", where certification – the passport for white-collar jobs - is emphasized; an education which is characterized by rote-learning and memorization. In this day and age, students need to be able to think for themselves, to make decisions on their own, to discover knowledge by seeing with the inner eye and then applying facts to reality and reasoning productively. They need an education that will enable them to live and grapple with the challenges with which that they are continually confronted.

The women I spoke with struggled with issues of poverty, religion, ethnicity, and language as they went to school, as reflected in the stories they told me in response to my over-arching research question: *What does schooling mean to northern Nigerian women?* As I pondered their stories, I found myself asking whether it is not possible to provide a humane and effective education that will improve their lives. I saw them exercise their power of agency in various ways, revealing the deep questions they are beginning to ask as they make sense of the world. It is that potential for questioning that gives me hope; that if it were successfully tapped, we would do education differently to meet the demands of our changing society.

Referring specifically to women in northern Nigeria, my research interest was informed by the phenomenon of high school dropout rates and lack of pursuance of career paths. Although the national policy on education recommends equal opportunities

for education for every Nigerian, in reality this is not so. There has been a wide gap between educational opportunities for men and for women, for the poor and the rich, and between the north and south of the country, resulting in various issues of ethnicity and identity crises. Within the ambiance of a vast country with a diversity of ethnic groups, differing cultures, traditions, and religions, my work addresses the issues of high school drop out rates in the northern part of the country and the lack of interest that young women have in pursuing career paths; a situation that is further complicated by the existing educational gap between the north and the south of the nation, with the north lagging far behind and seeking ways of bridging the gap.

Records show that fewer girls go to school than boys (Dubay, 1980). Female enrollment dwindles as they move up the educational hierarchy (Onuebunwa, 2003). According to UNESCO statistics, 31% of women in Nigeria are literate against 54% of men (Egunjobi, 2005). The *National Report on Situation and Policy Analysis of Basic Education in Nigeria* (SAPA, 1990) puts the figure at 39.5% literate females as opposed to 63.3% males. Specific to drop out rates, Obaji (2005) observes that of the 7.3 million children who drop out of school in Nigeria, 60% are girls, and she acknowledges that the situation is worse in northern Nigeria. There is imbalance in girls' enrollment, attendance, and completion in the northern region. Even when these women are able to complete high school, many of them do not go to college. I discuss more on this gender disparity in my literature review.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that in spite of world interest, through such bodies as the World Bank, DFID, and the United Nations (including UNICEF, UNDP,

and UNESCO), in equality and women empowerment, and in spite of the efforts of the Nigerian government in this regard, women's education in northern Nigeria, particularly from the senior secondary school level upward, has remained a challenge. The interest of these international stakeholders, which started in the 1980s, was borne out of a sudden realization of the need to integrate women in the development process so that the crises of development in sub-Sahara Africa could be overcome. Unfortunately, they have been more concerned about early childhood education through the junior secondary school level, which is why they describe the females as "girl-child", to the neglect of the young women. Also, in recent times, the government has invested substantial funding to provide free and compulsory education at primary and junior secondary levels. The proliferation of public and private schools has been encouraged and a national policy on gender has been promulgated to encourage, among other things, women's education. Yet, the Nigerian educational system is still in crisis and women's education has remained a major challenge (Olaofe, 2005; Adibe, 2009). Significant positive results are yet to be realized on girls' and women's education. What these stakeholders failed to realize is the fact that a host of forces and myths complicate the process of educating women, which in turn render intervention programs ineffective.

My story

My own schooling experiences influence why I got interested in investigating this phenomenon. In some ways I perceive myself as writing this research all my life, considering my lived experience and the passion that has engulfed my being for so long. I suppose that this will come through more clearly when, after reading to the end of this

dissertation work, the reader revisits this story a second time. It should become clearer why my participants' stories resonated with me in such profound ways.

I come to this research as one of very few northern Nigerian women with a high level of educational achievement. I went to school against all odds. I am from Kaduna State in the northern part of the country, where I returned to conduct this research. I almost lost my opportunity of acquiring an education, but for the fact that my father was trained in a mission school during the colonial era and had the 'privilege' of working for Reverend Fathers in the Catholic Church as a cook while he was schooled. He also had the 'opportunity' to work in a textile factory with white men. He, therefore, understood the value of education even though he stopped schooling after Standard Three[1].

Initially, he, like most men in northern Nigeria at the time, was not in support of women going to school. I was supposed to be groomed for marriage and while I waited to get married I was supposed to go through primary school, hawk[2], and engage in petty trading or any other odd jobs, buying time so that I could reach a marriageable age. I was to be married off to any man of my father's preference or if I made a choice, the man had to meet my father's laid down criteria – he had to at least have a job so that he could adequately fend for me and my family. If he had an education, that would be most preferred, because then his economic means would be much higher. Also, if I had a bad

[1] From the colonial era up to 1969 when the Curriculum Conference was held to standardize the way schools were operated primary school education was completed after six or seven years in different parts of the country. It was referred to as Standard School and each year group was referred to as "Standard … (the year group)". If my father stopped at Standard Three that means that he dropped out of school before he completed his primary school education.

[2] Hawk is a term used to refer to the pedaling of stuff on the streets and the way side in exchange for money. Items hawked could include food items, toys, car spare parts, and drinks.

marriage I was not expected to return to my parents' home – it was a thing of ridicule to do so.

It was my mother, though "unschooled" but very smart, who encouraged my father not to neglect his daughters as he sent his boys to school. She too had observed that the white men, her neighbors, and friends who had an education were more comfortable and seemed to enjoy life better. She sold food stuff in the open market initially, and then sold food in a roadside restaurant in front of a textile company. In her later life she became a subsistence farmer in a bid to contribute her own quota to the upkeep of the family. Intervening in my schooling pursuit in the way she did meant that she had to make many sacrifices: her housekeep money was drastically reduced; she bore the brunt of my father's wrath when he was 'broke' because he had to pay school fees for his children; and she was beaten and battered whenever my father felt really frustrated and depressed.

The highest rank my father got to was the position of a foreman at a corporation until his premature death. Until his death, he had stagnated in that position for many years because he did not have the relevant certificate to enable him to move to the next rank. He was dedicated and he performed his duties and responsibilities with skillful mastery. He desired to further his education but he did not have the means to go back to school, especially as his children were already also in school. The financial burden weighed heavily on him. In dogged determination he actually started a certificate course in accounting when, on one fateful day, as he was going to his evening school from work, he had a ghastly motor accident and met his untimely death.

In addition to joining my mother and my siblings to hawk, I have continually enjoyed scholarships and sponsorships which have given me the added motivation to stay in pursuit of an academic career path. Gaining my first degree cost me my marriage. I suffered accusations, beatings, and battery from my ex-husband beginning from the first day I stepped my feet on campus till I graduated. Two weeks before I graduated I had my second child whose paternity her father denied. She died after one and a half years. She was diagnosed with hydrocephalus and I with the help of my mother and my siblings had to nurse her with our very scarce financial resources. She did not receive good medical care because we could not afford it. Furthermore, I was denied access to my son for seventeen years by his father. They actually moved out of town so I could not reach my son easily. I got my Masters degree on a work-study arrangement. My determination kept me focused on the pursuit of academic excellence for self-actualization, even in the face of glaring discrimination from my friends and colleagues who came from wealthier homes. My schooling experiences were littered with frustrations, lack of confidence, and anger as I continually fought discrimination because of my social class (coming from a low-income family background), my religion (being a Christian in a predominantly Islamic environment), and my ethnic and linguistic background (speaking pidgin English and Hausa[3] while I struggled with trying to be proficient in English language – the language of instruction and the official language).

[3] Hausa is one of the three major languages spoken in Nigeria. It is the predominant language spoken in northern Nigeria by the indigenous people and by most other ethnic groups who have made the north their home. In Zaria particularly, it is the language of the immediate community.

I remember how I began to get "proficient in English". It started at my secondary school where I felt like a misfit. The school, an elitist unity school[4], was started by the Federal Government to foster national integration. It was dominated by the children of the affluent who had good exposure to English language. Anytime I spoke grammatically incorrect sentences (I seldom spoke for fear that I would say the wrong thing), they either went under the desk shouting "arrow" or they doubled over on their stomachs shouting, "Hey, my stomach!!" Everyone in the class understood that this gesture meant that there was some flaw(s) in my speech[5]. However, I was not singled out for ridicule in this manner. It was the class practice and it was done to any and all defaulters. But, because I was already feeling inferior before my peers, I felt the worse hit and was truly embarrassed.

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[4] Unity schools were created by the federal government to foster national unity after the Nigerian Civil War. As such, candidates from across the country were admitted into one of such schools meaning that they had to travel far away from home to come to school. In so doing, they interacted and learned to live with people with different ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds even though most of the students were from wealthy homes. It was logical that they would be from wealthy homes since the schools were very expensive considering that they were run as boarding and model schools. Children from poor homes who got to be in such schools, particularly those from the northern part of the country, often had state scholarships to support them with school fees, purchase of books and writing materials, and their living expenses. Such unity schools were called Federal Government Colleges and were either co-education or single-sex schools.

[5] "Arrow" was the alert they gave to indicate that I had spoken grammatically incorrect sentences in terms of tenses, subject/object subject/verb agreement and the like. For example, they would react in that way if I were to say: "How many peoples are going?" "There are one people in the bus," "I don't know that you say that you will not come yesterday", and "We was coming to meet you when you start to call us on the phone".The impact of my grammatical blunder on my rich classmates who were not only fluent in Englsih language but were often the ones who shouted "arrow" and did all the gestures, is likened to the piercing impact of an arrow on the object it is targeted at. The use of this imagery further reinstated the social inequality that pervaded the school. Each time my classmates performed the gestures of going under their desks it meant that they escaped being hit by the arrow meaning that they were not contaminated by the blunder. But if they shouted "My stomach" then they were hit by the arrow and that meant that the grammatical blunder had a damaging effect on their psyche and their language use from which they had to recover. It was really emabrrasing to have these comments made on me knowing that I already felt inferior and discriminated against seeing that their parents were richer than mine and they had many nice things such as school bags, novels and book wrappers, little toys, stickers, wristwatches, and school shoes that I did not have.

I therefore strove very hard to improve on myself and when I did the stigma vanished. Instead of taking offence or dwelling on the discrimination I felt, I took my lack of proficiency in English language up as a challenge. Initially, I never knew that you read English to know English. I assumed that you just knew English, just as you just know your mother tongue or the language of your immediate community. I never had a reading culture. However, when I had a mere pass in English language in my WAEC[6] examination and I knew I needed a minimum of a credit to fulfill the requirement for English for gaining admission into the university, that was when I read English and then rewrote the examination. This time, I got the credit I needed. In spite of my constant feeling of inferiority, I ended up making a career of English language, determined to use my education to change my social status in life.

My story shows an emphasis on my effort to excel in my schooling endeavors given the socio-economic, ethnic, religious, language, and gender issues that confronted me. It also shows an emphasis on certification, rather than on actual learning.

Defining identity

From my research questions, it is obvious that the concept of identity is germane to this research. Here I want to delineate the way I have used it in this study. I used identity in this work to account for my participants' real selves – the selves I captured at

[6] WAEC is an acronym for West African Examination Council. Students referred to the public examination set by this body as WAEC. It was one of the public examinations meant for standardized testing that every student graduating from form five (the terminal year of secondary education at the time when it ended after five years) had to pass to earn their diploma and to further their education if they wanted to. This same body coordinates the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) now that secondary schools no longer end after five years but after six years. There is now a spilt in secondary education such that the first three years are spent acquiring Junior Secondary School Certificate (JSSC) while the remaining three years are spent to obtain Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSSC).

the point of the interview as they were constructed in language (recognizing the fact that although these women's identities undergo continuous constructions, they were locally constructed during our interactions). My use of identity in this manner is premised on my understanding of Bourdieu's (as cited in Lewis, Encisco & Moje, 2007, p. 6) explanation that individuals possess multiple identities that intersect in complex ways, because identities are constructed through power relationships. He also explains that identities are contested because individuals possess agency. Talking also about agency, Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte Jr., and Cain (1998) explain that the spaces of authoring dimensions of collective life are not predetermined but orchestrated or improvised, thereby yielding human agency. Identity is fore-grounded in the notion that human beings are active agents who play decisive roles in determining the dynamics of social life and in shaping individual activities (Sfard & Prusak, 2005).

I analyzed how agentic my participants were in their language, as they told the story of how they went against the odds that came against them as they did or did not do school.

To also help me foreground my conceptualization of identity as a concept, I relied on Vygotsky and Bakhtin's talk about identity and agency as a process. They saw speech, language, literature, and art as the pivotal media through which consciousness and subjectivity develop (as cited in Holland et al., 1998). Holland and Lave (2001), Bauman (1996), and Roth (2004) also think of identity as human-made and as constantly created and re-created in interactions between people. Identity is collectively shaped rather than given. It originates in daily activities and in the "experience of engagement" (Sfard & Prusak, 2005 p. 17).

I have delineated my use of identity and the nature of this qualitative research in this manner in order to call to question the issue of generalization and transferability of the findings of this research. This work is not about generalization. It is about pointing out the nuances, the complexities and the complications inherent in the stories women tell about their schooling experiences, so as to draw attention to the way women's education is talked about and planned for and the necessary changes that should be made.

I discuss in this work the way that my participants' identities were constructed and co-constructed in the figured worlds of their homes and their schools because of the relationships they had and the interactions they engaged in. Holland et al. (1998) explain that people never inhabit only one figured world. Identities are ways of figuring the interfaces among figured worlds, the politics of positioning, and spaces of authoring dimensions of collective life. The figured world is figured through language, images, and other objectifications like body postures, the use of colors, and so on. They explain that the politics of positioning is inextricably linked to power, status, and rank, having to do with entitlement to social and material resources and so to the higher deference, respect, and legitimacy accorded to those genders, races, ethnic groups, castes, and sexualities privileged by society. My participants constructed their identities as they tried to make sense of their world and their realities, and they had their identities co-constructed through the socialization process they went through and their interactions with people. Identity is linked to the activity of communication, conceived broadly as including self-dialogue – that is, thinking (Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Gee, 2001; Gonzales, 1999; Holland et al., 1998; Hall, 1996). Also, collective discourses shape personal worlds and individual

voices combine into the voice of a community.

The issue of reification is germane to any discussion about identity. Identities are discursive counterparts of one's lived experience. Sfard and Prusak (2005, p. 16) explain that in almost any social situation in modern societies, including institutional, means are employed to reify "who a person is" such as grades, test results, certificates, passports, diagnoses, licenses, diplomas, titles, and ranks. They define identities as "collections of stories about persons or, more specifically, as those narratives about individuals that are reifying, endorsable, and significant". According to them, "the reifying quality comes with the use of verbs such as *be, have or can* rather than *do*, and with the adverbs *always, never, usually,* and so forth, that stress repetitiveness of actions" (p. 16). Also, Sfard and Prusak (2005) explain that when identities are reified they are presented in two ways: actual and designated identities. Actual identities are usually told in present tense and formulated as factual assertions. For example, "I am a good driver".

Designated identities are stories believed to have the potential to become a part of one's actual identity. They can be recognized by their use of the future tense or words that express wish, commitment, obligation, or necessity, such as *should, ought, have to , must, want, can, cannot,* and so forth. For example, "I want to be a doctor". Designated identities are not a matter of deliberate rational choice (p. 18). Designated identities give direction to one's actions and influence one's deeds to a great extent, sometimes in ways that escape any rationalization. A perceived persistent gap between actual and designated identities, especially if it involves critical elements, is likely to generate a sense of unhappiness (p. 18). Designated identity is more inert and less context-dependent than

actual identities. It is neither inborn nor entirely immutable. It is created from narratives that are floating around. One individual cannot count as the sole author even of those stories that sound as if nobody has told them before. Designated identities are coauthored by the people to whom our stories are told and those who tell stories about us, as well as stories about others. Whether a story told by somebody else does or does not make it into one's own designated identity depends, among other things, on how significant the storyteller is in the eyes of the identified person. According to Sfard and Prusak (2005), significant narrators, the owners of the most influential voices, are carriers of those cultural messages that will have the greatest impact in one's actions (p. 18). So, in this work, I explain the way my participants express their future hopes and aspirations through their designated identities.

When I tell the stories of how my participants struggle with balancing their commitment to education, their ethnic group, and preference for Islamiyya education[7] vis-à-vis their quest for western education, I talk about their shifting identities as identities that have been socially constructed and which happen in social practice. Holland et al. (1998) insist that identities are unfinished and in process in relation to historically specific contexts. According to them, identities are antiessentialist and socially constructed. They happen in social practice and they come to bear the marks of these contexts and their politics. Holland et al. (1998) talk about how identities are sometimes censored or suppressed. They explain that identities form on intimate and

[7] Islamiyya education is obtained from Islamiyya and Qur'anic schools and it is an alternative and/or complementary to western education, designed by Muslims and for Muslims. I say more about the various types and the complexities involved in the way islamiyya schools operate in subsequent chapters in this work.

social landscapes through time. They also emphasize the importance of culture in contextualizing human behavior with the situating power of social position. They articulate the relation of person and society by drawing attention to both social life and the psyche sites, or moments, of the production and reproduction of social practices. For Holland et al. (1998), this means that identity is one way of naming the dense interconnections between the intimate and public venues of social practice.

An overview of the Nigerian educational system

An understanding of the Nigerian educational system is crucial for following the discussion in this study. Egwu (2009, p. 6) describes the three levels of education in Nigeria as follows:

a) The basic sub-sector comprising three years early childhood care and development, six years primary schools, three years junior secondary schools, and nomadic and adult literacy directed at nomadic and migrant children, mass literacy, as well as the almajirais and other vulnerable and excluded groups. The affairs of this sub-sector are coordinated by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE), and National Mass Education Commission (NMEC).

b) The post-basic including senior secondary schools, technical colleges, vocational enterprise institutions, vocational schools, and open apprenticeship centers.

c) The tertiary consisting of universities, polytechnics/monotechnics, colleges of education, and innovation enterprise institutions. The supervisory bodies which coordinate the activities for this level of education include: the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).

He explains that the Federal Ministry of Education is the organ of Government charged with the overall responsibility for laying down national policies and guidelines for uniform standards of education as enshrined in various statutory instruments, including the *1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* (FRN) and the *National Policy*

on Education (NPE). Because the education sector is on the Concurrent Legislative List, Egwu (2009) explains, it is a shared responsibility of the Federal, States, and Local Government. As a result there exists, according to him, a plethora of stakeholders including policy formulators, examination bodies, and the like who work together to give direction to the sector.

Basic education is, under normal circumstances, for children between the ages of three and fourteen and it is free and compulsory by law. But in practice all kinds of levies are charged in various schools to aid with the provision of basic infrastructure as a result of the inadequate funding that, among other issues, bedevil these schools. Post-basic education is received after successful completion of nine years basic education and passing a Basic Education Certificate Examination. Thereafter the student proceeds to a 3-year Senior Secondary School or a 3-year Technical College. For the purpose of maintaining standards, nationwide qualifying examinations are held each year to determine how a student transitions from Primary School to Junior Secondary School (JSS), from JSS to Senior Secondary School (SSS) and form SSS to tertiary institutions. The major examinations are: National Common Entrance Examination, Federal and State Junior Secondary Examination and Senior Secondary School Examination set by three major examination bodies: West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), and National Business and Technical Certificate Examinations (NABTEC) . Tertiary education is obtained by choice after successful completion of post-basic education. For admission into tertiary institutions, candidates have to pass the University Matriculation Examination (UME) organized by Joint

Admission and Matriculation Examination Board and the post-UME organized by the various institutions in addition to having a credit in English language and mathematics. In the rest of this work I use acronyms to refer to these bodies and institutions.

Chapter outline

This work has ten chapters in all. Chapter Two reviews related literature to establish the gap that my research fills in the study of women's education in northern Nigeria and the different viewpoint that I bring to this issue.

Chapter Three captures my research design and my research process, showing the power dynamics that played out between my research participants and me as well as the way I was positioned as an insider/outsider researcher. In this chapter I also talk about the dilemma of reporting this kind of research, that is whether to go about it thematically, talking across my participants, or telling and analyzing their individual stories.

Beginning with Chapter Four through Chapter Nine, I share my participants' stories and how they represent the various perspectives that they bring to this research on schooling and what it means for them to go to school. There is no single story about why northern Nigerian women drop out of school and why they do not pursue career paths. While Chapters Four to Eight tell the stories of women who have remained resilient and stayed on in school, Chapter Nine tells the story of two women who dropped out of school, but who are agentic in their present predicament in expressing their desire to return to school.

Chapter Four tells Adama's story to show how social inequities playing out in schools affect the way she does school. In Chapter Five, I tell Safiya and Hannatu's

stories to portray the way their schooling experiences, which are already influenced by their poverty, are further complicated by their being trafficked[8] in exchange for an opportunity to go to school and to experience city life.

I tell Farida's story in Chapter Six to show the intersections between Islamiyya and western education and the dilemma that she experiences in making a choice between both options. Chapter Seven tells Samira's story, which explores how she was positioned to make a choice between Islamiyya and western education. She struggled with wanting to conform to the dominant western form of education, particularly in relation to being proficient in the English language.

Chapter Eight tells Hauwa's story and the manner in which, in exercising her power of agency to pursue western education, she seems to go against the grain of cultural practices entrenched in the people's traditional and religious practices.

Chapter Nine extends themes from Hauwa's story and explores the complexity and divided loyalties of pursuing western education and conforming to the people's traditional and religious practices. Kubra and Kuluwa's stories help us understand how early marriage encourages northern Nigerian women to drop out of school. I explore the manner in which they perform gender to show their preference for western education, even in their present state of "being left behind".

The concluding chapter, Chapter Ten, is my overarching chapter, where I discuss aspects of my findings about these borderland (Anzaldua, 1987) women that are especially striking to me and discuss the implications of this research for educators and

[8] The word 'trafficked' is used to denote being placed in a position of forced labor. I provide a specific definition of the way I have used the word in my dissertation in Chapter Five.

policy makers.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

To establish the significance of this research I begin by reviewing literature on women's education in Nigeria tracing it to its historical foundation prior to colonialism. In addition to discussing the current emphasis given to women's education both by the government and other international partners and civil society, I draw attention to the gaps that provide justification for my research. In this second section, I consider postcolonial theory and show how invaluable it is to this qualitative research on schooling and what it means to northern Nigerian women. Just like the literature on women's education, this theory provides me with lenses for reading my participants' stories and making sense of them. It allows me to understand the women's values, their views, and their interests as human beings.

Contextualizing women's education

I discuss the history of women's education in Nigeria to contextualize my overarching research question: *What does schooling mean to northern Nigerian women?* This is significant because my perception is that this will elucidate the way my participants perceive what schooling means to them and my interpretation of their perceptions, as well as provide a basis for the solution that I proffer at the end of this work.

During the pre-colonial times: the era of traditional education

The history of women's education is traceable to the history of the development of education in Nigeria. Fafunwa (1987), Esu and Junaid, (2005), and Mkpa, (n.d.) explain that long before colonialism other forms of education existed in what in the end became the nation of Nigeria, including traditional education and Islamic education (also known as Qur'anic education). They explain that traditional education was for the induction of members of the society into activities and modes of thought that they felt were crucial and germane to the invaluable roles they performed in the society. This kind of education thrived in oral forms because it was rooted in the rich cultural heritage of the people and was preserved and transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation. Many people have variously referred to this kind of education as indigenous, pre-colonial, informal or even community-based. In most cases "students" graduated from childhood to adulthood through certain prescribed initiation rites and designated adult members of the society were the teachers in such "schools" where the "curriculum" embraced all aspects of human endeavor including "mental broadening, physical fitness, moral uprightness, religious deference to good social adjustment and interaction (Esu & Junaid, 2010).

Mkpa (n.d.) explicates that as far back as when traditional education was practiced, subjects were taught according to the people's sex roles and according to geographical locations. So, in addition to farming, trading, craftwork, fishing, cattle rearing, wine tapping, traditional medicine, and blacksmithing, boys engaged in such training activities as sitting quietly beside their fathers at meetings and listening

attentively to learn the process of such tasks and skills as arbitration of cases, oratory, wise sayings, and use of proverbs, thereby stimulating their sense of rationality. Girls, on the other hand, were often expected to stay back at home to learn domestic and other chores such as cooking, sweeping, weeding the farmlands, hair weaving, and decorations of the body, dye production, and the like from their mothers. Mkpa (n.d.) explained further that they did whatever their mothers trained them to do.

During the pre-colonial times: the era of Islamic education

Specific to Islamic education, Mkpa (n.d.) traces the development of Islamic education to the early 14th century when Islam was brought into Hausa land (now northern Nigeria) by traders and scholars who came from Wangarewa to Kano during the reign of Ali Yaji (1349 – 1385). Fafunwa (1987) traces this first penetration of Islam to what is now known as northern Nigeria to the 11th century, claiming that Umme Jilmi (1005 – 1097) was the first Kanem (in Borno Empire – which is also part of what eventually became northern Nigeria) to accept Islam. Subsequentl rulers such as Dunama 1 (1097 – 1150) and Dunama 11 (1221 – 1259) continued the tradition of Islamic learning such that by the end of the 13th century, Kanem had become a center of Islamic learning.

According to Mkpa (n.d.), much of Islamic learning included the learning of Arabic, the language of the Qur'an which is also recognized as a language of great spiritual value. As a result of the political and social influence which Islam and Quranic learning conferred on those who possessed it, many rulers employed Islamic scholars as administrators. The Jihad by Uthman Dan Fodio that began in Gobir in 1804 helped to

revive, spread, and consolidate Islamic studies and extend access to education to women and to what later became the southern states of Nigeria. With the spread of Islam, Islamic education came to be seen as part of the religious duties of the child. Children learned one or more chapters of the Qur'an before they were five or six years old. Subjects learned included Arabic alphabet, the ability to read and copy texts in the language, as well as texts required for daily prayers.

In such Qur'anic schools, learning took place under a tree, on a thoroughfare, or in a local mosque under the tutelage of Mallams or Ulamas who specialized in religious learning and teaching. This learning was considered elementary and it was the most widespread. Later on the study of the meanings of the Arabic texts, grammar, syntax, arithmetic, algebra, logic, rhetoric, jurisprudence, and theology were added requiring specialized teachers to handle them at the advanced level. After this level, students traditionally went on to some of the famous centers of learning.

Western education was introduced to northern Nigeria after Lugard's declaration policy on northern education in 1902 which, according to Fafunwa (1987), stated that "the Christian missions should direct their attention to the non-Muslim areas of the north" (p. 101). In Zaria, the Hausa Mission was established by the Christian Missionary Society (C.M.S.) and the types of schools established were called 'Home Schools' and they were for ex-slaves and children of ex-slaves. Miller also established secular schools for educating the mallams (teachers of Qur'anic education) and the chiefs' sons in 1907. But these schools failed because of their all-consuming preoccupation with the conversion to Christianity of the northern Nigerians (p. 105). Fafunwa (1987) explains

that from 1900 to 1914 the missions continued to be the only agency to establish schools in non-Muslim areas of the north (p. 108). However, after the political amalgamation of the north and the south of the Colony in1914 more schools both mission schools and secular schools were not only established but regulations were laid down on their operations and how they should be funded.

It was after this period that northern leaders like Abdullahi Bayero, the Emir of Kano, built a Law school in 1934 for the teaching of Islamic subjects and Arabic as well as English and arithmetic. This school later became the present Bayero University which helped to expand the scope of Islamic studies in Nigeria. Many more formal Muslim schools set up and run on European lines were established in almost all major cities of the country. In *History of Education in Nigeria* (1987), the claim is made that most of such schools catered for the children of devout and wealthy Islamic followers who wished to have their children educated in the new and necessary European learning, but within a fairly religious context. These kinds of Islamiyya schools were in existence before the government took over private and parochial schools in the mid-1970s. However, since 1990 the government has continued to support the existence and operations of such schools.

There is not much literature on the way women were positioned during this initial phase of Islamic education. Most of the literature I consulted discussed the place of women during the establishment of western education and after pointing out the issue of gender disparity as discussed in the subsequent section.

Education gap between the north and south of Nigeria during the colonial era

Lemu (2002) explains that Christian missionaries were allowed by the British colonial power to set up mission schools in the south from the early days, and government schools were generally Christian-oriented. In the north, however, the northern emirates – the legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate established during the Uthman Dan Fodio Jihad - withstood colonial incursion until they were overpowered through military conquest. When the British took over, they operated the Indirect Rule system of government which meant that local government was left in the hands of the traditional chiefs (emirs) subject to the guidance of European officers. This meant that the European officers minimally interefed with local customes. A few modern government schools and teachers colleges were then established where Islamic studies along with other subjects was taught. The teachers who taught Islamic studies were almost always the product of Qur'anic schools and the syllabus emphasized memorization of the Qur'an and hadith, and fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence, the articles of faith, and basic moral education). However, Lemu (2002) explains, there were many other places, particularly in the remote rural areas, where Christianity and western education were embraced earlier through the educational and evangelical activities of Christian missionaries. Wusasa in Zaria town is one such place. (I say more on this in my methodology chapter where I describe my research site).

Explaining further on the way formal education was established in the north, Fafunwa (1987) and Ottaway (1970) said that because formal education style was

brought by Christian missionaries who did not hide the fact that their primary mission was to Christianize Nigeria, a lot of the people in the north treated western education as something dysfunctional, alien, and threatening to their religion and culture and therefore resisted it. Particularly among the illiterates, this fear that education will expose their children to alien Christian influences is still lingering (Niles, 2001).

Gender disparity and formal schooling: Tracing the origin and explaining the current state of affairs

Sambo (2008) asserts that, particularly in the northern states, girls' access to basic education has continued to be abysmally low despite government's efforts towards addressing the issue through various policies, programs and innovations. According to him, in Kaduna State, where Zaria, my research site is located, there has been a steep increase in primary school enrolment since the introduction of the UBE program, but the percentage of female enrolment is still low. Umar (2008) provides the following data on gender: the imbalance in enrolment figures of girls when compared to that of boys is about 10% in the south and as much as 40% in the northern states; an estimated 10 million Nigerian children of primary school age are not enrolled in primary school and about 6.2 million (60%) of these are girls; this represents a number of enrollment of 74% for boys and 56% for girls leading to a gender gap of 18% on the average; and this figure is as high as 48% in some of the northern states specially in Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, Niger, Jigawa, Kano, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, Borno, Adamawa, Taraba, and Nasarawa states.

The issue of gender disparity, as far as formal schooling in northern Nigeria is concerned, is traced to the manner in which formal schools were established. From the

onset, as Lemu (2002) explains, most of the schools that were established were single sex schools. Niles (2001) also explains that formal education was introduced considerably later for girls than for boys (1929 compared to 1912). He explained further that the belief was that women are the embodiment of Islamic values and custodians of Islamic morality and should therefore be guarded against the corruption of unsuitable schooling. This, according to him, plus the Islamic injunction that restrains the mingling of women with men, made parents, especially mothers, not to send their daughters to school. Parents objected to co-educational institutions and to male teachers teaching their daughters. Some parents also believed that going to school led their daughters to different sorts of misbehavior such as laziness, insolence, and loss of interest in their role as housewives. They felt that education made girls unsuitable as wives and mothers and that it would lead to moral laxity in behavior. Men generally did not want to marry educated girls because of a fear that they would demand more freedom and be opposed to the men taking other wives.

Consequently, from the beginning, most girls did not have access to western education. Gender and class differentials have persisted with women being fewer than men and most of these few women were drawn from the "more privileged elements of society" (Pittin, 2007). Pittin (2007) explains further that as a result of the Indirect Rule, formal education was not only situated in urban centers, thereby denying the rural women access, it was also controlled by the ruling elites who privileged daughters of the palace and the aristocracy and those of other clients associated with feudal dependency relations. According to him, the ideology of "domestication" within the context of minimal literacy

and numeracy upheld by the British government also contributed to relegating women to the background. Usman (2006) explains how women got to be relegated to the background. She said that more often than not, girls in the north engaged in house trade for their mothers or guardians who were in seclusion, and who depended on these girls' assistance in order to be economically empowered. They engaged in domestic labor in including the care of younger siblings. She stays at home while the boy gets education so that he can gain access to waged labor or higher education.

Muhammad (2008) explains that "the low female ratio at the primary level in northern states has a female multiplier effect on the rate at which females in these states partake in the next phase of education" (p. 12). She explains that there is a low transition rate of the girl-child from primary to secondary level. This is because the number of available post-primary schools is insufficient to absorb all the primary school leavers. Another reason she gave for this low transition rate is the fact that these girls tend to terminate their education at the primary school level to go into vocations and early marriages (p. 14). The resultant effect of all these, according to him, is that there is a lower level of transition to tertiary level coupled with low performance in public examinations. Consequently, the admission rate of northerners in tertiary institutions has been affected. Northerners are hardly able to fill their quota in the colleges, polytechnics, and universities in general and female entrants more so (p. 16).

The role of international partners in women's education: A historical perspective beginning from the colonial past to the present day

In 1877, the colonial government granted the first grant-in-aid of £200 to each of the three missionary bodies that began education work in the Lagos Colony: the Anglican

Church Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Methodists, and the Roman Catholic Missions. The most significant milestone in the financing of education in Nigeria by this government was made in the 1944 10-year Educational Development Plan where increased subventions were to be made to the missions and other voluntary educational bodies (Adesua, 1981).

Then with the Ashby Commission Report of 1960, a more systematic approach to financing education took place. The report stipulated the justification for this approach – in order to produce the necessary manpower required for resources development. Further to this report some development plans were embarked upon in the nation thus: The First National Development Plan (1962 – 1968) concerned with the development of high level manpower and mass literacy and the Second National Development Plan (1970 – 1974) concerned more with the 3Rs – Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, and Reconciliation since it was embarked upon after the Nigerian Civil War. Within the period of the First and Second National Development Plans, external aid was received in form of technical experts from friendly countries. Institutions were established at the expense of these friendly countries and counterpart training programs were provided. Donations of equipment and supplementation of income of overseas staff were also made. The UPE was introduced during the Third National Development Plan (1975 – 1980) and universities were expanded from 6 to 13. Then, in the Fourth National Development Plan (1981 – 1985), a purposeful attempt was made to raise the quality and relevance of education at all levels.

The World Bank played a crucial role in the financing of these development plans. Its role in the development of education in Nigeria dates back to 1953 when the McPherson Constitution (1951) and the colonial Education Act Number 17 of 1952 were in operation (Subbarao, Raney, Dundar, & Haworth, 1994). Babalola, Sikwibele, and Suleiman (2000) provide a historical documentation of the World Bank Projects in Nigeria, the amount they cost and what they were meant to be used for. They also criticize the projects as dictating Nigerian education policy and that such external control does not make for effective education policy since it does not allow Nigeria to determine her own education policy. For example, they explain that the first education project supported financially by the World Bank in Nigeria was the US $20.1 million credit agreement spanning the period March 1, 1965 to December 31, 1977. It was meant to increase secondary school enrollments, particularly, in northern Nigeria; diversify the secondary school curriculum; increase the number of secondary and technical teachers; and to train craftsmen and technicians. Babalola et al. (2000) opine that "*the role of the World Bank during this period can be seen as part of a continuing effort that began during colonialism, in which the West dictated what Africans learned and how it was done*" (p. 2). They argue that:

> *many years of World Bank assistance to education in Nigeria have yielded very poor results. The World Bank Projects in Nigeria have hitherto been characterized by inequity in allocation, and lack of effectiveness and continuity. Unfortunately, these externally imposed programs have been implemented at a significant cost to future generations of Nigerians who are expected to repay the huge debt accumulated in the process*. (p. 5)

In explaining how World Bank assistance to education has been characterized by inequity in allocation Babalola et al. (2000) explain that the north is favored against the south and adduce the following reasons for this favoritism at least at the initial stage:

> 1) The World Bank might have been using aid to bait the northern states to accept western/European education which was initially resisted by them; and
>
> 2) The aid might have been a kind of compensation for their political will to adopt donor-driven educational priorities. (p. 2)

According to them, as a corollary, the neglect of the west might have been an effort to discourage the promotion, by western policymakers, of UPE, which the World Bank did not support. They are not opposed to the use of World Bank funds but what they insist upon is that:

> *efforts must be made to ensure equity, efficiency, and effectiveness in loan allocation and management. There is need to increase local capacity, so that individual communities can set and defend their own priorities and manage the funds efficiently and equitably. That is, perhaps, the only way through which these projects can have positive effect on communities in Nigeria*. (p. 6)

From the foregoing, it is clear that the Nigerian government's efforts towards improving education in Nigeria have since colonial times been situated within the larger context of the influence of superpowers on her own aspirations.

In more recent years, the concern of the world powers is with the liberation of the totality of human beings; a concern that is popularly expressed in the parlance of democracy. Consequently, Pan- African specialized educational agencies, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, DFID, and British Council, have been put in place as pace makers

and standard setters. This is because education is perceived as very germane in bringing about social integration and sustainable development. They argue that developing countries that invest more in 'human development' record greater rate of national development than others; no major industrial revolution can take place where there is ignorance, disease, and poverty. Consequently, the Nigerian government has generated educational plans to suit these world concerns. It is within this drive for democracy that the issue of gender inequality, as far as access to western education is concerned, is addressed.

Anikweze (1995) explains further that the Nigerian government's efforts towards improving education lines up with the aspirations of the superpowers for universalized education in order to make the world a global village through easy communication and interaction, unimpeded by illiteracy, disease, and poverty. Consequently, in1990, Nigeria adopted a new slogan of "Education for All By the Year 2000" just like "Health for All By the Year 2000" and "Housing for All By the Year 2000", suggesting the beginning of the 21st century as the celebrated wonder year for complete achievements. This slogan was birthed from the World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand, from 5th to 9th March, 1990, where war was declared against illiteracy, disease and poverty – the triune indices of ignorance and superstition.

Nigeria came up with policies regarding access to primary education, adult literacy, and non-formal education, aspects which are involved in the provision of education for all, in order to justify her involvement in the Jomtien Declaration. Anikweze (1995) perceives this education as one that is expected to cultivate dispositions

in terms of developed abilities, acquired skills, broadened knowledge, enlightened beliefs, desirable attitudes, cherished values, and admirable character traits. By implication, therefore, education for all calls for a crusade against all forces that deter accelerated national development in line with the Federal Government's description of education as the instrument per excellence for effecting national development (NPE, 2004, p. 3). This development ramifies scientific and technological advancement, socio-cultural development, industrial revolution, commercial evolution, political statesmanship, high standard of living, enhanced health status through medical advancement, population education, environmental control, and sanitary engineering, gender balance and female empowerment, and other aspects of civilization and modernization. Consequently, the National Council of Education approved a 9-year compulsory education program starting in 1992 and aimed at ensuring equity in access to education and simultaneously dealing with the problem of drop-outs.

Before the slogan "Education for All", the Nigerian government had made two attempts at improving the quality of education in the country. The first was to make education free and compulsory via Universal Primary Education (UPE). The UPE commenced in 1976 and was made compulsory in 1979 by the then Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon. The program failed in the end because it was "neither universal, nor free, nor still compulsory" (Dauda, 2000, p. 11). The Universal Basic Education program was the second attempt by the government of Nigeria to make its citizens literate. One of the cardinal goals of this program was to inculcate communicative

competence in the Nigerian citizenry such that they have mastery of language, so that they are able to use it efficiently and appropriately in a variety of situations.

Muhammad (2008) provides more information on the role of UNICEF in Nigeria. According to her, UNICEF has been working in Nigeria since 1953 to support the government to implement programs and policies towards realizing children's rights. Specific to girls' education, the FGN/UNICEF cooperation program works on women's and girls' education towards effective education for women. In some few states in the north including Bauchi, Niger, Kaduna, Kano, and Benue, edicts have been promulgated banning the withdrawal of girls from school for marriage. Free education has been provided for girls in some states up to secondary school level. The first action was geared towards the complete elimination of gender disparity in secondary education by 2005, while the second was to achieve a 100% transition rate by the same year. To this intent, they initiated the mobilization and sensitization of communities and relevant agencies for enrolment drive to be carried out by the State Ministries of Education (MOE), Local Government Areas (LGAs), traditional and emirate councils, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), community leaders and the mass media. Muhammad (2008) observes that these targets have not been achieved within the time frame. She opines that the abysmally low enrollment and retention of girl-child education threatens the realization of UBE, EFA, MDGs, and the President Yar' Adua's seven-point agenda. Many of her recommendations were re-echoed in Egwu's (2009) Roadmap, which I talk about below.

In a press release by Jaulmes and Njoku (2005), UNICEF announced that it had supported the "25 of 2005" global initiative for the acceleration of girls' education in order to achieve gender parity in 25 countries, including Nigeria, by 2005. They also announced that in 2003, the Ministry of Education adopted the Strategy for Accelerating Girls Education in Nigeria. Furthermore, in 2004, the Ministry also launched the Girls' Education Project supported by UNICEF and DFID, in order to focus interventions on states with the lowest enrolment rate for girls. They also reported that the collaborative efforts made by government, civil society, and development partners have yielded results, especially in the southern part of the country, as well as in pilot projects in northern states. They also reported that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Commission has been implementing projects that provide more schools, better qualified teachers and gender sensitive textbooks and curriculum. Additionally, they recommended that the UBE Act by all states should reflect the customs, traditions, and lifestyles of the people and that it be translated in very concrete programs in order to create the proper environment at the state levels where the bulk of these interventions are most required.

Sambo (2008) recounts the measures that Kaduna State government made towards addressing the problem of girl-child education:

1) Free and compulsory education is being seriously enforced.
2) The provision of free textbooks and uniforms.
3) The government has also directed that under no circumstance should a child be sent out of school for non-payment of any levies.
4) Intensive public enlightenment through religious, traditional, and community leaders.

5) Formation and inauguration of Basic Education Monitoring Committees (BEMCs) at constituency levels whose role among others is to ensure that gender disparity in schools is minimized.

Civil societies have also worked relentlessly to complement government efforts towards enhancing women's empowerment and gender equality. They operate through non-governmental organizations. They provide platforms for the advancement of gender balance through popular education and empowerment, social mobilization and sensitization not only of women but also the government and the general public on the need to formulate and implement gender-friendly policies. They are also to champion the struggle to externalize the struggle, linking the local to the global in the gender discourse through effectively built partnerships and networks among the local NGOs, harmonizing their views and positions to articulate alternative perspectives on the way forward Karunwi (2004).

In 2006, a national gender policy was formulated which among other issues touched on women's education. The Strategy for the Acceleration of Girls' Education (SAGEN+) reinforced by the new Girls' Education Project (GEP) have also been developed. Some states in northern Nigeria have promulgated edicts to support the promotion of girls' education (Obaji, 2005).

In the last 15 years, the proliferation of Qur'anic and Islamiyya schools, which provide alternative or a compliment to the teaching content in public schools, have also been encouraged. According to Lemu (2008), in many of these schools, there is no need to worry about the girl-child. The girl-child is on the average more serious about her studies than the boy child and the girls win the most prizes on Speech Day. They take it

for granted that they will proceed to the university. The problem she points out, however, is found mainly in the rural areas and to a lesser extent among the poor in the towns.

Recently, Egwu (2009) presented a roadmap for the Nigerian education sector for phased and systematic implementation of reforms at the basic, post-basic, and tertiary education sub-sectors which he referred to as "an intervention designed to expedite action towards the attainment of the 7 point Adenda [of President Yar'Adua], Vision 20-2020 as well as key international development goals of EFA and MDGs" (p. 2). His roadmap "charts the course strategies to reactivate some crucial aspects of the education system which tend to be moribund … it contains the proposed turn-around intervention in four priority areas of Access and Equity, Standard and Quality Assurance, Technical and Vocational Education and Funding, Resource Mobilization and Utilization" (p. 4). It is "designed to transform schools and institutions in Nigeria into high performing schools that produce high achieving, functional and self reliant students" (p. 8). According to Egwu (2009), the proposed implementation model will use a representative sample of schools and institutions as demonstration sites and centers of excellence to be replicated over time by states. He said that a critical success factor of the Roadmap is the effective collaboration among all stakeholders.

The gaps

The foregoing historical account of both Nigerian education and women's education shows the ongoing relationship between education and politics, which, in my opinion, has many implications for why education in general and women's education in particular have continued to remain inadequate in spite of all the huge investments

stakeholders are making. Here I point out the gaps that this literature illuminates by first commenting specifically on the more recent works – Egwu's (2009) Roadmap for the Education Sector and the role of UNICEF in girl-child education. Second, I highlight the gap in the way the promotion of literacy has been approached throughout the development of education in Nigeria. Third, I draw attention to the neglect to deeply explore the complexities and complications inherent in schools. Lastly, I bring to light the lack of clear distinction between the problem of girl-child education and women's education and the neglect to address the peculiarities of the education needs of women within the ages of 18 and 30.

In his Roadmap, Egwu (2009) draws attention to women's issues when he re-examines the crises in the education sector placing more emphasis on access and equity, quality assurance, technical and vocational education and training and funding. In his call for reform, he draws close attention on the issue of implementation. Adibe (2009) commends Egwu (2009) for his roadmap as a necessary bold step, but posits that what is needed is a re-invention of the educational system. Adibe (2009) criticizes Egwu's (2009) work and I agree with him that it, like most others, draws attention to structural issues and not to the nuances that dictate these issues – For instance, it is not enough to point to poverty as a major impediment. The question should be how is poverty implicated in the teaching and learning process and what can be done about it at that level?

Also, Egwu (2009) needed to draw attention not just to the fact of unemployment as a crisis but to how the teaching and learning process can create independent creative thinkers who in turn can be innovative and inventive enough as to create jobs rather than

seek employment. It is not enough to recognize religious and cultural differences and to encourage specialized schools or even what he calls “performance schools”, when what we need to address is how issues of power and identity are addressed in such schools such that the students’ voices are heard and their sense of humanness is celebrated. Egwu (2009) recommends that these performance schools be situated in both the urban and the rural areas. To do this is to perpetuate societal inequities which no doubt will be manifest in the operations of these special schools because of the influence of differential access to education among the different geographical areas of the country. Furthermore, Egwu’s (2009) work does not address the way these issues will be tackled to eliminate difference.

As regards the more recent work of international partners on women’s education, particularly through the efforts of UNICEF, it is obvious that the political agenda of the international stakeholders is to extend the dominance of the west, even though their investments in Nigerian education are highly commendable. Their efforts are not geared towards helping these women make meaning of their world. They position the women as vulnerable and susceptible to their philanthropic good will so that they might be able to fulfill their political agenda of democracy. This is why their investments are largely on structures and high school enrollment rather than on the people and their social needs. This rationale for women’s education has continued to dominate policy strategies for womens’ education in the country. It is for similar reasons that Babalola et al. (2000) and Robinson-Pant (2004) criticize World Bank projects in Nigeria and Nepal respectively.

The quantitative data international partners collect using surveys, quantitative-type interviews, and questionnaires do not expose the nuances that the women grapple

with. Here is how Jualmes (2007) reports the findings of one such study. Talking about Jamila a twelve–year-old girl, she reports that the girl said:

> *I dropped out of school in 2003 when I was in class two […]. I left because I didn't have a school uniform. My mother wanted me to work to make some money so that hopefully one day we can afford the uniform again.*

Another girl, Wasila, a 10-year-old girl was reported to have said:

> *My parents asked me to drop out and work so that I can support them […]. I was not happy and didn't like it so much so that I almost felt I had a fever.*

Naturally, with this kind of data, UNICEF, through the Girls Education Project, distributed free learning materials in more than 700 schools in northern Nigeria. In so doing, according to Jaulmes (2007), they lifted a big financial problem for such families. Jaulmes (2007) announced further that Wasila's school was reconstructed by the state government providing water pumps and separate latrines for boys and girls. Teachers also benefitted, receiving extra training. In response to these interventions, Jaulmes (2007) reports that Wasila now appreciates the importance of education and her parents are satisfied at her academic achievements and progress. She is now a good role model to her younger brother who began to ask that he too should be taken to school.

The problem with this kind of research is the emphasis it places on increased enrolment and the provisions of infrastructures for women's schooling ignoring to address the fundamental issues that hinder the process of these women's schooling. It is obvious that poverty is a major challenge for both Jamila and Wasila and what should be done is to challenge the structures that perpetuate social inequality rather than providing

for their immediate schooling needs. After this stage, they are bound to face more financial challenges, what will happen at that point? That is the question that needs to be addressed. If the kind of questions that the women were asked addressed these nuances, they would have had answers that would be appropriate to addressing their concerns in a different manner than as presented in these cases. Also, the tendency to generalize these women's cases as representative of those of the generality of the other women who were not interviewed negates the question of difference and reintstates universalism thereby encouraging a top-to-bottom approach to solving the problem and ignoring the women's views, opinions, and perspectives.

Another problem in the way women's education was introduced is the emphasis on the improvement of literacy skills in order to fulfill the colonial agenda of producing manpower for the low cadre jobs.This goal has not been changed even today. The goal even as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (2004) is to inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively. Non-dominant literacy practices and prior knowledge that these women bring into the learning process are ignored. Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005) explain that schooling is a social process and students' learning is bound within larger contextual, historical, political, and ideological frameworks that affect their lives. They insist that the better way to engage students is to draw them in with knowledge that is already familiar to them and to use that as a basis for pushing learning. In so doing, they argue, it will be possible to develop a composite and multidimensional image of the range of possible funds of knowledge.

Another gap I noticed in the literature on women's education in Nigeria is the fact that they ignore the complexities and complications inherent in schools that hinge on issues of ethnicity, class, religion, and other forms of diversities. Ogbu (1981, 1983, 1986, 1987, 1991, and 1992), for instance, through his numerous ethnographic works in education was notable for his call to the need to understand race and ethnic differences in education. He stressed the importance of students' own cultural practices and group identity to their school experience drawing attention to the issues of racism and economic marginalization.

Dei (2005), situating his analysis within the African context, Ghana specifically, expands this complication in schooling to include issues of ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, and class. In his article, he insists that there is a need for Africans to search for genuine educational options or alternatives; an education that can meet the challenge of equitable minority education by acknowledging difference, while highlighting commonalities even among people of conflicting interests. He insists that transformation in education must begin to address that which is dominating: the internal problems of discrimination, prejudice, bias, and alienation within schools, as well as emphasizing social and cultural values that promote alternative readings of the world (p. 284). In recognition of difference he advocates inclusive education.

Brenner (2001) analyzes the nature of Islamic knowledge and the conditions of its transmission as she interrogates the complexities involved in interrelationship between religion, power, and schooling in Mali, a West African Muslim society. She draws attention to the claim that the greatest impact of western schooling in many parts of sub-

Saharan Africa has been the creation of new forms of social inequity and new techniques of political dominations, facts that are persistently ignored by those who advocate education as a neutral pre-requisite for "development". However, she posits that "the contemporary rise of fundamentalist religious thinking is not limited to Muslims … Some Muslims may be in the forefront of this trend, but they represent only one part of the broader social and political phenomenon that is present across the globe in many different religious contexts (p. 4). Some of my participants were Muslims and a close examination of their conversations show a visible tension between their devotion to Islamic knowledge and their search for western education.

Another interesting work is Streitmatter's (1999) concern with single sex and co-education issues as far as schooling is concerned. Her qualitative study provides a clear picture of how girls in girls-only settings feel, what they believe, and what they want, rather than simply what their test scores are. She argues for single-sex public schools and/or single-sex classes in coeducational public schools as an option, especially for girls who do not have the economic means to choose private single-sex schools. Most of my Muslim participants had issues with western education and learning because the schools were either co-ed or single-sex and Strietmatter's (1999) work helped me to make sense of the way they were reading their situation. I found Streitmatter (1999) invaluable for interrogating my participants' struggle with schooling as far as sexual distinctions are concerned and whether or not their achievement level is more enhanced in single-sex schools and the way that these distinctions impart on their identity formations.

The undermining effect of social inequality, particularly in the north, has not been addressed. This pattern has been maintained in the way schools not only in the north but also in the south are run.

Apple (1995) insists that the school system encourages a competitive ethic that ultimately functions to legitimate formations necessary for the reproduction of inequality in the society. I find Aronowitz's (1992) exposition as explanatory for the implication of the social inequality perpetuated in schools. He argues that when economically disenfranchised people perform below "standard" and eventually drop out of school, they are categorized as criminals, drug addicts, homeless people, juvenile delinquents, or the chronically unemployed instead of addressing the structural inequalities that underlie their plight. Dardar (2002) explains further that these categories of people are more often than not rendered members of the disposable and expended class. The implication here is that schools are used by dominant powers as sites for "dismantling the middle class, increasing polarization of wealth and the "racialization" of populations" (Dardar, 2002). Macedo (1994) explains that schools are sites where the majority of students are so domesticated with fragmented and disconnected knowledge that they are left virtually uneducated and with little access to political and economic spheres of society through a "pedagogy of lies" (p. 9). These literatures help me to make sense of the women's discussion of the social inequality that stares at them in school and how that realization informs their subject positions and identity formations as they do school.

Books (2004) and Jones (2006), on the other hand, examine the social and especially the educational significance of poverty. They insist that although teachers

cannot "cure" poverty by themselves, they can – indeed, cannot help but – respond to the poverty that walks into their classroom in the minds and bodies of millions of children.

