universität wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„Protesting from Home:

Women*s Resistance in Contemporary Nigeria“

verfasst von / submitted by

Janne Teresa Wanner

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master (MA)

Wien, 2022 / Vienna 2022

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt / degree programme code as it appears on the student record sheet:	UA 067 805
Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt / degree programme as it appears on the student record sheet:	Individuelles Masterstudium Globalgeschichte
Betreut von / Supervisor:	Dr. Anaïs Angelo

UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG

universität wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„Protesting from home:

Women*s Resistance in Contemporary Nigeria“

verfasst von / submitted by

Janne Teresa Wanner

angestrebter akademischer Grad / academic degree aspired

Master (MA)

Wien, 2022 / Vienna, 2022

Studienkennzahl / degree programme code:	UA 067 805
Studienrichtung / degree programme:	Individuelles Masterstudium Globalgeschichte
Betreuer/Supervisor:	Dr. Anaïs Angelo

Abstract

This thesis addresses the protest and resistance of women* in Nigeria against gender-based oppression and marginalization. To this end, the following research question is posed: In which forms and spaces do women* in contemporary Nigeria express protest and resistance to gender-based marginalization?

To examine this question, field research was conducted using qualitative and semi-structured interviews. This served to explore how women* talk about their own protest and resistance, how they perceive it, where, why, and in what ways they express it. The different narratives of the interviewees illustrate that all subjects face personal struggles for equality and recognition on a daily basis, and have found their own means of protest and resistance used in private, in public, or at the intersections of these spheres. The findings of the research show that the boundaries between protests in private and public spaces are blurred, individual protest cannot be clearly distinguished from collective protest, spontaneous forms of protest correlate with organized forms of protest, and thus different forms of protest are used in collaboration. The relevance of the work is expressed in its focus on protesting in private spaces and the connection of this to public and collective resistance. Accordingly, it is argued that private spaces should be more included in gender-based protest research.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Thesis befasst sich mit Protest- und Widerstandsformen von Frauen* in Nigeria gegen genderbasierte Unterdrückung und Marginalisierung. Dazu wird folgende Forschungsfrage gestellt: Auf welche Weise und in welchen Räumen drücken Frauen* im kontemporären Nigeria Protest und Widerstand gegen genderbasierte Marginalisierung aus?

Um dieser Frage auf den Grund zu gehen, wurde eine Feldforschung mit qualitativen und semistrukturierten Interviews durchgeführt. Diese diente der Erforschung, wie Frauen* über ihren eigenen Protest und Widerstand sprechen, wie sie diesen wahrnehmen, wo, warum und auf welche Weise sie diesem Ausdruck verleihen. Die unterschiedlichen Erzählungen der Interviewten verdeutlichen, dass sie alle tagtäglich mit ihrem persönlichen Kampf um Gleichheit und Anerkennung konfrontiert sind und ihre eigenen Wege des Protests und Widerstands gefunden haben, welche sie im Privaten, in der Öffentlichkeit oder an den Schnittstellen dieser Sphären anwenden. Die Ergebnisse der Forschung zeigen, dass die Grenzen zwischen Protesten im privaten und öffentlichen Raum fließend sind, individueller Protest nicht klar von kollektivem Protest zu unterscheiden ist, spontane Protestformen mit organisierten Protestformen korrelieren und somit verschiedene Formen des Protests in Zusammenarbeit genutzt werden. Die Relevanz der Arbeit drückt sich in ihrem Fokus auf das Protestieren in privaten Räumen und dessen Zusammenhang mit öffentlichem und kollektivem Widerstand aus. Dementsprechend wird argumentiert, dass private Räume mehr in die genderbasierte Protestforschung einbezogen werden sollten.

I would like to thank all those who supported me with this thesis and made it possible in the first place. Special thanks go to the people who agreed to being interviewed, who trusted me, opened up to me, gave me their time and incredibly enriched myself and this thesis. Together we can make the world a little better.

I am grateful for those who accompanied and supported me on the way of my field research in Nigeria, who stood by me with words and deeds. Without you I would have been lost not only once.

I also thank from the bottom of my heart all those who carried me through the process of this thesis through advice, discussions, proofreading, dinner cooking, and emotional support.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Anaïs Angelo, my thesis supervisor, for her patience, advice, encouraging words, and everlasting support. I have learned a lot from you.

Table of Contents

"The voice"

African motif artwork by Esther Adebayo

Introduction

“Feminist thoughts come naturally when you have a sense of injustice.” This is a quote from Lola Meduteni, one of my interviewees who contributed significantly to this thesis. A sense of injustice is something all the people interviewed for this thesis share and struggle with in their everyday life. The question, however, is how this is dealt with and what forms of resistance the sense of injustice can bring about. This led me to the following research question: In which forms and spaces do women* in contemporary Nigeria express protest and resistance to gender-based marginalization? The question of form refers to the ways in which resistance is expressed, the ways of protesting, and the strategies used to change or at least draw attention to certain conditions perceived as unjust or discriminatory. The term space, on the other hand, refers to the space and the setting in which these forms of protest are carried out. It is less about geographical locations than about public, semi-public, private, or domestic space. The fact that these spaces cannot be separated from each other by clear boundaries will become apparent in this thesis.

Research on protests that may take place behind closed doors in domestic settings is tenuous and yet highly relevant to understanding the processes of social change and everyday protests against gender-based discrimination as well as gender-specific forms of resistance. Accordingly, I set out to conduct field research in Nigeria with those questions in mind, in order to hear from women and people who are primarily read as women[1], how they talk about their resistance, how they perceive it, where, why and in what form they express it.

Researching protests basically gives insight into dynamics and changes in a society and clarifies which people consider which parts of a system illegitimate or intolerable. But what does protest and resistance mean? Protest in general is usually directed against individuals or groups that exercise power or against a system of power that is practiced and exploited by certain people.[2] This can be directed against state institutions as well as against private individuals. Power structures and dynamics are omnipresent in interactions between private individuals as well as in larger political or social frameworks. By performing an act of protest, agency is reclaimed. Protest involves action, the initiation of transformative processes, and political participation.[3] The ways in which protest can be expressed are as varied as the circumstances that inspire acts

[1] In the following, the term women* will be used, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter two.
[2] Haunss 2009.
[3] ibid.

of protest. Protests can be isolated incidents or seen in the context of a social movement. Social movements, however, often do not use only one form of protest or action, but function through an interplay of different people/groups and forms of protest.[4] Balistier identified the following groups of forms of protest: forms of protest that use the strategy of appropriating public space, symbolically expressive forms of action, and direct forms of action.[5] The former seeks public attention through the symbolic appropriation of public places. Here, a collective of protesters is usually active. Demonstrations or marches are popular examples of this form of action. According to Balistier, symbolic expressive forms of action aim at the symbolic protest action becoming the core of the staging itself.[6] A prominent example from this thesis would be the intentional undressing of women* as a form of protest. Direct forms of action, on the other hand, summarize a large variety of actions and will also be primarily addressed in this thesis. These are all forms of action that aim at direct effects. This can take place individually or in groups, in public, virtual or private space. Examples include acts of refusal such as strikes or boycotts, but also the simple refusal to conform to social expectations; forms of protest aimed at obstruction, such as sit-ins, the traditional protest form of sitting on a man, which is widespread among the Yorùbá in Nigeria, or blockades of any kind; as well as acts aimed at destruction. The categories of different forms of protest elaborated by Balistier are not always clearly distinguishable from one another and can sometimes overlap in social movements, but also in individual actions.[7]

The definition of political resistance, however, also implies that it is directed against a ruling order or the power exercised within its framework and that it refuses to obey. "Resistance is thus social action directed against an order of rule or exercise of power perceived as illegitimate."[8] Like protests, it can be expressed violently or non-violently, can be individual or collective, and can occur spontaneously or in an organized manner.[9] The difference between the two terms, resistance and protest, is that protest begins with the mere expression of disagreement or displeasure with a circumstance through words or actions,[10] whereas resistance goes one step further and undertakes concrete actions to change or prevent that which causes disagreement. Ulrike Meinhof summarized this as follows: "Protest is when I say: 'This doesn't

[4] Haunss 2009.
[5] Balistier 1996 in Haunss 2009.
[6] ibid.
[7] ibid.
[8] Daase 2014 (translation by author).
[9] ibid.
[10] Wohlgemuth 2010.

suit me.' Restistance is when I make sure that what doesn't suit me never happens again."[11] Furthermore, Awcock states that "resistance is the product of multiple practices,"[12] which implies that the accumulation of protest actions can form resistance. During the field research, however, I found that the terms protest and resistance were often used interchangeably by the research subjects and that the boundaries between the two terms were frequently blurred. This is expressed in the fact that one can assume that individual protest actions can often already be in the context of a larger resistance, whether this is actual organized resistance or rather a mindset of resistance. Moreover, since one can assume that there are frequent overlaps between the terms, they will in part be used interchangeably in the following course of the work.

When doing research about Nigeria it needs to be noted that Nigeria is a heterogeneous, multi-ethnic country that combines numerous cultural, religious, economic and socio-political currents, beliefs and structures. With the founding of Nigeria as a unified nation in 1914, numerous pre-colonial states, societies and kingdoms were united. Even today, there is an invisible border between the north and the south of the country. Although it may seem simplistic, the north-south division of the country plays a significant role, which will be briefly discussed for a better understanding of the rest of the paper. The north of Nigeria is Muslim-dominated, which is expressed not only culturally but also, for example, socially and legally through the application of Sharia law. The south of the country, on the other hand, has a Christian majority, and is accordingly influenced culturally and socio-politically. Of course, it should be noted that there are also numerous other faiths in Nigeria, some of which also mix with these two dominant religions. The dichotomy between North and South, however, is vast and must always be kept in mind in the context of this work. Women* in the South have more rights, are on average more educated (by Western standards), are more often represented in leadership or political positions compared to Northern Nigeria, and often have more careers outside the household.[13] The north-south division of the country will also reappear in the analysis of the thesis and will be visible in the context of protest and resistance by women*.

The first chapter of this thesis will focus on historiography, which begins by describing the role of women* in Nigeria in three time periods: pre-colonial Nigeria, colonial Nigeria, and post-colonial Nigeria. Of course, it must be assumed that I will not be able to portray a complete picture of the diverse roles of women* in Nigeria in this chapter, as the category of women* does not represent a homogeneous group and, furthermore, there are numerous historical as

[11] Meinhof 1968.
[12] Awcock 2020: 7.
[13] Bala 2021; Mohammed 2021a; Ogunsheye 2021; Oladejo 2021; Abubakar 2017.

well as regional differences in the role of women*. Moreover, Nigeria must be understood as a heterogeneous state with numerous ethnic, cultural, and regional differences. Women* have always been embedded in the different economic, social, political, and cultural structures of what is now understood as Nigeria and have played a significant role in shaping them.

The second part of the first chapter then explores the history of women*s protest and resistance in Nigeria. It does so by first examining the historical, political, and cultural contexts of women*s gender-based protests in Nigeria. This section is again divided into historical stages describing protests in pre-colonial Nigeria, anti-colonial resistance, and finally post-colonial movements and protests by women* in Nigeria to the present day. Finally, this chronology is resumed and continued in the fourth chapter, which deals with gender-based protest by women* in contemporary Nigeria.

Beforehand, however, the second chapter discusses the theoretical and methodological approach that was used for this thesis. The qualitative field research in Nigeria, its conceptual approaches, as well as the evaluation of these will be described. The framework and circumstances of the fieldwork will be clarified, and the research subjects will be introduced. In addition, a part will describe my positioning and self-reflection as a researcher. This will give an insight into all those ethical and methodological issues that can arise in qualitative field research and need to be carefully considered. Where it must be assumed that influences of the researcher's socialization are not completely surmountable, these must be openly recognized and addressed to allow the reader to understand the thesis in its context and specific perspective. Additionally, this chapter addresses concepts and terminologies that are dominant in this thesis and thus require more detailed explanation. This includes understanding the contested term feminism in its context in Nigeria, as well as an explanation of why I consider it necessary to use the term women* in this thesis.

