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Of Maps, Margins and Storylines: Sociologically Imagining Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "The Thing Around Your Neck" and "Americanah"

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**Of Maps, Margins, and Storylines: SOCIOLOGICALLY IMAGINING
CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *THE THING AROUND YOUR NECK* AND
*AMERICANAH**¹**

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*Presented to the Departments of Sociology and International Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree with honors of Bachelor of Arts*

*Omolara Abiona, Omolara.Abiona@trincoll.edu, I would like to acknowledge my thesis advisors, Professor Tanetta Andersson (Sociology) and Professor Seth Markle (International Studies). I am very grateful to for both their guidance and support of my intellectual risks throughout the thesis fruition process. I would also like to thank Professor Donna-Dale Marcano, Professor Stephen Valocchi, Professor Trisha Tiamzon and Professor Isaac Kamola for their helpful conversations during the process. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who tirelessly encouraged me throughout the stressful process and respected my space during my writing and research.

ABSTRACT

This undergraduate senior thesis investigates how Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie conveys the sociological imagination through the fictional characters and plots in *Americanah* and *The Thing Around Your Neck*. By conducting an ethnographic content analysis of these books, I investigate the interplay between history and biography, as presented in C. Wright Mills' *The Sociological Imagination*. The two principal aims of the research are: 1) to explore the historical, structural implications of the current Nigerian diaspora and 2) to illuminate the biographies of contemporary Nigerian women through an intersectional feminist analysis. The theoretical framework is a hybrid of cultural sociology (Griswold) and diaspora studies (Butler). The findings are split into two parts: 1) history, which looks at the structural and diaspora elements of the homeland, hostland, and homeland and 2) biography, which analyzes the intersectionality in the changing positionalities of a diasporic Nigerian female protagonist. Overall, the purpose of this project is 1) to present narrative literature, especially African literature, as sociological knowledge; 2) to understand the contemporary Nigerian diaspora; and 3) to recognize the ability of storytelling to particularize and liberate the marginalized.

Key words: sociological imagination; African literature; diaspora; intersectionality

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	2
Introduction	4
Literature Review	9
<i>Sociology of Culture and the Origins of Sociology of Literature</i>	9
<i>Sociology of African Literature</i>	13
<i>African Feminism Through Literature</i>	17
<i>Existing Scholarship on Adichie's Literature</i>	19
<i>Review of Diasporic Studies and Nigeria</i>	24
Theoretical Perspectives	28
Research Methods	34
<i>Research Design</i>	34
<i>Sampling and Data Collection</i>	36
<i>Methodological Challenges</i>	37
Findings	39
<i>Part I: History</i>	40
<i>Homeland</i>	40
<i>Host-land</i>	55
<i>Homeland Upon Return</i>	58
<i>Part II. Biography</i>	60
<i>Relationships</i>	60
<i>Rituals</i>	66
<i>Restrictions</i>	68
Discussion	71
Conclusion	73
References	76

“Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.”

-Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *The Danger of a Single Story* (2007)

"Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both."

-C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (1959)

African writers have historically used fiction literature as an activist, nation-building tool to debunk hegemonic, Eurocentric narratives about Africa and African people. Today, a significant African issue is the homogenization of African countries, peoples, and stories. Globalization on the African continent has led to the emergence of a new generation in the African diaspora.² However, the invisibility of this phase of the African diaspora leads to respective invisibility of the mobile agents, especially women. Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's literature takes a fresh approach to the traditional "African novel" framework and explores modern-day Nigerian experiences from a diasporic, intersectional feminist standpoint.

² "Diaspora" refers to the movement of a specific ethnic or national group of people across geographical space and time (Safran 1991).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born on September 15, 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria.³ She grew up in Nsukka in a home that was ironically the former home of Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe.⁴ Both of Adichie's parents were professors at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Her father was Nigeria's first professor of statistics, later becoming Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University, and her mother was the first female registrar at the University. After completing her secondary education at the University's school, Adichie studied medicine and pharmacy at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. However, she did not feel fulfilled in this career path and decided to pursue her passion. Thus, she left after a year and a half to study communications at Drexel University in Philadelphia. She finished her bachelor's degree in communications and political science at Eastern Connecticut State University in 2001, graduating summa cum laude. It was during her senior year of her undergraduate studies that she began to write her first novel (*University of Liège* 2015).

Adichie has written five books: *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), *Americanah* (2013), and *We Should All Be Feminists* (2014). *Purple Hibiscus* is narrated by Kambili Achike, a 15-year-old girl who lives in Enugu in postcolonial Nigeria. Her father is a wealthy, revered Catholic authoritarian and political activist. However, he abuses his wife and children and demonizes his Igbo culture, denouncing his own elderly father. Still, Kambili unquestioningly admires her father and craves his approval. It is not until Kambili stays with her Aunt Ifeoma, an outspoken yet impoverished professor in Nsukka, that her

³ Enugu, Nigeria is known as the capital of "Igboland".

⁴ Nsukka, Nigeria is an university town in Enugu State.

perspective on her home life changes. *Half of a Yellow Sun* took place during the Biafran War, a civil war in Nigeria in the late 60s countering the secession of Biafra, a nation led by the Igbo tribe, from Nigeria. It follows two wealthy, Western educated Igbo sisters and their stories of love, betrayal, violence, and national divisions. *The Thing Around Your Neck* is a collection of short stories that highlight the immigrant experience. It features Nigerian men and women living in Nigeria, the United States, and South Africa who navigate emerging identity formations that accompany transnationality. *Americanah* is about a young Nigerian woman, Ifemelu, who moves to the United States to attend college. In the United States, she encounters racism for the first time and must navigate being black, Nigerian, immigrant, and a woman. *We Should All Be Feminists* was adapted from a 2013 TED Talk of the same name. It addresses why feminism is necessary and beneficial for women and men.

She completed her writing through her multiple graduate degrees and fellowships at elite institutions. She earned a master's degree in creative writing at Johns Hopkins University and a master's in African Studies at Yale University in 2008. She was also a Hodder fellow at Princeton University and received a fellowship from the Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Study at Harvard University. It was in the midst of and in between her graduate studies and fellowships that Adichie wrote *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), and *Americanah* (2013). Adichie has received many accolades for these works.⁵

⁵ *Purple Hibiscus* was shortlisted for the Orange Fiction Prize (2004) and received the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book (2005). She won the PEN 'Beyond Margins' Award and the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction in 2007 for *Half of a Yellow Sun*. *Americanah* was arguably her most successful novel to date, which won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 2013 and was named

My first encounter with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's literary work was *Americanah*. As a Nigerian-American woman, it was one of the first books to which I could relate. I learned from an early age that Nigerians in the United States had to be responsible for their own visibility. The tendency to group all African, Caribbean, and Black American ethnicities under "Black" can complicate the ability to embrace specificity as a Nigerian-American. Even as I developed an intersectional view of feminism, my own understanding of my identities left out my Nigerian-American identity because it did not need to be defended as much my blackness or my womanhood. Adichie's fiction takes a special interest in the social locations of Nigerians within the society in which they reside. In making these observations, I decided that a sociological analysis of Adichie's books would be valuable.

C. Wright Mills' "sociological imagination" embodies contemporary sociology's overarching goals: to distinguish "personal troubles" from "public issues" while seeing them as interconnected. According to Mills, the basis of acquiring this sociological imagination is understanding the intertwining of history and biography. It is acknowledging that each individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society, and lives out a biography within some historical sequence (Mills 1959: 3). Mills' definition of history is not merely the past versus the present. Rather, Mills argues that we are all currently living in a historical moment. Monumental events that are understood as history were once the present for a given generation, shaped by structural forces of

among the New York Times Book Review's "Ten Best Books of 2013" and BBC's "Top Ten Books of 2013". She is also a recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship.

these events. This understanding of history is not limited to large-scale events or sudden shifts but it is every structural entity that impacts the present. For example, slavery in the United States and colonialism in Nigeria resulted in different forms of systemic racism. The former involves the domination of Whites over Blacks in the racial structure of the United States from slavery, Jim Crow Segregation, the ghetto, and mass incarceration (Wacquant 2002). This structure is also built on settler colonialism of White settlers over American Indians. The latter refers to imperialism and colonialism of Western nation-states over African countries. According to Mills, biography encompasses all orbits of individual's private lives: family, work, religion, culture, health, romantic relationships, and so on. Biography does not and cannot exist independently of the social institutions with which the individual interacts with every single day. However, individuals often lack the sociological imagination to connect their private troubles to public issues. Every part of biography is influenced by society's structure and the individual's location within this society. The three main questions that a "sociological imaginer" asks are: 1) What is the structure of this particular society as a whole? 2) Where does this society stand in human history? and 3) What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and in this period? (Mills 1959).

This history-biography relationship will serve as the core framework for this thesis. In this research, the historical moment of concern is the emergence of a new generation of the Nigerian diaspora. In tracing this diasporic path from homeland (Nigeria) to host-land (the United States) and back to homeland, the Nigerian mobile agents are being biographically shaped by two nation-states and their respective systemic

features. These biographies will be analyzed using intersectionality theory so as to articulate how marginalization-- and privilege-- affects identities. Intersectionality, coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, theorizes that the multiple oppressions-- whether on the basis of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, and so forth-- do not operate independently of one another but must be understood as "intersecting oppressions" (Crenshaw 1989). This translates into interconnected identities that operate in a field of power. Overall, this research applies the "sociological imagination" to literature in order to produce a diasporic analysis of history and an intersectional analysis of biography. Therefore, the research question for this project is: How do Adichie's fictional characters and plots convey the sociological imagination? By conducting an ethnographic content analysis of select books and short stories, I will explore the historical, structural implications of the current Nigerian diaspora and illuminate the biographies of contemporary Nigerian women through an intersectional feminist analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sociology of Culture and the Origins of the Sociology of Literature

Sociology of literature is a subfield of the sociology of culture, whereby literature is considered a cultural object. Some of the earlier attempts to make this subfield "sociological" analyze the publishing institutions and the circulation of literature. Sociology of literature had a slow start in the 1950s and 60s, and eventually peaked in the 1970s and 80s. Key scholars include Lewis Coser, Lucien Goldmann, and Robert Escarpit. Dominant sociological models, specifically genetic structuralism and semiological analysis, have been adapted for applied studies in the sociology of literature.

According to Joseph (1986), humanistic sociologists believe that "every human activity, including literature, qualifies at least for the sociologist's interest, if not analysis" (Joseph 1986: 66).

As the novel increased in popularity in the 1950s and 60s, sociologists of literature began to assert the prerequisites for the structure of the novel, such as Lukacs' idealistic postulations in *The Theory of the Novel* and Goldmann's genetic structuralism in *Towards a Sociology of the Novel*. However, many of these "classic" sociological approaches to literature define the novel through Western characteristics. Amuta (1986), for example, denounces the Western notion that a novel must have an alienated, individualistic protagonist. Thus, classical sociology of literature has little relevance to this project.

The research of cultural sociologist Wendy Griswold informs this project significantly. She maintains that the sociology of literature it is not exactly a field, but instead "like an amoeba: it lacks a firm structure, but has flowed along in certain directions nevertheless" (Griswold 1993: 455). In other words, sociology of literature yields significant research findings, but lacks a foundation of key questions and debates. Indeed, its questions are an application of those in the sociology of culture. Griswold's "A Methodological Framework for the Sociology of Culture" (1987) investigates the seemingly self-contradictory field of the sociology of culture. The tension inherent in this field is its location between the sciences and the humanities. The methodology for the sociology of culture thus needs to take care that it is not "inattentive to science or insensitive to culture" (Griswold 1987: 2). An interpretive approach to culture does not

encourage generalization or testing. Through a Marxian perspective, cultural sociology must "figure out the mutual construction of class interests and ideological expressions through social and cultural practice" (Griswold 1987: 2). This approach should distinguish the dynamics of domination in the meaning of a cultural object. Griswold thus presents a methodological framework that would respect both aspects of this hybrid field.

Griswold's central argument is that the cultural analysis must focus on the point at which individuals interact with a cultural object (Griswold 1987: 4). She defines a "cultural object" as "shared significance embodied in form [or] an expression of social meanings that is tangible or can be put into words" (Griswold 1987: 4). The interaction involves four actions: intention, reception, comprehension, and explanation. Intention is "the social agent's purpose in light of the constraints imposed on him or her in the production and social incorporation of cultural objects" (Griswold 1987: 5). This explores the reasoning behind a social agent's-- in this case, the author-- form, themes, symbols, and so on. In Adichie's literature, intention would inquire why she wrote about what she did when she did in the way that she did. Reception is "the social agent's consumption, incorporation, or rejection of cultural objects" (Griswold 1987: 5). In this case, the social agent is the audience or readership reacting to the cultural object. The reception of Adichie's work includes her fame, accolades, and speaking engagements. Comprehension is "the analyst's consideration of the internal structures, patterns, and symbolic carrying capacities of the cultural objects" (Griswold 1987: 5). This is the core ethnographic content analysis of the cultural object: Adichie's literature. Explanation is "the analyst's drawing of connections between comprehended cultural objects and the external social

world" (Griswold 1987: 5). This final element of explanation from Griswold's framework, in conjunction with comprehension, asserts the sociological importance of Adichie's literature.