Poverty was a strong recurrent issue in my work. I agree with Books' (2004) and Jones' (2006) reading of poverty and the way it complicates the schooling process. Like Ogbu (1981, 1983, 1986, 1987, 1991, and 1992), I have used ethnographic method to interrogate the way Nigerian young women's out-of-school experiences can be brought into their in-school experiences. Some of the issues affecting their staying in school, their achievement, and their pursuit of further education include those of language, the neglect of their cultural, religious, and ethnic differences, and poverty which complicate their schooling experiences. In retelling, expanding, and amplifying what they said about these issues I accentuated what would work better in enhancing their schooling experiences. Whereas Dei (2005) does not talk specifically about women's education, his notion of difference holds sway for me. However, like him, I used difference not just to interrogate the way these issues dictate difference among the African people but to include how this difference has implication for their identity formations. I referred to difference to advocate that universalizing standards should not be used to prescribe women's education in Nigeria. Instead, "local" peculiarities that recognize the women's views, their interests and their values should inform policies, classroom practice, and all other aspects of their schooling. I also drew attention to the need for change in the way teachers relate to their students and to their pedagogical practice to reflect the students' lived experiences.

Lastly, another gap I noticed was the lack of a clear agenda for women between ages 18 and 30 in policies and activities implemented to promote women's education.

Although the research in Nigeria on women's education uses the terms "girl-child education" and "women's education" interchangeably as if they mean one and the same thing, my research interest was with young women who were between the ages of 18 and 30. My attention was drawn to women within this age bracket because they are often neglected in most government research and documents, which will normally focus on the girl-child and the adults. As far as the girl-child is concerned, attention is targeted to the early childhood and the primary school level, owing to world commitment for Education for All (EFA) and their emphasis on the provision of basic education. Therefore, with the ongoing vigor as far as activism and awareness campaigns are concerned, there has been a tremendous increase in school enrolment for the girl-child, as described earlier. Also, as far as adult literacy is concerned, more and more adults have taken advantage of the adult literacy centers to improve on their literacy skills. However, schooling has not been sustained after primary and after junior secondary school. Most women are not even pursuing career paths. Under normal circumstances, women of this age bracket, by western standards, ought to be in various tertiary institutions, if they do not already have an undergraduate degree. I sought to find out what my participants' schooling experiences were and I chose both those who were in school at various levels and those who had dropped out, to hear their stories. The women in this category are seldom talked about. More often than not, research about, and funding for them, are geared towards the dearth of females in science, technology, and mathematics. Issues pertaining to their social realities are often relegated to the background. Yet, as my research shows, these women's social realities are of paramount significance to them.

Theoretical framework

Postcolonial theory

Postcolonial theory is a discourse of reactions to and the analysis of the cultural legacies of colonialism. It attempts to salvage cultures that were affected by colonial incursion and to forge new ways of being after the fact of this forceful cultural integration that resulted from the colonial contact. Central to postcolonial thought is the argument that colonialism and its impact on ex-colonies is not just an event in the past. Rather, it is on-going and active. Many theorists have made postulations in this regard such that in many fields, this theory has been found invaluable in interrogating issues that relate with the experience of colonialism as defined by these theorists. As an offshoot of postmodernism, postcolonial theorists make multiple voicing possible. It is this possibility that allows feminists to employ this theory in the way they interrogate issues peculiar to the womenfolk. It is this possibility to be different and to voice these local variations that this theory affords that makes me use it as a basis for depicting how my participants assert themselves. In representing them the way I do, I show that the women are able to read and interpret their own realities in their own terms within their specific cultural, historical and geographical location. It is because I read them this way that I interpret them as challenging the way interventionists (using western eyes) read them for which reason I advocate that they (the interventionist) redefine their reading of these women.

Western epistemology: Discussing the beginnings

With its root in literature, postcolonial discourse rejects the Universalist claims of liberal humanist critics that great literature has a timeless universal significance. Their argument is that whenever a Universalist signification is attributed to a work, white, Eurocentric norms and practices are being promoted to an elevated status while others correspondingly are relegated to subsidiary, marginalized roles. They saw the world as existing in binary oppositions such as colonizer/colonized, center/margin, East/West, civilized/savages. As a result, cultural, social, regional and national differences are demoted and disregarded (Said, 1978). Balandier explains how colonialism occurs; it is characterized by "the domination imposed by a foreign minority, 'racially' and culturally different, over a materially weaker indigenous majority in the name of a racial (or ethnic) and cultural superiority" (as cited in Spurr, 1993, p. 5). According to Balandier, in order to maintain its authority, the colonizing society resorts not only to force, but also to a series of "pseudo justification and stereotyped behaviors" (as cited in Spurr, 1993, p. 6). Balandier insists that the colonial situation is one of "latent crisis", an order maintained precariously by ideology and representations as well as by formal administration (as cited in Spurr, 1993, p. 6).

Specific to Africa, Edward Long explains that the enlightenment gave support to the colonial mission by its ranking of societies along an evolutionary scale from 'barbarism' to 'civilization' and in so doing thought Africa 'the parent of everything that is monstrous in nature' (as cited in Hall, 1997, p. 239). In fact, Curvier dubbed the Negro race "a monkey" tribe (as cited in Hall, 1997, p. 239). Hegel declared that Africa has 'no

historical part of the world … it has no movement or development to exhibit' (as cited in Hall, 1997, p. 239). Furthermore, by the nineteenth century, when the European exploration and colonization of the African interior began in earnest, McClintock explains that, Africa was regarded as 'marooned and historically abandoned … a fetish land, inhabited by cannibals, dervishes, and witch doctors …' (as cited in Hall, 1997, p. 239). Hall (1997) insists that black people are still seen as childish, simple and dependent, though capable of, and on their way to (after paternalist apprenticeship), something more like equality with whites (p. 249). The colonialists regarded Africans as inferior to whites (Loomba, 1998). They called the very humanity of Africans into question (Achebe, 1981). Africans were portrayed as people without culture living in a mindless society. They attributed laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity, innocence and irrationality to Africans. Achebe (1975) explains further that Africans were associated with an inglorious past of "raffia skirts", "tyrannies of master", "menace of hostile neighbors", "bloodshed and alcoholism" (p. 4). Africa was considered only as a geographical expression with no political embodiment. Consequently the colonialist considered that they laid the foundation of nation states and gave Africans the true religion. They felt that they "toiled to bring civilization to different parts of Africa" (Achebe, 1958). These representations were not only biased, they also had a lot of limitations serving the purpose of subjugating Africans mentally and psychologically. In British West Africa, colonial powers encouraged economic exploitation and the imposition of foreign norms on the natives through the policy of Indirect Rule resulting in culture conflict. In French West Africa, the policy of assimilation, which attempted to

make black Frenchmen out of Africans, teaching them to abhor their own "primitive" customs and traditions and to embrace the "civilized" culture of the French, prevailed.

Webster (1996) describes the dangers of colonialism pointing out that it is not satisfied merely with hiding people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content but by a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin (1998) insist that the effect of the colonizing process over individuals, over culture, and society was vast and produced consequences as complex as they are profound.

As such, the postcolonial mission is to first reclaim the past, then begin to erode the colonialist ideology by which the past had been devalued (Barry, 1995). In so doing they create a version of their own nation, rejecting whatever is tainted with a colonial status. Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) is recognized for its voicing of cultural resistance to France's empire where he argues that in finding a voice and identity, colonized people must first reclaim their past and then erode the colonialist ideology by which the past had been devalued. Leopold Senghor championed the course of cultural nationalism and negritudism – a celebration and edification of pristine African life and values. Ngugi (1993) is also recognized for his exposition on the way, under colonial rule, native cultures were repressed while through the school system other imported traditions were encouraged. Recognizing difference and the legitimacy of a multiplicity of centers, Ngugi (1993) asserts that:

> *There could never be only one centre from which to view the world but that different people in the world had their culture and environment as the centre.*

> *The relevant question was therefore one of how one centre related to other centres*. (p. 9)

He explains that the "centre" can be shifted ideologically through imagination and that this shifting can recreate history.

In a similar vein Nigerian novelist Achebe (1964) argued that:

> *A man who can't tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body […] my society [has to] regain its belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self denigration*. (p. 158)

In saying this he urged Nigerian people to demand and assert their right to state their views. Neumarkt (1975) affirms this view by insisting that the Nigerian novelist:

> *can never be oblivious of his encounter with the white man who during the prolonged period of colonization, flaunted his "superiority" at every turn of the road … a past which is not easily repressed*. (p. 140)

By recognizing difference and a multiplicity of centers, postcolonial theorists question the monopoly of power with which the west defines the rest of the world; the imperialist culture of dominance, authority, and restructuring of the Orient (Barry, 1995; Webster, 1996). In so doing, the hidden motif behind imperialist culture and the civilization superimposed on the colonized world is exposed.

Postcolonialists postulate that there is a recognizable double/dual identity for the colonized resulting from the colonial contact. This concept is different than the western notion of dualism expressed in notions of binary opposition such as center/margin, East/West, civilized/savages. Barry (1995) explains that the colonized is part of the colonizers by virtue of the exposure to the values of western civilization, which is

supposedly the exclusive enclave of the west and also part of the colonized "Other" by origin, tradition and culture.

Bhabha (1994) pushes the notion of difference further, warning that, "the representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition" (p. 2, emphasis in original). His notion of hybridization is different than Barry's (1995) because of his introduction of the concept of the "third space"; one in which culture and identity are recognized as "fluid, shifting, and political" (English, 2005, p. 86). Here is how Bhabha (1994) puts it:

> *The language of critique is effective not because it keeps forever separate the terms of the master and the slave…but to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics*. (p. 25)

Bhabha (1990) explains further that:

> *The importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity …is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge*. (p. 211)

In Bhabha's (1990) moments of hybridity, moments of cultural enunciation happen in the interstices, in the margins of what we once thought possible – a space between the original and the copy. This "displacement or liminality opens up the possibility of articulating *different*, even incommensurable cultural practices and priorities" (p. 211,

emphasis in original); liminal spaces in which "new and unrecognizable" meanings and representations occur. Bhabha also advances the notion of diversity advocating for an acceptance of "unequal, uneven, multiple and potentially antagonistic, political identities" (p. 208); in so doing, *incommensurable* differences are acknowledged. Bhabha (1994) explains that "hybrid hyphenations emphasize the incommensurable elements – the stubborn chunks – as the basis of cultural identifications" (p. 219). In this space of incommensurable differences, the individual continually lives with ambiguity, uncertainty, and antagonism. In such a situation, Minh-ha (1989) says that the individual should be able to "live fearlessly with and within difference(s)" (p. 84).

Furthering the discourse of hybridization Anzaldua (1987) introduces the concept of the "borderland" experience of inner struggles within the Self as well as the birth of a new language which she refers to as "the language of the Borderlands" (preface) . Anzaldua (1987) describes this inner struggle with the self thus:

> *The ambivalence from the clash of voices results in mental and emotional states of perplexity. Internal strife results in insecurity and indecisiveness. The mestiza's dual or multiple personality is plagued by psychic restlessness*. (p. 78)

She explains this *la mestiza*, a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another, as in a constant state of mental nepantililism, an Aztec word meaning torn between ways (p. 78). In such a situation, the hybridized individual perceives the version of reality that her culture communicates but also has or lives in more than one culture, therefore getting multiple, often opposing messages. According to her, the coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of

reference causes *un choque*, a cultural collision. Therefore the resulting reaction is limited by and dependent on what it is reacting against leaving the individual on her way to a new consciousness where she is on both shores at once, unable to hold concepts or ideas in rigid boundaries (p. 78). She moves away from set patterns and goals toward more whole perspectives, one that includes rather than excludes (p. 79). She is able to cope by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity – transcending duality.

In a similar light, Ngo (2009) examines this kind of cultural ambivalences that occur in the lives of Lao American urban immigrant students. In her research, she found that what was paramount in the identity struggles of her Lao participants cannot be framed within discreet, binary discourse that put the ethnic identity of students at one hand of the spectrum and another identity at the other end (p.216). She said that her research suggests that there is a need to disrupt discreet binaries of good/bad, black/white, modern/traditional and to interrogate what happens in the continuum between dualistic categories and unsettle the tidiness of binary discourses. (217). She explains that as Lao students try to figure out and imagine how to exist in the world, their practices produce identities that are ambiguous and conflictual. She explains further that the "incommensurability of these students' identities cannot be accommodated within the discourse of a single student identity or even within discourse of plural identities (p. 217. She highlights their "ambivalent identities that do not fit into notions of bicultural or binary identities" (p. 202).

Celebrating difference: a feminist approach

Poststructuralist feminists insist that women are different in themselves in spite of certain assumed commonalities (Irigaray, 1999; Johnson, 2002). Mohanty (1988) discusses extensively on the danger of representing women as a homogenous whole. I talk about her seminal piece in my chapter on methodology. Suffice it to say that women's experiences are peculiar and different in themselves. This assumption of peculiarity and difference is fore grounded in Butler's (1997) insistence on the fact that the category "woman" is debatable because it is complicated by class, ethnicity, sexuality, and other facets of identity. According to Butler (1997), gender is performative. Like other poststructural feminists, she insists that humans must see themselves as beings with agency, as individuals who make choices and accept responsibility for the choices they make and that other people must value these choices as "rational". They see humans as not fixed but constantly in process, being constituted and reconstituted through discursive practices which shift in meaning according to context and the positioning of the subjects within those contexts. These discourses are always in tension providing humans with multiple layers of contradictory meanings inscribed in their bodies and in their unconscious minds (Davies & Harre cited in Davies, 1993).

Also, poststructuralisits argue that gender is constructed through language (Butler, 1997). It is for this reason that it is mistaken to assume a consensual homogeneity of women (Steans, 2006). Like Butler, Steans (2006) argues that humans are discursively and not just socially constructed. Like poststructuralists, poststructural feminists argue that there is no single truth – to have a single truth is to center some experiences and

decenter or marginalize others in order to maintain the coherence of the doctrine that is being perpetuated. Therefore, it is inappropriate to make essentialist or universal knowledge claims on the basis of experiences that are historically and culturally specific. Rather, thinking and speaking that allows for openness, plurality, diversity, and difference should be embraced such that an allowance can be made for forging cross-cultural understanding maintained within culturally determined images – there cannot be one story about the human condition nor can you have an all-encompassing vision of human freedom and emancipation.

Third World feminists use postcolonial theory to give voice to their resistance of the way the west represents third world women. Spivak (1988) is one of those in the forefront of this move. In her seminal work, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Working with the concept of difference, Spivak, (2005) insists that the subaltern is not to be considered as a homogenous group. Rather, the Subaltern should be considered along multiple axes including gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, language, health, experience, and socio-economic status. She also insists that the Subaltern speaks but nobody listens. Their words are effaced within their own patriarchal culture and by western imperialist discourse. Although the Subaltern is used to advance the status of difference in educational discourse, postcolonial feminists generally refer to third world women as Subaltern (Mohanty, 1988; Spivak, 1988). Spivak (1988) draws attention to the question of how to translate or re-present what the Subaltern is saying without corrupting their stories. She insists that researchers must grapple with their own vested interests, power, and desires. They must "learn to learn from below, *from* the subaltern, rather than only

study him (her)" (Spivak, 2005, p. 482, emphasis in original). They should be allowed to speak on their own terms.

Similarly, Lather (1991) argues that there is a need for intellectuals with liberatory intentions to take responsibility for transforming our own practices so that our empirical and pedagogical work can be less toward positioning ourselves as masters of truth and justice and more toward creating a space where those directly involved can act and speak in their own behalf. She recommends that we do our thinking and our investigating through struggle and to learn the lessons of practice; the lesson that there is no "correct line" knowable through struggle. Lather (1991) explains that struggle reconstitutes itself and any useful theories of social change deal with this fluidity.

The peculiarity of my participants' "third space" expereince

Robinson-Pant (2004) sheds light on the way western intervention is driven by a political agenda. She opines that women's education in developing countries has been used by politicians as a campaign tool both nationally and internationally. She exposes the leverage that international development partners have over these politicians explaining that women's education in every donor's agenda has been strongly linked to current poverty eradication strategies, with 'gender disparity in primary and secondary education' being taken as an indicator of the 'empowerment' needed to overcome the political, social, and economic obstacles that have kept women in poverty (Department for International Development, 2000, p. 8). Furthermore, she explains that research in this area has been dominated by the quantitative paradigm: using statistical measures to assess the success of enrolment strategies and to measure the benefits of educating girls and

women, whether in terms of improved child mortality, reduced fertility rates or increased school enrolment of children. She opines that this type of research approach has influenced both the nature of discussion on women's education policy and the way that success is measured (pp 473 – 474). Women's education is perceived as relevant for 'empowerment' – a 'conservative empowerment' – an empowerment that sees education in terms of access to schooling (and adult education in terms of access to literacy classes). Because of the way they perceive women's education, they ignore discussion on the process of girls' schooling or of women's education, particularly in terms of how schools and literacy programs can either transmit or transform dominant values and relationships, such as gender hierarchies (Wolpe, 1978).

Robinson-Pant (2004) explains further that much aid agency research and policy tend to focus on the externals – such as the social or physical factors that encourage or discourage girls' attendance – rather that looking inside the classroom (p. 475). They assume that the notion of 'schooling' is unproblematic; the dominant policy discourse works with a universal notion of gender relations. They put forward strategies that focus on the symptoms (such as scholarships for poorer girls) rather than the causes of gender inequalities in education (such as unequal access to land). They assume that understandings of 'gender relations' or what we mean by 'transformation' are generally universal. She insists that their discourse is underpinned by western values, thereby reducing local definitions to that of 'cultural beliefs' (p. 475).

Robinson-Pant (2004) argues that when 'poverty' and 'cultural beliefs' are set in opposition the complex local interplay of values and experiences are reduced to a

simplistic equation that can be solved by greater ‘gender awareness’. Little attention is paid to who is involved in the formulation of policy and plans (p. 476). Consequently, policy on women’s education focuses more on one sector of women who are affected, the ‘poor’, with the implication that they are less able to take control of their lives (Stromquist, 1998) meaning that different (and unequal) roles in development planning are envisaged for richer and poorer women (p. 476). Women are presented as a homogenous group with similar needs and education as the key solution to women’s problems. The political agenda or the patriarchal system perpetuating inequalities are ignored in Government policy. Consequently, skillful vocational training is emphasized for functional purposes. The identification of ‘gender awareness’ with foreign intervention is obvious. Most girls’ education measures are due to support by foreign donors. The kind of ‘gender relations’ or ‘change’ anticipated are not discussed (p. 478). I leaned on Robinson-Pant’s arguments to propose new perspectives on women’s education in Nigeria by problematizing the schooling process and my research findings are not far-fetched from supporting her arguments.

Therefore, by depicting their stories in the manner that allows the Subaltern to speak, reflecting the ambivalences in their identities and their agentic behavior, I am able to explore and depict the relevance of their lives to their academic pursuits and how they grappled with personality and identity issues as they struggled with going to school. It is obvious that universalizing standards in women’s education cannot be used to adjudge the limitless array of their historical and cultural specificities in order to plan how they do school. Instead, a voicing of their peculiar situation touching on the socio-cultural and

religious injustices that they are confronted with has to be permitted. I therefore proffer an alternative practice which draws attention to the peculiairities of the women's experiences leaning on Abu-Lughod's (2002) views. Although she expressed these views when she talked about the plight of Muslim women in Afghanistan following the intervention of the United States government in their affairs, I find her concepts applicable to my discussion of women's education in northern Nigeria both in the general sense and in the particular context of the issues that Muslim women are face with as depicted in my participants' stories. First and foremost, I recommend that certain kinds of forces and values that the women still consider important should not be compromised in the process of getting them to go to school. Abu-Lughod (2002) argues that accepting difference does not mean resigning oneself to being cultural relativists, who respect whatever goes on elsewhere as "just their culture", but recognizing and respecting differences precisely as products of different histories, as expressions of different circumstances, and as manifestations of differently structured desires (p. 787).

The application of universalizing standards in women's education is propagated by the west in the name of fighting for the rights and dignity of women. This stance is the kind that Spivak (1988) will cynically describe as whitemen saving brown women from brown men. Ahmed (1992) will also insist that such a stance justifies colonial policies and colonial feminism. When the west seeks to "save" others, they imply superiority and the act entails violence. It is better to work with these women in situations that are subject to historical transformation and to address the larger issues of global injustices that shape the world in which they find themselves. Just like Abu-Lughod (2002) and Robinson-

Pant (2004) insist, I opine that there is a need to speak more of a more egalitarian language of alliances, coalitions, and solidarity instead of salvation; a need to explain women's education in northern Nigeria within political and historical frameworks instead of the current way it is explained within religious and cultural ones. In so doing, it will be possible to call for a global redistribution of wealth and a universal human right to freedom from the structural violence of global inequality (Abu-Lughod, 2002). These women should be helped to explore other paths toward social change that might give them better lives; ways to make the world a more just place as Abu-Lughod (2002) puts it. At the end of this work, I specifically recommend democratic education as providing the kind of space where the possibilities of these kinds of dialogue can be explored.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

Using a qualitative research approach, my work deepens understanding of the complexities of gender and education in northern Nigeria by examining the experiences of northern Nigerian young women for whom school has been important, whether such women are originally from Kaduna State or they were born and raised there. Although women's education is a 'good thing', the way we are doing school needs to be challenged by asking fundamental questions about what these young women value, what their views and interests are, as well as the challenges that they are facing as they do school. In raising these questions, I am actually interrogating the complex dialectic between learning and its socio-cultural context to which the notion of 'identity' is very fundamental. The notion of identity is helpful in dealing with issues of power and of personal and collective responsibilities for individual lives (Prusak & Sfard, 2005, p. 15). I say more on this later. Specific to education, John Ogbu (1992) argues that "*[w]hat the children bring to school – their communities' cultural models of understanding of "social realities" and the educational strategies that they, their families, and their communities use or do not use in seeking education are as important as within – school factors*" (p. 5). My work examines these extracurricular aspects for many reasons because as I recollect my own schooling experiences, I see the extent to which these models and strategies impacted my schooling.

Research objectives/questions

To provide focus and direction to this study on advancing understanding of what

schooling means to northern Nigerian young women, I asked the following research questions:

a) What meanings do these women develop about their schooling experiences?

b) How are their social and academic identities constructed and co-constructed in school?

c) How do their various identity formations shape their decisions regarding school attendance and career plans?

d) How do their perceptions of literacy differ from the perceptions of those who prescribe literacy for them?

Potential significance of the research

Although many intervention programs have been developed to address women's education in northern Nigeria and an increasing number of women attend both public and specialized secondary schools, significantly fewer women than men complete secondary education and even fewer make the transition into tertiary institutions. This study explored the nuances of what schooling means for seventeen women, and underscored the individual motivations and structural impediments to women's education in order to help educators and policy-makers to better meet their academic and social needs. It recommends that the one-size-fits all educational approach that is being practiced should be revisited to account for the particular experiences of young women, informed by such factors as religion, age, ethnicity, linguistic background, and social class, so that their education can be based on their human capacity and propensity for learning. These women need more control of what and how they learn within the educational system. In so doing they will be more innovative and inventive. Therefore, ultimately, this study

provides insight into how to create a humane and effective education for northern Nigerian women, one that will improve their lives. On a larger scale, this research has the potential to inform research in other parts of the world where women are equally uneducated and oppressed.

In the rest of this chapter I explain my research design, then I talk about my research sites and the methodology I employed to select my participants. I also describe the way I collected my data, the ethical issues that were implicated in the process, and the way I analyzed my data. Thereafter I devote a whole section to discussing my research process both at the level of data collection and at the level of analyzing the collected data.

Research design

My study was interpretive. I employed feminist ethnographic qualitative research methods and perspectives to describe my participants' attitudes towards schooling and the way they made meaning of their schooling experiences considering their gender as females, their nature and affiliations to their culture, tradition, ethnicity, and religion (Usman, 2006). Feminist ethnographic qualitative research methods, like critical ethnography, allow the researcher to employ thick descriptions and conversational narratives to give women voice. This means that feminist theory on women and gender, using the general structure of scientific theory, guides this type of research and the researcher is expected to be immersed in the work making a series of ongoing decisions and choices (Harding 1987; Reinharz, 1992). Rather than actual immersion for a long time in my field of study as ethnographers would do, I used feminist ethnographic qualitative research methods/techniques. I conducted the research in Zaria, a city where I

worked among my own people for 18 years. I began with unstructured interviews after which I asked follow up questions generated from the ongoing interview. I had multiple sessions of these interview sessions. This process led to our having deep conversations about the issues, events, and meanings that seemed significant in my participants' lives as they went to school. I also used postmodernism, postcolonial feminism, socio-cultural perspectives on literacy and funds of knowledge as theoretical lenses to examine my participants' stories and better understand the discourses and practices that shaped their schooling experiences and to create awareness for the need for social change as well as to represent diversity and difference.

However, implicated in these feminist ethnographic qualitative research methods are issues bordering on the crisis of representation posed by post-structuralists in an attempt to problematize "the unequal relations established between researchers and research participants in the field … to help "liberate" oppressed and minority people … [thereby] "breaking" the pattern of unequal power relations favoring the researcher in relation to the research participant" (Junqueira, 2009, p. 73). Central to this concern about representation are the issues of reciprocity and reflexivity. A number of authors have engaged in this ongoing and not yet resolved debate including Golde (1970), Lather (1991), Skeggs (1994), Fine (1994), LeCompte (1995), Villenas (1996), Behar (1996), Luttrel (2000), and Chaudhry (2000).

To the extent that in order to deepen understanding about the meaning that northern Nigerian women are making of their schooling experiences, I allow my insider perspective to influence and bias my interpretation of their stories, I have employed auto

ethnographic research methods/techniques. Auto ethnography will normally construct the portrait of the researcher; her reflexive account of her experiences situated in culture (Reed-Danahay, 1997). An auto ethnographic researcher would embrace her personal thoughts, feelings, stories, and observations as a way of understanding the social context she is studying (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Ellis, 2004). She also sheds light on her total interaction with that setting by making her emotion and thought visible to the reader thereby embracing and foregrounding her subjectivity. She is conscious that she is writing about "us" not "them" and that she is driven by her own experiences as she interprets her findings. Also, an auto ethnographic researcher is critical about the way she reflects the ethical issues she encountered in the field, mindful that what she reports is what she and her participants co-created (Manning, n.d.). Both during the process of data collection and the writing of the findings of this research, I constantly brought myself into this work as a researcher. I brought my own experiences – life history and memory - as an instrument of investigation to the research process (Price, 2000; Jones, 2006) and effectively drew upon my participants' experiences to elicit more detailed responses. Also, I communicated with them using the language that was most comfortable for them including English, Hausa, and Pidgin. In so doing I was able to learn about the women and their perspectives about schooling. I also kept a journal of my reflections and a few field notes especially where my participants preferred that I did not record my session with them and where they asked me to come over to their homes for the sessions.

Research site

This study was conducted in Zaria also known as Zazzau, a pre-colonial,

ethnically diverse city in northern Nigeria. Nigeria has thirty-six states including Kaduna State where Zaria is located in the north central part of the country. Zaria is one of the oldest cities notably remembered because of its walls. Historically, Zaria was a traditional emirate – a historic kingdom founded in the 11th century when King Gunguma founded it as one of the original Hausa Bakwai (seven true Hausa states) (Zaria, 2010; Smith, 1960; Dalhatu, 2002). During the days of Camel caravan trade, Zaria was a trade center. Traders from the Sahara desert came to exchange salt for slaves, cloths, leather, and grains. Islam was introduced to Zaria in 1456 by Mohammed Askia of the Songhai Empire. By 1517 this empire conquered and extended its rule to Zaria (Fisher, 1978).

Zaria has since experienced changes in demographics. Diverse ethnic groups have settled in this town even though they are not recognized as indigenes in spite of how long they have lived there. This diversity is seen in schools especially in religious and cultural practices. Zaria existed as an urban center long before colonialism and as far back as the period when trans-Saharan trade thrived. It further developed as a city as a result of the Fulani Jihad war. It was colonized in 1901 by the British colonial army under the leadership of Frederick Lugard. Since inception till now, the old city is headed by a traditional ruler known as the Emir of Zazzau.

Zaria has a population of 1,018,827 (The World Gazetteer, 2007). Present-day Zaria has five main areas: the old world city, Wusasa, Tudun Wada, Sabon Gari, and Samaru. The old walled city is inhabited primarily by Hausa and Fulani. It is predominantly Muslim. Wusasa was the new settlement where during the colonial era, Christian converts from Zaria city and the neighboring pagan ethnic groups on the

plateau and other remote areas were settled. Generally, peaceful relations were maintained between people living in Zaria City and those in Wusasa in spite of the continuous religious crises that have bedeviled the region since the Nigerian Civil War. Recently, more ethnic groups have settled in Wusasa resulting in an increasing number of diverse populations. Tudun Wada is a residential area that was one of the earliest outliers of the walled city. Like Wusasa, Tudun Wada is continuing to experience a diverse population of new settlers. Sabon Gari is where most of the settlers from other ethnic groups have lived since the colonial era. Samaru is the place where most of the civil servants live. Zaria is more or less like an academic town with a lot of institutions of higher learning including the famous Ahmadu Bello University and the Nigerian College of Aviation Technology. The university also has a teaching hospital and a nursing school, one of the largest in the country. Apart from working as civil servants, nurses, doctors, and teachers, most other people who live in Zaria engage in trade, farming, and animal husbandry.

Research participants

My primary participants were seventeen women, ages 18–30. For this dissertation I talk about the stories of eight of them. Although all seventeen women drew attention to schooling as a process with implication for their social needs implying that the issues of access, equity, and the provision of structures were not the only ones that women in northern Nigeira grapple with as stakeholders often project, these eight women's stories were more captivating for me. This is because in making sense of their world they highlighted the operations of power and control embedded in such factors as religion and

ideology, history and ethnicity, social class and economics, and language which they considered were affecting their schooling. Therefore, I figured that working with their stories and not the others' enabled me to better address my research questions and to call attention to the complications and complexities inherent in women's education in this part of the country as well as to the fact of difference as being fundamental in considering intervention work for their schooling.

Also, much of what they said resonated with me. As such, I found it easier to name my own life's experiences and to observe and depict areas where I felt the women were disrupting the status quo and unsettling neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions. For instance, when I went through school as I captured in my personal story, I observed the social discrimination I experienced in school and was content with enjoying the benevolences of friends at the time but I was unable to interpret the internal conflict I had as I tried to make sense of how I was positioned the way these women, particularly Adama, Safiya, and Hannatu, did.

These eight women's stories also had moments of surprises for me which was another reason why I selected their stories over others. For instance, I was surprised to discover that Kubra, a Muslim, came to live with her older brother and was even maltreated to the point that she took the decision to opt for early marriage and to drop out of school by way of reacting against this oppression. I was under the illusion that this kind of experience was peculiar to Christian women. I also realized that dropping out of school as a result of early marriage was not just a cultural and a religious issue as is often portrayed in the literature as I highlight in my discussion of her story.

To provide further justification for why I selected these eight women's stories, in each of my analytical chapters, I highlight their relevance to my overarching research question: *What does schooling mean to northern Nigerian young women?* I point out why their stories were selected out of the seventeen stories for the purpose of this dissertation with the sole intent of depicting complexity and complications.

Also, I provide details about who my participants are and how we met in the individual chapters where I tell their stories so that as I discuss the complexities of their schooling experiences my readers would not lose sight of them. However, in this section I provide a brief background information about their ethnicities, their occupations, their marital status, where/who they live with, and what level of education they were at during the period of my data collection.

Adama was at the penultimate level of her law degree program at the university. She was a Christian and she belonged to the University campus fellowship. She was Bajju, an ethnic group from the southern part of Kaduna in northern Nigeria. She was unmarried. During her growing up years she lived briefly with her uncle but at the time of the interview she had returned to living with her parents. Both her uncle and her father worked in the Nigerian Military. As such for the greater part of her growing years she lived in the military living quarters popularly known as the barracks[9]. She was very comfortable with speaking in English.

Safiya like Adama, was Bajju from southern Kaduna State in northern Nigeria.

[9] Barrack is the living quarters for serving military personnel. Usually the lower ranking soldiers are said to live in the barracks whereas the senior Military officers, even though they also live in the same location but in a different space than the soldiers, they will not be said to live in the barracks. They would be said to live in officer's quarters. So, in the use of the word barracks, a person's rank and social class is immediately delineated.

She was brought to live with her auntie so that she could have the privilege of going to school and being exposed to urban life. At the time of the interview she was completing her NCE program. She was also an unmarried Christian woman. Although she learned to speak Hausa because it was the language of her community and could have chosen to speak in it during the interview, she preferred to speak in English even though she was not proficient in it.

Hannatu was also a single Chrisitian woman in JSS 1. She was from Kano State in northern Nigeria where her father was a district head in her village. She spoke Hausa as her first language. Our conversations were in Hausa. She lived with several benefactors serving them as a house-help in order to enjoy the benefit of going to school.

Farida was originally a Yoruba woman from Oyo State in the southern part of Nigeria. Her mother was from Katsina State in northern Nigeria. Farida, like Safiya, was completing her NCE program when we met. She was a Muslim with a firm belief in Islamiyya education and had attended some Islamiyya schools. She wore the hijab all the time. She preferred to speak in English throughout our conversations although she was not very fluent in it. She was more fluent in Yoruba and Hausa. She was the first of two daughters. Her father had passed and she had had to live with her uncle. Farida was unmarried.

Samira's great grand parents were originally from Kebbi State in northern Nigeria. In Zaria they were among the earliest traditional rulers known as emirs. She had just begun her NCE program when we met. Her schooling background was mostly Islamiyya education. She spoke Arabic fluently. During the interview she code-switched

between Hausa and Arabic and I had to ask her to interpret what she said into Hausa – the main language we used for the interview. She was also unmarried.

Hauwa's parents were also originally from Kebbi State but she was born and had lived in Zaria up till the time of the interview. She was married and she had a son. Hausa was her first language. She struggled to code switch from Hausa to English but most of our conversations were in Hausa. She had completed her NCE program and was contemplating furthering her education by going into a four-year degree program. She was a full-time Muslim house-wife.

Kubra, like Hannatu, was originally from Kano State. Hausa was her first language and we communicated in Hausa language throughout the interview sessions. She had dropped out of primary school to get married. She had lived with her step-brother and his family before she got married. She chose the option of getting married rather than continuing with school because she felt maltreated in her step-brother's house and that disrupted her schooling. She has since then not returned to school inspite of her desire to do so. She is a full-time stay-at-home Musim woman with two children.

Kuluwa, like Kubra, dropped out of primary school to get married. Being originally from Sokoto State, Kuluwa got married early because according to Hausa custom and religious conviction, her parents left her with no option. She actually married her cousin. She was the first wife of a polygamous marriage and a mother of three biological children and two others left to her to take care of by her husband, children of her ex-co-wife. We spoke in Hausa throughout the interview sessions. She too was a stay-at-home full-time housewife.

I also interviewed other secondary participants designated as significant to the lives of my primary participants including my primary participants' friends, their parents, their teachers, and some administrators.

Primary participants were recruited through word-of-mouth, criterion sampling (based on specific relevant characteristics) and snowball sampling (Ortiz, 2003) - based on the recommendation of other members of the sample selected. Some other women like Kuluwa self-selected to participate.

Participants were selected purposively (Patton, 2002; Cresswell, 2005) after they gave their consent to be part of the study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Gender and age were common denominators for all of them. They were all women and they all fell between ages 18 and 30. The women were selected to represent a broad spectrum of their experiences touching on ethnicity and language, religion, educational status, socio-economic status, family background, marital status, and type of school attended. It is from these differences that the complexities and complications of their schooling experiences are interrogated. These differences point to the way their identities were constructed. Of the seventeen young women I interviewed, eleven of them were Muslims while six were Christians. The ratio is not 1:1 because of the role that the other factors played in my selection. I chose women whose parents were civil servants, those whose parents were in the military, those whose parents were educated and those whose parents were not educated. I also chose women who had dropped out of school and those who remained in school, those who were married, divorced and/or unmarried. Young (2000) explained that one's positionality is multiple and is being affected by myriad and

evolving factors and the nature of the intersections themselves will change over time and across contexts. This is so true with these women in the sense that, for instance, I found that their socioeconomic background, to some extent, determined the kind of schools most of them attended which in turn affected the kind of commitment and dedication they gave to schooling. Another instance is that with women whose parents were in the junior cadre of the military I was able to see how inferior they felt as they related with the rich. Also, the way barrack life prescribed a different definition of what schooling means especially because of the issues of morality that relationships formed among youths in the barracks dictated and how that in turn affected schooling for them was also portrayed. However, in spite of these differences, I was able to still find commonalities (Young, 2000; Laible, 2000) in their stories and I point these out in my concluding chapter where I talk about what was striking for me in this work.

I was very open about why I was conducting the research and that helped to motivate my participants to give their consent – they felt that the study was very interesting and helpful to the womenfolk (Price, 2000). In so doing it was easier to build relationship and trust (Price, 2000; Ortiz, 2003; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) and to elicit the more nuanced issues surrounding what schooling meant to them and why they were doing school the way they did.

Each interview session lasted between one and three hours especially when the young women were very engaged. I made a lot of phone calls to arrange meetings – it was the more accessible, easier and fastest way to schedule appointments.

Data collection

Data collection began in February 2009 and continued through October 2009. According to Fontana and Frey (1994), informal conversation is used in order to understand complex behavior without imposing prior categorization and framework that will limit responses. Spradley (1979) referred to this method as ethnographic interviewing. Creswell (2007) also makes a case for the need for the researcher to be flexible with the research questions that she constructs so that participants can be kept in focus with their responses to the questions. According to Creswell, asking follow up questions helps the researcher to ensure that she obtains optimal response from her participants. Furthermore, McNamara (2009) explains that with informal conversation the researcher does not ask any specific types of questions, but rather relies on the interaction with the participants to guide the interview process. Therefore, in my research, because of its flexibility, I used the methods of informal conversation especially when I asked follow up questions that helped me gather appropriate information for my research questions - to find out my participants experiences, perceptions, values, views, and opinions about schooling. The follow up questions helped to further clarify earlier conversations. However, I began by first using a semi-structured interview, asking questions that guided the conversation and established the focus of the study. I have attached my interview protocol as an appendix to this work.

I interviewed each participant multiple times for at least one hour each session. All interviews and conversations were audio-recorded. Additional data were collected in the form of artifacts, including written records such as students' writings and school

documents, some of which informed my discussion with my participants. I negotiated multiple spaces for the interview and conversation sessions – sometimes my participants requested me to meet with them at their homes. At other times they preferred to come over to my house. On very few occasions we met at some of the women's school campuses.

Also, because I was mindful of the issue of privacy and confidentiality, given the risk this research posed to my participants for participating, I got an office at the school where I taught before I came over to the United States. Most of the time we used this space if my participants felt that my house, their homes, or their schools were not conducive for the meeting. The office was well situated alone at a corner of a school block making it possible for my participants to feel safe and secured.

Nigerian society is a closed one – divergent opinions are not openly articulated and most women are shy to speak out. Plus, it was not culturally and religiously acceptable to talk publicly about their private lives especially if the topic had to do with sex and other gender related topics (Aondonam-Mzehemen, 1995; Zubair, 2006). We did whatever made them comfortable at the moment. Most of my Muslim participants talked about their religion explaining particularly how Islamiyya schools operated. Considering that I am a Christian and the on-going religious tension and crises between the Muslims and the Christians, particularly in northern Nigeria, it was risky for them to be caught giving me, an "infidel", all that detailed information although the general sense that it was for research purpose was understood. Such women would normally be warned to desist from divulging such information and that would have affected my data collection

because they would have declined from working with me. Some of the women had strong views about sexuality and how that impacted on their schooling. They were actually lesbians. But it was un-Islamic to hold such radical views. Although they initially consented to be part of my research, considering how their views would impact on the general perception about Islam, and their personal family and individual lives, those women declined to work with me. They did not discuss with me that they were withdrawing from participating in the research. They just made it difficult for me to reach them even though I tried hard through phone calls and constant visits at their homes.

The American Anthropological Association mandated by the University of Minnesota Internal Review Board approved this research (Baba & Pawlowski, 2001). Consequently, I got informed consent from my participants before I commenced the study. All the interviews were voluntary. I have used pseudonyms to report my findings in order to maintain confidentiality and to protect individual and group identities. In reporting my findings, I tried as much as possible to avoid the use of any descriptors that would give away any of my participants for these same reasons and so that they are not at risk of being attacked for talking about such sensitive issues as religion and indigenization bordering on the question of ethnicity. All audio-recorded interview sessions were kept away from other people in order to maintain confidentiality. Data collected was triangulated across participants and across two data sources: guiding research questions and interviews (Fetterman, 1998). I also used field notes and reflexive journals to ensure validity for the work (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

Data analysis

I began to analyze my data using qualitative coding procedures informed by grounded theory (Strauss, 1987). By using an iterative process, the data was coded to explore possible categories or themes that emerged (Weis, 1985) and which were recurrent (Merriam, 1998). I prepared theoretical memos which helped me to link data relevant to the theory about women's education that I formulated. I did a data log which facilitated these processes. With a data log, I was able to note strands of analysis that were surprises to me; aha moments – aspects that were striking and salient and which spoke also to my research questions (Price, 2000). I struggled to resist talking across all my participants by way of looking for commonalities and differences in the things they said which my activist self told me to do. I continued to have tension between representing these women through their voices and in very powerful ways as a writer. I had given drafts of my earlier work to my advisor and a few of my other colleagues including Dr Rachel Malchow. They had similar observations in terms of the need for me to provide a roadmap that would enable them to follow my interpretation without getting lost. Consequently, I revised my work. Let me reproduce my advisor's response to a mail I wrote to him to try to see if as a reader he could make sense of the way I was representing these women in a third draft I submitted to him in order to get his feedback:

> *Timothy: This is MUCH much better, You seem very much in control of this and you are acting as a guide, helping me, the reader, understand what I should be paying attention to. Also, you are honoring Adama's voice, because you are helping us understand the significance of what she is saying, its implications*. (e-mail, 3/6/2010)

This was the stage of writing I got to after his mentorship using portions of his own writing and after I read Dr. Audrey Appelsies' (2006) dissertation. What I garnered from Audrey's work is that if I compared these women and the way they made sense of their schooling experiences thematically, as I was seeking to do, my work will be deterministic and in the end I would be reifying the same position that policy makers have taken concerning women's education in northern Nigeria, some of which I talked about in my introduction. I would be talking about these women as if they were a homogenous group. I resolved to tell their individual stories weaved within the recurrent themes that I had established. Then I did a concept map to help me eliminate redundancy and repetitions.

Additionally, I employed methods of discourse analysis to analyze and identify transcripts with selected codes from my data, particularly the interviews in order to clarify, expand, or deepen understanding of the meaning of these coded categories even though I did not go deeply into critical discourse analysis in the manner in which Fairclough (2001) and Gee (2005) recommend. I considered themes, patterns of communication, and beliefs that emerged in my participants' interviews so that I could better explain their perspectives (Price, 2000). I also used methods of discourse analysis to deepen understanding of how participants' identities were expressed in interaction with peers, parents, and teachers. Nonverbal communication and contextual factors such as the location of the interview and the attitude and emotional comportment of my participants while we talked were included in my analysis.

Methodologically, I triangulated my data by using semi-structured interviews, deep conversations, and documents to gather data (Cohen & Manion, 2000; Denzin,

2006). Some of the documents I collected where from the Federal Ministry of Education such as the national policy on education and the current curricula in use in public schools. I also collected the curricula in use in Islamiyya schools from the Institute of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. I also used theory triangulation by employing postmodernism, postcolonial feminism, socio-cultural perspectives on literacy, and funds of knowledge as theoretical frameworks that helped me to understand the forces at work in these women's schooling. Furthermore, I triangulated data among my participants as shown in my analytical chapters. In those chapters, I showed that some of the issues bordering on poverty, ethnicity, religion, and their struggle with proficiency in English language were common to these women, except that they were impacted differently by these factors and that is what makes their stories different and schooling for northern Nigerian women very complex. I also interviewed some of the women's parents, friends, and some administrators of schools, the director of the women's literacy program in Kaduna State, and the director of Islamic programs.

As I reported my findings, I was mindful not to speak with authority on these women's perceptions since I know that other people, including the women themselves, may have other perceptions about their stories (Villenas, 1996; Young, 2000; Segall, 2001; Madison, 2005). My participants belonged to particular regions of Nigeria. They belonged to a different generation than I do, and they have had different life's experiences than I have had. Even amongst themselves these experiences were not the same and that is why in the entire work I have emphasized difference, complications, and complexities as the catch phrases. This dilemma and obvious contradiction about whose

perspective is being captured is common with qualitative researchers as far as the issue of representation is concerned. Young (2000, p. 635) posits that the way researchers represent their participants and what they learn from their participants can have an impact that lies anywhere between incredibly helpful to seriously destructive (regardless of intent) and, thus counterproductive. Said (1978) describes the act of representing the Other as an act of violence (p.4). It is violent because it always involves "some degree of reduction, de-contextualization, and miniaturization" (Young, 2000, p. 635). Fine (1994), on other hand says that in the process of research, the researcher participates in constructing Others by inscribing and commodifying Them. I am therefore not speaking for my participants. I am simply interpreting their experiences through my own lenses (the theoretical perspectives that I bring into the research), my own experiences, and my passion about promoting women's education in northern Nigeria. These factors might push me to come on strong in my voice as I analyze my findings (Standing, 1998; Young, 2000). Nonetheless, what I report here in this work is based on my own subjective understanding of these women's situation, experiences, feelings, and desires (Young, 2000; Laible, 2000) and on my own fieldwork experience (Wolf, 1996).

As far as transcription convention is concerned, I used is *[…]* to indicate that I took out some words from the original transcript and *[with text within]* to show my insertion of texts to help clarify what the women said (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1978). I edited most of the direct quotes or transcripts I made of what my participants talked about so that they are not confusing to the reader. I struggled with retaining the scripts of those who spoke in English as they were and there were three of them out of

which two struggled with being fluent. This was not intended to be disrespectful to them but to complement my discussion on proficiency in English language being a recurrent motif; an issue that I also struggled with when I was in school, as I revealed in my personal story which I told in the introduction. However, because I did not want the transcripts to be incomprehensive to my readers, I decided to heavily edit them. I also felt if the transcripts were incomprehensible then my readers would depend on my interpretation of them to make sense of the conversation. If that happened I would have denied my participants their voice – the Subaltern would no longer be speaking (Spivak, 1988) although I wonder if the Subaltern were really speaking when I presented only the English translation of what the other five of them said in Hausa language. However, there are a few sections where I tried to retain their original words or phrases even if they were not said in Standard English. I recognize that in the manner in which I presented the transcripts I problematize the issue of representation and power imbalances in written accounts of research thereby reinforcing power imbalances by identifying Standard English as the "normal" means of communication as Standing (1998) and Young (2000) argue. Furthermore, because I am not Hausa I recognize that my translation abilities might be limited.

Other details including my own reflexivity, the way my own values and ideology influenced the work and whether or not I excluded counter examples that I felt would subvert my analysis have been discussed extensively in the section on my research process. Since my goal was to disrupt the status-quo, unsettle both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions made regarding women's education in northern Nigeria, I have

brought to light the underlying and obscure operations of power and control bordering around issues of religion and ideology, history and ethnicity, social class and economics, as well as socio-cultural factors which are often not talked about in the literature (Madison, 2005). These issues, as depicted in the women's stories, are the forces that impeded their acquisition of education in the way they chose to go about it resulting in some of them going the extra-mile to work hard in order to excel in school, some others struggling to cope with schooling and others actually dropping out of school. I also traced how these factors impacted on the career choices that they made.

Discussing my research process

A number of ethical and methodological issues were fore grounded in this qualitative research including how I negotiated my dilemmas and ambivalences as I researched with as opposed to researched on my participants (Deere cited in Wolf, 1996) – young women living in Zaria in Kaduna State of northern Nigeria. The following discussion captures how I constantly engaged in self-reflexivity (Young, 2000) both while I was in the field and at the point of reporting my findings. It also elucidates aspects of how I carried out my ethical responsibilities (Madison, 2005; Segall, 2001). I report on my interactions and relationships with all the seventeen women I worked with meaning that there are cases, issues, and occurrences that I talk about that have not been reflected in the analytical chapter of this work. Those should be covered in the subsequent works that I hope to write to report the findings of this research. I had to be selective of what I reported for the purpose of this dissertation.

Insider/outsider dilemma

At some points in the course of this research, I found that I was positioned both as an insider and as an outsider (Collins, 1991; Villenas, 1996; Wolf, 1996; Islam, 2000). I went back to work in my own community. I had worked and lived in Zaria for 18 years before I returned again for 11 months to conduct this research. Although I am not Hausa by ethnicity, I am from Kaduna State where Zaria is. The Maguzawas and the Hausa/Hausa-Fulani people are the indigenes of Zaria even though as an urban centre, Zaria has since embraced a huge diversity of people thereby reflecting the multiethnic nature of the nation.

On many occasions during the course of data collection, I felt like an "outsider within" (Collins, 1991; Wolf, 1996), an intellectual halfie (Abu-Lughod, 1991), and/or a border crosser (Villenas, 1996). As the women told me their stories I felt my limitation in knowing what these women talked about. Even though some of what they said resonated with me, it was obvious that it was their experience and not my own so a number of issues sprang up at me as surprises (Wolf, 1996). I found that I was able to engage my participants better once I positioned myself as a willing learner – vulnerable (Behar, 1996) to their knowledge.

For instance, like most of them, I was socialized to value education and this birthed a drive for furthering my education as I narrated at the beginning of this work. Part of the way this socialization took place is in the role my parents played in helping me stay focused. They supervised me to ensure that I studied my books, did my home work, and did not spend the whole time playing or hanging out with my friends. They

also ensured that I was engaged in very helpful literacy activities such as listening to news, reading newspapers, and watching the television (when we eventually acquired one) except that I could watch it only at weekends and during the holidays to keep me from being distracted from my school work.

Following the history of the development of western education in Nigeria, Christians were more eager to embrace formal education than Muslims. As such in Kaduna State, the other ethnic groups apart from most Hausa and Hausa-Fulani people embraced formal education earlier than the Hausa and the Hausa Fulani (Niles, 2001; Pittin, 2007). So, in typical Christian homes, parents supervised their children the way I got supervised even though that was not the case in all such homes. However, it jumped at me as really shocking to hear the same practice in my Muslim participants' homes. I did not think that Muslim Hausa/Fulani parents related with their children and wards in this same manner. A lot of cultural practices that I see from observing them and interacting with some of them make me feel that Muslim fathers do not spend much time with their children. They would rather hang out with their friends. Muslim mothers were responsible for bringing up their children. I guess if these young women told me their mothers made time to supervise them in that manner I would not have been as surprised as I was.

I was also surprised to find some of these women doggedly committed to hard work, perseverance, and determination against all odds to acquire western education. I got curious and as I asked follow up questions I discovered that most of my Muslim participants were not originally Hausas or Hausa-Fulani. They came from clans where

they shared boundaries with other ethnic groups than Hausa or Hausa-Fulani. Some of them even shared parenthood with other ethnic groups from other parts of northern Nigeria. That for me explained why their approach to western education was as different as it was compared to the stereotypical way that original Hausa/Fulani women do school.

I felt like an outsider when I spoke to some of my Muslim participants. I had grown up all my life with Muslims – I lived with them and worked with them without any sense of discrimination in spite of all the religious crises that had taken place in Kaduna State and which I had witnessed. We always had a way of putting the crises behind us and continuing like nothing that traumatic and tragic ever happened. Yet, in the course of data collection, there were moments when I felt a distance between me and my participants. For instance, I found that the way I dressed mattered a lot to me if my audience was Muslim. I needed to be accepted and that meant looking like my Muslim participants whenever I was with them. Although I would normally wear wrappers and long dresses if I wanted – that was a typical northern way of dressing - but during this research I would go the extra mile to cover myself properly. I would use a veil (not a hijab) leaving only my face, hands, and feet showing especially if I was meeting my participants at school – more so if it was an Islamiyya school. I would dress in the same manner if I were to meet them at home especially if the house was one in which "purdah"[10] was practiced. However, I discovered that the extent to which I covered myself reduced as I got familiar with my host and became more accepted.

[10] Purdah is a term used to describe the Islamic practice of keeping women away from public view. Whenever they had to make a public appearance, Muslim fundamentalists who were strict with adherence to this practice would insist that they were fully covered with clothing and apart from the rest of the

Islam (2000) explained that she also had a similar experience when she did her research. Her class, gender, and bicultural identity all shaped her relationship to members of the community such that she had to survey her own presentation constantly to remain inscribed within community boundaries (p. 46). One incident happened when I visited an Islamiyya school while I was still scouting around for my participants. My manner of dressing was typically not Islamic. I was immediately marked out as different from them. I was conscious of it. I had tried to cover myself properly by the choice of clothes I made – I wore a thick skirt and a long-sleeved blouse on this hot day. My feet, my hands, and from my neck upwards including my hair, were uncovered. Also, I wore a long neck chain and round ear rings. I sweated profusely. A 9-year old from the crowd called out to me saying, "arniya", which means infidel. Another small girl, his age mate came to report him to the teacher. We had noticed the scuffle among the crowd but were not sure what the matter was although I guessed it, no doubt, had to do with me and my dressing.

I did not take the incident to heart because being an insider researcher I expected it would happen but I felt truly scared for a moment that I was in the wrong place. The teachers scolded the crowd and called out after the erring student who had run away into the crowd, promising to discipline him later on when he was found out. They apologized to me attributing his behavior to childishness and explained that the students are often taught not to be hostile to non-Muslims. Although other students waited to see what punishment would be meted to this student, his behavior and the reaction of the other students proved that the teachings received in this school no doubt emphasized the divide

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society. They would normally use such items as a hijab (a long flowing gown) and a nikab (a face veil) in addition to wearing mittens on their hands and socks on the feet.

and distinctions between Christianity and Islam. This awareness made it easy for them to notice those qualities and sometimes they voiced out their observations like this student did and at other times they kept mute about them, carrying them in their psyche.