In order to better understand the protests of women* in Nigeria, it was also relevant to learn how they perceive their situation and the general role of women* in Nigeria. Oppression and marginalization became frequently mentioned terms in this context, but there was also a great emphasis on the resistance that is generated by them. Accordingly, the analysis of the field research in the third chapter will first address how women* perceive their gendered role and situation in contemporary Nigeria in order to give more context to the investigation of the research question. Therefore, this chapter gives space to the interviewees' ideas, experiences, and perspectives about gender-based oppression, discrimination and harassment of women* in Nigeria, how women* are often viewed and treated externally as property, which in turn

increases their anger and resistance, which will be discussed in more detail in the chapter thereafter. In doing so, personal experiences of the interviewees are intermingled with their views of the broader situation in their communities. The chapter is divided into three parts, which deal with different spaces. The first focuses on the female body as the property of others in the domestic or family space and thus addresses family-related issues such as family planning, marriage, divorce and pregnancy. The second addresses public space and sexism, harassment, and objectification experienced in public space. The third part explores how these two spaces overlap focusing on rape and sex. My hypothesis is that the described spaces cannot always be clearly demarcated from one another, but rather reach into and influence one another.

Finally, the following fourth chapter analyzes and reports how the research subjects report on resistance, how they express it on a daily basis, which forms of protest they use in which contexts and spaces, and the meaning and impact of this. Interviewees reported on protest movements, online campaigns, civil society organizations, marches, traditional forms of protest, and their own individual forms of resistance. A significant focus of this thesis will be on the latter, as already suggested by the title of the thesis "Protesting from Home." Individual forms of protest are by no means limited to private space, but it will be explored how different protest spaces can be delineated or overlap, what these mean to the interviewees, and how resistance can be expressed differently in different contexts, whether spontaneous or organized, public or private, alone or in a group, as a conscious or unconscious act of resistance, as a simple expression of an identity, or as a chosen form of activism. The narratives of the interviewees on which this chapter is based refer primarily to contemporary Nigeria and thus follow on from the historiography of protests from the first chapter. With these two chapters about the analysis and the results of the field research, not only the research question shall be answered, but I chose a style of interpretation and writing that also provides a platform which leaves space for the interviewees ideas, perspectives, experiences and hopes.

Through this thesis, I aim to gain a deeper understanding of the various gender-specific forms of protest used by women* in contemporary Nigeria to liberate themselves from a position of oppression and to draw attention to patriarchal structures. Furthermore, this thesis focuses, among other things, on forms of protest on a small scale that are not necessarily evident in history books or in the public image of a society. To explore this, I have chosen a qualitative field research method with semi-structured interviews and talked to 14 different women* from different parts of Nigeria. The group of interviewees was diverse, but they were united by a sense of injustice and a need to resist that discriminatory inequality. Their motivations,

perspectives, realities of life, forms of protest and approaches differ and overlap, as will become apparent in this thesis.

1. Historical Background of Women*s Protests in Nigeria

1.1 The Political Category of Women* and Women*s Roles in Nigeria

It is hardly possible to speak about a general role of women* in Nigeria in the historical as well as in the contemporary context, because the category of women* does not form a homogeneous group. Nigeria as a unified nation was not founded until 1914 by the British colonial power. Prior to the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates, numerous kingdoms, city-states and decentralized chiefdoms existed in what is now known as Nigeria. These all maintained different cultures, customs, socio-political and economic structures, traditions, and beliefs. The roles of women* reflected this diversity. They were embedded in economic, social, political, cultural structures and shaped them. "Rituals and religious offices that were women's preserves existed side by side with those of men." [14] Thus, writing about women* in Nigeria brings with it the problem that a generalizing universalism about the role of women* in Nigeria disregards the multiple dimensions described above and also brings with it a methodological nationalism. The reader of this thesis must therefore be aware that the following analyses and discussions will leave out a multitude of societies, experiences and groupings that are also part of contemporary Nigeria. However, it cannot be assumed, as it were, that these would differ enormously from the one described below.

1.1.1 Women* in Pre-colonial Nigeria

Each pre-colonial society in what is now Nigeria shaped the role and experiences of women* in different ways. Patriarchal structures and values as well as matriarchal ideas existed simultaneously.[15] Women* in precolonial Yorùbá society for instance played diverse roles. Traditionally, they were responsible for the household and the upbringing of children up to a certain age. Private space was primarily associated with women*, and so children grew up holding their mothers in high esteem. In addition, however, women* were the central figures in markets and trade. There were also women* with metaphysical powers that they could use for good or evil according to the beliefs of Yorùbá people. Therefore, these women* were feared by all people.[16]

[14] Ukpokolo 2020: 2.
[15] ibid.
[16] ibid.

Women* were also represented in the public sphere, in certain political positions. For example, there was the head of the female traders, the *Iyalode*, who is defined by Ukpokolo as "an intermediary between the market women and their kings and chiefs, relating their affairs to the leaders."[17] Even today, the position of the *Iyalode* remains relevant among the Yorùbá people. In addition, it was quite common for women* to publicly criticize leading figures and to urge them to take certain actions, even to resign.[18] This occurred through culturally specific forms of protest, which are described in more detail below and continued into colonial times.

Women* had influence in communal decision-making and were able to assume certain socially and politically significant roles in Yorùbá societies just as men did.[19] At this point it is important to note the context of Yorùbá culture, in which seniority and social achievements often play a more significant role than a person's gender when it comes to attaining prestige and certain roles in society. Oyěwùmí points out that gender is not used in the Yorùbá language and thus argues that gender in pre-colonial Yorùbá culture was less fixated on biological than social characteristics and thus must be understood differently than in today's widespread Western ontological conceptualization and construction of gender and gender differences.[20] She writes: "If gender is socially constructed, then gender cannot behave in the same way across time and space,"[21] and thus describes gender as "a historical and cultural phenomenon."[22] Referring to ancient Yorùbá culture, Oyěwùmí describes that "social hierarchy was determined by social relations" and seniority instead of sex or gender.[23] Oyěwùmí's reasoning has sparked a heated debate among researchers. Bakare-Yusuf, for example, criticizes Oyěwùmí's approach as too simplistic, arguing that the relationship of language, as Oyěwùmí's primary argument, with power and social reality falls short.[24] While she agrees that seniority trumps patriarchal structures in Yorùbá culture, this does not mean that gender-based structures of marginalization were not present.[25]

If we, however, look at this topic through a gendered lens, it must be pointed out that Yorùbá societies are described by the majority of scholars as patriarchal societies, even if there are deviations or varying degrees of this in different areas and groupings. For example, women*

[17] Ukpokolo 2020: 4.
[18] ibid.
[19] Mba 1982.
[20] Oyěwùmí 1997.
[21] ibid: 10.
[22] ibid: 10.
[23] ibid: 13.
[24] Bakare-Yusuf 2003.
[25] ibid.

are not involved or desired in some cultural activities, whereas there are also female deities in whose worship women* assumed leading positions or acted as priestesses.[26] With regard to legal issues, women* were also involved in the highest legislative council, where "a woman occupied the position of *Erelu*, […] who represents the society in the council. Her consent must be sought in decision making."[27]

The influence of Islam on the culture of the Yorùbá and accordingly on the roles of women*, which already in the 14th century through traders took hold, is also of no small importance. Today, the Yorùbá include Muslims as well as Christians and practitioners of indigenous religions. Nevertheless, the influence of Islam cannot be limited to those people who today or in pre-colonial times already referred to themselves as Muslims. Islam has had an influence in areas such as clothing, marriage, and even the entire belief system.[28]

In pre-colonial Igbo societies, women* were also actively involved in shaping culture and society. Although they were primarily seen in their roles as wives, mothers, or daughters, they also played the central role in the marketplaces and secured additional economic power through interregional trade. Female titleholders thus regulated the markets.[29] Pre-colonial Igbo societies were primarily organized patriarchally, with a man acting as head of the family in a mostly polygymous household.[30] As mothers, they were and still are highly revered, similar to Yorùbá societies, with adages such as "*Nneka* (Mother is greater), and *Nne amaka* (Mother is very good)."[31] This also implies that infertility or childlessness brought discrimination and that the central task of women* was to bear children.

However, women* in Igbo societies also played a significant role in maintaining peace. While the men's assembly had decision-making authority over the entire community, women*s assemblies could make decisions that affected only women*.[32] Similar structures still exist today in Igboland, but have less power. In the same way, at least some Igbo societies had both a male and a female chief. The male chief presided over the entire community, while the female chief presided exclusively over the women*.[33] However, there are also cases in which women* held a title that gave them greater power and political authority. Another feature of the role of

[26] Ukpokolo 2020.
[27] Akintan 2002: 9.
[28] Ukpokolo 2020.
[29] Mba 1982.
[30] Ukpokolo 2020.
[31] ibid: 6.
[32] ibid.
[33] Okonjo 1976.

women* in Igboland that is comparable to that in Yorùbá societies is that they were responsible and capable of teaching a certain morality and ensuring that it was maintained by the society as well as by leading figures, which was expressed through various forms of protest.[34] Moreover, even among the Igbo people, some women* were said to have a connection to black magic. Witchcraft was thus primarily associated with women* and continues to play a role, albeit to a different extent.[35]

Women* in the old kingdom of Benin lived in a strongly patriarchal and classist society. Women* were able to gain public recognition and a certain amount of power primarily through nobility or through successful economic trading. In this region of today's Nigeria, women* were also central figures in regional as well as supra-regional trade. In the noble hierarchy, there were indeed positions that attributed a certain power to certain women* as, for example, advisors to a male chief.[36] A woman*'s class and the power and respectability associated with it were consciously underscored by her appearance and dress. Ukpokolo argues that the female body in Benin "was used as an instrument of power."[37]

In many societies in what is now Nigeria, women* acted as priestesses and mediums between deities and humans. They also worked in farming and were responsible for raising children until the male children became the responsibility of the fathers at a certain age. Often, older women* in particular were granted a certain amount of power when it came to maintaining public morals and peace. Thus, women* were sometimes accorded a comparatively significant role in society, but this is contradicted by the fact that often the same societies reported that women* were denied any wisdom because of their gender, regardless of their age. This is the case, for example, with the Esan people.[38]

Furthermore, it was common in pre-colonial Nigeria that women* were not considered full-fledged and respectable until they married and gave birth to children. However, according to local legal systems, often only women* could commit adultery. These ideas continue into contemporary Nigeria in the 21st century. They illustrate how cultural norms and practices are used to benefit the position of men, implementing gender power imbalances.

Before Islam spread to pre-colonial Hausaland and other kingdoms in the northern regions of Nigeria, the role of women* there may not have been very different. However, Islam was used

[34] Amadiume 1987.
[35] Ukpokolo 2020.
[36] Mba 1982.
[37] Ukpokolo 2020: 8.
[38] Ehiemen 2016.

as a pretext to exclude and oppress women* from the public sphere. Here it is significant to emphasize that I argue that it was not Islam itself that preached this seclusion, but that it was merely instrumentalized. Nevertheless, women* were active in trading here as well and were able to navigate their status and influence in society and political decision-making processes through economic wealth.[39] "With the introduction of the Islamic religion, beginning from the reign of Mai Muhammadu Rumfa of Kano (1463-1499), women's active role in governance began to wane."[40]

In an attempt to summarize this broad spectrum of cultures and people in such a large time span, it can be said that women* in pre-colonial Nigeria were not, by and large, ascribed the same political power as their male counterparts. However, this does not mean that women* did not actively participate in the political life of their community. In this regard, Mba highlights the loss of power for women* during the subsequent colonial period, thus pointing to the significant and often restrictive influences of colonial powers on women*s roles.[41]

1.1.2 Women* in Colonial Nigeria

Colonialism induced political and legal changes, cultural values, trade routes, and a new social hierarchy that affected people of all genders. British rule slowly spread throughout the southern states of Nigeria beginning in the mid-19th century. In 1862, the British declared the city of Lagos and its environs a protectorate and later a crown colony, the first time they exercised direct power on Nigerian soil. By the turn of the century, the area under British power expanded considerably across southern as well as northern Nigeria.