Wendy Griswold's "Recent Moves in the Sociology of Literature" (1993) investigates other directions that sociology of literature has gone during "the end" of the field. The article highlights the establishment of the production-of-culture approach in the 1970s, which looks at the "organizational and marketing exigencies to which any cultural product is subject" (Griswold 1993: 460). The "production-of-culture" approach sociologically analyzes the structural factors that affects the creation and circulation of the "cultural object" altogether. She argues that this approach has recently gone in four different directions. First, production-of-culture approach "has been incorporated into more traditional studies of the relationship between literary content and the social world from which it springs" (Griswold 1993: 460). This looks at the publishing companies, the readership of certain genres, and the current social events. She adds that recent work in cultural sociology suggest that "during times of social upheaval, ideological production by self-aware cultural innovators will increase" (Griswold 1993: 460). This is important to consider in analyzing the rise of the African novel during anti-colonial struggles. Second, the approach looks at the publishing companies' capacity to exclude or promote. It is important to note that the top publishing companies are located in the West, which will result in the censorship of a bulk of African literature. Adichie's ability to enjoy Western success is something to be considered. Third, Griswold states that literary institutions, which produce books, are distinct from literary culture, which determines the

author's social status. Finally, there are emerging methodologies, such as network analysis and clustering techniques, used to map systems of literary production and reference (Griswold 1993: 463). However, these methods will not be incorporated into this particular project.

Regardless, methodological approaches is an enduring issue in the sociology of literature. Obi Joseph (1986) discusses the use of ideology as a tool in elucidation. It is a potential meeting point for sociologists and literary critics. According to Joseph, sociologist Lewis Coser does not call for replacing scientific analysis with literary insight but instead insists that the understanding of science is illuminated by literature and vice versa (Joseph 1986: 66). Sociology of literature is a hybrid field that will yield a hybrid method. I will elaborate more on this project's research design in the "Methods" section.

Sociology of African Literature

In order to understand the characteristics of Adichie's books, one must understand the characteristics of the African novel. However, one must first ask: how is sociology of literature received on the African continent? According to Joseph (1986), sociology of literature was not originally welcomed among African sociologists. The first generation of African sociologists were educated according to mainstream Western sociology of the 1950s and 1960s, which over-emphasized quantitative and positivistic approaches. However, this is exactly what C. Wright Mills challenges in 1959 with the sociological imagination. I interpret the strict adherence to quantitative research as post-colonial respectability politics to gain credibility with the West. However, Joseph believes that a sociological analysis can illuminate the relationship between text and context in African

literature (Joseph 1986: 65). Joseph argues that there are many dimensions of African literature that would benefit from sociological inquiry. Topics include the transition from the oral tradition to the literary tradition; the social and political issues outlined in the storylines themselves; and the production, distribution, and consumption of the literature (Joseph 1986: 65).

While Joseph's article highlights the response of African sociology to classical sociology of literature, Amuta (1986) argues that there is an organic relationship between the African novel and African history. Based on debates about the significance of the African novel, Amuta has divided the sociology of African literature into four main areas:

- (a) the indebtedness of the African novel to African oral narrative tradition;
- (b) the extent of influence on the African novel from alien (mainly Western) novelistic traditions;
- (c) the criteria for the evaluation of the African novel; and
- (d) the role(s) of the African novelist in contemporary African society especially in its political manifestation. (P. 60-61)

Amuta (1986) also documents renowned Nigerian author Chinua Achebe's response to patronizing assumptions that the novel form itself is a sign of Westernization of African intellectualism. Chinua Achebe states, "I have no doubt at all about the existence of the African novel. This form of fiction has seized the imagination of many African writers and they will use it according to their differing abilities, sensibilities and visions without seeking anyone's permission" (Amuta 1986: 62). Rather, part of the "Africanness" of the African novel comes from its derivation from the oral tradition. The

oral tradition is more reliant on human memory and cross-generational transmission. It is rooted in routine and ritual and favors a homogenous nature of beliefs, sentiments, and attitudes. The literary tradition, however, permits more scientific inquiry and a greater diversity of beliefs, sentiments and attitudes (Obiechina 1975: 33).

Obiechina (1975) applies a similar frame to the analysis of West African literature. He especially emphasizes the role of locality in how West African novelists write about what they know. Obiechina argues that the West African novel is written in West African about West African life. In present day, many Africans have transnational experiences that do not permit them to have an experience exclusively rooted in their own country. The important quality of West African literature, as stated, is for the author to write about what is most familiar to them. In such a fashion, Adichie writes about what she knows, specifically in regard to location. From her birth place to her American residences, Adichie only writes about places that she has personally experienced. It is through this organic knowledge that she is able to be honest in her portrayal of these settings. Also, as alluded to before, Obiechina asserts that the West African novel has an "essentially sociological emphasis" due to the social, economic, post-colonial conditions from which it has arisen (Obiechina 1975: 35).

The indirect role of the African novelist is also interesting. The African novelist was originally intended to be a member of the colonial foster elite who did not question power. However, the exposure to education raised the novelist's consciousness of their own low social position in respect to the colonial elite. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall*

Apart was one of the first acts of ideological revolt through African literature, setting the tone for African literature to come (Amuta 1986).

The African Writers Series was founded in 1962, almost exactly 25 years after the start of Penguin Books. It published economically accessible paperbacks for the rapidly emerging professional classes in post-independent African countries. They used the English language, seeing it as "unifying" across Anglophone African countries. Prior to the existence of the African Writers Series, the British held a monopoly over the publishing industry. In fact, British publishing mandated that school textbooks were to be the only books sold in Africa (Currey 2008: 1-2). The goal of the African Writers Series was to liberate newly independent Africans from mental, intellectual imperialism. It ensured that those fortunate enough to receive an education would use it to change their society and participate in nation-building.

This brief review of the sociology of African literature provides context to Adichie's intentions as an author. Adichie once stated in an interview entitled "Humanising History" that she is drawn as a reader and a writer to fiction that is based on fact (The RSA 2013). Like the "classic" African novels, Adichie's books feature characters and storylines that are fictitious but thematic content and historical events that are true. I argue that this sentiment is the true defining feature of African literature. The African novel therefore serves as a tool of consciousness-raising, addressing the hegemonic portrayal of Africans as self-destructive, helpless, illiterate barbarians. The continuation of the African literary tradition through Adichie's literature emphasizes the

tremendous work still left to be done. In also considering the patriarchal struggles of the African women writers before her, Adichie's success is ever more noteworthy.

African Feminism Through Literature

African women writers have been present in the three generations of African literature. Adichie is a third-generation African woman writer, along with Sefi Atta, Helen Oyeyemi, Taiye Selasi, Noviolet Bulawayo, and Aminatta Forna (MsAfropolitan 2014). First- and second-generation African women writers include Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Bessie Head, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Mariama Ba (Bazin 1989). While the term "feminism" is English, "its realization is inextricably bound to the culture and peculiar backgrounds and experiences of the women" (Chukwuma 2006: 2). In other words, feminism is a Western term, but a global concept. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1984) argues that Western feminist scholarship reinforces racist, colonial, imperialist ideologies in their analyses of women in the "Third World". Mohanty especially takes concern with the reductionism in how Western feminists homogenize non-Western women. She therefore calls for a global feminism that emphasizes the specificity and positionality of women in different national, ethnic, socioeconomic, religious spaces. This corresponds with a main goal of African feminist literature, which is to portray specificity of African women's experiences.

Some of the earliest African feminist literature favored breaking conventional traditions and norms, arguing that neither marriage nor motherhood defines women. Flora Nwapa, who was the first published Nigerian and African female writer, was motivated to write in order to "correct the disparaged image of women in male-authored novels"

(Chukwuma 2006: 3). Her first two novels, *Efuru* (1966) and *Idu* (1970), were set in patriarchal, traditional village environments. Chukwuma (2006) states that Efuru, the protagonist in the eponymous novel, was feminist in that she could marry her first husband without the necessary dowry. She eventually had two failed marriages, but exercised her right of choice between staying married or returning to her father's house. Efuru was still respected at the end of the novel. Idu, also the protagonist of the novel with the same name, chose to die rather than "succumb to a levirate marriage at the demise of her husband" (Chukwuma 2006: 4). Idu was feminist in her decision-making, but the gruesome options available demonstrated the constraints in her life, and those of women in similar situations. In Nwapa's *One is Enough* (1990), Amaka navigates being childless after five years of marriage. She finds self-fulfillment in her escape to the city and becomes the mother of twin sons. However, she does not marry the twins' father, saying that "one marriage is enough for a lifetime". Amaka sees marriage as a site of suffering and limitation and revels in her newfound freedom. According to Chikwenye Ogunyemi, these stories are significant in that they "partake in discourses that shape families, communities, nations, and a certain portrait of ourselves as a world shared in common" (Ryan 2014: 1232).

Stratton (1994) states that critics of African literature often ignore gender as a social and analytical category. In fact, the framework of the African novel excludes African women writers across their three generations of existence. In most of this discourse, "African literature" exclusively features the African male literary tradition and often centers Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Wole Soyinka. Eustace Palmer's

An Introduction to the African Novel (1972) was the first book-length scholarship on African fiction. However, it only featured one woman writer, Flora Nwapa, and labeled her as "an inferior novelist" (Palmer 1972: 61). Indeed, African women writers have been present since the mid 1960s but still struggle for the support of African publishers and fellow African writers. Whisler (2001) states that four African publishers rejected Tsisti Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1998) because they believed that the books portrayed black women's lives in a negative light. Buchi Emecheta has also been disowned by many African male authors and critics for her bold portrayal of women characters. Regardless, African male writers have spoken against the Western criticism that African literature has received, which Soyinka once estimated to be "about a thousand fold of the actual [literary] material being put out" (Stockholm African Writers' Conference 1986). Thus, African women writers have often had difficulty critiquing African literature without appearing Westernized. It is feminist criticism's emergence in African literary studies in the 1980s that allowed writers such as Emecheta and Head to display such great upward mobility that would benefit the next generation of African women writers (Stratton 1994). Evidently, the amount of critical attention that Adichie has received demonstrates the progress that African women writers have made throughout generations.

Existing Scholarship on Adichie's Literature

There are approximately 228 journal articles and 55 dissertations about Adichie's books (University of Liège 2015). Most of the articles were written following *Half of a Yellow Sun's* popularity. Most articles discussing feminism critiqued *Purple Hibiscus* and

Half of a Yellow Sun, while articles focusing on diasporic studies critiqued *The Thing Around Your Neck* and *Americanah*. There were a few articles that specifically investigated diasporic women in Adichie's works. Arabian and Rahiminezhad (2015) focus on *Americanah* and study 1) the impact of diasporic displacement on the main characters' sense of belonging both toward homeland and host-land and 2) the sense of alienation in host-land due to discriminatory experiences in host-land and the emerging decisions to return.

Connor Ryan (2014) also analyzes Adichie's work through a diasporic lens by discussing her work alongside Caribbean female writers. Ryan does a feminist reading of Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck* and Canadian-Trinidadian author Dionne Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon*. Specifically, he is investigating the "modes of speech" that female characters use to "navigate their conditions home and abroad" and also the language that both authors use to represent black women in the diaspora (Ryan 2014: 1230). Ryan engages with an intersection of race, gender, and nation to explore "migration as the occasion for redefining women's sites and avenues of resistance" (Ryan 2014: 1230). This type of redefinition draws from Carole Boyce Davies' notion of migratory subjectivity, which seeks agency in the idea that the subject has multiple, incompatible identities. This experience can thus "trouble stable identities-- like blackness or femininity-- as a means of politicizing identity" (Ryan 2014: 1231). Migration is a golden opportunity for a woman to "negotiate her positionality" (Ryan 2014: 1231). While I did not find any sociological studies of Adichie's work, I consider Arabian and Rahiminezhad (2015), Ryan (2014) and other articles focusing on diasporic

women to be the closest to this research. A key difference is that my project will take the latter two books and discuss both feminism and diasporic studies.