This experience juggled my memories. In the past, people who dressed differently and passed territories that were predominantly Muslim, especially if they wore pants, had children throw stones at them. They were also called names and teased to a point of provocation. Children would beat drums or empty tins and sing behind them as they walked on. If the women, usually Christians, fought back they were beaten up and in extreme cases religious unrest ensued. But this practice has since ceased with better understanding and tolerance for people of different faiths in the spirit of national peace and unity.

I also noticed that my clothing was not only an issue when I was with Muslims. The difference in the way I got treated by Christians, particularly the more social ones, was in whether I was keeping up with fashion or not. I needed to dress up to meet their tastes and standards. For instance, each time I visited Dinatu (one of the women whose stories I did not get to talk about in this work), I consciously checked myself to make sure that my dressing met her sophisticated taste so that she was not discouraged from participating in the study – I was supposed to be from America where "all the good things are". At some moments during the sessions we had she had actually gone on and on about big names in the fashion world and the kind of malls where such fashionable items could be bought from the United Kingdom. She had a cousin there who shopped such stuff and sent them to her to sell to people. She was disappointed that I did not know some of the

names she mentioned and I cringed and felt very apologetic at such moments. Her expectations about my coming to America and the exposure that I was supposed to have had were high and I could not measure up.

I also felt the same way when Adama demanded to know my house. It was obvious that she and most of my other participants and members of the community assumed that I had a rich standard of living since I was able to go in and out of America. Ironically at the time I did not even have a house to live in. I had lived in government quarters before I left for the US and had to move out when I left the job. For the eleven months of data collection and beginning analysis when I was in Zaria I lived in temporary spaces. I felt my confidence challenged at these moments when the spotlight was on me and indeed power actually shifted from me to my participants.

Another time I felt as an outsider was when I scouted for participants and came to that Islamiyya school where that 9-year old student called me an “arniya” and requested to speak with the Principal. Everyone wondered at my audacity. I did not even know that by requesting to see the Principal I was crossing boundaries. When he came to speak with me eventually, he was very formal and immediately directed me to the female teachers in the school. He did not brief them enough on what my consultation with them was about. They assumed that they were the ones who were to be interviewed. After a series of failed appointments due to logistic reasons, I was able to meet with these two female teachers. I explained what my research was about to them, that what I wanted was for them to be able to select and recommend women from their classes with whom I could work. On getting this understanding, they gave me another appointment. They had to check the school

calendar for what day would work. They gave me a one month appointment because it was examination season and right after that they went on holiday. I could not afford to wait that long so I changed direction to look for my research participants elsewhere.

Eventually when I found one who attended the same school and who consented to be part of my research, she explained that if I were to show up in an Islamiyya school to request audience with the men as a researcher, they will not attend to me because I am a woman and a Christian. Men do not interact with women except in class during the day's lesson and they keep the relationship purely official. They are only free to interact with their own wives. As I interviewed Ralia (another young woman whose story I do not tell in this work), I requested to speak with her mother but she discouraged me. She explained that her mother will not grant me any audience because I am a Christian and because she does not like talking much. She said that her mother even blamed her for talking with me and that she consented to participate in my research in spite of her mother's disapproval because, unlike her mother, she was a talkative woman. Ralia actually felt that she consented to participating in the research because in so doing she was rendering service to humanity. That was another reason why she refused to be dissuaded by her mother's attitude.

Villenas (1996) explains that "the issue of identity negotiation is an on-going process with many learning points along the way – it is a process of continual discovery" (p. 756). I found this to be true in my case. I took on multiple identities in the process of conducting this research. At some point I was a researcher but at other points I was a mother, an older sister, a counselor, and a divorced woman with a hurting story about

marriage and relationships to tell. As such, as an “insider” researcher, I used my own life history and memory as an instrument of investigation. I found that each time I used my experiences as ice-breakers, my participants opened up to me a lot more easily and they became more transparent. More often than not the conversations became more emotionally engaged and the sessions ended up being therapeutic.

I always felt that my responsibility toward my participants (Lather, 1991) was called to question. These women were able to let out pent-up emotional trauma surrounding the issues of their schooling which they had held close to their hearts for a long time. Once Safiya cried bitterly because of the grief she felt over what she perceived as discriminatory treatment, as she lived with her aunty and went to school. The issues had to do with insufficient money to go to school, to meet her basic necessities as a young woman, and her increasing workload that left her with little time for her personal study.

She was also bitter about the pain she had to go through as well as the harsh words that were spoken to her each time she requested money, which more often than not was money she needed for school. She wished she had an alternative – some other place to go to in order to find respite. She desperately craved a good education. I say more on this as I analyze her story. As an insider, I understood her aunt’s struggles that having a good job did not mean that she was not also financially overwhelmed. My position shifted from that of an interviewer/researcher to a counselor.

My cash gift to her and all the other women for participating in this research went a long way to soothe her pain for the moment. For her, being involved in this research gave her a new hope, a new awakening to schooling and academic pursuit. She said she

had never given serious thought to the kind of questions I asked her and every time she went back home after the sessions she found herself rummaging the questions in her mind. She began to ask herself soul-searching questions like why she was really in school and what did schooling really mean to her. She also asked to know what she would do if her boyfriend failed to marry her and marriage generally eluded her.

Hannatu and Dinatu were able to talk about their emotional trauma because at the time of the interview sessions they were going through very troubling times with their boyfriends and this situation took their minds off their academic work. These women just like my other participants found confiding in me very helpful. Kuluwa's husband was about taking a second wife and the whole idea did not sit well with her, but because of patriarchy and the restricted movement (known as "purdah") which Islam encourages and which her husband took advantage of to enforce, she was not able to voice out her opinion publicly. It was a great emotional relief for her that she could talk about her pain, her fears, and her anxieties with me and her friend, Fatima.

Building confidentiality and exercising mutual respect of difference

As I tried to build confidentiality and to establish rapport with the young women, I observed that my participants related with me differently. I needed to establish a strong rapport with some of them before they could open up and talk freely with me. A few others connected with me easily and the conversations flowed effortlessly. Many factors played into determining how long it took for me to establish a rapport. The huge one was religion but then there were other issues like the confidence they had on the person who recommended that they work with me and the way the person represented me to them.

Most of them were willing to speak with me because I was an American PhD student. America is the dream world for most of them. Others obliged me because they knew I was a teacher in a tertiary institution in the community. Teachers are generally respected. Yet, others felt I had an amiable disposition and they liked me for it and obliged me. For instance, I talked with Dinatu like I had known her from before the first meeting. On the contrary, talking with Kubra was very stressful. I had to prod her on almost every question. It was almost like I told her story because she simply gave one-word answers to the questions I asked. Kuluwa on the other hand more or less offered to be part of the study because she happened to be around when I interviewed Fatima. She explained that she took a liking to me because of the things that Fatima told her about me.

I previously explained that not being a Muslim positioned me as an outsider when I spoke with my Muslim participants. My sessions with Ralia illustrate this fact. There was a lot of tension between her and me when we started. It was obvious that our religious biases, prejudices, and differences in ethnicity (Brayboy, 2000) came between us. At some point I wished I could decline working with her because of how intimidated I felt. She was a Muslim fundamentalist. But she was not the only such Muslim I had to work with. However, she kept putting it in my face that we were different. Persistence and respect for her position paid off for me plus the continuous efforts I made at being polite and desirous to learn and to know. In so doing, the tension reduced drastically but it was not all together eliminated.

I met Zara through Asma'u, the headmistress of an LEA school with whom we connected pretty well on ideological grounds since she was also interested in girl-child

education and was actually a graduate student in one of the universities in the area. Zara was Asma'u's younger sister and she was within the age bracket I needed. Although Asma'u and her sister, Zara, were staunch Muslims, I never felt uptight as we spoke; from what I could tell, neither did they. I was also able to speak with their mother because they made it possible and that gave me another level of data triangulation.

Wolf (1996) advised that it is essential for researchers to exercise mutual respect of difference but this respect should not pretend an equality of power that does not exist. She explained further that if this happens, it will eventually lead to resentment on both sides of the field encounter. Particularly with Farida, Ralia, and Fatima there were moments when there could have been resentment between us but mutual respect constrained us. As a researcher, I chose to make myself vulnerable – eager to listen, eager to take sides with them. Even when they talked about familiar topics I was knowledgeable about and even had differing experiences, I did not oppose their views. My stance on issues was more often than not clandestine. I waited until the end of the conversation to talk about them unless it became extremely necessary to do so earlier on.

Most times I expressed my views in the form of questions – seeking more knowledge and that helped them. In so doing, these women were genuinely empowered to share their experiences. They enjoyed the power of owning the knowledge and dispensing it as they willed and deemed fit. I guess that was what defined power relationship between me, as the researcher, and them as my participants, resulting in my feeling subordinated sometimes.

Some of these women, for example Ralia, Salamatu, Samira, Jemima, and Dinatu, were so self-confident that they came through as being very arrogant; talking like authority figures with a strong voice and deep passion and in so doing positioned me as a very submissive, somewhat timid listener. They were very zealous about defending their conviction and commitment. I felt compelled to remain small in their eyes, listening for details, for explanations, or for opportunities to ask follow up questions. This kind of power dynamics manifested even when I set up appointments with them.

My experience with Salamatu and Dinatu regarding space for meeting is a good case here. They felt it was their prerogative to determine the meeting space and that was what I anticipated, but they went about it authoritatively, leaving me at their mercy. I had to speak with them respectfully, always feeling terrified that they could decide to withdraw their consent to participating in the study. I looked forward to other meetings with apprehension and much uncertainty. However, once the interview session started the tension often reduced. Ralia, for instance, continuously insisted that she had no struggles with schooling. I asked her my overarching research question differently and in many ways and in the end resorted to asking her to tell me her success stories. She was more comfortable with talking about her successes. Yet, it was obvious that she struggled with the English language. Most of the interview and deep conversations we had were in Hausa because that was the medium she was most comfortable with even though she explained her lack of proficiency in English language away as a non-issue.

Contradictions, tensions, and dilemmas

I encountered some difficulties in the field because of the biases, experiences, history, and politics that I brought into my research. Wolf (1996) explained that contradictions encountered in the field can inflict an enormous sense of guilt and anger. I found this to be so true. As a researcher working amongst my own people I empathized a lot with the stories the young women told me. I often resisted, with great difficulty, making commitments to taking action on their behalf – like counseling them on some decisions they needed to make. Sometimes I wondered if my personal stories did not bias my participants and in so doing influenced their own narration. On many occasions I felt like taking up their cases and intervening. I constantly asked to know where my responsibility as a researcher began and ended.

Wolf (1996) suggested that researchers should not "grab the data and run" but that they should act practically as well as responsibly toward their participants and the research community. Zara had struggled for four years to pass her English language examination at the Senior Secondary School Examination (SSCE). She had stagnated in continuing her education for many years because of this deficiency. I found myself committing to helping her remedy her deficiency by giving her extra coaching if she did not pass the last examination she wrote. I followed through and was so relieved when she excitedly told me the next time we met that the results were out and that she had finally made a credit in the subject. I had carried on with the feeling of guilt that I could help her to pass her English language examination by tutoring her, but I was unable to make out time for it. Plus, I was afraid of influencing her with my own biases because as it was, I

was angry at the dominance of English language in the educational system and the way that it determined to a large extent whether a woman dropped out of school or not. If I allowed myself to influence her then she probably would not have taken re-writing the examination seriously and that would have made her to be stagnated as far as her pursuit of higher education was concerned.

I also encountered very troubling moral issues (Laible, 2000). For instance, when Safiya sobbed about her grief at the way she was being treated at her aunt's house, I did not know what was morally right to do – to be responsive to my participant and follow the course of social justice or to empathize with her aunt whom I knew so well and understood her financial constraints and the extent to which she was making sacrifices to support Safiya's schooling. Having gone through school the way I did – guided by the principles of determination, diligence, and hard work, I found that I was almost pushing for that as the right posture that women who wanted to succeed in schooling against the odds should take. In fact I felt drawn to women who had this disposition even though I subscribe to Books's (2004) position that there is a need to create social conditions in which all children can flourish and in which no child pays the price for social priorities that devalue his or her health, safety, or educational well being (Books, 2004).

So, like Laible (2000) I continued to struggle with whether or not I was using a Euro-American, middle-class definition of success to assess the struggles these women had with schooling. I observed that in the United States and in United Kingdom, people work and go to school. That made me to wonder what was wrong with young women living with other people and doing the house chores and in turn getting an opportunity to

go to school. For me, that is almost the same thing as working and going to school. I also wonder what the yardstick is for condemning engaging in the hawking business as a way of augmenting family finances. Is it because western standards propagated by such bodies as UNICEF name it as child abuse? Would such a young woman who worked as a nanny or in a group home while she went to school in the United States be said to be experiencing child abuse? I never really was able to resolve these dilemmas but I reported the way these women felt about these acts and for most of them they saw them as impeding them from pursuing their schooling interests in the manner they cared about.

I also struggled with the issue of morality as I listened to my participants talk to me about their sexual compromises. Most of my participants were sexually involved with the people they dated. I struggled with self-righteousness as we talked deeply on the way these issues affected their schooling. I cherished the fact that they trusted me enough as to confide in me and I appreciated that I could provide a safe space for them to talk about their experiences. However, I also did not want them to read me as approving their actions. Dinatu and Rahila did a lot of these kinds of self-disclosure to me and ended up worrying about if I was disappointed in them. There were moments when I took on my counseling identity and even had to stand up for them before their boyfriends with whom they were having issues at the time because of how traumatized they were. Dinatu, for instance, had been having low grades at school because her boyfriend was not committed to their relationship even though he kept making promises to her that he would marry her. She kept feeling abandoned especially as he neither called nor visited as he used to anymore. She felt very uncertain about where the relationship was heading. She was

often distracted from her school work. As she was in the final semester of her college program, she felt terrified that she would not be able to graduate. I had to intervene to talk with her boyfriend and although the issue was not resolved at that time, she called me months later to tell me that she had moved on with her life. She had both graduated from school and had found reason to put her boyfriend behind her. She hoped to start off another relationship in the future.

I constantly struggled with restraining myself from pushing radical views into these women's minds borne out of my "Western eyes" (Mohanty, 1988). Mohanty (1988) posits that anyone who uses discourse which "sets up its own authorial subjects as the implicit referent, i.e. the yardstick by which to encode and represent cultural Others exercises power in discourse" amounting to oppression (p. 336). This is because in so doing differences in interests and desires regardless of class, ethnic or racial location or contradictions are silenced. Also, in so doing, a homogenous notion of the oppression of women as a group is assumed which in turn produces the image of "an average third world woman" - one who is powerless, sexually constrained, ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family oriented, and victimized as opposed to the self-representation of western women as educated, modern, having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions. Even when difference is talked about by western scholars, she insists, they view it for third world women by categorizing them as: "religious (read "not progressive"), family oriented (read "traditional"), legal minors (read "they-are-still-not-conscious-of-their-rights"), illiterate (read "ignorant"), domestic (read "backward") and sometimes revolutionary

(read “their-country-is-in-a-state-of-war-they-must-fight!”). Mohanty (1988) also condemns this second categorization as homogenous and systematized. She insists that oppression is contextual and not universal and ahistorical; all marginal and resistant modes of experiences have to be recognized (p. 352).

Given my understanding of Mohanty’s (1998) arguments and my commitment to postcolonial feminism, what I report here is what I found about these women’s reading of their schooling experiences and how I reacted to them. They were making decisions and asking questions about their schooling predicament. I read them as going against the grain, but what they were requesting was what they cared about. For most of them, their stance represented what I was advocating for – that these women should be allowed to go to school on their own terms. I was more drawn to talking with those who had such radical views; they idealized some of my positions concerning schooling. They appreciated schooling. In talking with these types of women I found that I could not restrain myself from showing solidarity with their postures. On many occasions, I felt like instigating them to go to school even if they lost their homes in the process.

I often wondered at what coincidence made me to discover such women. Their personality was not one of the things I looked out for before selecting them to work with me. Often they were very vocal and expressive of their feelings. They were advocates, determined, and hardworking; people who were resolute on weathering the storm in order to realize their dreams and life’s ambition. They were smart. Their openness made undertaking this kind of study a worthy venture for me. I could talk with them for hours unending. I looked forward to the next session we would spend together. I admired them.

Hauwa and Kuluwa come to my mind in this regard. These young women desired schooling so deeply, but their husbands restrained them because of their own selfish reasons, hiding under the cloak of religion. They resisted their husbands but I needed them to be more radical than they were. But that was precisely my dilemma – whether I should encourage them to be more radical about their stance or not. As with these two women and my general disposition in this research, I continued to have an internal conflict on whether education is not truly a panacea given our postcolonial reality. I know that a critical examination of this issue shows that it is actually not a panacea. However, my experience shows me that my having an education and of the kind I have – a masters degree and hopefully a PhD – definitely positions me to be more comfortable in life and to have better job opportunities. This is because of the way certification is celebrated in the society.

In seeking for better ways to do school for these young women – which I have called an alternative way of looking at women's education, am I not also acknowledging, in some sense, schooling as some sort of panacea? To stretch this thought a bit further, I found that I needed to recognize that even the notion of social justice is a western concept. The pertinent question to ask is, "How feasible is it to extrapolate the concept of social justice into the Nigerian society – a closed one at that?" Is the Nigerian society rife to engage in this kind of issues when we have a lot of development issues plaguing the country? Should we be looking at the question of social justice or should we be asking questions about how to have the kind of education that will lead students and teachers to making discoveries, innovations, and inventing things that can help the nation move

forward from being a developing nation to becoming a developed one? Am I not simply importing the knowledge and way of communicating I have garnered which are validated by western institutions into the Nigerian society by my recommendations?

This kind of dilemma is what Laible (2000) refers to as “institutional evil”. But do I have any choice about this really, since I need to be awarded this PhD anyway? Even in the field, my participants made it obvious that they were drawn to me because I came from the US to do my study and I would be returning there after I was done collecting data. More often than not they were willing to participate in the study because they felt that in the process they would learn many things from me and the experience I brought with me from the US. I find the entire project truly complicating and complex in all its ramifications.

Ethics

Villenas (1996) talked about wrong ways in which a researcher can be positioned as an insider researcher. I refer to this notion on a different platform than she talked about it. I speak about wrong positioning as concerning the financial implication of recruiting research participants. One of the things that puzzled me in the field was how the research terrain has been marred with the gifts given to participants, leaving one to wonder whether facts are not distorted to suit the assumed interest of the researcher – something like a resurgence of anthropological work in the days of the scramble for Africa that entrenched colonialism. In those days, gifts of mirror, singlet, gun powder and t-shirt were enough to lure traditional rulers to sell their lands to white settlers and some of the

versions portrayed of the people in narratives that were told were in no small measure distorted.

Presently, international bodies like UNICEF, World Bank, and Pathfinder allow participants to cart away so many gifts that if a researcher who does not have enough funds comes to the field, especially to places where these organizations have worked, and does not have commensurate gifts to what the people are used to being given, they are resisted and not supported in their data collection. Although these international partners give these gifts in appreciation of the state of poverty of most of their research participants, there is no gainsaying that some of this gesture is premised on a capitalist tendency to keep the poor and the marginalized subjugated.

Because of the way the people have been spoiled with gifts they have now commercialized information they give out by actually naming a price for it. In some instances, researchers are asked up front what the settlement will be. Although I understand that Nigerians like receiving and giving gifts, this is usually not done in exchange for information given. More often than not this exchange is done to show comradeship with people over a notable event that has happened to them like childbirth, coronation, and wedding. However, in the course of collecting data, I was particularly puzzled when Ralia placed demands on me for her financial compensation in exchange of the information she gave me. I had already proposed to give some form of compensation which the University of Minnesota Internal Review Board had even approved (Baba & Pawlowski, 2001) but my practice was to do so at the end. I did not announce my intention unless I was forced to because I did not want my paticipants to be biased. I was

greatly dismayed when Ralia, during our second session together, started off our conversation by saying that she had some information which she would not give to me unless I promised to give her a gift. She premised her argument on the fact that she was not even supposed to volunteer any information if we did not have a deal regarding this matter. I was taken aback. On the other hand, other participants, like Samira, felt unhappy that I gave them any gifts. They were happy to simply be a part of the study because according to them, their stories will result in a book which in the end could be used to help improve the lots of other women – they considered that they were rendering good services towards the course of humanity.

Moments of self-reflection and times for mapping out strategies for activism

Like Islam (2000), I struggled with whether or not to be silent about certain issues that my participants discussed bordering on religion and ethnicity especially. I do not consider that in espousing these issues I am speaking up for my participants (Young, 2000). However, some of the views they expressed resonated with me while others did not. For instance, the view that a woman should submit to her husband's insistence on her not furthering her education in order for her to secure her place in heaven definitely did not resonate with me. Some people may read my analyses as oppositional to Islamic views and justify their judgment on the fact that I am not a Muslim and so my judgment is biased. Yet I recognize that failure to show the oppression inherent in that kind of posture and how "systems of domination and inequality are maintained" (Islam, 2000, p. 59) will defeat the purpose of amplifying these women's voice and calling attention to what they are saying.

Wolf (1996) encouraged the education of women so that they in turn can conduct their own research themselves. I continued to reflect on this during the research process and found that I did not resolve the conflict regarding whether or not I felt like I was doing the research among my own ethnic group, because of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of the Nigerian society that positioned me as an outsider among the women I worked with, even though we were all supposed to be from northern Nigeria. It felt more comfortable to say I was working with women living in Zaria than to say I was working with northern Nigerian women, because of the complications and complexities implicated in the latter position. Our inherent differences and privileges defined certain power relations that made me feel somewhat handicapped a lot of the times. Conflicts and contradictions inhibited me and limited me in ways I have tried to articulate in the foregoing.

I feel consoled in the fact that a number of my participants began for the first time to think deeply about why they are in school and what going to school means to them. They began to feel that someone cared about the struggles they were having and to seek possible ways of challenging the forces that were working against their schooling. Their favorite questions were: "*How will you describe your schooling experiences so far*?"; "*What changes do you want to see happen in school that will make schooling an exciting adventure for you*?" and "*Where do you see yourself 5 – 10 years from now?*" I asked these questions in multiple ways to help them confront the realities of their lives rather than shy away from them, to make then see the source of their oppression and to contemplate ways of challenging them, and to see if they could even be somewhat pushed

to start to challenge their oppression or to feel safe to continue the struggle if they were already doing so (Collins, 1991; Laible, 2000).

Another internal conflict that I continued to have was with whose interest the research served. Obviously, these women were not asking questions about schooling and what it means to them until I brought my research to them. I already mentioned that most of them actually told me so. It would appear that the whole research is about me and my anticipated degree and not about them. Many times I felt like I was exploiting them for my own advantage, especially when I brought myself into the work. I already suggested that my schooling experiences were littered with frustrations, lack of confidence, and anger as I continually fought discrimination because of my social class (coming from a low-income family background), my religion (being a Christian in a predominantly Islamic environment), and my tribal and linguistic background (being Gbagyi, a minority tribe in a Hausa dominant region) as well as the fact that determination, hard work, and my parents' sacrifices and belief in formal education helped me to stay focused.

I have remained passionate about promoting women's education in northern Nigeria especially among those, who like me, fight marginalization to access education. My 18 years of teaching in both rural and urban secondary schools in northern Nigeria and in what would pass as a community college also fueled my passion. I continually observed an increasing school dropout rate among women. The gender gap and inequities that pervade the educational system became more glaring. I became increasingly troubled.

For my master's dissertation I examined Hausa women's voice expressed in shantu songs (a popular folksong) and saw that these women have a wealth of literacy that is excluded from the dominant forms obtained in our schools. This study led me to want to understand more about the conditions in women's lives that keep them from furthering their education. My goal has been to work to transform these conditions and help women to increase their literacy development and meet their educational goals.

Also, in almost all of the national and international conferences and articles I have published, my recurrent theme has centered on the plight of women and the need to design educational programs that can potentially help them improve their lives so that they could be self-actualized. It is this passion that drove me in 2006 to abandon my secure job in order to pursue a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction, with an emphasis in Literacy Education, in the United States, where I developed the theoretical frameworks that helped me to understand the forces at work in schooling.

Lather (1991) and Price (2000) explained that this ethical issue of whose interest research serves is an unresolved one in ethnographic research. Gonzalez (2001) argued that research is supposed to produce knowledge relevant to both the researched and the researcher. In his case he came away from his research feeling liberated because he saw himself shifting away from being an oppressed object to a culturally working actor, a subject working toward the transformation of his cultural environment. His view is that in pursuing an academic career to become a researcher and a professor, he can transform the academy. By not losing his cultural nourishment, he can refuse to become a cultural agent that is reproducing the existing social order.

Following Gonzalez's (2001) stance, I too see myself as a determined agent of change with a burning passion to make a difference in the lives of northern Nigerian women. I am determined not to be silent so that my silence is not read for complicity at the peril of continued marginalization and subjugation. It is my view that northern Nigerian women need to create their own "academic territories" (Villenas, 1996).

Additionally, I felt consoled that my participants benefited from the research process in a number of ways. First, considering the closed nature of our society, getting them to talk about what bothered them was therapeutic in itself like I already mentioned. Second, the women were able to articulate what their inner yearnings and desires were for formal education and the structural changes they expected to see; they were able to have a voice (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003). Lastly, the gifts they got definitely met their present financial needs. For a moment I felt powerful; I felt like a savior – almost all of them were excited at the cash gifts and had a number of things they were going to do with the money that will empower them in powerful ways: Safiya was going to pay for her NECO examination; Fatima, and Kuluwa, and Kubra were going to invest in petty trades. I even committed to doing a follow up with them in the future to see where they would be at and what would have changed for them as far as schooling and empowerment are concerned.

But this left me confused about where to go after graduation – pursue my dreams as articulated in the previous paragraph, and I would need money for that, considering how hugely poverty complicates the schooling process for these women and the fact that the alternative practice I have proffered in this study plus the equity that I advocate for

are not changes that can take place in a moment. If I got a job offer in the United States where the dollar amount I get can better be invested in the laudable projects I have in Nigeria for promoting women's education, what would that mean for my commitment and passion about these women? What would it mean for my dream not to be realized because I am financially handicapped? If scholarships brought me to where I am then I definitely do not have my own money to invest into my dream.

I already talked about how elated my participants were when I gave them their cash gifts for participating in the research and what the money was going to do for them. The concern I have is that usually, because of the abject poverty that is entrenched in the society, my participants felt that they could not enjoy the cash gifts I gave them alone – they worried about people who knew that they got the gifts and who will be expecting their own cuts because they helped in the process of my finding them as my participants by actually recommending them. On many occasions I had to give them extra cash gifts to forestall jealousy and envy.

Some of those women, even after I returned to the US, wrote me e-mails and spent their hard earned money to call me on several occasions requesting financial help. I remember the day the first call from them came through. It was Hannatu. The call came through at 10.50 a.m. American time on March, 5, 2010. I was so thrilled and touched. I did not leave any phone numbers with my participants when I was leaving because I did not have any. But when I got back to the US and called a few of my friends these women in turn got the number from my friends when they chanced to meet them.

My situation is further complicated by my obligation to my family responsibilities. I mentioned in my personal story at the beginning of this work that I had a strained relationship with my only son for seventeen years resulting from my failed marriage. We got back together just before I left for the US. He desired to join me here but of course my living allowance from the fellowships I received plus my J-1 status and the fact that he was past age twenty one made it impossible for me to help him to come over. Luck fell on his side and he won the American visa lottery. However, as soon as he got here he realized that the American dream was a façade. Rather than do the hard to find menial jobs that most immigrants do and then to slowly work and study until he finished college, he preferred to enlist in the US NAVY, the military having been one of his life's ambition when he was in Nigeria. As a veteran his school would be paid for. Furthermore, his status changed very fast from being a resident to being a citizen, understandably so if he had to defend the country. But what all these mean for me is that returning home to Nigeria presents me as an uncaring and unloving mother who would again be abandoning her only son; this time a grown son. I feel torn apart.

This dilemma of whether or not to return home to Nigeria is further complicated by my love and commitment to my sick mother. She had played a very vital role in my academic career. She had a stroke in my second year of course work and I almost slipped into depression if I had not been able to dash home quickly to be with her as she recuperated in the hospital; thanks to faculty, staff, my friends and course mates in the Curriculum and Instruction Department. Presently she has been diagnosed with Alzheimers. My heart is with her and I want to be able to take care of her. This need to

make this decision further tears me apart. My big question remains how do I reconcile my personal issues – the issues of life and the pursuit of my passion and life's goals and ambition?

The Nigerian socio-economic and political situation continues to tip downwards. Again, I continue to wonder what the Nigerian situation means for my passion and dream? During the course of my data collection, boko haram happened – it was an agitation against western education by a Muslim sect who went about killing people and destroying government structures because they considered western education abominable (Gusau & Kwaru, 2009; Halfah & Yahaya, 2009; Ibrahim, 2009; Abubakar, 2009; El-Sadiq, 2009). Followers who already had one form of formal school certificate or the other burnt them as a show of solidarity for this protest. The government was eventually able to clamp down on them and to silence them after their leader was captured. A residue of them are still gathering themselves together in anticipation of when they will stage a come back. Religious crises are a common recurrent feature in northern Nigeria.

The big question then becomes the risk of exposure I would be putting myself into when I go out there to promote what certain fundamentalists are most opposed to. I already talked about how my outsider status affected my data collection process. I therefore worry about how my not being a Muslim would continue to position me as far as promoting western education among northern Nigerian women is concerned, especially if they are Muslim fundamentalists. During the boko haram crises, members of the izala sect were also the target of attack because of the role they play in promoting western education, particularly among Muslim women. They are Muslims themselves

whereas I am a Christian; a person who is not just seen as an infidel but one who is associated with the perpetration of western education in the guise of fulfilling a Christian mission agenda.

As such, I would need to truly be doing something radically different and one that will not jeopardize these women's faith in order to be able to attract them to my advocacy work. My question in this regard is, what do I hope to go back home to Nigeria to do differently? Do I have the resources to work with? How am I going to raise the money? Unfortunately, I came away from this research unable to resolve this internal conflict. Rather, I felt more troubled, disturbed, very helpless, and pessimistic about my mission for social change and social justice; yet determined to take the leap.

Conclusion

I told my own story in the introduction deliberately in order to work the "blurred boundaries" (Rosaldo, 1989) or the "hyphen" (Fine, 1994) and to be authentically engaged (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) in my narrative about what schooling means to northern Nigerian women – to probe how I am in relation to the context I have studied and to make explicit my position of speaking against structures, representations, and practices of domination. My entire posture in the analytical section is not to present these women as some homogenous group, Othered by oppression in order to evoke pity and need (Ladner, 1971; Fine 1994). Mine is an outcry for social justice – for the views, the interests, and the values of the women to be heard as far as provisions for their schooling are concerned. I have done so by the claims I have made in order to counter existing claims. I can not assume that I have "arrived" even in the way I have exposed the

contradictory stances, politics, perspectives, and histories that relate to the way women's education is being pursued presently which I represented in the claims I made as well as in the solutions I have proffered. But I continue to struggle "between" (Fine, 1994); I struggle with contradictions, tensions, and dilemmas.

Chapter Four

The Impact of Poverty on Schooling

Adama: "God punish poverty"

Introduction

In this chapter I begin by discussing my meeting with Adama and how she came to be a pick for this research. Thereafter, I provide a synopsis of what telling her story means for the overarching research question that I ask: "*What does schooling mean for northern Nigerian women*" in order to foreground the manner in which her story reveals the complications and the contradictions implicated in schooling which are often glossed over when quantitative research methods are used to investigate women's education in Nigeria and northern Nigeria in particular. As I tell her story I provide sub-themes that help make the meaning-making process clearer.

"I wish you could use my story"

Adama was a 27 year old Christian Kaduna State law student in the penultimate year of her program at the Usman Yunusa University in Zaria when I conducted this interview. I had met her through the president of her university's campus Christian fellowship upon the recommendation of my colleague. I needed to pick a woman who was at the university level because I wanted to reflect the manner in which age was not a factor in school placement in the Nigerian context. So, while women her age might still be in secondary school or even pursuing a master's degree, Adama was just about completing her first degree. I had already started interviewing her when as I asked to know her age. I discovered that she was not a good fit. We were both devastated because

we had connected so well already. We did not need any ice-breakers. She very much wanted to partake in this study. We exchanged phone numbers and promised to remain friends. Then she said to me, "*I wish you could use my story. I have a very interesting story. My schooling experiences are very captivating and you would like to use them if you hear them.*" I worried about violating IRB rules and so I did a mail to my advisor, to ask if I could increase the age bracket from 18 – 25 to 18 – 30 and the number of my research participants from 5 to 20 because then I began to worry about also reflecting the multi-ethnic nature of the Nigerian society. Upon his consent I wrote to IRB and received approval to do so. Before I could even get back to Adama, her call had come through and I told her the good news – she was enlisted and we could begin our conversations. What I report here is a result of that development with each of the 4 sessions I had with her lasting for more than one hour. Her story was truly engaging and the manner in which she told it was no doubt captivating. We laughed and cried as we shared our stories. I tell her story with the aim of showing the arduous task women who are poor undertake in order to access western education and how their identities are constructed in the process. The intent is to demonstrate how being poor complicates the schooling experiences of northern Nigerian women.

What Adama's story means

Adama's story speaks to issues of social inequality which pervades the larger society but which also plays out in schools and the way they are run. The fact that she was poor affected the way that she was positioned in school and the manner in which her identity was constructed. I viewed her reaction as shaped by the discourse of

postcolonialism in the way it spoke back to the west to challenge the impact of colonialism in former colonies and the resultant legacies that play out in the way nation states have been formed and the way they operate. Specifically, I see Adama challenging the way the social structure created by the colonial contact put her at a disadvantage in terms of how she accessed school. She contested this positioning through the way she navigated her way through school via determination and hard work and her aspirations and dreams for a future in which she would be able to appropriate success in the manner in which those in the upper-and middle-classes do.

Adama disturbs the discourse that equal opportunity for schooling exists for all Nigerians. She argued that good schooling was still the prerogative and the right of a select and privileged few. Her story exposed middle-class identity and privilege determined by education which guaranteed economic stability. This privilege was further complicated by ethnicity because where she came from had implications for how easily she had access to education, especially at the tertiary level. Her story shows that members of the middle class, whether such people are members of her extended family or not, set the standards/norms in the society, at school and at home, which the poor have to aspire to attain.

Another thing Adama's story exposed was how poor schools are located in poor neighborhoods placing the rich schools both in spatial and economic terms beyond their reach. Rich schools and better resources in schools are exclusively reserved for the rich and the few and rarely privileged poor who by stroke of luck are able to access such schools. Adama explained how as she struggled to attain these lofty standards, pressure

was put on her by the society, her school, her family, and herself to necessarily be an excellent student. It was her excellence that privileged her and stood her out to be reckoned with for initiation into this social class for which she so deeply yearned. It is this kind of positioning of Adama as poor and underprivileged and marginalized that makes the intersection between poverty and education a social justice issue. Adama's story, therefore, leads me to ask: Do the poor have to work so hard before they are recognized and reckoned with as human beings who have something to contribute to the society? How should schools be organized differently to prepare women like Adama for the vital role and contribution they have to make in the society? Books (2004) argues, and I agree with her, that:

> *the fact that some young people succeed despite enormous social odds owing to say hard work, their own giftedness, family support, dedication, or teachers and other mentors, scholarships that enable them to pursue higher education, and so on, is never a reason to abdicate responsibility for creating the social conditions in which all children can flourish and in which no child pays the price for social priorities that devalue his or her health, safety, or educational well being*. (p. 130)

Telling Adama's story: Childhood impressions, indelible markers

Adama narrated her childhood experiences of how her being poor left indelible impressions upon her mindset, constructing her identity, and informing her decision to position herself for "success" in adulthood. She looked back at the neighborhood where she lived and was able, now and then, to tell that only the poor lived in such neighborhoods and by virtue of living there, there were certain behavior traits that they

exhibited that she too partook of, especially as informed by the kind of relationships she kept and what that meant for the way her parents shaped her identity formation:

> *Adama: Growing up I had friends that were bad because I lived in the barrack […]. My neighbor was the first person to make me have a boyfriend because I escorted her to see her boyfriend; they were in the room with the boyfriend. Me I will wait for her in the parlor […]. I will keep staying till they finish what they were doing […]. I was twelve/thirteen. You know in the barracks at age ten to eleven girls have started sleeping with guys. That's how rough barracks can be actually. If you live in the barracks and you come out clean, you are good. Just thank God for your parents and then you as an individual […]. I had injuries on my head. My mum used to beat me […]. She flogs me with koboko*[11]*, with firewood […]. I was very stubborn actually when I was small […], I will go with those girls, maybe escort them to their boyfriends' place and come back late in the night.*

Judging herself against the moral standards that the rich advocate, as the mark of class, success, and wealth, both when she was a child and now that she had become an adult, Adama concluded that growing up in the barracks presented a moral challenge which most people were unable to overcome. She explained that "at age ten to eleven girls have started sleeping with guys" usually as a result of peer influences from bad friends who were usually people from the neighborhood. She told the story of how she too had her first boyfriend at age twelve or thirteen because of the influence of her older friend and neighbor who always invited her to come with her to visit her boyfriend. She waited for them in the parlor while they were in the room doing "what they were doing". Her

[11] Koboko is like a long rope made out of horse skin used the way a belt is used to beat an erring child or donkeys when they are reluctant to bring the loads on their backs to particular destinations.

conclusion was that to be morally clean while remaining in the class of the poor depended on the extra effort of the individual. This meant that being morally clean was, by implication, the prerogative of the rich. Her mother played a significant role in this regard. Blaming herself for her moral character, Adama judged herself as "very stubborn*"* and justified the corporal punishment she suffered. Her mother would beat her "with koboko, with firewood" because she went out with her friends to their boyfriends and came back home very late.

The little gifts in cash and kinds[12] she got from such escapades soothed her hunger pangs and gave her a little taste of the good things that the rich enjoy:

> *Adama: They will buy sweets and chewing gum for me or minerals […]. You know you're trying to survive. You're trying to, you know, eat. And sometimes some of my boyfriends they will give me five naira [three cents], twenty naira [thirteen cents], you know, just to eat. I remember the first time I did that with the boyfriend I had was after it he gave me fifty naira (thirty-three cents). Do you understand, he gave me fifty naira not that I asked for it […] but that fifty naira did go a long way and helped me. You know, I felt, could it be a justification for that? So, sometimes not having I could see that it can push some ladies to do some things. That was not what informed what I did but then […].*

Sweets (candies), chewing gum, and minerals (pop/soda) were luxury items that the poor could not afford not only because they did not have the money but because they would rather spend their meager resources on hunger assuaging items – items that helped them to survive. The desire to live the lifestyle of the rich was what lured Adama toward the

[12] "Kinds" is used here to refer to other gifts that Adama received that were not in the form of money such as sweets (candies), chewing gum, and minerals (pop/soda).

moral behavior that she categorized as immoral, and thereafter she struggled with guilt for making such compromises. In the midst of hunger three cents or even thirteen cents became a lot of money especially, when it came as free money. The monetary gift was seen as wrong because it was given to her by "some of my boyfriends" suggesting that she had had to make certain moral compromises to earn it. This is confirmed when she said that the first time she did "it", her boyfriend gave her thirty-three cents which she did not ask for. She did not see sexual exploitation in that relationship. Her vision was beclouded by the immediate and more pressing need to survive or/and to enjoy the use of some luxury items. Although Adama recognized that this kind of tendency of compromising one's moral integrity for monetary gains was what influenced most young women's behavior, she offered justification for hers while yet fighting guilt and being judgmental on herself by insisting that there was no justification for such an action – "That was not what informed what I did but then …" Her Christian morals told her that compromise was compromise and sin was sin; there was no excusing it.

Adama further pointed out abject poverty as informing her acts of stubbornness and compromises:

> *Adama: We used to cook once in a day […]. Sometimes we may not have much […]. Sometimes I have to look for food outside […]. In fact, I felt just even vegetables […], we can just eat only vegetables and sleep because she used to farm […]. She is a very hardworking woman […]. My mum contributed to me not going wild because, "ah", I have the tendency to go wild that's what I think […] but my mum was always beating me. She didn't, she never spared me […]. She must flog me. So, I used to be very scared […] but still I will still do some of those things, you know. But then, I worked a lot so they*

> *liked me […]. That is why they will tell me to go and sell. I will sell for them.*

When the rich eat vegetables, it is a matter of taste and they are eating healthy in order to stay fit, strong, and alive. However, with the poor they often ate once a day because they could not afford more meals. Eating vegetables, as was the case with Adama, was a sign of genuine lack and want. It was a way of assuaging her hunger pangs in a bid for survival.

Adama's mother's role in keeping her from being amoral was to employ the use of corporal punishment. Adama did not talk about enduring the pain of those punishments with a feeling of regret. Rather she talked about the experience with a lot of delight in her eyes. She appreciated the fact that her mother trained her in this manner otherwise she would have been wild. She acknowledged that she had "the tendency to go wild". It took hard work to put a meal on the table and in spite of her stubbornness, Adama became her parents' favorite because she was very diligent and hardworking – she helped her mother to raise upkeep money by hawking for the family. Money realized from hawking was for house use, not just for Adama: as she explained: "I will sell for them". This sheds light on the communal way they lived as poor people; supporting themselves to survive and enabling themselves to strive for change of status – from being poor to being rich.

Following from this conversation, Adama drew attention to the social and emotional issues that affected her schooling. She asserted that in order for her to do school the way she cared about, she had to deal with these survival issues bordering on economics, gender, and her emotions (i.e. the feelings of guilt and blame that she had when, overwhelmed by her poverty, she made certain compromises that she felt were

amoral). Although Adama knew that her belonging to the lower class positioned her as necessarily, if not compulsorily, vulnerable, she felt that she did not have to be hungry, sexually abused, or even amoral to survive. She felt that she could still have lived a decent life in spite of her situations and circumstances. It was a matter of choice.

Specifically speaking about the kind of school she attended, Adama portrayed how poor women like her who lived in poor neighborhoods were only able to access poor schools, because those were the kinds of schools that they could afford and that were closest to them:

> *Adama: I think my, will I say my foundation was not really good […]. I was in LEA. You know in an LEA what the standard is. I was passing o. I was carrying first but I didn't know how to spell my name […]. The standard of teaching is too low. The exposure […] my teachers were not good. They didn't know what they were doing […]. They cannot pass the message well […]. Sometimes they speak Hausa with you […]. Sometimes they will not come to class and sometimes the standard of teaching actually was poor […] and the exposure. And you know, of course maybe they are not well paid too. So, they cannot deliver the best to the students […]. And then, I just feel foundation actually […] and then of course growing up in the barracks we don't speak good English. We speak Pidgin English. So, that's a long way again it goes. And you write in school. Again is with English you write. You write to make sentence, make statement, you know some of these things we didn't know how to do them and our teachers didn't help us […]. We were not really taught as much […]. Even if they did we did not understand coming from the background of [laughed] not knowing anything you know.*

Being proficient in English language was another trade mark that showed that one belonged to the middle class. Poor schools do not maintain that standard because even the

students in such schools do not have that previous knowledge to bring with them to the classroom. Adama explained apologetically and regrettably how "growing up in the barracks we don't speak good English. We speak Pidgin English". She saw her inability to speak in Standard English as excluding her from the class of the rich. She felt put at a disadvantage as far as being able to access western education was concerned because of this deficiency. Her condition was not helped by her attending a school in her neighborhood, since the school was poor and the relationships she cultivated were with people who were themselves deficient in being proficient in English language. As such they could not help themselves to improve in the use of the language. The teachers who worked in that school were: "not good", "they speak Hausa", their "standard of teaching actually is too low", their "standard of teaching actually was poor", "they cannot deliver", "they cannot pass the message well", and because "they are not well paid" they do not have enough motivation to "come to class". Consequently, her "foundation was not really good"; she "didn't know how to spell [her] name", and "[her] teachers didn't help [her] … [she was] not really taught as much …"

Many issues are implicated in what Adama talked about here. From my perspective, I read her as questioning the competence of the teachers that were assigned to teach in poor schools. She also queried the attempt to use government structures to relegate them to the background. Teachers in these kinds of government schools were poorly paid. They were not committed to teaching because they lacked motivation.

In my opinion, therefore, I read the Nigerian government as paying lip service to women's education. They actually do not want more women to be educated. If more

women get educated and peradventure they find good jobs, the gap between the rich and the poor will be bridged and that is not what they want. That is why although they advocate women's education, the actual things that should be done to ensure that these women really acquire this education, one of which should be ensuring that the teachers teach appropriately, are being neglected. As such, as a researcher, I read Adama as calling the attention of the government to the need to re-think the way teachers are treated. This is especially needful considering the fact that these poor women, given their class and family background, are already positioned at a disadvantage in terms of being able to cope with the rigors of schooling. They need the services of competent teachers who will help to bring them up to standard.

Another issue Adama raised which she did not question is whether or not Standard English language should be maintained as the language of instruction in schools. I comment on my take on this issue in the concluding chapter of this work. Suffice it to say that Adama did point to her lack of proficiency in English language as a major set back in her schooling endeavor, for which she did not get help from the kind of poor local government primary school she attended.

Another issue that is implicated in Adama's statement is her alluding to the fact that when poor people have a poor foundation in their schooling experiences, then the pursuit of further education becomes a major challenge. She questioned the assessment practice in poor schools when she explained that although she could not read and write she was topping the class. According to her, a school is good if the teaching and assessment qualities are good.

By way of providing further explanation on what it meant to go to school, Adama commented on the reading pattern that obtained in poor schools:

> Adama: *Um, the reading pattern […]. Textbooks, buying textbooks, buying all those things. We didn't have them. Even if they say we should buy, we don't have money. All of us were poor people. Virtually everybody [laughed]. We were poor people. No money. So, you cannot afford them. So, when will you have time to even go back and read it at home*?

Neither she nor her classmates had the required textbooks to read because they were too poor to be able to afford to buy them. This implied that only the teacher's copy was available for use in school, meaning that she could not get any reading done whenever she was not at school. All exposure to reading happened and stopped at school. Again, Adama drew attention to the fact that if northern Nigerian women are to be encouraged to go to school, they had to be able to have access to books.

Rich schools in contrast to poor schools: What that meant for Adama

In contrast to poor schools, the schools that the middle class and the upper class elites go to are better managed. Adama got the privilege of attending such a school. Her mother got a job in Battalion Primary School as a nanny and was able to enroll Adama in that school. It was an elite school and it was run as both a primary and secondary school, such that students simply transitioned from the primary school to the secondary school upon completion of the former. Whenever Adama's mother was unable to pay the fees she would beg the school administration to delay payment as well as to allow her to pay the fees by installment. They often took pity on her and conceded to her request.

Adama had to repeat her class when she came to this school such that at 12 years old she was still just in primary 2. This meant that she was in class with much younger children who were between five and seven years old. This made Adama to feel very intimidated, shy and sometimes embarrassed in class, as captured in this powerful statement that she made about her experience at her new school: "I saw small small children that are like five years, they could read, you know … " She repeated the word "small" for emphasis. All her classmates were rich kids and that meant that in addition to repeating her class she felt intimidated and inferior in the classroom. The children were not only much younger than her but they were also smarter – they could read whereas she could not. However, this new school environment was for her the first time she began to actually go to school. She considered herself "fortunate" to be in such a school:

> Adama: *It was at a very old age that […] I started school, as in I started a good school […].*
> *Phebe: So what did they do differently in Battalion that was not in LEA that helped you pick up?*
> *Adama: I think I had an injury on my head because I didn't know how to read.*
> *Phebe: Injury?*
> *Adama: Yes, I had a teacher that flogged me so much in primary 2 and I was 12 years already. I was big o, I was already [laughed], I was very big […]. So, I think, among my siblings it's only me and my younger brother that were fortunate to get that and that helped […]. They expect you to start reading from primary 2 because they have readers […]. They use the high standard one […]. When I got to Primary 2 I will not forget you have to read out "Peter goes to school". Some of those things we read I can still remember some of the things because of how we were taught to learn to know them.*
> *Phebe: So how did they begin to teach you?*

Adama: Of course like I said how to write words together, letter handwriting, all those things, how to join two words together to be able to, sorry two letters to get a word, two words to get another word, things like that. So, you know, it's like from the beginning. From ABC, some of those things they were teaching us and we learnt some of those things. And then we have readers. Some of those readers now today they will say you read. You come and stand in front of the class and read. If you don't know how to read you have to go back home and tell someone please teach me o even if you don't know how to read you can cram it and come and read it to the class and the teacher will […]. Sometimes my classmates, I will tell them please put me through put me through […]. It's a consistency thing and then we started learning the words and then they will give us assignment, they will give us homework, go back and read this thing when you come to class. Some of those things, actually with time […].

The rich have teachers who are put under pressure to maintain a high standard of academic performance. In order to measure up to these set standards the teachers use all kinds of means to force the children to learn, including the use of corporal punishment, take home assignments and homework, and the teaching of certain content to children at an age when they might not be ready for such learning. Since that is the practice in the school, you find that the children are able to cope with the workload. However, another thing that helps them to cope is the funds of knowledge that they are able to bring with them to school from home. Almost all of them have a literacy-rich home environment which makes learning a lot easier for them in comparison to poor women who naturally do not have that kind of advantage.

Another thing these rich schools have going for them is that the teachers are able to maintain consistency. Consequently, women like Adama who did not come into this kind of rich school with such positions were classified as struggling readers upon whom corporal punishment had to be used to help them measure up to standard. Adama sustained a head injury at one such time. She could not read at 12 years old in primary 2. She did not have readers. Those who could read were able to do so "because they [had] readers". The foundation that was supposed to be laid before she came to this school had to be re-laid, beginning from the basics. The teachers employed such pedagogical practices as read aloud and that made her to be both conscious and determined to be able to know how to read. She sought help from those who knew how to read. Sometimes she memorized a passage in order not to be embarrassed and punished in class, because she was unable to read.

There was no sense of regret in Adama's voice as she recounted these very taxing and demanding ways of learning in this new school of the rich. It was obvious that she was behind but her determination to catch up both in terms of her academic performance and in terms of closing the class gap made her to endure the hardship for the hoped-for gains of tomorrow. Her perception was that if you were from a rich home you began to read and write very early in life and you went to a good school. This means that that if she were not poor she would have been able to read as well as those rich kids were doing.

For Adama, enduring corporal punishment in order to be able to enjoy good teaching was a worthy sacrifice to make. However, in so doing women who were behind experienced untold hardship and made a lot of sacrifices so that they might be able to

transcend their social class. One of the sacrifices they made was to depend on the kindness and the generosity of the rich. Having established that good learning was the prerogative of the rich who in turn share it with whom they decide to be kind and generous to, Adama did not hesitate to ask her classmates to help her learn how to read. She ignored the fact that they were much younger than her. Also, although they belonged to a different social class, she was not dissuaded from seeking their help to improve on her learning. She chose to transcend class boundaries in order to get what she wanted. I read Adama as saying that the onus is on poor women to take the initiative to seek for academic assistance from the rich if she is to change her status. Good schools will make you inquisitive and curious to discover knowledge – you become more conscious to learn but rich people are already comfortable with such behavior traits. It is poor women like Adama who have to cultivate and imbibe these traits as they walk their way towards a change of status.

This mindset of enduring hardship and paying the price was propagated by poor women's parents. It informed the role that they played in their children's lives in order to ensure that they did well in school. They encouraged them to persevere and to endure hardship:

> *Adama: You know I was beaten by my teacher with a hard wood and I was injured on my head and I went home and told my mummy. My mummy said that's the price I have to pay for not knowing how to read. So, you know but after then, I will not forget, so I had to be conscious enough to know that I have to learn these things.*

Further to her mother's disposition about the place of corporal punishment in the learning process, Adama became resilient. She talked about the incident without any sense of regret or self-pity. Rather, there was a note of triumph in her voice that she had her advanced educational pursuit to show as evidence of improved learning from this harsh treatment that accompanied the learning process.

Adama saw comfort and luxury in life as the prerogative of the rich. Poor children like her could only observe from afar and wallow in self pity. They assumed that such lifestyles were beyond their reach:

> *Adama: I saw small small children that are like five years, … they had parents that are doctors, that are lawyers, that are engineers, and everything. Ok you see them their parents bringing them to drop them in school with cars. […]. You know, when they are coming to school they bring a good food- flask with food with meat inside and you you can barely even see the food not to talk of eating it with meat […]. There were times that I in fact when I am hungry and they are eating I will have to beg them to give me to eat. Yes, and then some of them too because they know that you don't have too they bring food for you and some of them that are very good say, "come and eat with me". In fact some of them if they bring the food they don't even eat it and you you will be looking for how you will do it so that you will eat.*

Adama assumed that those who enjoyed comfort and luxury in life were those who had a good education – those who pursued higher education and career paths and earned good paying jobs including doctors, lawyers, and engineers. They could drop off their children at school with cars and the children could bring good food flasks with food and meat in them to school. The life of wastefulness was also associated with the rich –

some of the children brought food to school that they did not even eat whereas the poor were always hungry in school waiting for the benevolence of the good rich children so that they could find something to eat. Adama would beg for food from her classmates even though they were younger than her. She came to school hungry most of the time.

Adama perceived that teachers were drawn to and celebrated children whose classroom performance was excellent. As such, she worked very hard to earn her teachers' favor and attention. To do this, she set her own standards which she labored hard to achieve. Each time she earned her teacher's favor, she felt motivated to keep striving harder. Her perception was that her positioning herself this way helped her to keep pace with staying in school. Her assertion, therefore, was that it is a demand on the poor woman to stay motivated in school and one of the ways to achieve that is to become an excellent student, which in turn will earn her the favor of the teacher and the necessary attention the teacher needs to give her that will enable her to continue to excel. Adama's sense of achievement was displayed in the way she enumerated the excellent result with which she graduated from secondary school:

> *Adama: Most of my teachers were very impressed with that and the school authority could fight for me at any time. Anything that comes up they are ready to stand for me. You know and everything. So, I gained much favor from my teachers and everything like that […]. After secondary school I had one of the best result […], five distinctions and then four credits.*

Adama actually graduated from secondary school with five[13] distinctions and four credits.