In predominantly Muslim northern Nigeria, little initially changed for women*s lives. In addition to their seclusion, they could continue to work in some agricultural fields. The seclusion of women* benefited their husbands and "increasingly became symbols of elitism, Islamic piety of husbands, and Muslim identity."[42] The degree to which women* could be relegated from the public to the private sphere, however, was also related to social class. Criado Perez rightly points out, however, that "the arbitrary division of the world into 'private' and 'public' is in any case arguably a false distinction. Invariably both bleed into each other."[43] She

[39] Bawa 2016.
[40] Bawa in Ukpokolo 2020: 9.
[41] Mba 1982.
[42] Ukpokolo 2020: 11.
[43] Criado Perez 2019: 20.

hereby argues that women*, in their seclusion from the public sphere, have nonetheless had a significant impact on social norms and change, but that these are less documented due to patriarchal foci in the historiography.[44]

The British initially implemented an indirect rule, whereby power was assigned primarily to male chiefs and leaders. The new political structures introduced by the colonial power in the south of the country thus undermined female participation in decision-making processes and leading positions that had been occupied by women* in precolonial times. The effective power of women* was thus curtailed. Reforms even made traditional forms of women*s protests illegal, which pushed them further in the invisible realm. Van Allen states: "the British effectively eliminated the women's ability to protect their own interests and made them dependent upon men for protection against men."[45] This was further underscored by the advent of the Victorian understanding of women*s role in society, which saw women* primarily in the informal sector.[46] Men, on the other hand, had the role of the breadwinner of the family.[47] Additional laws on land rights and taxes introduced by the colonial administration made women* increasingly dependent on their male family members.[48] This inequality also made itself apparent in the educational systems. Men were initially educated to serve the colonial power, whereas women*s education was not on the agenda until later.[49] This further reduced women*s chances of advancement and agency in the colonial as well as postcolonial political and economic system.

In summary, colonization by the British propagated the discriminatory process of the "inferiorization of females" in Nigeria.[50] According to Oyeronke Oyewunmi, this gender hierarchy is closely linked to the racist oppression of the "native": "The process of inferiorizing the native, which was the essence of colonialism, was bound up with the process of enthroning male hegemony."[51] Accordingly, public spaces were created that only allowed males, genders were segregated, and women* were considered the inferior gender.[52] Religious institutions (Christian, Islamic, as well as traditional religions), the establishment of a Western educational system, as well as capitalism were misused to further strengthen a patriarchal gender hierarchy.

[44] Criado Perez 2019.
[45] Van Allen 1972: 178.
[46] Blackden & Canagarajah 2003.
[47] Falola 2018.
[48] Tamuno 1978.
[49] Mbonu 2011.
[50] Oyewumi 1997: 152.
[51] ibid: 152.
[52] ibid.

Ukpokolo aptly summarizes these circumstances: “in all spheres of life, colonialism created a paradigm shift that disadvantaged women in Nigeria.”[53]

1.1.3 The Struggle for Independence and Postcolonial Times

Despite the suppression of women* from leadership positions or decision-making processes during British colonial rule, women* were not politically inactive, submissive and silent. Primarily in the south of the country, they formed women*s groups, as well as protests and “contributed to the political activism that led to Nigeria’s independence,”[54] as will be illustrated in the further course of this chapter.

It is significant to consider the north and south of the country separately in this case. In the years leading up to Nigeria’s independence in 1960, few women* in the north actively campaigned for the country’s independence and the related political emancipation of women*. Nevertheless, individual activists, like Gambo Sawaba, from northern Nigeria of this period are also known.[55] More concrete examples will be discussed in the following subchapter.

However, if one looks at the entire country during the struggle for independence and also after independence was achieved, it becomes clear that numerous women*s groups, parties and associations emerged that advocated for women*s issues, women*s rights and gender justice and tried to implement these in the general political discourse and the newly independent government.[56] These initiatives and organizations continued to grow after Nigeria’s independence from the British in 1960. Women*s identities and roles were shaped by and in turn shaped the various approaches of women*s political organizations. Women* set out to identify and reclaim their rights.

Independent Nigeria and the establishment of a centrally governed federal democracy were interrupted by military coups in the 1960s and 1970s. Military governments alternated with democratically elected rulers. Finally, the Biafra Kreig (1967-70) scarred large parts of the country. The oil boom at the beginning of the 1970s, which decisively shaped Nigeria’s economic situation, was eventually succeeded by an oil crisis in the second half of the 1970s. The presidential elections in the 1980s were overshadowed by corruption, which was followed

[53] Ukpokolo 2020: 12.
[54] ibid: 13.
[55] ibid; Interview mit Aisha Mohammed.
[56] Ukpokolo 2020.

by further military coups and alternating people in power.[57] Thus, the situation in Nigeria has been constantly changing since independence, tormented by ethnic and religious conflicts and political unrest, which has also had a diverse and changing impact on the role of women* in society. After independence from Great Britain initially promised less oppression of Nigerian women* and women*s organizations developed, grew and spread, there were also setbacks. For example, the "War Against Indiscipline" introduced by General Buhari[58] while he was in power from 1983-85 had devastating consequences for women* and restricted them in their expression of opinion through protests. Women* were reprimanded for not taking sufficient care of their families and were at times forced back into the private sphere.[59]

With an increasingly globally interconnected world, there is no denying that global events and developments also impacted the role of women* in Nigeria and strengthened the implementation of women*s rights. These include the UN Decades for Women (1975-1984; 1985-1994), and the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted in December 1979 by the UN General Assembly, which was signed by Nigeria, among others. It should be noted, however, that theory can often differ significantly from practice. Moreover, the needs of Nigerian women* are, of course, as diverse as their identities or the heterogeneous "category of women" itself.[60] Women* in Nigeria today have a wide variety of life realities and experiences. Their identities are intersectionally influenced by class, ethnicity, skin color, educational status, marital status, place of residence and are located "on the crossroads of individualism promoted by globalization and modernity, and collectivism that marks the indigenous lifeways."[61]

In summary, women and people perceived as women in Nigeria still do not have the same freedoms and opportunities as cis-men do. Women* continue to be underrepresented in decision-making positions, which pushes their concerns to the back of the political agenda or often causes them to be forgotten.[62] Women*s influence on the country's development is thus limited. Although, as described above, the influence of women* in private on society should not be underestimated. Rebellion and the search for gender justice takes place in private negotiations, which can additionally be driven by activists and political campaigns etc. that have a public impact, as the results of my field research show.

[57] Falola & Heaton 2008.
[58] Muhammadu Buhari has been back in power as Nigeria's democratically elected president since 2015.
[59] Turner & Oshare 1993.
[60] Ukpokolo 2020: 14.
[61] ibid: 14.
[62] Mba 1982; Ukpokolo 2020.

Today in the 21st century, there are numerous non-governmental organizations and institutions in Nigeria working towards gender equality and justice. These range from women*s empowering organizations to organizations that call themselves feminist, which is a contested term in West Africa, or even queer feminist[63]. Nevertheless, the "structural violence against women" in society is strongly reflected in "sociocultural norms" and practices, which in turn are "intersected by religion, ethnicity, and class."[64]

1.2 History of Women*s Protest and Resistance in Nigeria

> *"In Nigeria […] there is, and there has always been a women's movement or more correctly women's movements. These existed before, during and after colonialism."*[65]

1.2.1 Historical, political and cultural context of Nigerian Women*s protests

Various forms of public protest by women* have been documented across different pre-colonial societies in Nigeria. The protests can be seen as political participation and expression, and in some cases can also be attributed to the role of (primarily older) women* as peacekeepers. For example, there are traditional practices such as "sit ins" and "sitting on a man" or "making war."[66] "Sitting on a man" or "making war" is a practice from Igbo culture that was used when someone had done something unacceptable or threatening to the general peace (as the next page will explain). The women* would then gather around his compound and wait, dance and sing songs that expressed the cause of their grievances and intend to publicly humiliate him. Often they would even damage his hut and use nudity in their protests.[67] The women* stayed there until the person solved the problem or resigned.[68]

Complaints were exchanged and discussed in the marketplaces, which were usually dominated by women* from different villages. Whenever there was a need, women* gathered and their decisions were then announced to the men of the village. If this was not sufficient to create

[63] Although queer inclusive feminism is still not widespread and often hidden, as homosexuality and transsexuality are widely marginalized or even illegalized in Nigeria.
[64] Ukpokolo 2020: 19.
[65] Madunagu 2008: 666.
[66] Van Allen 1972.
[67] Paddock 2018.
[68] Harris 1940; Green 2012; Leith-Ross 1939.

change, women* took action in the form of boycotts, strikes, or by "sitting on" or "making war on a man."[69] Boycotts were used when a whole group of men made decisions that contradicted the needs of women*.[70]

As Judith van Allen wrote, "Igbo women [thus] had a significant role in traditional political life."[71] Their strength found expression in their solidarity in their "kinship groups", "market networks" and female political institutions, which they used to plan these "strikes, boycotts and force to effect their decisions."[72] Harris i.e. describes an instance in which "after repeated requests by the women for the paths to the market to be cleared […], all the women refused to cook for their husbands until the request was carried out."[73] Strategies like this could only be effective because all the women* worked together in solidarity. These were ways of protest and resistance Igbo women* used to express their individual and collective concerns and to create change. Female religious authorities like priestesses practiced other forms of protest and influence on society, which were related to their religious roles.[74]

Another form of protest, which has prevailed in today's Nigeria and was already used in pre-colonial times by Yorùbá and other women*, is deliberate undressing. This primarily involves mothers or grandmothers who strip naked for reasons of protest. The act of undressing is seen as cursing those to whom the protest is directed and conveys the message that these women* would be willing to die for the cause of the protest.[75] This form of protest thus carries with it enormous power and seriousness.

It is important to understand the cultural components of undressing in this context. In Yorùbá culture, as well as other cultural groups in West Africa, it is common for children to never see their mothers fully unclothed. Should they nevertheless ever see their mother naked, this is associated with a curse that is placed on them. When this culturally specific behavior is translated to public forms of protest, women* strip in front of those people who they believe have behaved wrongly with the symbolism that they could be their mothers whom they are seeing naked. The curse is accordingly transferred to the people against whom the protest is directed. Shaming plays a big role in this scene. This gives the act of undressing an unfathomable significance and urgency. Furthermore, the women* make themselves extremely

[69] Van Allen 1972: 170.
[70] Paddock 2018.
[71] Van Allen 1972: 165.
[72] ibid: 165.
[73] Harris 1940 in van Allen 1972: 170.
[74] Paddock 2018.
[75] Fallon & Moreau 2016.

vulnerable through their nakedness, which underscores the message that they would be willing to die for the cause of their protest.[76] This can also be seen as the origin of the curse: the mothers and grandmothers were able to give life and are equally able to sacrifice life. Turner and Brownhill describe the meaning of undressing in Nigeria as follows: "This is where life comes from, I hereby revoke your life."[77] The significance of this gender-specific form of protest thus "allows women to reassert their power within local communities."[78] Since this practice is still used today and has survived the misinterpretations of colonial authorities, it may well have an impact beyond the scope of local societies and oppose the national government in some cases. It should, however, be mentioned that "mothers and grandmothers use the collective action tactic of shaming only as a last resort."[79]

1.2.2. Anticolonial Protest and Resistance

The British colonial administration took little notice of women*s institutions or the traditional roles of women* in general. The colonial political structures introduced changed power relations and women* lost autonomy and rights. However, they did not always remain silent and complied with these changes. For example, market women* boycotted European goods in 1925 to assert their traditional authority over the markets.[80]

