

## Challenging global geographies of power: sending children back to Nigeria from the U.K. for education

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# **Challenging Global Geographies of Power and Cultivating Good**

## **Subjects: Sending Children back to Nigeria from the U.K. for Education**

### Abstract

West Africans have a long history of investing in their children's education by sending them to Britain. Yet, some young British-Nigerians are being sent to Nigeria for secondary education, going against a long historical grain. The movement of children from London to Nigeria is about the making of good subjects who possess particular cultural dispositions and behave in such a manner as to ensure educational success and the reproduction of middle class subjectivities within neoliberal globalisation. We maintain that this movement highlights the way in which global geographies of power – rooted in a colony – metropole divide - are being challenged and reconfigured, serving to provincialize the U.K., through the educational choices that Nigerian parents make for their children. Such small acts disrupt imagined geographies and particular spatial and temporal configurations of progress and modernity, in which former colonial subjects have travelled to the metropole for education, whilst generating counter narratives about Nigerian education, society and economy. Yet, the methods to instil new dispositions and habits in the contemporary Nigerian educational context are informed by the British educational colonial legacy of discipline through corporal punishment. Physical punishment was central to the civilizing mission of British colonial educational policy. Consequently, the choice to send children to school in Nigeria, and other African countries, as well as challenging global geographies of power, sheds light on the continued relevance of the colonial educational legacy and its disciplinary strategies which are, in turn, part of the broader project of modernity itself.

*'The Temne chief Naimbanna [Sierra Leone], recognizing the value of a European training, had sent two of his sons to Britain for schooling in the late eighteenth century. This example was followed by other African rulers, often at the instigation of missionaries and colonial officials who hoped that African princes would serve as agents to plant European 'civilization' and Christianity in the Black continent' (Killingray 1993:7).*

As the case above highlights, African migration to Europe for education has a long legacy: from as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century European traders sent a small number of Africans to Britain for education in order to secure their support in West African coastal trade relations. Throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century increasing numbers of Africans attended school throughout Britain.<sup>1</sup> From the 18<sup>th</sup> century West African elites, with the wealth accrued from trade, sent their children to Britain for secondary and University education to support their work in trade, and official duties that were integral to the maintenance of empire (Jenkins 1985; Killingray 1993). At the same, Britain made use of ‘good’, educated colonial subjects to sustain the slave trade, spread the gospel and fulfil the goals of empire (Adi 1998: 7). The establishment of a society for the education of Africans in 1801 in Britain bears testimony to the increasing numbers of Africans migrating there for education (Killingray 1993: 7).

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries Church of England mission organisations, such as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, sent missionaries to convert local populations throughout the Atlantic World. In the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century young men, such as Philip Quaque - from a comfortable Cape Coast family on the Gold Coast (present day Ghana) - were educated in England at the expense of the SPG, in the hopes that they would return to their homelands to spread Christianity and ‘civilisation.’ The first African to be ordained in the Church of England after the Reformation (Herbstein n.d.), Quaque returned to live in Cape Coast with his English wife. Positioned at the junction of distinct religious and social

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<sup>1</sup> Africans have migrated to Britain for hundreds of years, many residing in port cities as slaves, merchants, servants, musicians, entertainers, students, artist models, and in the case of children - play things of the aristocracy (Costello 2001). Yet, there are huge gaps in our existing knowledge of African migrants to Britain (Adi 2010: 266).

realms he faced numerous difficulties in his attempts to bridge these realms by converting the locals to Christianity. Nonetheless, he became an influential and prominent figure in Christian missions and the local schooling system.<sup>2</sup> Quaque's case highlights the role of educational migration in the (re) production of status (Valentin 2014:1) and moral worlds, as well as in the making of particular types of subjects within changing cultural, political, and economic conditions.

From the late Victorian period Britain's policy of allowing its imperial subjects to enter the country with relative ease - awarding them the same rights of property, abode and association to which white British citizens were entitled - resulted in an increasing African presence (Killingray 2012: 393). Many Africans traveling to Britain for education came to improve their lives and further their prospects as they faced and were subjected to enslavement and / or colonial domination in their countries of origin. They benefited from British education and the economic and political power of the metropole. For those who came to study Britain offered opportunities and some respite from colonialism and slavery, at the same time subjecting many Africans to worse forms of racism and oppression (Adi 2012: 265). As a result many established networks and formed and joined associations, which served as systems of support and refuge. Further, throughout the colonial period, these networks were key in supporting and giving voice to an anti-colonial and anti-racist politics and the Pan-Africanist movement that emerged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Ibid., 266). Paradoxically, Britain provided the space for Africans, and those of African descent, to critique the forces that were responsible for their presence in Britain, as well as the

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<sup>2</sup> Philip Quaque 1741 – October 17, 1816: Slavery and Remembrance: A Guide to Sites, Museums and Memory, <http://slaveryandremembrance.org/people/person/?id=PP008>.

racism to which many were subjected. Ultimately, the dissemination of these ideas, in part through the development of vibrant print cultures from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, helped to bring about the end of colonisation (Bressey and Adi 2010: 108). In the postcolonial period, partly in recognition of the importance of education to nation-building and modernisation, significant numbers of Africans migrated to Britain, with Nigerians and Ghanaians, representing the largest group of overseas students at the time (Baikin 2009: 88).

The migration of Nigerians to Britain for education, work, family reunification, amongst other things, is central to postcolonial migratory historical narratives (Harris 2006; Olwig and Valentin 2014: 6). As we have seen West Africans, particularly the upper and middle classes, have a long history of investing in their children's education by sending them to the metropole. Yet, some young Britons of West African descent, who were born in the U.K., are being sent to West Africa for secondary education, going against a long historical grain (cf. Bledsoe and Sow 2011). What does this tell us about the types of subjects some members of the British West African diaspora seek to produce within a changing global political economy?

Based on an ethnographic study of British Nigerian families who have sent their children to Nigeria for education, this article address this question, as well as offering new insights into the relationship between education, migration, space, emotion and the production of particular types of subjects and subjectivities within neoliberal globalisation. The material we present draws on fieldwork carried out in 2012 in London, U.K., for four months, and

Lagos, Nigeria, for a month.<sup>3</sup> In London as well as in Lagos, we carried out one-to-one interviews and group discussions. Our interviewees were eight Nigerian-socialised parents, all of whom were first generation migrants and either British citizens or were legally resident in the U.K.; eight children and young adults who had gone to school in Nigeria while their parents were in the UK, but who were now back in the UK; fifteen children who were currently attending school in Nigeria while at least one parent was in the UK or USA. Finally, we also interviewed nine close relatives (grandparents, uncles, aunts and siblings) and several other relevant people such as teachers. In a few exceptional cases people interviewed initially in London were related to those later interviewed in Nigeria. We focus on three cases, in order to provide depth and a stronger sense of the experiences and emotions of those involved, with a focus on parents, their children and, in one case, grandparents.