[13] This means that out of the nine subjects that Adama registered for at the standardized testing that takes place at the end of a student's secondary school career, she aced five of them and credited four of them. In terms of letter grades, this means she had five "As" and four "Cs". This was an excellent result. It was not common place to find many students with her type of background graduating with this kind of result.

Adama's secondary school experiences

From her childhood up till the time when she completed her secondary school education, Adama understood the way she was positioned because she was poor. During the course of the interview, as she re-examined that situation, she asserted that poor women struggle with the feeling of inferiority, worthlessness and insignificance in school when they are in the company of the rich:

> *Adama: Sometimes there is tendency that you want to be jealous but then jealousy cannot take you anywhere so you just have to […]. Yes there were times that I felt inferior because I felt I could not go closer […]. So, it was, it was quite terrible actually.*

Adama condemned herself for feeling inferior in the way she described this feeling as a tendency, almost wishing that it is something that she could stop. She felt that she had no right to envy what she missed – the lifestyle of rich children. She regretted not just the fact that she felt jealous but also the fact that she had been relegated to the social class that positioned her where she hardly wanted to belong. I hear a salient wish and determination in her to transcend her present predicament – belonging to her low social class is considered a predicament that she was not responsible for getting into; it was not a choice she made. However, Adama was hopeful that she would not be positioned as jealous of people who are in the middle and upper class much longer since she would soon graduate as a lawyer. By virtue of this degree she would be initiated into the middle class. Talking about this experience of jealousy in the past as she did suggests that she was already in the euphoria of this new class positioning.

Adama revisited the issue of the need for a rich literacy home environment if a woman from a poor background was to do well in school and be able to cope with schooling. She told the story of how her coming to live with her uncle provided her with that kind of environment and the way her ability to cope with schooling was enhanced as a result:

> *Adama: While I was in JSS 2 I needed to leave my parents' house to stay with my uncle […]. The difference was quite clear because things, I was more enlightened, you know coming from my background and everything because these are educated people that went to university and everything unlike my parents.*
> *Phebe: So, what are the kind of things you had access to that you did not have with your parents?*
> *Adama: Yeah, I was more encouraged to, my aunt was a teacher […] so she encouraged me to read literatures. I read so many novels, storybooks, you know and I had some Christian literatures around […]. Of course life was a little bit better. Of course, the meal […], because when I went there I grew fatter. In fact that is the reason I am today like this […]. The comfort was good […].*
> *Phebe: How did your reading help you improve in school?*
> *Adama: Yeah. Like I said, it improved my grammar. It improved my write up, my composition […]. I usually go for debates […] the present tense, the past tense, the terminologies used and then how to organize my work, how to put sentences chronologically, how to arrange them, it quite helped me and then […] the thought, the thinking pattern […].*

At her uncle's house, Adama had access to lots of literature and her aunt motivated her to read various kinds of literatures that helped to improve her reading and writing skills tremendously. She affirmed that young women who have educated parents do not only have comfortable homes where they eat good food but they have the right

literacy environment that motivates them and enhances their literacy skills and reading habit. They engage in extensive reading.

Typically she had to make a lot of sacrifices to enjoy the comfort of the class she did not belong to originally. Adama had come in to live with her uncle to assist with house chores since her aunt was away in school. Because of the privileges she enjoyed in her educated uncle's house, Adama preferred to continue to live with her uncle. However, this decision caused conflicts between her uncle's family and her parents:

> *Adama: I worked a lot having a big house to take care of. I worked like a man […]. In fact my daddy told me it was slavery I went to do with my uncle […]. I have to do all the washing, do the cleaning; I have to clear the whole environment, grass with my hands […]. It was just me alone. My uncle has a son […]. Some of the things I do that's men's work to do he will not even want to do […]. Sometimes it can be tiring actually […]. And sometimes when you don't feel appreciated for what you are doing […]. Sometimes when you are doing something they will scream at you […] because of the shouting thing that kept a distance between myself and him [her uncle] so I could not even ask him for money […]. There were times that I felt I could just go and work to pay my school fee myself […]. Sometimes even when I am on I will not tell him. I will just use rag; I will just use tissue […]. I've always felt I should be able to provide things for myself […]. I just did everything I did because of God.*

Adama, according to her father, slaved for her uncle doing all the very demanding house chores all by herself. His son would not help out. Adama perceived the nature of house chores from a gender perspective and that made her feel that there were certain chores that her male cousin should have done that she had to do. Worse than that, she

never really felt appreciated for her hard work and diligence. Adama suggested that when poor young women leave their parents' homes to live with a relative and in so doing are able to have access to better schooling conditions, they necessarily made sacrifices in return for this privilege and opportunity. They also felt the burden of making those sacrifices even though they felt consoled in the fact that they hoped for a better future. So, while they bore the burden they looked away from it hiding under the pretext, like Adama did, that the house is theirs as well and they would do whatever they had to do to for its upkeep. It is this escapist mindset that Adama had that made her not to see from her father's perspective that her uncle and his family exploited her and really used her as a slave in their house.

She worked endlessly and tirelessly. She did not feel free to ask for money for her school fees and personal effects. She resorted to using rags and tissue paper instead of clean sanitary towels for her menstruation. Her uncle and his wife were also not responsive to her needs since they waited for her to ask before they did what they should normally be responsible for. I discuss more on child trafficking later on in this work.

As Adama recounted her growing up years she explained the decisions she arrived at based on the way she made sense of the world. She resolved not to allow her children to pass through this kind of hardship:

> *Adama: Yea. No. I have to do well. I have to pass. I have to be beyond my parents. I have to get, no I can't allow my children to go through what I went through.*

The way to ensure that her children escape this kind of predicament was to perform well academically. Adama was determined to do well and doing well meant being

academically excellent. To further reconcile herself with her identity, Adama purposed to pay the price for academic excellence by setting her own standards. If she did not top the class then she was most miserable. For her, it was not about meeting people's expectations but about meeting her own expectations for herself. But in so doing, she enjoyed the support of her teachers and the school authorities and was able to stay motivated:

> *Adama: If I wanna go for something I go for the best. So, if I don't hit that best even if it is second best I'm not satisfied.*
> *Phebe: It's your standard for yourself?*
> *Adama: Yes.*
> *Phebe: Not people's expectation?*
> *Adama: Not people's expectation of me. It's what I feel and know is best. You know, that informed most of the things I did.*

Having formulated this mindset, Adama's adulthood experiences were replete with more concrete decisions which guided the way she lived out her life.

Adama's adulthood experiences: The playing out of reality and the making of decisions

After her secondary school education, Adama continued to experience the interplay between poverty and school. For Adama, furthering her education was not just a function of interest but also of the social class she belonged to. Adama's excellent secondary school result could not guarantee her admission into the university. She needed intervention to get in, as she explained:

> *Adama: Even the Vice Chancellor […] he knew my uncle. So, he told him [my uncle] to bring my credentials [and my uncle did] but still I could not get admission […] he said it was difficult for him [to secure admission for me even though he was the*

> *Vice Chancellor of the university] […]. My uncle just gave him [the result] and assumed [that because he was the Vice Chancellor I would be admitted into the school without much stress. He did not make follow up calls to the Vice Chancellor to remind him and bother him about the case][…]. During their time he got everything by merit [that was why he did not think that he needed to make any follow up contacts][…]. At the time I finally got the admission it took the effort of some people who saw the result […]. They said [to themselves] this lady has a good result. Whatever it takes they will go for me. I didn't tell [them to help me]. I don't know them […]. That's how I got admission.*

Adama asserted that poor people need to know those who have a better social status than they have in order to secure admission into a higher institution of learning. And those people must be willing to lobby for them so that they can find placement. Adama went through a lot of hardships before she could gain admission into the university, being the daughter of nobody. It took luck and good fortune to get her in – people she did not know took it upon themselves to help her. The fact that she had a good result helped them to be able to make a good case for admission for her. Implied in her statement is the fact that rich children who have the right "connection" do not have to have excellent results to be able to gain admission into the university. Also, even when poor children have "connection" they do need to do a lot of follow up also, otherwise the person intervening on their behalf might not really pull through with their case. He will need to be constantly reminded. Another implication of what Adama said is the fact that it is easier for poor children to gain admission into diploma[14] courses than for them to be admitted into the

[14] In Chapter Two I talked about the various types of tertiary institutions that were obtainable in Nigeria. The universities are degree awarding while the polytechnics are diploma awarding; either ordinary national diploma or higher national diploma. In order to be able to own a degree, diploma students will have to

university. The competition to gain admission into the university is stiffer than it is to gain admission into any other tertiary institution. That is why Adama suggested that a candidate seeking admission needs to have well-placed individual(s) to intervene on her behalf. She also needs to ensure that she maintains a follow up schedule with them. This means that university education is meant for the elite and their children. Her uncle had to depend on the assistance and the intervention of the Vice Chancellor which unfortunately did not work. That the Vice Chancellor of the university's intervention did not work reveals the amount of politics that is involved in the admission process. Therefore, merit was definitely not a guarantee for Adama to further her education.

After she was admitted, finding funding for school at the university became a desperate challenge for Adama – her school fees were high and her schooling needs were enormous. Here is her story of how she survived university life:

> *Adama: My daddy didn't have much money […] He wasn't working. So, he just lives on pension and pension hardly come. They could live six months no pension and everything. And we were, in fact, we were living more on my mummy's salary and my mummy's salary was not much. How much? Ten thousand, nine thousand then. It's just now that it's up to twelve or thirteen. And our mum didn't have time for anything. All that she did, her money, was just going to the food and everything, you know, stuffs like that.*
> *Phebe: So how did you get your school fees?*
> *Adama: I think the first instance my daddy struggled. I think he borrowed some money or so for me to go and then when they paid them their pension he paid it back. But after*

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switch over to the universities. Most women prefer to go to the universities. University education is considered more prestigious.

> *sometime, of course, I didn't, there was nowhere else and it is not as if money comes to me in school regularly. Just when I am going to school my daddy can manage to give me three thousand or five thousand. I just manage, you know, somehow, somehow. Before I left to school I just told God, I can say I don't have a father that meets my needs but you are my father. I pray that you open door for me and do you know somehow somehow someone will just call me, "hey, and write a check for me, […]. There are times that my daddy will not have money, school fees for that term, he will tell me I know you, I know what, I know that even if I am not alive today the world will still stand for you […]. But one thing baffled me when I was in two hundred level, and then I needed money to resume school my daddy didn't have money so he made a statement and he said that I can go and get money anywhere now and that he knows me. So, that statement pained me because I felt if you tell me I can go and get money anywhere it means I just bring money and settle my bills you are okay with it. So, you know I felt so bad with the statement […]. Of course he seeks for how much he can get to be able to help me. If he has it he will help. […].*

Adama's father was on pension which was not also regularly paid. This meant that the family had to survive on her mother's meager but hard earned monthly salary of a maximum of thirteen thousand naira (about eighty- seven dollars). Much of all that money was spent on feeding the family. Adama was unable to tell what the exact amount of money her mother's salary was because she definitely did not count on it to survive at the university – it was too meager.

Paying her school fees was usually a struggle. Her father had to borrow money in lieu of his pension the first time she came to school. Adama survived on three to four thousand naira (twenty to twenty-seven dollars) for the whole semester whenever her father could find the money to give her. This amount was to pay for her school fees, her books, her rent, and whatever else money had to be spent for, including her living allowance. It was definitely insufficient. Her financial lack and the provisions she got outside her family supplies affirmed her belief in God.

Adama asserted that religion provided a buffer for poor women. However, she also insinuated that there are women who may not go the route of religion and would be able to raise money through other means which Adama did not approve of. She did not mention what the other means are but she implied that those means may be ungodly. That was why she complained that when her father was unable to pay her fees in one term during her second year at the university, she was baffled that he told her to go and get the money from anywhere. The signal that this sent to her was that he did not care where she got the money from and how she got it – he always knew that she would always get by. Her anger implied that her father was shirking his responsibility of paying her fees. She also read him as unconcerned about whether or not she compromised her morality to get the money. He did not hold her accountable for how she got money and that was not acceptable to her. She thought that his position was an anomaly. By implication, Adama asserted that when poor young women go to school they find themselves in certain compromising situations that they would normally not want to be in. She also suggested

that lack of enough funding for school can cause unwarranted family tensions if the women insist on going to school.

The tension she suggested may not only be between the father and the young woman seeking financial assistance, it could engulf the entire family such that the entire home becomes a troublesome one. And if that happens then it would take resilience to be able to put aside family squabble and tension to stay focused with school work. Adama told the story of how her family feud affected schooling for her:

> *Adama: Because he [her father] doesn't have money, he complains. He grumbles. He murmurs. You know, things are not the way you expect them to be and of course my elder ones are not forthcoming with the things that he expects. So, he gets disappointed, He complains. He grumbles. You know, that's' compounding the problem on my mum too. She's having high blood pressure. So many issues. Drugs here and there. Things are just not working as I would love them to actually. I've always told and I've prayed for God on behalf of my family that I expect much. When you look at other family you just wish your family should be or sometimes I don't want to look at my home and say God I wish I wasn't born here. Because if I were to look at it before and I'm telling you if God is to give me a choice, I will wish because of the troubled home or because of the way things are […]. Things are not just comfortable. They are not just good for you. You have a need they are not met and stuffs like that. I know my daddy tries within his means to see that he can at least help me in one or two ways […]. Of course he seeks for how much he can get to be able to help me. If he has it he will help. But then.*

Adama sounded quite depressed when she told this part of her schooling experience. It was obvious that she wished she was born into a family where there was less tension.

Poverty deprived her family of unity, joy, happiness and emotional stability. Her mother was on high blood pressure medications that consumed the money that they did not even have. Adama did not have older ones to emulate or to mentor her and her father was not only frustrated about that fact but about the fact that they were not a financial support to the rest of the family.

Most poor people expect that if their older children break even financially, they will be able to assist with taking care of the younger ones and it was because that was not the case in Adama's family that her father grumbled, complained, and murmured. Although Adama understood that her father was doing his best, his best was not good enough. She depended on faith and the goodwill of people outside her family to survive. She was grateful for whatever help she received from any source. She knew that whatever help she got from her family was limited – it could never really be enough.

Adama also got some financial aid from her state government and her ethnic group. She asserted that the amount they gave as sponsorship was too little compared to her needs as a student. She revisited her assessment of the interplay of poverty with schooling as a social class phenomenon by explaining the ridiculous disparity between what the state government gave as sponsorship and what oil companies gave. In so doing she appealed to the bigger discourse of societal inequity which in her view marred the way the school system worked. It puts poor women at disadvantage – they would need merit and to study the high stakes subjects like the core sciences to be able to compete for the high paying sponsorships:

> *Phebe: Are you on government scholarship?*
> *Adama: My state ba. How much? It's just nine*

thousand naira (laughs).

Phebe: So what will you say about scholarships and encouraging people to go to school?

Adama: Yeah, it's good but it's, to me it's too small o.

Phebe: Ehn?

Adama: It's very very small. I'm collecting nine thousand naira.

Phebe: For the year?

Adama: Yes. Nine thousand naira. Sometimes they split it in two – four five. And the four five the student union will collect maybe so you might end up just having eight thousand or something.

Phebe: But there are people who that's all they depend on to go to school.

Adama: Yes. Actually.

Phebe: So what would you say about your state scholarship?

Adama: Yes, they're trying […]. I will commend them first […]. That is a good one. But then I feel they should increase more […]. Ok, pick some certain persons that we want to take up the responsibility of paying for you all through. You know, if they could do that that will help. Actually. Because there are some people that nine thousand cannot do them anything […]. At least let them have a criteria for people they can pick up […]. Ok, like these, these oil companies now. They try. In a year they give the students, there are some they pay them one hundred and fifty, there are some people they pay them eighty […]. Some of my course mates are enjoying […]. That's good. That can cover them throughout the year; you pay your school fees. What do you want, your textbooks, everything for the year and that is a year which is very good […]. I wish the government can pick up that.

Adama expected to receive nine thousand naira (sixty dollars) for the academic year but this money was not only split so that half the amount was paid per semester, she got to

receive a total of eight thousand naira (fifty-three dollars) because she had to pay her state's students union[15] dues of about one thousand naira (seven dollars). The union's role among others is to advocate that this money is paid as and when due. Sometimes they even advocate for increase in the amount paid. In order to be able to function effectively they collect union dues and in order to ensure payment they collect the said amount of money at the point of payment of scholarship funds.

When Adama compared herself to others who depended solely on this amount of money to go to school, she suggested that there are more women in worse financial predicaments than she was. Consequently, she insinuated that poverty was graded – it is in categories and definitely poor people who find themselves in this kind of elite schools barely survive through school. Adama revisited her concept of luxury by explaining that poor women in the university do not care about living comfortable lives. What they want to be able to do is to pay their school fees and to buy their textbooks – they are almost incapable of wanting anything else. This implies that as they go through school, their minds are often preoccupied with anxieties about how they would be able to have their basic school needs met. So, eighty thousand naira (Five hundred and thirty-three dollars) or one hundred and fifty thousand naira (one thousand dollars) for the year would be more than enough money for such indigent women. By wishing that the government

[15] Universities and other tertiary institutions permit students to form academic and non-academic associations and unions.Some of these bodies, like this one, belong strictly to people from the same state. Such bodies are avenues through which members socialize and address their concerns. When the need arises such concerns are presented to the relevant authorities for their intervention. These student bodies are usually self-funded. They often have to come up with fund-raising strategies in order to be able to adequately carry out their duties. This is the reason why they charge union dues and levies as seen in this case. By deducting the money from source as she collected her scholarship stipend, Adama was forced to pay her union dues because she, like others, would often default in making this payment unless they were forced to do so. It was understandable that she would be tempted to default in paying her dues considering that she was barely able to survive financially.

picked this up, Adama suggested that the government is not doing enough to empower women. She posited that women need to be economically empowered to be able to further their education.

Earlier on I showed how Adama, while in primary school, sometimes depended on the kind benevolence of her classmates to satisfy the hunger pangs that accompanied her to the classroom. This continued when she came into the university. So, in addition to the aforementioned ways through which she raised money for school, Adama counted on the support she received from her rich friend – her classmate and roommate. She had explained how this relationship "blessed" her and I needed her to say more on it:

> *Phebe: When you say blessed you what do you mean?*
> *Adama: She has, she has, ok, ok, sometimes we do tutorials together. She asks me questions and I explain to her. She understands and sometimes I do ask her, she tells me and I understand. So, we help ourselves. But then, will I say, when we came into the relationship newly I don't have money. She will just give me. I will tell her to borrow me and when she borrows me sometimes she may not collect it back. Sometimes she will collect. Of course being that she has the means […]. Good things that we will naturally not eat in school we eat because her mum, sometimes the mum comes around. Sometimes when the mum comes she cooks and she used to bring good things for us. Sometimes we eat chicken in school […]. So many good things actually I will say and then the standard of feeding will be very good.*
> *Phebe: And clothes too?*
> *Adama: Yes. Most times when she's coming she buys, in fact, this one I'm wearing she bought this material for me and the little I have I help. We can just do, so we do as friends. Actually, I learnt so much from her that you could have much but still you will still be humble. You could be in wealth and see as if you don't have much.*

Adama enjoyed the benevolence of her friend and her family. She helped her with money, food, and clothes. It was with delight and deep appreciation that she showed off the dress she wore which was a gift from her friend's mother. Accepting the class difference and her own fate, Adama commended her friend's humility and decided to emulate it – being wealthy and not showing it off. Starvation and hunger became the general motif of how Adama's class identity was defined, making her celebrate the possibility of having not just food but choice food like chicken. The way Adama strove to pay back money she borrowed and how she tried to also help out with the little she had showed how inferior she felt in comparison to her friend. She did not want to feel demeaned. The implication of this conversation for me is that young women who go to good schools would need to rest on the benevolence of their rich colleagues to be able to be comfortable in school. Also, enjoying this benevolence is a chance occurrence for those who are fortunate. Furthermore, whenever such a poor woman happened to enjoy such benevolence she would often have to cope with some identity issues. Adama's academic excellence enhanced her self-confidence in the relationship. Her feeling of inferiority acted as an incentive for achievement. As such, although she also got to learn some things from her friend when they did tutorials together, she seemed to suggest that her friend benefitted more by the order in which she presented the conversation or that the benefit for both of them was on a fifty-fifty rating. As with those small children in her primary school, Adama struggled with issues of jealousy with her rich university friend:

> *Phebe: So, how do you, how will you describe how you feel each time you relate with her?*

Adama: Actually, growing up as in coming to meet her, there are times, we're humans, there are times that this kind of tendency of wanting to be jealous comes in. Really, and of course several times we talk because we talk we express our hearts to ourselves and I tell her. When they come I pray about them. I tell God, "no", this is my friend. She has blessed me so much.

In order to find her own self, Adama tried to look for ways to move beyond the class difference between her and her friend by finding recourse in religion.

Adama dreamed of a future in which her academic achievement would make her a celebrity. She wanted to be known because of the impact that the peculiarities of her life would afford her to be able to make in other people's lives:

Phebe: So, what's your dream in life?
Adama: I must be known because of this peculiarity of my life and everything, you know […]. Yeah after school I trust God to go into much. I will practice for like one two years but I know that I will not continue […]. Even if I am gonna do it I just want to do it at the, at the level of the masses. I will [practice] only just to stand for people, that's what I feel […]. It could be in all facets […]. I know that of course one day this nation will recognize me for something, one or two things that I will do for the nation […].

However, to be able to achieve this feat, she would have to earn her certificate first. This would not come easy because of the pedagogical practice that her university teachers employed which she explained as follows:

Adama: *To some certain extent, some might read to get knowledge but more of it is, I will say, it's really I want to pass. Seriously, I don't want to have a year back. I don't want to at all. Actually,* Actually I will *say largely eighty, seventy percent I guess […] if you ask, if you take statistics, most of my colleagues*

> *in fact virtually everyone [reads to pass their examinations][…]. They [the teachers] make you feel it's the passing thing; you have to pass or you carry over […]. So, there is no encouragement to [learn][…]. There is no way you can pass without reading so you go to read to pass instead of building [yourself]. I want to just finish this school let me leave the school environment. Let me have the certificate and go out. I know that when I get there I will do the things […]. Most of the time I have question papers […], I go through the question paper and see what is the mindset of the lecturer [and then I use that understanding to prepare myself for the examination].*

Adama read with the mindset of passing her examination in order to obtain the certificate without delay. She alleged that most other students did the same thing. She blamed her orientation on her teachers who also threaten the students with a pass or fail syndrome. When she explained that there was no encouragement and she talked about the fact that she did not read for the sake of gaining knowledge, she showed her perception of the purpose of education: to gain knowledge and to acquire a certificate. The certificate was her passport for entering into the world of fame, where people were celebrated, and she could not wait to get there. She was getting very impatient. She presupposed that there was another learning that took place outside the school – out there in the world and at the job place – so when she gets there she would do the things that needed to be done to prove that she had acquired knowledge from passing through school.

Chapter Five

Trade by Barter: The Issue of Child-Trafficking and Implications for School

Introduction

In the first section of this chapter I discuss why I tell Safiya and Hannatu's stories and what their stories contribute to this research on what schooling means to northern Nigerian women. I tell Safiya and Hannatu's stories in one chapter because they share commonality not only in the fact that they are poor but also that they were trafficked. The situations and the conditions under which they served in their host families' homes and how these in turn affected the way they did school were different. In telling both of their stories in one chapter I again show the complexities and complications that schooling entailed even when the factors affecting schooling for these women seemed similar. In the next section, I tell the story of how I came to recruit Safiya for this work and this is immediately followed by an analysis of her story. Following this analysis, I again tell the story of how I met Hannatu and then as with Safiya, I analyze her story.

Reflecting on Safiya and Hannatu's stories

I tell Safiya and Hannatu's stories in order to expose the way the factor of poverty is further complicated by the practice of child trafficking, thereby making schooling arduous and difficult for them. I use the concept "child trafficking" in the manner in which the United Nations (2000) defines it, to mean, among other things "the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation" and exploitation shall include among other things "forced labor

or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude". By using this lens to interpret Safiya and Hannatu's stories, I suggest that as trafficked women, they were objects of exploitation where the profit of their being traded went to the women - their guides - who brought them away from their immediate families to their host families or benefactors. In both contexts their consent was not sought by their parents and guides. In view of the fact that the world is gradually becoming a global village, these guides simply assumed that the arrangement was for the women's best interest. They actually thought that they were doing them a favor since in the villages the women had limited or no access to good food, good healthcare services, healthy home environment, and good schools whereas in the towns they would not only have access to these provisions, but they would also be exposed to the use of technology and other city/urban-based facilities that signify modernization. The decision was made suddenly leaving them with little or no time to reflect on whether they would really want to be separated from their families in pursuit of western education or not. They grappled with coping with the new responsibilities that fell on them in their new home, experiencing city life, and going to school; a situation I refer to as trade-by-barter.

Although their experiences mirror child trafficking, the conditions under which I use the term in both instances is not the same. Whereas in Hannatu's case the element of migration is obvious in the way that she moves from one host family to the other seeking for better comfort and a more rewarding experience, Safiya actually moves to live with her cousin. In both cases, however, Safiya and Hannatu's human rights as well as their right to good education were violated. They were treated as victims who were trapped to

the benevolence of their host families. Their labor was exploited. They did all the dirty and difficult jobs in the house in exchange for a schooling reward. Although the practice of living with members of the extended family is part of the traditional discourse of family units in Nigeria and in deed the rest of Africa, the way Safiya told the story of this experience disrupted this discourse in that she saw it not as a practice that promoted family cohesion but as one that was exploitative. She read the situation this way because of the discriminatory treatment she received in her cousin's home. Safiya felt that after living with her relative for many years she ought to be seen as a member of the family, meaning that she ought to have been treated as a biological child and not as a house maid.

This was not the case. She found that the social inequity that played out in the larger society and at school also manifested at the home front before her face and she was completely disillusioned. This experience was so disturbing for her that it informed the future identity she constructed for herself – one that was not dependent on the benevolence of other people. It also informed the way she constructed, in a futuristic sense, her motherhood role – another disruption of the traditional discourse of motherhood. She hoped to be a mother who would provide for the educational needs of her children and set them on educational paths so that hopefully they would be economically independent and would not have to live with anybody to survive like she had.

Hannatu's story also questioned the hitherto accepted norm of house helps/maids which at some point was celebrated as the way for such deprived women to get ahead and not be left behind. It was the practice particularly in rich and middle class homes for

these househelps/maids to perform such roles while doubling up as nannies, cooks, and gardeners. Such maids were often grateful for the rare privilege to serve and to gain a better outlook to life. But with Hannatu's story it was obvious that there is now a radical shift in this mindset. Even though Hannatu acknowledged the fact that her social class placement warranted that she rendered such services in order to break even, she made demands on the kind of reward she got and assessed it to ascertain whether it was commensurate to the services she rendered. She was no longer going to settle for just anything. And though she did not voice her objection to what she considered as negative treatment from her host families, she performed her objection in various other ways. One of the many ways Hannatu did this was by migrating from one host family to another through making an insistent request to her guide for a change.

What all this means for their schooling is that both Safiya and Hannatu were distracted from maximum concentration while in school because their minds were bogged with concerns about home chores that were left undone. They ended up going to the poor schools that were in the neighborhoods because to aspire to attend the "good" schools like the children of their hosts was to be ungrateful and to ask for too much. Also, by the time they returned home, because of the chores they had to accomplish, they did not have enough time to study. Nonetheless, they watched as the biological children in the house engaged in their reading and in getting their own school assignments done. Often they did not get structured help with their school work. Thus, their progress in school was not monitored and encouraged. Whatever help they got was happenstance and not a usual occurrence. Gaining access to books and their personal effects was an ordeal

for them. They had to depend on the benevolence of other housemates or total strangers to have their needs met.

In addition, they were estranged from their own immediate family units, often leaving them with an emotional vacuum and extra concern as they worried about the well being of the other members of their family. Through their association with their host families and other people at school, and in the larger society, they picked up new identities and new world views that further troubled their initial complacent attitude about their deprivation, such that they began to push for ways to influence their siblings to pursue an education. They came to perceive education as the panacea for the good and comfortable life that they perceived others enjoyed. Consequently, they became overzealous emissaries of western education as was clearly the case with Safiya and her siblings.

Safiya and Phebe: The selection and getting to know each other

Safiya is a 27 year old woman. She came to live with her cousin, who happened to be my friend, very early in life. Every time I came to visit with her cousin I also met with Safiya. So, for a long time, I was her acquaintance. Still, bringing her into my research brought us closer. Because of my intimacy with her cousin, which started before the research process, I struggled first with whether it was all right to bring her into my research and with how well I would fare at keeping Safiya's stories confidential. Her cousin knew that she was participating in the research and was naturally curious, but Safiya and I wound our way through it by making sure that we never had any of our meetings in the vicinity of the house. We met at a neutral place far away from her home

and in my reporting in this dissertation I use a pseudonym for her just as I do with my other participants. I am conscious about what descriptors I use in order to ensure that I do not give away Safiya's identity.

Safiya became freer in expressing herself to me when I promised her that I would keep her information confidential. There were times when she did not feel safe to share some experiences but I would urge her on and then she would speak out. In the end, she let me know that she found value in the relationship we built.

Previously I talked about how she was particularly impacted by the interview and deep conversation process in my methodology. My use of memories in sharing my own story was an effective ice breaker for her on many occasions. That is what made the relationship stronger and deeper. In the course of our conversations, there were lots of times when Safiya had to dissociate herself from knowing me as her aunt's friend to seeing me as a researcher, and the same was true for me. I began to see her as my research participant. This shift in identity did not come easily. What helped me to make the shift was that I found her story very fascinating, considering that other women in a similar predicament dropped out of school. I found it extremely fascinating that Safiya remained in school against all odds.

Safiya: "I don't want to be dependent"

My session with Safiya started with my asking what going to school meant to her. It seemed to me the most appropriate way to begin the discussion. Here is her response:

> *Safiya: My reason of going to school today. I […] don't want to be dependent to maybe in the case that maybe today I marry I don't want to be a liability to my husband and again I'll, I want to help my family*

> *who are not able to reach out to others in the family since they are not capable of helping all of us. We're going to school maybe somebody is helping us to go to school […], is helping us financially. We have so many financial problems that our family cannot be able to help us. So, we stay with our cousins in order for us to go to school so that we will not be dependent.*

Safiya came specifically to live with a relative who happened to be her cousin in order to have the privilege of going to school. Her parents were too poor to send her to a school in the city. She could only attend a village school. She therefore saw schooling as the passport to overcoming poverty. From the information that Safiya provided about her life, my inference is that poor women are financially dependent on rich people whereas rich women are independent. Also, dependent women are liabilities to their husbands. With this understanding, therefore, it made sense to me that Safiya was passionate about not wanting to be a liability. With an education, she would be able to take care of her family members. By implication, Safiya saw her parents' financial limits as a handicap that positioned their children as needing help. Neither parent had an education. The highest qualification her father had was a primary seven[16] school leaving certificate, but he believed in education and that was why he sent Safiya and her siblings to live with relatives who could help give them this. He had retired from government work to farming. Her mother was an in-house petty trader. Safiya hoped that with an education she would be able to restore the resources of her immediate family.

[16] Before the 6-3-3-4 system of education was introduced by the Federal Government – which means a student was expected to spend 6 years in primary school, 3 years at the junior secondary school, 3 years at the senior secondary school and another 4 years at the university, such a student spent 7 years at the primary school at the end of which she obtained a primary school leaving certificate.

Safiya transitioned from the village to the city, making her schooling experiences in an urban-based LEA[17] as opposed to a rural-based LEA quite fascinating, especially if what she said is compared with Adama's experience from the previous chapter:

> *Phebe: How did you choose to come to live where you are living?*
> *Safiya: It was not a choice [laughs] I did it because I was eleven years old when […] they just said […] I should get ready. They are taking me to the city. And and from that time I never knew um, Auntie. They just brought us to her house.*

Safiya did not have any choice about it. The decision was made on her behalf and it was assumed that it was for her own good, since education and city life were viewed as good things. Safiya came to live with "Auntie" without initially knowing who she was. "They" brought her. It was not a choice she made. As she told me this story I wondered what transpired in her mind as she made the journey to this strange land and to this strange family. Was she anxious? What was she apprehensive about? Safiya did not explicate those feelings, but obviously, by the time she got to her new home, she was faced with making adjustments.

Safiya had to start school all over again even though she had almost finished her primary school at the LEA school in the village:

> *Phebe: At that time at eleven years old where were you? What were you doing?*
> *Safiya: At that time I just finished my primary school. But when I came, because the education in the village is not the same as the city's. So, I have to go back to primary school again. I started in Jack Shoes School but I did not finish. Then my Auntie now took me to LEA […] to primary four but […] I*

[17] LEA is an acronym. It stands for Local Education Authority. Public primary schools are generally controlled and managed by the local government area where they are situated.

did not do primary 5. I went straight to primary six, then from there I now got to after my Common Entrance, I got admission to JSS 1.

Phebe: So, when you came to Jack Shoes School what class did you start?

Safiya: Ok, when I came to Jack Shoes they gave me, ok they were trying to, they tested me by giving me a reader, I could not read […] they took me to primary four first but it's like I could not cope. So they brought me back to remedial class. That's the class before primary one […] from that remedial class when I finished I went to primary four there.

Phebe: So how did you then begin to know how to read?

Safiya: Through this remedial, through this Jack Shoes School […] that was when I started learning how to read and how to speak English because that time I could not speak English. I don't even understand English at all […] and where I stayed because daddy doesn't speak Hausa. So, it was through him again I learned how to speak English.

Phebe: In the village how were they teaching you?

Safiya: They would teach us but they didn't care whether you understood what has been taught or not […] sometimes they would not even go to the class to teach.

Phebe: Ok, so when you came to this LEA em, how was the teaching there that is different from Jack Shoes School? Or how did you now continue to improve apart from the influence at home?

Safiya: Through em, through the teaching of the Jack Shoes School. I- I improved […] because I already learned how to read in Jack Shoes School very well. So when I went there I was not finding it difficult. That was why they even promoted me.

Safiya had a late start with good schooling because she was poor. The only available option she had growing up in the village was a poor LEA school. But when she came to the city, she was privileged to go to a "good" school, Jack Shoes, to learn English. With a good literacy home environment in her Auntie's house and the entire teaching support group she found, she was able to improve in her school work. With this "good" support

she was able to remain in an urban-based LEA school and to excel in her academic performance.

In the previous chapter I talked about how Adama had a poor foundation from an urban-based LEA, made clear when she came to a good school in the same city. It is, therefore, ironical and consequently complicating to discover that what Adama rated as a bad school became a "good school" for Safiya, although the foundation she received from Jack Shoes, a privately owned school, was very helpful in preparing her to cope with it. As far as Safiya was concerned, this urban-based LEA corrected the poor foundation she had from the village/rural-based LEA. What Safiya implied was that with a good foundation, LEA schools would not be a write off. She also suggested that LEAs are diverse – some have no standards at all like Safiya's village LEA and Adama's city LEA, but others, like the one that she attended in the city, helped her to maintain the pace of the foundation she rebuilt. Safiya and Adama suggested that the solution for handling poor schooling foundations was to repeat classes and take remedial lessons in the English language – the language of instruction. Specifically, Safiya was helped to improve in her English language learning abilities and once she did improve, learning became a lot easier for her.

Safiya also asserted that students' learning was predicated upon teachers' pedagogical practices – whether they cared about their students' learning or not. In the following conversation, Safiya showed that with extra attention a so-called "disadvantaged" or "marginalized" poor young woman could also improve on her learning:

Phebe: So what do you think was the main reason your understanding improved?
Safiya: I believe English […] when you understand the language that is being used.
Phebe: Tell me about your home, how your English improved at home apart from the fact that you had to speak in English with Dattijo..
Safiya: Dattijo usually called me to teach me some reading […] and through other people that were staying in the house. I used to meet them […]. When Margaret taught me I used to understand very well […]. She was very good sha […]. When she was teaching me she would explain, she would make me understand. She was the one that taught me how to read this from em Hausa alphabet […].
Phebe: So you knew how to read Hausa first then the knowledge of knowing Hausa helped you to know English?
Safiya: Yes […] and my teacher too was very good in Economics and Mathematics […]. When I was in JSS 1, JSS 2, and JSS 3 it was the same teacher that taught me Mathematics […]. So I was very good in Mathematics but when the teacher left […] I came to hate Mathematics because the method that he was using; I was not understanding. Not only me - most students normally complain about him […]. He would not explain […]. He didn't give us assignments […]. Things were beginning to be too much for me […] the work at home […].
Phebe: So you mean you didn't read as much as you used to?
Safiya: Yes.

Safiya showed that "disadvantaged/marginalized" young poor women could be helped to improve on their learning if they received intensive attention – home work, assignments, additional reading, painstaking explanation, and enough reading time - but first they had to understand and know how to use the English language. She was helped to improve by "Dattijo"[18] and other housemates, particularly Margaret[19]. They taught her to read and

[18] "Dattijo" was Safiya's in-law – her cousin's husband.

[19] Margaret was the other girl that was brought along with Safiya from the village to the town to live with Safiya's cousin. Safiya's cousin was more like an auntie to Safiya considering how much older she was. She was about 50 years old.

guided her to do her homework. Margaret was more caring of Safiya. She painstakingly taught her using first the Hausa language to explain concepts to her before then saying the same things over in English language. Safiya found that kind of translation very helpful in comprehending the content of what she was taught.

Some of her teachers also contributed to helping her improving her learning, like the first teacher who taught her economics and mathematics. She came to hate the same mathematics she had loved initially because her second teacher would neither explain his lessons for the class to comprehend nor give the students assignments. In addition, Safiya explained how her attention was often divided between studying and doing house chores. She was unable to manage her time in such a way as to allow her to be able to devote enough time to her study.

This means that poor people who get the privilege of living with relatives in order to secure better academic access also have overwhelming house chores to cope with. It is often left to them to prioritize the quest for education and to give it what it takes so that they can have an excellent result. Also, although they could not choose the kind of school they went to, since this choice was often made for them by their benefactors, they could perform well in school and maintain positive motivation to remain in school, especially if they had good teachers that cared about their learning styles.

Furthermore, Safiya struggled with identity issues because she was poor and she was a trafficked child. She explained that if she had a good education she would not be looked down upon. Consequently, she saw schooling as a viable instrument for helping her to build up her self-esteem:

Safiya: Me I want, me I want to, I want to make that thing. I want to see that me I go to school to any whatever academic height I can attain […].
Phebe: What are you fighting?
Safiya: Because me I believe, I felt that the more you um you have that education and you have everything people will not look down on you.

Safiya felt that if a woman has good education she would not be looked down upon by people. The implication of Safiya's position is that education equals a better life, happiness, and better relationships with people. This explains why she thought that she would no longer feel inferior when she related with her aunt and her family if she had an education. Her assumption was that their education gave them access to the good things in life and the final say so in family matters; her and her family's lack of education forced them into a culture of silence. They did not have access to the kind of freedom of expression that their cousins and families had:

Safiya: I know definitely the way em family that there is gap between our family, our family and theirs and the way they see us and it is just everything that they say. We don't have a say again and that thing used to disturb me […] as if without them we could have not been […] that thing really pained me that I was even blaming [hesitation] […] because they feel that they were the one that did everything for us so we don't have a say again. It's everything that they say we just have to, we just have to follow […]. They see that they are the one in that family, they are the only people that have achieved all these things. And it's everything they say they have to do for them because they know that they are rich. So, [hissed] I really felt so that they really made me pick up that challenge […].

Following the assertion that education makes a person rich, Safiya strongly desired and was determined to go to school to whatever extent she could go. This education would, in

addition to making her rich, give her a voice – a right to a "say so." Consequently, she and her family members might not be treated as second class persons in the extended family any longer.

Safiya was obviously challenged to overcome her identity crises by squaring up with those that she felt derided her and her other family members, even though they were the same people who were affording her a schooling opportunity. She continued with the imagery she had started earlier of being handicapped without an education - her benefactors behaved like they gave them air for surviving by helping her and her family members through school. Although she did not contest the fact that she and her family members needed her benefactors to access school, she vowed to overcome this challenge. Through this stance, she suggested that when poor young women go to school in situations such as hers, competition became the overriding intention above and beyond the desire to seek knowledge.

Trafficked poor young women are quick to notice discriminatory treatment in the household they come to live in, in order to access good education. Just like Adama noticed that her male cousin did not join in doing the house chores, even when the work to be done required a man's strength, Safiya also noticed a preferential treatment given to the biological children in the household compared to how she was treated. The aspect that bothered her most was when it had to do with finances for meeting her schooling needs:

> *Safiya: I felt like that, I felt like that because[…] the school [her daughter], I know I cannot compare what em, she is doing for as in her education but in the sense that I stayed with them, like I'm like I should be part of the family since I grew up there. It was from that house I grew up. So, I felt maybe I'm,*

> *I should be part of the family which maybe if I ask for something they must not complain before they give it to me. I felt that, that way […].*

Safiya felt that her aunt's biological daughter was given preferential treatment in everything, but particularly in the choice of school she went to. She felt discriminated against and not as recognized as the biological child in the house even though she had grown up in this house and, like Adama, saw the house as hers. Since she was not regarded as a member of the family, she had no right to make financial requests. Whenever she did, she got lots of complaints before her requests were granted and that hurt her badly. In fact, when she narrated this part of her story, she actually broke down in tears and the atmosphere became tense. What this means is that whenever poor women got dislocated and grafted onto other family structures for schooling purposes, they remained a misfit. In Safiya's case, she was able to stay in school because she chose to make her living with her relative and serving her a positive challenge and a temporary situation. She was determined to endure it because of the good end she saw in sight as she hoped that with her education she would be able to experience the kind of social mobility that will change her present circumstance of deprivation. Kubra, on the other hand, was marred by the challenge as we shall soon see.

When I asked Safiya why she would not leave her aunt's house if she felt unfairly treated, she explained that she could not leave:

> *Safiya: No, I can't just leave because maybe I know if, I don't have, I will think, I don't have any other place to go that will be better and I won't leave, because it's a story that I will have to tell and I know what I went through and maybe I will not want my children to suffer because since from the beginning since our*

> *parents did not give us good education so, if I struggle to get the education I will not want my children to suffer before getting the education. I will want them to get a better education […].*

Safiya asserted that dependants do not have an option except than to live with their relatives, if they need the added benefit of going to school. She lamented this lack of an option. She considered the experience as a learning point and the lesson she learned was that she must get the education that will afford her the ability to give her own children a good education. She did not want to be like her own parents who were unable to give her and her siblings a worthwhile education. She was actually blaming her parents here for making her suffer by living with her cousin. It is this type of suffering that she vowed not to allow her children to experience. She insisted that her children did not have to suffer before they got a better education.

Furthermore, Safiya asserted that when poor young women get dislocated and grafted onto other family structures they are burdened with the weight of problems from their own families and that affects their ability to stay focused in their studies. The problems become enlarged in their eyes and they feel that they should be able to solve all of them from their own vantage point within the improved home environment and new-found education:

> *Phebe: Why is schooling such a struggle for you?*
> *Safiya: When I am reading, I don't really, I don't concentrate but maybe my mind […] yes. I think about my family. Somebody is bringing one problem or the other […]. No, my brother [hiss] like my brother as in that one that I said he, he just finished his secondary school. Okay, he was even about to write his exams and there are some things that disturb my mom that I feel it, yes[…] and that boy is*

> *the only son she has and it's like he is not helping her because […] there's the other girl, our last born […] but the way she started behaving, […] she used to go to yawo. And […] she will just leave the house she will not come back in time and she is very stubborn […] and she is just maybe 14 or 15[…] and my brother too, he will be drinking […] and he has hepatitis […]. So, different things. So, things make me, I worry about that*.

Although Safiya had access to a better school than the one she attended in the village and she seemed to be enjoying the support system that helped her excel in school, schooling was still a struggle for her because she worried about members of her family and their lifestyles. She was unable to concentrate on her studies because her mind was distracted, worrying about all of her family members' problems; and, like the messiah, she wanted to solve all their problems. The way she read their problems was accentuated because she compared their lifestyles with those of her cousin's and their biological children, and using their lifestyles as a yardstick for success in life she found that her family members were lacking. Consequently, she became overwhelmed with feelings of depression, self-pity, anxiety, and worry - particularly about her brother, who was not serious about his school, was drinking, and living a a-moral lifestyle to the point that he was even diagnosed with hepatitis. She was also worried about her younger sister who was already showing signs of waywardness (which she referred to as "yawo").

Meeting Hannatu

Hannatu was eighteen years old. She was in JSS 2 in a government day secondary school and worked at her host family's roadside restaurant at the time I met her. I met her through one of my male students, Bello, who did his teaching practice at the school she

was attending at the time I began data collection. Bello was enthralled by my research and seriously wanted to be my research assistant. He had been a research assistant for an American anthropologist who regularly visited Zaria to conduct research. Bello helped put in a word for me to the principal of the school so I did not have to fulfill the lengthy bureaucratic protocol of bringing a letter of permit from the zonal office. This would have taken too long a time and I wanted to hit the ground running, apprehensive of what the rigor of data collection entailed and how little time I had to be in the country for my in-depth ethnographic experience.

Hannatu happened to also be one of the first few women I began to work with, barely two months after I arrived home for this research. When she was called upon to give her consent she was very enthusiastic. We spoke in Hausa language throughout the multiple sessions we had. She was very free and expressive. She immediately trusted me and to date calls me up to give me updates about how she is doing. She saw me as a mother-figure and she is one of those, who like the others, I still carry in my heart as I write up this research.

Considering the sensitive nature of our discussions, and since she lived with a benefactress who we were going to be talking about, we chose a neutral place near her school and used her free period while in school to meet. Her benefactress knew me well and she was likely to think I was instigating Hannatu to work against her. This is not to say her consent was not sought. It was required for cultural reasons[20]. However, seeking

[20] Hannatu's benefactress was recognized as her parent since she was supposed to live with her as her biological child. Elders and members of the community would hold her accountable for whatever happened to Hannatu. Therefore, as a researcher, I was also culturally required to seek her benefactress' consent before engaging Hannatu in my research. Not to do so would tantamount to not recognizing her

her consent was Hannatu's job. It was her prerogative and discretion and I simply tagged along.

After I had returned to the US Hannatu called me and told me she had changed her host family. My heart sank because my fears may have been confirmed that her benefactress might assume that in the course of the interview I might have made her believe that she was being maltreated and therefore instigated her to leave. That for me is one of the burdens that this kind of outsider – insider researcher work entails.

Hannatu: "Oh God forgive me for what I did"

I started my interview session with Hannatu by asking about her background:

> *Hannatu: You know my mother is not with my father. They are divorced.*
> *Phebe: Oh really, they are divorced?*
> *Hannatu: Yes.*
> *Phebe: How old were you when they got divorced?*
> *Hannatu: I was a little child […].*
> *Phebe: So has your father remarried?*
> *Hannatu: Yes, he has three wives now.*
> *Phebe: And he is a Christian?*
> *Hannatu: He is a Christian […]. My mother is a Muslim […]. She has remarried […]. My father does not permit me to go to her […] and I wish to go […]. If I disobey my father he will beat me up […]. I am afraid of the beating […]. He beats me with a bag and with his bare hands […]. I wouldn't recognize my mother if I ran into her […]. I have only seen her once […]. Whenever I am seated you will just see tears rolling down my cheek […]. I start to think of her […]. You know in this world a person is better off loving her mother than her father […]. She is the one who suffered for you […]. All through my growing up years my father has never bought me clothes […]. People help me out. Sometimes my paternal grandmother makes clothes*

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benefactress' role as Hannatu's mother and my action as trespassing and intruding in their private space. It was unacceptable to do so.

> *for me when she has the means […]. My mother does not send me stuff because if my father finds out he will not permit it […]. I am the only child of my mother and father […]. I say the lack of a mother is not good, I swear to God […] then I start to cry […]. That was why my father sent me to Kanji because he did not want to pay my school fees […]. My father is the District Head […]. He farms […]. He can read and write in English and Hausa.*

Hannatu's background had a lot of significance for how she came to do school and to interpret her schooling experiences. Being from a divorced home with a strict father who would not allow her to have contact with her mother, even though he was negligent of his responsibility towards her, explained why Hannatu had no one to mentor her through school. She missed her mother and slipped into bouts of depression on many occasions from the mere thought of missing her. She asserted that mothers are more particular about caring for their children – they are often more willing to make the sacrifices – than fathers. By implication, Hanntau alluded to the fact that if her parents were not divorced her mother would have ensured that she got a chance to go to school. Her father sent her to Kanji to go to school because he did not want to be responsible for paying her school fees. It was not because he did not appreciate schooling – he actually could read and write in Hausa and English himself. Her father was an influential man in the village. He was a district head and that meant that he wielded power that his ex-wife, Hannatu's mother, could not contend with. As such she kept away from the house and from her daughter and this resulted in Hannatu's neglect. She had to live off of the benevolence of her grandmother and good neighbors and friends since even her father was not responsive to her basic needs, even of clothing. She lost contact with her mother when she was an

infant and would not be able to recognize her if she ran into her. Her story resonated with me considering that I had lost contact with my son too for many years. Consequently, as with Safiya, as Hannatu told this part of her story the atmosphere became emotionally tensed. I could see why she was self-less about living with her benefactress. She had no choice about it. That was the only option she was left with if she was to access school.

Most young women like Hannatu born under these kinds of circumstances were trafficked like a commodity from house to house. They lived with host families – people who were total strangers to them – and that movement destabilized their lives and their schooling. They were often at the mercy of their host families and if they were not fortunate they were even worse off than in their own homes:

> *Phebe: Where did you start going to school.*
> *Hannatu: I started in Kanji.*
> *Phebe: What took you to Kanji?*
> *Hannatu: The school.*
> *Phebe: What type of school? Boarding school?*
> *Hannatu: No, to go and help someone with work and he in turn help me out with money to go to school because my father has too many children and they attend big big boarding schools. And there are others at home and you know schools in the village are more expensive […]; the one in my village is expensive.*
> *Phebe: How did you come to live with your host family?*
> *Hannatu: It was in our village. He was teaching in our village. My father went to ask him to make way for him to help me to go to school because he has too many children to send to school. So, the man decided that he will bring me to his hometown […]. My dad agreed and I came to live with them […]. They would not pay me for my services […] but they will provide me with clothes, and pay my school fees. If I become sick it is on them. However, if I become sick they send for my father […]. If the illness is the type that ten naira panadol can cure*

they will buy it, but if it is an expensive one they will send for my father […]. You know in the village those who are sick go for examination, right?

Phebe: Ehm.

Hannatu: They examined me and found I had liver problem the same as the husband of my host family. They bought the medication for us. The husband's illness was cured mine was not […]. They did not buy more medications for me […] instead they sent for my father telling him that I was sick […]. My father asked what the illness was but he did not do anything about it.

Phebe: So, how did you then get well?

Hannatu: One of my neighbors who used to have same ailment […], he bought the herbal medicine for me and for him […]. This man's brother had the same illness. He was so sick his stomach was swollen like a pregnant woman's […]. He eventually died of that sickness.

Phebe: So, you became afraid.

Hannatu*: Yes.*

Although Hannatu observed the discriminatory treatment she received from her father as a result of the divorce from her mother, she did not take it to heart. She still preferred to have a family. Consequently, she made excuses for her father even when it was obvious that she was being trafficked. She explained that the fees in the village school were too expensive for him to pay, seeing that he was already paying heavily to send many of her siblings to boarding schools where the school fees were high. Because her father had many children from his many wives whom he cared for, Hannatu agreed to the arrangement to go live with this strange family that her father negotiated with, without seeking her consent. Her benefactor, her guide in this instance, volunteered to bring her to his home when her father approached him to help. He was doing her family a favor.

In exchange for her services in his house – mainly doing the house chores – her benefactor sent her to school. Her father was not even responsible enough to negotiate for the type of school he would prefer Hannatu to be sent to. All he cared about was that her benefactor sent her to school and took care of her needs, including her health needs. But, if her health got critical then they sent for her father to take responsibility. On one occasion that need arose because her health problems became critical, but neither her father nor her benefactress came to her rescue. She had to depend on the benevolence of her caring and sympathetic neighbor. Hannatu was treated like a disposable material – useful when active and discarded when no longer able to perform. She had a liver disease and had to resort to surviving on the kindness of a good neighbor, taking herbal medicine, and living with the fear of death. Amidst this emotional trauma, and worsened by her being torn apart from her family to live with strangers, Hannatu definitely could not cope very well with schooling. But, she remained in school rather than drop out.