Another famous example of women*s resistance is the Aba Women's War in 1929. The forms of organization and protest that were chosen for this are comparable to those of "sitting on a man," but took place on a much larger scale and in this case against the British colonial power and the Warrant Chiefs who worked for them, argues van Allen.[81] The Women's War was sparked by fears circulating among women* in southern Igboland that they should now also pay taxes to the colonial power. Additionally, it can be assumed that the feared taxation merely broke the camel's back, which was already full of frustrations towards the colonial government, which undermined and destroyed the local belief and cultural system, making the situation of women* much more difficult.[82] The news about the taxation spread rapidly through the market women*s information network, resulting in women* from all over Owerri Province converging to protest in front of the district office. The initial protest ended with them being assured in

[76] Fallon & Moreau 2016; Interviews with Temmie Ovwasa and Ololade Faniyi 2021.
[77] Turner & Brownhill 2002: 139.
[78] Fallon & Moreau 2016: 325.
[79] ibid: 324.
[80] Paddock 2018.
[81] Van Allen 1972.
[82] Paddock 2018; Ifeka-Moller 1973.

written form that no taxes would be levied on them.[83] However, this success encouraged women* in other administrative districts to protest against their Warrant Chiefs and the entire Native administration. Thousands of women* participated in these protests, using their ever-similar traditional forms of protest. "They 'sat on' Warrant Chiefs and burned Native Court buildings."[84] In some places they were more successful in doing so than in others. In Aba, the site that contributed to the historic naming of the protests, the British eventually deployed police and soldiers to stop the destruction. Although the protesting women* did not injure anyone and apparently had no intention of doing so, as their traditional form of protest did not provide for or allow for this, as can be assumed, the clashes with the troops nevertheless resulted in about 50 dead and as many injured women*. Not a single man sustained an injury in these rebellions that lasted for about a month.[85]

Through their communication networks, the women* managed to organize themselves over almost ten thousand square kilometers and appeared at the various locations of the event in always the same traditional manner and dress: Their faces were painted with white chalk or ashes, and their hands carried "sticks wreathed with young palms."[86] The attire with which the women* appeared is strongly reminiscent of that which men wore when they went to war. The term "making war" thus suggests itself. Here, the significance of the protests becomes clear once again, since the war robes express that the women* would be willing to give their lives if their demands were heard.[87]

These events briefly brought women* into the spotlight, but this soon faded and had no effect on the reforms that were made in the Native administration. The colonial power thus continued to ignore the fact that women* had played a significant role in the traditional Igbo political structures and excluded them from the new system of government.[88] Although it initially seemed like a failure, one must also consider the long-term consequences of the events, which sparked a series of further protests and resistance and contributed to the development of a national identity that would prove essential to the independence movement in the 1940s and 1950s.[89]

[83] Gailey in van Allen 1972.
[84] Van Allen 1972: 174.
[85] Esike 1965.
[86] Van Allen 1972: 175.
[87] Fallon & Moreau 2016.
[88] Van Allen 1972.
[89] Paddock 2018.

Comparing the Aba Women's War to the traditional protest form of "sitting on a man" or "making war" is obvious due to the similarity in tactics. Nevertheless, Ifeka-Moller argues that the Aba Women's War incidents were of unprecedented proportions and mobilized large numbers of women*, as is unusual for the traditional "sitting on a man." Moreover, as described earlier, it is reasonable to assume that it was not the threat of impending taxation alone that provoked protests of this magnitude, but that women* were expressing their displeasure of long-term changes in their role in society brought about by colonialism. Colonialism and the values and structures it transported had an oppressive and marginalizing effect on the role of women* in societies.[90]

Thus, between the 1930s and 1950s, Egba women* in western Nigeria pressured their Alake (or King of Egbaland) to abdicate because he collaborated too much with the "exploitative colonial government."[91]

In the late years of colonial rule, despite the oppression of women*, numerous women*s organizations and associations emerged to promote women*s emancipation and rights. Famous examples are the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU), led by Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, the Aba Market Women's Association, led by Margaret Ekpo, and the Enugu Women's Association. The former also publicly protested the taxation of women*.

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti is a leading figure in the struggle for women*s rights and in anti-colonial movements in Nigeria. She advocated access to education for women* and promoted women*s political participation and representation.[92] She successfully united women* of all classes across the country to fight for their political, economic and social rights.[93]

There were less women* in northern Nigeria that participated in the struggle for independence and women*s political emancipation. But Gambo Sawaba, for example, stands out. Trained by Ransome Kuti, Sawaba was one of the very few women* in a political party in northern Nigeria (NEPU), as well as one of the few female political activists, which forced her to face numerous challenges. Ukpokolo reports from northern Nigeria that "women politicians were regarded as prostitutes,"[94] because this role did not correspond to the traditional image of a woman* in society. Islam was instrumentalized as an argument to prevent the emancipation of women*.

[90] Ifeka-Moller 1973; Paddock 2018.
[91] Turner & Oshare 1993: 336.
[92] Falaiye 2021.
[93] Mba 1982.
[94] Ukpokolo 2020: 12.

Sawaba was therefore not only regularly threatened, but also beaten and imprisoned for her actions.[95]

Finally, in 1947, the National Women's Union (NWU) was formed from the various independent women*s organizations primarily from the Southwest and Southeast regions of the country. The NWU eventually became the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies (FNWS), which set itself the task of "bringing Nigerian women together to protect their rights under colonial rule and raise the general status of women to win equal opportunities with men."[96]

In 1958, the FNWS in turn became the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS). This Basu aptly describes as a "non-confrontational" and "unarmed movement."[97] "It is a movement for the progressive upliftment of women for motherhood, nationhood and development,"[98] but widely accepts patriarchy and the male supremacy that goes with it. Despite their focus on elite women*, the NCWS fought for women*s political participation in general in politics and campaigned for women*s right to vote.[99]

In summary, it can be said that various types of women*s movements could be found at this time. Several market women* associations in different regions of Nigeria primarily used traditional structures and modes of action to uphold women*s rights and economic autonomy. At the same time more and more organizations emerged that were led primarily by women* from the "new" elite, who had received a Western education and thus benefited in part from the colonial system. Their demands were initially related to their role within the colonial system, their right to political participation and equal opportunities. From the 1940s onward, however, they increasingly focused their objectives on the pursuit of independence and thus made a decisive contribution to the nationalist movement. Furthermore, there were also movements that operated at the intersection of these two spheres. They combined traditional organizations, such as those of market women*, with those of the "new" elite, thus creating a powerful union in the struggle for women*s rights as well as independence.[100]

A shift of strategies of protests became visible as a response to colonization since the Women's War in 1929. "Localized ethnic-based opposition to British imperialism"[101] shifted to protests on a geographically wide scale and across class and ethnic groups, which illustrates that

[95] Ukpokolo 2020.
[96] McGarvey 2008: 143.
[97] Basu 1995 in Madunagu 2008: 666.
[98] ibid: 666.
[99] Madunagu 2008.
[100] Johnson 1982.
[101] Paddock 2018: 2.

women* were increasingly networking and asserting their common interests. They worked together collectively to improve the situation of all women* and to put pressure on the colonial government.[102] Thus, in the words of Fallon and Moreau, it can be said that "the consolidation of the state (in this case through colonization) led to a new form of collective action tactic – protests, demonstrations, and boycotts."[103]

At this point, I would like to elaborate on the differentiation between civil society activism and grassroots activism. In this thesis the focus lies primarily on forms of protest and resistance in grassroots activism. By grassroots activism I refer to on the ground individual or collective activism, protest and resistance, which is independent of larger civil society women*s associations. I do, however, consider it crucial to briefly mention the landscape of civil society activism in the form of women*s organizations as it gives an impression of the political situation of the country as well as of women*s roles in society. Additionally civil society shapes not only policies but also society as a whole and thus has a non-negligible influence on grassroots activism as well.

1.2.3 Protest and Resistance in post-independence Nigeria

Many of the women*s associations described above continued to exist well into independent Nigeria. Other associations were added, and with them the diversity of demands and attitudes of the women*s associations grew.[104] In the colonial era, women*-led protests were primarily directed against the colonial administration and were sometimes more and sometimes less successful in incorporating women*s concerns into government policies. In independent Nigeria, on the other hand, the focus of protests changed to some extent: "women confront the forces of tradition, modernity, and the neo-patriarchy," [105] while at the same time the majority of women* just struggles to make a living every day.

The 1982 national conference on women* in Nigeria consolidated a change in Nigerian feminism. Out of this conference emerged the organization Women in Nigeria (WIN), which saw itself as part of a feminist movement.[106] This is remarkable considering that feminism was

[102] Mba 1982; Fallon & Moreau 2016.
[103] Fallon & Moreau 2016: 327.
[104] i.e. Women in Nigeria (WIN) founded in 1982, Women's Research and Documentation Centre (WORDOC) founded in 1985, the Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) (1985), the National Commission for Women (NCW) (1989), etc.
[105] Ukpokolo 2020: 1.
[106] Madunagu 2008.

always (and still is) a contested term in colonial Africa. Another aspect that WIN brought was attention to intersectional marginalization, problem-solving, and solutions that considered both class and gender in women*s struggle for equality. WIN was succeeded in 2008 by the Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF), which is part of the larger African Feminist Forum (AFF).[107]

Apart from these civil society organizations women* continued to use their collective identity as women* to unite against contemporary government decisions and to resist hardships brought on by powerful capitalist companies. This is also visible in women*s protests against the oil industry in the 1980s and 2000s. In the 1970s, there was an oil boom in Nigeria that significantly changed the economic situation of the country and thus also the situation of many women*. The markets in which women* exercised economic and social power were monetized by the advent of capitalism and in some cases swamped by imported goods, leaving many women* in an economically precarious position. In addition, the environment was devastated, land was occupied by industries, agriculture became difficult and promised compensation failed to materialize.[108] The revolt in 1984 around Warri was the beginning of numerous uprisings against the oil industry in Nigeria. One day, all the women* of the community of Ogharefe gathered around the local production facility and occupied it and the access roads, briefly paralyzing the operation. When negotiations were offered to them, the thousands of women* stripped naked, demanding compliance with their demands and no further negotiations. This traditional protest technique as a last resort was effective. The Nigerian men understood the significance of the curse it was intended to place on them, and thus it had a significant effect on the U.S. oil company chairmen as well. The demands were soon implemented, compensations were paid and wells and electricity were installed.[109]

Two years later, about 100 women* occupied parts of Shell's refineries to press their demands, saying that Shell was destroying their livelihoods.[110] A few months after this incident, around 10,000 women* of all ages gathered for the so-called "1986 Ekpan Women's Uprising."[111] They made noise, chanted, shouted their demands and threatened to undress. They occupied the access roads to the site, thus shutting down Warri's oil industry. After several hours, they finally settled down to negotiations. The reasons for their revolt were not only their frustration with their situation as women*, which was affected by the oil industry, but were demands for the whole society, men and women*. What began as a protest by women* was taken over by men

[107] Madunagu 2008.
[108] Lacey 1986.
[109] Turner & Oshare 1993. Okon 2007.
[110] Turner & Oshare 1993.
[111] ibid: 345.

of the elite after a few days of negotiations. Although they represented the majority of the women*s demands, it is nevertheless evident that "in the men's version, women were not challengers of power but victims of it."[112]

Numerous protests and demonstrations against the oil industry followed in the decades that ensued. Some were carried out by women* alone, others in collaboration with male protesters. In 2002, renewed protests flared up in the Niger Delta. Some of these can be described as more planned than previous protests. Sometimes hundreds of women* gathered, sometimes thousands. Oil company sites were strategically occupied, and the threat of nakedness was made and used.[113] In addition, black magic customs were used, there was noise, dancing, singing. However, Western workers and commanders at the sites could not comprehend the threat posed by traditional forms of protest, such as undressing, in the same way as the majority of Nigerian men did. Stratton describes it as follows: "here was a cultural disconnect between the meaning of a tactic for African who used it and for the Westerners against whom it was directed."[114] Nevertheless, the message was conveyed through the many Nigerian male workers that with this kind of protesting women* expressed that they were ready to die for their demands. They complained about the pollution brought by ChevronTexaco's plants, which made their lives difficult. They expressed their desire for concrete changes, for infrastructure and employment. Eventually, many of the demands were met.[115]

In the decades that followed, women* could be seen in various organized and less organized public protests in Nigeria. For example, the cross-gender marches of the Occupy Nigeria Movement in 2012 included numerous women* among the protesters marching against the discontinuation of oil subsidies by the government. Muslim women* from Nigeria's north also took to Kano's streets, and naked women* were seen in protests in Benin City shaming the government into reinstating fuel subsidy.[116]

It is noteworthy that, for cultural and historical reasons, women* in Nigeria generally only engage in peaceful protests and do not carry weapons. This may be related to their traditional role as peacekeepers on the one hand, but also as a protest strategy and protection against a violent reaction.[117] However, a violent reaction does not remain absent in every case.