In both a British and a Nigerian context our interviewees can be broadly described as aspiring middle class. We follow Spronk's (2014: 94-95; cf. Behrends and Lentz 20120)

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<sup>3</sup> We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their invaluable feedback. This pilot project entitled "Reconfiguring Transnational Care and Education: West African Migrants in the UK" was funded by the Rockefeller foundation (grant no. 2008 SRC 114). The study mainly looked at Gambian and Nigerian families. The fieldwork for the 'Nigerian Families' sub-project was carried out by Katrin Maier under the supervision of Pamela Kea. Maier, who carried out doctoral research on Nigerian Pentacostal churches in London re-activated contacts from her previous research, as well as accessing additional informants in London through local secondary schools, social services, universities (lecturers and student groups). In Lagos a local research assistant was of invaluable help.

definition, which extends beyond class as household income (AfDB 2011) to class as ‘cultural practice’ and an ‘aspirational category’, marked by the possession of various forms of capital (Bourdieu 1984; cf. Coe and Shani 2015). Education, a form of cultural capital, has historically served as a key component of middle class British and Nigerian subjectivities. All parents and relatives or unrelated carers in our study valued education enormously. Several of the parents had attended boarding schools or lived away from their parents in their own childhoods and valued this positively as a formative experience. Sending children to Nigeria entails particular costs (fees, travel, board etc); not surprisingly, all parents were in work and tended to live in middle class residential areas of London.

The movement of children from the U.K. to Nigeria is, from the perspective of children, their families and carers about the making of good subjects (cf. Fechter 2014) who possess particular dispositions and behave in such a manner as to ensure educational success, as well as the (re) production of middle class subjectivities, and networks, in a context of increasing economic precarity (Sassen 2014). We argue that this movement highlights the way in which global geographies of power – rooted in a colony - metropole divide – are being challenged and reconfigured, serving to provincialize the U.K. through the educational choices that Nigerian parents make for their children. Inspired by Dipesh Chakrabarty the term provincialize within this context ‘...means...relocating western narratives of progress in their wider colonial histories and rethinking the ‘centre’ by resituating it in its complex web of colonial interconnections’ (Nash 2002:222; cf. Arndt 2009). As Nigeria becomes the preferred destination for educational migration for some British Nigerians, it is repositioned as the centre. Such small acts disrupt imagined geographies (Said 1978) rooted in colonial histories and particular spatial and temporal

configurations of progress and modernity, in which former colonial subjects have travelled to the metropole for education (cf. Olwig and Valentin 2014: 3).<sup>4</sup>

The choice to send children to Nigeria for education must be understood in relation to the historical relations that informed the colonial encounter, as well as to the emergence of new relations of domination that are central to neoliberal globalisation (Coronil 2000: 352). The latter is characterised by the drive for new forms of ‘profit-driven extraction’ and the emergence of outsourcing sites and global cities that house financial institutions and corporations that run these extractive industries (Sassen 2014:9). Constituting a ‘new geography of centrality’, this matrix of global cities transcends ‘North-South and East-West divides’ (Ibid.). This neoliberal logic, which purports that ‘...human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade’ (Harvey 2005: 2), has transformed institutions, forms of governance and ‘ideas about the self and society’ in what has been termed neoliberal restructuring (Glick Schiller 2011: 214). Further, workers are expected to continuously reinvent themselves, engaging in a project of the self (Giddens 1991, Foucault 2008: 252-3), in developing the appropriate skills, cultural practices and dispositions for the new economy (Walkerline 2003: 240). In a context where profit is based on resource extraction and less on labour, there is increasingly less investment in the reproduction of the labour force. Consequently, following a

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<sup>4</sup> Similarly, we are cognizant of the continued presence of ‘non-colonial forms of imperial domination’ in which financial capital in the form of loans and foreign aid (re) produces imperial geographies of power (Glick Schiller 2005:443).



neoliberal agenda, governments serve the interests of corporations whilst cutting the welfare state and the costs that are central to social reproduction (Sassen 2014), including state education. Cuts to education, and the welfare state more broadly, are in turn part of the neoliberalisation of education, characterised by increased ‘parental choice’ and the reframing of the role of private schooling (Ball 2012: 11).

Within the context of the expansion of an international educational market Nigerian boarding schools are an increasingly popular choice amongst some British Nigerians. As geographies of power are increasingly rooted in cities and regions that are seen to be growing, we argue that Nigerian boarding schools take on additional appeal. Although not a global city, Lagos, a mega-city of almost 20 million inhabitants, is the economic powerhouse of the region (Howden 2010). Despite huge income inequalities, a range of indicators - such as a growing middle class, the rise of billionaires, increasing investment and trade, and growing GDP - make Lagos, along with other African cities, such as Nairobi, Accra and Johannesburg, central players in the Africa rising narrative, which attributes economic growth to the implementation of a range of policy measures and good governance reforms (Mackenzie 2016). Yet, this growth, which has produced increasing inequalities, is not sustainable and is based on profit driven resource extraction in which transnational corporations are prospering. Characterised by a ‘new scramble for Africa’, this growth is driven by the logic of primitive accumulation, which drives neoliberal globalization (Mackenzie 2016:3-4). Nonetheless, the continued salience of the Africa rising narrative has encouraged the descendants of Nigerian migrants to the West to return to live in Lagos as ‘repatriates’.<sup>5</sup> It is within this context that many first and second generation Nigerian

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.channel4.com/news/nigeria-the-repats-who-have-returned>

migrants to Britain are sending their children to be educated in Nigeria. Further, we argue that the decision to send children to Nigeria serves as an act of social positioning (Glick Schiller et al. 1992), within changing global geographies of power, and a key feature of the aspirational strategies of a British Nigerian middle class, in which the middle classes are shrinking in Britain (Sassen 2014) and perceived to be growing in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa (AfdB 2011). Paradoxically, within the context of neoliberal globalisation, British Nigerians now benefit from an elite Nigerian education, the networks this experience gives rise to, and, potentially, the economic power of the Nigerian state, formerly characterised within the Western imaginary as a ‘disenchanted space’ (Chakrabaty 2000).

If the mobilities paradigm (Urry 2006) highlights the way in which subjectivities are configured through relations with people and places (Conradson and McKay 2007: 168; cf. Berg 2014: 2), anthropological approaches to subjectivity, in turn, privilege the ‘internal life of the subject’ (McKay 2008: 382). We suggest that children who are sent to boarding school in Nigeria, and then back to the U.K. for school holidays, experience a continual process of mobility, subsequently developing transnational lives. Here, mobility creates the conditions for the development of new subjectivities, networks, and a transformation in subjectivities. Indeed, those parents who send their children to boarding school in Nigeria believe that this experience creates the conditions that are most conducive to this transformation. It is argued that the qualities that are central to the good subject embody an idealised conception of a disciplined, well-behaved, polite child, informed by a nostalgic view of Nigerian socialisation practices, and a firm belief in corporal punishment. However, because the transnational migrant experience ‘is inextricably linked to the changing conditions of global capitalism’ (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: 5) the good subject also embodies characteristics that are central to contemporary middle class and neoliberal

subjectivities (e.g. self-disciplined, flexible, time conscious, self-inventive, self-governing etc.).<sup>6</sup> Continuous mobility and processes of transformation give rise to a range of thoughts, emotions and the configuration of translocal subjectivities (Conradson and McKay 2007: 169), that is ‘multiply-located senses of self amongst those who inhabit transnational social fields.’ In documenting the nature of children’s mobility and the transformation in subjectivities we highlight the significance of emotion in bringing about changes to subjectivities. These include feelings of privilege, power and prestige as well as those of abandonment, fear, apprehension and loneliness.