Some scholars have investigated Adichie's use of literary devices to make her arguments. Katherine Hallemeier (2015) investigates national allegory in *Americanah*. She is concerned with how Adichie represents Nigeria and the United States in the text. Hallemeier looks at capitalism as linked to patriarchy and expressed differently in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Nigeria. She also observes Adichie's use of romantic relationships in *Americanah* to express these differences. She compares Ifemelu's relationships with Nigerian Obinze, wealthy White-American Curt, and academic Black-American Blaine. Hallemeier states that Ifemelu's relationship with Curt enabled her socioeconomic mobility in the United States by giving her a job through his network. This gave her the time to start her successful blog about race from a non-American Black's perspective, even after they broke up. Hallemeier also looks at the different racialized, gendered scripts in Ifemelu's relationships with Curt and Blaine that required absolute gratitude of White savior role and absolute pro-Black solidarity, respectively. She critiques the book's implication that Nigeria is removed from white supremacy. Hallemeier uses Jameson's "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" (1986) to interpret Adichie's use of national allegory in the book. I will revisit Hallemeier's analysis of Ifemelu's relationships in the "Findings" section.

Some literary scholars have done theoretical readings of Adichie's text, a few being more sociologically informed than they may claim. Heba M. Sharobeem (2015)

investigated space in three short stories from *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Sharobeem referred to two theorists, French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre and French philosopher Michel Foucault. Lefebvre's theory of social space presented a "conceptual triad" of three concepts including spatial practice, representation of space, and representational space. Spatial practice describes the way that the interactions between the subjects and their space and surroundings define and constitute a certain space (Sharobeem 2015: 20). Representation of space defines space according to what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived (Sharobeem 2015: 20). This is considered the dominant space. Representational space defines space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols" (Sharobeem 2015: 20). This is the dominated space. Foucault's theory of heterotopias, or meticulously constructed resistant spaces, outlines six principles that define a heterotopia. Sharobeem's analysis demonstrates the impact of patriarchy, post-colonialism, deviance, and class in the creation and resistance of social spaces and heterotopias. Sharobeem argues that Lefebvre's social space theory is an essential way to understand Adichie's social spaces in *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Lefebvre's social space analysis is useful for investigating and comparing power dynamics of the various sites in the homeland, host-land, and homeland upon return. I will revisit Lefebvre's social space theory in the "Theory" section.

Adichie's books are often discussed among literary critics alongside third-generation African women writers. In "Half and Half Children: Third Generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel", Jane Bryce looks at seven novels by Nigerian women published since 2000, including Adichie's first two books. Bryce investigates the

changing national realities of Nigerian women that will distinguish their writing from their first- and second-generation foremothers. Bryce argues that,

the forms of feminine identity evident in earlier women's writing, constrained by nationalist priorities that privileged masculinity, have given way to a challenging reconfiguration of national realities in which the feminine is neither essentialized and mythologized nor marginalized, but unapologetically central to the realist representation of a recognizable social world. (P.49-50)

She observes the way that these authors "[explore] the repressed feminine in relation to a socially conditioned version of femininity" (Bryce 2008: 50). In my "Findings" section, I will expand on the various femininities of Adichie's female characters.

Bryce (2008) also presents the complicated subject of theory in relation to African studies. She states that researchers must balance between over-theorizing African realities and under-theorizing to the point that they barely make any argument at all (Bryce 2008: 51). This is an important balance to maintain. It is a common practice, especially of Western scholars, to impose theory onto Africa instead of seeing Africa as a source of original theory itself. Simultaneously, a researcher must put existing theory in conversation with African studies. This is a very significant premise of this thesis, to which I will return.

Bryce also discusses the role of publishing in accessibility of African books to African people and censorship of material. She discusses, as an editor, "the degree of intervention in and reworking of promising African novels that publishers can resort to make them 'publishable'" (Bryce 2008: 56-57). The content of African literature is policed and thus will have limited ability to critique Western hegemony. She also states that in five out of seven books, Adichie's two books among the five, the novelists

routinely paid tribute to their editors due to the importance of a sustaining relationship with a "skillful and sympathetic professional" who decides not to censor the authors. Adichie, for example, calls hers at HarperCollins "brilliantly discerning" (Bryce 2008: 57). Bryce notes her own occasional book-raids in Nigeria at the few bookstores available in Lagos and Ibadan. Her ability to consume African fiction is contingent on multinational publishing houses choosing to publish African writing (Bryce 2008: 57). In her TED talk, "The Danger of a Single Story", Adichie discusses how the accessibility of Western literature over African literature impacted her childhood and produced a self-effacing writing style. It was not until she first picked up *Things Fall Apart* that she felt allowed to relate to literature.

Review of Diasporic Studies and Nigeria

Two significant scholars in diaspora studies are William Safran and Kim Butler. They both have very different definitions of the diaspora. Safran (1991) defines diaspora with a special emphasis on the "homeland construct". That is, the essence of diaspora is the mobile agent's relationship and imagining of the homeland. According to Safran (1991), a diaspora must have the following characteristics:

- 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'center' to two or more 'peripheral,' or foreign, regions;
- 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland - its physical location, history, and achievements;
- 3) they believe that they are not-- and perhaps cannot be-- fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it;
- 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return-- when conditions are appropriate;
- 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity;

6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. (P.83)

This model is more restrictive in that it demands that the diasporic agents have a specific relationship with their homeland. Not all contemporary diasporic Nigerians are concerned about nation-building, for instance. While Safran works with "expatriate minority diasporas", Butler (2001) works with migration diaspora. Butler's model is more loose, stating four main features of a diaspora:

- 1) After dispersal, there must be a minimum of two destinations;
- 2) There must be some relationship to an actual or imagined homeland;
- 3) There must be self-awareness of the group's identity;
- 4) [it exists] over at least two generations. (P. 192)

This model is more rooted in the impact of economic globalization on multiple diasporas. In other words, the new generation of the diaspora is not directly related to colonial push factors. It is more complex than the postcolonial citizen travelling abroad to gain skills in the host-land and return to their homeland for nation-building purposes. While this does still exist, there are more layers to the contemporary diaspora, especially for Nigerians.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, eighth in the world, with over 180 million people. It is also increasingly urbanizing with 47.8% of the total population living in a city. Nigerians began to emigrate from Nigeria in significant numbers after 1990. The estimated size ranges from five to 15 million people. While Nigerians are found all over the world, they are especially concentrated in the United Kingdom, the United States, and South Africa. According to the CIA World Factbook, most movement is driven by poverty and religious/ethnic conflict, the latter persisting despite the establishment of a democratic government in 1999 that followed several years of military

rule (Migration Policy Institute 2010). These conflicts include Boko Haram attacks and counterinsurgency efforts in northern Nigeria; communal violence between Christians and Muslims in the middle belt region; political violence; forced evictions; and competition for resources. In May 2015, Nigeria has the fifth largest number of citizens crossing to Europe, according to the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (Vanguard 2015).

However, one must be cautious to not center African migration around economic motivation. Because the statistical majority of Nigerians live in poverty, the West may interpret this poverty as a norm and homogenize it as; "the Nigerian experience". In doing so, wealthy and middle-class Nigerians are under-researched and invisible in the general discourse about Nigeria, unless corruption is the topic of discussion. This perpetuates a "single story" of Nigeria, as Adichie discusses in her 2009 TED Talk. Emphasizing the socioeconomic diversity of the Nigerian diaspora is an important way to debunk the "single story".

That being said, does the use of the term "diaspora" dictate that all diasporic agents are socioeconomically oppressed? The current European-African dichotomy of the migration discourse suggests that European migration is psychosocially motivated while African migration is economically motivated. Ochonu (2014) states that "the concept of the African immigrant as an economic refugee satisfies and reifies the patronizing rhetoric of African helplessness, as well as the discourse of African deviation from the West" (Ochonu 2014: Location 3245). Ochonu also argues that the psychosocial factors that influence migratory decisions are not entirely removed from issues of poverty and

economic alienation. He highlights the phenomenon of "vicarious poverty" in which "poverty is experienced not by the self but indirectly through the trauma of living in the midst of grinding poverty and of being assaulted daily by reminders and images of poverty, economic collapse, infrastructural deficits, and so forth" (Ochonu 2014: Location 3266). For this reason, being rich in Africa is not the same as being rich in the West. Firstly, it is important to note that "no matter how wealthy or successful one is in Africa, one still has to depend, to various degrees, on state-provided social services--among them, electricity, water, roads, and security" (Ochonu 2014: Location 3288). Additionally, wealthy Westerners have segregated themselves into their own microcosmic spaces, in which they are meticulously protected from any and all signifiers of impoverishment. The wealthy African, however, is immersed in destitute locations and thereby experiences ironic psychosocial trauma (Ochonu 2014: Location 3288). Also, the successful professional must also deal with the envy, jealousy, and resentment of economically unsuccessful neighbors, junior colleagues, employees, and even relatives. They form social circles with other successful professionals as coping mechanisms to distract themselves from the lack of "unconditional social acceptance in one's own society" (Ochonu 2014: Location 3309). Ochonu therefore argues that the migratory flow is caused by "psychosocial alienation and yearning as well as systemic poverty and infrastructural collapse, which are so ubiquitous that you cannot escape them no matter how materially successful you are" (Ochonu 2014: Location 3309). Referring back to diaspora theory, this complicates the wealthy African's relationship with the homeland.

The complexity of both voluntary and involuntary migration qualifies this emerging migratory flow as part of both the Nigerian and African diaspora.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This thesis incorporates theories from Sociology and International Studies. These theories include Wendy Griswold's cultural sociology, Kim Butler's-- and some of William Safran's-- diaspora theory, Henri Lefebvre's Marxist spatial theory, Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality theory and Patricia Hill Collins' black feminist epistemology.

The cultural sociological model from Griswold (1987) serves as a methodological framework for this thesis. As stated in the literature review, this model dictates that a cultural analysis examines how individuals interact with a cultural object. In this case, the "cultural object" is Adichie's literature, specifically *Americanah* and *The Thing Around Your Neck*. This interaction involves four actions: intention, reception, comprehension, and explanation. The "individual" involved in the interaction is either the reader or the researcher. In this project, I serve as the researcher incorporating theory and method to comprehend the text and explain its role in creating visibility for Nigerian stories. Thus, comprehension and explanation are the core actions that I take to interact with the text. Intention serves as a secondary interaction, in which I will incorporate Adichie's intentions as an author. Unlike most authors, Adichie has had the opportunity to communicate the intentions of her books in a couple TED Talks and countless speaking engagements. Her media appearances will be incorporated in the Discussion section to

compare my comprehension and explanation to her explicitly stated intentions. Reception serves as a tertiary interaction for this project. That is, the data will not directly examine the reception of Adichie's work. However, her accolades and acquired audiences will be briefly discussed so as to illustrate her credibility and cultural impact.

The diaspora theory in this project is centered about Butler (2001) and her four proposed features of the diaspora:

- 1) After dispersal, there must be a minimum of two destinations;
- 2) There must be some relationship to an actual or imagined homeland;
- 3) There must be self-awareness of the group's identity;
- 4) [it exists] over at least two generations. (P. 192)

In general, there are three "locations" in the diaspora: homeland, hostland, and homeland upon return. Butler's model is an inclusive definition that identifies the Nigerian diaspora both as its own as well as part of the larger multi-generational African diaspora. I will draw on Safran to examine the diaspora agents' relationships with both the homeland and the hostland. My reluctance to center Safran's model is its restrictiveness. A lack of desire to return to the homeland does not disqualify someone from being a diasporic agent. However, alienation from the hostland and one's commitment to hostland are important features to investigate when analyzing the diasporic agents' experiences.

To sociologically analyze the spaces within the homeland, hostland, and homeland upon return, I will incorporate Lefebvre's Marxist spatial theory. French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre first detailed space as a social product (Sharobeem 2015: 18). In his book, *Production of Space*, Lefebvre defined "social space" as a "social product [that]... serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of

domination, of power" (Lefebvre 1991: 26). This selection of theory and theorist is derived from Sharobeem (2015) and her Lefebvrian analysis of *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Lefebvre's theory of social space presented a "conceptual triad" of three concepts including spatial practice (what is lived), representation of space (what is perceived), and representational space (what is conceived). Spatial practice describes the way that the interactions between the subjects and their space and surroundings define and constitute a certain space (Sharobeem 2015: 20). It is the way that social agents navigate the space and make daily decisions that ensure their own survival and well-being. This demonstrates the dominant-dominated relationship in the space. Representation of space defines space according to what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived (Sharobeem 2015: 20). This is considered the dominant space. These representations of space can include maps, plans, or other designs that can change over time with the change of ideologies (Lefebvre 1974: 16). They can also include a dominant way of understanding a certain space. Representational space defines space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols" (Sharobeem 2015: 20). This is the dominated space. Lefebvre's theory is valuable for analyzing the power dynamics in the various settings throughout the texts. One can trace patterns of oppression and resistance across different spaces in the same country to understand institutional racism, sexism, classism, nativism, and imperialism within the one system. Understanding a character's spatial practice will reveal their position as dominant or dominated. Representation of space demonstrates whose perceptions of a certain space will be the most visible. Representational space explores the actual social dynamics in regards to power. This

analysis permits for a differentiation between the dominant and the dominated within a social space. In investigating multiple spaces in the same system, one can draw conclusions about the qualities of the society's macro-structure.