[112] Turner & Oshare 1993: 349.
[113] Ukeje 2004.
[114] Strutton 2015: 77.
[115] Fallon & Moreau 2016.
[116] Strutton 2015.
[117] ibid.

Through the increasing use of social media, new forms of protest and organizing have emerged in the past decade, which are relevant to movements such as #ArewaMeToo[118] and also the EndSARS protests of 2020[119]. Moreover, social media increasingly enable protest and resistance in private to be externalized, blurring the line between private and public, as will become clear in the further course of this work.

[118] #ArewaMeToo was a hashtag that started in 2017 in northern Nigeria prompting women* to share their experiences of sexual abuse and harassment online. This will be described more in detail in chapter four.
[119] The EndSARS movement protested against police brutality in Nigeria in 2020 and specifically against the violent actions of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad. This will be elaborated on in chapter four.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Approach

In this chapter, I will discuss the strategies I used in the course of my qualitative research as well as reflect on the realities involved. In this process, research methods and fieldwork will be discussed first. After reflecting on my positionality as a researcher, central concepts and terms of the work will be addressed and defined, such as feminisms in Nigeria and the socio-political category women*. These parts will provide a deeper understanding of the context of the work. Finally, the research subjects who were instrumental in the outcome of this work will be briefly introduced.

2.1 Conducting Fieldwork in Nigeria

Full of curiosity and questions about how people would react and respond to my research topic, I stepped off the plane in Lagos in October 2021. The humid heat hit me. My calendar for the next seven weeks, which my stay in Nigeria was to last, still had few appointments noted at this point, but soon became denser week by week and encounter by encounter. Since I often received further contacts of potential informants from interviewees and thus quickly found access to a network of similarly minded people, I cannot report on an informant group representing the broad society in this thesis. Rather, the focus in this research is on Nigerian women and non-binary people who are predominantly perceived as female, and who are interested in gender justice which they express in their profession, lifestyle, activism, political or social engagement in a private as well as public sphere in one way or another. I chose this group of people as informants for my research to get an insight into young, politically thinking, Nigerian minds and to see how or if they resist and protest in different spaces using different strategies and tools.

I chose to conduct interviews and use oral sources[120] because I see a great advantage and richness in doing so when researching marginalized groups that are often underrepresented in written sources.[121] Documenting the voices and ideas of those who have otherwise often been

[120] Oral sources are non-written sources that document historical or, in the case of this work, contemporary information. They are used in oral history, a method of historical studies that focuses on giving voice to primarily marginalized groups that are otherwise often underrepresented in historical sources. It is also important in the method of oral history that interviews are conducted as freely and in depth as possible, leaving a lot of space for the interviewees and reducing the influence of the researcher. (Dillard 2018; Perks & Thomson 2016; Berger Gluck & Patai 1991)

[121] Cf. Perks & Thomson 2016.

silenced or left out of the historiography calls for a democratizing approach that reflects on what implications of power can and cannot be overcome by doing so.[122] Beyond the reason that oral history can tell the stories of people who are otherwise underrepresented in historical and contemporary documentation, this approach also gives the opportunity to gain insight into spaces that often remain underrepresented in scholarship. In this case, I speak of the private and domestic space, which, as it will become apparent in this work, is of unexpected importance in processes of resistance.

Access to the research subjects was gained through extensive Internet research prior to my journey to Nigeria, during which I contacted numerous organizations, institutions and individuals who appeared to be involved in gender-specific or gender-based protests. The potential interviewees were then informed about my research project and asked if they would be available for an interview. Much of the contacts ultimately arose in the field itself, through research subjects or other people I encountered referring me to other potential research subjects.

My main informants were Nigerian women* in their twenties, although four of them were in their thirties or early forties. Their identities overlapped in that they had all once started, were still studying, or had already graduated from university or some other form of higher education. In addition, all had some interest and varying degrees of commitment to gender justice and all spoke fluent English or called English their first language. Three of the 14 interviewees indicated that they had grown up in a Christian context, whereas six stated that they had grown up in a Muslim context. The remaining five did not mention their faith. However, some of the interviewees did not identify as practitioners of any religion at the time of the interviews. Twelve of the interviewees grew up and lived in the southwestern region of Nigeria. The majority of them stated that they belonged to the ethnic group of the Yorùbá. Two of the interviewees came from the primarily Muslim north of Nigeria. All interviewees lived in urban areas during the research period, although they did not categorically grow up there.

In addition to the 14 interviews, I also conducted various conversations with researchers who themselves deal with related topics. The essence of these conversations is also included in this

[122] Dillard 2018.

thesis. These include Adetowun Ogunsheye,[123] Mutiat Oladejo[124] and other researchers who are not specifically mentioned in this thesis.

To get a deeper understanding of their role in society and their view as well as experiences and opinions related to my research, I chose a qualitative research strategy based on semi-structured, narrative, individual interviews.[125] These interviews took place primarily in neutral public places such as parks or cafes in Lagos, Ibadan, and Abuja, Nigeria. I speak of neutral places here, as they are not the home or otherwise meaningful or emotional places of neither the interviewee nor the researcher. Neutral locations in this sense were chosen on the one hand so that interviewees could speak as freely as possible and not be disturbed or influenced by family members or other familiar people. On the other hand, neutral places can support a reduction of the power imbalances between interviewee and researcher, which inevitably occur in interview situations to a certain extent. Care was taken to maintain sufficient distance from surrounding people in these neutral places to preserve the integrity of the conversation. The interviews were held in English.

Initially establishing a familiar conversational level and atmosphere with the interview subjects was an integral first component of my interviews to ensure a meaningful exchange. During the interviews, my goal was to explore human stories and to allow the research subjects to speak for themselves. Thus, I made sure to give the interviewees enough space to tell their stories. Although I had a prepared and standardized list of questions, I kept it open and flexible and added questions depending on where my interviewee took me in the context of the research interest. Often, it is not obvious from the beginning what information collected will end up being of particular importance for the research, which is why I gave the interviewees the freedom to tell me what they thought was relevant or what contained a particular personal relevance for them. This approach helped me to get a deeper understanding of the issues that were most important to them and were burning on their minds the most. In addition, this made it possible to overcome a hierarchy that initially results solely from the roles of the researcher and the interviewee. The research subjects were able to steer the conversation to a certain degree and thus express their agency. Dillard wrote about oral history methods that "one of the most

[123] Felicia Adetowun Omolara Ogunsheye was born in 1926 and is the first female professor in Nigeria. She is a professor emeritus of library science at the University of Ibadan, was involved in various women*s organisations and focused her research on women*s roles in Nigeria. I had the privilege to meet her for a brief conversation in her private library in Ibadan.
[124] Dr Mutiat Titilope Oladejo currently works at the Department of History, University of Ibadan. Her research focus is on gender and women*s history.
[125] Cf. Chilisa 2012.

exciting elements of these methods is that the research is dynamic. The people being interviewed are agentive actors who bring their own perspective to the interview process."[126] In this way, I was able to learn about things and topics that I was previously unaware of or that I had overlooked due to my positionality. Thus, it became possible to follow what postcolonial theory emphasizes according to Baur: "the importance of abolishing blind spots by increasing visibility of the excluded."[127]

In the majority of the interviews, I perceived a great desire from my informants to talk and to be heard. They also approached me with openness and trust in revealing personal and sensitive stories and vulnerabilities, for which I am incredibly grateful. It is likely that all research subjects had a different motivation and agenda that led them to take the time out of their busy schedules to be interviewed. Some expressed simple curiosity, others seemed to care about expressing their opinions on my research topic and sharing their experiences, often in the hope that this research could make a difference by bringing attention to the discrimination they have experienced. All interviewees indicated that I was welcome to mention their full names and that they did not wish to be anonymized. This shows a certain courage to stand fully behind what they are willing to share with the public and expresses that they want to be heard as individuals and representatives of what they assume is a broader phenomenon of marginalization and resistance in order to achieve change.

Finally, I held a total of 14 interviews. All of these interviews were audio recorded and later analyzed. The length of the interviews varied in focus, depth, and length between twenty minutes and three hours. All were held within a seven-week time span in October and November 2021. Subsequently, the recordings were transcribed, sorted according to recurring themes, and marked in terms of a qualitative content analysis. Through this, themes that came up repeatedly and distilled categories, as well as subcategories, could be worked out and used for analysis. Of course, I tried to order themes not according to my biases and expectations, but according to the foci my research subjects set for me in our conversations. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that the categories which emerged remain in parts a biased product of my own perceptions and limited understanding of the situations of my interviewees. My task as a researcher is to put the interviews and conversations into perspective, to draw out overarching arguments, and to give what is said a relevance that extends beyond the personal relevance of

[126] Dillard 2018: 6.
[127] Baur 2021: 208.

the interviewees and me as a researcher. My intentions and what I want to show with this work are thus inseparably mixed with those of my research subjects.

Field research for this thesis was conducted in three major cities in Nigeria: Lagos, Ibadan, and Abuja. Lagos and Ibadan are both located in the southwest of the country, whereas the capital city, Abuja, is located in central Nigeria and thus combines the Muslim dominated north and the Christian dominated south of Nigeria. These three locations were chosen in order to get as broad an impression as possible of different situations throughout the country. Other regions of Nigeria unfortunately had to be avoided in the field research for security reasons.

Of course, it cannot be expected that this work covers the entire diversity of Nigeria, but it can be assumed that the stories and experiences of the informants are representative of a larger group of young women and non-binary people in Nigeria. However, this work and its findings can and should not be considered as general experiences of Nigerian women*. Generalizations are to be avoided and this research has to be understood in its context of time, places, group of informants, research focus and the researcher's positionality.[128] The complexity of Nigeria's history, geography, political situation and the cultural particularities this country entails as well as various ethnic groupings cannot be fully covered and represented by this research.

Beyond the interviews, this thesis incorporates numerous observations, conversations, and experiences of everyday life during my fieldwork in Nigeria. In addition, a research diary was kept as a reflection of my impressions, thoughts, concerns and development, the essence of which is also included in this paper.

2.2 Reflection and situating myself as a Researcher

"Every researcher will have to face ethical issues in the course of their field research," argues the anthropologist Beer.[129] I would like to acknowledge this and reflect openly below on what ethical issues I encountered in the course of the research. This reflexivity can help me as a researcher to recognize my internal biases through the process of shifting the focus of observation from the research subject to myself, the researcher. It is important to recognize and understand these biases and the positionality of the researcher in order to understand its possible impact on both the collection and analyzation of qualitative data. Being aware of my

[128] Cf. Chilisa & Ntseane 2010.
[129] Beer 2003: 26.

positionality also involves an awareness of the "remnants of colonial thinking,"[130] as Baur argued. These inevitably influence the perceptions of researchers from the Global North, including myself.