In what follows, we situate our argument within the literature on children, transnationalism and educational migration. We then contextualise our account by providing an overview of the changing nature of educational provision in Nigeria and Nigerian migration to the U.K. Drawing on ethnographic case studies, and with reference to parental motivations for sending children back to Nigeria for schooling, we argue that such choices must be situated within the context of neoliberal globalization and cuts to British state education. The former is characterised by the growth of the Nigerian economy and levels of prosperity of a small minority of the population, and must be juxtaposed to the levels of poverty that characterise the parts of London, in which many West African migrants reside or have previously resided. Finally, we outline the types of subjects Nigerian parents seek to produce and the range of emotions and subjectivities that children experience as a result of on-going mobility.

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<sup>6</sup> ‘The neo-liberal subject is the autonomous liberal subject made in the image of the middle class’ (Walkerdine 2003: 239).

## **Children, Transnationalism and Educational Migration**

There is a rich and growing literature on transnational childhoods, and on children and migration, in which children's experiences are increasingly privileged, ranging from work on: transnational care chains, intimacy and connection between parents and the children they leave behind; children who migrate independently; and children of migrants who are sent back to the 'home' country for education, care, and immersion in home cultures as well as for a number of other reasons (see for example Gardner and Mand 2012; Zeitlyn 2014; Qureshi 2014; Orellena et al. 2001; Bledsoe and Sow 2011; Carling et al. 2012; Coe 2014; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Parrenas 2005a, 2005; Olwig 2012). Research on education and geographic mobility highlights the role of education in acquiring cultural capital and social mobility (See for example Berg 2014; Valentin and Olwig 2015; Waters 2006).

Much of this literature focuses on the devastating effects of vagabond capitalism, and the increasing mobility of capital, as parents and children in search of work are separated from each other and other loved ones (Katz 2001). Most frequently, those in search of work and / or education are from the South and travel to wealthier parts of the globe (Waters 2006; Valentin and Olwig 2015). Such common trajectories are, as we have seen, rooted in colonial histories and the allure of particular types of cultural, economic and symbolic

capital.<sup>7</sup> With respect to African educational migration to the West, this movement re-inscribes a familiar first world / third world, developing / developed dichotomy in which Africans are solely framed as migrants and diasporans. When migrants from the North or wealthier parts of the globe travel for work they are privileged migrants, transnational elites and / or mobile professionals, making informed choices about where they choose to work, study and live. In both of these cases mobility is situated within the competing opportunities and constraints of the global political economy. Yet, despite this similarity, analytical distinctions and unquestioned assumptions between mobile professionals and transnational elites, and migrants and diasporans, persist. This casts a 'Eurocentric and class bias' on the literature (Werbner 1999:17). Indeed, such analytical distinctions re-inscribe the global geographies of power, rooted in a colony-metropole divide, that we critique.

In a new geography of centrality that cuts across North South, East West divides, Nigerian parents in the U.K. make choices, in an educational marketplace, about where to educate their children (Castles 2010: 1567). Consequently, as transnational elites, migrants and members of a Nigerian diaspora, they question assumptions and break down distinctions that are made between transnational elites and mobile professionals, and migrants and diasporans. Nigerian parents who send their children to Nigeria for education draw on kinship and familial networks, education, transnational orientations and varying degrees of wealth to negotiate challenging circumstances (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: 4), to be sure.

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<sup>7</sup> With reference to East Asian educational migration Waters (2006: 181) maintains that 'a Western education is an essential component of what Mitchell (1997) has described as a 'self- fashioning' process, undertaken by East Asia's transnational middle-class seeking inculcation in the "language of the global economic subject" (Mitchell 1997).'

Yet, as transmigrants, they are also positioned in such a way as to be able to engage in a form of prestige migration (Bredeloup 2013: 172).<sup>8</sup> This form of prestige migration is not about the acquisition of material objects but rather the cultivation of particular characteristics and dispositions. Indeed, for British Nigerians acquisition of the latter is seen to improve the status of the individual and the family ‘...in response to the changing social, economic and political conditions of a globalizing world’ (Huang and Yeoh 2005: 380; see Carling et al. 2012).

### **Education in Nigeria**

Formal western education in contemporary Nigeria is rooted in British missionary education, which spread and was extended in Southern Nigeria during the colonial period.<sup>9</sup> Nyamnjoh (2012:132) details the powerful sets of relations that emerged once missionaries became involved in education, creating an ‘unprecedented alliance between State, Capital and Church’ serving to subject and dominate the bodies and minds of Africans. Indeed, with the introduction of Christian missionary schooling in Nigeria in the mid-nineteenth century corporal punishment was used in both mission and state schools (Last 2000: 362).

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<sup>8</sup> Historically, those involved in prestige migration within West Africa were seen as adventurers in pursuit of material wealth (Bredeloup 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Lord Lugard, British governor of Nigeria, from 1914 to 1919, showed great admiration for the Hausa-Fulani hierarchical social structure in Northern Nigeria, describing them as more developed than ‘tribes’ of Southern Nigeria. Consequently, in attempts to ‘develop’ the latter, missionary educational activity was greater in the South (Chukunta 1978: 69-70).

From the 1960s until the mid 1980s one sees the expansion of state education - secular, Christian and Muslim - and the establishment of federal colleges in the 1970s, as a way in which to extend educational provision for the masses (Peil 1982: 159). At the same time, after Independence, entrepreneurs began to establish for profit schools (Rose and Adelabu 2007: 71). The implementation of Structural Adjustment Policies in 1986 resulted in a rapid contraction in educational resourcing and provision, decreasing standards and a crisis in the educational system (Nwagwu 1997). Disenchanted with state education, many parents, at both primary and secondary levels, turned to the burgeoning private school sector (Ogunsanya and Thomas 2004: 80). Significantly, their clientele include local Nigerians as well as the children of expatriate Nigerians (Harma 2013). Tapping into the heritage and cultural legacy market, a wide variety of private schools target expatriate Nigerians through websites, open days and marketing campaigns - competing in a bid to woo the best students. Prospective students take entrance exams in the U.K.<sup>10</sup>

Such educational choice must be situated in a Nigerian political economy in which there are huge inequalities between the rich and poor (The Economist April 7, 2014).<sup>11</sup> As the largest

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<sup>10</sup> There is a body of literature on the burgeoning international education market that focuses primarily on higher education in western countries (see for example Waters 2006:180; King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003; Olwig and Valentin 2015). However, there is comparatively less literature on private schools and higher education in countries in the South.