Intersectionality theory was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), and is defined as a concept that examines the ways in which oppressive institutions are interconnected and cannot be analyzed individually. Crenshaw introduced the term in addressing the marginalization of Black women in particular in antidiscrimination law as well as feminist and antiracist theory and politics (Carbado, Crenshaw et. al 2013). In "Mapping the Margins"⁶, Crenshaw also explores how oppression based on class, immigrant status, and English-speaking ability in the United States impacts women of color differently than white women, especially in relation to sexual and domestic violence (Crenshaw 1991).

Sociologist and black radical feminist Patricia Hill Collins is widely renowned for her expansion on intersectionality theory as well as feminist standpoint theory. In her own work, Collins uses this concept of interlocking systems of oppression to understand systems of penalty and privilege that women experience. She elaborates on intersectionality theory by identifying Black women as caught up in a "matrix of domination". Within this bind, the either/or dichotomy of Eurocentric, masculinist thought makes the dominant narrative inherently insufficient in naming Black women's unique experiences of domination. Collins instead calls for a both/and paradigm acknowledging that the combination of racism and sexism is not equivalent to each

⁶ The title of this paper was partly inspired by the title of this 1991 Crenshaw article. In this case, however, "maps" represent diasporic movement while "margins" allude to intersectionality theory.

oppression operating in a mutually exclusive fashion. In adopting this both/and perspective to analyze the experiences of Black women, one can examine not only their experiences of racism and sexism, but also of racialized sexism and sexualized racism. This interlocking of oppression can include the analysis of other forms of oppression, such as age, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, and so forth (Collins 1990: 255). According to Collins, an intersectional analysis requires crafting a respective epistemology. Such an epistemology builds on feminist standpoint theory.

Pioneered by sociologist Dorothy Smith, feminist standpoint theory claims that women's lived experiences should be interpreted as sources of knowledge. The theory is derived from the Marxist ideal of the proletariat, in which the dominated proletariat has a more inherent and intricate grasp of domination than the dominant bourgeoisie. Feminist standpoint theory makes three principal claims: 1) knowledge is socially situated; 2) marginalized groups are socially situated in ways that make it more possible for them to be aware of things and ask questions than it is for the non-marginalized; and 3) research, particularly that which is focused on power relations, should begin with the lives of the marginalized (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy N.d.).

While Collins is known as a feminist standpoint theorist, she simultaneously embraces the Afrocentric standpoint. She argues that Black societies share core African value systems that existed prior to and independently of racial oppression. Because of colonialism, imperialism, slavery, apartheid, and other forms of racial oppression, Black people internationally share a common experience of racist, anti-Black domination. Both feminist and Afrocentric standpoint theory claim that subordinate groups serve as an

inherent source of knowledge and therefore form their own epistemology. Collins favors this epistemological approach in order to achieve the both/and intersectional analysis of marginalized people, especially Black women. In the texts of study, Adichie applies intersectionality theory to illustrate the unique biographies and marginalization that her characters experience. Because this thesis will unpack the biographies of diasporic women, intersectionality theory will permit the analysis of the characters' transnational experiences of domination. The intersectional analysis will follow the character along their diasporic journey as they, for example, change socioeconomic and national statuses. It will assess both the penalties and privileges of character of study in respect to other characters with different social locations. I ground my intersectional analysis in Black feminist epistemology to assert the diasporic female characters as sources of knowledge. Despite their technical status as fictional characters, I combine this epistemology with Adichie's intentions to use fiction to be "radically honest" about issues most familiar to her to assert the potential for this project to illuminate overlooked truth about the experiences of modern-day Nigerian women. Therefore, in exploring the biographies of the diasporic female characters, intersectionality and its premise of the matrix of domination serve as the theory itself. Black feminist epistemology then acts as the orientation through which I, as the researcher, must extract this theory.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

My methodology is inductive reasoning influenced by Griswold's cultural sociology framework: intention, reception, comprehension and explanation. Given that

my research question focuses on Adichie's approaches to depicting the complexity of the modern-day Nigerian experience, my research design will focus on the comprehension and explanation of diaspora theory and intersectionality in her select literary texts.

For this qualitative research, I will be conducting an ethnographic content analysis with an emphasis on grounded theory and narrative analysis. In simplest terms, ethnographic content analysis (ECA) is a reflexive analysis of documents. Coined by David L. Altheide (1987), ethnographic content analysis (ECA) is a merging of content analysis and grounded theory. Content analysis is traditionally a quantitative method, in which a researcher counts the frequency of words in a document or text in order to make conclusions about certain phenomena. In contrast, ECA, as a form of qualitative content analysis, concerns itself with the frequency of categories but goes further to call for the "constant discovery and constant comparison of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances" so as to incorporate grounded theory (Altheide 1987: 68).

Coined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory is "a practical method for conducting research that focuses on the interpretive process by analyzing the actual production of meanings and concepts used by social actors in real settings" (Suddaby 2006: 633). This method was groundbreaking in how it asserted the credibility of qualitative data in an era when quantitative sociology was dominant. In doing so, Glaser and Strauss "rejected positivist notions of falsification and hypothesis testing" in favor of "an organic process of theory emergence based on how well data fit conceptual categories identified by an observer, by how well the categories explain or predict ongoing

interpretations, and by how relevant the categories are to the core issues being observed" (Suddaby 2006: 634). Grounded theory is often critiqued not for its design but for the common misconception of the method. Suddaby (2006) recounts "grounded theory" being used to describe analysis via correlations, words counts, and pure introspection. He argues that it is often used as "rhetorical sleight of hand by authors who are unfamiliar with qualitative research and who wish to avoid close description or illumination of their methods" (Suddaby 2006: 633). The "middle ground" from which Glaser and Strauss work is the main site of data for this project. Most importantly, by incorporating grounded theory, I argue that diaspora theory and intersectionality theory arise from treating the text as data, thereby reflecting an inductive approach, as discussed earlier in this section. Seeing as theory is often applied to Africa rather than seen as coming from it, this is a significant aim of my research.⁷ In my discussion, I will bring my inductive reasoning into full circle by putting the two aims, in respect to history and biography, in conversation with each other.

While Altheide collected numerical and narrative data in his ethnographic content analysis study, this study will exclusively use narrative data. Narrative analysis is the "qualitative investigation, representation, and presentation of the participants' lives through the use of story" (Saldaña 2009: 207). Incorporating narrative analysis in my method permits me to practice the cultural sensitivity to the literary text that Griswold called for.

Sampling and Data Collection

⁷Professor Isaac Kamola, Post-Colonial Archive Conference, Trinity College

My sample for this research is 10 texts: *Americanah* and nine short stories from *The Thing Around Your Neck*. I chose *Americanah* and *The Thing Around Your Neck* because 1) they both focus on the immigrant experience and 2) they are Adichie's most recent works of fiction and best reflect where she currently is theoretically. For my sample within *The Thing Around Your Neck*, I chose the short stories that 1) had a female protagonist/narrator; 2) were set in either Nigeria or the United States and 3) were relevant to contemporary times. These nine texts are "Cell One", "Imitation", "A Private Experience", "On Monday of Last Week", "The Thing Around Your Neck", "The American Embassy", "The Shivering", "The Arrangers of Marriage", and "Tomorrow Is Too Far". None of Adichie's speeches and interviews will not be coded as data; however, they are significant in that Adichie uses these platforms to articulate her intentions as an author. The discussion and conclusion will therefore incorporate select speeches and interviews by comparing her intentions to my comprehension and explanation of her literature, revisiting Griswold's cultural sociology framework.

The ethnographic content analysis process is the application of grounded theory to content analysis. Thus, it is grounded theory methodology that has influenced my coding choices and methods. The traditional grounded theory process has two coding cycles: initial coding (originally known as open coding) for the first cycle, and axial and theoretical (originally known as selective coding) for the second cycle. Initial coding is the discovery and synthesis of qualitative data into discrete parts for constant comparison (Saldaña 2009: 81). However, because it is also a narrative analysis, I choose three different first-cycle coding methods: narrative coding, versus coding, and values coding.

Narrative codes extract the literary techniques that Adichie uses to make her arguments. Versus codes locate the conflicts, tensions, or dilemmas that arise between individuals, groups, social systems, and ideologies in the text. Values codes identify the values, beliefs, and attitudes held by individuals, groups, and societies.

For second-cycle coding, I will borrow from the traditional grounded theory process with axial coding and theoretical coding. Axial coding is the first step in reassembling data that was "split" or "fractured" during first cycle coding. Axial codes are where broader categories will begin to emerge. Theoretical coding brings these subcategories together and organizes them into the central category/categories.

Methodological Challenges

The choice and design of methodology was a main challenge throughout my research. While my theories borrow from Sociology and International Studies, my methodology draws from qualitative sociology, specifically cultural sociology. It was a challenge to not only define the subfield of sociology of literature but also to defend the resurrection of this defunct and short-lived field that has apparently found permanent homes in either literary studies or sociology. However, it is in fact the nature of sociology of literature to be in conversation with multiple disciplines, even though the resulting scholarship is no longer designated as sociology of literature. Many "sociologists of literature" are literary scholars doing sociological work in their own field without the "constraint" of method. In response, this thesis argues that sociology of literature can still be valuable beyond the analysis of censorship and publishing houses. A sociologist of literature can use methodology to identify theory in literary texts and inform readers

about social phenomena. The research design asserts that a hybrid qualitative approach allows the researcher to make the method fit their data instead of vice versa.

Potential flaws with the coding process are the subjectivity of my choice of what to code. Before commencing my methodology, I read each book once, increasing my familiarity with the main themes in the books and sensitivity for future coding. I chose the codes specifically so that I could extract certain information in the most effective way possible. I chose narrative coding to acknowledge the specificities of a literary text so as to not treat it as interchangeable with other texts or documents. However, some of the events or character descriptions may be analyzed regardless of its specific coding. For example, I may decide to code every time I see a character description under "narrative coding", but there is clear overlap with values coding, in which I assess the values of the characters in the story, values that are clearly character descriptions. Over time, I may decide to not code every character description, leading to inconsistent coding. The overall purpose of my coding method is to extract information for sociological analysis of the characters, the settings, and the conflicts that occur on a macro- and micro- level so that it may be identified as either diaspora theory or intersectionality. On a first cycle level, my main concern is that this information is at least present in my codes.

FINDINGS

After concluding my first-order coding, I conducted my second-order theoretical coding and axial coding. Traditionally, a researcher conducting grounded theory would do axial coding first and then theoretical coding. Because my research is centered on the

history-biography relationship, I established my grand, overarching codes of "history" and "biography" first. From this point, I have split my findings into two parts: Part I: History and Part II: Biography.

In the history section, I have committed to the diasporic theory by grouping passages from the short stories and chapters into "homeland", "host-land", and "homeland upon return". The two principle aims of each section within homeland are: 1) to systemically and institutionally define and analyze the country of study in regards to their social spaces and 2) to determine the diasporic elements that arise as a result. In the "Homeland" section, I will investigate how some emerging sites/microspaces illustrate Nigeria's social structure. Then, I will assess how key sites/micro-spaces cultivate "push" factors that leads Nigerians to depart from their homeland. In the "Host-land" section, I am interested in the passages that illustrate the American system. I am also investigating the diasporic agents' different experiences to the host-land. In the "Homeland Upon Return" section, I am interested in how the Nigerian social system has changed, if at all, during the diasporic agent's time in the host-land. I am also investigating the returnee's relationship with the homeland.

In the biography section, I am sorting codes relevant to individual values, character descriptions, and relational conflicts into relationships, rituals or restrictions. The "Three Rs" framework is derived from Nigerian-Ghanian author Taiye Selasi's TED Talk "Don't Ask Me Where I Am From, Ask Me Where I Am a Local". Selasi used the "Three Rs" to define her identity since she could not solely identify with one nation-state. The "Three Rs" are: relationships, rituals, and restrictions. In this section, I will tracing

the path of the female character's identity throughout her diasporic journey. I will accomplish three goals: 1) determine what penalties and privileges she has in a particular social structure; 2) examine how they impact her relationships, rituals, and restrictions; and 3) investigate how they change with her movement.