Most of the concerns I had prior to the fieldwork, such as how I would be encountered as a white European researching marginalization and resistance in Nigeria, were alleviated with my encounters with the research subjects. It was important to me that my research did not underline stereotypes, that I did justice to the experiences and accounts of my interviewees, and that I did not feed colonial continuities and dynamics, but rather did justice to a postcolonial approach.[131] In conversations with the interviewees, I addressed these concerns openly so that I could possibly rethink and adjust my research through the clear opinion of my counterpart. However, the feedback I received was overwhelmingly positive. Temmie Ovwasa, for example, expressed that as an outsider, I had the freedom to talk about all these issues that would so often be taboo. They saw me and my research as a medium for how they could speak openly about issues that were on their mind and that they considered significant and for how they could be published in a largely safe frame. I thus provided a shield for marginalized voices, Temmie explained.[132] Esther Adebayo also wrote to me in a message before our interview, "I just hope this research would help educate and enlighten more women in this."[133] She was referring to the desire and need from her perspective for more women* in Nigeria to develop awareness of their situation and opportunities.

However, this response and the hope that was instilled in this work challenged me again. I wanted to do justice to the experiences and narratives, the stories of oppression, of liberation, of resistance and hope that were opened up to me through my research subjects, and at the same time I found myself faced with the challenge of trying to compress them into a scientific paper. Therefore, in this paper I tried to give as much space as possible to the narratives of my interviewees, to let them have their say and to underline their statements and the related relevance through secondary literature.

[130] Baur 2021: 207.
[131] Postcolonialism is a current of poststructuralism. On the one hand, it is based on decolonization and thus "a multi-pronged process of liberation from political, economic and cultural colonization. Removing the anchors of colonialism from the physical, ecological and mental processes of a nation and its people," (Tamale 2020: XIV). On the other hand, a postcolonial approach also strives for an awareness of continuing imperialist structures. These should be perceived, named and eventually overcome. (Young 2016; Jefferess 2008; Castro Varela & Dhawan 2020.)
[132] Ovwasa 2021.
[133] Adebayo 2021, personal communication.

Through shared woman*hood[134] and related experiences of oppression and resistance, albeit in a different context and scale, I had the opportunity to build a deeper connection and understanding with my research subjects. At the same time, however, I was also aware that my personal involvement in the subject matter not only bestowed the opportunity for deeper insights, but also brought with it the danger of understanding my interviewees' experiences through the lens of my own experiences and losing objectivity. Consequently, in the process of my research, I have attempted to continually reflect and differentiate between what is my personal learning and what is the interviewees' experience. Furthermore, I assume that by presenting the interviews in a broad and detailed manner, more space is given to the stories and contexts of the interviewees and thus they can be understood from the reader's particular perspective. Nevertheless, it must of course be assumed that my subjectivity as a researcher has found its way into this work, as it would be dishonest to deny this. For this reason, I feel it is important to briefly introduce myself: I am white, in my mid-twenties, an academic, able bodied, have German citizenship, grew up in an upper-middle class family, live in western Europe, am female, grew up in a Christian context and do not count myself as part of the queer community. These peripheral facts about myself give an insight into my perspective and possible biases that shape this work, although of course one cannot assume to be able to completely classify my perspective and positionality solely based on these peripheral facts.

I was also concerned that I was getting so much from my interviewees, time, trust, openness, vulnerability, but I could not give enough in return. The thought quickly spread through my mind to what extent field research should be seen as exploitation. As a researcher, one comes, collects information and disappears again. Other researchers I met on my journey told me that good research does not serve the opinions and needs of the interviewees, but questions, analyzes, and critiques them. According to them, my job is not to write for the interviewees. However, I have a hard time with this statement. I think research can be a form of activism and it is legitimate to use it that way. Of course, one should always remain critical and yet research can also serve the interviewees and their intentions to a certain degree. Academic research can be seen as a form of activism and resistance in that it allows people to voice what is otherwise too often silenced and focus on circumstances to direct attention to what is too often unseen. When I research and write about feminism and resistance, it is itself an act of resistance, Awcock argues. Further, she writes, "by uncovering the contribution of women to protest movements [...], it is contributing to the ongoing political project of gender equality. Resistance

[134] Woman*hood defines the state of being a woman*. More specifically this means the state of being socialized and/or externally perceived as a woman. It does not define the gender of a person as will be elaborated on below.

is the product of multiple practices."[135] And this includes documenting and, in this case, academic writing of forms of protest used by women* in Nigeria.

In addition, Chilisa and Ntseane write that African feminisms specifically "emphasise the power and agency of African women in particular to theories from their cultures and lived experiences to produce knowledge that is contextually relevant, builds relationships, heals the self, the community and the larger socio-cultural context."[136] This is part of what I am aiming for with this thesis and research approach.

The original driving force that brought me to this research topic was the curiosity to know how other people look at this world. This is something that has been driving me for years and sent me on this field research journey. I wanted to learn with and from others, to share and connect, as I wrote in my research journal at the beginning. However, the deeper I delved into the subject matter and the more interviews I conducted, the more I realized that there are hopes placed in this work on the part of the interviewees and that the research question and topic definitely have significant relevance and can thus also be seen as part of the resistance.

Nevertheless, the question remains to what extent I can or should separate my own resistance from that of my interviewees. Part of me recognizes commonalities in the marginalization and demands of resistance that I myself experience in my context in Western Europe and that my interviewees experience in their respective contexts in Nigeria. This part desires a collective struggle against patriarchal structures in the world. However, another part of me is aware that caution must be taken here, as African feminisms and resistance must be seen in their own context. Different circumstances lead to different priorities and needs, as well as different ways of dealing with them. The issue must be approached with an awareness of intersectionality.[137] Furthermore, I need to ask myself to what extent my research question and approach was inspired by popular narratives in Western societies and thus already present the research subject in a distorted light. These are questions that a researcher in fieldwork must ask anyway but may never be able to fully penetrate and overcome.

Qualitative research always takes place at the intersection of the researcher and the topic or research subjects. Therefore, the role of the researcher must be reflected and analyzed in how she interprets, understands, and brings her own (un)conscious beliefs and agendas into the research. Consequently, in terms of "decolonizing" social science research methods, I must

[135] Awcock 2020: 7.
[136] Chilisa & Ntseane 2010: 619.
[137] Cf. Disney 2008; Crenchaw 2010.

acknowledge my own subjectivity as well as make the reader of this thesis aware of it.[138] "The decolonizing debate is intrinsically linked to debates about objectivity, subjectivity, and positionality because, in a nutshell, postcolonial scholars criticize the idea that "objective" knowledge is possible and argue that research findings are influenced by researchers' subjectivity and positionality,"[139] argues Baur. Furthermore, postcolonial scholars try to overcome the reproduction of global inequalities through research narratives by adapting their research questions and methods to the research subjects.[140] Whether a complete overcoming of colonial structures in science is possible is questionable, however, in this thesis I consider it relevant to reflect on the extent to which these inequalities might be reproduced and how I can overcome this as far as possible. For this reason, I realized, for example, that I had to adapt my research question to the resonance I received from my research subjects in order not to impose a "Western" narrative.

One point at which I again realized that I have to start from a different context and get to know it better in general before I can carry out and analyze my concrete research project was when Omolola Akinsanya explained to me in an interview that so many people in Nigeria are primarily concerned with survival and therefore have no room to think about gender relations and gender-specific oppression.[141] Aisha Mohammed commented that this was a cop-out, that gender issues should always be addressed and that many things could only change for the better if, for example, more women* were in leadership positions.[142] Beyond the discussion of whether it is legitimate or rather an excuse to say one has no capacity to address gender-based injustice, this discourse showed me that in the context of this research, I need to ask what people's priorities and capacities are and why. Furthermore, there is a need to ask how various privileges, as well as hardships, play a role in researching resistance and protest. Who has the freedom to choose whether to protest, who feels they do not have a choice whether to resist due to context, and who feels they do not have the capacity to resist due to life circumstances? This will be touched on in the following chapters when it comes to the question of who becomes an activist (un)voluntarily. However, it will also become clear that there are no clear categories and boundaries here, according to which it is objectively decided who has the privilege of choice and who does not. Rather, this must be seen as an intersubjective process.

[138] Baur 2021.
[139] ibid: 208.
[140] ibid.
[141] Akinsanya 2021.
[142] Mohammed 2021a.

This also brings me to another issue I encountered: to what extent can the group of informants be considered representative when some of the interviewees themselves testified that they suspected that only a small percentage of women* in Nigeria shared their views and opinions, yet they assumed that a large percentage of women* shared their described experiences of marginalization? Since it is hardly possible with a qualitative study to cover a group of people large and diverse enough to assume a broader representation of the female population of Nigeria, I see it as legitimate to focus on this specific group of interviewees. However, at the same time, I consider it relevant to introduce them below in order to clarify their context and elaborate on the specification. Furthermore, I see it as a strength of decolonial approaches of qualitative research that the subjectivity of the researcher, but also of the research subjects, is acknowledged and included in the work.

Every interview is a social experiment posing the following questions: Who understands what question and in what way? How do I ask questions in a way that minimizes my influence on the answers? How do I create the most comfortable situation for my interviewees? How can I deal with the power imbalance that an interview situation usually entails? What is my role and responsibility as a researcher? Interviews are a negotiation and interviewees have their own agenda with which they draft a discourse. The research subjects come into the interview wanting to talk about and emphasize certain things. Their agency must be acknowledged and I as the researcher see myself as the mirror reflecting their agenda. In order to make myself aware of this agenda, I let the interviewees themselves take the wheel to a certain extent in our conversations. I often found myself in situations where I had only briefly explained the topic of my research and the interviewees were already talking away, telling me what was on their minds and what they personally associated with the research topic. Not only did I find it difficult to get them off their agenda, but I also found it particularly inspiring to give them that space to say what seemed to be of importance to them, what they were focusing on, and how they were analyzing it.

Another instance that got me thinking was how the different religions that played a role in my research could be handled. Christianity, as well as Islam, play the two prominent roles in this thesis when it comes to religiosity. Having grown up in a largely Christian environment myself, I had to wonder if Christian influences in my interviewees' experiences were less noticeable to me than Muslim ones, since the former are more familiar to me. It can be assumed that Christian thought, as well as Islamic thought, shapes my research subjects' perspectives on patriarchy and gender relations, and thus attention must be paid to both religious currents in the context of

this thesis. Nevertheless, the analysis of my interviews showed that Christian identities and influences were proportionally less prevalent in my interviews than Muslim ones. This may be specific to my group of research subjects and I do not wish to draw further universal conclusions as a result. In addition, I want to exercise caution because, first, I do not want to perpetuate othering by emphasizing Muslim influences more than Christian ones and, second, I do not want to exacerbate the dichotomy of Nigeria's two major religions that already strongly characterizes the country. Nevertheless, I considered it important to mention that some of my interviewees wore headscarves because of their Muslim identity, just as I considered it important to mention what others expressed through their style of dress or hairstyle. The reason I give for this is that the choice of clothing is both an expression of identity, allowing the reader to get to know the interviewees a little better, and the expression of identity through externals such as clothing can be an (un)conscious form of protest, as I argue later in this thesis.

Finally, however, I would like to state that the people I interviewed for my research were informed about my research project and about the use of data. They have explicitly agreed to this and do not wish to remain anonymous.

2.3 Feminism, a Contested Term

In this part, I will briefly explain how the term feminism is connoted and understood in Nigeria to give more relevant context to the work. In order to understand Nigerian feminisms, it is first useful to give a brief introduction to African feminisms in general, which inevitably also gives an introduction to Nigerian feminisms. However, it should not be ignored that feminism in Nigeria is a controversial concept and contested term, which will be clarified in the following.