Hannatu, like Adama and Safiya, complained about the quality of education she received in the village and in some government schools, but unlike these other women, she took responsibility for her poor performance in school rather than put the blame on the teacher and the school system:

> *Phebe: How did you find going to school in that village? Were they teaching you?*
> *Hannatu: They were teaching us except that we did not pay attention to what we were being taught.*

However, Hannatu had reasons why she did not pay attention. Her drift began when her benefactor defaulted in paying her school fees and she had to do extra work in addition to

the services she rendered in the home in order to raise the fees. In spite of these challenges, she did well even in mathematics:

> *Phebe: Why did you not pay attention?*
> *Hannatu: It was later on I began to say Oh God forgive me for what I did […]. They will teach me and I will […] like when I was in primary school, they would teach me math and I would understand it. Then for one year I was not going to school. No, two months we were sent home because we had not paid our school fees. This was when I was removed from the primary school to the secondary school […]. We do not know why he [her benefactor] did not pay the fees. So, we began to fetch sand on our heads and gather it together waiting for buyers, when they buy the sand we would go and pay our school fees by ourselves […]. Sometimes we would pile up the sand for four months and there will be no buyer unless God hears our prayers and then they will come and buy. When they buy it we go to pay our school fees […]. Until then we will remain at home and not go to school […].*
> *Phebe: So, was your benefactor so negligent?*
> *Hannatu: The man was a teacher. He was in a school, teaching in Abuja […]. He only comes on holidays and goes back […]. His wife read Hausa. Her husband died and she married his brother [her present husband]. If you see her, she has thirteen children. She goes to school even now […]. She could not teach me.*

Mathematics was considered a difficult subject. As such by commenting on the fact that she did well in that subject before she began to drift away, Hannatu accentuated her blaming herself for her poor performance in school which is further heightened by her prayer – "Oh God forgive me for what I did". For me, her posture reveals how hard she was on herself because obviously, her benefactor was not sufficiently supportive of her schooling. If the reason why she was trafficked was for her to gain the benefit of going to

school then she did not have to drop out of school and to work and raise money to pay her school fees by herself while yet serving in that home. It would have been more understandable of she did that at her parents' home or independently if she chose to live by herself. This is where exploitation is defined as far as Hannatu's case of child-trafficking is concerned but she explained it away by making excuses for them. She lived with her benefactor's wife who was not originally his wife. She was first his late brother's wife and already had thirteen children. Her benefactor was only able to visit with them occasionally which means that her benefactress was not intentionally mean to her. They all wallowed in abject poverty and had to do whatever they could not only to survive but to also remain in school.

Hannatu's willingness to do this kind of menial job in order to remain in school showed her commitment to schooling and distrupted by way of complicating it, the notion that northern Nigerian women need to be enlightened and sensitized about schooling before they can engage in it as stakeholders project. Hannatu not only piled up sand waiting for buyers but also resorted to depending on religion for the way to escape the abject poverty which was challenging her schooling endeavor. She prayed for buyers. I read desperation in her tome suggesting that even if the amount of money she got was not commesurable to the labor she put in for this work she would be content as long as she could save enough to return to school.

In pointing to the failure of the system to support her schooling, Hannatu explained that the teachers did not teach as they ought to:

> *Hannatu: In the secondary school in Kanji they do not teach as they ought to. They do not teach very well.*

For example when we go to school if one teacher comes into the classroom since the morning then until closing no other teacher will come into the classroom any more. That was why I was removed from that school […]. All they do is just sit. If we have any teachers come into our classroom we are grateful even. Some when they come in all they do is tell stories, tell stories. That is all […]. No teaching.

Phebe: Do they give you books?

Hannatu: Yes, books. They write on the board giving us examples to copy. Some others when they come into the class all they do is write on the chalkboard and leave […].

Phebe: When did you move on to secondary school?

Hannatu: I was removed from primary school when I was in primary five because you know in the primary school they were not teaching. We didn't like going. So, they removed us […]. They had just started the secondary school. It was started in 2006. We started going there in 2007 […]. Sometimes when we went to the secondary school we would just be sleeping […]. Yes, when the teachers don't come to class […].

Teachers did not teach and the story is the same both at the primary and the secondary school. Hannatu was moved from the primary school to the new secondary school that was opened with the hope that there would be more commitment to work and standard would be maintained, but the story was the same. They did not come into the classrooms and on the few occasions they did, they merely told stories to while away time or they copied notes on the chalkboard for the students to copy into their notebooks implying that they expected them to memorize and to regurgitate the content during examinations. Hannatu explained that what she did most of the time was to either refuse to go to school or to sleep throughout the school period. This pathetic situation was captured even in the

regretful tone with which she told this story. She wished that the situation was different and that she actually learned and not wasted the time.

Hannatu explained the effort she made at learning from her classmates but how even that attempt was frustrated because she was mocked at even by her friends for not knowing the subject:

> *Hannatu: You know, if someone can read a little bit, she knows this one and does not know that one and she asks someone else what this means then someone will tell them the answer laughing at them to ridicule that she does not know anything. You yourself, you know, you will be shy to ask next time, right?*
> *Phebe: Right.*
> *Hannatu: That was what happened.*
> *Phebe: But among your friends did you not have a trusted one you could depend on?*
> *Hannatu: They were the ones who laughed the most […].*

With these multiple challenges to her schooling, it is understandable that when her neighbor outside school tried to help her to learn, Hannatu did not have any motivation to do so. She preferred to pluck mango and guava fruits instead:

> *Hannatu: When we came home and they were teaching us our attention is elsewhere.*
> *Phebe: Who teaches you at home?*
> *Hannatu: My neighbor.*
> *Phebe: Was he being paid?*
> *Hannatu: No, for free. He teaches us for free whenever he gets a chance to do so. When he is teaching us our attention is on the mango or guava tree […] just like that.*

From the foregoing, it is obvious that Hannatu was definitely torn between blaming the school system, her benefactor, and her own negligence for her poor performance in school. Apart from the fact that she was living her age by being playful, does her

playfulness not suggest the absence of effective guidance from her parents or guardians/benefactors? Was it her responsibility to pay her own fees in addition to rendering services in the home where she had been sent to serve in exchange for an education? She obviously was more sympathetic and understanding of her host family's predicament at her own expense.

It was absurd that her father would send her to live with a family that could barely take care of themselves. In so doing he revealed how negligent he was about her well-being. Both the man's wife and children and Hannatu were neglected by this husband who lived and worked in another city far away from home. This meant that he was hardly there to notice what their predicament was. No wonder Hannatu felt sympathetic towards her benefactress and her children and decided to bear the burden of her schooling by herself while enjoying the company of fellow young women who shared similar plights. She talked in the plural "we" about their inability to afford their school fees in the village government school. She found these friends to be a buffer – they could relate on common grounds and pacify themselves. So, together they fetched sand from the river to sell in order to raise the money to pay their school fees. This was not a fast moving business and that meant that they got left behind in class.

Hannatu felt more bonding to this family because she understood that at least they did not pay her school fees not because they were being mean to her like her father, but because they were plagued with abject poverty. Hannatu found escape in religion. She prayed to God to forgive her because she lived in the consciousness of the fact that she could have made the most of the bad situation had she been focused on schooling herself.

In my opinion, in painting this picture of the effort she and her friends put to raise money to pay their school fees, Hannatu challenged the discourse of free education in the sense that policy documents say that government schools from primary to secondary schools were supposed to be free, yet certain levies were being charged for the maintenance of the school because government funding was not reaching the schools. Consequently, the purpose of free education was defeated.

The burden of paying school fees affected Hannatu because it caused her to lag behind. For instance, initially she used to understand math but before long she got left behind. I assume that she refers to math because of the general belief that math is a difficult subject. Since, initially, she could cope with math but got left behind when she got so overwhelmed by her problems; it means that the problem was not that she was incapable of coping with the demands of schooling. Instead, her poverty, her neglect, and her being trafficked contributed to slowing down her progress. She needed to survive. She explained that she received coaching from her good neighbor who volunteered to teach her. But she was too distracted to take advantage of this privilege. It is obvious that Hannatu, like Adama, asserted that poor young women who make it through school and do well often are able to do so because of the benevolence of some good people that they happen to meet in their schooling journey.

Hannatu, like Adama and Safiya, pointed out the fact that the pedagogical practice of the teachers and their nonchalant attitude to work contributed to her poor performance in school. This was so both at the primary and the secondary schools she attended in Kanji. She was actually removed from primary school when she was in primary five and

moved on to secondary school because of this same teachers' nonchalance to work. The teachers were not mindful of whether she had a good foundation to cope with the next level of education or not. The teachers would be in school but they would not come into the classrooms to teach. They only sat around. Whenever they managed to come into the classrooms, they told stories the whole time or they wrote notes on the chalkboard for the students to copy into their notebooks and that was all that teaching meant. The notes they copied were the only reference resources the students had. The obvious implication of doing this was that the students were expected to memorize the notes and regurgitate them during examinations.

Hannatu judged this form of teaching as improper. She was not motivated to go to school. She slept in school most of the time. There were times when she motivated herself to study and to come up with a few questions. Since the teachers were inaccessible she resorted to asking her friends for help with understanding the difficult aspects of her notes, but she was often frustrated from making such attempts because they ridiculed her. She recoiled into herself and was resigned to her fate.

Another experience in another house – the effort of "one woman" (the trafficker)

Schooling for Hannatu was arduous because of how she had to keep moving from house to house and not at her own discretion. She did not get the privilege of being asked what she preferred. I asked her why she left Kanji:

> *Hannatu: My father removed me.*
> *Phebe: Why did he remove you?*
> *Hannatu: I also do not know. My sense is that it is probably because he saw that they do not teach in the school or because he saw that they were always asking him*

to provide money for my ill-health. That is the way I thought about it […]. He brought me to Zaria.

Phebe: How did he know he should bring you to Zaria?

Hannatu: It is one woman, she looks for young women to live with host families […]. That is the job she does […].

Phebe: How did your father know about her?

Hannatu: You know she got some young women from my village and the women ran away. When my father heard, without hearing that the women ran away, he decided to bring me and a few others. When we went home on holidays the three of them refused to return. Only two of us returned […]. Since we got back after the Christmas holiday we have not met.

Hannatu explained how she was devalued as a human being. She was not consulted when she had to be moved from one house to the other. Her father contacted the woman, Hannatu's guide – the trafficker - to help him find a place for Hannatu in Zaria. The woman supplied young women to host families. That was the job she did. A few other women in her predicament from her village exercised their power of agency to return to their parents' homes when they felt maltreated by their host families, but Hannatu was unable to do so because she knew that her father preferred her to be out of the house. I assume that she made some choices here – she preferred the deplorable condition of living with host families to the neglect she suffered from her father. That was obviously a hard decision to make out of two terrible situations.

At her present benefactors' home in Zaria, she observed the discriminatory treatment she received because she was not their biological child:

Hannatu: You know rich people put their children in expensive schools. It is the poor who put their children here. You know here it is only four hundred and twenty naira that is paid for school fees.

Hannatu's school fee at this government day secondary school was only four hundred and twenty naira ($2.80). Again this challenges the notion of free education that I already talked about. Her poverty stared her in the face because she was aware that only poor people went to the kind of school that she was in. This reiterates what Adama also said about the kind of primary school she started in.

Hannatu, like Adama and Safiya, saw education as her way out of her overwhelming predicament:

> *Phebe: What are your plans for the next ten years?*
> *Hannatu: In my life all I want to be is to become a nurse.*
> *Phebe: Nurse? You want to be a nurse? Why?*
> *Hannatu: To be able to give people injection […]. I also want to be a tailor.*
> *Phebe: Tailor? Tell me, what is your reason?*
> *Hannatu: [Laughed]. I want to be a tailor so that when I come home from my nursing job and have nothing to do I can sew for people and have money.*
> *Phebe: So money is your motivation.*
> *Hannatu: When I get married I want to buy stuff for my children if my husband does not buy them […]. And problem, if a person has problems, to be able to solve them herself […]. I wish I could marry many men I would have preferred it.*
> *Phebe: Hey [laughed]. Why would you want to marry many men?*
> *Hannatu: Because some men's behavior appeals to me. You hear your mind say to you marry this one, marry that one and you are left confused on who to choose […]. You know, there are some men you marry and they beat you mercilessly. You do not know if you will marry a reasonable and responsible man or not […]. I will marry the one God chooses for me it is just my mind that wonders about the possibility of marrying many husbands. You know sometimes your mind tells you all kinds of things […]. Many times I wish that God will match me up with a man that owns a car and lives in the town, not to a village man that will bring me to his*

farm and we would be farming and the soles of my feet will be breaking […]. If I get married in the town, when I am going for holiday, when I am going to see my parents I bring my husband with me in the car and people envy me and say […]. But if a person gets married in the village you will see that she will age very fast […] because they are suffering […]. You come to the village with your well made hair […], with your well sewn clothes, with your pump shoes, your very expensive handbag, and your expensive earrings, and your expensive necklace, and your expensive bangles […] and when some people are getting married they will say let them invite this lady in the town […] and then when I come I will come with my very big headgear and everything I have very expensive […] and come and sit down like the President of a country's wife.

Phebe: Why do you dream this way?

Hannatu: Because I see other women I admire.

Phebe: So how do you think you can have this kind of husband?

Hannatu: I have to work very hard on my books. You know these days some men like those who own cars- they prefer educated women. I have to work hard on my books and on my schooling.

Phebe: So, for you that is why you are in school, right?

Hannatu: Yes, so that I can find a good husband […].

Like Safiya, Hannatu did not want to be a liability in her marital home. She desired to have an education – to become a nurse – but in addition to that she wanted to have a business outfit by the side – so that she could be economically independent. She wanted to be able to meet her children's needs when she eventually had them and in so doing assist her husband and also solve her own financial challenges.

It is obvious that her deprivation informed her future dreams – like Adama and Safiya, she would not want her children to suffer the hardship she endured. She would not want to neglect them and she did not want to be a dependent wife. Hannatu disliked

poverty so much that she transferred this attitude to the way she perceived poor people. As far as she was concerned, they grew older faster than normal and they had broken feet because they could not afford a pedicure. Also, poor women were not recognized in society. If she married a rich man she would be invited to important ceremonies like weddings in the village. Like Safiya, Hannatu thought that success would make people to reckon with her, but unlike Safiya she saw that she could attain this recognition not only through having a good education but also by marrying a rich man.

Her appearance would change as she would look expensively dressed and she would be able to afford the good things of life. She imagined the admiration that would attend her if she happened to marry a rich man, especially when she visited her hometown. She equated this to the extravagance that accompanied the First Lady of any nation – expensive hairstyle, clothing, pumps, handbags, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and huge head-gear. Her deprivation was expressed in these wishes and it pushed her to contemplate polygamy which I found to be an extremely shocking view on gender and sexuality. No doubt Hannatu, like Adama and Safiya, pointed out the social inequity in the society through her very graphic use of imagery and hoped that acquiring higher education, like becoming a nurse in addition to owning her own business enterprise as a tailor, would help her to break even.

For this reason she decided to work hard at her books and her schooling. Hannatu also asserted that her schooling might help her to get lucky to be picked by a rich man for marriage – rich men marry educated women. In my opinion, this is a radical shift in paradigm influenced by the new challenges of living both in a postcolonial and a

capitalist globalized condition. Hannatu's dream of an alternative access to wealth and abundance was marriage but she had to be fortunate to be chosen by a rich man whom she must impress with her educational achievement.

Delpit (2002) provides me with the vocabulary to describe what was going on in Hannatu's perception and sense making of the world. According to her, "For better or worse, in our stratified society our appearance can be seen to create an expectation of success or failure, of brilliance or stupidity, of power or impotence" (p. xvii). Hannatu described the poor as failures and the rich as successes using their appearances and the influence they command as explained above. My opinion is that Hannatu's perception of what being poor or rich means fits very well into the dominant way the west has categorized humans in binary oppositions such that a human being is either poor or rich which she has been socialized to also imbibe. Consequently, typical of her hybridity and the third space she occupies, she sees herself as belonging to neither class of people. Instead, she perceives herself as better than the poor while yet aspiring, sometime in the future when her dreams and aspirations would have been realized, to belong to the class of the rich.

Chapter Six

The Intersections between Islamic Education and Western Education: The Case of Divided Loyalty?

Introduction

This chapter tells Farida's story beginning with how I met and recruited her for this study. In the next section I explain her relevance to this work, situating it within the issues of diversity in order to show the intersections between Islamic education and western education and to show her dilemma regarding making a choice between the two schooling options. The following section engages in a critical analysis and my interpretation of the conversations we had. I start with her detailed explanation of how the Islamiyya schools operate to show that there were unresolved issues in the operations of these schools. In so doing I show how complex and complicated her decision process was, because, even if she preferred Islamiyya education, she could see the obvious gaps in the way it was communicated. Still, she was obliged to it because of her religious calling and orientation and needed to strike a balance between adhering to the dictates of her religion and the pursuit of western education – a "necessary evil" for coping in the secular world. Thereafter, I discuss the conflict she had in making the choice between the two forms of education, illustrating that she did not in the real sense have a choice: western education was a compelling alternative she had to choose in view of the challenges of surviving in this global age and in her postcolonial reality. However, she found a third space for herself where she lived with the combination of both forms of education tailored toward creating her own experience.

Meeting Farida on the school corridor and in the office

Farida was completing her NCE program when we had her interview. She was 23 years old. She is one of the selections I made from the community college I worked at before I came for my PhD program in the United Sates. I had taught her literature in English when she began her pre-NCE program and she admired me as one of her "good teachers". When she found me in the corridor of her school - thinking I was away in the United States- she was flabbergasted.

She quickly reconnected with me. Previously, when I taught, there was not a close bonding between us. She had never expressed her admiration to me. As a devout Muslim, she typically always wore the hijab. I, like most other Christians, was often standoffish with Muslims with the hijab and other dress styles that portrayed them as fundamentalists, even though we might eventually establish a rapport and become friends. The general belief was that they held very radical Islamic views, one of which was to treat people of other faith as infidels. They also were not disposed to interacting freely with people of other faiths. In being standoffish I felt I was keeping myself away from any conflicts and confrontations resulting from our faith differences.

Farida surprised me this day when she walked into my office space, greeted me nicely, and asked for help with her final year project writing. I offered her the best help I could and then I felt that this was my moment to ask for her consent to participate in my study. I wanted a Muslim fundamentalist's view on schooling. I had gone to a nearby Islamiyya school to recruit someone and it had proved difficult because of my "outsider" status. I explained my situation to her and described my research. She instantly gave her

consent and explained that she had attended various Islamiyya schools at different stages of her schooling experiences. She spoke, it seemed, without reservations or inhibitions. I positioned myself as the learner and she the teacher. That positioning made her very comfortable to speak at length and for me to listen. We were engaged in deep conversations that spanned more than one hour per session because she could get lost in the world of her discourse and I was enthralled with the details that came through to me in new realizations. Throughout my interview sessions with her she wore the hijab.

Situating Farida's story

Farida's story sheds light on the issue of religious diversity and how that has implications for the way northern Nigerian women "do" school. Her schooling experiences explicate the conflict and ambivalence that she faced as a Muslim young woman who had to strike a balance between acquiring Islamic education and western education at the same time. She was torn evaluating what knowledge had the greater worth.

Farida brought from home her religious and ethnic culture and in school she was confronted with the dominant culture of the west, played out in the way the school system was structured and the way the curriculum was designed and taught. In my literature review I talked about the existing educational gap between the north and the south caused essentially by the way the north resisted western education during the colonial era. The north associated accepting western education with accepting Christianity, especially because of the way the missionaries went about spreading both western education and Christianity to the native people. It is interesting that over 50 years since Nigeria became

independent, Farida and most of the other women I interviewed still perceived schools as spaces where their devotion to Islam is corrupted. They struggle to make sense of the cultural integration that took place as a result of colonial contact.

In telling Farida's story and in the next chapter in Samira's story, I show how these northern Nigerian women no longer resisted western education. This in my opinion shows a definite paradigm shift. In Farida's case the reason is that she wanted to be able to stay relevant in the age of capitalism and globalization in postcolonial Nigeria. What she resisted instead was the fact that her cultural sense was being devalued in the process. It was this resistance that made her to have perpetual conflict within herself. In striking a balance and finding a voice, she maintained her values and worldviews while still fashioning a new culture – a hybrid of her commitment to Islam, Islamic education, and western education that permitted her to benefit from both worlds.

"Religion has its own part; education has its own part": Explaining the way Islamiyya education worked

Knowing that Farida was a Muslim, I started the first session by asking her why she went to an Islamiyya school:

> *Farida: Every Muslim is supposed to attend Arabic education because it's very important. If you want to know how to worship God and know who is God himself, you have to attend Arabic education. So, it's there they tell you everything pertaining to your religion from A to Z, how to worship God. And because there is a saying that says you can't worship God unless you know him […]. Some parents don't know anything pertaining religion. To some extent you will see if they send their children to school, to Arabic school, it's these children that always assist their parents in some aspect of religion. So, it's very very important. I believe that*

> *for any Muslim who did not go to Arabic school it will be very difficult to know how to worship God in a proper way […].*

Farida had a strong conviction that obtaining Arabic education from an Islamiyya school was mandatory for a devout Muslim who must worship God properly. That was where knowledge about God was obtained. Her impression was that this knowledge was compact and it was deposited in the student with precision – "A-Z". When a Muslim woman attended an Islamiyya school, she was actually fulfilling one of the injunctions: "you can't worship God unless you know him". Additionally, she was able to assist her parents in some aspects of the religion. So, the search for Islamic knowledge for Farida was obligatory on three counts: so that the woman could know God and worship him properly, so that she fulfilled an Islamic injunction, and so that she assisted her parents in issues pertaining the religion.

Farida explained the way the Islamiyya school she went to worked and the kind of subjects that were offered:

> *Farida: We have subjects, categories of subjects they normally offer the way we have in western education. We normally have math/English. They have Qur'anic, Arabic, hadith, sira, fiqh, tawhid, tasawwuf, al-luggha, al-adab, and so on and so forth […]. For example, like Qur'an is recitation of the holy book. So, you'll be taught how to recite and that is one subject on its own and even that Qur'an is further classified into subsections and taught as such. Before you can know how to recite, it's just like a child going to primary school. You learn the alphabet. We have the alphabet in Arabic too. The way they have an alphabet in English is the same thing as they have an alphabet in Arabic. Then it's that alphabet they will start teaching the nursery or kindergarten students […]. Let's say three years old*

> *[…]. And they believe that if someone knows the alphabet, how to join the alphabet together to make a word, from a word to sentence, to a paragraph. So, they believe that even on your own you can recite Qur'an because those letters are the ones they use to write the Qur'an.*

Although Farida explained the pedagogical practice in Islamiyya school by comparing it to what is obtained in formal schools, the peculiarities obtained in this type of school were obvious – that recitation was paramount particularly of the Qur'an. She also drew attention to the various kinds of subjects that were taught – hadith, sira, fiqh, and so on. Again, just as with western education, this education was graded beginning with the nursery or kindergarten where Arabic alphabets were taught, emphasizing how early in life devout Muslim women began to acquire Islamiyya education. They actually began when they were three years old. After the alphabet, words were learned, then sentences, and paragraphs.

Different Islamiyya schools operated differently. Farida explained the way the one she attended operated:

> *Farida: There are some Arabic schools where a child in primary five has finished reading Qur'an […]. Normally, in some Arabic school they first memorize or let me say they memorize mainly […]. Like in my own Arabic school […] you will do the recitation of Qur'an […]. Recitation is for you to be able to open Qur'an and read it and be able to know the point you are reading. Then memorize, you memorize upstairs [in your head] whether you know where it is or not, in the absence of the Qur'an you can read it upstairs. Then recitation is believing that if you open Qur'an you will be able to touch where you are reading. That means you know Arabic as a language […]. But memorization is compulsory because in prayer, if you are praying*

> *you can't be opening the book. So, you have to know it upstairs. But because some people believe that they should know it, they should know how to recite it first before they memorize it because if they memorize first they may not be able to know it in written.*

The main difference Farida pointed out was the stage at which a student was expected to have finished reading the Qur'an. She opined that Islamiyya schools did not agree on that. In the school she attended, the complete reading of the Qur'an was expected to take place at primary five. She defined what she meant by reading. It meant memorization and recitation. Farida and her school saw a difference in the reading skills taught in Islamiyya schools where memorization was mindless and recitation was mindfully conscious and deliberate. Herein laid another difference in what the schools practiced. According to her, other schools emphasized memorization whereas her school emphasized both. Even in schools where both skills were emphasized, there were no consensus on which skill was to be learned first as far as being able to read afterwards was concerned. She considered recitation - meaning reading the words on the page - a more difficult skill to acquire because in her opinion, a student must fulfill the prerequisite of knowing Arabic before engaging in recitation.

She stated that there was a consensus in the practice of the religion that memorization was compulsory as that was a necessary aspect of routine Islamic prayers. So, beyond drawing attention to pedagogical practice and language skills (reading and writing), Farida also drew attention to the reading skills obtainable in Islamiyya education; the student either memorized or recited.

Farida shed light on the issue of the curriculum of Islamiyya schools when I asked to know who planned it. I asked this question because in my mind I wondered how the differences in the practice of Islam as shown by the various sects were obtained and differentiated:

> *Farida: The curriculum is drawn from those, it seems they have, is it committee or something of Arabic school […] normally like I, I graduated in JSS 1 […]. Like my own Arabic school we have from nursery then primary one through five, then junior secondary school […]. After primary school walimat Qur'an is the exam you write […]. After junior secondary school there is another exam you will write. So, if, they normally call it shahada […] they believe that after Qur'an, all those, those subjects those textbooks on other subjects you've known them […]. And they believe that, the way they normally have first term, second term, third term in western education, that's how we're having it in an Arabic school too […]. It is believing that if you are in SSS 1 you should be speaking Arabic […]. After SSS they normally go to Saudi Arabia or Egypt to get another knowledge like degree on maybe different, it may not be Qur'an. It's, it will be like research on some books pertaining to the Islamic religion […]. Some believe that, it's like western education; they believe that what they are doing in primary five is almost the same thing with primary six. Instead of wasting the children's time they should just go to JSS 1. But some, those who cannot cope they have to do the primary six […]. Like I, I did my own first graduation in primary five […].*

In an attempt to explain how the curriculum was structured and drawn by a committee set up to ensure minimum standards, Farida explained the school grades obtainable in Islamiyya schools. There were nursery, primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, and higher education sections. Whereas all the other sections were obtainable in Nigeria, the

level of higher education was only obtainable in Saudi Arabia or Egypt. Each level of education terminated with a qualifying examination. Going back to the previous excerpt, it followed that after the nursery section, the student should have known the Arabic alphabets properly. At the end of primary school, she should have passed her walimat Qur'an. After junior secondary school the shahada was the qualifying examination. Farida did not mention what the qualifying examination was after senior secondary school but proficiency in Arabic language was a necessary requirement a woman needed to fulfill in order to be able to further her education outside the country; an education that was more research based than what they obtained from Nigeria. According to Farida, as was with western education, if a young woman did not perform as expected she was made to repeat a class. This meant that good performance was a demand that was placed on women in Islamiyya schools. As such, for instance, a woman may do primary six if she did not perform well at the qualifying exam in primary five. Consequently, Farida celebrated the fact that she was a good student since she passed her walimat Qur'an at primary five.

Another difference about the operations of Islamiyya schools that Farida drew attention to bordered on the issue of ethnicity:

> *Farida: But like my own Arabic school, due to is it tribalism or what, we are not taught Arabic. Mostly they teach us in Yoruba because they believe that even if they are teaching us in Arabic you cannot understand what they are teaching you. They have to teach you in Yoruba first. To understand because it's not […] something you are not born in it and it's not your language […]. Let me say maybe the mistake or what they don't have in their curriculum in that school is that they give room for student to*

> *be speaking Yoruba. They don't take speaking Arabic very very important […]. Now that my younger siblings ones are there I heard them saying that they introduce speaking Arabic, even say if you speak Yoruba or any other language they will fine you or they will beat you. So, it seems they have put it in their curriculum to take Arabic language to be using in the school now unlike when we were there. Normally we speak Yoruba. The only Arabic we know is what they read for us in the book.*

Farida insinuated that there were schools where Arabic was the language of instruction and general communication among the students unlike the school she attended where bilingualism was encouraged. In her school Arabic was encountered only in books but Yoruba was the official language of communication and instruction. She explained, however, that even in her former school there had been a shift in this practice as confirmed by her younger siblings. Farida criticized the initial practice seeing it as a question of priority; Arabic was not very important to them when she was in that school. She had a differing opinion to that practice. That was why she thought that the negligence of the Arabic language at the time was a major flaw in the curriculum. So, it is my opinion that Farida's assertion was that Arabic must be kept as a necessary prerequisite language of communication and instruction in Islamiyya schools. She explained and did not have any criticism against the way this language was currently being enforced in that school – you paid a fine or got beaten if you spoke Yoruba instead of Arabic.

In spite of the minimum standard that was set by a curriculum planning committee, Islamiyya schools were not rated in the same way. The main yardstick that was used to distinguish among them was whether their students were proficient in Arabic language or not. When Farida finished her junior secondary school education, she could

not proceed with senior secondary school education in the same school because they did not have that level of the education at the time, because the school was fairly new. She needed to transfer to another Islamiyya school, but she could not:

> *Farida: Because like now the way I'm thinking I've graduated JSS 3, I might go to, with the hope to go to that SSS, due to maybe the exams or the interview they will do to me, they might put me in primary five.*
> *Phebe: In another Arabic school?*
> *Farida: Yes. They will feel that my standard is not high enough.*
> *Phebe: So, how do you measure standard? You know you said that there is a committee that sets the standards. So everybody is supposed to be operating with the same curriculum. So, if everybody is operating with the same curriculum, why will some schools see you as finishing JSS and another school will think that you should go back to primary five?*
> *Farida: Um, like what I'm saying is that some Arabic school, their level of teaching is high […] like the way I said it that my own Arabic school we are not good in speaking Arabic. So, there they believe that what will make me graduate to JSS 3 and not know how to speak Arabic?*

Farida lost confidence in applying to another Islamiyya school after she completed her JSS because she considered that she was not sufficiently proficient in Arabic and that she would be denied admission or be demoted to primary five. She affirmed that the Arabic language she acquired from her school was substandard. Here again, she spoke to the lack of harmony in the way Islamiyya schools operated and her tone suggested dissatisfaction and the need for intervention.

Farida explained that Islamiyya schools were run according to sects even though the basic tenets of what they taught were the same:

Phebe: Is the concept of Islamiyya school purely an Izala sect affair?

Farida: No, the Izala sect is an organization. We are all Muslims but individual like you have izala, you have Derica[21], and we have shiite. We are doing the same thing but there are some personal things that this one is thinking is proper, while this one they are doing as well. There are some things that are compulsory for all of us to do like praying five times a day, fasting in the month of Ramadan, going to hajj if you have the money, then the first, I forgot, is believe in God, Allah, and his Prophet, this is compulsory for you […]. So, there are some acts, part of ibada some people are doing that maybe are not compulsory. If you do it is rewarding, if you did not do it there is no punishment for you. So, like those izala […] they are following Prophet Muhammad, the way he, all his deeds, and how he lived his life […]. So, like there are some acts like the derica now, some are doing zikri – the hailing of Prophet Muhammed, like praising Prophet Muhammed […]. While Izala doesn't quite believe in that; it's not by force to gather yourself and do it, you can do it individually. Like that […], there are just minor minor differences […]. So everybody has his own organization but it's all the Muslims that have their own Islamiyya […] but there is a school that will be mixed.

There are three main Islamic religious sects that she listed: Izala, Derica, and Shi'ite. Farida explained that the basic difference between the practices of these sects laid in what she called the act of worship ("ibada") and what was perceived as compulsory and mandatory and what was compulsory but not mandatory. The main distinction in this was whether a devout Muslim wanted the reward attached to doing the extra act of worship or not. My take on these differences is that they do have implications for education in the sense that they complicate the process of developing a curriculum that will help maintain

[21] Derica is one of the Islamic sects that Muslims in Nigeria belong to. The other sects include Izala and Shiite. I discussed the differences between these sects in Chapter Six.

minimum standards. The situation, in my opinion, will be worse where some schools teach the beliefs of all the sects combined, schools that Farida referred to as mixed schools. However, from what she was saying and in her tone Farida did not see any real problems with these differences and their implications in the expected teaching and learning.

Further into our conversation, Farida pointed out the fact that Islamiyya schools emphasized and reinforced sexual norms which the women had been socialized into from their infancy. Farida explained how this was done in her school:

> *Phebe: Are shifts [morning and afternoon sessions] run in Islammiyya schools to ensure separation between men and women?*
> *Farida: Mnn, for some. Like our own, my own Islamiyya, both male and female are in the same class but our seats are different […]. Like from nursery, primary, some, from primary one to is it three or two, they are mixing female and male. So, maybe they are thinking that as children are getting mature maybe they should separate them. Like the primary setting is for both male and female in the afternoon but the females are in a separate apartment while the male are in a separate apartment […]. They are thinking maybe if the girls and the the boys are mixed together maybe there will be feelings or something or there will be corruption.*

According to her, there was no Islamic rule for schools to run shifts based on sexual difference. Some determining factors include crowding and insufficient facilities. This meant that the rule for observing sexual separation applied whether the school ran shifts or not. In mixed schools, the rule about observing the opposite sex was enforced in the sitting arrangement insisted upon in the classroom. Students sat in rows according to their sexes. In her opinion, sexual separation was observed in this manner to ensure moral

purity. She assumed that the reason the students were not allowed to sit together once they got to either primary two or three was because they were seen as mature children who understood the workings of their bodies and could begin to have and probably entertain sexual urges. She was more explicit about this when she said that if the girls and the boys were mixed together, there would be feelings or there will be "corruption." I read Farida's explanation as her attempt to draw attention to the deeper meaning ascribed to the issue of space in Islamiyya education both in the classroom and in the school in general.

Furthermore, Farida posited that when a school was mixed, the onus would lay on the teacher to ensure that both sexes were involved in the teaching and learning process:

> *Phebe: Would you think that the sitting arrangement affects learning in any way?*
>
> *Farida: Like my own Islamiyya personally, when the lesson is going on, the teacher will make sure that he is concentrating both on the, there won't be much gap, maybe just this row like this will be females. Then this row like this, maybe just at the middle even at the middle too maybe if the boys are more than the girls they will use two rows or four rows of the females like that. So, the teacher will make sure he goes up and down in the class going up and down and maybe after the lesson he will make sure that they ask question. He will be throwing question to each section of the students because sometimes we normally do debate in the class, maybe two females, two males in the class; maybe for more motivation to see who is working best sometime if we do it like that maybe the teacher will say that maybe females are participating even more than you. So, that one will cheer the men the next time so that they will put more effort, so that they will do like that. So, the teacher will make sure that he will be the one to do better work, trying to motivate students in the class*

maybe those that are not vocal by asking them a question.

Farida explained that one way that space definitely affected learning in the classroom was the burden it placed on the teacher. He had to move around in the classroom and make sure he involved both sexes in the question and answer time in order to ensure classroom participation and adequate learning. Sometimes, the teacher encouraged competition and motivated the students by making overt comparisons between the boys and the girls. However, in spite of this effort, Farida pointed out that there were still students who would not participate in this kind of classroom practice. What the teacher did in most of such cases was to specifically pick on the less vocal students to answer his questions.

Farida asserted that in co-educational Islamiyya schools females performed better than males and in female single sex schools competition was even stiffer. Either way, learning was ensured. She seemed to be supportive of the kind of competition generated in these schools:

Phebe: What type of school did you attend? Mixed or all girls?

Farida: When I was in primary I went to an all girls school, males were also alone in the class […]. But like my junior secondary Islamic school is mixed […] it's just that that the rows are different […]. I can say maybe yes because the females are performing better than the boys individually. So, maybe if it is mixed, maybe they will feel ashamed or something to make, to ginger them up to work hard because then the females are more serious […] the females perform better than the males in the school. So, maybe if they're somehow mixed maybe if they say the females are performing well than them maybe it will gear them up to do.

Farida did not seem to be overly in support of one or the other, that is, single sex schools or co-education schools. For me what was significant in this conversation was her explanation about how Islamiyya schools were structured to ensure that both sexes were somewhat separated because it explained the significance attached to this matter and its impact on students' performances. It also drew attention to the idea of competition which again puts the onus on the individual, just as with western education, to succeed.

The proprietor of Farida's school operated two types of schools on the same premises: the Islamiyya school and the western type school but the principals, staff, and teachers were different in both schools. In fact, Farida attended both schools at the same time and I was curious to know how she split her time between them:

> *Phebe: So, you combined western education with Islamiyya education. How were you able to cope with time?*
> *Farida: Normally, like western education we go to school Monday to Friday. About 8.00 a.m. we are in school. So, like I, my own school, my, when I was in junior secondary school we close at 1.00pm, 1.30 p.m. So, I go home. When I reach home, I will maybe eat or do some things. So, my own Arabic school start by 3.00 p.m. and we will close by 6.00 p.m.*
> *Phebe: So, when do you make time to read your Arabic school work and read your western education school work?*
> *Farida: Normally like em, in the night you have to share your work into two. Like I, sometimes I do times table for my reading especially if my western and Arabic school exams clash. So, I don't have time for myself. So, I have to make sure I read for both western education and Arabic school. If possible I don't have time to read for Arabic. Maybe I went to school. Maybe after finishing that exam, immediately I will rush home to give myself maybe one hour or one and a half hour to read for Arabic before I will go to school.*

While her western education school ran from 8.00 a.m. to 1.30 p.m., her Islamiyya school began at 3.00p.m. through 6.00p.m. This meant that she had to manage her time properly. Her self-assessment was that she was discreet, disciplined, and decisive about both her study time and the way she went in and out of both schools. This means that Farida did not have a social life. The better part of her day and night was spent in both schools and she needed to be committed and disciplined to keep her schedule. Therefore, her assertion was that young Muslim women needed to do the same if they must acquire both forms of education. My observation is that it worked well for her because of the way both forms of education were structured – they were geared towards passing examinations and obtaining certificates and not necessarily towards actual learning and the sharing and discovery of knowledge.

"Religion has its own part; education has its own part": Discussing the dilemmas and explaining the reason for her compulsion to acquire a western education

Considering how cumbersome it was for her to negotiate both western education and Islamiyya education, I was curious to know why Farida thought she needed both forms of education. I already understood her commitment to Islamiyya education as previously discussed. I needed to know why she thought western education was a necessary add-on:

> *Phebe: What does going to school mean to you?*
> *Farida: First, to me, going to school in my own generation […] going to school is the best thing one can have now if you want to meet up with your mates because if you really want to meet up with the society in our current generation now you have to be educated.*
> *Phebe: What are we meeting up with? What are those things we want to measure up to?*

Farida: Everybody wants to be in one or another position in this generation. Everybody wants to have a high rank. Maybe they should say you're in so so maybe a lecturer, working under government, bank, or maybe you are working on one filling station or another and before you can be able to achieve your aims or your goals it's through education because no matter how good you are now, Nigeria does not believe that you're talented or maybe you are good. All they are after is your certificate. If you have your certificate, they believe that you're fine […] but let's say for instance you're just talented in one thing and you're thinking that you'll be able to do it, but without a certificate you don't have evidence to prove to people that you are, you mastered it.

Farida pointed out how the competition which thrived in school was extended to life outside of school. It mattered what kind of job she got after school in comparison to her mates. This behavior was both what she could not help as a trait and as an influence from her peers. That is why she referred to it as generational. That is the way she read her world. She perceived this competitive behavior as peculiar to her generation. This new societal dynamic put pressure on her both to acquire western education and to earn a related certificate that qualified her for the kind of job she aimed for. She felt a compulsion to acquire a western education. It was not optional. Talents which for her translated into skills were not recognized in the job market. They must be supported with certification if they were to be considered as qualifiers for the job being sought.

The level of educational attainment of a woman also mattered. Farida explained that the NCE level (an associate degree) was not a good place to stop:

Farida: And the way I'm even seeing it now, NCE now in some years to come it will just be the same thing as secondary school […] because things are changing day and night. If you thought before that if someone

> *had secondary certificate he could get a tangible job to be doing things are different now, even with your your NCE unless you just want to make do with whatever job offer you get, you [hesitation] NCE it cannot take you to anywhere […] no how no how, you with your NCE cannot go seeking for job and someone with degree seeking for job, before they will give you job they have to give that person job because now everybody, education doesn't have a full stop, it's a continuous process […]. To me personally the way I'm seeing it […] this NCE is just the starter, the beginning of education […]. We have to proceed and continue so that we can achieve our goals in life […]. Even now with NCE, with the way they're treating us it is not okay because if you go to some private school they will be giving an NCE holder 6,000/7,000 [$40/$47] a month. And let's say someone is collecting #7,000 [$47], if you calculate it in a month, divide it into 29 or 26 days. In a day you are not earning more than #200 [$1.33] and maybe where you are coming from you have to transport yourself, you have to feed yourself, at least if you left your home around 7.00/8.00 in the morning, you may not be able to have your breakfast, you will leave, go to the school. Maybe the school will close by two, you have to put something in your mouth look at the transport and now that everything has changed […] so that #7000 [$47] can not do anything and if really you're somebody that wants something to do in life, you have to proceed. Immediately after your NCE, instead of you collecting that #7000 [$47] that will not do anything, why not, if possible, maybe, if you can be doing something […].*

The reason she gave for the need to advance beyond an NCE was because of the inflationary trends in the Nigerian economy. She was determined not to rest on her laurels. Seven thousand naira was grossly inadequate for meeting her monthly needs. She mathematically calculated this to show that even with the most frugal individual that amount of money as salary was insufficient. Yet, that was about the best offer available

in most places, particularly in private schools where employment was easier to get although still competitive.

Farida also alluded to the issue of the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria resulting in NCE and degree holders and in some cases even master's graduates scrambling for the same job openings. She did not see an end to this challenge. It would only get worse because more and more people were becoming aware of the need for western education and they were continuing to read better. Farida was looking beyond her immediate community and gender to assess the situation for the need for a higher education. It was a nation-wide phenomenon that went beyond the case of northern Nigerian women dropping out of school.

Her motif of being left behind continued when she explained that if a Muslim young woman did not join the band wagon she would not be economically empowered. I saw Farida presenting a clear understanding of poverty in Nigeria; there was also an allusion to Nigeria being one of the poorest countries in the world. Nigeria has no support for the poor. Rather, individuals independently search for survival, and it is survival of the fittest. That was why no matter the level of suffering that she had to endure, Farida was determined to forge ahead in her pursuit of further education and she encouraged her colleagues to do the same. What I heard her say, therefore, was that schooling had to be geared towards certification and the pursuit of the acquisition of more certificates because the acquisition of jobs, especially the better paying jobs, was dependent on that certification. Therefore, she could not choose Islamiyya education to the neglect of

western education, since it was certificates obtained from the western-type schools that counted more in this circumstance.

Another compulsion she felt for why she had to have western education alongside her Islamiyya education touched on marriage:

> *Farida: And where our generation is going now, if you're not educated you're left behind because as, let's say as a lady. Maybe you're married to someone and unfortunately you are not educated and you married him, unfortunately that person can be in a high position maybe in the future and as for you thinking that you've been together with him and you're not educated, immediately that your husband has reached the position that he cannot present you he might have to marry another wife whether you like it or not because you are not up to the task.*

Farida asserted that when husbands occupied certain significant positions in society in their later lives, their wife's educational qualification began to matter to them in new ways. She assumed that the men were justified in seeking the replacement of such "backward" women with the "educated" ones, because such women with these new "wifely" roles would be required to perform certain tasks that would require some level of educational attainment. At such moments the uneducated woman would be placed in a disadvantaged position.

For Farida, if such a "first wife" did not improve on her education and she got replaced by an educated woman, it was her fault. It is her opinion that such a woman ought to have known better and strived harder for a western education. She opined that a young Muslim woman had to make a conscious effort to acquire a western education if she had to retain her home and walk by the side of her husband. The onus laid on such a

woman to rise, as he too was rising, so that she didn't get left behind. Again, for Farida, the need for making this kind of paradigm shift was a new development which, in her opinion, was peculiar to her generation.

Farida drew attention to what she considered were the inherent problems with the pursuit of western education. According to her, when a Muslim woman is married, even though she understands the need to acquire a western education, she might be hindered from this pursuit if her husband is not disposed to her doing so. Here is how Farida proposed to position herself if she married a husband who situated himself in that manner:

> *Phebe: If your husband says don't go to school or don't work what would you do?*
> *Farida: If we want to follow the ethics and rule of Islam women are not allowed to go out of their husband's house at all […]. Before you get married your responsibility is to your parents […]. The problem of learning about Islam before you get married is up to your parents […]. If you are married all those responsibilities are on your husband. Your husband will be the one to go and seek knowledge; if he comes back then he will teach you in the house. And if he teaches you, they believe that maybe if you start having children you will be teaching them. That's it […].*

In this hypothetical situation, Farida explained her proposed reaction by first justifying her would-be husband's position should he insist that she must not return to school after they get married. She said that he would have a right to say so since according to the ethics and rules of Islam women are not allowed to go out of their husband's houses. Here Farida was referring to the practice of purdah and in so doing suggested that going to school meant going out of the house. Following this position, she explained that she

would be inclined to dropping out of school if her husband was opposed to schooling. She provided further justification for the reason why she would take this stance by saying that Islam expects her husband to be the one to seek for knowledge and to impact same to his wife. Before marriage, that would be the responsibility of her parents. As, a wife and a mother, the expectation was that the woman was to, in turn, teach her children. A sort of hierarchical order was implied in her explanation regarding the way knowledge was supposed to be sought and transferred which for me conjures the picture of what Freire (2000) describes as the banking method of learning where learners are positioned as empty containers that need to be filled and not as individuals who have something to bring to the learning table.

However, Farida explained that not too many Muslims follow this Islamic injunction of a hierarchical pattern of knowledge acquisition. She attributed this deviation to a generational pattern suggesting that the challenges of the times and their reality force people in her generation to make compromises as a result of the way they are reading the world:

> *Farida: In our own generation now […]. The husband is not there to cater for the wife hundred percent while the wife is not contented with what the husband is doing for her. That's the problem […]. You will have to go out and look for your own so that you too you will be able to do some things. And due to the society now, even men will be telling you they can't marry a liability that at least if I assist you, you should assist me. You should assist each other. So, that's the problem we are having. So, we are not following Islam […]. It's the society and we the people have changed what Islam has brought to us […]. Islam said a woman is not there for you as a slave. No, your wife is not your slave. You are there*

> *for each other, to assist each other […]. But if you look at it in our generation now, the men are not there to do what Islam says while we too are not there to follow what Islam says.*

Men no longer completely catered for their wives and the wives were no longer contented with the care they received. The care Farida implied required finances to make it good. Consequently, the women now, out of necessity, disrupt Islamic injunction by violating it and going out there to work in order to augment whatever care they were able to receive from their husbands. Their husbands did not oppose their actions. In fact, even unmarried men made their choices on who to marry depending on what economic contribution the women could bring to the marriage table. Women who were unable to bring anything to this table were seen as liabilities. Farida seemed to be making an assertion for northern Nigerian Muslim women that they were speaking up against the assumption that they accepted and endured Islam as patriarchal and authoritarian. She insisted that they identified with their religion but they in addition to doing so developed and lived according to their own ideas on their social status. Their stance was that the system of purdah did not mean that they were not to have access to education whether it is secular or sacred. This was because, challenged by the harsh realities of survival, they saw education as their passport for social mobility. Farida's position heightened by her argument that Islam does not say that wives are not meant to be slaves to the men reveal her biases about these gender issues which she appeals to religion to justify. For me, her biases highlight the arguments made by second wave feminists covering the period early 1960s to late 1970s whose goal was to change societal attitudes towards women and gender roles by centering their arguments on the issue of equality. Early works reflecting

this feminist thought include Simeone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* in which she examined the notion of women perceived as "other" in patriarchal societies; Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* on the discontent of many women over their staying at home thereby limiting their possibilities and horizon, and waste of their talent and potential; and President Kennedy's *Presidential Commission on the Status of Women*, a report on gender inequality.

To make clearer her posture about not insinuating a change of the cultural and religious status quo but a disruption that demands a change in societal attitudes and the achievement of equality, Farida explained that even when women get educated they must be conscious of their religious obligations:

> *Farida: But even if it is possible that you are educated you have to be conscious of your religion. Religion has its own part, education has its own part. It is left to you to know the rules and regulations of your religion and the rules and regulations of education so that you will not mix, put the two together. Your religion should not affect your education; your education should not affect your religion. And anything that you know that education will affect your religion you have to leave it aside or know how to control yourself because you must not allow your education to affect your religion. Your religion is the most important thing we are here to do on earth.*

Farida depicted the internal conflict, struggle, and continuous negotiation that postcolonial northern Nigerian women have to grapple with as they acquire or seek to acquire western education. This state of hybridity is what she referred to as a "mix". She talked as if it was possible to retain the colonial (western education) and the colonized (the Muslim woman) in their original state hence she said that "Religion has its own part,

education has its own part", "know the rules and regulations of your religion and the rules and regulations of education", "Your religion should not affect your education; your education should not affect your religion", and "And anything that you know education will affect your religion you have to leave it aside". So, although she talked about the imminent possibility of a "mix" which the women should be cautious not to permit yet she did not seem to be very conscious of the fact that she, like all the other women, were already a hybrid. As such, she insisted that they must give preference to their religious obligations over their search for western education. Where sensitive decisions needed to be made, religion must take precedence over schooling because in terms of ranks of importance, religion was, in her opinion, the most important thing on earth.

Therefore, although Farida did not out-rightly say that she would violate her husband's instruction by seeking western education if he said she should not, she implied it in her response. In so doing, she presented the men as reading Islamic injunctions in newer ways such that they differed from the religious position that generally indulged Muslim women. This means that societal changes have forced both Muslim men and women to change. In saying this, Farida seemed to exonerate herself about deciding to be different. She showed this difference by choosing to pursue western education so that she could fend for herself, assist her family, and not be a liability of any sort to her husband.

In specific educational contexts, Farida explained the kind of things she would put aside if they conflicted with her religion:

> *Farida: Let's say for example now, in the way of dressing even. You see, maybe sometime you want to dress to maybe to, maybe your friends are dressing somehow, in a, maybe there is a new style or*

something that is reigning and maybe I'm willing to dress like that and I know if I dress like that it's not the code of my religion, I have to push it aside and not to do it.

Dress code was paramount and Farida was definitive about her stance that the school environment, particularly peer group influences, would not affect her commitment to her religion and its prescription on proper dress code.

Farida also expressed concern about curriculum content asserting that they sometimes conflicted with her religious beliefs:

Farida: And there are some things maybe by way of education even in the class, there are some things they will be saying in the class that may, you may be thinking it will be, it's affecting your religion, but due to you're just here to learn, you just hear, write, if it's due to exam, read and write and pass […].

When such contents were taught, what she did was to "hear" and regurgitate them during examinations in order to pass. She often thought about what was taught to ensure that it did not affect the religious teachings she had received. In so doing, Farida highlighted the emphasis placed on examinations. Her tone expressed dissatisfaction with this type of education. She exemplified areas where she perceived conflict between what she was taught in school and her religious beliefs:

Farida: Let me say in the form of, like Yoruba we're doing now. Most Yoruba they are talking about the, our forefathers […]. They believe that they are the best, all those idol worshippers or something is the best religion before the coming of Islam and Christianity. So, they are saying that that religion is even more preferable than these Islamic and Christian religions because even these two religions now, we don't, we want to leave our forefathers' religion and follow the foreign religions while today

> *they believe that that one is the most original religion. And they believe that the religion they are doing is good even if possible more good than the others.*

Yoruba language was one of her majors in school. Farida pointed out that in the course of teaching this subject, "the religion of our forefathers", what she considered as idol worship, was emphasized as the best form of religion. Christianity and Islam were considered as foreign religions and therefore not original and not as good as traditional religion.

> *Farida: But to me it's totally wrong due to my own religion because anything that will have to do with idol worshipping is not allowed. Even those who were doing it before, before the coming of religion that they are applying or they don't know and since religions have come out it has brought the right thing for us, why shouldn't we leave the one that is not the correct thing. This is the correct one we are doing. But they don't want to believe it. They are even thinking that it's even the Islamic religion and Christianity that is affecting that religion – our forefathers' religion.*

Farida outrightly condemned such teachings that portray idol worship as good. She said that they were totally wrong because Islam disallowed belief in idol worship arguing that idol worship was a product of the people's ignorance. In so doing, she associated Christianity and Islam with enlightenment and with right doings and correctness. She portrayed those who do not believe in Islam and Christianity as people who are headstrong – "they don't want to believe it". Such people, according to Farida, believe that these foreign religions are affecting traditional religion negatively. She did not contest the fact that traditional religion was in practice before Islam and Christianity were

introduced. However, she seemed to suggest the need for a paradigm shift and to question the rationale behind the perpetuation of such curriculum that questioned the fundamental tenets of her religious beliefs. In making this historical allusion she pointed out the different forms of colonialism that had taken place in the nation via these two foreign religions. She insisted that Christianity and Islam were better choices than idol worship. Farida also made an ideological allusion to the fact that Islam and Christianity are similar in many ways even though she did not specify what areas they shared in common.

Another area of dissonance she had with the topics taught in her Yoruba major class was about the creation myth:

> *Farida: And the issue of the history of Yoruba. That all, that it's one person call Oduduwa that owns Yoruba. Me I don't believe that. I just take it here as academically to know it to take exams and pass - that's all. I don't accept it, I don't believe in it. All the history of Oduduwa of how they spread the land, sand, I don't believe it. I don't believe. I just take it to pass there and go.*
> *Phebe: So, if you have to teach that course what will you do?*
> *Farida: I may teach it, not that I believe in it but because that is what the society believes and that's the history of Yoruba […]. I can't change it. It's already there. So, I can't change it. So, I just have to tell them so that maybe they too they should know it. But on my own I do not believe in it. I don't.*

Yoruba people believe that they are the descendants of Oduduwa. Farida vehemently refuted this myth on the grounds of her belief in Islam. She would not contest it when it was taught in class and she would reproduce it when asked during examinations and when she in turn had to teach it to others.

The implication of the foregoing is that schools expose and compel Muslim women to do and listen to things that they would normally not want to be exposed to or listen to. However, Farida, because of the value she placed on schooling, was determined to define her own boundaries while in such situations and adhere strictly to her religious tenets.