Part I: History

Homeland

From my sample, "Cell One", "A Private Experience", and "The American Embassy" were the only short stories to take place primarily in the homeland. In *Americanah*, Chapters three through eight featured the homeland prior to departure.

Site #1: Familial Space

Gender and class are the most prevalent themes in familial spaces in homeland settings. In regards to gender, "Cell One" is one short story in the homeland setting that highlights the patriarchal family structure. In this story, the family dynamic revolves around the son, Nnamabia, a troublemaker who is almost never held accountable for his actions. The story is told through the eyes of the nameless narrator, Nnamabia's sister. The story begins with Nnamabia leaving his sister at Mass when their parents were out of town, stealing their mother's jewelry, and faking a break-in. The narrator recalls how typically, they would "nudge each other and stifle giggles about somebody's ugly hat or threadbare caftan" but instead he "left without a word after about ten minutes" (Adichie 2009: 3). His departure signals his subsequent departure from boyhood and the growing distance in brother-sister relationship. There is little interaction or affection shown between them for the rest of the story. When the family returns home and "discovers" the

robbery together, the narrator already knows that her brother did it. The parents are not fooled either but, trying to sway them, Nnamabia tells them, "I know I have caused you both terrible pain in the past, but I would never violate your trust like this" (Adichie 2009: 4). He then leaves the house for two weeks, returning drunk and apologetic for pawning the jewelry to a Hausa man and losing all of the money.⁸ In response, their mother does not discipline him and instead cries over the lost money. Their father tells Nnamabia to write a report about the incident and says under his breath, "That he could hurt his mother like this" (Adichie 2009: 5). In doing so, both parents accept Nnamabia's deviance and toxic adolescent masculinity. His mother's spatial practice is to consciously endorse it while his father defers to it. His mother tries to simply put the situation behind her, "as if pretending that Nnamabia had not done the things that he had done would give him the opportunity to start afresh" (Adichie 2009: 7). This creates a representational space in which the parents relinquish power to Nnamabia, making him dominant.

Other families in the town of Nsukka react similarly to their deviant sons. Whenever robberies occur, they vaguely "moan about riffraff from town coming onto their sacred campus to steal" (Adichie 2009: 5). They prefer to pretend that their children are innocent and the "town" is criminal. The impact of their toxic masculinity extends past the familial space in which it is nurtured. Also, in this specific setting, the family's location on a college campus causes the collegiate space to invade the familial space. According to the participants, the representation of the familial space is to portray their

⁸ "Hausa" is a Nigerian tribe, predominantly Muslim, found in northern Nigeria. It is one of the prominent tribes in Nigeria, along with the Yoruba and Igbo. As an Igbo woman, Adichie's stories focus on Igbo people and culture.

space as pristine and innocent and the outside space as inherently deviant. While they do not personally benefit from this representation, the adults still determine the overall representation of space that exonerates their sons from accountability.

The narrator is the only character to see the ludicrousness of her brother's deviance. However, she says nothing for most of the story. In fact, her family refers to her very minimally, and only in the shadow of her brother. In one passage, the narrator cites how their mother would take them to the market and traders would say, "Hey! Madam, why did you waste your fair skin on a boy and leave the girl so dark?" (Adichie 2009: 6). Their mother does not defend the narrator's beauty but instead responds with a courteous giggle, "as though she took a mischievous and joyful responsibility for Nnamabia's good looks" (Adichie 2009: 6). This also highlights the mother's agreement that light skin is better than dark skin, demonstrating imperialist ideas of whiteness and femininity in post-colonial Nigeria. There is therefore a correlation between the narrator's darkness as a young woman and her invisibility. In the familial space, she is the most dominated.

Fortunately, her position as the narrator allows the audience to get inside of her head and understand her sincere emotional and psychological responses to the structure of the household. It is a common theme throughout the text that the narrator wishes to do or say something but never does. When their mother cries over her lost jewelry and money than over her wayward son, the narrator wants to slap her (Adichie 2009: 4). Clearly, she does not slap her because her consequences would be too great. Still, she

does not verbally express her protest either, at that moment or any later moment. Her main spatial practice is to be silent.

When Nnamabia begins to attend university, he is among peers that have evolved from mischievous teenage boys to violent cult members. While it is not clear if he is a member of a cult, he is equally as popular and shares social circles with them. This cult violence invades the familial space when Nnamabia gets arrested alongside cult members. She and her parents would visit him every day, and the parents would continually beg the police for Nnamabia's freedom. Nnamabia is physically removed from the familial space in which he is unconditionally innocent and protected. The family has difficulty transcending this space without social capital. It is during this time that the narrator asserts herself.

"The second week, I told my parents we were not going to visit Nnamabia. We did not know how long we would have to keep doing this and petrol was too expensive to drive three hours every day and it would not hurt Nnamabia to fend for himself for a day.

"My father looked at me, surprised, and asked, 'What do you mean?' My mother eyed me up and down and headed for the door and said nobody was begging me to come; I could sit there and do nothing while my innocent brother suffered. She was walking towards the car and I ran after her, and when I got outside I was not sure what to do, so I picked up a stone near the ixora bush and hurled it at the windshield of the Volvo. The windshield cracked. I heard the brittle sound and saw the tiny lines spreading like rays on the glass before I turned and dashed upstairs and locked myself in my room to protect myself from my mother's fury. I heard her shouting. I heard my father's voice. Finally there was silence, and I did not hear the car start. Nobody went to see Nnamabia that day. It surprised me, this little victory." (P. 14)

In this moment, the narrator cannot keep silent anymore as her parents' coddling of Nnamabia continues and his innocence is never questioned. While the narrator does not believe that Nnamabia is guilty for cult crimes, he is still too entitled to his parent's

constant attention. Their mother is especially apathetic towards her presence and sees her suggestion as extremely insensitive. In throwing a rock at the windshield, the narrator establishes that her voice and presence in the family has value. Her parents' reaction suggests that she does not have the same freedom as Nnamabia to be seen as unconditionally innocent. She instead goes from being invisible to hypervisible for that one moment, running away to avoid punishment.

In regards to class, masculinity, especially for the father figure, is portrayed as related to money. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu's father loses his job at the federal agency after twelve years for refusing to call his new boss Mummy (Adichie 2013: 56). Initially, Ifemelu's mother is supportive, stating that God will provide another job and that they would manage on her vice-principal salary while he looks for work. However, after weeks of unsuccessful job hunting, he begins to stay at home lounging on the sofa. One day, Ifemelu's mother comes home from work looking drained and tells him, "If you have to call somebody Mummy to get your salary, you should have done so!" (Adichie 2013: 56). Ifemelu takes pity on her father for his discouragement and for her mother's words. She describes her father as very ambitious and intelligent, and states how he had wanted to attend university but could not because he needed to find a job to support his siblings. Before he was fired, he was looking forward to buying her mother a gift once he got his promotion (Adichie 2013: 57). Despite not reaching his educational goals, his expectation of upward mobility affirms his masculinity. After losing his job, his spatial practice changes. Ifemelu's father becomes quieter, with "a thin wall [growing] between him and

the world" (Adichie 2013: 58). He feels emasculated by his inability to provide for his family, a sentiment that Ifemelu's mother reinforces in her exclamation.

This is also exacerbated by harassment from the landlord. After three months without rent, the landlord bangs on their door and screams at her father, "It is now three months! I am still waiting for my money!" (Adichie 2013: 59). Ifemelu recalls this as one of the first times in which her father has owed rent, and they have lived in the flat for her entire life. Her father tries to rehabilitate his bruised ego and embarrassment in front of Ifemelu by saying, "What a braggart of a man" (Adichie 2013: 59). Ifemelu recalls his use of big English words to sound educated and indirectly prove his intelligence despite lack of a college degree. However, it does not change the fact that they owe rent. Later, the landlord comes again, but this time, "he [barges] past Ifemelu into the flat, into the kitchen, and reached up to the electric meter, yanking off the fuse, cutting off what little electricity they had" (Adichie 2013: 91). By this point, they owe two years' rent. The father's power over his familial space was contingent on his ability to pay rent and therefore live uninterrupted. His inability to pay rent leads to the landlord, also a man, to demonstrate his power by disrupting the familial space.

Her father plans to go to his "almost-cousin" Akunne for a loan. He dislikes him, calling him "a lurid illiterate, a money-miss-road" (Adichie 2013: 91). However, he is still willing to ask another man for help. It is Ifemelu's Aunty Uju, his cousin, that he completely refuses to ask for help. He envies Aunty Uju's upscale house in the affluent Dolphin Estate, which her married lover, known as The General, bought her. Ifemelu wants to live there so that she can impress her friends. She asks her father if she can stay

with Aunty Uju during the week and even offers to help her in the house. Her mother agrees that it is a good idea because she would have light every day and could study well there. However, her father, who typically gives her what she wants, firmly says no. He states that Aunty Uju has sufficient help already, referring to the General (Adichie 2013: 90). Her father makes this decision entirely based off of his ego. Ifemelu claims that while her father would not ask Aunty Uju for help, he would not refuse if Aunty Uju were to present him with money. Ifemelu thinks that "it [is] better than being indebted to Akunne" (Adichie 2013: 91). Later, Aunty Uju does give Ifemelu's father rent for two years in cash. In this exchange, "she [does] not look him in the face as she [speaks] and he [does] not look her in the face as he [thanks] her" (Adichie 2013: 95). There is an understanding between them that men do not typically accept money from women, even if the money is provided by another man. Although Aunty Uju does not physically reside in their familial space, she still follows similar rules as Ifemelu in her gendered spatial practice. She relinquishes her ability to be financially dominant to cater to her cousin's ego and not look him in the face. This demonstrates the existence of patriarchy outside of familial space.

Continuing with class, there are also familial spaces in which the families can afford house help. While the two familial spaces already investigated do not, Aunty Uju has a housegirl, Chikodili, in her Dolphin Estate mansion. Kosi, Obinze's wife who he marries upon return to Nigeria, also has a housegirl. The house help tend to be outlets of anger and, at times, violence. In *Americanah*, there is one passage in which Aunty Uju prepares excitedly for The General's visit. As she grooming herself, he calls to say that he

can no longer come. Aunty Uju feverishly puts all of the cooked food into plastic containers for the freezer when she accidentally pushes the pot of egusi soup off of the stove.⁹ As she stares at the mess on the floor in surprise, she turns to Chikodili and screams, "Why are you looking like a mumu? Come on, clean it up!" Ifemelu tells Aunty Uju that she should be shouting at The General, not Chikodili. Aunty Uju then charges at Ifemelu hollering, "Is it me you are talking to like that? Am I your agemate?" and strikes her on the face. Considering their close-knit relationship, this is unusual coming from Aunty Uju. She projected her rage and feelings of rejection from The General unto both women. However, she later apologizes to Ifemelu for slapping her. She does not apologize to Chikodili for screaming at her. This demonstrates the power dynamic within the house, where disrespect towards the housegirl does not count (Adichie 2013: 98-100).

Kosi is consistently unkind and skeptical of housegirls. When Obinze notices how Kosi's soft, gentle manner changes when she speaks to housegirls. Instead, she has an "impatient, shrill manner...to command authority, to ward off disrespect" (Adichie 2013: 41). In one instance, Kosi is about to hire a housegirl, brought by a friend's relative, when she discovers a packet of condoms in her duffel bag. Kosi begins to scream at her saying, "What is this for? Eh? You came to my house to be a prostitute?". Timidly, the girl responds say, "In my last job, my madam's husband was always forcing me." This makes Kosi even more furious and tells her to leave. Kosi does not believe her, and does not trust housegirls in general. This demonstrates that housegirls can be victims of sexual assault from their employers without justice, or even solidarity from female employers.

⁹ Egusi soup is a Nigerian dish made with ground-up shelled melon seeds.

This makes housegirls especially vulnerable and oppressed within the familial space of their employer (Adichie 2013: 41-42).