African feminisms and thus also Nigerian feminisms refer to a diverse range of theories and debates, philosophies and actions. However, these seem to agree on the following unifying characteristics: a differentiation from the universalizing tendencies of Western feminism.[143] African feminisms developed in response to and critique of (especially the second wave) feminist theories of the West by pointing out the universalizing tendencies of these feminist ideas and working against the misrepresentation of women* in non-Western countries. It should be noted that African feminists often emphasize that the feminisms and feminist theories relevant in their countries are not only imported from the so-called West but grew out of internal

[143] cf. Oyewumi 1997.

ideologies and sociocultural factors. Thus, African feminisms are equally defined by the deconstruction of Western feminisms as well as the construction of feminisms grounded in their respective historical and cultural contexts.[144]

African feminisms thus also include an intersectional approach. Definitions of femininity are applied that are embedded in other aspects of identity such as race, class, nation, religion, or sexuality. Thus, it is argued that gender oppression cannot be considered separately from racism, classism, or other forms of oppression, but that the problematics of oppression and discrimination should be thought of in a much more intersectional way.[145] Essentially, African feminisms are a "pluralist struggle against all forms of oppression."[146] The eminent Nigerian feminist philosopher Amina Mama stated that African feminism "signals a refusal of oppression, and a sommitment to struggling for women's liberation from all forms of oppression internal, external, psychological and emotional, socio-economic, political and philosophical."[147]

Related to intersectionality is also the decolonial approach of African feminisms, which Sylvia Tamale upholds and considers a crucial contribution to decolonial epistemology. If more intersectional methodologies were used, Tamale states, "it would highlight and explain how the male-dominated pan-African Movement or the predominantly heterosexual women's movements on the continent unwittingly uphold the very forms of domination that they seek to dismantle."[148] She also points out that colonialism has significantly exacerbated patriarchal structures. African feminisms must therefore be considered in this context. Colonial aspects and influences must consequently be taken into account in a decolonial methodological approach, although care should be taken not to reinforce them.[149]

"Women are constituted as women through the complex interaction between class, culture, religion and other ideological institutions and frameworks,"[150] writes Mohanty, a pioneer of postcolonial and transnational feminist theories. She argues for a transnational approach to incorporate the diverse experiences of women* around the world into feminist theories. However, using the term 'women*' as a group and category of analysis becomes problematic

[144] Mikell 1997.
[145] Cf. Disney 2008; Crenchaw 2010.
[146] Kolawole 2002: 95.
[147] Salo 2001; 59.
[148] Tamale 2020: 68.
[149] ibid.
[150] Mohanty 2003: 60.

when it presupposes a universal and ahistorical unity of women* based solely on a generalized notion of their subordination.[151] Instead, feminist literature should analytically demonstrate the "production of women as socio-economic political groups within particular local contexts" in order to avoid the limitations that the term 'women*' implies as a category of analysis.[152] This limitation results from the reduction of the definition of the female subject to gender identity, which thus completely ignores other factors such as ethnic identities, social class, and religion. When women* are addressed as a coherent group, the focus is on their gender, which is defined sociologically rather than biologically. This primary focus includes "a monolithic notion of sexual difference,"[153] which then becomes synonymous with female subordination. Binary terms are emphasized, and power relations are defined and understood accordingly. According to this narrative, individuals defined sociologically as men have power and exploit, and women* are powerless and therefore exploited. Such simplistic formulations reinforce binary divisions between women* and men and are both historically and contextually reductive. Consequently, these simplistic binary categories are ineffective in developing strategies to address oppressions: "It is only by understanding the contradictions inherent in women's location within various structures that effective political action and challenges can be devised."[154] African feminist theories take the problematics coming with looking at women* as a universal and ahistorical unity into account by focusing on local cultural and historical contexts as well as intersectionality.

Additionally, it needs to be taken into account that "historically, the organization of gender in many African societies was not necessarily arranged along heterosexual or patriarchal lines as we have learnt them through colonial conceptualizations."[155] That is precisely why, again, African feminisms offer an intersectional and thus decolonial approach to research.

Three aspects or strands of thought become apparent when one focuses on the literature that has emerged in the field of African feminisms, namely: a critique of Western feminist theories, their generalizing nature, and their blindness to different life circumstances;[156] an assertion that so-called "Third World feminisms," and by extension African feminisms, are inherently intersectional in their approaches and therefore often more theoretically grounded than the

[151] Mohanty 2003.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.: 62.
[155] Tamale 2020: 100.
[156] vgl. Oyewumi 1997.

majority of feminist theories developed from a gender-focused Western perspective;[157] and an argument that African feminisms are emerging and are not descendants of Western feminist theories, but are uniquely African and therefore radically different from Western feminisms.[158]

Oyeronke Oyewumi, who is originally from Nigeria, is one of the African feminist writers who criticizes the imposition of Western feminist theories of gender categories on African contexts. She questions what she sees as central features of Western feminisms. These include the assumption that gender is a category of analysis that serves as a timeless, universal, fixed, and fundamental organizing principle of all societies, with the category of "women" always subordinate to the category of "men."[159] What is needed in feminist theories and research is an approach that identifies the different genders and analyzes their institutional as well as individual relationships and relative power relations in different contexts without presupposing a universal, essentialist, fixed, timeless notion of woman*hood or manhood.

However, as mentioned earlier, it is significant to recognize that the academic debate on feminism does not necessarily resemble the discourse that is prominent in the broader society. Through my fieldwork, I have repeatedly found that the concept of feminism is met with various rejections and walls at first. Others, however, have appropriated the term feminist and wear it as a proud title (for example, in their social media accounts).[160] Reasons given for rejecting the term feminism were that it is understood as a collection of Western theories, feminism has a bad reputation with which people do not want to associate themselves, or that out of ignorance and socialization it is assumed that feminists are necessarily misandrist and aggressive.[161] Of course, feminisms are diverse and multifaceted. Some of my interviewees who explicitly did not call themselves feminists said they were for equality and did not want to oppress men, but rather advocated for the rights of all marginalized groups. For me, however, that is the epitome of feminism, and African feminisms in particular.[162]

Because of the problematic connotations circulating around the term feminism, some of the interviewees chose the alternative term "womanism."[163] They used it to describe an awareness of gender-related injustices and a need to advocate for women*s rights. Radicalism, however it can be defined, is not part of this. Moreover, it is more a general awareness of injustice than a

[157] Disney 2008: 28.
[158] Mikell 1997: 4.
[159] Oyewumi 1997: ix-xii.
[160] Faniyi 2021; Meduteni 2021.
[161] Jacob et al. 2012; Bala 2021; Akinsanya 2021; Adeyemi 2021.
[162] Cf. Jacob et al. 2012; cf. Hooks 1981.
[163] Faniyi 2021. cf. Ogunyemi 2006.

theory, conceptualization, or awareness of a larger pattern of or systematic injustice. Nkealah described both womanism, as well as feminism, as something that "strives for the total liberation of women from religious and socio-cultural institutions that relegate women to the periphery of existence."[164]

It is significant for the context of this thesis to know the understanding of feminism in Nigeria and the research subjects in particular in order to gain a deeper understanding of how feminist or womanist activism and resistance is framed and conceptualized in Nigeria. A majority of the interviewees mentioned that through the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, they had gained a framework and terms for what they already perceived as injustices before, but could not name and relate to. Through her books and speeches, they gained access to the concept of feminism and a theoretical background for their experiences, they said.[165] Adichie has had a great impact on broad segments of the Nigerian population. However, it must be added that she preaches a less radical, trans-exclusive feminism, in which many women in Nigeria can recognize themselves, but the queer community sees this at most as a good beginning to name the issue at all and to bring it to the wider society.[166]

2.4 The Category of Women*

In order not to emphasize gender binaries through this work and to maintain an intersectional approach, I would like to briefly explain here what I am referring to when I write about women* in the rest of the work and why I have chosen this way of writing. The informants in my work self-identify as women or non-binary people who were socialized and/or are often read as women. When I refer to women* in the rest of the paper, it has nothing to do with their biological sex or sexual orientation, but rather with their gender and the socio-political category of women*. The gender star (or gender asterisk) serves as a placeholder for different gender definitions of the non-binary spectrum. Thus, the term women* does not only address cis or trans women, but also genderqueer or non-binary people identifying or being primarily read as femme/feminine.[167]

I am aware that the dominant role of the term women in women* still suggests gender binarism. However, after consulting with my interviewees, I see it as legitimate to use this term

[164] Nkealah 2006: 138.
[165] Ovwasa 2021; Meduteni 2021; Faniyi 2021; Mohammed 2021a.
[166] Cf. Adichie 2014; Ovwasa 2021; Faniyi 2021.
[167] Steinmetz 2018; En et al. 2021.

nonetheless, as this work is specifically about the marginalization and resistance of women and of people who have experiences of being read as women. It is nonetheless important to consider how gender categories and identities are understood in the Nigerian cultural and historical context, as I described in the previous chapter.

I have also chosen to use the term women* in the historiography of this thesis in chapter one, although none of the sources cited use the term. This is less about whether the term is or was used by the women* being referred to themselves, or whether all women* grouped together as a political category in historical sources identified as cis women, than it is about my desire to use gender-inclusive language. I think this is significant because it is both inclusive and intersectional, and it points to gaps in gender binary historiography that leaves people out, can be discriminatory, and also often disregards non-binary gender concepts from different cultures. Thus, this can also be seen as part of a decolonial approach. To normalize the assumption that gender cannot be thought of in binary terms, the term women* is used throughout this thesis. Excluded from this are direct quotations.

In the following, the term women* thus stands for a socio-political category, a construct that describes a heterogeneous group of people with different gender identities who can in parts be described as female but excluding the socio-political category of men or male. This is significant because in this work I focus primarily on analyzing experiences of gender-based marginalization and resistance, whereby people act out of their experience as being read as women and make claims based on this political subjectivity. This, of course, does not mean that people who do not identify as women do not face other discrimination and experiences. However, in the context of this thesis, I will only address this in a limited way.

2.5 Introduction of the Interviewees

Temmie Ovwasa (they/them) is a non-binary, primarily female read musician who was 24 years old at the time of the interview. They described themselves as neurodivergent. As a teenager Temmie moved to Lagos from the small town Ilorin in southern Nigeria because of their music career. They belong to the Yorùbá ethnic group and grew up in a Christian context although they no longer practice any religion today. After publicly coming out as homosexual in 2020, they not only faced daily death and rape threats, but also released Nigeria's first publicly queer music album. They describe themselves as an "angry artist" rather than an activist. When I met Temmie at a café in Lagos for an interview on October 18, 2021 they were

dressed flamboyantly, covered in tattoos, piercings and tribal scars. This first encounter was followed by numerous informal and unrecorded conversations. The interview lasted 1:38 hours.

Ololade Faniyi (she/her) was interested in feminism from a young age and now describes herself as an "afro-feminist." At the time of the interview on October 22, 2021, she was 23 years old, wearing locks and staying in the United States for professional matters. For this reason, the interview took place via a video call. She is also Yorùbá and grew up in a Christian context. Ololade studied English Literature and African Studies with a focus on Gender Studies at the University of Ibadan, so she was already dealing with various intersectional feminist issues in the African context on an academic level. This influenced her activism and career choice. Ololade has worked with various NGOs such as the SCREAM initiative and the FRIDA fund. She also writes on African feminisms in her blog and in various published academic works. The interview with Ololade Faniyi lasted one hour.

Temmie had introduced me to her friend **Beatrice Mobolade Arogundade**, whom I met on a park bench in one of the few green spots in Lagos on October 25, 2021. She had brought a friend with her as backup, who sat down out of earshot during the interview, however. Beatrice is also Yorùbá and comes from a Christian context. At the time of the interview, she was 25 years old, wearing locks and had dropped out of law school a few months earlier, coming out as homosexual to her family. Now she is pursuing her passion of creating multimedia art. Beatrice defined herself as gender-fluid, but prefers the pronouns she/her. She grew up and lives in Lagos. She described herself as neuro-divergent and does not use the term feminist or activist to characterize herself. The interview, which was followed by numerous informal and unrecorded personal conversations, lasted approximately 1:18 hours.