She also addressed pedagogical practice, alluding to the fact that sometimes Muslim women who were teachers were positioned in a manner where they taught topics that did not resonate with them. Farida opined that school curricula were so determined that individual teachers did not have the right to draw up their own curriculum. If she found herself in such a situation, she was resolved to teach what she had been assigned to teach, but that would not influence what she believed in.

More often than not the pursuit of western education culminated in careers for which school graduates sought job placements in later life. In view of this I asked Farida what she thought about making career choices:

> *Farida: When I sit down I'm thinking if I want to read mass comm. or something so I sit down and think of the other way round that maybe showing me on screen all the time, I may have husband that will be […], quite okay even in my religion it's not that proper.*
> *Phebe: Mnnnn. What's wrong with it?*
> *Farida: In my religion, even your voice as a woman is not allowed to be heard anyhow because they believe that even our voices are instruments of prostitution […] because some people have that type of voice. If they speak even a lady like you spoke you will like to look at her, who's the person that's speaking. But due to the, let me say, due to the civilization and everything now, if it comes to, if it becomes that you have to do it, anything you have to do, just fear Allah. Anything, because the society now has*

> *changed anew […], just do it maybe you're looking for means of surviving […]. What religion makes it haram for us but in cases of difficulty it makes it halal. It allows us to do it if we are about to face difficulty. […]. Maybe if they say, a lady working in the bank is haram, because the way you dress and the way you interact with people, men like this, is haram. But let's say as a widow you don't have any means of surviving, you have children to take care of, you don't have any means to survive and don't have any work you can get, you can go for it but just put Allah in your mind. Don't take that opportunity to do what you are not supposed to do […]. Even working in the maybe hotel, beer house something […], you don't have a means of surviving, you have a family to take care of […], you've tried your best, not that maybe you see another work, because that beer work is having more money then you, no, you've tried everywhere and you are at the point where getting food to eat is very difficult for you, you're allowed to do that work so that you can survive.*

Farida used the examples of working in the mass media, banks, and hotels to illustrate the types of jobs that would normally be "haram" – abominable – to practice but which could become "halal" – permissible – in desperate situations or for survival. In all these situations what was in question was the woman's moral integrity. If she worked in the mass media her voice could be seductive and she could lure other people. The issue of sexuality was called up to explain how improper this behavior was – where even a fellow woman could be seduced by the alluring voice of such a career woman. A woman who worked in the bank would be too comfortable in the company of people of the opposite sex and that was also not permitted in Islam. Those who worked in hotels and beer houses should ordinarily not be found there. They should not be seen to be aiding and abetting immoral acts, and drinking was immoral. However, she explained, the need for

survival could necessitate their taking on these kinds of careers, but if they did, they needed to be cautious to still remain devout in the practice of their religion. This meant that as soon as they found a different job opening they were to immediately relocate. Greed or covetousness was not to make them cling to such jobs.

Here again, Farida alluded to the high unemployment problem in Nigeria which makes many graduates settle for job offers that were not necessarily in the area of discipline they studied, all in the bid to survive. This state of unemployment was presented as a hopeless situation which young women in Nigeria could do nothing about. The words "survive" and "surviving" conjured the image of death to me, thereby emphasizing the desperate nature of the situation that these women were sometimes presented with. This allusion restated the earlier posture she took and the motif that the rules and regulations of Islam could be disobeyed in certain desperate situations that the socio-economic and cultural realities presented to people.

Considering the religious boundaries within which she needed to operate in order to tailor her schooling endeavors towards particular career choices, I became curious to find out what Farida's career ambition was:

> *Phebe: So, what's the height of education you want to have?*
> *Farida: Masters in literature in English.*
> *Phebe: Why do you want literature in English?*
> *Farida: Because I said I wanted to be a creative writer.*
> *Phebe: So, why do you want to be a creative writer?*
> *Farida: First, I write. I just like, there are some times I will just, you will just see me sit down I will just be imagining things and I will just be putting it down. I may sit down I – I read Hausa stories, I will sit down and on my own start criticizing the story […]; that it's not supposed to be like this, or like this, or*

like this, I just sit down and start criticizing it. And sometimes there will be some things I want to put down like a story or message- something that's in the way of writing that I will be able to give out some message to society. Second, I love reading novels. I do read Hausa novels. I'm not fluent in reading Yoruba. So, because sometimes they give us novels to read in Yoruba, it's, if it is that important that I will read it but if it is not important I will not because some time I will be reading that Yoruba, I will be reading but I myself will not understand what I'm reading. But I'm very, I can read Hausa novel very very well.

Phebe: What about Arabic novels?

Farida: I do read Arabic but what made me not to be reading Arabic novels is that I don't understand Arabic that deeply. So, it's limited.

Phebe: What about English novels.

Aishat: Ehn, I do read, I love reading English novels but sometimes, there is an absence of novels or sometimes they are unavailable. But like some, there are some novels that when we did this ehn criticism last semester, the teacher that taught the course was very good with encouraging us to develop a reading habit. So the woman is very good in talking to us that we don't love reading. I told her that there are some novels because all these Wole Soyinka some of his novels, Chinua Achebe, em Zynab, mostly I read almost three novels of Zynab Alkali – Stillborn, Virtuous Woman, and Cobwebs […]. So, I love, if I will see them available I can sacrifice, I can read them because even sometimes in my room, even at home, I, what I hate most is sitting idle. So, instead of me sitting idle I prefer picking something to be reading.

Phebe: So, does your religion permit you to be a creative writer?

Farida: Yes, yes. There are some people, many people that normally write poems in Arabic. They will write them. Like the way we have prose, poetry everything, there is in Arabic […]. And I would like to be a lecturer sha. I will be lecturing and then be doing my writing.

Here, Farida provided a run down on the literacy practices with which she engaged including writing and reading novels. She went in and out of the novels written in the four languages in which she was seeking proficiency: Hausa, Yoruba, English, and Arabic. She was at different points with these languages as far as proficiency was concerned. Interestingly, these hobbies informed her career interest. She wanted to become a creative writer alongside being a lecturer. These vocations were not only approved by Islam but even the occupational engagement of people in the Arab world set the standard for and encouraged her to pursue her dream of becoming a creative writer. To me, the implication here is obvious: that just like the west sets the standards for western education, the Arab world set the standards for Islamic education.

The knowledge Farida garnered from the Islamiyya school helped her in her ability to comprehend the courses she enrolled in for a western education. In her NCE program she studied English/Yoruba and it was easier for her to understand the aspects of phonetics and phonology especially in the English language because of her earlier exposure to the Arabic language:

> *Phebe: So, how is your knowledge of the Arabic language helping you in your study of English/Yoruba?*
> *Farida: Because what makes it to help me is the step. If I'll follow the steps I'm following in Arabic and I'll follow the same here it seems because sometimes if you are doing some things then I'll start relating it to, I'll start thinking, I'll start relating it to the Arabic like in the form of this phonetics and phonology I'm talking of. So, if maybe I'm in the class, if they are explaining so I'll start relating it to Arabic their own way of talking. So, if I'm relating it then I will say yes there are some similarities there so if maybe I do not understand the way in the class then if I remember the one in Arabic then I*

> *will try to relate it with what they were saying in the class*.

Farida continued to make connections, going back and forth across the four languages as she studied them. She observed aspects of other languages that resonated with her whenever she sat in to learn another one. The implication is that she seemed to be confirming her earlier stance that the issue with both Islamic education and western education was not one of choice, but that Islamic education was actually highly beneficial because it complemented the learning that took place in schools where western education was practiced.

Chapter Seven

Situating Women Who Attend Only Islamiyya Schools within Global Contexts: Revealing the Inherent Limitations

Introduction

In this chapter I tell the story of how I met with Samira and the new perspective that her story brings to my interpretation of the way northern Nigerian women are making sense of their schooling experiences. In the subsequent section, I analyze my conversation with her to show how she struggled with wanting to conform to the dominant form of education, particularly in being proficient in English language, so that she could be globally relevant, and the ensuing conflict and dilemma she was faced with. This chapter further complicates the issues discussed in the preceding chapter because it shows that young Muslim women are not just forced to choose western education as a compelling alternative, they themselves feel limited when they settle for Islamiyya education alone.

Meeting and selecting to work with Samira

Samira was a 20 year old Muslim who had just started her NCE program at the time of this interview. She is from the royal family in Zaria City, even though her immediate family is not the current ruling family. Zaria City is an ancient city with such historic figures as Queen Amina of Zaria. It is one of the earliest cities that embraced urbanization, long before colonialism, especially as a result of the influence of the trans-Saharan trade and the jihad wars that encouraged territorial expansion in historic times. Because of the significant roles that the emirs, who were the traditional rulers, played long before and during this historic disturbance, history has it that the indirect rule system

employed by the colonial government must have impacted the way western education was embraced (Fafunwa, 1987) and how women were positioned as a result (Niles, 2001; Pittin, 2007). Therefore, I deliberately chose to work with Samira to further explore how her family background impacted on the way she did school. I interrogated how her positionality as a member of the ruling family impacted on the way she did school in order to further establish why young women drop out or stay in school and why they choose the kind of careers that they do. I wanted to know whether the fact that her family had a generational schooling tradition made any significant difference in the way she did school.

The royal family was among the first people to embrace western education in the north, after the initial resistance. However, it was a Herculean task to find her or any other person from the royal family to work with. This was because issues about the emirate[22] were guarded jealously. The historic nature of the emirate and the city made them a center of attraction for many inside and outside researchers, both in the past and in the present. Being mindful of misrepresentation, they had decided to censor and hoard information about themselves.

Certain protocol had to be followed involving a lot of money in order for me to get an audience and to recruit my participant. I could not follow that protocol because of my slim resources. I had to depend on finding someone from the emirate to work with through someone else's contact. Another colleague from the school where I worked saved the situation. I told her what my research was about. She was also from the royal

[22] "Emirate" is used to refer to the traditional city of Zaria. See my description of Zaria, my research site, in Chapter Three.

family, but she had since passed the age bracket within which I situated my research. But, she was magnanimous enough to recommend Samira. She was in fact the go-between for us. She arranged the meeting days and venues and even though I eventually had Samira's phone number and could make those arrangements myself, there were many times when my effort failed and I had to return to my colleague for help and intervention which she graciously gave. However, Samira did not only consent to work with me because she respected the older woman who recommended her, but she came to appreciate me as one studying in America and admired my academic achievement. Consequently, trust was built between us almost immediately. In spite of her very fundamentalist disposition, we did not need any ice breakers. She opened up immediately and talked freely. She did not seem to hesitate to answer the questions I asked. She could see that I respected her royal blood and she felt honored by it and enjoyed my patronizing that position, especially knowing that her family was not the current ruling family and emirs were no longer as politically powerful as they used to be in time past. I particularly respected her royal blood because as an insider researcher, I knew that traditional rulers were culturally accorded this magnitude of respect, if not more. I also knew that in so doing I would enjoy better cooperation.

Establishing relevance

Samira's story was similar to Farida's in that it showed the conflict and ambivalence that she experienced because of the way that the Nigerian school system did not pay close attention to issues of diversity. However, the difference between their stories among other things is the way that Samira's story narrowed in on the issue of

language. Her proficiency in Arabic language was not acknowledged in school, beyond her finding relevance in the Arabic department. For me, her story questioned the hegemonic knowledge that validated "Standard" English language as the only language of instruction and the nation's official language. Her internal conflict laid in reconciling her desire for Arabic language and the acquisition of English language, which in turn affected the way she constructed her identity. Nieto (1996) explains that "when students' language is used as the basis for their education, when it is respected and valued, students tend to succeed in school" (p. 291). In her case, her language was not used as the basis of education in courses outside of Arabic and Hausa departments. As such, she struggled with schooling once she joined secular schools. As long as she remained in Islamiyya schools she had no problem. Her knowledge was valued, validated, and respected as was the case in her major classes – Arabic and Hausa – but not when she had to take education and general studies classes.

I also brought Samira's story into this work to show that not all my participants came from poor homes. Coming from the royal family meant that she had a schooling tradition in her family to maintain and that technically speaking she was not supposed to have issues with finding funding for school. This, for me, meant that she could choose to go to whatever secular school she wanted. As I associated people who preferred Islamiyya schools rather than western schools with poverty and ignorance, I was therefore pleasantly surprised to find that Samira would opt to pursue Islamic education in the way she did, only to, at a later stage, begin to seek global relevance when she realized that Islamiyya education limited her access and interaction with other forms of

knowledge and career choices. It is the tension implicated in this new self that her hybridity created that I capture by retelling her story; one that wanted a bit of both worlds but for different reasons than Farida did. She actually felt dislocated and disoriented.

Maintaining family traditions

As one from the royal family, Samira grew up knowing the value of education because it was a family tradition to do so:

> *Samira: You see us, in our house, we go to school a lot. I grew up to find that our older ones went to school. Our mother is an old woman and she reads, she can read […] I swear to God […]. She went to school long time ago […] since the beginning of western education and she is an old woman […]. She should be seventy something years old. Why? Since the beginning of western education, the very first school that was started […], they were the first students to enroll. Their father took them there […]. They were the ruling family. Their father took them there. Why? You see our family; our family is a royal family. My great grandfather was an emir. We had seventeen kings in our lineage […] but today we do not have any emir except district heads and other title holders […]. At that time they knew the importance of western education. You will even find the pictures, pictures they took with white men with women and the Queen of England and others […]. There was one of our grand parents who traveled out of the country when not too many people were enlightened. That was where he went to school […]. They knew the value of western education. You will see them exchanging pleasantries with white men […]. They were brought into places and shown places because they were rulers […].*

Samira could not have refused to buy into the tradition of going to school. Her older siblings went to school same as did her old parents. Being from the royal family, it was easier for Samira's parents to accept western education after the colonialists

persuaded them to do so. The allusion to the impact of colonialism and the way that it was entrenched in northern Nigeria is implicated in this statement. I already talked about this historic occurrence in my earlier chapters but it bears repeating here so that the implication of Samira's statement can be brought to fore. History has it that through the use of indirect rule, the emirs were prevailed upon to embrace western domination and through the emirs, the general populace was reached. Therefore, the spread of western education was used in the service of this mission of colonialism. It was when northerners were assured that they could keep their religion and their lifestyle while embracing western education that they became open to this form of education. Since then, they have tried to bridge the educational gap between the north and the south, since that gap was created because the south embraced western education without as much resistance as the north did. This historical allusion is sustained in Samira's reference to the pictures her great grandparents took with white men and the rare privilege one of her grand parents had to study in London. Samira's over seventy-year-old mother could read in English. She was one of the very few people who started going to school when the first school was started. Her father took her there to enroll her in the school. What this story meant for me was that when a young Muslim woman grows up in a home where a schooling tradition has been sustained then she is more prone to want to go to school as well. Samira felt uncomfortable to behave differently. It felt almost compulsory for her to tow the same line. Also, she felt that some standard had been set for her – referring to her uncle who studied in England – and she had to aspire to reach that standard. Samira also felt that if her mother could go to school as far back as this time when women's education was not

popular and could still read at the age of seventy then she had no excuse than to do likewise.

My interpretation of the way her family came to value western education is that the hegemonic structure that existed before colonialism permitted them to be so positioned. The colonialists needed to use the rulers to reach the people and they made themselves available. Therefore, they became positioned at a privileged vantage point to embrace and reap the "benefits" of western education both for the men and the women long before it became commonplace to acquire western education. Samira was only following in the footsteps of that tradition.

Another family tradition that Samira had to conform to was the way the family reconciled marriage and schooling particularly for the womenfolk. But this tradition was peculiar to her immediate family:

> *Phebe: Why are you not yet married? I hope it is not because you chose to further your education?*
> *Samira: It is because of that. That is why my father waited until I gained admission into my NCE program. You see I have my cousins who were married off recently. They had just completed their secondary school education; three of them. They were married off. See, my father does not have that desire. He prefers for you to have started higher education like NCE then if your husband will not stop you. You know some are uninterested. They may not want their wife to come to school. Even if he gets married to you and says he will not hinder you from going to school, it's all lies. It is after the marriage that he will insist that you may not continue with your education. At that point your father will not be able to intervene since he has already married you off. You are no longer under your parents' custody. But if you start attending a tertiary institution before the marriage an agreement will be reached with him*

> *asking if he consents to her continuing her education […]. If he consents that is great. But he will not be responsible for paying your school fees […]. Your parents will pay your school fees […] especially if your husband is uninterested in your furthering your education. But he will have to provide her transport fare […]. He will also have to buy her handouts for her. So you see, if he is interested he will allow you to go to school […].*

I said that I hoped that she did not delay getting married because she wanted to further her education because I wanted to tease out if she was having problems with schooling because she had to make marriage decisions. I also expressed this concern because in my literature review I showed how early marriage was given as one of the reasons why northern Nigerian women drop out of school. So, if she chose to delay her getting married to a later date then her case was an exception and it was worth exploring.

Samira's father insisted on his daughters going to school. He also preferred for them to get married early as the Hausa and Islamic tradition enjoined, but his tradition in his family was to not allow them to get married until they were already in a tertiary institution. Also, he would insist on getting the fiancés' consent to allow them further their education before allowing the marriage to take place. This was his strategy for ensuring continuing education for his female children – where this continuation implied both the husbands' approval for them to continue going to school and their being responsible in providing what they needed for school including transportation fare, school fees, and learning materials (although the women's parents could take on the larger part of this responsibility if the women's husbands proved to be financially handicapped). But where their husbands were unwilling and this agreement was reached, then the parents

committed to paying their school fees and insisted that their husbands took the responsibility of paying their transport fare and buying their handouts. Samira explained that in cases where the fiancé was disposed to the woman going to school, then his consent was not sought before marriage because no problem of resistance was envisaged.

As a result of this tradition, Samira had to start her NCE program before she could even consider the thought of getting married. This meant that there was a continuous struggle to balance the satisfaction of both the desire for marriage and the desire for school among northern Nigerian young Muslim women. Families who had a schooling tradition seemed to be able to strike this balance a lot easier than families who did not largely due to the intervention roles that the parents and other family members often played. This struggle is obviously caused by the hybridity that resulted from the colonial contact that left the populace with the legacy of the need to necessarily seek western education or be left behind.

In making sense of her survival in this third space, Samira expressed her doubts about the men promising to allow their wives continue their education after marriage saying that they only lie when they say so because they will not keep their promise. Her posture made me to read her as calling upon first wave feminism because her stance evokes the women's suffrage movement which in addition to advocating for the right of women to vote and to run for office questioned the way women were positioned in marital relationships. This movement originated in France in the 1780s and 1790s where Antione Condorcet and Olympe de Gouges advocated women's sufferage in national election. Additionally, Samira's views echo Saudi Arabia's feminist views on this subject

of women's suffrage. Foremost among the advocates of these feminist views is Sabria Jawhar, a journalist who in her web blog frequently criticizes her country's partriachal customs as well as the west for their perceived judgement about partirachy in Saudi Arabia. In her feminist view Jawhar (2009) insists that in accordance to Islamic belief, all females must have a male guardian, typically a father or husband and having this guardian does not automatically translate to domination because of the role that love and protection play in that relationship. She sees stability and safety in life as guaranteed when a woman has a husband who cares for her and that is what Islam provides. What she advocates, however, is for their rights to issues like education. This kind of insistence by Muslim women to have a right to education exlains why Samira agreed with her father to start her tertiary education before getting married with the hope that because she was already at that level of education and because her fiancé's consent would be sought before the marriage is conducted she would have no problem continuing her education. In the process of advocating for these rights Muslim northern Nigerian women like Samira challenge injustices and reinterprete religious traditions.

The need to make a choice between marriage and schooling placed a lot of pressure on the young Muslim woman. I asked Samira what she would do if in spite of all the precaution her father took for her to marry a man that would consent to her going to school he ended up reneging on his consent after marriage:

> *Samira: I will give it up […] because marriage is a form of education […]; you will experience all kinds of things, you will learn all kinds of things. But he should allow you to do Islamiyya education even if he will not allow you to have western education because of the need to train the children properly*

> *[…]. If he will not allow me to go to school then he has to teach me at home […] so that the children do not come home to request my assistance in their homework and I say I do not know. That will be disgraceful and they know I went to school […] and they will say so our mother is a dullard. So he has to teach me. In so far as he says I must not come to school then he has to teach me […].*

Samira explained that she would give up school to stay in her marriage on some conditions. The first was that the husband would have to allow her to have Islamiyya education. Second, he would have to become her teacher and teach her what she would have learned at school. My interpretation is that even though she sounded complacent, Samira was being agentic in putting factors as necessary conditions that her husband would have to fulfill before she would comply with his insistence on her not going back to school. Although she knows that her parents could play an interventionist role as explained earlier on, Samira is not counting on that. She is being responsible and is exercising her power of agency to make decisions for herself. The third reason she gave as to why her husband had to allow her to at least have Islamiyya education could in fact be what informed her decisiveness in taking her stance – the fact that she did not want to appear to be a dullard before her children. She explained that she would want to be able to train her children and to help them out with their take-home assignment.

She would prefer her marriage to schooling because she perceived marriage as some form of education – you experience all kinds of things and you learn all kinds of things but she would rather have both western education and Islamiyya education. I did not follow up on what she meant by the informal education of marriage or even how that would compare to formal schooling. This might be a good question to follow up for a

future research. From the foregoing, I see that Samira was able to come up with her own definition of schooling – something that gave her an experience and something from which she learned all kinds of things. Therefore, I perceive her as asserting that a young Muslim woman does not have to be in a formal school to be able to acquire education. Also, western education is not the only form of education that she should have to be contented. This means that she rated Islamiyya education as equal to western education and alleged that Islamiyya education should suffice where it is difficult to attain western education. But even in taking this stance, I perceive the conflict in her and her silent yet voiced desire for western education, when, in particular she talked about the need for her to be able to help her children with their take home assignment. She was implicitly not talking about assignments from Islamiyya schools only. In fact I felt strongly that her concern was with assignments that they would being home from their western type schools. This is because she already had a wealth of knowledge from Islamiyya schools as shown in her proficiency in Arabic language, which was why her father encouraged her to pursue that career path. This, for me meant that she recognized the dominant space that western education occupied; hence her talk about not wanting to be disgraced and embarrassed if she was unable to assist her children with their take home assignment.

Seeking global relevance via proficiency in English language

This position of dominance that western education occupies is an issue that Samira continued to contend with. She was studying Hausa/Arabic, Hausa being her first language and Arabic her second language which she had grown to be proficient in. Yet her future ambition was to be a lecturer of English, a dream that she knew very well she

was not going to be able to actualize because she did not have the required foundation for that discipline:

> *Phebe: You wish to become a lecturer, yes. What problems do you have to deal with that you think will hinder you from achieving your goal?*
> *Samira: Honestly there are lots of problems. My first problem – I do not want to be a lecturer of Arabic […]. I want to be a lecturer of English.*
> *Phebe: Hear that (laughed). I was so sure you would want to be a lecturer of Arabic. I am happy I asked this question.*
> *Samira: No*
> *Phebe: Of English?*
> *Samira: Yes, of English. That is all I want to become.*
> *Phebe: Why is that?*
> *Samira: Just like that. I admire it.*
> *Phebe: So, what do you think you have to deal with to be able to become a lecturer of English?*
> *Samira: As far as my interest is concerned that is who I want to become. What I see is that a person must go and study hard […] but I know I can't have my desires since from the beginning that is not the foundation I have. I just have to be content with being a lecturer of Arabic and endure it. But, my deep desire is to be a lecturer of English.*
> *Phebe: What other problems were you going to talk about?*
> *Samira: Additionally, it is difficult for me to be allowed to become a lecturer of English.*
> *Phebe: Why is that?*
> *Samira: Just because of my father's interest. He, when he sees that your strength is in a certain subject […] that is what he will permit you to study […]; my academic qualification does not qualify me to become a lecturer of English language.*

I was obviously shocked to hear that Samira's dream was to be a lecturer of English. The whole interview session was in Hausa because of her struggle with the language. So, when she reluctantly talked about giving up this dream, I felt empathy for her, but that made the dominance of English language in the academia more vivid to me. She was

resolved to be content with Arabic as if Arabic was a much easier language to learn and as if that meant Arabic was her second best as far as preference was concerned.

Apart from her not having the required foundation for becoming an English lecturer, Samira raised another salient point – her father was not going to allow her to study English because he knew where her academic strength laid. This showed the mentorship role her father played in her academic life. It also showed the prescriptive manner in which the father carried out this role. From Samira's standpoint, it is obvious that when young Muslim women have educated parents they are likely to receive mentorship in their educational pursuit as well as career guidance. Whether or not the women should be agentic enough to follow their passion is a different case altogether. I also saw the fact that she seemed to suggest that if young women were exposed to alternative career guidance, away from their parents' bias, they were more likely to follow their passion in the choices they made, because I heard in her voice a wish that she could be allowed to be an English lecturer. This is when she said "but I know I can't have my desires since from the beginning that is not the foundation I have […]. But, my deep desire is to be a lecturer of English […]. Just because of my father's interest. He, when he sees that your strength is in a certain subject […] that is what he will permit you to study." She listed what she perceived as her obstacles to her becoming an English lecturer one of which was her lack of foundation – meaning that she had not taken classes throughout her academic career that should have prepared her to major in English. The other was her father's refusal since he had mentored her to follow her area of strength.

Another thing I perceived in this conversation was the influence of her religion in tilting her towards studying Arabic and her getting proficient, in it which made it outrageous for her to prefer a career in another language. Arabic is the language of Islamic religion. A devout Muslim, just like Samira exposed, was one who was proficient in Arabic. So, naturally, Samira's proficiency in Arabic was an indication of her devotedness to Islam. Throughout the interview sessions we had, she was in full black hijab and nikab and she had her feet and hands also covered. No part of her body was exposed. She was also very quick with making quotes from the Qur'an and other religious literatures and forum unmindful of whether I understood what she said or not. I, therefore, perceived her as a Muslim fundamentalist, but it turned out that she was not as withdrawn, authoritative, and assertive as I figured that Muslim fundamentalists were.

This meant that for most part, our religious boundaries thinned out and became almost non-existent. I had to stop her at other instances to refer her back to earlier statements she made in order for her to interpret them for me. I would always wait until later because I often did not want to break the flow of our conversation. She envisioned herself as the teacher and I the learner. She was a very open and interesting person to talk with. We laughed together and have remained friends to date, with continuous phone calls leaving the communication line between us open in spite of geographical distance.

Tensions and ambivalences in the pursuit of both western and Islamic education

I saw how her socialization process influenced how she came to find herself studying Arabic:

> *Samira: I have a good foundation in Arabic. I did makarantan alo […]. That was what our older ones*

did […]. We go in the morning at 6.00am. When we return […], and then we go to makarantan boko. When we return from makarantan boko and say our prayers, at 2.00pm once it is 4.00 we go to Islamiyya school and come back home at 6.00pm […]. I wanted to leave the country but my father refused to allow me. I even got a scholarship […]. My father said that I was going nowhere. He will not permit his daughter to leave the country to study abroad. How has it been with men? No matter what a person's will is, even if she is not a wayward person friends can influence her. Why? There was a young woman who went abroad to Syria to study […]. She came back and began to wear tight-fitting clothes, she goes out with men, she does not even have female friends and she did not even study anything there […]. They terminated her study.

Phebe: Why did you combine makarantan alo and Islamiyya education?

Samira: So that I could make progress […]. The two schools are different. In makarantan alo you will come with your slate and you will be taught the correct pronunciation of Arabic words […]. The importance of makarantan alo is in learning the Arabic alphabet. It is easier learned there. In Islamiyya school you will be there for a long time and you will still not know the Arabic alphabet.

Phebe: Why is that so? Does it have to do with the teaching method used?

Samira: Yes, the teaching method because in Islamiyya a large number of the alphabets are written together and that is not the way they are pronounced […]. In makarantan alo the teaching is broken down into smaller bits and learned piecemeal. In Islamiyya, the stress and intonation that make a word mean different things are not taught […] but in Makarantan alo attention is drawn to such grammatical details […] if you are already familiar with these words in makarantan alo and then you see them in Islamiyya school even if the differences are not taught you are able to recognize those differences because of the previous knowledge you brought from makarantan alo. However, if I encountered those words in Islamiyya school first

> *and then in Makarantan alo I would not be able to understand their meanings […]. In Islamiyya school you do not know the rules of grammar*.

Samira drew attention to how she was in school half of the day for the better part of her life. She combined going to both Islamiyya and formal school. She also explained what the two major types of Islamiyya schools were – makarantan alo and Islamiyya, emphasizing that the major difference between both of them was in the teaching methodology employed and the aspect of the subject content that was emphasized. The teaching in makarantan alo was done piecemeal and the oral aspect – pronunciation, stress, and intonations as well as grammar - were taught more emphatically than they were taught in Islamiyya schools. She recommended that every young Muslim woman should attend both schools – makarantan alo and Islamiyya school – as they complement each other.

Her recommendation again complicates the way young northern Nigerian Muslim women made sense of their schooling experiences, because it meant that if they were to do school as devoted Muslims, then they had to share their time, energy, and knowledge between three rather than the two types of schools. The third school would then be the makarantan alo, in addition to Islamiyya and western type schools.

Samira's commitment to the study of Arabic made her desire to study abroad, but her father would not hear of it because of the testimonies of those he knew who went abroad to study. They deviated from the core teachings of Islam. She told the story of a woman who came back from studying abroad in Syria wearing tight-fitted clothes, enjoying the company of men rather than that of her fellow women, and worst of all, she

was unable to complete her program of study because she got terminated. Samira's father's assessment of this story was that the woman made a shipwreck of her schooling endeavor. In narrating this story, Samira did not seem to agree with her father that this young woman's experience could be generalized. Instead, she suggested that young Muslim women who could set the boundaries that would help them remain devoted to their religion could pursue further study abroad. She also seemed to suggest that such women must be ready to combine western education, makarantan alo, and Islamiyya education if they truly wished to pursue schooling. This is what she cared about and the way she preferred for schooling to be defined.

Being passion driven and the need for teachers to teach to task

Samira was committed to her study of Arabic. She had a sustained motivation for the subject:

> *Samira: You see me, whatever book it is once it is in Arabic and I find it anywhere even in my father's room, I will pick it up and read even before I became the way I am. At that time I could only read it and not be able to translate it. I would underline a portion and ask what the interpretation is. In so doing I increased in knowledge. Some other times I pick up a book and underline portions that I do not understand and then come to someone who knows better than me to ask him to interpret it for me. In so doing, you would have gone past that level. Next time you come across such you will recognize it immediately. That is all. But you find some people who will not read books yet they want to be able to speak Arabic.*

Samira picked up Arabic books wherever she found them and read them and underlined portions she did not understand. If she got stuck, she asked questions. She knew that

extensive reading helped her to be proficient. Her assertion was that devotion to extensive studying and asking questions relating to the readings were necessary indications of her devotion to schooling and her passion for Arabic language.

Other behaviors that helped Samira to be proficient in Arabic were the traits she picked up from her Islamiyya school - determination, strict study pattern, and a competitive spirit:

> *Samira: You will see that when you are taught in Islamiyya school you always go back very determined to know what you've been taught particularly if there are others in the class that perform better than you do […]. If you transfer this competitive drive to the way you do formal school, you will be angry if you are being left behind. You will make up your mind to work harder so that you too can excel. You will even seek out people to teach you aspects that you are struggling with. You will not want anybody else to be better than you because you know that when a student is brilliant she is popular and she becomes the focus of attraction and you will be envious of her. That jealousy will motivate you to work harder because you will say to yourself that she is not better than you are, she does not have a better IQ than you have*.

Samira, like Adama, asserted that students who excelled in class drew attention to themselves and that was what she desired. She did not want others to be better than her. She wanted to always be the star. This was what motivated her to study hard after school and to ask questions when she felt stuck. Her assumption was that if young Muslim women in formal schools adopted these traits they would remain motivated to further their education because of the attendant sense of fulfillment that they would enjoy.

Additionally, Samira asserted that if these young northern Nigerian Muslim women's interest in their subject content knowledge informed what they did for leisure, they would stay motivated and they would also desire to excel in school:

> *Samira: I like watching stuff, either Islamic teachings […] or I watch Hausa films because I like those ones – like comedies […] and the young women in movies, I like watching them […]. Honestly, I do not watch English movies that often. I also watch Arabic movies. I go to rent movies. I pay my money and come and watch them and laugh. Or from the satellite cable or dish I tune to it and watch […] sometimes I even call the number on the screen during live programs and ask questions and they ask me questions as well […]. Sometimes they wonder at my version of Arabic and they ask to know what country I am from […]. He says even in his country they do not speak that version of Arabic […]. You know on the radio they speak a lot of Arabic and you go from one radio station to the other […], you emulate them because you know they are better than you […]. Definitely you will pick up the language […]. I have written a small book in Arabic on ablution […] but I did not publish it. Then I started another one – it is a Hausa novel I tried to translate into Arabic language […]. I was reprimanded at home that I was idle that was why I was writing a book […]. It is love story that I was translating into Arabic […]. They said that I was not studying my books. So, I decided to put it aside […]. My friend had read the book and I got interested in it […]. Before then I never like Hausa novels but I saw her reading it and she rents it out to others. She also rents more that she reads. So, I asked her to read it out to me and I saw that I liked it. So, I wrote it down and went and borrowed the book.*

Samira told the story of how she spent much of her time watching Arabic and Hausa movies. She would occasionally tune to live programs in Arabic nations and engage in

sessions of questions and answers with the program coordinators. Her proficiency in Arabic language, according to her, was often astonishing even to people in foreign countries – where standards are set. In relating this as a success story, Samira showed how her attempt to approximate the set standards made her outstanding and even as we talked about this "success" she displayed confidence and elation in her demeanor.

Samira explained how she sustained the tempo of her interest in Arabic by going ahead to write books in the language, although members of her family discouraged her from building up this potential for creativity. They saw it as a distraction from her commitment to studying her school books. From her story, it is obvious that she committed her time and her resources to her subject of interest, implying that young Muslim women who want to be outstanding in their subjects of interest must be willing to commit their time and their resources to them. Conversely, if the women are poor, then they would not be able to pay this price, in spite of their religious commitment and zeal, since they would not be able to afford the items that would afford them the opportunity to be that committed. As for me, I get the sense that a lot of women may have had their creative potential destroyed the way Samira's was because of the negative criticisms they received against the practices they engaged in to build this creative potential. This again has to do with the way they read the type of education that they were receiving – one that had to do with the memorization and regurgitation of knowledge and not one that was creative, inventive, and on-going.

Studying Arabic in an Islamiyya school was not much of a challenge for Samira. The atmosphere was conducive and encouraging:

Samira: In school, it has been communized. Everybody speaks it. You do not draw attention to yourself by speaking it because everybody else understands it as long as you are not speaking standard Arabic. As long as it is the broken one you are speaking everybody can speak that one and nobody's attention is drawn to you […]. If you speak standard Arabic you will draw attention to yourself because they know that you must be an expert to be able to also speak standard Arabic. It is mainly those who have traveled out that can speak that kind of Arabic […]. Those who speak broken Arabic do not understand what you are saying talk more of responding to you. They will simply be looking at you. If you can speak English language you will be a subject of envy but if all you know is broken Arabic, everybody can speak it. Nobody will be attracted to you […]. The other day in class, one of our teachers was giving his lesson in Arabic when I raised up my hand to ask a question, my class members where enthralled wondering what type of Arabic I spoke.

No doubt, Samira did not struggle with proficiency in Arabic because even her Islamiyya school environment encouraged that the language of communication should be Arabic. She explained, however, that there were two varieties of the language – the standard variety and the "broken" variety. The latter was commonly spoken. If you spoke the former then you were outstanding, just as if you spoke English language. A level of mastery was required for that to happen. People who had traveled to the Arab world tended to be able to speak the standard variety. Although Samira had not traveled out of the country, she was able to speak the standard variant. The sense I get out of this is that what a young woman needs to excel in her area of discipline is exposure to all avenues from which the knowledge could be garnered. From what she had explained earlier on, Samira exposed herself to a lot of avenues that helped her to be proficient in Arabic

language. She read books, watched movies, asked for further explanations, and so on. Samira asserted that schools would need to endeavor to give their students more exposure to their fields of study if they wanted to achieve greater performance and to sustain the women's interests.

Conflicts and dilemmas: Western education as a compelling alternative

Samira was faced with the challenge of furthering her education in a formal school setting. Islamiyya schools did not have many tertiary institutions where their students could go to further their education. When she came for her NCE program to study Hausa/Arabic and her certificate from the Islamiyya school gave her the required qualification to gain the admission, she still had to cope with doing other required courses if she had to be awarded the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). She had to pass her general studies education and other education classes. The medium of instruction in these courses was English language and Samira's lack of proficiency in English became a huge challenge:

> *Phebe: So, how do you cope with your education and general studies courses whose medium of instruction is English language?*
>
> *Samira: You know, like the handouts that they give us […] you buy them. When you buy them, even if, since you can at least read them […] yes I can read them. It is how to comprehend them that is the issue. I do not understand everything. What I do is, I have a sister who did not study Arabic. She went to a formal school. I go to sit with her, she reads to me and explains, breaking it down and translating it into Hausa for me […]. Whenever I come across difficult portions while studying at home, I underline them and write stuff by the side. This is because I too teach her and she too teaches me in return. So, I sit down and she is my younger sister. I*

am very much older than her. She is a small girl but she is very intelligent […]. If I am unable to read a portion she would laugh at me and if I pronounce a word wrongly she would say that is not the way to say it. Then I would say that she should teach me. I keep following her tutorship.

Phebe: How do you cope with writing your examination?

Samira: When I come into the examination hall, whatever I understand. When I pick up the question paper and check out the first question. If I can answer the question good but if I am unable to answer it I would skip it and go to the next one whichever one I can answer, fine and if I can copy somebody else's answers that would be great [laughed].

Samira was at a disadvantage. She was unable to read and understand her notes. The culture of handouts became useful for her kind of learning. This meant that she was stuffed with the relevant knowledge through the handout. She did not have to discover any knowledge. Once she could read, memorize, and regurgitate the knowledge she would be able to complete the program. As such, in addition to buying the handout and reading it she was smart and humble enough to find her younger sister who explained portions she did not understand to her – much of this coaching was about English language and not about an in-depth comprehension of the content of the subject. Obviously, Samira did not receive sufficient help through that kind of tutorship. Consequently, she resorted to copying somebody else's answers in the examination hall.

Samira seemed to raise issues with whether or not the NCE program needed to be structured in such a way as to make it mandatory for all students to take these other courses, even though their specialization subjects were different. She also drew the attention of propagators of Islamiyya education to the need for them to provide sufficient tertiary institutions for their students, so that they did not have to cope with the

challenges of proficiency in English language. If in fact they were unable to do so then the English language component of the Islamiyya school curriculum needed to be taught with more vigor and thoroughness so that the products of these schools would not be at a disadvantage.

I asked Samira to know how she mastered the little amount of English language that she could speak:

> *Samira*: *You know when you live in a large house you will find some people who speak only English language among themselves. You see, one day definitely you will pick up some of it from daily practice. Sometimes, for no reason they will come and speak English language to you […] even though they know you do not understand the language. They will speak it to you just to make fun of you; to hear what response you will give and then they would laugh at you saying that you do not understand the language. You will definitely learn […]. There is one of my older brothers when he completed his National Youth Service Corps and came back home, he said to us you don't know this, you don't know that and I said yes, I do not. He said alright. He got a blackboard and began to teach us beginning with nouns, parts of speech and so on […] we still do that. With our books he will ask us to take dictation. He will say write such and such a word. What you don't get right he marks wrong. He corrects your wrong*.

The literacy practices she was engaged in at home helped Samira tremendously. Members of her family who were proficient in English language teased her about her ignorance/lack of proficiency. They also served as mentors to her. She tried to emulate them. She maintained the posture of humility – being willing to be laughed at if that would help her to learn. That was her strength of character and it helped her to learn in

deed. One of her older brothers actually took it upon himself to coach her beginning from the basics. In telling this aspect of her story, Samira asserted that the northern Nigerian Muslim woman's personality had a lot to do with whether she was able to cope with schooling or not. If she was able to recognize her deficiencies and worked at them then she could improve and stay motivated to do school, instead of dropping out. Also, if she took advantage of her home environment and the literacy practices in it chances were that she would do better at school. Furthermore, Samira affirmed that proficiency in English language was a necessity for Muslim young women in schools. My take on that, something which I have consistently tried to point out throughout this work, is that something has to be done about the dominance of English language in schools, seeing how much of an impediment it is to northern Nigerian women's efforts at doing school.

Samira did not begrudge the demands that western schooling put on her. She appreciated western education:

> *Phebe: How has western education been beneficial to you?*
> *Samira: I have improved tremendously through western education because western education brings enlightenment. You find that there is something you do not know, you have never seen it. But in school they will raise it up and tell you that this thing is such and such a thing. That way you get to know what it is. If you find yourself somewhere else you will not ask what is that thing. You would not have to ask because you are educated and know this, you know that, you know that […]. If you hear someone say it even though it is an English word you already know what it is. No one will show off with it to you.*

Much of her appreciation for western education was to the extent that it helped her to be enlightened and it positioned her to be able to relate with other people without any

inhibition or feeling of humiliation or inferiority. Therefore, Samira asserted that western education enhanced a young woman's sense of worth and belongingness. Educated people seemed to belong to a cult which excluded others who did not belong to it and, from her tone, she was happy to find a space in that cult, even if she was not among the top-ranking members. She was grateful that she was not ignorant.

Samira also had a religious reason for appreciating western education. Western education helped her to be more productive with the practice of her religion. It provided her security, in the event that she happened to be somewhere where there was a plot to hurt her by non- Muslims, expressed in English language. In escaping that hurt she would have preserved her religion:

> *Phebe: How do you view western education? Is it an abomination?*
>
> *Samira: No, honestly I do not view western education as an abomination. If you have western education you will be able to assist your religion through that education. If, for instance, you have to go somewhere where English is spoken and you do not understand what they are saying, you see they might be planning on hurting you. You will be able to protect yourself even before protecting your religion […]. During the time of the Prophet, at his time, he sent one of his disciples […] to go and learn another language which was not Arabic […]. He sent him so that they might enjoy fellowshipping and speaking. So, you see western education cannot be said to be an abomination […] since he sent one of his disciples to go for knowledge outside Islamic knowledge. Specifically he took him […]; the walk to that town was almost seventy kilometers. He took him […]. At that time, you know there were only horses and other things, and camels. He sent him and he went there […] to go and learn how to read. He went to learn and also came back so that they might enjoy communicating […] either through*

> *their trade or through the spreading of the religion […]. He stayed in that town for 4 months learning and he came back and taught others. So you see the issue of boko haram is uncalled for […].*

I asked to know whether she thought western education was an abomination because the boko haram crisis had just occurred and I wanted to tease out what her take was on the crisis. In so doing I hoped to be able to portray the complexities involved in the propagation of Islamic education and in the operations of Islamiyya schools. I explained in my literature review that there is a proliferation of Islamiyya schools, an attempt made to provide Muslims an alternative education that is culturally and religiously more acceptable to them. In spite of this laudable effort, the boko haram crisis still occurred. Also, most international interventionists and government bodies have often recommended that there should be an integration of Islamiyya education into the school curriculum. I felt the issue was more complicated and more complex than that. Therefore, I figured that since my assessment of Samira was that she was a Muslim fundamentalist, she would be better positioned to help me interrogate what nuances were involved in this approach towards helping more Muslim women go to school.

In her response, Samira insinuated that religious crises were a recurrent phenomenon in postcolonial Nigeria. She explained her perception of western education as not anti – Islam by showing how the Prophet set precedence for the search of this kind of knowledge when he asked his disciple to learn to read so that they could enjoy trade and be able to spread their religion amongst people of different ethnic groups. In learning to read, their communication abilities would be enhanced. Her argument was that if the Prophet valued knowledge for that purpose, she too was justified to value knowledge for

the same purpose. I read her as implying that young women have no religious reasons not to further their education, because education will better equip and position them to spread their religion and to be part of the global world.

Her added reason for pursuing western education was that during religious crises, a Muslim woman could get hurt by the opposing party if she did not denounce her religion; the opposing party being Christians. The plot to harm her could be discussed in English language and if she did not go to school to learn to speak English and to acquire the necessary enlightenment required for making wise decisions at such moments, then she could be trapped. Therefore, as she explained, Samira wanted to acquire western education so that she could escape danger zones in times of such crises. I explained in my literature review that Christianity was associated with western education because of the role missionaries played during colonialism in its spread. I, therefore, found it very interesting to observe that in the 21st century women like Samira would still have this perception about western education. It points out to me that there is a need not to ignore this perception as new ways of doing school are considered.

Although she appreciated western education, Samira was not enthused about the way public schools were run:

> *Samira: No teacher should come into the classroom and in the course of his lesson poke other people's religion and so on. If anyone feels provoked she might decide to refuse to continue with her education […]. The truth should be told and no one should feel provoked. Religion can be talked about but […] whoever you are just endure even if you feel provoked […]. The chairs in the schools should be repaired and provisions should be made of things that will […] make the students happy to study […].*

> *If the chairs are being managed it will not be easy for the student to assimilate what is being taught because her attention will be on her seat so that she does not fall off. But if her attention is in one place and she is concentrating on what is going on in class then she will be well focused […] but if you are thinking that the chair is broken and you could fall off your attention is with the teacher and your attention is on the chair. So, you see learning might not take place because God said he did not create man with two minds*.

Samira drew attention to two salient issues – the sensitive nature of religious differences and the dilapidated state of most public schools. If young women did not feel protected in the practice of their religion, because of the power dynamics that operated in the classroom, then they would not feel encouraged to remain in school. Secondly, if students had to cope with broken chairs then they would not focus on the teaching. She appealed to religion to justify why a broken chair in the classroom could be a source of distraction, saying that God created humans with one mind and not two, meaning that humans can only focus on one thing at a time. Samira had attended a public primary school as well. She knew what occurred in public schools. She asserted that if the building and the facilities were dilapidated then young women would lose motivation for schooling.

Samira also drew attention to teachers' nonchalant attitude to work in those public schools, talking about it with an attitude that suggested that teachers in Islamiyya schools behaved better:

> *Samira: You know, nowadays, teachers in formal schools hardly teach […]. I know a teacher, he taught us math. He comes with his math questions already solved on paper. He will copy everything including the answers and everything with no explanations on the procedure through which he arrived at his*

> *answers. How do you expect anyone to learn that way […]? He writes it on the chalkboard. If you ask how he arrived at the answer he orders you out of the classroom […]. How then might a person be able to learn? All he does is to come and sit down on a seat and at break time he goes out for break […] just so that a person does not spend the whole day at home, making noise and doing all kinds of things. In some cases even when the teacher comes into the classroom to teach they would not even listen to him. They won't even teach you in the manner in which you will understand. If only they start with teaching parts of speech […]. I swear to God we will learn. Why is it so? […] they make doubly sure that you have learned […] not the manner in which it is done presently that leaves the individual to learn on his own. If he knows it, he knows it. If you do not know it, that is all. That is what happens in most government schools. That is why you will discover that not much learning takes place there. A child who goes to a private school is better able to read than anyone who goes to a government school. That is if he is determined to study hard […].*

Samira asserted that good teaching only took place in private schools. In government schools teachers copied notes on the chalkboard for students to copy into their own notebooks and regurgitate during tests and examinations. No explanations were offered, even for such subjects as math which follows a particular procedural pattern. They did not double-check to ensure that learning took place. Students were left to grope in the dark. Some teachers simply sat around in schools without going into the classrooms to teach. Samira concluded that not much learning took place in that kind of school environment. In her opinion the Islamiyya schools did better. Teachers were more responsive.

Like formal schools, Islamiyya schools were ranked – the public ones and the private ones. The private ones were more expensive to attend and the teaching was more thorough. Samira had the benefit of that as well and that explained one of the many ways that she kept herself motivated in the study of Arabic language:

> *Samira: There are Islamiyya schools that are good. Majalis and Islamiyya are not the same. In Islamiyya you come and learn and if you learn, you learn, if you have not learned, you have not learned. But in majalis, they will sit you down and take turns, you see. You know that somebody will perform better than you and you will be embarrassed and there are men and there are women and they will say this woman is a dullard. Next time you will work harder to perform better. If you do not improve the teacher will change your class […]. I went to majalis. That was my preference […]. Exams are written after every month […]. When you do the exams even if you copy other people's answers they will not stop you. You do whatever you feel like doing. You peep into this person's work and into that person's work, no problem. Until, since it is majalis, the students are very few. You are not more than ten in the classroom if you are that many […]. They will not return your scripts to you and ask you to repeat what you wrote on the chalkboard […]; the script will not be returned to you but questions will be asked while the teacher holds unto the script. He checks to find out if the answer you provide is the same as what you wrote on your script. If that is the way you wrote that will be alright but if that is not the way you wrote it they know that your answer was copied from someone else. Therefore they will cancel the one you wrote in your script […].*

Samira attended majalis, a private Islamiyya school with fewer students so that the teaching was not only thorough but students received personal attention. Other public Islamiyya schools were more crowded and teachers did not pay attention to individual

women's learning. It was easier to be competitive in majalis than in public Islamiyya schools. However, teaching for examination purposes was more pronounced in majalis and that is why so much time and attention was devoted to making sure that students excelled in examination by their personal efforts. They could not copy other people's work and escape with it - they were found out. This meant that even in pursuing Islamiyya education, social class positioning was an issue. The rich who could afford the best type of Islamiyya schools where standard was maintained and insisted upon were few.

Even with her attending majalis, her school was not as good as the private formal schools that her cousins attended:

> *Phebe: Why did you not go to a private formal school?*
> *Samira: I had my primary school education in a formal school. The fees paid in private formal schools are a lot. It is not everybody that can afford it. But you see my cousins, a lot of them, you know that in a large family you will find that one person has more money than the other person […]. Everybody goes to the school that their father can afford since it is their fathers that send them to school.*

Although Samira was passionate about the Islamiyya school she attended, she would probably have gone to a private formal school if her father was as rich as her uncles. She explained that it is not everybody that could afford to go to private schools because the school fees were high. From her tone, she seemed to wish that she too went to a private school. She seemed to feel sidelined by her social class.

On ethnicity

In her NCE program, Samira was not only struggling with English language, but she also struggled with her other major subject areas – Hausa language to be specific. This struggle was different than the one she had with English language:

> *Phebe: You are studying Hausa/Arabic presently, which one do you find easier to cope with?*
> *Samira: Arabic.*
> *Phebe: But you are a Hausa woman. How is it that you find Hausa difficult?*
> *Samira: You will find some Hausa not looking like Hausa […].*
> *Phebe: Where are you originally from?*
> *Samira: We are originally not from Zaria […]. We are beriberi.*
> *Phebe: Is that why you find Hausa language difficult?*
> *Samira: Honestly, it makes Hausa language difficult for us.*
> *Phebe: But do you understand beriberi?*
> *Samira: Honestly I do not but one of my sisters speaks it and we learn from her.*
> *Phebe: Do you visit your hometown sometimes?*
> *Samira: We have never […]. Our great grand parents are not even originally from this country.*
> *Phebe: What country are they from.*
> *Samira: They are from, where did they say, one country they said. You know if one were to trace where one originated from […] yes we were said to be Arabs originally […]. But presently we are not Arabs […]. My paternal grandfather is Fulani. It is his mother that is beriberi. Even my mother's relatives are Fulanis […]. When they speak I can respond.*

Samira showed how the issue of ethnicity was intertwined with religion and how both affected schooling for her. She made the whole notion of tracing one's origin a daunting effort that was not worth embarking upon. She was from the ruling family in Zaria, meaning that she was originally from Zaria City, but in this conversation, by alluding to

history, she showed how the ruling families in Zaria City were not all originally Hausas. Her family was originally beriberi. The beriberi people were originally from Borno State. They established their authority through conquest – mainly through the jihad.

Samira complicated the issue of ethnicity further by saying that the beriberi people were not even originally from Nigeria. Also, over the years there had been intermarriages that now linked her lineage to the Fulani people. The implication of this complicated story for me was that although Samira was supposed to be Hausa – and Hausa was her first language - she was not as proficient in it as to find studying it as a course a walk over. The complication of this struggle for me laid in the fact that if she struggled so much with studying her first language, then how daunting was her academic endeavor, seeing that she was actually learning three different foreign languages – Hausa, Arabic, and English.

Chapter Eight

Marriage and Schooling: Which Way to Go

Hauwa: "Going to school is very valuable particularly to the womenfolk"

Introduction

In this chapter I tell the story of the dilemma that Hauwa faced in deciding which way to go: to uphold the discourse of early marriage and of submissiveness in marriage, entrenched in the peoples traditional and religious practices, or to exercise her power of agency to break free and portend a different discourse and face the consequence of such an uncommon radical stance. I begin by discussing the way Hauwa's story is germane to this work in order to establish significance. Thereafter, I tell the story of how I met and got to select her to be part of this study. Much of the rest of the chapter is an analysis of her story, to establish how she exhibited her power of agency and desire, how she imagined her future, and the hindrances she encountered as she performed her gender.