Overall, the familial space does not contribute to a push from the homeland. Those marginalized within the familial space simply figure out how to navigate their environment. In "Cell One", despite the narrator's independence of thought and opinion, she is physically and financially dependent on her family. Her invisibility is something that she has grown accustomed to yet constantly works to transcend. Seeing as she sees the rock-at-the-windshield moment as a "small victory", her goal is likely to accumulate these "small victories" and gain influence within her family environment. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu's father seizes control of his familial space by trying to reassert himself as the breadwinner. Otherwise, the landlord reveals his true control over the familial space. As demonstrated in Kosi and Auntie Uju's households, housegirls are the most dominated within the familial space. Kosi and Auntie Uju both accept their lower position of status in the face of men yet take out their jealousy or disappointment on the housegirls. In return, the housegirls often do not have the agency to leave the homeland. They can only hope to be at the mercy of "kind" employers.

Site #2: Urban Space

Urban spaces in the homeland are most illustrated in "Cell One" and "The American Embassy". Overall, succeeding and surviving in the homeland is contingent on having cultural and social capital within the urban space¹⁰. As mentioned in the previous

¹⁰ "Cultural capital" and "social capital" are concepts coined by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. "Cultural capital" is the insider information that an individual must know in order to succeed. "Social capital" is social networks and connections, especially in powerful places (Bourdieu 1986).

section, in "Cell One", Nnamabia is held in a prison in Enugu. His father is familiar with Nsukka, the "slow, insular campus and the slower, more insular town" in which he knows the police superintendent (Adichie 2009: 10). However, his father is completely unfamiliar with Enugu, "the state capital with the Mechanized Division of the Nigerian Army" where the police are free to kill whomever they please (Adichie 2009: 10). This makes Nnamabia especially vulnerable to violence from the police and forces his parents to bribe the police and beg daily for his release. Patriarchy arises once more in which it is the man's cultural and social capital that counts over a woman's. It is her father that the narrator expects to possess the cultural and social capital for the family. The father takes responsibility for the family once they exit the familial space. He is then held accountable for the family's vulnerability should he not possess the necessary capital.

Urban spaces are also where aspiring diasporic agents would leave the homeland. Similarly, their practical intelligence serves as cultural capital as they try to strategize how to acquire visas. "The American Embassy" takes place in the midst of General Abacha's regime (1993 to 1997), which is the beginning of the contemporary Nigerian diaspora. The protagonist is a nameless woman whose son was recently murdered in a home raid by anonymous men looking for her human rights journalist husband. She is standing in line at the embassy, silently dealing with her trauma and not engaging with others in line. One man keeps speaking to her even though she does not respond. He tells her, "They don't give our people immigrant visas anymore, unless the person is rich by American standards" (134). He is demonstrating cultural capital in knowing about the

immigration process. The push from the homeland is very strong in this story. The following passage illustrates this push:

...they had all woken up early-- those who had slept at all-- to get to the American embassy before dawn; because they had all struggled for the visa line, dodging the soldiers' swinging whips as they were herded back and forth before the line was finally formed; because they were all afraid that the American embassy might decide not to open its gates today, and they would have to do it all over again the day after tomorrow since the embassy did not open on Wednesdays, they had formed friendships. Buttoned-up men and women exchanged newspapers and denunciations of General Abacha's government, while young people in jeans, bristling with savoir faire, shared tips on ways to answer questions for the American student visa. (P. 130)

There are scenes describing the soldiers' unnecessary brutality over the individuals in line. The soldiers are exerting dominance in this urban space, which is correlated to political power under the Abacha regime. As aspiring diasporic agents, their push to leave the homeland is derived from a lack of success in the homeland. This ultimately places them as the most dominated. Their spatial practice is therefore to show up as early as possible and pray that the embassy opens. The aspiring diasporic agents are also exposed to the surrounding elements. Eleke Crescent, the embassy street, is crowded with beggars and street vendors selling fruit, water, or even chair rentals. The presence of the informal sector in this urban space also demonstrates their own need to use practical intelligence in order to survive. Whether citizens are leaving or are staying, they are involved in some sort of hustle in which practical intelligence serves as cultural capital (Adichie 2011).

Site #3: Space of Conflict and Violence

There is one short story, "A Private Experience", that highlights the religious/ethnic conflict between Hausa Muslims and Igbo Christians. The story is set in the middle of a riot in Kano¹¹ when Chika, an Igbo Catholic, hides out in an abandoned store with a Hausa Muslim market woman. It also takes place during General Abacha's rule. Chika is a medical student at the University of Lagos who comes with her sister, Nnedi, to spend a week with their aunt. The riot begins when a man who happens to be Igbo and Christian drives over a copy of the Holy Koran that lay by the roadside. Nearby Hausa Muslim men pull him out of his pickup truck, cut his head off with a machete, and carry it to the market, saying that an infidel desecrated the Holy Book and asking them to join in (Adichie 2009: 46). At the time, Chika was at the market with Nnedi, who was buying groundnuts farther down from her when screaming and violence erupted. Chika ran, separating from her sister, and saw the Hausa woman who led her to an abandoned store to hide out together. Once there, the woman tells Chika that it is safe because "them not going to small-small shop, only big-big shop and market" (Adichie 2009: 44). Chika says "Yes," in agreement but does not really know enough about riots to determine if it is true. The Hausa market woman's practical intelligence about riots suggests that they not only occur often, but that she is directly affected by it. She trades onions, and every time a riot happens, "they break market" (Adichie 2009: 49). The woman is both physically and socioeconomically impacted by the violence, despite being from the same background as the assailants. This suggests who tends to be most affected by the Hausa-Igbo conflict. While in the store together, Chika learns a bit more about the Hausa

¹¹ Kano is a predominantly Hausa city in northern Nigeria (Encyclopaedia Britannica N.d.).

woman, who she initially looks down upon for being uneducated and not speaking English well. The passage illustrates the possibility of peace in the midst of conflict.

Despite the deep divisions that drive the violence, both women are affected and, as a result, they bond in their mutual need to provide themselves with security. While both Chika and the Hausa market woman are hiding together in the shop, they do not have identical experiences with the space. This was not Chika's space from the beginning. She is a guest to this violent space. As a wealthy medical student, she is typically sheltered from religious/ethnic violence. Chika is not socioeconomically obligated to permanently reside within this space. The Hausa woman's evident expertise in surviving riots demonstrates that she has no choice but to navigate the danger and consistent destruction of her workplace. She has five children and is responsible for raising and supporting them. Her eldest daughter works with her in the market and is also lost in the riot.

Chika and the Hausa woman are typically in segregated spaces. If the riot did not occur, Chika would have been a passing customer and maintained her limited perception of the Hausa woman. The Hausa market woman's spatial practice confines her to this violent space. She does not have the freedom of movement that Chika does. This is important in demonstrating that the push from homeland is not universal among Nigerians. Chika is not necessarily "diasporic". She lives in Nigeria but occasionally vacations abroad in Western countries. One thing that she loses during the riot is her Burberry bag that her mother bought on a recent trip to London. She is also wearing a denim skirt and red T-shirt with a picture of the Statue of Liberty, which she bought

when she spent a few weeks with relatives in New York one summer (Adichie 2009: 46). Chika does not need to be diasporic. Despite being a woman, she has wealth that allows her to exert control over her space within the country. The Hausa woman, on the other hand, has had to learn to make her home out of spaces of conflict and violence.

Site #4: Educational Spaces

There are two key educational spaces that Adichie illustrates in the homeland. Both of which experience some form of disruption and dysfunction. In "Cell One", Nnamabia had been arrested for being in the midst of cult wars on his campus. It is unclear whether or not he was part of the cult. As previously stated, the narrator does not believe that he is, nor do their parents. Nevertheless, the cult violence directly affects the functioning of the school. At Nnamabia's campus in Nsukka, the best known cults were The Black Axe, the Buccaneers, and the Pirates. Their toxic masculinity is influenced by "the swagger of American rap videos" and results in "guns and tortured loyalties and axes" (Adichie 2009: 7). There is a cycle of violence that starts as assaults and eventually become murders, and the lecturers themselves became afraid to hold classes. The police would come in, but the cult boys have more modern guns than they do. The battle is not merely among cult members, but especially between the cults and the police. They are both battling for control over the space. The very fact that the cult boys have the opportunity to grow and flourish under minimal backlash-- "Say No to Cults" signs around campus-- demonstrates the power that they have over the representational space, or how the space operates for everyone. Toxic masculinity literally wreaks havoc on the school's campus. The police are finally able to arrest many of them, some potentially

innocent like Nnamabia, in efforts to regain control. However, the fact that the cult members possess so much power over the functioning of the university illustrates the reign of hypermasculinity on campus.

Again, "Cell One" as a whole does not allude to a push from the homeland. It is the educational space in *Americanah* where the push becomes especially evident. When Ifemelu and her boyfriend, Obinze, are choosing universities, they only consider schools in Nigeria. They do not look internationally at the time. Despite Obinze's love affair with the United States, he does not consider going to school too far from home. To him, relational ties with his mother and Ifemelu are more important to maintain. When at university, they join their peers for student protests for light and water in front of the vice chancellor's house. Obinze's mother, who is a professor at the university, informs them that it is not the professors or administration that are the enemy, but the military. They have not paid the professors their salary in months (Adichie 2013: 110-11).

Later, the professors go on strike, which causes the student hostel¹² to be closed the following day. This throws the students into a frenzy and shuts the university down for weeks. The professors' demands fall on deaf ears, as government men send their children to school abroad anyway. As a result, they do not receive their pay anytime soon, and therefore will not stop striking. This affects the students' abilities to see their futures in Nigeria, at least educationally. Ifemelu recalls how everyone talks about leaving. Their new struggle is acquiring a visa. They are not easy to get. One of Ifemelu's friends, Ranyinudo, has a cousin in America. She applied for a visa but got rejected at the

¹² Another word for dormitory

embassy by "a black American who she said had a cold and was more interested in blowing his nose than in looking at her documents" (Adichie 2013: 120). Evidently, the Black American clearly does not want Ranyinudo to acquire citizenship and therefore obstructs her with the power that he has.

Others have better luck acquiring visas and relocating to either the United States or the United Kingdom. Aunty Uju, who has since moved to the United States following the General's death, invites Ifemelu to stay with her and study in the United States. Ifemelu's friend Ginika, who moved to the United States when they were in high school, helps Ifemelu apply to colleges in the Philadelphia area. Fortunately, Ifemelu is able to acquire her student visa. She is nervous and unsure of her departure, but Obinze encourages her saying that she would be able to study what she wants in the United States, instead of having to study geology at a Nigerian university. As Obinze's mother hugs her good-bye, she alludes to the "brain drain" in saying that "Nigeria is chasing away its best resources" (Adichie 2013: 123). Ifemelu is pulled towards the United States because of its educational opportunities, in regards to choice of study and financial aid options. Being fortunate enough to acquire the visa, she must sacrifice her desire to be closer to her family, friends, and Obinze to make strategic decisions for her future.

Host-land

In *The Thing Around Your Neck*, "Imitation", "On Monday of Last Week", "The Thing Around Your Neck", "The Shivering", and "The Arrangers of Marriage" take place in the host-land, with some flashbacks to the homeland. In *Americanah*, chapters one, three, nine through 22, 30 through 41, and 43 take place in the United States.

Site #1: Familial Space

In the host-land, family ties need to be deliberately preserved. Fortunately, Ifemelu has Auntie Uju and her son, Dike. Ifemelu is extremely fond of Dike and concerned about his well-being. He struggles in the United States as one of the only black students at his school. Throughout his childhood and into his adolescence, his spatial practice in the familial space is to masquerade his pain with humor. However, he later attempts suicide. Auntie Uju says that it is just depression while Ifemelu says that his depression is because of his experience. Unlike Auntie Uju, Ifemelu has insight into the structure of race in the United States. This helps Ifemelu to be a resource to Dike. However, she wishes that she noticed his pain sooner (Adichie 2013).

Other familial spaces are less tight-knit. In "Imitation", Nkem lives in the United States to raise her children. Her husband, Obiora, spends most of his time in Nigeria. Despite his absence, Nkem still lives to please Obiora. Nkem's friend from home, Ijemamaka, tells her that her husband has a young girlfriend with short, curly texturized hair. Her friend stresses that texturizers, which are different from relaxers, are popular among young people in Nigeria. Throughout the short story, Nkem becomes increasingly self-conscious about her hair. Nkem's personal hair preference follows that of her husband. She eventually cuts and texturizes her hair in order to be attractive to Obiora. In doing so, she surrenders to his dominance over the familial space. When he returns, she attempts to be assertive in the relationship. She tells him that they are moving back to live in Lagos at the end of the school year. After initial surprise, Obiora says, "If that is what

you want, we'll talk about it" (Adichie 2011: 42). Her assertion is conflated into a request for permission. She is unable to escape her dominated position in the familial space.