<sup>11</sup> See for instance websites such as 'In Lagos the 1% takes stock' (<http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/04/25/lagos-nigeria-fashion-deola-sagoe-alara-temple-muse/>).

economy in Africa, Nigeria is the seventh largest producer of oil in the world.<sup>12</sup> Inequality is attributed largely to years of military rule in which the latter effectively pillaged the economy (Smith 2001: 804). Yet, private schools do not simply cater for the wealthy. In a calculated bid for social mobility and the status and networks that education affords, poorer families with few resources, sacrifice in order to send their children to cheaper private schools (Ogunsanya and Thomas 2004; cf. Binaiisa 2013: 890; Last 2000: 362). Prices for private schools range drastically, with cheaper schools attracting poorer Nigerians, particularly in Lagos state where ‘...12,098 private schools cater to 57% of the state’s enrolled children...’.<sup>13</sup> Most private schools are entirely self-financing and, although they need to be registered, operate independently from the government. They are, however, required to have government recognition of their status (Harma 2013: 548). Indeed, children may be fostered to well educated relatives who are better educated than the child’s parents in the belief that their education and professional status (e.g. as a banker, teacher, government official etc.) will improve the fostered child’s prospects.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, geographic mobility for education, whether local or transnational, is seen as key to ensuring social mobility, as well as fulfilling an array of other aspirations (Brooks and Everett 2008).

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<sup>12</sup> Oil ‘...accounts for about 40% of the Gross Domestic Product and 70% of government revenues’ (Ikelegbe 2005:208).

<sup>13</sup> Costs for elite private boarding schools vary from \$4,000 to \$20,000 for fees alone (Expat Arrivals Website).

<sup>14</sup> The act of fostering, where children are entrusted to relatives or friends in order to affirm relations, as an additional source of labour, and to enable children to attend school and acquire additional skills, is a common practice throughout West Africa (Goody 1982).



## **Nigerian Migration to the UK and the Politics of Education**

An estimated 98,000 UK residents were born in Nigeria, which makes them the second largest U.K. immigrant group from Africa and the tenth largest out of all immigrant nationalities (Matheson 2010: 17). Most of them live in Greater London. The majority of Nigerian migrants are of Yoruba descent and/or grew up in Lagos, which is dominated largely by the Yoruba. Nigerians in the UK are Muslims and Christians and in particular, there is a vibrant landscape of Nigerian-dominated Pentecostal churches.

Nigerian migrants who have come to the UK in larger numbers since the 1950s, have come largely for education. These students from non-elite backgrounds focussed on return to now independent Nigeria (Harris 2006: 23). Wives of such students often supported their husbands with earnings from low paid jobs (Harris 2006: 30); due to the financial pressure on parents, children were sometimes left behind in Nigeria, sent home, but also fostered out to white British families in order to enable their parents to study and / or work (Goody and Groothius 2007). The importance placed on education has not diminished among the many educated middle class professionals and entrepreneurs who have come to the UK since the economic crisis in Nigeria in the mid-1980s.

With a structurally and financially stronger population in the UK today, Nigerians have become more transnationally mobile. In this sense, they have formed “multi-layered, multi-sited *transnational social fields*, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1003, our emphasis; see also Glick Schiller 2005). Within the current period of neoliberal globalisation many people are subjected to precarious working conditions and various forms of social protection are increasingly the preserve of

‘highly skilled workers, corporate capital, or those with inherited wealth’ (Gill 1995: 401). Consequently, in the transnational social field that Maier and Coleman (2011: 453) call ‘London-Lagos’, children move in order to obtain the adequate sort of education, networks and cultural dispositions to help give them the best start in life (cf. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000).

Importantly, decisions to send children to Nigeria need to be understood in relation to educational cuts, and increasing privatisation, which have brought about a seismic change in the nature and quality of state educational provision in the U.K. (Ball 2012:2). Further, with the growth of neoliberal policy we see enhanced competition, in which schools’ achievements are measured by a range of performance indicators. The effect of such policies has been to (re) produce existing racial and class based inequalities as schools seek to attract the strongest students within a performance led environment (Apple 2001: 413, Ball et al. 1994). As performance indicators are published in public league tables, those schools that perform well are rewarded. They, in turn, seek to attract students who contribute to, and / or are seen to have the potential to contribute to, a school’s strong performance in the league tables. This results in ‘the reinforcement of intensely competitive structures of mobility both within and outside the school’ (Apple 2010: 410). It is widely recognised that the middle classes are positioned in such a way as to manipulate this system to their advantage (Ibid.,: 414). Although British Nigerian parents in this study are middle class, their class based experiences are mediated by race (Gilborn 2008) gender and, in the case of first generation migrants, their migratory status. Critical of poor educational experiences for their children, low expectations from teachers and differences in educational outcomes for different groups of students as a result of racism within schools (Stevens 2007: 171; Equality Act in gov.uk: 30), many felt that the British state educational

system did not instil the requisite levels of ambition in their children (cf. Bledsoe and Sow 2007:8). Such dissatisfaction encourages some parents to either send their children to boarding school in West Africa or, as a first measure for those who can afford to, to private school in the U.K. Further, by drawing on transnational opportunities they make themselves, and their children, less vulnerable to potential racism and the British educational system (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: 9).

### **Discipline and the Making of Good Subjects**

High-end boarding schools in Nigeria can be a means to deal with a financially and morally challenging UK environment, resulting in on going intergenerational tension within families, as the following case illustrates. Patience previously went to a private school in Croydon, South London before attending boarding school in Nigeria from the age of 14. She was underperforming at her school in Croydon, forgetting books at home and showing general disorganization in her daily routine. Prior to this they had had negative experiences of state education for their children. Yet, Patience was the only one of her siblings to be sent to Nigeria because of her lack of self-discipline. Her parents and teachers felt she needed the structured and regulated routine that a boarding school environment would offer because both parents were working and felt unable to ‘micromanage’ Patience’s life. Inspired by other African parents who had sent their children back to boarding schools in Zimbabwe, Ghana and Nigeria, Patience’s parents looked at a range of schools in Nigeria

opting for a high-end internationally oriented single sex secondary boarding school in Lagos.<sup>15</sup>

Sending children to Nigeria for schooling reflects a transnational collective endeavour - involving parents, extended family, teachers and peers within boarding schools - to produce particular types of subjects and the requisite networks that facilitate success (Cohen 1981). In this sense, these moral and aspirational projects do not just involve family members but also key actors within a wider Nigerian educational and social world (cf. Carling et al. 2012).<sup>16</sup> For instance, parents may consult grandparents or other relatives at home, reflecting on the needs of the child, those of the parents and the nature of intergenerational tension between the two. Further, grandparents and relatives involved in the care and emotional support of children who have been sent back often benefit from parental financial contributions, as well as the affirmation of transnational kinship relations. Alternatively, pressure to send a child to Nigeria comes from relatives in Nigeria. In one case, the maternal grandparents had repeatedly asked for a girl to be sent to school in Nigeria. To their Lagos-based grandparents' mind she had severely lacked 'respect for her elders' (parents, grandparents and other adults) when the grandparents had come to London for a visit. They were concerned that British education and society would not teach her the

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<sup>15</sup> Despite the costs of regular travel between London and Lagos, fees, general expenses and chauffeur costs, boarding school in Nigeria proved to be cheaper than the private day school Patience attended in her South London suburb.