Hauwa and this work

Literature on the development of women's education in northern Nigeria is replete with stories of the barriers that traditional and cultural practices pose to inhibit large enrolments and retention rate in schools. In bringing in Hauwa's story I interrogate this terrain further in order to expose the nuanced nature of the issues implicated in this outcome and to reveal their complexities and complications. Hauwa displayed a high sense of agency that draws attention. She challenged patriarchy and the religious cloak under which it is shrouded. Her posture represented the radical shift that is taking place from earlier positions of voicelessness and complacency which the literature I reviewed

portrayed. The implication of this shift is that a subtle but sure change in gender formations in northern Nigeria is already taking place. Hauwa's subject position was born out of her hybrid (Bhabha, 1990, 1994) self – the Hausa/beriberi Muslim young woman, the young woman exposed to western education, and the northern Nigerian woman surviving in postcolonial realities. She had to necessarily negotiate her desire for western education. Therefore, her access to and attainment of western education was complicated through the dynamics of patriarchy and religion. Hauwa was driven by the need to survive in economically challenging times, a time when survival is difficult without money. She saw a good job as a sure source of income but the good jobs did not come easy – they required good and higher educational qualifications. She realized that she had to compete for them and that was why she could not compromise her pursuit of western education.

She saw a need to understand how to balance home and school. This meant making provision for childcare and support, having financial support, and the timely completion of her home chores so that she could make out time to both attend her classes and get her reading and assignments done. Considering the way she was positioned in making sense of these needs and how to meet them, Hauwa resisted traditional and religious gender positioning, which she felt was limiting. Typically, the norm was that a Muslim wife is a home keeper in purdah. She is not to be seen or heard. But Hauwa disrupted this discourse in order to be heard and seen; to suit the way she was reading the world.

In this world education was the key to development; the panacea for solving life's challenges including family crises and financial lack. Consequently, I saw Hauwa emerging as "a new form of ideal subject" (Gonick, 2006, p. 4) – one who was a self-determined, individualized, and reassured citizen. She acknowledged the risk in this disruptive behavior, which could cost her her marriage, but she was resolved to remain committed to her pursuit of western education. Her parents encouraged her in this endeavor making it easier for her to be resilient. They sacrificed themselves and withstood the criticism of others to ensure that Hauwa acquired a western education. In disrupting the traditional and religious discourse, she took responsibility, with the support of her parents, to imagine a future of economic independence and a stable and comfortable life. Hauwa and her parents' actions highlight the symbiotic relationship that has ensued since the colonial contact between the acquisition of western education and the people's identity. Clearly the people are still colonized via western education since, in order to acquire western education, they have to forfeit their identity. By accepting western education as being intrinsically more superior to Islamiyya education for instance, Hauwa and her parents display their colonial mentality about education and social mobility just as Ngugi wa Thiongo (1981) and Nandy (1997) would argue in their discussion on the colonization of the mind. No doubt both Hauwa and her parents perceive western education as the passport to global citizenship and that explains why they pursue it at all cost.

As good as Hauwa and her parents' actions might seem, they nonetheless show how western education and talk about education result in colonization because of the way

they render individuals as successful and/or failed. They also show how this type of education positions other societies where it is introduced as deficient in comparison to the western or modern world as well as show how education that is indigenous to those societies is not centered and is therefore incapable of capturing the picture of the world. Engstrom (2008) in his review of Seth's *Subject lessons: The western education of colonial India* explained that Seth alleges that this approach to western education tantamonts to reading Indians as non-modern subjects incapable of self-actualization – a racist belief hinged on western epistemology.

Meeting Hauwa

Hauwa was 21 years old and had just completed her associate degree program (Nigeria Certificate in Education – NCE) at the time of this interview. Her father was educated. He was a zonal supervisor at the Ministry of Education. Her mother was an assistant headmistress. Considering their educational achievements, her parents placed a high value on western education. Hauwa was the first person I interviewed. She was recommended to me by a colleague who was intrigued by her story, and once he heard what my research was about, he was certain that she was a good choice for me. Her aunt worked as his secretary and she had informed him about Hauwa's schooling experiences. I was elated because I had before this gone from school to school looking for women to work with in this study and I was not being as fortunate as I had hoped. Hauwa was very enthusiastic to talk about her schooling experiences. I asked open-ended and follow up questions from things she said, and she just went on and on. I was a very keen listener. We met twice in an office space at her school.

Agency and desire: The interstices of power relations and marriage

Hauwa talked about her experiences as a married Muslim woman who had to reconcile this identity with her identity as a student. My first question to her was "What does going to school mean to you?" Here is how she responded:

> *Hauwa: You know going to school is very valuable particularly to the womenfolk […]. I did not begin to have problem with schooling at the NCE level until I got married. That is the time that I start having lots of problem. The reason is because when I was getting married we agreed with my fiancé that I will continue with my education after marriage. He told me he agreed because at that time there was a semester in which I made 4.00 Grade Point Average (GPA) in this school. I showed it to him and he rejoiced greatly being overjoyed that I had a good result. But once I got married, one week after I got married, we started quarreling because I said truly I would have to return to school and he insisted that he would not permit me to do so. I say to him if you had not forgotten we agreed that I will continue with my education and you agreed. This agreement was not with me alone. My parents were involved […]. I was in NCE 2 first semester when I got married. That was when we began to have problems […]. The big problem he was facing was that he did not want me to leave the house at 8.00am […]. At this time he would not have left the house for his shop in the market*.

In an attempt to answer my question, Hauwa came very quickly to the heart of the matter – the struggles she was having with going to school. It was a social problem. Her husband had issues with allowing her to leave the house before him. He is a business man in the open market. Most of those shops don't open before 8.00am daily. He could not reconcile her leaving the house before him. I thought that an issue of power relation implicated in gender was obvious in what she described as the problem. As the head of the house and a

man, her husband felt his position threatened if she took on the role of a man – rising up early and leaving the house in search of resources with which to manage the family. The woman is the home maker. She stays at home to manage the home front. He would not have her reverse this role.

Time, therefore, assumes a different meaning in this context, defining a different struggle with schooling for Hauwa. Since her husband did not return home until late in the evening, whatever she did in the day time, if managed not to affect the smooth working of the home front, was her business. Her husband had consented to allowing her return to school after they got married, but he reneged. While they courted he showed that he was enthusiastic about her performance in school and was overjoyed anytime she performed well. However, they started quarreling one week after her marriage because she insisted on returning to school. She was at the penultimate level of her NCE program when she got married.

Her parents had seen to it that there was an agreement that she would return to school after the marriage. They committed to continuing to bear the financial responsibility of sending her to school even in her marriage:

> *Hauwa: Even before the marriage we did not agree that he would be financially responsible for everything about my school. All he was to do was to allow me go back to school.*
> *Phebe: So, who gives you money for school?*
> *Hauwa: My parents. They still give me money for school up till now. If I said to them I want they give me […]. We courted for three years. He never showed me his lack of interest in my going to school but his friend once told me he does not like western education but I told him that I did not agree with him because all the while we were in the relationship, if I achieved*

> *any educational progress he would show his happiness more than my own expression of joy over it sometimes. It was after we got married he began to show that he did not approve of my going to school […]. Even today whenever I remind him he says yes it is like when a person wants to cross a street and he is told that he may not cross over the street until he says something otherwise he will be run over by a car and he would die on the spot. He would definitely say whatever he has been asked to say and afterwards cross over the street. That was why he gave his consent that I might return to school after our marriage. He just wanted me to come into his house. When I am already in his house I would not be under the authority of my parents. I will be under him*.

The issue of power and gender relationship is very pungent in his response to why he gave his initial consent to her going to school. He respected her parents' authority over her. This position of power shifted once she got married. He had the final say over her choice for school and not her parents. In exercising his power it did not matter to him whether he had to play a financial role in supporting her education or not. In the midst of this power tussle, Hauwa's positionality both as a woman and as a child defined her as less powerful and subject to the whims and caprices of those who wielded the power. She was more or less left a voiceless victim. She only had a subjugated voice – one that allowed her to question her husband's voice in very subtle ways by reminding him of his promises. He explained away his promises simply as a case of desperation, through the analogy he made with the man who needed to say a word before he could cross the street. He insinuated that his love for her made him desperate to make commitments that he did not believe in. This revealed his insincerity so that even when in courtship he showed excitement over her academic achievement, in actual fact he did not mean it. He was

being deceptive and she was too gullible and vulnerable to notice; not even when his friend cautioned her.

Growing up as a child, Hauwa was mentored by her parents to be passionate about western education. They never allowed hawking for money like most children in the neighborhood did. Instead, they made sure they provided her with most of her needs:

> *Phebe: Do they permit you to hawk in your house?*
> *Hauwa: No. We are not permitted to hawk.*
> *Phebe: But why?*
> *Hauwa: My father provides everything we need. He therefore did not see the sense in hawking. Instead, whenever we came back from school at night after the evening prayers and the evening meal he would always ask us to bring out our books to study. If we have assignments that we are unable to solve, we would go to him and ask him to teach us. Sometimes we would go to our mother instead […]. Even if we do not have any assignments he would insist that we read our books. He does not monitor to see if we are playing instead of reading but he is content that at least we observe that study moment […]. Sometimes he encourages us to bring our assignment to one another and if we are unable to help ourselves then he or my mother would step in.*

Speaking about her literacy practices and the cultural deposit that she brought with her to school, it is clear that Hauwa's parents' supervision of her study habit was a helpful way of mentoring her. She read or did her assignments every evening. Her parents and her siblings were always available to teach her any topics she was struggling with. Her focus on education was further enhanced by the fact that she did not have to be distracted with hawking as most of her peers in the neighborhood did, but that is essentially because her father was able to provide for her needs. I assume that what they provided was her basic

needs meaning that her parents must have taught her and her siblings how to be content with having their basic needs met and how not to be covetous.

Hauwa explained how limited her parents' role in encouraging her to go to school became once she got married:

> *Phebe: Are you saying that your parents cannot say anything about the situation?*
> *Hauwa: They have done their best.*
> *Phebe: How do you mean?*
> *Hauwa: See. The first time he stopped me. They came to meet him. My mother came by herself to meet him early in the morning before he left for the market. She said Mallam that was not the agreement we had with you. And you know another problem? Whenever my parents come to meet him to ask him why he stopped me from going to school he doesn't say anything to them. He only tells them I will soon return to school. But between him and me, when we sit to talk about the matter, he tells me the truth. Even my grandfather and my father came to him. There was once when my father came to quarrel with us and said that he would not have any more business with me and I must never come to his house again since I said that I will not continue with my education anymore. My husband and I were sitting together when my father came to our house to say these things to us. After two days I insisted on letting my husband know that I was not going to continue to accept to marry a man who encourages me to fall apart with her parents. What if my husband divorces me? So, I told him that I was going to go to my father's friend. He agreed to accompany me. We came to my father's friend and pleaded with him to go and appeal to my father to reconsider his stance. We actually went there with my husband […]. He promised that by the grace of God the situation will improve. After two days he still refused to allow me to go back to school. I reminded him of the time when my parents withdrew me back to their house for this same reason. I even slept there. Very late at night he came to request for*

> *me to return home and my parents told him that I would not return until the next day. Again very early in the morning the next day he came and pleaded with them and promised that I would return to school. After I got back home he still refused me to return to school. I asked him why. He is from Zamfara state […]. He is Derica […] When we got married he did not let me know that he had his in-laws [his older brothers' wives] in this town but I knew he had older siblings. None of his in-laws went up to secondary school in their educational pursuit. I am the only one who did and has even completed my NCE. All of them did not. Most of them married street hawkers. He himself did not go to school. While we were in courtship it was not obvious that he did not go to school. He speaks English language since he lived briefly in Lagos town. Nowadays his siblings are going to school. They are also putting their children in school. He is just the one refusing me to return to school. He thinks that when I am educated I will despise him and I will be disrespectful to him. When I am educated and I start to work and to receive my own money I will not even recognize him anymore because I would have my own money. I will not even ask him for anything. My response to him is that there are different kinds of women. Anyone who exhibits this kind of behavior already had it innate in her. He has refused to agree with my own perspective*.

The power tussle over who had the final say concerning Hauwa's return to school, between her husband and her parents, assumed a very dramatic dimension. Her husband would not be disrespectful of her parents but he was very agentic and purposeful about the way he comported himself each time he had to deal with them. He made his position clear that he loved his wife and wanted his marriage but his objection was her returning to school. He knew the cultural ethics that bounded marriage. As such he was never disrespectful of his in-laws. However, by implication he drew the boundaries for what

was permissible in his house – that was his own domain and he had to have the final say. Between his wife and him was another situation of power assertion. Because of his "feelings of inferiority" he feared that if she had an education, she would automatically obtain a job and that would mean that she would be economically independent. Her economic independence would displace him from the position of power and authority which he commanded over her. It would also mean that he stood a chance of losing her since she would be more exposed to the larger society and her life's preferences may change. He, therefore, reasoned that the best thing to do was to subjugate her by refusing her to go to school. She went an extra length to explain how it was not as if he did not understand the value of education. He was exposed. He lived in Lagos city, the former capital city of Nigeria, before it was moved to Abuja. He even looked schooled, especially since he spoke English.

She was obviously deliberate about her marriage choice, knowing that she and her parents were passionate about her going to school. Being deliberate about marriage choices in this manner is another disruption of the traditional and religious discourse on marriage. In the past, young women did not have much say in matters of marriage choices. Hauwa and her parents allowed her to disrupt this discourse and in so doing foreshadow the shift that has begun to take place in this terrain. In deliberately making this choice she tried to forestall encountering these problems and struggles that she was in actual fact having with her schooling. She reasoned that he deliberately did not allow her come in contact with his in-laws so that she would not pick the clue that education was not valued by her husband's family. She also perceived that he was ashamed of his

family's social class and educational background. It is possible that if she made this discovery she would probably have changed her mind from marrying him. She saw herself different than them because of the agency she expressed, which was informed by her awareness of the relevance of western education to societal and individual well being. Her husband's in – laws were complacent with not going to school, while she was resolute.

Her agentic self began to show when she cooperated with her parents to return to her parents' home and when she insisted in making peace with her father rather than side with her husband. She foreshadowed a situation where she would prefer divorce to staying in her marriage, which is why she was insistent in making peace with her parents. She needed to have their support in case things turned for the worse in her husband's house.

Even though she assured him of her submissiveness and respect, in spite of her education and her job and money, he was not convinced. She did not deny that she would want to be economically independent nor did she refute the proposition that a good education was her passport to a good job. But the essence of all these, for her, was not to usurp power and authority. Her perception about women, who after acquiring higher educational qualifications become very disrespectful to their husbands, was that it was not the additional qualification and the exposure they received from going to school that was responsible for that behavior. In her opinion they must have had that tendency and were living out their personalities. What her response implied was that she expected that her husband knew her personality and should have known that she was going to act

differently than those women. Her argument was that their tendency for disrespect and lack of submissiveness must have been rearing its head before then but their husbands may have overlooked them. Again, she implied that considering the number of years they had spent together as a family her husband should have been able to tell whether furthering her education would make her act in the way he feared. I read her as more or less pledging her loyalty. In being as explicit as she was about the matter, I also read her as also silently challenging his reading of the world since she saw the situation differently. Unfortunately, however, her husband is obstinate; he would not acknowledge it. By making reference to the state he comes from, which is Zamfara State, and to the sect he belongs to (derica), Hauwa suggested some stereotyping of men who fall within those two descriptors; as perhaps not cooperative as far as encouraging women to go to school is concerned.

Imagining the future

Hauwa's husband threatened her with divorce if she insisted on going to school:

> *Phebe: So, how does he register his refusal? Does he get violent with you?*
> *Hauwa: No. We just talk about it. Sometimes he asks me to make a choice between staying in my marriage and going to school. I would always say to him that I would not say this is what my preference is. However, if you make the choice for me and you tell me that this is your solution to me I will take it.*
> *Phebe: If you accept wouldn't you be bothered later on?*
> *Hauwa: I swear to God it will not bother me […]. The reason is because even if he says he will divorce me, I have already completed my NCE. I will find a job and I will continue with my education. Why then should I be bothered.*
> *Phebe: Being without a husband will bother you.*
> *Hauwa: Being without a husband?*

Phebe: People will mock at you?
Hauwa: Mock at me for what? I am unable to live with a husband? Let them go and marry him. I swear to God it will not bother me […] because I am passionate about going to school […]. If things had gone the way I had hoped they would, I would have started working by now. But since he has objected I have not even collected my NCE result […]. If I collect my result my parents will insist that I start working and that will start a whole lot of problems between us again […]. What I prefer is to further my education. I am determined that whether he likes it or not I am going to further my education.

Hauwa's husband used the threats of divorce to keep her subjugated, but what that did to her instead was that it built resilience in her and mad her more agentic. She became more determined to go to school at the peril of losing her home. It is against Islamic law for her to initiate divorce but she was resolute that if it came to that, she would settle for it especially if the sole cause was her insistence on going to school. That was why she said that it would not bother her if she does not have a husband. The society frowns against single matured women and against the divorced. Often times, the woman is blamed for not keeping her home. Hauwa disturbed this discourse with her stance, weighing her academic pursuit over and above those values. Her value and respect for her marriage was the reason that she had been very diplomatic about not collecting her NCE result. With that result in hand, her parents would insist that she got a job and in so doing her loyalty to her husband would be questioned and vice versa. What she preferred, while she bought time for her husband to change his mind, was to stack up her educational qualifications. She would rather commence her undergraduate program than look for a

job since she would always enjoy her parents' financial support for meeting her schooling needs.

However, if her husband decided to marry a second wife, Hauwa was resolute that she would seek employment and begin to work. I was curious and wanted to know why she would do such a thing:

> *Hauwa: Presently he is sponsoring one wife. If he marries two wives you know he will sponsor two wives and his current expenditure will increase. He will begin to complain that the money he is spending is too much and may decide to reduce it. You know if he does that I might get angry. But, if I have my money I would not be bothered. Even if he does things for her and he neglects me I will leave them to themselves since I have my money. I will just spend my money for my needs.*
>
> *Phebe: So assuming you are sure that he will not marry a second wife, you probably will not pursue western education the way you are doing right now, will you?*
>
> *Hauwa: Why not? You see, probably as we are together with my only child now. Then he dies. You see if he dies, that will be a lot of problems for me. What will I do and you know NCE is not even regarded as any serious educational qualification. Even those who have a first degree are looked upon as not being well-read […]. I wish he will allow me to further my education; I won't bother about getting a job. I should just have the certificate. Any other time when I run into any unforeseen circumstances, I will simply dust out my certificate and seek for employment.*
>
> *Phebe: If he permits you to go to school what level will you stop at.*
>
> *Hauwa: Upward ever. I will just keep on going to school and stacking up the certificates […]. I love to be educated not just because of my parents but because anyone who is educated is not an illiterate. Everywhere she goes she is loved by the people. No*

one will despise her or even disrespect her. They will not treat her with despise […] unless you do something wrong that will make them despise you […]. I just want to be educated the way I see my relatives do and they are able to be independent of other people's help and they are not a laughing stock because of lack […]. My uncle has a master's degree […]; most of them are teachers. They have their first degrees […]. Homes in which people don't go to school; they do not achieve much in life. If you go to school you will achieve a lot. You will not be left behind.

Phebe: Where are you originally from?

Hauwa: We are from Zaria but we are originally from Kebbi State.

Phebe: Don't you think where you are originally from is the reason you appreciate western education the way you do?

Hauwa: That is it. That is the reason we value education the way we do in our family because in Kebbi State every woman goes to school. Our relatives there are always in school no matter what odds come against them […]. My paternal great grand father was the first among members of my family to settle in Zaria City.

The postcolonial reality in Nigeria dictates high rates of unemployment and certification as a requirement for securing a job in the midst of stiff competition. That is why Hauwa was not content with having an NCE certificate. She resolved to keep on acquiring more and more certificates, provided her husband would permit her to do so. The situation of competing for a job and providing for her needs would be more challenging should her husband die, leaving her with her child to take care of all by herself. Obviously schooling for her was a matter of taking precaution measures so that she would be able to cope with hard times should they occur.

Such hard times might not only be dictated by her husband's death but also by the predicament of having to cope with the actual competition inherent in polygamous marriages, when she would have to actually share her home with a co-wife. Islam permits a man to marry more than one wife and up to a maximum of four. Hauwa lived in the consciousness of the fact that her husband might actually marry another woman. She had no issues with that. Her opinion, however, was that marrying more wives would definitely lead to the stretching of family finances and to neglect and complaints about lack of money by her husband. There might be times when jealousy could thrive because of that leaving her caught in the web of feud and contention. That was what she wanted to avoid. If she was economically independent, she would be able to meet her own needs by herself.

Additionally, Hauwa loved to be educated because there were some boxes into which she had put the uneducated as opposed to those of the educated referring to the first category as illiterate and the second as educated. She saw the educated as respected people in the society. They were not despised and that is the box she wished to belong in. If educated people were treated differently, she asserted, it was because they had done something wrong. Her stance painted the picture of education creating a different class of people and earning a higher qualification was the initiation right that she needed in order to belong to that group. Acquiring western education was the mark of success for her.

Ethnicity and urban migration played a crucial role in this matter. Unlike many Hausa people, her family was originally from Kebbi State. People from Kebbi have a reputation for valuing western education, gender and religion notwithstanding. Although

her parents had since migrated to Zaria and have settled in there, they did not lose the values and the principles associated with their ethnic group including the passion for western education. Hauwa explained that that was what kept her and her siblings motivated. For her in particular, it fueled her determination not to be left behind. None of her relatives stopped at the NCE level. She did not see any reason why she should be left behind.

In addition to the family and ethnic tradition of placing value on western education and the role her relatives played in motivating her to do the same, the type of schools she went to also contributed to her staying focused:

> *Hauwa: Before I came to School for Women Teachers (SWT), I attended a junior secondary school in Zaria. While I was there I began to take lessons from Muslim Support Tutoring Program (MSTP). The program was run on Saturdays and Sundays. That was where I was inspired to value western education the more. Most of the teachers knew us personally. I preferred that school and refused to go to SWT. But I could never refuse to go to MSTP because what they taught us there was more than what they taught us at SWT. I understood the teaching better.*
>
> *Phebe: How was their teaching different?*
>
> *Hauwa: They taught on Saturdays and Sundays. We did Mathematics and English language. Their English and Mathematics teachers were lecturers from the polytechnic or the university. They were the ones that taught us and you know that you cannot compare their teaching to that of secondary school teachers. They also follow the syllabus with precision whereas in SWT sometimes the teachers don't even come into the classroom. What they do is give notes to the class to copy. When the teacher now comes into the class he will just talk around the notes and leave. It was at MSTP that I developed a lot of interest in school. No one in my set laid back.*

Everyone furthered their education. When we completed our program with them they encouraged us to not rest on our oars. We were asked to continue with our education. They advised that we must not insist on gaining admission into Usman Yunusa University. We were encouraged to attend whatever school we gained admission to instead of staying at home.

Phebe: Is the school for Muslims only?

Hauwa: Yes, it is for Muslims only.

Phebe: Describe the school for me.

Hauwa: We are not that many in the school. We are not as many as we are in SWT. We are not as many as sixty students in class including men and women whereas in SWT we are usually about eighty in number. And in this school, after a lesson has been taught in class and you do not understand we usually come together as colleagues and have tutorials amongst ourselves. Additionally, when I wrote my qualifying examinations – West African School Certificate Examination (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) examination I had only two credits. So I went to them in MSTP to seek for counsel. They asked me to come and enroll in a tutorial class. I came and enrolled. Additionally I received daily extra tutorship from another teacher who volunteered for free to teach me English language and mathematics on a one-on-one basis. Whenever I do not have transport money or even when I had, he still gave me money just because he willed to do so. They were the ones who showed us how to be interested in schooling. Everyone who completed the MSTP program hardly does not like schooling.

Phebe: Do you know why they set up this MSTP program?

Hauwa: They saw that most Muslims do not have enough support or even the Hausa people, as most of the teachers are Hausa people, do not like schooling and even when they do they do not stay focused. Some children go to school and come back home without revising their notes. The next day they will dust it up and return to school just like that. What they began to do was that instead of these students whiling away time on Saturdays and Sundays, they

will rather bring them together for these tutorial lessons. Lesson starts at 8.00am and at 11.00am we go on break. We go back into the class at 11.30am and then close at 1.00pm. There is another shift that begins at 2.00pm and ends at 6.00pm and yet another that holds at night. It is for adults, particularly market men and women. They start at 8.00pm and close at 10.00pm.

Phebe: Did the fact that the school is for Muslims alone enhance your learning in anyway?

Hauwa: Yes. There is a lot of competition amongst us. Everyone wants to come out tops. We are usually asked to come to the chalkboard to answer questions. Also, the teachers invite low performing students to his office for extra coaching. In most cases, their performance improves.

Phebe: Don't those teachers feel overwhelmed by this extra work that they do?

Hauwa: No, they don't.

Phebe: Who pays them to do this job?

Hauwa: Nobody pays them. Initially when we started, we each paid 50 naira per term. It was when I came into Senior Secondary School 3 that they increased the fee to three hundred and fifty naira for science students and two hundred and fifty naira for arts students. This money is used to buy chalk. Sometimes you find out that students also donate chalk to the school. But no school fees are paid. It is a selfless service for which they anticipate to be blessed by Allah.

Hauwa asserted that the mentorship, guidance and counseling, tutoring, personal attention, and personable classroom environment she received at MSTP, in addition to the pedagogical practice of the teachers went a long way to keep her motivated and interested in western education and to make her to continue to aspire to further her education. The classroom population size was manageable and the teachers were themselves sufficiently motivated to notice low performing students and to single them out for remedial training.

Also, Hauwa emphasized the issue of teacher qualification. According to her, most of the teachers were from the polytechnic and the university, unlike school teachers in SWT. By making this distinction, she implied that those in SWT had lower qualifications and therefore could not impact knowledge appropriately. They were neither motivated nor committed to their jobs. They were content with dumping knowledge in the students by giving notes to them to copy and talking around the notes. This meant that the students were expected to memorize the notes and regurgitate them during examinations.

The teachers at MSTP taught to task by rigidly following the syllabus. They also cared for their students. They provided them career guidance, especially in terms of college selection, encouraging them to be open to whichever higher institution they gained admission to and not to insist on getting into their preferred university. They cared for them enough to also be economically relevant to them – providing them with money when they felt they were in need. These teachers also did this extra community service at MSTP as a way of volunteering for the good and the growth of the Muslim community, hoping in Allah's reward. According to Hauwa, the intention was to keep particularly the Hausa people motivated, as these volunteers had noticed that these people were typically uninterested in western education. Participants who bought into the spirit of this MSTP program saw it as community service, whether they were teachers or students, and that was why the token levy they were required to pay was not burdensome. They were sacrifices that everyone had to make for the good of all. Some students even went the extra mile of donating boxes of chalk to the school in appreciation of the services they

were rendering. No doubt the cultural and religious environment in the school and the time slot spaces within which they operated, worked well for the students, and also kept them motivated. All these factors were reasons why Hauwa appreciated this school.

The scenario she described captured the ethnic implication of schooling. She made a strong case regarding Hausa people needing extra motivation to show sustained interest in western education. Additionally, this conversation showed the way Hauwa excluded herself from this syndrome, and in so doing further reinstated the fact that although she was now a Hausa woman, by virtue of her family's settlement in Zaria, she was still originally from Kebbi State and would not need to be pushed too hard to stay motivated. In fact, she was the one who went to seek extra help when she noticed that her performance at the qualifying examination could not guarantee her gaining admission into higher education.

Hauwa's discussion of her schooling also spoke to the fact that teacher motivation affected students' performance. This discussion disrupts the discourse that teacher motivation is dependant on economic reward. Possible motivations for teachers include the improved performance of the students (some of them improved noticeably after the remedial sessions they had at the teachers' offices during break), later placements of these students in institutions of higher learning, and the fact that their religious beliefs assured them of a later reward. The teachers at MSTP engaged in the program voluntarily. Also, implied in this selfless sacrifice was the use of the program to help bridge the educational gap between the north and the south and between the Christians and the Muslims.

The school was for Muslims only. Hauwa drew attention to the added advantage that this kind of space had for these students, in the sense that it provided a competitive spirit which was germane for keeping the students motivated and focused. According to Hauwa, this kind of competition gave positive energy to the students for excellence. In addition to all the attention they received in class, they formed discussion groups among themselves in order to encourage cooperative learning.

Hauwa discovered that all the members of her cohort had been placed at various institutions of higher learning and that made her more determined not to allow marriage to keep her from catching up and reaching her own goals. There was therefore no stopping her now. Evidently, in comparison to the western world, technology is lacking in this teaching and learning situation, yet the students must be able to make the most of their poor condition to excel. Hauwa's assertion is that the government schools are lacking in these various attributes that make MSTP to stand out and make her find learning in this school better than learning at STW.

However, in spite of the positive impact that MSTP had on her and the intensive care and attention that she received, Hauwa still graduated from secondary school after a second sitting with just five credits in five different subjects. She only had passes in English language and mathematics. Her struggle with proficiency in English language as with most of my other participants, showed up during my interview sessions with her. My entire interview was conducted in Hausa language rather than in English. Following the way she expressed disappointment and dissatisfaction with her performance in those two subjects and my observation of the fact that she spoke in Hausa language throughout the

course of the interview, I became curious to know what her issues were with English language:

> *Hauwa: I have five credits in the external examination I wrote […]. In maths and English I got pass pass.*
> *Phebe: Why? Even in this interview we are virtually speaking in Hausa language. What is your problem with English language?*
> *Hauwa: Truly I have had problems with English from my secondary school. I did not have good teachers who insisted that we spoke in English. That was the problem we had […]. You know if you speak grammar from time to time you will become conversant with it. I understand whatever is said in English but I have not been able to determinedly speak in English all the time. When I read I understand. I even read novels. I just don't speak in English because first and foremost I feel shy to do so. Also, I live amidst Hausa people. There is no one with whom I necessarily need to speak English language to. Even if you speak it they will only laugh at you because you would be said to speak incorrectly. That further dampens your ability to learn the language. I write it when I have to. Speaking in English is the main problem I have. When I was in MSTP I participated in a lot of debating competitions. My script will be written for me and I will memorize it and say it articulately … Usually turns are taken to regurgitate what was memorized and the better group is rewarded […]. If from the beginning they allowed us to be creative with our ideas we would have improved by now […]. I have no problem with memorization because when I have to do it I set my heart to it […]. Also, it is easier for me to memorize stuff because as a Muslim I had learned to memorize the Qur'an […]. Even in my exams, if I find any aspect difficult to understand I simply just memorize it and once I achieve the essence of the memorization I don't remember the stuff anymore. I will not be able to recall it any other time […]. But it is not everything that I memorize because studying at the NCE level requires that I learn stuff. The things I am able to*

> *learn remain with me. It is the aspects that I memorize that I am unable to recall […]. Actually, I find it easier to learn than to memorize*.

Hauwa was more comfortable with Hausa language because that was both her first language and the language of her immediate environment. This made proficiency in English language a daunting task for her. She was conscious that English language was foreign to her so she felt shy to speak it. Additionally, she was mocked when she committed blunders while speaking in the language. She was more comfortable with reading and writing in English than with speaking in it.

The schools she attended did not help her in this endeavor. Teachers condoned her inability to speak in English such that even when they engaged her in practices that should normally give her practice with gaining proficiency, like debates, they ended up writing out the scripts for her, thereby encouraging memorization and regurgitation. She brought memorization practices which the practice of her religion also encouraged (that is, via the compulsory memorization of the Qur'an), to even her study pattern. Since the educational system emphasized success in examinations as the true test of knowing what a person knows and has learned, she would memorize portions of her school work she thought were vital for the examination, especially if she found such portions difficult to understand. As soon as she deposited them on her answer booklet, as with her debate script, the memorized knowledge evaporated and she was unable to recall it anymore. She argued that memorization and regurgitation affected her proficiency in the English language.

For Hauwa, the impact of the extensive reading in which she engaged was not very strong. I elaborate on the way a lack of proficiency in English language impacted her and others' learning.

Hindrances to her doing school

In exercising resilience and determination in her pursuit of western education, Hauwa was faced with the issue of negative teachers' dispositions to students' learning needs:

> *Phebe: Since you were able to still make it to school in spite of your husband's objection, why did your performance drop from a one time Grade Point Average [GPA] of 4.00?*
> *Hauwa: There are lecturers that insist that once it is past 8.00am you may not come into his class. And before I finish my house chores, find a bus or a bike that will bring me to school, sometimes I get there at past 8.00am. I would have to stand outside which means that I lose that class. Those kinds of problems are the reasons my points dropped […]. Even if I wanted to copy other people's notes to make up for the classes I missed you will discover that most of the students do not take good notes. They only jot down a few points. There are some classes that do not require that you read hard. Once you are able to attend the lectures and take good notes you will perform well. There is one of my lecturers, she does not like giving students notes to copy but once you are able to attend her class and listen to her you are better off than actually copying down any notes and she is the type of lecturer that does not admit students into her class once it is past 8.00am […]. This has a lot to do with the way they explain their lectures.*
> *Phebe: Don't you have textbooks that you refer to?*
> *Hauwa: I have them at home.*
> *Phebe: Do the textbooks not help you out?*
> *Hauwa: I understand better when I listen to the lectures. I use my textbooks mainly for my assignments.*

Hauwa asserted that teachers were not careful to respect students' out of school lives and to allow that knowledge to supersede their penchant for classroom orderliness. So, although Hauwa learned better when she listened to lectures, she was denied access into some of her classes because she was late. What Hauwa implied was that although lateness should not be tolerated, cases of women who are dealing with male resistance to their schooling should be allowed into the classroom. Hauwa had to complete her house chores before leaving the house, so that in some ways her husband would be pacified to allow her to come to school.

For Hauwa, the teachers were not mindful of the need to impact effective education that encouraged critical thinking and independent learning. They were content with perpetuating rote-learning, memorization, and regurgitation, in spite of the fact that they appeared to discourage note-taking. So, although they did not give lecture notes, they gave their words and once a student was able to capture their words and returned same to them, they were good to go. No wonder Hauwa said that she understood better when she listened in class. This again drew attention to what the value of this acquired knowledge is intended to achieve. It is Hauwa's opinion that it is meant to help the students pass their examination, obtain the relevant certificate and job-hunt thereafter. For me this means that this kind of education was not meant to help them to become better citizens in the manner in which the revised *National Policy on Education* of 2004 insists upon, meaning that the policy on education says one thing but the actual implementation does another.

Hauwa had to devise a workable means of violating her husband's power and authority in order to be able to keep going to school, a strategy she hoped to employ in order to be able to complete her education to the graduate studies level:

> *Phebe: How do you hope to continue with your education?*
> *Hauwa: Even this one, how we do it, when I am going out, when I say to him I have lectures, I am going to school, he does not say he is ok with it. When I leave him in bed, I do all my house chores, I leave the house early in the morning. I have my transport money. He does not have to give it to me. I say to him here is your breakfast since we always have food. He does not get out of bed to eat. I just keep the food for him, pick up my house key and leave … He does not fight me. The only thing he does is that he does not speak with me. He does not come back home until late at night. I don't allow that to bother me. I have my radio. When I am done listening to the radio and I feel sleepy, I go to sleep and don't care about when he gets back. I know the reason he is offended in me. Whenever I don't go to school he does not behave that way. That is why since I like my education I don't bother about his attitude toward me.*
> *Phebe: I hope he does not beat you up.*
> *Hauwa: No, he does not beat me up and he does not curse me out. He just shows his displeasure. He eats my food.*
> *Phebe: So what do you do when you are home alone?*
> *Hauwa: I don't do anything. Once there is electric power supply, I watch film […]; I watch Nigerian films a lot. I also watch Hausa films and if NTA has a good program showing I watch. Whenever there is no electric power supply, I listen to my radio. When I get tired of sitting at home all by myself I go to my neighbors' homes to hang out. We talk about our worries and concerns […] and give counsels and advices to one another.*

The strategy that worked for Hauwa was that she had her own transport money which meant that she also had other sources (mainly her parents) of funding for school. Then

she made sure she had her home chores taken care of and formally informed her husband that she would be leaving for school. She positioned herself to accept whatever attitude he showed to her as the sacrifice she had to make. The fact that he was not violent with her made it a lot easier for her to manage.

The way Hauwa was positioned showed how much she was subjugated. She had to take on responsibilities, made many sacrifices, and stretched her abilities to meet his expectations for how the home should be run, so that he could not fault her on those counts when he made his case against why he did not want her to go to school. Then she made sure she did not nag at him when he became bad company for her. To make up for the loneliness and isolation she suffered, she made the radio and TV programs as well as videotaped movies her companion. Additionally she hung out with her friends. Even the attempt at preoccupying herself with the media was frustrated by the bad management of electric power. Although she engaged in media literacy to while away time, it is my opinion that that kind of engagement spoke volumes about her literacy practices and the funds of knowledge that impacted on her classroom learning experiences.

To explore my assumption, I pursued the issue further, asking her how the literacies she engaged in for leisure affected her learning experiences:

> *Phebe: The films you watch and the radio programs you listen to, do they in anyway help you in your learning experiences?*
> *Hauwa: Yes. You know I studied Hausa language and Islamic Studies at the NCE level. Some of the programs I listen to, like Hausa songs, we do them in school and they ask us who sang the song, how many verses does it have. I often listen to know the way they sing the song and I ask myself tentative questions that I anticipate that I could be asked in*

> *school. I then attempt to answer the questions. Also, for my Islamic studies, when I listen to their programs, particularly to their preaching, I hear discussions on topics that I get to be asked in school. When I watch Nigerian films I learn life skills […]. Also as far as English language is concerned, I learn aspects of grammar and comprehension. When I watch movies that reveal rural setting, I learn a lot about the tradition of the people and since I know what our own practices are I seek to find out how theirs differ from ours […]. In my Hausa course, one of my lecturers plays some of the songs I listen to in class and sets his examination on them […]. So, they do the theory in class and I do the practical at home when I listen to the radio.*

The programs she listened to and watched were the cultural capital she brought with her to the school and they helped her a great deal in comprehending the content of what she was taught. Some lecturers, particularly those who taught in her two program areas, Hausa language and Islamic knowledge, actually ensured that they engaged in these pursuits by making their assignments and examination require such engagement. Then, because she also needed to improve her proficiency in English language, Hauwa found that her grammar and her ability to comprehend content subject areas were enhanced when she watched the Nigerian movies – mainly created, directed, acted, and marketed by the Igbo people from the eastern part of Nigeria who are further along in the pursuit of western education than people in the north. She talked about learning about their traditional practices and other life skills, and these lessons were not limited to the Nigerian movies, but also to the Hausa films. Hausa movies are tailored after Indian movies, often focusing on the theme of love. The point, however, is that although these distractions occupied Hauwa in the absence of her husband's companionship, they spoke

to the literacy practices with which she was engaged and which enhanced her learning process in school.

Hauwa's husband had no problem with allowing her to go to any Islamiyya school of her choice:

> *Phebe: Your husband does not stop you from going to Islamiyya school, does he? Why not?*
> *Hauwa: He said that this one has to do with religion but western education is of the world. I said to him even in this one you can seek for heaven because if you teach a person, Allah will reward you.*
> *Phebe: Did you not say you are also studying Islamic studies?*
> *Hauwa: I am studying Islamic studies.*
> *Phebe: So how is your Islamiyya school knowledge different than your knowledge from the Islamic studies program?*
> *Hauwa: You know like tajuwidi, since when we were in Islamiyya that was when we learned taujuwidi. But when we came here we were brought back to the beginning alifan ba'u, here in NCE. We started from Alifan ba'u even though we had gone far on this subject in Islamiyya.*
> *Phebe: Did you draw his attention to this difference?*
> *Hauwa: I drew his attention to this difference. He just does not want me to go to school.*

I teased out more details from Hauwa and discovered that although her husband was opposed to her going to formal schools, which he considered as "worldly", he did not object to her going to an Islamiyya school because that one had to do with religion, and he would not stop her from practicing her religion. Moreover, the time schedules in such schools and the cultural and religious atmosphere were more compliant to his reading of who a housewife should be. However, what was obvious was that he superimposed his patriarchal powers over her. He dictated what his convictions were and expected her to

comply. He was the one who perceived western education as worldly and not her. Hauwa on her own saw the intersections between western education and Islamiyya education, particularly since she was also studying Islamiyya education at the NCE level, where what she learned from Islamiyya school was further grounded. Her assertion, therefore, was that she could have a blend of both forms of education and still fare well. Her place in eternity would even be better ensured because Allah will reward her for impacting knowledge into someone else, even if the knowledge that she transferred was western knowledge. Although her husband could see that the Arabic course she studied at the NCE level was an extension of what she has learned from her Islamiyya school like the learning of the alphabets (alifan ba'u), he was still obstinate about allowing her to pursue her passion. She explained that it was purely a question of "He just does not want me to go to school".

Some of Hauwa's friends also played significant roles in encouraging her to remain in school:

> *Hauwa: My friends also encouraged me not to give up going to school. They kept saying to me that I should not stop schooling because my husband is opposed to it. One of my friends who had seven children before she began her NCE program, she is not a young woman, I told her that since my husband does not want me to go to school I will give up going to school. In fact I even stopped coming to school but she followed me home and counseled me that I should not stop. She told me that many things could go wrong like I could experience divorce and if that happens he would have cheated me […]. She told me to endure whatever he says," listen to your parents, and continue with your school". She scolds me for coming late to school. There was once when my*

> *GPA dropped and I wanted to defer the semester but she counseled me against it. She encouraged me not to do so. Instead I should work harder. She said that deffering the semester will make schooling more difficult for me. She advised that I should just keep coming to school. Sometimes when I am not there and assignments are given, she does mine and hers and submits both since most of the time the assignments are submitted to the class representative who forwards them to the lecturer. But whenever there is a class test, she informs me and pleads with me to make sure that I take the test with the rest of the class. And if I am unable to come she informs me of when a make – up test is to be written. If I come late she will reserve a seat for me. There were also times when she brought my assignment home to me for me to do them myself since I have textbooks and she does not. I would also sometimes write the assignment for both of us and send them to her for submission. It was even my husband who bought some of the books for me.*

Although Hauwa's friend went overboard in helping her friend by doing her assignments for her, they were pushed into committing these academic vices by their desperation to go to school. Hauwa's friend put it to her that the reward of this kind of persistence was in case of divorce; at least she would not be stranded. She would be able to use her certificate to find herself a job. This kind of solidarity was quite helpful to Hauwa. It provided her a support system for actualizing her ambition. It was in anticipation of this kind of support that she was positive that she would continue to pursue her education against the odds of her husband's refusal.

Since her husband would sometimes buy her books for her, I asked her if there was more to his refusing her to go to school and she explained:

> *Hauwa: No, he is just not interested in my going to school. In addition, he has friends who influence him to*

> *maintain this stance. There was a man who told me when we just got married that my husband will not permit me to continue going to school. I saw that my husband respects the man a lot. So, I went to meet him to complain about my husband not permitting me to return to school. What he said to me in response was to ask me what was more honorable, keeping my home or perambulating to and from school. Those like Awolowo and Yar'Adua who went to school and made money, where is the money today? Where is the knowledge? Are they not dead today? These were the questions he asked me in answer to my complaint. I said yes they died. He said so be patient and go and stay in your husband's house. They say be submissive to your husband. Are you going to prefer to submit to your parents rather than your husband? Which of them should be preferred? I said my husband. I think if there is anyone who is influencing my husband I am sure that man is one of such people […]. My husband is afraid of what people will say. That is the problem. He does not want to be told that he is unable to control his home. He only does whatever a woman asks him to do*.

No doubt Hauwa read her husband as being influenced by peer pressure, particularly from his circle of religious friends. One friend she went to for help ended up appealing to her religious conscience to advocate that she take sides with her husband and to give up her passion. That, according to him, would be the most honorable thing to do. Using such elder statesmen as Awolowo and Yar'Addua as examples, he made allusion to the religious knowledge that death made vanity of all of man's effort on earth, so she should be complacent. He insisted since all humans will eventually die and leave their acquisitions behind, there was no need to seek knowledge and wealth. He bought into the belief that good education equaled wealth, but since these factors did not have eternal value, there was no need to seek them. Hauwa was convinced that if this man was the

kind of person that her husband hung out with, he would definitely continue to oppose her going to school. Even if her husband saw things from her perspective, he would not want to be said to be less a man. Their definition of who a man is implied someone who was not only controlled by a woman, but able to control women.

Chapter Nine

Illiteracy versus Literacy: The Case of Women Who Drop Out of School

Introduction

We passed through narrow paths littered with filth and dirt, smelly gutters, stagnant water with grayish and greenish substances floating on top. Dried animal and human feces mixed with fresh ones, strong stench from concentrated urine, and disorderly refuse dumps greeted Fatima and my every step. We were walking through the slum to Fatima's house where she preferred for us to have the first interview. When the stench got thick and heavy in the air, Fatima became apologetic. She explained that the stench was mainly due to the almajiri[23] residence in the area. There were two of them. One of them was adjacent to Fatima's residence.

As soon as we got into her compound I noticed a sharp contrast. Fatima was a very neat woman. She made a lot of effort to keep her own side of the compound clean and the difference was obvious. We sat in her neat and well-arranged living room and began our conversation. Just when I was about to end the conversation, her friend Kuluwa walked in. I immediately stopped the tape and thought to leave so they could have their privacy. But, no, Kuluwa took a seat; I felt comfortable as Fatima explained that she had told her friend about me and my visit and that her friend had anticipated

[23] Almajiri's are male children who are often sent by their parents in search of Islamic knowledge to Islamic boarding schools also known as Makarantun alo. These schools are often located in the cities. A head teacher usually referred to as a Mallam is the owner of the school. Older students as well as some graduates from the school also help with teaching the other students. Characteristically, almairirs live in overcrowded make-shift rooms which more often than not do not have bathrooms in them. They often use any and every available space for their convenience. They are generally seen in the afternoons during break in classes on the streets with bowls in their hands begging for any scraps in order to survive. Some of them render services in people's homes doing their laundry and cleaning the compound for which they get gifts in return. As servants of Allah, traditionally they are not supposed to beg to live. They are to be taken care of by members of the communities where they live.

meeting me. She had a pleasant disposition and I could not resist recruiting her for my research. She gladly accepted. So, it is Kuluwa's story that I tell in this chapter along with Kubra's.

I begin with discussing how I found their stories relevant for this study. Thereafter, as with previous chapters, I explain how I came to recruit them for this work and then explain how their stories depict how they were unable to withstand the pressures that came against their staying on in school. They dropped out. All the women I talked about up until now were women who remained resilient and stayed on in school. In telling their stories, I show how different their stories were, in order to further establish the fact that there is no one single story to the issue of high school drop out rates. While Kubra reacted against being trafficked and maltreated in her step-brother's house by opting for marriage so she could control her own life on her own terms, Kuluwa actually dropped out of school in response to the pressure of early marriage that was put on her by her parents in fulfillment of traditional and religious practices. In my analysis I show how these women reacted to their different predicaments as far as continuing education was concerned.

Discussing relevance

In the literature about women's education in northern Nigeria, when people who dropped out of school were talked about, they were represented as having a single story. But Kubra and Kuluwa's stories contest that stance. While Kubra questioned the traditional practice of extended family relationships, just as Adama and Safiya did, she was more radical about her approach. Her dropping out of school was her overt reaction

against this form of dominance and subjugation. Kuluwa's story on the other hand, showed how, unlike Hauwa, she submitted to family pressure and to male patriarchy by not continuing her education. She did not protest against her being subjugated in the manner in which Hauwa did, but in analyzing her linguistic identity, I argue that even in that state of submissiveness she was actually speaking out against this traditional and religious practice. Even though she felt completely devalued and had lost her self-confidence about being able to cope with academic life, she was able to explore ways in which she could acquire literacy from home. Both women maintained a strong sense of value for school, but they also made me question whether all learning must necessarily take place in the four walls of a classroom.

Meeting Kubra

I met Kubra through Uwani, my ex-student who worked at an LEA primary school in Zaria. When I reconnected with Uwani, she asked to know what my research was about. Like most others, she had heard I went over to the United States to study. After my effort at finding a participant of age 18 – 30 at this primary school failed, I explained that I also needed to speak with anyone within that age bracket who dropped out of school. She in turn informed me that she knew many of such women and that she was willing to bring me to them although I would have to come over to her house so she could lead me to where they lived. We chose a date and I agreed to meet her on that day. She brought me to Kubra whose consent she had sought earlier on. She was her neighbor. After she introduced us she left us to ourselves and never showed up again throughout the sessions we had. All through my interviews with Kubra her speech was interspersed with

indirect speeches. She spoke about herself as if she spoke about other people as depicted in her use of 3rd person pronouns particularly in her use of the pronoun "you". Faced with the same issues of abject poverty as Adama, Safiya, and Hannatu, she decided she could not cope with her predicament anymore and decided not just to drop out of school but to also get married. Kubra was 20 years old at the time of this interview. She had two children. She actually dropped out of school when she was at primary 4.

"Marriage was the better option"

Kubra was originally from Katsina State but had come to live in Zaria where I met and interviewed her. When I asked her why she was not in school this was her response:

> *Kubra: I was born in Kano […]. I came to live with my older brother in Zaria […]. He enrolled me in school […]. He is a mason […]. I stopped at primary 4 […]. I got married […] because today and tomorrow you are not living with your parents […] problems occur from time to time […] so marriage was the better option […].*

Kubra dropped out of school because living with her older brother, an act which I referred to earlier as child-trafficking, made schooling difficult for her. Her older brother was a mason and that meant that they lived from hand to mouth amidst abject poverty. I got curious to find out details about why she came to live with her brother and why she preferred to drop out of school to get married:

> *Kubra: You are living with your older brother and then his wife resents you. It is not the same as living with your parents. That was why […]. All types of work. You had to do them; difficult ones and all types. That was why […]. She did not like the fact that my older brother brought me to live with them because*

> *she felt whatever he did for her he would do for me. That was how he began not to do stuff for me and began not to make clothes for me anymore except for her. That was why I became anxious to get married. I gave up going to school […]. She engaged in petty trade […]; they sell ginger drink and pure water for her in the school premises […]. Because I was going to school and she said that if I do not hawk I will not go to school. That was why I decided to stop going to school.*

Kubra considered working for her sister-in-law as hardship. She missed being with her own parents. Her relationship with her sister-in-law was full of rivalry over the provisions that her brother made, which were grossly insufficient because he was poor. Her sister in-law resented the fact of sharing. Kubra became excluded and neglected as it became obvious that her brother preferred to satisfy his wife rather than allow her to be the reason for dissension in the family. In order to augment whatever her husband provided, Kubra's sister-in-law engaged in petty trade – selling ginger drink and pure water and would rather have Kubra hawk those items than go to school. So, whether Kubra wanted to drop out of school or not, she was actually not really in school. She hawked in the school premises which meant that rather than be in class with her mates, she was out there selling. Kubra asserted that dropping out of school was not a result of lack of interest but of abject poverty and maltreatment resulting from being a trafficked child. She was being abused and she was not going to continue to endure it.

Kubra, like Hannatu, also asserted that if a young woman's parents were divorced, schooling became a challenge:

> *Phebe: Why didn't you think of other options like going back to your parents so that you could continue with your education?*

Kubra: Even if I went back to my parents they were likely to say I was of a marriageable age, I must not return to school.
Phebe: Your parents are not educated, are they?
Kubra: They are educated.
Phebe: They are?
Kubra: My father goes to work to teach […]. My mother to say the truth did not go to school.
Phebe: When you told your older brother that you were going to get married what did he say to you?
Kubra: Actually when I wanted to get married, he wanted me to leave.
Phebe: So he really didn't want you to live with them, did he? Is that what you mean?
Kubra: Yes, because we only have the same mother. It is his father that he lived with. It is because he did not want me and wanted me to leave that I decided to leave the house […]. He did not accept me very well as his sister.
Phebe: Are you the only child from your parents' relationship?
Kubra: I am an only child. We were three, the other two died.

What complicated her going to school in addition to poverty was her being the only surviving child of her parents' marriage which ended up in divorce. Her relative – her half-brother- whom she came to live with did not feel obliged to her. She was also abandoned by her father who knew the value of education but would not ensure that Kubra benefitted from it. She mentioned that "he goes to work to teach" meaning that he was a teacher. He would rather she got married. Her brother was happy to get rid of her when she opted to get married.

Also, Kubra, like Hannatu and Safiya, asserted that coping in school for a poor child was daunting:

Phebe: Why couldn't you learn much in school?

Kubra: In school, when you go to school, you have to cope with lots of worries and anxieties. Yet you have to learn. You study but you cannot assimilate very well.
Phebe: Why were you unable to assimilate?
Kubra: You might be taught and if I am asked to regurgitate what I have been taught I am unable to do so all by myself. I am only able to do so gradually and through much persistence.
Phebe: Do you memorize or do they explain to you until you understand it?
Kubra: They do not explain to me. What they do is they teach all of us whoever understands, good and whoever does not understand, that is all.
Phebe: How would you rather be taught so that you can understand?
Kubra: They should teach gradually and patiently. People will understand better if they teach piecemeal and not a lot at a time. If the teaching is done gradually, patiently, and in piecemeal people will understand better and properly.
Phebe: How do you mean gradually?
Kubra: Not too much should be taught at once. It should be taught gradually and in piecemeal. People will understand better […]. They taught me but I did not pay attention to learn.
Phebe: Why was that?
Kubra: Just like that […]. I just didn't learn it properly […]. If I am taught from the beginning I will understand what I am being taught and I will be able to go to school.
Phebe: But you can read your religious books.
Kubra: Yes.

Kubra described how women like her could be helped to learn in school – teaching should be done in piecemeal, gradually, and patiently and the proper foundation should be laid and built upon. She criticized the current practice of teaching a lot at a time without ensuring that students were actually learning. She pointed out the pedagogical practice of teaching for rote-learning, memorization, and regurgitation as being too

overwhelming for her. She preferred to have a good understanding of the content of what she was being taught.

Additionally, she explained that she was often overwhelmed with worries and anxieties that made her mind wander away from what she was being taught. She could not pay attention in class. However, Kubra was able to read her religious books. What I picked from that was that her commitment to her religion motivated her ability to sustain her learning, meaning that if what she admired in religion could be woven into her school work, then it was likely that she would be able to develop sustained motivation for learning as far as western education was concerned. This means that religious education had a stronger appeal for Kubra than western education did, most likely because of the way she perceived its relevance.