Site #2: Occupational/Professional Space

Most diasporic characters struggle to find work in the United States. Ifemelu especially struggles a lot to find a job in the United States. She is a college student who needs to pay her rent. Employers tend to not want to do the extra paperwork for foreigners to acquire work visas. She spends weeks searching for work when she eventually has to perform sex work in order to pay her rent. Originally, the job posting is vague: "Female personal assistant for busy sports coach in Ardmore, communication and interpersonal skills required" (Adichie 2013: 176). When she arrives, the coach shares what the job will entail and she leaves immediately. After being unable to find work elsewhere, she returns.

She moved slowly toward the door, wondering if it was locked, if he had locked it, and then she wondered if he had a gun. "Just come here and lie down," he said. "Keep me warm. I'll touch you a little bit, nothing you'll be uncomfortable with. I just need some human contact to relax." There was, in his expression and tone, a complete assuredness; she felt defeated. How sordid it all was, that she was here with a stranger who already knew she would stay. He knew she would stay because she had come. She was already here, already tainted. She took off her shoes and climbed into his bed. She did not want to be here, did not want his active finger between her legs, did not want his sign-moans in her ear, and yet she felt her body rousing to a sickening wetness. Afterwards, she lay still, coiled and deadened. He had not forced her. She had come here on her own. She had lain on his bed, and when he placed her hand between his legs, she had curled and moved her fingers. Now, even after she had washed her hands, holding the crisp, slender hundred-dollar he had given her, her fingers still felt sticky; they no longer belonged to her. (P. 190)

It is important to question why this position is the only one that Ifemelu, a young poor African immigrant woman, is able to find. One can make observations about immigrant

women of color and segregation into feminized labor. Fortunately, Ifemelu's friend, Ginika, is later to get her a job as a babysitter for a friend. Had Ifemelu not had that connection, she likely would have had to return. The severe domination that Ifemelu experiences in the occupational/professional space alienates her from the hostland, brutally destroying any American Dream she may have possessed. .

Homeland upon return

"Tomorrow is Too Far" is the only short story to illustrate the homeland upon return. In *Americanah*, Chapters 44 through 55 illustrate the homeland upon return.

Site #1: Familial Space

Like "Cell One", "Tomorrow is Too Far" is a representation of the patriarchal family dynamic with a nameless young female narrator and her brother. This story is unique because the narrator and her brother, Nonso are born in the United States and visit their grandmother in Nigeria each summer. Thus, this is a different return. The narrator's acceptance in the familial space in Nigeria correlates with acceptance into the homeland. However, her grandmother gives all of her attention to Nonso and ignores the narrator. She teaches Nonso how to pluck coconuts but does not show the narrator because girls never pluck coconuts. When everyone passes around the coconut for the sipping ritual, she makes sure that Nonso goes first. Her preference for Nonso is because she is her son's only son and the one who would carry on the Nnabuisi name, while Dozie, their cousin who is also with them, is only her daughter's son (Adichie 2011: 188). Their grandmother actively endorses the patriarchal structure of the family, as if that is her core duty as the matriarch. She makes Nonso climb the coconut tree to prove his masculinity and train

him to carry on the family name. The narrator becomes so vengeful towards Nonso that she makes him fall, accidentally killing him. The narrator is resentful towards the familial space that erases her, and her spatial practice is to sabotage Nonso's unearned position of power. However, she ends up killing him and having to live with the guilt.

Site #2: Occupational/Professional Space

Upon settling in Nigeria, Ifemelu experiences an unusually easy job application process. She sees an advertisement for a job at a women's magazine and sends in her application without knowing the employer at all. However, she receives a response directly from the employer within a few days of applying. Upon her hire, she comes with her personal critiques of the magazine in relation to their competitor. Not only does her employer respect her, but she is impressed by Ifemelu's work ethic and go-getter attitude, attributing it to her Americanness. Those without international education or work experience would likely not be able to get their foot in the door, let alone be able to propose changes on the first day. They would therefore have to work harder to network with the few powerful people in Nigeria. In general, there is an uncontested belief that those who travel abroad are more skilled and more hard-working than Nigerians who have not. Thus, financially, Ifemelu was able to reintegrate into her homeland upon return with more ease than before. Ifemelu's return was more embraced because companies saw foreign employees as cultural capital. For a company to say that they have foreign staff raises the level of prestige in the eyes of other Nigerians, and potentially to Westerners (Adichie 2013: 482). The concept of the "brain drain" leads Nigerians to be intellectually undermined. However, Ifemelu is not fully seen as "Nigerian", even though she was born

and raised in Nigeria. Any experience aside from being a Nigerian only in Nigeria makes someone a foreigner. Socialization in another country for any period of time immediately turns a returnee into a foreigner. This can lead Nigerian returnees to feel unaccepted in the homeland.

Part II: Biography

Through an intersectional feminist analysis of identity, I will investigate how Ifemelu navigates three different positionalities throughout the text. In Nigeria, she is a young lower-class woman with some college. In the United States, she is a young, poor African immigrant woman who achieves socioeconomic mobility and gets a prestigious education. Upon her return to Nigeria, she is a middle-class professional woman with Western education. These penalties and privileges are illustrated in Ifemelu's biography through her various relationships, rituals, and restrictions.

Relationships

Of the three Rs, relationships best depict Ifemelu's positionality, especially in the United States. While in America, she is in two romantic relationships. Her first relationship is with Curt, a wealthy White man who is the cousin of Kimberly, her boss from her babysitting position. At first, Ifemelu is not interested in White men. Her experience in the United States thus far has showed her that White men do not take Black women seriously. She once had a crush on Abe, a white man in her ethics class. She recalls that Abe saw her as smart, funny, perhaps attractive, but he did not see her as female. He interpreted her flirting as niceness and would most likely hook her up with his black friend if he had one (Adichie 2013: 236). This disappointment sticks with her and

initially makes her hesitant to consider Curt. While his interest in her is explicit, she does not notice because she has already decided that he would not be interested. She does eventually notice his interest and "[begins] to like him because he [likes] her" (Adichie 2013: 237).

Curt describes himself as "a rich white guy from Potomac, but not nearly as much of an asshole as I'm supposed to be" (Adichie 2013: 237). He is more open than most in his socioeconomic class, but this is also the first time that he is dating a black woman. He treats Ifemelu extremely well. They go hiking, kayaking, and eat out at nice restaurants. He even helps her find a job in human resources after graduation. However, there is a disconnect due to their different positionalities. For example, one day, Curt proposes that they go to Paris the next day on a whim. Ifemelu responds that she cannot just go to Paris on a whim because she has a Nigerian passport. He then responds that they can get the visa stuff sorted in a week's time and go the following weekend. This shows that Curt is oblivious to the experiences of immigrants in the United States. As a wealthy White American man, he only understands freedom of movement. He cannot see the structural implications of an identity that prevents individual, immediate transcendence of restriction. While Ifemelu is able to benefit socioeconomically from her relationship with Curt, their realities still remain completely different.

Also, Ifemelu's positionality as a Black woman makes it difficult for she and Curt to relate to each other. Sometimes she has to explain things to him, such as her relationship with her hair, or the stares they would get from black men in passing. Curt is generally inquisitive and compassionate, but oftentimes, he does not understand why

certain things are so important. For example, there is one disagreement that had in which Curt says that *Essence* magazine is racially skewed because it is specifically for black women. He does not understand why the existence of *Essence* is necessary. Ifemelu then drives him to the bookstore and takes copies of different women's magazines from the shelf. When they are seated, she picks up one magazine and asks him to count how many Black women there are. He counts and finds three, maybe four. She then provides the following breakdown of the magazine:

So three black women in maybe two thousand pages of women's magazines, and all of them are biracial or racially ambiguous, so they could also be Indian or Puerto Rican or something. Not one of them is dark. Not one of them looks like me, so I can't get clues for makeup from these magazines. Look, this article tells you to pinch your cheeks for color because all their readers are supposed to have cheeks you can pinch for color. This tells you about different hair products for everyone-- and 'everyone' means blonds, brunettes, and redheads. I am none of those. And this tells you about the best conditioners-- for straight, wavy, and curly. No kinky. See what they mean by curly? My hair could never do that. This tells you about matching your eye color and eye shadow-- blue, green, and hazel eyes. But my eyes are black so I can't know what shadow works for me. This says that this pink lipstick is universal, but they mean universal if you are white because I would look like a golliwog if I tried that shade of pink. Oh, look, here is some progress. An advertisement for foundation. There are seven different shades for white skin and generic chocolate shade, but that is progress. Now, let's talk about what is racially skewed. Do you see why a magazine like *Essence* even exists? (P. 365-366)

In response, Curt simply says, "Okay, babe, okay, I didn't mean for it to be such a big deal" (Adichie 2013: 366). Ifemelu takes a significant amount of time and energy educating Curt about her experience only for him to dismiss and minimize it. In his short response, he is demonstrating that it is inconvenient to him for their relationship to be politicized. He prefers to take her on trips and have adventures but backs away when she becomes "too much work". Curt expects recognition for his small acts of kindness. He

emphasizes his distinction from those in his race and socioeconomic bracket. He brands himself as one of the "good" white guys. However, he refuses to be serious in exposing himself to what he does not know. He does not understand why she needs such solidarity. For this reason, Ifemelu often feels drained and unable to express certain things to Curt. Despite their general happiness, their relationship has a power imbalance with Curt benefitting from conflict avoidance.

Ifemelu then dates Blaine, a Black American political science professor at Yale University. Their initial point of connection is her blog, entitled "The Non-American Black". She has started this blog after her relationship with Curt ends. Blaine's academic prowess and commitment to social justice enthralls her, yet simultaneously exhausts her. She constantly feels behind, as though she is inevitably missing something. Also, their positionalities as African and Black American are in constant conflict with each other. In their relationship, Blaine requires constant solidarity of Ifemelu. As a Black woman, she understands the role that race would play in their relationship. However, her solidarity is intellectual, not emotional. She academically understands how race works in America and Blaine's position as a Black American man. However, she does not feel the same anger that he does, nor does she understand it. The one point of commonality that they have with each other is Barack Obama. They both equally understand the importance of his campaign. They feel most connected on his election night.

Positionality is least important in Ifemelu's relationship with Obinze. He is Ifemelu's first boyfriend from high school. When she moves to the United States, they maintain a long-distance relationship. However, after the sex work incident, Ifemelu is

too ashamed to contact him. Their relationship ends abruptly. Despite their migrant experiences, there is a familiarity with each other upon return. Obinze is married to Kosi, as mentioned earlier, but he does not truly love her. When Ifemelu returns to Nigeria, they reconnect and begin to have an affair. Obinze later realizes that Kosi knew the entire time. In response, he feels "guilt not only for wanting to leave Kosi, but for having married her at all" (Adichie 2013: 572). He is angry at himself for settling with someone he did not love and now having responsibilities that he cannot abandon. In the end, he and Ifemelu decide to be together. For Ifemelu, this relationship does not make her consistently aware of her positionality in respect to the significant other. From the beginning of their relationship, Obinze's higher socio-economic position did not impact his ability to relate to her. Of all characters in the book, Ifemelu and Obinze's relationship is the most organic. Therefore, this is the relationship that Ifemelu chooses.

Her romantic relationships illustrate her positionality in respect to men. How does it factor into Ifemelu's relationships with women? Her relationship with her Auntie Uju is very significant. Their identities as educated African female immigrants in the United States are the most similar. Specifically, Auntie Uju is a doctor. However, it is their values, beliefs, and overall decision-making that especially makes them different. Originally, Ifemelu and Auntie Uju were very close, being only ten years apart. Auntie Uju was practically a big sister to Ifemelu, guiding her through adolescence. As they both grow older, they begin to value different things. When Auntie Uju starts seeing The General, Ifemelu's mother refers to her as Auntie Uju's "mentor". In short, Auntie Uju is his mistress and he fully finances her medical education as a patriarchal bargain. In

exchange for his resources, Aunty Uju spends a lot of time and energy making herself look conventionally attractive. She "[avoids] the sun and [uses] creams in elegant bottles, so that her complexion, already naturally light, [becomes] lighter, brighter, and [takes] on a sheen" (Adichie 2013: 89). This type of relationship is not uncommon. In fact, many women in Lagos¹³ see a relationship with a "Big Man" as their only option. Ifemelu's mother even calls it "a miracle" (Adichie 2013: 56).

Aunty Uju's complicity with the patriarchy shows that she almost sees it as part of growing up. During the beginning of their affair, Ifemelu remembers Aunty Uju as she once was: a "village girl brought to Lagos so many years ago, who Ifemelu's mother mildly complained was so parochial she kept touching the walls" (Adichie 2013: 89). Now, she begins to lose herself in her relationship with The General and her new wealth. She fits herself into his world and insists that she can change him if necessary. When the General dies, Aunty Uju's world comes crashing down. Fortunately, she is able to migrate to the United States with help from friends. If her baby, Dike, was not fathered by a "Big Man", then she would not have had the opportunity to have the baby in the United States.