<sup>16</sup> Often enquiries are made with schools, relatives and friends within transnational social networks. Sometimes these plans are dismissed. In such cases, the schools may have been found to be inadequate and / or no relatives or friends were available to act as a guardian while the child is in Nigeria.

‘Yoruba culture’ of respect and obedience and that she would get into trouble. The girl was sent to Nigeria to boarding school and has been in the guardianship of her grandparents for the past four years. Similarly, Patience is supported and cared for by relatives in Benin and Lagos whom she visits in her school breaks. In most cases, trusted family relations have facilitated logistics, and worked to meet the emotional needs of children who had been sent to Nigeria.

Nonetheless, Patience’s move to Nigeria was not without emotional cost to her mother Mary and the rest of the family.

*Oh, it was hard. I cried that day. You know? Even I broke down crying because...And you could always think what have I done?...And, er, to have been put in that position, you know, where we have had to put her into a school abroad, I think it was quite hard.*

The family felt there were certain events and occasions that they had to put on hold because Patience was not there. ‘We are not complete. My husband would say “no” if we are planning anything, ”not until she comes back”’. This sense of waiting for Patience’s return highlights the feelings of loss, and the deep emotional cost that some families feel when they send a child back to Nigeria. Yet, these mixed emotions help to promote and guide conduct: Mary was adamant that Patience could only acquire the skills, cultural dispositions – polite, organised, independent, educated, time-conscious and well-mannered - that she needed in a boarding school environment. Mary uses terms such as ‘organisation, respect, regimental’, adamantly claiming that Patience needs to learn ‘...that things have to be done at a certain time, in a certain way and in a certain manner.’ These dispositions and qualities

speak to Nigerian conceptions of the good child, which are partly informed by culturally specific notions of what it means to be educated (Levinson and Holland 1996). The latter is rooted in nostalgic accounts of the ethos of Nigerian education prior to the introduction of colonial education in which emphasis was placed on the group, ‘respect for elders and those in positions of authority’, an appreciation of ‘cultural heritage’ and the development of the intellect and ‘character’ (Obiakor 1998: 59). As well as exposing their children to Nigerian society, parents who send their children to boarding school in Nigeria seek to enforce desirable behavior by immersing them in a particular moral world, with its own disciplinary regime. In so doing they create a moral mirror against which they judge and provincialize British society and its shortcomings.

*‘Nigeria has a way of moulding them...Discipline in Nigeria is much more spot on than what we have here...But you see, in schools, even though they call them ajebota (rich, spoilt kids who eat butter)<sup>17</sup>...they still flog them. They discipline them very well if they misbehave. The way they brought them up is that here, the child can walk past you and they won’t even look at you. But at [the school she attends in Nigeria] you’d have to say good morning, good afternoon, good evening...They expect them to respect them... all those traditional things that probably did exist in the UK in the past, but no longer exist at schools today.’*

Mary emphasizes the importance of corporal punishment in child rearing and the making of good children in Nigeria, a practice meted out to unruly children, regardless of class

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<sup>17</sup> The ability to ‘eat butter’ symbolises a particular level of wealth and privilege.

affiliation. One of the interlocutors, an elderly Baptist Reverend, in Nigeria who had cared with his wife for their granddaughter while she went to school in Nigeria echoed this view. He claimed that the only way to ease intergenerational friction between parents and children was to send the latter back to Nigeria for training, without which it is difficult to instil children with respect for elders ‘...in England if you beat your child, for this reason or another, they call it child abuse. In this country [Nigeria] it is ‘training’!’<sup>18</sup> His beliefs, Marys and other parents, reveal the ambivalent, hesitant and fraught relationship that the Nigerian diaspora has with the British state where the latter is seen to dictate appropriate childrearing practices through child protection measures thereby undermining Nigerian parenting strategies (Maier and Coleman 2011; McGregor 2008; DeLoach and Gottlieb 2000; Carling et al. 2012).<sup>19</sup> Indeed, many parents felt that the problems and protracted crises they face in their relationships with their children partly stem from state education, as we have seen, as well as British society’s short comings (the lack of discipline, moral values and respect for elders), rather than from their parenting methods.

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<sup>18</sup> Corporal punishment in British schools has been illegal since 1987. However, smacking is still permitted in homes. Booklets such as ‘Manual on Child Protection for African Parents in the UK’, directed at the African diasporic community, attempt to prevent abuse towards children, whilst offering childrearing support and guidance.

<sup>19</sup> At an evening parenting class in a big Nigerian-led Pentecostal church in London, Nigerian parents expressed their sense of disempowerment by the state and legislation that restricts their ability to discipline their children as they would ideally like to.

Mary harks back to a period in Britain's past when, it is alleged, corporal punishment in schools and homes was common practice and children showed respect for adults. Paradoxically, the methods to instil respect, new habits and a work ethic in the Nigerian educational context are informed by the British educational colonial legacy of discipline through corporal punishment. With the introduction of Christian missionary schooling in Nigeria in the mid-nineteenth century corporal punishment was used in both mission and state schools. The limited literature in this area maintains that beatings and corporal punishment were not as common in some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa prior to the colonial period (Emy 1972: 128-35; Westerman 1938: 18; cf. Sulaiman 2012). Although beatings took place, this was often undertaken by other family members, or in connection with initiation practices (La Fontaine 1986: 98). Further, physical punishment, within both mission and state schools, was central to the civilizing mission of British colonial educational policy and colonial modernity, where physical punishment became associated with being civilized and modern. Consequently, those who beat children came to be seen as civilized and those who did not were 'backward' (Last 2000: 359-386).<sup>20</sup> Indeed '...legitimacy accrued to beating primarily by virtue of it being a particularly European practice' (Ibid., 362; cf. Pierce 2001). By sending Patience back to Nigeria, Mary actively bypasses British legislation and assumes a position of moral superiority vis a vis the U.K. Yet, she also affirms disciplinary practices rooted, ironically, in a colonial modernity that she feels is central to the making of a good child. She attributes these practices with greater

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<sup>20</sup> However, the non-Muslim Hausa generally do not beat their children, who are likened to visitors and are part of a spirit world. In a context of high infant mortality, parents need to encourage their children to stay: a departure is equated with death and return to a spirit world (Last 2000: 368; Gottlieb 1998, 2004; Okri 1991).



legitimacy as she draws on nostalgic representations of Victorian child rearing strategies, reworking historically sedimented practices to suit current and immediate needs.