This is not to say that Kubra did not appreciate western education. She did. She still desired to acquire western education, even though it had been so many years since she dropped out of school. At the time I was talking with Kubra, the boko haram crisis had occurred. Since she was a Muslim, I asked her opinion on the matter, in order to ascertain whether she was not of the sect that believed that western education was indeed an abomination:

> *Phebe: Recently we had the boko haram crisis. What do you think about the idea that western education is an abomination?*
> *Kubra: Honestly western education is not an abomination since western education is the way of life now. If you do not have western education, it is not nice […]. Your fellow human being will see something and say that this is what it means. If you are ignorant you will be unhappy.*

Kubra asserted that not to have western education was to be ignorant and susceptible to other people's opinions. She perceived schooling as a way of life. She admired her friends who had western education and felt excluded from their conversations whenever they drifted into talks about their schooling experiences:

> *Phebe: Do you have friends around?*
> *Kubra: Yes.*
> *Phebe: Do you talk about schooling?*
> *Kubra: Those of them who know how to, they talk about it among themselves.*
> *Phebe: How do you feel when they talk about school and you are with them?*
> *Kubra: I just keep quiet and listen to them.*
> *Phebe: Doesn't it bother you that you did not go to school?*
> *Kubra: Why not, it bothers me since I do not know how to to read […]. I want to […]. When they tell their stories about schooling if you do not know about it you are better off keeping quiet. Those of them who know about schooling should talk about it […]. It is like it is my fault since I did not pay attention to go to school.*

Kubra considered having western education as ability and her inability to complete her education was an inability – a handicap – that she had to cope with. She lost her speech ability at such moments because she chose to be quiet. Then, she blamed herself for not paying attention to going to school. She forgot the overwhelming circumstances that debarred her from realizing her good intentions for school. That was why it bothered her – she felt that she needed to do something about it. She had to return to school.

Although Kubra was mindful that marriage should not debar her from returning to school, she realized that marriage did not necessarily solve the problem of poverty, which was the main reason she dropped out of school in the first place:

> *Phebe: Are you happy that you left school?*

Kubra: I wish to continue schooling.
Phebe: What is your husband saying now?
Kubra: He is also interested in my going back to school […]. I once asked him and he explained that he will not be able to carry my schooling responsibilities unless if any member of my family will be able to do that for me in which case he will not stop me from continuing my education […]. If he gets used to paying my school fees, I might also ask him to pay my transport fare […]. He would not want me to ask him for any other money […]. He has just enough money to get by but not much money.

Kubra's husband would not stop her from continuing her education, but he would not be responsible for the financial implication involved. As did most of the other Muslim women I have talked about throughout this work, Kubra asserted that Muslim husbands did not feel obligated to their wife's schooling. It was the responsibility of their families, although what made him prefer that her family take on that responsibility was the fact that he was poor – he was just managing to get by.

I asked if her half-brother was now remorseful that his nonchalance pushed Kubra to early marriage and if he was willing to assist with the financial responsibility of sending her back to school:

Phebe: So, are you going to ask your older brother to pay your school fees on your behalf?
Kubra: Honestly, he will not be able to pay my fees.
Phebe: Why not?
Kubra: Because he will say that I have a husband who says he is unwilling to take on my schooling responsibilities and he has his home issues to attend to.
Phebe: Does he have children?
Kubra: He does.
Phebe: How many wives does he have?
Kubra: He has one wife but he has many children.

Kubra did not see a change of story regarding her brother's attitude to her schooling. His situation had not changed. He was still a poor man and his having many children complicated issues, because he had to be responsible to them as well.

I got curious and asked how much money she needed to get back to school:

> *Phebe: Is the school fees that much?*
> *Kubra: In that school?*
> *Phebe: Yes.*
> *Kubra: Um um. It is just eight hundred and fifty naira (Six dollars) for three months.*
> *Phebe: Which school would you want to return to?*
> *Kubra: They do not admit married women into that school. The one I want to go to not too far from here used to be four hundred naira (two dollars sixty-six scents) but now it is five hundred naira (three dollars).*
> *Phebe: It is also an Islamiyya school, right?*
> *Kubra: It is both Islamiyya school and western education combined.*

The amount involved in her returning to this Islamiyya school where Islamiyya and western education were combined was five hundred naira (three dollars) for three months, but neither her brother nor her husband could afford it.

Kubra drew attention to some other implication of her dropping out of and wanting to return to school as an adult – there are some schools that would not admit her. Also, she would need a transfer certificate which she did not have since she just stopped going to school:

> *Phebe: So, why are you not back in school?*
> *Kubra: Now, if you want to return to school if you do not have a transfer certificate they say it is a problem. You will not be admitted.*

This means that when these young women dropped out of school no formal process was followed. They just ceased to go to school. If a formal procedure was followed, Kubra would not have had a problem with re-enrolling, since she would have had a transfer certificate. She probably would have received counsel to explore other alternatives to dropping out of school if the school had such structures in place.

If she were to return to school now she would also need to make provision for child care since she had two children, an infant and a toddler, but that was not a source for concern for Kubra:

> *Phebe: If you have to return to school what will you do with child care for your children?*
> *Kubra: See our house, our crowded house. One can leave the children with them with their food and whenever they want to eat it will be given to them to eat.*

Kubra reasoned that she would take advantage of the extended family structure of the Nigerian society for meeting her child care need. She would leave her children in the care of the large number of people in the crowded compound. The only thing was she would have to ensure that she left their meals behind as well. In so doing, Kubra reduced the notion of child care to simply making sure that the children were given their food to eat.

Kubra sustained her understanding that her husband did not object to her acquiring western education by explaining how he engaged her in certain literacy practices in the house. He completed his secondary education before he went into business. As a result of that and the exposure he got from his business, which brought him to the city of Lagos, he was able to understand and read in English language and to

speak some of it. He was more fluent in Hausa. This was her response when I asked how she related to the electronic gadgets and books I observed that she had in her living room:

> *Kubra: He reads in Hausa […]. He reads lots of Hausa love stories. He reads all of them.*
> *Phebe: Really? Don't you also desire to read them?*
> *Kubra: He began to teach me […]. He brings them with him to his business place and continues to read them.*
> *Phebe: When he watches movies does he narrate the stories to you?*
> *Kubra: You will find him telling the stories especially when there is a conversation going on over an issue he will explain that this person wronged that person. That person said he must take this action. He normally retells the story […]. Whenever there is electric power supply […]. Provided there is electric power supply at night I am more relaxed then because I would have already finished doing my house chores […] and my husband will be around to explain what is going on in the movie to me […]. [My husband] watches Indian movies […]. I too appreciate them […] I prefer Indian movies.*
> *Phebe: Why do you prefer Indian movies?*
> *Kubra: Because they are love stories.*

Kubra's past time after the day's chores were done was to watch movies, particularly Indian movies, and especially in the company of her husband because he would explain what was going on to her. He would also tell her the stories in the books, preferably Hausa love stories that he read. He had begun to teach her how to read those novels. Consequently, she too developed other literacy practices:

> *Phebe: But if it is a Hausa movie you are able to understand and follow the story line, right?*
> *Kubra: Yes, I am.*
> *Phebe: Do you also watch Indian movies?*
> *Kubra: Yes, I do […]. Here they are; either video cassette or CDs.*
> *Phebe: What do you learn from watching them?*

Kubra: There are some Hausa ones when you watch them you will see some that talk about how to live as husband and wife, they will talk about schooling, fights, and rivalry. They show all of those.
Phebe: Do you also listen to the radio?
Kubra: That's right.
Phebe: How has that impacted you?
Kubra: The radio programs? I have truly increased in learning since some radio programs they relay them according to your literacy level […]. They do more of western education in certain sections […] in English.
Phebe: But if the program is in English you will not understand.
Kubra: Yes, in deed I do not understand.
Phebe: But you keep listening?
Kubra: Yes.
Phebe: What music channels do you prefer to listen to?
Kubra: The ones in Hausa. I prefer the ones in Hausa.
Phebe: Which types do you prefer to listen to?
Kubra: Love songs […]. I watch love movies to see how they conduct their love affairs.
Phebe: You do so to while away time, right?
Kubra: Yes.

Kubra would watch movies and listen to her preferred channels on the radio even when her husband was not at home to offer helpful explanations. She was able to make sense of what she engaged in if it was in Hausa language. She knew for sure to watch the love channels, because love stories fascinated her. She would listen to English channels even when she did not understand what was being said. She also listened to music channels. Her literacy practices with which she engaged were her past times. Based on this information that Kubra provided, my inference is that although poor women who drop out of school may appear illiterate, they definitely engage in certain literacy practices that prove that they are not illiterate. Also, they have sustained interest in schooling and

would do well if they had good mentorship. This left me again wondering about the possibility of alternative schooling for women like Kubra.

Kubra's schooling ambition was to be able to read proficiently, even if she read only Hausa love stories. She believed that it would make her enlightened, wiser and diplomatic:

> *Phebe: If you were educated what would you do with your education?*
> *Kubra: Honestly, if I was educated I would read love stories. Hausa love stories. I would read all of them because you will become enlightened. You will be wiser. You will be diplomatic.*

Meeting Kuluwa

I met Kuluwa through Fatima. Fatima was the second person my zealous male student fished out for me through the intervention of the principal and Fatima's class teacher. When I explained to the principal and her class teacher what my research was about, they recommended that I speak with Fatima[24] and Hannatu, whose story I talked about earlier. Fatima is a mother of two and married to a husband who was supportive of her going to school. She was in JSS 2 at the time of this interview. Because of her family responsibilities she preferred that we meet at her house. It was during this meeting that she told her friend and neighbor, Kuluwa, about me and my mission. She presented me as very personable and that I studied in the US. Both women were Muslims but they took a

[24] Fatima's story is one of the other nine out of the seventeen women's stories I collected that are not in this dissertation. Because I was overwhelmed by the data I collected, I had to be selective about which ones I reported. Also, since my dissertation is a response to the work that interventionists were doing in women's education, Fatima's case was not the type typically talked about by these stakeholders. Most literature on women's education show that northern Nigerian women dropped out of school because of early marriage. Although Fatima, like Kubra and Kuluwa got married early, she unlike the others enjoyed the full support of her educated husband to go to school. In telling the stories of women who dropped out of school when they got married early I draw attention to the complexity in the situation and Fatima's story does not complicate the situation in this manner.

liking to me, so much so that our religious boundaries faded away almost immediately after we met and began the conversations. I not only came to Fatima's humble abode but also ate and drank with her and her family and friends, watched movies with them, waited while they said their prayers, played freely with their children, helped out with some of their home chores, and had the sheer pleasure of listening to them tell their stories. They enjoyed calling me by my first name, which was not a typical cultural practice. They did it because I told them it was alright to do so. Whenever Kuluwa knew that I was around at Fatima's house, she came in to partake in the discussion and I would then concentrate on her to get her own story. I found Kuluwa a very amiable woman; curious and eager to learn.

Being able to read: A haven from feuds with co-wife

I started my first interview with Kuluwa by asking her where she was from and she explained that she was not originally from Zaria:

> *Phebe: Are you from Zaria?*
> *Kuluwa: I was born in Zaria but my parents are originally from Sokoto.*
> *Phebe: Is your husband also from Zaria?*
> *Kuluwa: Oh yes, he is my older brother.*
> *Phebe: Your older brother?*
> *Kuluwa: His father and my father have the same parents.*
> *Phebe: So, you are cousins? What does it feel like to marry your cousin?*
> *Kuluwa: Well, we have continued to live together. He knows me and I know him and that is all that matters.*

Neither her husband nor Kuluwa was from Zaria. They were originally from Sokoto State, further north in Nigeria than Zaria in Kaduna State is. Obviously the issue of ethnicity came to play in the way she was positioned to do school, because marrying her

cousin was a cultural issue that had implications for how she related with her husband. Kuluwa was constrained to remain in her marriage on two counts – It is unacceptable in Islam for a woman to seek divorce and culturally Samira could not refuse to marry her cousin. She expanded on this in the subsequent discussion.

Kuluwa dropped out of school before she completed her primary school education at an LEA school. She was unable to read and write:

> *Phebe: But did you complete your primary school education before you got married?*
> *Kuluwa: No I did not.*
> *Phebe: Was it your desire to get married at the time?*
> *Kuluwa: My parents'. That's what they do. Once a girl is 12 years old they will give her out in marriage.*
> *Phebe: Whether she wants to or not, right?*
> *Kuluwa: Yes, whether she wants to or not. We don't know what falling in love means or what rejection means. Whoever you are matched with that is all. You get married to him and you go and live with him.*
> *Phebe: So, does the marriage work?*
> *Kuluwa: Not so bad because one is not conscious about the ways of the world. Once you already have one or two children with the man where would you want to go to anymore. You are stuck. You have no choice than to endure the marriage.*

Kuluwa had a different story to tell about dropping out of school than Kubra. She had no say in her getting married. Her parents made the decision on her behalf and then forced her into it. They chose the man and because Hausa and Islamic culture permitted cousins to marry each other, a situation they refer to as *auren dangi*, she found that she had to live with her husband and weather the marriage storm. The cultural practice was that once a girl came of age – that is, once she was 12 years old - she was married off. The Islamic culture certified a girl to get married at the age of 9. So marriage for those who practiced

these cultures was not built on a love relationship; neither was it a matter of choice. That explained why women who married under such circumstances were not even conscious of their predicament or their deprivation, should the marriage become unpleasant. They considered themselves as stuck in it just the way Kuluwa felt stuck. They were left with no other option than to endure the marriage. The implication of this kind of forced marriage on schooling was that the young woman, like Kuluwa was, was forced to drop out of school to become a wife.

Kuluwa was unable to return to school because her husband would not permit her to do so:

> *Phebe: You have a friend who goes to school while you do not. How does that make you feel?*
> *Kuluwa: You know it depends on the husband one married. We don't have the same husbands. There are husbands who encourage you to continue to go to school. You see her husband is educated. He knows the value of education. But my husband does not have western education but he has Islamiyya education. He would not want me to go to school […]. He does not approve of him leaving the house and me to do the same thing. He detests it […]. He has a shop in the market where he sells foodstuff. I am the one who stays at home, keep the house, wash the children's clothes, and keep the compound clean.*

Due to his own Islamic view about women and schooling, especially in western type schools, he refused to support Kuluwa in her insistence on pursuing this type of education. He insisted that both of them could not leave the house. The traditional way of perceiving sex roles was brought to fore in this discussion. Since he was supposed to be the breadwinner, it was he who had to leave the house while she remained in the house,

doing the roles that women were associated with – keeping the house, washing the children's clothes, and keeping the compound clean.

Kuluwa sounded complacent, but I saw her as actually exercising her power of agency in spite of the traditional institutions that constrained her. This is seen in the comparative statement she made about her friend, Fatima's husband, and her own husband. She said that obtaining permission to continue her education depended on the type of husband she had where type referred to his disposition to women's education. She understood her husband's lack of support to be due to a cultural ideology – men who have acquired western education encouraged their wives to go to school because they appreciated the value of education, but those who did not have such an education did not encourage their wives.

She followed through with this ideology about type of husband and permission for the woman to return to school when she talked about how her parents did not make a case for her return to school:

> *Phebe: And you have given up on schooling, right?*
> *Kuluwa: Yes, I have given up. He does not want me to go to school. I can't force it.*
> *Phebe: Did your parents not reach an agreement with him that he should allow you to return to school?*
> *Kuluwa: My parents also did not attend western type schools. They are learned in Islamiyya education. We have the same parents. Their decision is final […]. If only I could have Islamiyya education I could teach it to my children.*

Kuluwa's conclusion was that her parents were not making a case for her to return to school because they themselves did not have a western type education. She implied that even if she were to make a case for her to be released to purse this type of education, if

her parents did not see the need then she would not have their support. What she meant to say was that she was at the mercy of their and her husband's decision, and, as it stood, her parents were nonchalant about her returning to school and her husband too objected to it. That left her with no support system. The culture that gave parents final authority came to fore here.

But, for me, I saw her power of agency in the fact that, unlike young women who were often complacent and unconscious of their predicament and their deprivation, she was conscious. This again reminds me of Spivak's (1988) "Can the Subaltern Speak". The truth is that Kuluwa was actually speaking by the way she positioned herself. She identified the ideology that made her parents and her husband not encourage her returning to school in this conversation. In so doing she positioned herself as having a differing stance than other complacent women and she consolidated this stance in this wishful statement: "*If only I could have Islamiyya education I could teach it to my children*". The implication here is that she recognized the fact that Islamiyya education was also a recognizable form of education.

Kuluwa followed through with this posture of recognizing the need for education, even if it was Islamiyya education, when she talked about the fact that her former co-wife returned to school after her divorce with their husband. She talked about it with much wishful admiration:

> *Phebe: Do you have a co-wife?*
> *Kuluwa: Yes but they are divorced. She had two children for him […]. After they divorced she went back to an Islamiyya school where both western type subjects and Islamic subjects are taught. You see*

> *that is good for her. It is better than her sitting at home idle.*

Kuluwa's ex-co-wife actually returned to an Islamiyya school where both Islamiyya and western education were taught. She considered that a brave action and, in spite of the differences they had and the bitterness she had against her for leaving her with the burden of caring for her kids, she still rated her action not just as brave but also as better than sitting at home. The fact that Kuluwa contemplated returning to an Islamiyya school shows how smart she is. This reminds me of Street's (2001) argument that people who are compartmentalized as "illiterates" are in fact not illiterate at all. They engage in other forms of "literacies". It is the dominance of western education that excludes them as illiterates. One of Kuluwa's aspirations for wanting to be educated, like with most of the other Muslim women I have reported on, was so that she would be able to teach her children. Hearing Kuluwa talk about this desire the way she did, however, suggested to me that she was questioning the notion of the overarching western tenet that the essence of education is to be able to secure a good job.

Another interesting thing I found in her conversation was that her husband's objection was not based on the fact that he did not value western or even Islamiyya education himself. He, in fact, had Islamiyya education and he sent his children to school:

> *Phebe: Does he object to his children going to school?*
> *Kuluwa: No, his children are little. They do not even talk very well but he has put them in school already. They are all girls and he allows them to go to school. They attend both Islamiyya and western type schools […]. I ensure that they go to school. He is not concerned about ensuring that they do. Once he has paid their school fees he is done. He leaves the house early and he does not have any way of*

checking to know whether they went to school or not […].

So, Kuluwa's husband behaved differently than Hauwa's husband. He did not only value western education but he also knew the worth of early childhood education. As such, he had his children start school early in life – before they were even able to speak articulately. He ensured that he paid their school fees. They did not have to be sent home for non-payment of fees before he paid them. But he was never there to follow up on whether they were actually learning or not. Kuluwa, in spite of her limited schooling, was the one who ensured that they actually stayed in school and that they were truly learning. This is so ironical because she is the one who should "normally" be categorized as "illiterate", yet she was the one who ensured that the children were in school.

From the foregoing subsequent conversations, it was obvious that although Kuluwa acknowledged that she was not educated in both western education and Islamiyya education, she did not come through as unintelligent. She was smart enough to know what was good for her:

Kuluwa: I swear to Allah being educated is good. If you are not educated even your fellow women will disrespect you. They say things you do not understand and you have no choice than to keep silent or stand up and leave the place […]. When people look at me they assume that I am educated. Yet, I have no education whatsoever in my brain […]. I interact with people because I can't be intimidated by anyone. Whenever I am in the company of people who are educated what I wish to be able to do is to speak in English and that is what I cannot do. And whenever I say anything they laugh at me and I am unperturbed. I will still sit with them and after a while I will formulate another word and say it and they will laugh again and it

> *does not bother me that they laugh at me. I cannot isolate myself from people. The worst they can do is laugh at me and I don't mind that as long as I will get corrected in the process.*

Kuluwa knew the value of western education. She described it as "good" and for her acquiring western education meant being able to belong to a high social class of people. Her talk about exclusion reminded me about the way Samira described this kind of exclusion as a cult she would also want to belong to. In exercising her power of agency Kuluwa refused to be excluded from this "cult". She sought the company of a network of friends, her social group, and made attempts to speak like they did by speaking the English words she had learned accidentally. English language was the code with which they manifested difference between members of the "cult" and non-members, again reminding me of the dominance of English language both in academia and in the Nigerian society, and how that further suggests the continuing presence of colonialism.

What was further interesting about Kuluwa was that she did not make herself speak English just because she did not want to feel excluded, but because she truly admired people who did. Again, alluding to the larger discourse of the dominance of English language over the languages in the country, Kuluwa asserted that any young woman who could not speak in English really did feel intimidated in the company of those who could. No doubt, this colonial legacy still had a strong effect in postcolonial Nigeria. She did feel intimidated and silenced, but her body language both at such moments and at the time she narrated this part of her story spoke protest. According to her, whenever that happened she, unlike Kubra, would simply walk out of the gathering or, like Kubra, maintain silence while she remained. More often than not, however, she

despised their mockery, picked up the correction implied in the mockery, and in so doing considered that she was smarter than they were since, according to her, while she laughed with them she learned what not to say the next time. In so doing she positioned herself as a learner.

Kuluwa knew her Islamic right. If her husband would not permit her to seek knowledge then he had to teach her himself:

> *Phebe: Whenever you hang out with your friend, how do you feel?*
> *Kuluwa: I admire her a lot. But there is no problem. My husband is a very domineering person. Even if I wish to go to an Islamiyya school if he does not feel like it he will not permit me to go. Yet, he does not have the time to teach me by himself […]. And you know it is very difficult for a man to teach his wife how to read. Besides, he does not even have the time to teach me. Most times by the time he comes back home I am already fast asleep […]. Even if I do not know how to write let me at least be able to read […]. There are people who can read but they cannot write. Right now if I see any writing even if it's a gossip about me or a decision to kill me I will not know. That is why I want to be able to read even if I am unable to write. As I travel and pass through villages, I will be able to read and know the names of these villages. Once you know the names of these places, you will not need to ask anyone to know where you are. You will know for yourself. Education is sweet.*

Kuluwa recognized that what her husband was dealing with was the patriarchal culture into which he had been socialized. He was domineering. He did what he felt like and he felt that nobody could put him in check. She was somewhat helpless in physically challenging his authority, but she questioned it when she said, "he does not even have the time to teach me". I heard a wishful protest in her voice when she said "Even if I do not

know how to write let me at least know how to read". Kuluwa desperately yearned for functional literacy – to be able to relate with environmental literacy so that she could be independent. In her opinion she did not need to be able to write to achieve this. Just the ability to read was sufficient to satisfy her hunger and passion for western education. She perceived education as that thing that brought about empowerment in terms of it being able to position her to be able to make her own value judgment. But she said it in such an emotionally appealing manner that I felt empathetic towards her. That is the "sweetness", what I perceive as beauty, that she talked about, which she perceived was inherent in education. It is her way of perceiving education that made her admire her school-going neighbor and friend as deeply as she did – she saw this measure of independence in her friend, both in the way she spoke and in her demeanor.

In most cases, the complexities and complications inherent in polygamous relationships give some Muslim northern Nigerian women reasons to further their education, if only as a way of finding escape and to further reinforce their sense of feeling secure. In spite of his failed second marriage, Kuluwa's husband, at the time of this interview, was getting ready to marry another second wife. This time his pick was a school-going young woman. It was in reconciling herself to this reality of living with another co-wife that she felt more stuck in her marriage. In order to weather the storm of the family squabbles that might erupt as a result of this forced new relationship, Kuluwa found a second reason why she wished that she could learn to read. She had resigned herself to the fate that she would be unable to return to school. She advanced her earlier discussion from just wishing that she could acquire environmental literacy to desiring to

be able to read in Hausa language. In her perception, that would go a long way in soothing her and providing her the right frame of mind to be able to cope with her situation:

> *Phebe: Won't her education bother you?*
> *Kuluwa: It won't bother me […]. He said that he will wait until she finishes school so that the children can be taught. Like when they come back from school, there is no one that puts them through their school work. That is not good enough. He said now he wants to bring in an educated woman.*
> *Phebe: So, why will he not allow you to go back to school?*
> *Kuluwa: He thinks that even if I go back to school I will not be able to learn much like […].*
> *Phebe: Oh he means it is already too late?*
> *Kuluwa: It is already too late.*
> *Phebe: But you are not even 30 years old yet.*
> *Kuluwa: At all. I am not even 25 years old […]. Because his desire is, he does not even want me to peep outside the house; to find me standing in front of the compound and peeping outside, he does not like it. He is a very impatient and a jealous man. He does not even want to hear my voice outside. I swear to God he does not like it.*
> *Phebe: It is because you are a very beautiful woman, right?*
> *Kuluwa: How beautiful am I? […]. For example, this type of school like Fatima's which I wish to attend. This type of school where you see a woman gets prepared in the morning and goes, it will not be possible. Preferably, Fatima's house, I want to buy my book and come over to her place even if it is Hausa language I should be able to read it because even being able to read is a good companion. In your room, if anything upsets you, you would not necessarily chitchat with your co-wife. Too much idleness breeds lots of careless talking.*

> *Your co-wife will tease out your views on issues just to know what you are thinking, listening to your stories. One day when you are no longer in good terms she will expose all what you had told her. Books, even if you read them for the fun of it, you would have gained a few things from it that will improve your life.*

Kuluwa's agency came through again when she asserted that although her husband was about to marry an educated second wife and, claiming that she would be able to teach the children when they returned from school (a role that she was already performing in spite of her limited schooling), she would not be disturbed by her education. Because of the way she was oppressed and actually helpless in overtly fighting patriarchy and religious dominance, she did not see herself as able to stop her husband from marrying a second co-wife. The fact that her husband was making this move, but also preferring an educated woman, confirmed further that his refusing Kuluwa to return to school was more of an act of selfishness and self-centeredness – what she observed and explained as his act of impatience and jealousy.

So, it was definitely not that he did not place value in schooling. No doubt, he had a high sense of insecurity. He could not bear to see her come outside the compound nor for her voice to be heard. Yet, he permitted the new wife to be visible and public. This, no doubt, is an inconsistent behavior and her understanding of it is that he took advantage of the fact that they are biologically related to subjugate her, since members of their extended family will always encourage them to be tolerant and to live in peace with him. She had no arbiter she could count on to save her. Again Islam provided him safety to assume this posture, because the practice of "purdah" enforced this position. The

question, however, was to what extent was he a strong adherent of his religion, so that he could point to religious teachings for his objection to her returning to school or showing herself in public?

In her earlier conversation Kuluwa showed how he would not allow her to seek knowledge and would not even make out time to teach her himself. If he was not doing these two, by implication, she was questioning his devotion to religion and his rationale for taking an educated second wife on the account of wanting a woman who would appropriately "mentor" his children academically. To secure his position as the husband, he wrote Kuluwa off as one who would not be able to learn, again limiting his concept of learning to the four walls of the classroom.

It is obvious that Kuluwa was in turn devalued by the way her husband positioned her. She too felt that, at her age, it was too late for her to seek formal education. That is what she meant when she said it was already too late for her to return to school. Considering her friend, Fatima, as a role model, she resigned herself to wanting to be able to read Hausa novels at least. She figured that in so doing she would be occupied with something she enjoyed doing, especially if her co-wife was not personable. Cultivating a reading habit for her was to be constructed to fill the gap of dropping out of school. The manner in which she constructs this identity is similar to Kubra's. Being engaged in this manner would serve the purpose of keeping her busy and giving her a buffer against family feuds that, in her perception, often resulted from too much familiarity and the contempt that it bred. Reading, according to her, had the ability to improve a woman's life.

The way Kuluwa eulogized education exhumed pity and empathy. Using a powerful imagery, she considered her lack of education as incapacitating. This means that she is immobilized fom furthering her education and that in itself was limiting. In my opinion, her doing so was not unconnected to the dominant way that the power of education has been positioned. She wished to leave the house in the morning like a very busy person, as Fatima appeared to be, so as to be able to go to school. She resolved, out of her desperation, to buy a book, bring it to her friend, Fatima, so that her friend could teach her to read. I perceived an implication for how to encourage women's education in the face of abject poverty in this posture that she took: that each educated person can make the education of one more person in her neighborhood her responsibility and priority, so that religious tradition and traditional schools might be disrupted on behalf of women's education.

Chapter Ten

Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter I conclude by talking about what I see happening in the stories that these borderland (Anzaldúa, 1987) women told me about their schooling experiences. As an ethnographer, what I have done is to point out the nuances in their stories about schooling by amplifying, expanding, and retelling the stories of eight out of the seventeen women I interviewed. In this chapter I explain what I find particularly important about what they told me. I make recommendations on what I think is the way forward for women's education in northern Nigeria, especially in light of the fact that these women are not as complacent as they are often portrayed in the literature. I also discuss my limitations in undertaking this study and discuss areas for further research.

Striking issues

In summing up, I draw attention to aspects of these women's stories that are striking for me. In my literature review I traced the manner in which Nigerian women, particularly those in the North, were relegated to the background as far as the acquisition of western education was concerned, and how the proliferation of Islamiyya schools and the new awareness propagated by the "Education for all" strategy for the acceleration of girl-child education resulted in large school enrolment. Thus, when I heard women like Hauwa, Kubra, Kuluwa, Samira, and Farida insist on the pursuit of western education in the various ways they did, I wondered whether their interest was not informed by the socialization process that took place in the Islamiyya schools they attended, as well as

informed by the influences from their friends and family. No doubt, western education is perceived as the dominant form of education. Anyone who does not have it feels excluded, even when they have Islamiyya education. Samira's story is a case in point. This way of positioning western education accentuated the competition between the acquisition of western education and Islamiyya education and the split personality that the women ended up having. It reminded me of Bhabha's (1990, 1994) description of hybridity, a characteristic feature of people in postcolonial nations, where the integration of two cultures results in a hybrid of both cultures. With these women, they developed two identities, and both types of identities seem to be equally important to them, resulting in the inner conflict that they experience in that space which Bhabha (1990, 1994) describes as the third space.

Farida's story illuminates the literacy practices that these women engage in, and like Nieto (1996), it foregrounds my point that rather than attempting to erase culture, schools should do everything in their power to use, affirm, and maintain it as a foundation for these women's academic success. Most of the Muslim women constructed their identity based on Islamic religion and culture. Consequently, they made what obtains in the Arab world the norm. Yet, they saw themselves as needing western education to make sense of their postcolonial reality. It was this latter need that prevailed on them and made them to position themselves as agentic beings.

In the context of social forms and gender relations, it is uncommon for northern Nigerian women to be as agentic as my participants were. This new posture is disruptive. It announces them as challenging, interrogating, and as potentially trying to reconfigure

what the dominant social milieu was. I was personally fascinated with this posture because, in my opinion, it is the kind of mindset that makes for the development of effective education, which I advocate. I advocate an education that fosters critical thinking. In this type of education, there is the preponderance of group discussions enabled by the building of learning communities. In this kind of school setting individual stories are told to provide guidance for problem-solving. Problems are not resolved until enough dialogue is generated, dialogues such that the desired outcome of praxis is reached. This type of education is what informs my teaching philosophy.

Therefore, for me, the way these women react to their predicament is a good sign that the terrain is beginning to change. The women are more definite about wanting western education and for some, the pursuit of career paths, even if those paths are different from those prescribed by their religion. They want to be writers and teachers. By being this agentic, they portray themselves as no longer voiceless. They are speaking for themselves in a way that reminds me of Spivaks' (1988) argument in "Can the subaltern speak". They make profound statements about their decision to pursue western education, even if it means stacking up certificates and in some extreme cases, as with Hauwa, being dogged in this pursuit to the point of getting divorced.

Postcolonial feminism became an apt lens for me to see the way the women contended with issues of patriarchy, especially as revealed in Hauwa, Samira, and Kuluwa's stories. In spite of the women's feminist agenda that guides the propagation of women's education as a way of empowering women, I still saw in their stories a continuation of the traditional subjugation of women, shrouded in religious and cultural

beliefs. The men positioned themselves as the dominant identities and the women as the weaker vessels, needing help from the men in order to stay alive and to survive.

But the women were resisting this dominance. This means that there is still an overarching need for these women to be freed from patriarchy. Their voicing out in the manner in which they did in this research suggested that these women are questioning the totalizing, universalizing theory and thereby challenging hegemonic knowledges. Just as Robinson-Pant (2004) argued, these women are saying that the one-size fits all approach to women's empowerment via education is inadequate for meeting the challenges that come against their doing school. They contest the fact that their need for education should be viewed in terms of binary oppositions in which different programs are run for the rich and different ones for the poor (which is one of the criticisms that Adibe (2009) pointed out against Egwu's (2009) roadmap for the Nigerian education sector). This way of categorizing them and making a case for the marginalized poor is colonialist; it is a perpetuation of the western notion of dualism that makes the west position themselves as having a civilizing mission to a people written-off as savages.

Interventionists should move beyond the issue of access to schooling, both in terms of increased enrolment and the provision of infrastructures, to closely examining the process of education. They should examine how schools can either transmit or transform dominant values and relationships like patriarchy that these women are faced with. This ethnographic method which I employed allowed the women who had been homogenized to act and speak in their own behalf. (That said, my own subjectivities, influenced by the knowledge I garnered from studying in the US and my memories from

my own lived experiences, obviously affected the way I represented the women [Lather, 1991]).

These women are the ones who are directly involved in the predicament of their subjugation and marginalization, and it was for me a rewarding experience to hear them speak out about the socio-cultural and religious situations which often hinder them form accessing western education. And this is in spite of the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations to promote western education and to empower them. I see the women living out alternative ways of being. In so doing they reveal their search for a cultural identity through a retention of their cultural identity. This reminds me of Grande's (2004) advocacy on behalf of Ameircan Indian students, insisting for the incorporation of cultural issues into the curriculum; an approach that enables the oppressed to recognize their individuality and the social context in which learning should take place. It is therefore imperative, like Robinson-Pant (2004) advocates, that these women be allowed to take control of their lives. They should be involved in the formulation of policy and plans about their education. They should be the ones to spell out the kind of "gender relations" and "change" that they anticipate. The approach should be bottom-up and not top-to-bottom.

Furthermore, these women aspired to a change of status through their desire for education, thereby positioning aspiration as a necessary condition for the possibility for change in the future. They generally risked being different in order to reap the reward of a "better life" – a life that does not only exist at home but also in the public sphere. Their strong desire to be independent through education, resulting from being gainfully

employed, assumes that education is their passport to this space where they would be independent. This affected the way they constructed their identities in a futuristic sense – they avowed to be better mothers to their children in comparison to their parents, ensuring that they did not suffer what they suffered. In so doing, they pushed against and disrupted the traditional discourse about parenthood and other similar discourses. Hannatu, for instance, pushed against the traditional discourse of marriage where marrying any man in the village was the norm, once the parents judged that he was a good fit.

Situated within the postcolonial condition in Nigeria and similar to what Fran Vavrus (2007) found in her study of schooling in Tanzania, these women's desires for school and the acquisition of more academic qualifications made absolute sense to me. Certificates are still valued highly in Nigeria over and above job experience, since that was the colonial legacy that was inherited. Gainful employment is still one of the surest ways to move from the lower class to the middle class and to enjoy a "better life". Until there is a structural change that will make education more democratic, it is understandable that these women desire education the way they do. It means that they understood the process of economic development, in which the west, since colonial times and now via capitalism and globalization, sets the norms and practices of the country. So, although Nigeria is politically independent, because of the loans that she receives and the conditions under which the educational interventions are executed, the country still operates under the dictates of the west. In the west, educational attainment is still the yardstick for initiation into the workforce. The way Hannatu and Kuluwa defined what it

means not to be educated in this modern world comes to mind again – the uneducated age quickly and they are unenlightened. This kind of change in their mindset captures the cultural change that has taken place and that continues to take place in northern Nigeria, in the wake of modernization, globalization, and the transnational process of education which presents education as liberating.

Beyond the issues of gender, the issue of multiple oppressive formations highlighted by postcolonial theorists, as influenced by the discourse on postmodernism, was also highlighted. I was able to explore contextual notions of power-in-use through the flow of knowledge, especially knowledge transmitted through the media, in the context of capitalism and globalization. Darder's (2002) criticism, when she argues that the "United States of America has effectively extended its domination through an ideology of modernization, technological dominance, military superiority, and its stronghold on the world's political economy" (p. 2) comes to mind. Clairmont (1995) expands on this by explaining that the United States does this in the guise of "globalization", "freedom and democracy" or under the banner of "human rights". For instance, it is amazing the way that Kubra engaged in literacy practices through the guidance of her husband. She watched movies and followed the storylines even though she was unable to read and write.

Most of the women were able to recognize the way poverty impacted their schooling experiences. I almost came up with a maxim: Poor schools for poor women with poor family backgrounds where teachers are themselves poor, the resources are poor, motivation is poor, and the eventual products of such schools are also poor. Not

only did Adama and Hannatu's stories reflect this sense of poverty, but they spoke specifically to the class inequality that pervaded the schools they attended. Adama's transition to a good school made this inequality very apparent and, in the process, constructed different types of identities for her. Apple (1995) talks about this kind of segregation when he explains that student populations are organized in an economic hierarchy and that an unfair system of meritocracy is enforced through a high-stakes test-driven curriculum, which encourages a competitive ethic and that ultimately functions to legitimate the ideological formations necessary for the reproduction of inequality. Darder (2002) also argues that the consequence of this system of schooling is that the dominant powers use the schools as sites for "dismantling the middle class, increasing polarization of wealth and the racialization of populations" (p. 3). For my participants, particularly as seen in Hannatu's case, the subjugation they suffered as a result of their poverty made them to blame themselves for their predicament (Bourdieu as cited in Lewis, Encisco & Moje, 2007, p. 6) and to internalize oppression (Hall, 1997).

The issue of poverty was further complicated by these women's family backgrounds. I found that I agreed with Kuluwa when she argued that when parents do not have an education themselves, they are unable to insist on western education, particularly for their female children. I was fascinated by Hauwa, Samira and Farida's stories, as they talked about the role their parents played in pushing for western education for them, given the value they themselves had for it. Although I could see how the tradition of schooling within a family often influenced, positively, these women's experiences with schooling, there were certainly exceptions. Kubra, for instance, had an

educated father, but he did not play any significant role in encouraging her to go to school. This means that other issues of marriage and divorce further complicated these women's dispositions to school.

Given their postcolonial reality, they advanced individual achievement and personal responsibility for overcoming their current limitations. However, this effort was further complicated by ethnicity, a factor that is very germane in a heterogeneous and complex society such as Nigeria. As seen in Hauwa, Samira, and Farida's stories, they literarily had to claim ethnicities that they were not originally from for such benefits as easy access to admission into tertiary institutions, scholarships, and finding jobs upon graduation.

The kind of pedagogical practices that the teachers employed in the classrooms were also central to the way these women made sense of their schooling experiences. The role of religion in perpetuating the "banking method" (Freire, 2000) was immediately obvious, especially for the Muslim women. Non-dominant literacy practices (Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 2001) and prior knowledge were often neglected or relegated to the background in the way the west fosters western education. I argue that if cognizance is given to all the various forms of literacies that these women bring with them to the classroom, their academic literacy would be better enhanced. Gee (2008) suggests that multiple religious practices can have multiple effects, when he explains that all texts are fully implicated in values and social relations. I saw that these women's religious practices informed the way they were socialized or enculturated into certain social practices. I posit that these literacy practices are part of the funds of knowledge that they

bring with them to school and my argument is that they should be tapped into in order to make learning a worthwhile experience for them.

In pursuing western forms of literacy, the women displayed the notion that the west and other power structures dictate literacy acquisition in a manner that is characteristic of a prior presupposed "agreement between the dispositions of the agents and the expectations or demands immanent in the world into which they are inserted" as Bourdieu (as cited in Lewis, Encisco & Moje, 2007, p. 6) would describe it. Yet the way they employed their literacy practices to make sense of the literacy acquisition of their school work not only reflects their hybridity (Bhabha, 1990, 1994) but also shows what their preferences and interests are in both western education and Islamiyya education as shown in especially Farida and Samira's stories, resulting in their perpetually being in an ambivalent situation. They experienced inner struggles with the Self and the birth of a new language – "the language of the borderland" (Anzaldua, 1987).

Both women were in a constant state of mental nepantililism, wanting to retain their commitment to their cultural and spiritual values, which seemed to conflict with those obtained in formal schools causing *"un choque"* – cultural collision for them. This was captured in the story Samira told about the woman who went and studied abroad and came back with conflicting lifestyles that were not exemplary, and how that positioned her in her pursuit both of formal schooling and further education in Islamic education. Both women cope by developing tolerance for the perceived contradictions and ambiguities and in so doing they transcend the duality of Islamic education and formal education in the pursuit of both forms. This same ambivalent attitude is displayed among

the Christian women – Adama, Safiya, and Hannatu - even though theirs is between the binaries of the rich and the poor and how they are in turn positioned. It is this "incommensurable difference" that stakeholders in women's education in Nigeria need to address. Leaning on Ngo (2009) and her study of Lao American students, I also suggest that there is a need to disrupt these binaries and to interrogate what happens in the continuum between dualistic categories and unsettle the tidiness of binary discourses (p. 217).

Also, the Nigerian government and all other stakeholders need to desist from perpetuating a notion of autonomous literacy (Street, 1984, 1995), because in so doing they situate literacy in the individual person rather than in the society and obscure the multiple ways in which literacy interrelates with power. The current practice which the women's stories exposed showed them as apprentices in a master-apprentice relationship. In this kind of Discourse, the teacher scaffolds their growing abilities to say, do, value, believe, and so forth, within that Discourse. The teacher does this through demonstrating her mastery and supporting the women's learning even when such learning barely exists, as Gee (2008) would argue. Specifically, my participants, especially those who went to LEA schools, talked about how their teachers barely taught their lessons. They depended more on giving their students notes to copy and to regurgitate during examinations. Even at the university level, Adama explained how her desire for knowledge was mortgaged for the need to just give the lecturers what they ask for in examination so she could pass and obtain her invaluable certificate. To this extent, these women were positioned as apprentices in this pedagogical method that re-echoes what Friere (2000) describes as the

“banking method”, with the teachers as masters. The women were not seen as having any knowledge that both their teachers and their colleagues could learn from. They were just empty containers that had to be filled. These women’s reaction against this practice suggests a need for a radical shift from this practice so that their ingenuity can be tapped.

The use of mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment and Pidgin English is another literacy practice with which these women were engaged. Most of them talked about the way and manner they struggled to appropriate the norm by being as proficient in English language as they could be, while obviously feeling deficient in their inadequacies and blaming their teachers and the type of school they attended for this shortcoming. This reminds me of the Ebonics debate in the United States, the consequences of speaking a non-validated language form in school. For me, since “just as our skin provides us with a means to negotiate our interactions with the world – both in how we perceive our surroundings and in how those around perceive us – our language plays an equally pivotal role in determining who we are: it is *The Skin That We Speak”* (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002, p. xvii), it is imperative, therefore, that a balance be struck in the way that language is used to teach these women in the classroom. The “skin that they speak” is part of the funds of knowledge that they bring into the classroom.

Delpit (2002) argues that the commencement of formal education is usually one of the first settings in a person’s life when their language may be judged as right or wrong, when assumptions may be made about their intelligence, family life, future potential, or moral fiber every time a sentence is uttered. According to her, schools often see themselves, and are seen by the larger society, as arbiters of what is proper, correct,

and decent. Consequently there have been continual moves to eliminate the presence of other varieties of englishes such as African American language in classrooms, and raging debates whenever it appears that there might be some move to suggest otherwise. A similar debate abounds in Nigeria, called “the national language question”. Most of my participants, accepting the dominant culture and lamenting their inability to be proficient in Standard English, told stories of how they had to pay a fine or receive beatings if they spoke any other language in the classroom than Standard English language. They saw this lack as inhibiting the progress they might have made in their academic performances and pursuits. Consequently, their interest was to be proficient in English language.

Considering the literacy practices with which these women are engaged, it means that this research has implications for teacher preparation and professional development, especially in how teachers might be trained to provide a humane and effective educational environment in which northern Nigerian women can function. Delpit (1995) argues that to deny students their own expert knowledge is disempowering to them. It is imperative for teachers to help students have an important voice in their own learning process by making provision for social interaction and fostering student inquiry (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). Students should be able to question their circumstances and to make and remake themselves and their worlds even if in so doing they read against the grain (Dimitriadis & MaCarthy, 2001; Haw, 1998). Gee (2008) advocates teaching that uses explanations and analyses that break down material into its analytical “bits” and that juxtaposes diverse Discourses and their practices to each other, consequently developing a “meta-language” which, according to him, can be a form of power and liberation. He

argues further that teaching for acquisition alone leads to successful, but "colonized" students.

In addition, considering the complex ways religion and poverty influence these women's lives, I find Sockett and Le Page's (2002) counsel important for the teachers who teach these women. They counsel that teachers should envision their classrooms as moral rather than technical arenas, and they should use moral vocabulary to describe their work. This also means that these teachers would need to reflect upon and to inspect their personal beliefs, passions, values, images, and prejudices within the context of the classrooms (Liston and Zeichner, 1991) as well as to reflect on their pedagogical practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Schon, 1987).

Limitations and areas for further research

I have completely left out my discussion with my secondary participants and my findings from artifacts to make room for these women to be represented in powerful ways. I interviewed school administrators, parents, friends of my participants, and brought back artifacts for this research including books, curricula, and CDs which I have been unable to extensively use in this reporting.

Also, even though my primary participants were seventeen in number, for this dissertation I reported on only eight of them in order to explore their stories with more depth and to be able to represent them in powerful ways. In so doing it was easier to reflect my participants as human beings living out complex and complicated lives, rather than the compartmentalized way they are often portrayed in the literature. I was able to explore their thoughts, their feelings, their views, their perceptions, and the reasons they

took certain actions. With this approach, rather than talking across my participants along thematic lines, using postcolonial theory, I was able to depict the nuances in the schooling process that are often ignored by women's education stakeholders.

In the typical grounded theory way of generating themes, I have highlighted women's stories that touched on religion and poverty, but there were other engaging issues that they grappled with, including their classroom experiences, their relationships with their teachers, their parents, and their friends, the place of magic and mysticism in their schooling experiences, as well as their school boarding house experiences. I will visit these aspects and others that opened up to me in the course of formulating and researching this topic in my later writing.

In addition, this work has assumed that the current curriculum in use in schools does not take into cognizance the interests, values, and views of these women. It is pertinent, therefore, to closely examine the current curriculum and see what aspects need to be reworked to reflect the findings of this research. This is paramount, because as Apple (1993) argues, "The curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation; it is always part of a selective tradition, someone's selection, and some group's vision of legitimate knowledge" (p. 222). I hope to engage in more research to seek answers to how to create a humane and effective education for Nigerian women. My plan is to develop a curriculum that I can propose to the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria as an alternative package to what is presently offered in secondary schools.

I would also want to interrogate further the way “literacy” is conceptualized in schools and in policy documents as I seek answers to how to create a humane and effective education for Nigerian women. The kinds of questions that come to mind regarding this new area of research are: What does literacy mean to northern Nigerian young women? What new ways might be adopted for guiding education policy and practice on literacy development? Is it possible that the ways they engage literacy practices allow or disallow certain other practices in view of changing societal needs? What is different in the way my participants are making sense of their schooling experiences two years after the initial research? What does the informal schooling in marriage mean to my participants as compared with formal schooling? To enable me to do this kind of research I will further develop the Women’s Literacy and Health Agency, an NGO that I co-founded. I intend to consistently publish my work in order to further create awareness of the new dimension I bring to the discourse of women’s education in Nigeria. The mere fact of engaging in this research has helped me to grow in my thinking about and understanding of women’s education in northern Nigeria because of the powerful learning moments I encountered in the course of the research.

I also want to examine transnational work. I would want to find out what is happening with women’s education in other African countries in a comparative manner. Another interesting research question I would like to explore is: What are the schooling experiences of northern Nigerian young women in the Diaspora?

Finally, I am also hoping to teach these theoretical concepts in a renowned research college in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Democratic education and life-long learning is what is needed for these women. John Dewey propounded the theory of democratic education. Dewey (1926 [1916]) outlines the social role of education, both formal and informal, as the transmitter and bearer of a society's identity through the preparation of youth for the adult society. He defines education as a process of growth and this growth is only possible in a democratic environment where individuals are able to grow and socially participate in a manner that allows for the realization of their unique interests and gifts. In democratic education, thought and reason are applied to activity to find the best answer to a problem at a particular time and place.

I find Knight and Pearl (2000) invaluable in understanding the way democratic education should function as an alternative to the current practice. Here I highlight a few of the guidelines they provide. In schools all students are coerced to master what they learn whether they find it relevant or not; a system in which even the few that excel do so for utilitarian reasons – as a necessary means to succeed in a credential society to attain a competitive advantage (p. 201). But in democratic education, emphasis is placed on the need for the curriculum to address students' interests. Curriculum standards are not imposed by established authority. Rather, knowledge is determined by each individual student informed by what they are persuaded to learn. Teachers make a persuasive case for the importance of any school activity and important knowledge is determined by a democratic process. This knowledge is one that students can use to make decisions that affect their lives and their community's well-being (p. 202).

Furthermore, according to Knight and Pearl, (2000), democratic education also welcomes diversity beginning with the recognition that diversity can only be welcomed when there is a center to which all feel a positive sense of attachment; a space that is not imposed but negotiated (p. 206). The issues faced by students are included in the curriculum for them to study and solve by developing understandings and ways of living that are salubrious for self and others (p. 206).

Knight and Pearl (2000) describe the way a democratic school functions in terms of the operations of the authority figures be it teacher, administrator, coach, counselor, or teacher aide; they lead by persuasion and negotiation. A classroom is democratic to the extent to which it welcomes all students as equally valued members of a problem-solving community (p. 208). They criticize the current practice of hierarchy in schools manifested formally by tracking and ability grouping, and informally by differential encouragement given students by classroom teachers (p. 208). They explain that the democratic teacher does not allow inequity to be an excuse for poor student performance. Also, in a democratic classroom, the understanding is that students are born with rights and they learn to be responsible. They have only those rights that are supposed to be guaranteed by all citizens and the democratic teachers teach rights by both analyzing and practicing them. They teach those rights by establishing them as part of their constitutional responsibility and students are encouraged to also invent or otherwise bring new insights to rights (P. 211).

I strongly feel that this type of education is important for overcoming the schooling challenges that young women in northern Nigeria are facing. In so doing, the

women would be free to ask questions, develop their critical thinking abilities, and consequently improve their lives and the society at large. This means that they would not just be prepared as a workforce for the Nigerian economy, as is the current practice. Instead, they would be able to live and grapple with the challenges that they are confronted with in this age of capitalism and globalization. Their sense of being as humans would be recognized. They would be able to think for themselves and make decisions on their own, discover knowledge by seeing with the inner eye and then applying facts to reality and reasoning productively. If democratic education is to be adopted, then the onus lies on the teacher to make the classroom more interactive.

Concluding remarks

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the women I worked with did not have a single story to tell about their schooling experiences. Their conceptions of schooling were complex and complicated, especially because of their age, class, marital status, educational status, family background, language, religious commitment, ethnicity, and the type of school they attended. I discovered that the women shared common thoughts about the way poverty and religion impacted on their schooling experiences and on their future goals and aspirations. However, they differed in their perceptions and understandings of these issues, the way they were positioned, and the way their identities were constructed. Their experiences pointed out the manner in which the forces of class, religion, ethnicity, and language intersected in various power relationships to complicate their schooling experiences, thereby impeding their acquiring western education in the manner they cared about. Consequently, I argued that education should not be designed

for them. They should be invited to negotiate their schooling desires either when the curriculum is designed or in the pedagogical practices that the teachers employ. This means that the way the United Nations perceives girls' and women's education and human development as the sine qua non of development as captured in the Millennium Development Goals needs to be revisited. It is my hope that national and international policy makers who stumble into this work will be better informed about how to allow northern Nigerian women's interests, values, and views influence policies, by illuminating the young women's experiences.

In summary, in this work, I have suggested that young women from economically vulnerable families contain multitudes. Each person enacts diverse identities, different attitudes, behaviors, capacities, and experiences. Their subjugation is not limited to the binary oppositions of oppressed/oppressor, rich/poor, men/women, and boy/girl. Therefore, their complexities and complications need to be dealt with so that schooling can be less challenging for them. I posited that there is a need to go beyond the provision of formal structures and textbooks, a need to pay close attention to the social complexities and complications of these women's lives.

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Appendix

Interview protocol

Background

1. How many are you in your nuclear family?
2. How many of you are in school presently?
3. What school do you go to?
4. Who chose your school for you?
5. What level of school are you in presently?
6. How far is your school from your house?
7. What house chores do you have to perform before you go to school?
8. What do you do after school?
9. What work do your parents do?
10. What are your parents' levels of education?

The women's daily lives

1. How do you feel about the duties you have to perform at home before living for school?
2. How do you feel about what you engage yourself with after school?
3. Explain what your normal day looks like.
4. What do you do at night before you go to bed?
5. What do your parents think about your going to school?
6. What is your relationship with your brothers and sisters like?
7. Does your going to school have anything to do with the way you relate with your parents, your brothers and sisters, your friends and other members of your community?
8. What do you find most interesting about going to school?
9. Would you rather not go to school? If so, why?
10. Where do you see yourself ten years from now?

Schooling Experience

1. How will you describe your schooling experiences so far?
2. What struggles do you have with schooling?
3. What changes do you want to see happen in school that will make schooling an exciting adventure for you?
4. How does your being a woman affect your attitude towards education?
5. How has your identity been shaped by your schooling experiences?

* I asked other follow up questions based on the issues that arose from our conversations.