Ifemelu sees herself as different from Aunty Uju. Her reasoning for entering relationships has nothing to do with money. He is naturally attracted to Obinze, Curt, and Blaine. However, Ifemelu's social positioning in the United States is improved because of her relationship with Curt. She does not seek out the relationship for that reason. Regardless, without that advantage, she likely would not have gotten the job at human resources that gave her the free time to start her lucrative blog. When she returns to

¹³ Lagos is the biggest city in Nigeria.

Nigeria, her childhood friend Ranyinudo highlights this point, claiming that she is being superior (Adichie 2013: 521). Despite their different values, their own agency, both in Nigeria and the United States, is the same. Ifemelu does her best to make feminist decisions that agreed with her principles. Aunty Uju does her best to survive. They both exist in a patriarchal structure.

Rituals

Two rituals are significant to Ifemelu's identity: hair care and blogging.

For Black women, hair inherently possesses political meaning. Generally, there is a social preference for relaxed hair¹⁴ over natural hair¹⁵. The end result is hair that conforms to Western standards of beauty. Natural hair is often associated with cultural nationalism and pride in Black beauty. Hair also has a strong impact on identity and self-perception. Ifemelu states that she grew up in the shadow of her mother's hair (Adichie 2013: 49). It was black, thick, and long hair that took hours at the beauty salon. Ifemelu's father said that it was a "crown of glory". Body image and self-esteem is extremely connected to Ifemelu's hair.

In the beginning of the book, Ifemelu goes to a new hair braiding salon. She observes a similarity in the African braiding salons in her own American experience. For one, they are a microcosm of African femininity in the United States. The majority of the women are Francophone African immigrant women who share tips about acquiring visas and like to watch Nigerian movies. Also, they are always in impoverished parts of the

¹⁴ A relaxer is a chemical treatment which changes the texture of black women's hair from coarse or curly to straight.

¹⁵ Natural hair is non-chemically treated hair that preserves the "natural" texture of Black women's hair.

city. In order to get her hair braided, Ifemelu must travel from Princeton to Trenton, NJ. When Ifemelu complains about the heat in the salon, Mariama, the owner, apologizes, saying that the air conditioner broke the day before. Ifemelu knows that it was broken longer, perhaps was always broken. This alludes to the low class position of Mariama.

In the hair braiding salon, Aisha, Ifemelu's hairdresser, asks Ifemelu why she does not have relaxer. Ifemelu responds saying that she likes her hair the way that God made it. Aisha complains that it is difficult to comb and genuinely does not understand why Ifemelu chooses to keep it natural. Despite the fact that Aisha is also a Black woman, she does not understand why anyone would bother to have natural hair since it is so much work. This presents a dilemma of Black women condemning other Black women's decisions to go natural. Ifemelu brought her own comb, evidently accustomed to hairdressers who were clueless in the face of natural hair. She proceeded to comb her own hair, telling Aisha that "it's not hard to comb if you moisturize it properly" (Adichie 2013: 15). Even though Ifemelu is paying \$160 to braid her hair, she needs to bring a comb and acts as the expert on her own hair. Her decision to have natural hair marginalizes her within the African hair braiding community, potentially the Black hair care community. Not only is it a ritual for Ifemelu to do her hair; it is also a ritual to defend her natural hair to other black women.

Ifemelu also blogs in response to not being heard in general discourses about race. The blog is entitled "The Non-American Black", which she habitually updates after racialized interactions or observations with people of different races. She especially makes it a point to tell non-American Blacks that they are, in fact, Black. Her

positionality as Black yet a foreigner sets her apart in the blogosphere and allows her to gain national recognition.

Restrictions

Seeing as the entire biography section looks at Ifemelu's privileges and penalties, this content has much overlap with data in relationships and rituals. There is also data in the history section that discusses Ifemelu's restrictions. For this reason, I will only add restrictions that have not otherwise been mentioned.

In Nigeria, Ifemelu belongs to a lower socioeconomic class, which declines to near destitution when her father loses his job and they owe rent. At school, she is very popular. However, she feels different from her classmates because of their wealth. They have large houses in the affluent parts of the city. They have taken trips to the United Kingdom or the United States while she has not. Mobility as recreation is cultural capital in Nigeria, especially among young people. It is considered "cool" to have seen London or New York. It is not obvious to other students that she does not have the experiences that they have. The school is predominantly wealthy, while Ifemelu is only able to attend because she did exceptionally well on her entrance exam. When Ifemelu and Obinze first meet and he asks for her phone number, she responds that her family does not own a phone. Ifemelu does not have access to the same experiences as her peers, including Obinze. Even though Obinze loves her, Ifemelu still feels self-conscious that he will realize that Ginika, who lived at the University of Lagos in a quiet bungalow, is better suited for him. (Adichie 2013: 80).

In the United States, Ifemelu struggles with being honest about American racism, especially in a professional setting. When Ifemelu is working as a nanny, her boss's sister, Laura, often makes ignorant comments about Africa. She would try to show off her knowledge about Africa to Ifemelu, who does not sense that her curiosity was coming from a sincere place. One day, she is telling Ifemelu about one of her Ugandan classmates from graduate school who reminds her of a Nigerian doctor that she knew. She states that the Ugandan woman did not get along with the African-American woman in their class because "she didn't have all those issues" (Adichie 2013: 207). Ifemelu immediately responds, "Maybe when the African American's father was not allowed to vote because he was black, the Ugandan's father was running for parliament or studying at Oxford" (Adichie 2013: 207). When Laura feigns confusion, Ifemelu states that she believes that the comparison was simplistic and that she needs to understand more history. Laura storms off in anger, distressing her boss, Kimberley, even though she typically defends Ifemelu. Later, Ifemelu finds Laura to apologize, to which she responds dryly, "It's fine" (Adichie 2013: 208).

There are different dynamics at work in this passage. First, Laura has not only acknowledged the separation between Africans and Black Americans but also seeks to exploit it, using Africans as a buffer to justify racist assumptions about Black Americans. Laura's coldness to Ifemelu after not being permitted to freely say that Blacks in America have issues is a condescending assertion of racial superiority over her. She assumes that African immigrants pursuing success in America would dissociate from Black Americans by "not having all of those issues". She is expressing her expectations that Ifemelu be

reticent, compliant, and oblivious about systemic racism. She needs Ifemelu to perpetuate color-blind racism. She also expects Ifemelu to affirm her expertise and superior intelligence rather than override it. There is a social script that Laura wants Ifemelu to follow in which the White way of being and thinking was the only logical way of being and thinking. Ifemelu is expected to pretend that Laura is treating her as an "equal" rather than being patronizing. In later apologizing to Laura for rudeness, Ifemelu complies with her role in the social script for the sake of maintaining professionalism and job security. Ifemelu rarely apologizes for saying what she thinks. In fact, she holds strong opinions about apologizing without reason. Peace was maintained by allowing Laura to do and say racist, Eurocentric statements. However, the interaction creates an irreversible change in their relationship. She no longer finds Ifemelu's sassiness to be charming. Instead, she sees her as untrustworthy.

DISCUSSION

I found that *Americanah* easily overpowered *The Thing Around Your Neck*. However, the short stories were especially necessary in depicting the structure of the homeland. Overall, diasporic movement from the homeland signifies both marginality and privilege. Those that need to leave Nigeria are generally those who have not been able to find success there. Educational dysfunction and corruption were the strongest factors leading to a push from the homeland. The pull towards the host-land is the better opportunities in the United States and the United Kingdom. One could attend school and receive financial aid in the United States, for example. The privilege comes from being able to be mobile at all. Low-class citizens, such as market women and housegirls, do not

have the access to mobility that educated Nigerian women have. Also, visas are difficult to acquire, and one typically receives one through luck. Only the protagonist from "The American Embassy" decides to leave the embassy when she is called for her interview. A likely reason is her traumatic experience after watching her son be murdered only a few days before.

In the host-land, the opportunities are not as accessible as they initially appeared. In fact, those that do well financially-- Nkem ("Imitation"), Ifemelu (*Americanah*), and Aunty Uju (*Americanah*)-- were endorsed by men at some point in their lives, whether intentionally or not. This illustrates the deep marginality that African immigrant women experience in the United States. Part of Ifemelu's adaption to the homeland is gaining an understanding of American racism. It is not full assimilation because she positions herself to critique the system. This enables her to have insight into Dike's difficulties, in that he is one of the only black kids among his peers yet cannot express his pain. The host-land is no longer romanticized and Ifemelu decides to return home to Nigeria. She is one of the few characters in my sample to make this decision.

In the homeland upon return, reintegration is easy economically but not socially. Having American education or work experience puts returnees above Nigerians who have not left Nigeria. Ifemelu is able to secure a job without having to do a patriarchal bargain. However, she is no longer fully seen as Nigerian. There is a specific term for Nigerian returnees from the United States: "Americanah".

Throughout her life, Ifemelu changes positionality each time she enters a new national space. She encounters resistance based off of different identities and works to be

true to herself. Her relationships, romantic and familial, shape her experiences, especially in the United States. This is a microsociological discovery in which power is reproduced in relationships with other people.

The overlap in data from history and biography illustrates the interplay at work. The Nigerian diaspora as the current historic moment leads the diasporic agents, especially women, to be socialized by many different spaces. As they move, they change social positions in a way that is more complex than solely upward or downward mobility. Rather, it is the combination of identities that defines women's experiences. As social animals, we are shaped by what we navigate. Diasporic moment will only increase in the years to come with different women from various African countries travelling to other countries. Thus, this intersectional feminist analysis is necessary for sufficiently analyzing the experiences of women whose biographical nuances flourish in a field of power.

CONCLUSION

While it is controversial to use literature as data, African literature has sociological roots in its own intentions for existence. Being political is an essential part of African literature. It always has been and continues to be. However, the "politics" within African literature was operationalized from a patriarchal perspective. African feminist literature was originally not considered very African. In fact, it was seen as counter-productive and potentially siding with the West. It was not given the same support and intellectual criticism. However, it is important to assert African literature is about telling African stories. The main difference is the issues being discussed. In my reading of

Adichie's literature, I observed a shift in writing style and themes from *Purple Hibiscus* to *Americanah*. In a talk, Adichie states that when she was writing *Purple Hibiscus*, she was acting as a "dutiful daughter" of African literature, writing in a way that paid homage to Chinua Achebe. However, she names *Americanah* as her "f*ck you" book (New York Public Library 2014). It is her permission to write about what she wants to write about. It is the decision to tell more current stories, a direction in which she was also headed with *The Thing Around Your Neck*.

Adichie's strong international reception has afforded her the unique opportunity to expand upon her books' core themes across multiple forms of communication. She has given two renowned TED Talks, "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009) and "We Should All Be Feminists" (2013). A section of the 2013 TED Talk was featured in Beyoncé's song, "***Flawless" (2013). On December 4, 2015, a copy of "We Should All Be Feminists" was distributed to every 16-year-old boy and girl in Sweden (The Guardian 2015). In 2015, TIME Magazine named Adichie among the "100 Most Influential People" (University of Liege 2015).

If one gets nothing else from reading Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, it is that humans are extremely susceptible to the stories that they hear about others. A reader who rarely sees themselves in literature will think they can only be vessels for every story but their own. They will erase themselves in their own stories and reinforce the visibility of the already seen. The ability to tell nuanced stories about marginalized people is essential in humanizing them. The hegemony of the West as the authority "storyteller" allows them to particularize themselves and homogenize everyone else. African stories are especially

at a large disadvantage. Telling honest stories about Africa is a political act. Adichie is skilled in making sure the reader walks away having learned something, regardless of who they are. A White person may read *Americanah* and learn about racism in the United States. A Congolese woman will see what she has in common with Nigerian women. A Black American may learn about the challenges of immigration. Adichie brilliantly uses the curiosity of her characters to illustrate many different experiences.

By depicting the human experience within the context of power, Adichie embeds the sociological imagination within her storytelling. In writing literature from the standpoint of the marginalized, she joins writers like Toni Morrison, for whom fiction was never "mere entertainment" (American Rhetoric, 1993). In the tradition of C. Wright Mills, Adichie provides her readers with "a quality of mind that will help them to use information and develop reason in order to achieve lucid summation of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves" (Mills 1959: 14). In doing so, she fulfills her authorial intentions of liberating the most marginalized from the "single story".

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