Despite Mary's strong and clear ideas about appropriate child rearing practices and the use of physical punishment in enforcing this behaviour, she readily admits that she does not have the time to socialise Patience accordingly: 'The school in effect are doing what I should have been doing....They are doing it. Allowing me to have the easy part of it.' As part of its relationship with fee-paying clients, the elite school Patience attends in Nigeria takes the lead in working to change Patience into a disciplined, well mannered child through the time tabled rigour of daily routines, a regime of punctuality, academic achievement and an abiding appreciation for education. As the elite Nigerian boarding school takes on a full time role in this project of transformation Patience feels compelled to become a good subject and manage the range of emotions that schooling in Nigeria evoke.

Through processes of subjectification and self-formation (Foucault 1977) people actively turn themselves into subjects. Following Foucault's three modes of objectification of the subject, the third and most significant mode, subjectification, highlights the practices and techniques that are central to this process of self-formation. As children self-govern and self-regulate they become particular types of subjects. In Patience's case this process involves a range of disciplinary measures enforced by teachers, relatives, parents, peers and, the children themselves. Patience is actively engaged in self-making, as well as being made through culturally specific regimes of family and school based discipline, punishment, and training (cf. Mahmood 2005). She describes in detail the regimented routine and importance of obedience in the culture at her boarding school. 'You are in Nigeria. We have a certain time to do certain things...I had to be ready to just be that orderly person. It was very hard.'

Patience had to perform the role of an obedient and well-mannered young woman, negating feelings of distress and anxiety. Placed in the boarding school culture of the elite school she attends, she describes the feelings of loss and emotional breakdown she experienced when her mother left the first time.

As she sits in her living room in a South London suburb, having undergone a ‘successful’ transformation, Patience claims to be much happier now that she has changed, preferring ‘...the person I am now than the person I was before.’ Yet, even now, at home on holiday, her feelings of loss and incompleteness return at the prospect of going back to school in Lagos. Subjected to the ‘disciplinary power of uncertainty’ (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes 2016: 604), that characterises neoliberal subjectivities, Patience is engaged in a continual process of self-improvement and self-formation.

*‘I just don’t want to leave my family. I feel like this all the time, every time I go back. Every time I go, pieces of me will just...any time I am walking through the gate at the airport, pieces are just dropped, they are just left behind...I have nothing. I don’t have anybody around me anymore. I hate going back. But when I get there, it will all change.’*

As Patience leaves her family to return to boarding school in Nigeria, she loses pieces of herself, pieces that she has to work, through a laboured performance, to replace and transform in her boarding school environment. As she moves from one place to the other - from home, to the airport lounge, to the airplane, to the chauffeur driven car in Lagos and, finally, to the confines of the school - she struggles to locate and (re-) place herself in these diverse settings. With the passing of time Patience draws on and generates diverse

translocal subjectivities, informed by a range of emotional states, as well as a range of geographic spaces. 'Nigeria has changed me, it really has...Even though I don't want to admit it sometimes, but it has helped me. I am a better person.' As Patience moves from London to Lagos, the 'calm' atmosphere of the school, and its surrounds, makes her feel as if she is back in the U.K. Her movement from London to the enclosed, bubble-like world of the elite school with its green courtyard, strutting peacocks, locked in by firmly guarded iron gates -as well as the relations in both places - are central features of her transformation. Here geographic and temporal mobility is key to the emergence of Patience's varied translocal subjectivities.

### **Social Positioning and the Production of Privileged Subjects**

The transformative power of mobility in fashioning privileged subjects is clearly captured in the following accounts of the Olaju family. They live in one of the commuter towns to the Northwest of London. Rose and Ola, the parents, sent their elder daughters, Bola, Tolu and Ayo, back to Nigeria for a number of years and plan to send their youngest daughter, Kemi, back in a few years. They lived in Peckham, a more notorious part of South London, twenty-one years ago, and decided at the time that they would send their children back to school in Nigeria before secondary school. Their case differs from Patience's in the sense that it is part of normal family practice. All the girls knew that they would be sent to Nigeria from a young age, and, unlike Patience, had little choice in the matter. Ola is keen to convey the fact that if things did not work out for the girls, they could always return: 'It's not do or die. We can always bring them back.' In the interview it seems that this is as much a comfort to the parents as it is to the girls. However, Rose and Ola felt strongly that because they both worked they were not in a position to instil the necessary respect, morals

and cultural dispositions, as well as protect them from ‘the thieves [and] bad habits...’ in the area.

As well as highlighting the importance of the affirmation of cultural heritage, much of the literature on the motivations for sending children to their parents’ home countries for education highlights the need for discipline, along with protection from the threatening urban cultures of danger and immorality they inhabit (Bledsoe and Sow; Mazzucato and Schans 2011; Qureshi 2014). Nigerian parents make reference to the crime and trouble that plague children living and attending school in deprived parts of inner city London, such as Peckham, highlighting the ‘relationships between ethnicity, poverty and space’ (Hall 2015: 26) that characterise the urban landscape. Rose describes it [Peckham] - known as ‘Little Lagos’ because of the number of Nigerians living there (Barber 168: 2013) - as one of the worst places to bring up children. Drawing on the familiar trope of urban decay and moral collapse, Ola recounts the way in which some friends who chose not to send their children to Nigeria returned home from work to find the police at their house, and guns under their children’s beds - features of the violent landscape which, from his perspective, characterise poorer parts of London. Moving to the more prosperous surrounds of suburban London served as a first step in protecting their children from the dark underbelly of urban life; a good education served as the second. Both Ola and Rose place emphasis on the importance of education as a sign of social status:

*‘In Nigeria, it is something you have to do if you don’t want to be looked down upon. You need to go to school, you need to go to University. If not, you get looked down upon by everybody. Because you are more or less like a downtrodden person, somebody not to be reckoned with.’*

Rose and Ola work hard to position their daughters in an environment where they will acquire the cultural dispositions, skills, transnational orientation and networks necessary to succeed in a changing global political economy. Such cultural dispositions and transnational orientations ideally encourage those who have been educated in Nigeria to adopt a global outlook, as Bola maintains. 'I would go to Nigeria again. Anywhere...I mean there was a point when I was thinking of going to China for a bit. To work. Yeah. I would go where the money is. And I definitely think that [being in Nigeria] did help.' Given increasing levels of economic precarity and enhanced competition for social mobility, 'network building' (Portes and Walton 1981: 60) with elite Nigerians in Nigeria, and the U.K. is increasingly necessary to the (re) production of middle class, neoliberal subjectivities. Indeed, the girls, and other informants, talked about the new friendships they had formed with Nigerian girls and other British Nigerian girls who had been sent to Nigeria for education and were now back in the U.K.

Similarly, Rose and Ola held strong ideas, rooted in a diasporic imaginary (Berg 2009: 267), about the need for their daughters to learn about struggle while at boarding school in Nigeria. They were keen to ensure that their daughters were never complacent about their privileged lives and material comforts in the United Kingdom. Return to Nigeria would ideally expose their daughters to such struggle, whilst also, paradoxically, serving as an act of social positioning. Yet, there is clearly a discrepancy between what they felt their daughters would achieve by being sent to Nigeria and what their daughters felt they had learned, as the following interview extract illustrates:

*Katrin: And then, maybe you two [the two older daughters, 21 and 19 years old] can respond to that... when you are in Lagos and you get into the gates of the boarding school, there is a very big sense that it's a very good school. It's very clean, it's very tidy. In Nigeria, being part of [that school] you actually get a sense that you are privileged...*

*Daughter 1: I would say absolutely!*

*Daughter 2: I agree!*

*Daughter 1: And I know where they [their parents] are coming from in terms of 'ok, you see these kids, you know, hawking...' but it's actually not. The school they sent us to, it did make us feel bigger. It's a school full of snobs if I can be frank! And if you go to a school where your friend is the daughter of a senator and you are going to their house and they have swimming pool-s – you know, plural! – and huge houses and we are in these air conditioned cars and we are driving by drivers... half of the time this whole thing of seeing those kids [poor children hawking in the streets of Lagos]: you are not looking outside the window! You are sleeping because you are in this really cushiony air-conditioned car... The idea of 'don't be complacent because, you know, it costs money to pay for electricity and water'... but we were at a school where as soon as the power cuts, the generator is on... And there isn't times when there is no water. I can count on my hand how many times something happened that went wrong and there was no water.<sup>21</sup>*

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<sup>21</sup> Family interview, 21/08/2012.

In trying to make sense of their Nigerian schooling experience, the girls rely on oft repeated narratives to guide them, finding comfort in their familiarity. Confirming Patience's account of life in boarding school in Lagos as distinct and separate from the experience of ordinary Nigerians, Bola likens the school to Eton, describing the wealth of the Nigerian girls who attended: many had several swimming pools, air conditioned chauffeur driven cars and annual holidays to Europe. In the fashioning of new translocal subjectivities, Bola and her sisters are immersed in a space occupied largely by the Nigerian privileged elite; one that is considerably more affluent than the one they inhabit in suburban London. Within this space Bola and her sisters participate, albeit temporarily, in a world of wealth and privilege. Their social position as elites is generated and affirmed within the space of their Nigerian boarding school.

Initially blind to the poverty of Nigeria, and in a direct challenge to her parents' views, Bola maintains that: 'I think it's here [in the U.K.] that we have learned...about struggle. It wasn't until I got back here (to the U.K.) that I started to see things.' This statement speaks to the relatively moderate living conditions of many Nigerian migrants living in London, and those involved in this research, as well as to the disparities in wealth and extremes of poverty and hardship that many face. It took her four years, when she had returned for a holiday to Nigeria, to realise that poverty was a central feature of the Nigerian landscape as well. 'But because of the situation I was in [at boarding school] I was never gonna see it!' Her parents had expected that life in Nigeria would make their children value the material comforts they had in the UK. However, Bola associates struggle and poverty with life in London, and opulence and comfort with her life in Nigeria, serving to highlight the changing nature of global geographies of power in which British-Nigerians, in a form of prestige migration, are immersed in a world of wealth and material comfort in their elite

Nigerian boarding school. In embracing their translocal subjectivities, their sense of national belonging becomes increasingly fluid: 'I don't really have ties anywhere. I don't really feel I am fully Nigerian, I don't feel I am British, I just...you know? I don't think nationality is really my...it's not a big deal to me because I have had it both ways and either place I fit in properly' (Tolu). Nonetheless, the girls still affirm their Britishness in Nigeria. Surrounded by wealth and privilege in the hidden confines of boarding school life in Nigeria, the girls are accorded status because of their Britishness, a key attribute in the development of elite networks. Further, the girls 'keep their options open' by drawing on the symbolic and cultural capital of their Britishness in Nigeria and converting it into social capital, in the form of extensive networks, and economic capital, in terms of University prospects and future jobs, once back in the U.K. (cf. Glick Schiller et al. 1992: 12).<sup>22</sup> Yet, some children who have been sent to Nigeria come back bitter and angry about the experience, as in Joseph's case.

### **Resistance and the Making of Vulnerable Subjects**

Although many children are given a choice some, positioned as pawns, are forced to go to school in Nigeria. Indeed, they are highly mobile precisely because they adhere to adult authority and reluctantly fulfil their dictates (cf. Olwig 2012: 936). Joseph was born and

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<sup>22</sup> A young women who had been sent back commented that the more elite schools in Nigeria often have a non-Nigerian principal. '...the parents see that the schools here are actually better, so if someone from here goes there, he's gonna bring that mentality that is in the U.K. to Nigeria' (cf. Nyamnjoh 2012:139).



brought up in South London in a small Victorian house. Although not as well off as Patience and the Olaju daughters, his mother was comfortable enough to be able to send him to Nigeria for secondary schooling, from the age of 13 to 18. However, unlike the girls, Joseph did not return for visits to Britain during school holidays because his mother could not afford regular return trips, nor did his mother visit him in Nigeria. This would no doubt have contributed to his feelings of abandonment, loneliness and negativity. He is now in London, living on his own, although one of his brothers occasionally stays at the house with him. He studies art and fashion at a local college and works at a clothing shop. Unlike the other interlocutors, Joseph' account about this time in Nigeria is particularly bitter because his mother died just before his return to London. Consequently, despite having four siblings in London, all of whom are married, he feels very much on his own and conveys a sense of disappointment in people generally. During the interview, as well as having a headache and feeling under the weather, Joseph gives the impression of feeling irritated by the questions, no doubt because they evoke painful and unpleasant memories. At times he pauses and hangs his head, exposing a profound vulnerability.

Although Joseph claims to have trusted his mother's decision to send him to Nigeria, confirming that he was 'misbehaving...I wasn't doing well in school', his sense of abandonment is silently conveyed through his body language and frequent pauses in his accounts of life in Nigeria. Yet, to make sense of his mother's decision, Joseph claimed he had been difficult and that his mother had no choice but to send him to Lagos against his will. 'I wasn't acting up to my mum's standards. I was getting in a lot of trouble.' In this sense, he was very different from his other siblings. As well as misbehaving at home, causing on going conflict between mother and son, Joseph was excluded from school. Indeed, the friends and sisters of boys who had been sent to Nigeria for education

maintained that boys had more unpleasant and traumatising experiences in Nigeria than their female counterparts. They were treated more harshly than the girls, partly because they had often been 'in trouble' in London before being sent to Nigeria and were sent against their will. As a single parent his mother clearly could not cope with his behaviour. It was at this point that his mother decided to take him to Nigeria. Nonetheless, being told by his mother that he was going to go to school in Nigeria came as a big shock as Joseph conveys in a state of disbelief: 'I didn't believe her until I proper got put into the school, the boarding school. So, I didn't proper believe it, I thought it was just a joke to try to scare me...She just left me there.' It is not uncommon for parents to threaten to send children back to their home countries, without ever actually doing so, instilling fear as a way in which to address disciplinary issues (Orellana et al. 2001:583; cf. Ellis 1978: 49). Yet, his mother clearly was unsure of her decision, highlighting the sense of uncertainty that many parents feel in taking such decisions: 'My mum called me every week...sometimes twice a week...she was very worried about me all the time. You can imagine leaving your own last-born child in another country. It's hard.'

Despite understanding his mother's motivations for sending him back Joseph doesn't like to think about his time there: 'I don't really want to think about it because when I start to think about it, I will start getting upset. Don't want to think about it at all...I just keep it to myself.' Nonetheless, similarly to the other interviewees, his time in Nigeria instilled him with a strong sense of discipline, hard work and respect for his elders:

*'..if you don't learn them you get forced to learn them. You get hit or you get punished...You just have to obey, you don't have the choice...If you don't work, if you're lazy, if you're rude, whatever you do that's bad, if*

*you do it over there, they will beat you with a stick called cane. Or some big cord...You have to respect your elders. That is the first rule.'*

Likening his punishment to a form of abuse, Joseph sighs, conveying a sense of fatigue and resignation. As he is subjected to the school's authority, as well as that of his mother's, he feels there is no space for resistance (cf. Gardner 2012: 898). Yet, by negating his experiences of life in Nigeria, expressed through his reluctance to think and talk about his time spent there, he gives the impression of resisting through his strategic use of memory (Foucault 1977). In this sense, Joseph's experiences clearly highlight the way in which these transformatory projects - in which children are sent back for schooling in order to experience Nigerian socialization practices and to develop good, neoliberal subjectivities - are rarely seamless and, in some cases, extremely difficult. Apprehensive about the potential negative side effects of sending their children to Nigeria, some parents choose not to send their children, feeling they will fare better in the U.K. Alternatively, they compromise and visit Nigeria on a regular basis with their children. Joseph maintains that he would never send his own children there: 'I don't wanna keep in touch with nobody from Nigeria! I want to move on because I don't want to think about it...I don't want to talk to anyone from Nigeria. I am done with that. I have suffered enough.' His negation of his time spent in Nigeria, as well as all things Nigerian, as compared to Patience's active involvement in the decision to send her to Nigeria and her experience of positive transformation, demonstrates the importance of choice and negotiation in decisions to send children back to the home country. Joseph associates mobility and Nigeria with trauma and loss. His feelings of abandonment and loneliness are compounded because his mother has passed away: 'My life is hard. My life is not easy...So, I am just surviving, just on my own.'

Some of the children who are sent back to their parents' home countries are seen to be unruly, ill mannered, lacking in discipline (cf. Orellana et al. 2001) and the possession of valued cultural dispositions, whilst others are presented as fragile subjects, who are vulnerable to the culture of danger that defines the neighbourhoods and wider urban contexts in which they live (drugs, racism, gang culture, violence, sex, truism, educational failure etc.). Yet, as Joseph's unruly behaviour is beaten out of him, he returns to the U.K. possessing a vulnerability that stems from his experience in Nigeria, as well as the loss of his mother. His experience not only confirms his fear and apprehension of life in Nigeria, impressions that were initially generated from the media, but leaves him with a tangible hatred and deep anxiety for the country and the region, as well as a mistrust in people generally. Nonetheless, his plans to continue studying, combining business with art, highlight the sense of focus and ambition that he now possesses.

### **Concluding remarks**

In highlighting the transnational nature of British Nigerians' lives we must be attentive to the relationship between 'historical experience, structural conditions', and the cultural and social contexts that they move between, in this case Nigeria and the U.K. (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: 8). African elites have a long history of sending children to the U.K. for education. Similarly, some first and second generation British Nigerians parents were sent to boarding school within Nigeria whilst living there in their youth. The decision to send British Nigerians back to Nigeria for education must be understood within the larger structural context of global capitalism, as well as in relation to the cultural and ideological contexts of the U.K. and Nigeria.

We have argued that the choice to send children to boarding school in Nigeria, and the practices and performances this choice entails on the part of the children who are sent there, does a number of different things: it serves to disturb and contest taken for granted notions of educational provision in Nigeria rooted in global geographies of power, whilst generating counter narratives about Nigerian education, society and economy. Further, an analysis of this movement questions assumptions and extends our thinking about particular spatial and temporal configurations of progress and modernity in relation to educational migration. It does so in two important respects: by provincializing the U.K. and rethinking ‘the centre’, resituating it ‘in its complex web of colonial interconnections’ (Nash 2002:222), as well as in the new geography of centrality of global cities that underpins neoliberal globalisation; and by questioning analytical distinctions within the literature between mobile professionals and transnational elites, and migrants and diasporans. British Nigerians, as members of both of these categories, make choices in an international education marketplace about where to educate their children.

Further, Nigeria takes on a transformative capacity: circular mobility between London and Lagos generates new and translocal subjectivities. Such a process involves engaging in a project of the self by dismantling parts of the self - a central part of the process of self-making - as well as being remade, by developing particular cultural dispositions and skills. Some British Nigerian parents endeavour to turn their children into good subjects, rescuing them from an educational, social, and moral quagmire, they seek to equip them with the training, discipline, independence, and cultural dispositions and knowledge, which they feel their children can more readily acquire in Nigeria. Yet, this is not just a moral and cultural project but too an act of social positioning, an incremental process, in which children are

fashioned into neoliberal subjects (independent, autonomous, competitive, ambitious, self-regulating, self-inventive etc.) in the (re) production of middle class subjectivities and the pursuit of successful futures in the U.K., Nigeria and / or elsewhere. Further, they are socialised to possess the necessary values and skills that allow them to move and operate at ease within a number of different contexts (cf. Coe and Shani 2015: 563).

As we have seen such a process is above all a collective one and demands compliance and a degree of willingness, although not in Joseph's case, on the part of the child. In this sense, children are used as a symbolic space where concerns and unease about British society and the educational system can be addressed: Nigerian migrants' relationship with Britain is contradictory and highlights their 'ambivalent situatedness' (Arndt 2009: 107-108). They make choices within an international educational market place, travelling back and forth between London and Lagos, affirming and cultivating networks, and furthering social and material objectives both in Britain and Nigeria. At the same time, they draw on disciplinary practices, which, paradoxically, find their roots in the civilizing mission of British colonial modernity. Just as the Olu girls are accorded status in Nigeria because of their Britishness, in a similar vein education in Nigeria continues to be rooted in an epistemological hierarchy in which European knowledge, values and educational practices and systems, are privileged over indigenous ones (Nyamnjoh 2012:129). Consequently, the choice to send children to school in Nigeria as well as challenging global geographies of power, sheds light on the continued relevance of the colonial educational legacy, its disciplinary strategies and epistemological hierarchies, which are, in turn, part of the broader project of modernity itself.



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