I met **Adedoyin Bello** (she/her) at one of Nigeria's largest galleries, the Nike Art Gallery, on October 28, 2021. She is a painter herself, works in the gallery and is the mother of three children. She happily agreed to an impromptu interview in the gallery's gift store in Lagos. Adedoyin is a headscarf wearing Muslim woman in her late 20s, married, born and based in Lagos. After studying Art and Industrial Design she became a member of the Female Artists Association of Nigeria (FEAAN), who were also present at the EndSARS protests. We talked for about 20 minutes. Adedoyin did not describe herself as a feminist or an activist, but she made it clear that her art is an expression of her attitude that women* should be encouraged more to do what they want to do and not let patriarchal norms get them down.

I also met **Ayoola Omovo** (she/her) at the Nike Art Gallery, where she was introduced to me by the owner Nike Okundaye. She also agreed to a spontaneous interview, telling me primarily

from her perspective as a female abstract painter and art instructor in Nigeria. Like Adedoyin, Ayoola studied art and is a member of an association of female artists. She was born in 1980, which distinguishes her from the majority of my interviewees. It became clear that Ayoola wanted to represent herself primarily as an artist in the interview, leaving personal background aspects aside. The interview on the afternoon of October 28, 2021 lasted about 45 minutes.

Omolola Akinsanya (she/her) approached me after hearing about my research project from a mutual friend. We met at a café in the economic center of Lagos. She was wearing a dress and short hair. Omolola was 25 years old at the time and admitted herself that she hadn't looked into activism or feminism in great detail before, but had hoped that she could learn more about it through our conversation. Omolola grew up in Lagos and still lives there today. She is employed by a bank and claims to have grown up in a Muslim context. The interview lasts about 1:16 hours.

The contact of **Esther Adebayo** (she/her) was given to me by Ayoola Omovo. Esther lived in Benin City in the south of Nigeria at the time of the interview. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to travel to her for security reasons, so the interview took place by phone on November 1, 2021. Esther had recently gotten married and is an artist as well as an art teacher. She was pleased that my research addressed issues that would otherwise apparently receive too little attention, expressing a great need to share. A storm interrupted our first phone call of about 45 minutes, which was followed a few days later by another phone call of 15 minutes. In the meantime, Esther sent me numerous photographs and descriptions of her paintings, which are an expression of her resistance against gender injustice and violence.

Karimot Odebode (she/her) is a Yorùbá, headscarf-wearing Muslim woman in her mid-twenties living in Ibadan. She describes herself as a poet, writer, youth activist and feminist. Karimot is a law student and has won various awards through her activist activities. When Karimot took me to the quiet back garden of a café on November 10, 2021, so that we could talk in peace, she was bubbling over with energy and self-confidence. She told me "I make trouble by demanding for the rights of women and young people." Part of that is the Black Girl's Dream Initiative, which she founded and leads herself, and which advocates for girls' education and more female leadership, among other things. As a so-called Youth Champion of the ONE Campaign, she has already spoken as an African representative in the EU Parliament and is also active within Nigerian and transnational African NGOs and civil society organizations. The interview lasted about 1:20 hours.

I also interviewed **Lola Meduteni** (she/her) during my stay in Ibadan, but this conversation had to take place via a video phone call because she was currently staying in Abeokuta. There, Lola, a Yorùbá, referred to herself as a millennial, is a broadcaster at a radio station. When she appeared on my screen on November 11, 2021, with her pink short hair, she described to me that she publicly refers to herself on social media as a "raging, radical feminist" and told me about her journey to feminism. She said she has always been aware of gender injustice, but the theoretical basis for it came later for her and began with writings by Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie. She did not describe herself as an activist, but reported on protests against rape in Ibadan in which she had participated. The interview lasted 1:35 hours.

I met **Oyewunmi Omolora** (she/her), who prefers the name **Labelle** (as she will be referred to later in this thesis), on November 15, 2021, on the campus of the University of Ibadan, where she is studying at the Institute of African Studies. In the Students Association secretariat, various of Labelle's colleagues bustled around us as we chatted. She is in her late twenties, married and the mother of two daughters, a traditional dancer and headscarf-wearing Muslim. The first thing she told me about herself was that she doesn't like to conform to unquestioned norms. She does not explicitly call herself an activist, but definitely a feminist. The interview lasted about an hour.

I met **Ayodele Olofintuade** on November 15, 2021 in the evening at a bar on the campus of the University of Ibadan, where she had arranged to meet some friends for a beer. Her contact was referred to me by friends. After the ice was broken, she openly told me about her queer, homosexual identity. She considers herself non-binary but prefers the pronouns she/her for political reasons. Ayodele is a writer, freelance researcher, journalist and runs a blog on which she aims to give queer voices a platform. Her works are primarily focused on queer-feminist topics in Africa. She was born in the 1970s, grew up in Ibadan in a women*s commune and is Yorùbá. The conversation lasted about an hour.

Karimot Odebode recommended that I speak with **Funmi Adeyemi** (she/her), whom I eventually met on the campus of the University of Ibadan on November 17, 2021. She had already completed her law studies and was living in Oshogbo, a town in southwestern Nigeria, at the time of the interview. The initially inconspicuous woman with her short cornrows was full of energy and anger towards all the disproportions she perceived in relation to gender relations and sexualization in Nigeria. Funmi is a poet in addition to being a lawyer. She is in her twenties, a Yorùbá and does not explicitly see herself as an activist. The official interview

lasted about 1.5 hours, but ended in a long conversation until the darkness of the night poured over us.

Aisha Kabiru Mohammed (she/her) is a law student, poet and writer. She writes regularly for the Nigerian organization Document Women about women* in the north of the country. She herself wears a headscarf, is Muslim and lives with her parents and brothers in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria. Her mother, unlike her father, grew up in a Christian context, allowing Aisha to experience different cultural-religious influences in her upbringing. When we met for an interview in a quiet café in Abuja on November 23, 2021, she was twenty years old. One of her greatest passions is giving a voice to those who are underrepresented, like many women* in northern Nigeria, and telling their stories to show that they are more than just oppressed. The interview lasted three hours.

Zainab Bala (she/her) is the second woman from northern Nigeria whom I interviewed. She is also a Muslim and wears a headscarf. The 28-year-old is a journalist and broadcaster for television. Furthermore, she is married and has a son. She is passionate about telling human interest stories to create awareness, fight for justice, draw intervention and create change. Her gender activism consists of reporting on the oppression of women* while acting as a representative and role model in her profession. The interview in a café in Abuja on November 25, 2021 lasted about an hour.

3. Female Bodies in Nigeria: Oppression and Agency

This chapter presents the voices, ideas, experiences and perceptions of my interviewees who talked about how they see women* and female bodies in Nigeria as oppressed, objectified, harassed, and considered property, from which in turn their resistance grows. In representing these stories, personal experiences of the interviewees are intermingled with their views of the broader situation in their communities. This chapter is an analysis of the field research and serves the purpose of exploring the broader context of the research subjects and the situations in which they find themselves. Space is given to the different perceptions of the interviewees. Protest and resistance always arise in a dialogue with circumstances that are considered intolerable by certain individuals or groups. This chapter serves to analyze these circumstances, which inspire the interviewees to protest and resist, as will be discussed in the following fourth chapter.

It should be noted that some of the interviewees expressed during the interviews that their view of the role and situation of the greater part of women* in Nigeria does not correspond to the view of the majority. As described above, these are perspectives of people who consciously deal with the role of women* in their society in their everyday lives and resist in various ways.

This chapter is divided into three parts, which deal with different spaces. The first focuses on the female body as the property of others in the domestic or family space and thus addresses family-related issues such as family planning, marriage, divorce and pregnancy. The second deals with public space and sexism, harassment, and objectification experienced in public space. The third part explores how these two spaces overlap: it deals with rape and sex. In fact, these spaces cannot always be clearly demarcated from one another, but rather reach into and influence one another, as we will now see.

3.1 Female Bodies in Domestic Spaces

3.1.1 Marriage: Female Bodies as Property

In the course of our conversations, the majority of my interviewees came to talk about the role of women* in families and argued that women* were often seen as "properties."[168] One particular theme that ran through many of the interviews was the importance of marriage. The minority of my interviewees were already married at the time of the interviews, while others were preoccupied with the issue because their environment increasingly brought this up to them as a supposedly significant issue. Aisha Mohammed, for example, a twenty year old law student, poet and writer from Abuja, explained that "Muslims believe that if you get married, you completed half of your faith."[169] She spoke about how, through marriage, the book of a woman*'s life would be rewritten and emphasized the importance of marriage for Muslims in particular. In addition, she mentioned a Yorùbá poem that tells about a husband being the crown of a woman*.[170] She linked this theme to respect: "In places like Nigeria, married women are respected a lot."[171] In turn, she described how some women*s decision not to marry usually created an enormous backlash from society. "It is like you are not respected or taken as a human being until somebody else is there."[172] For this reason, according to Aisha, not many women* question whether they want to be married or not, but merely submit to these societal conditions, sometimes on their own initiative, sometimes due to pressure from their family and cultural environment.[173]

Lola Meduteni, the pink haired Yorùbá broadcaster in her early twenties from Abeokuta, told me in an interview that she did not want to marry and had told her mother. Her mother now prays fervently for her to change her mind.[174] Funmi Adeyemi, an outspoken lawyer and poet, also described to me, as we sat together on a park bench on the campus of the University of Ibadan, that she does not want to get married. She has high ideals and described that on the day

[168] Adebayo 2021.
[169] Mohammed 2021a.
[170] Yorùbá poem by Olúyẹ́misí Adébọ̀wálé: "Ohun Ẹlẹgẹ́ ni àṣẹ" (Authority is Delicate): Akọ ladé orí aya, Akọ ladé orí abo, Ọkọ ni baálé lọ́ọ̀dẹ̀, Ọkọ l'Elédùà dá lápàṣẹ, Aya l'Elédùà ṣe lágbáṣẹ, B'Ólú bá dá ẹ lágbáṣẹ, Yára fayọ̀ rẹ ara rẹ sílẹ̀, Kó o tẹríba fáṣẹ Ọba Ńlá. (A man is the crown of a wife, A man is the crown of a woman, A husband is the head of the family, It is the husband the Almighty God gives the power of authority, It is the wife the Almighty God makes to obey the authority, If God makes you to obey authority, Do humble yourself gladly, And submit to the authority of the most High God.) (Adebọ̀wálé 2003: 18)
[171] Mohammed 2021a.
[172] ibid.
[173] ibid.
[174] Meduteni 2021.

of her wedding, a woman* returns to a system that makes her small and diminishes her, no matter how aware she is of it. She continued by elaborating on the systemic oppression of women*, saying that all the PhDs and other awards do you no good if you are not married. As an unmarried woman*, she said, it is as if you have accomplished nothing.[175] This goes so far, Temmie Ovwasa, a queer musician from Lagos likewise described in an interview, that women* are asked if they are married during job interviews. Even getting a rental contract as an unmarried woman* is not an easy task.[176] Everywhere, at the market, in the cab, etc., you are asked if you are married. Moreover, besides the patriarchal connotations of this question, it also implies the assumption that one is heterosexual, or at least claims to be, since same-sex marriage is a hitherto unimaginable possibility in the Nigerian legal system. Especially since a tightening of the Anti-Homosexuality Act was passed in 2013, making homosexual acts of any kind illegal.[177]

The importance attached to women* getting married is about the reputation of the family, which could be at stake if a daughter decides not to marry. It can also be assumed that the concern that a woman* alone is not enough and cannot sufficiently take care of herself plays a role, as well as the lack of understanding and the fear of change that often occurs when something falls outside the accustomed norm.

This is also evident in the fact that women* rarely live alone and are thus always seen in a family context. Men are raised to be independent, while women* are thought to be dependent and are made dependent.[178] Until they marry and start a family of their own, it is very unusual for them to move out of their parents' home, except possibly to study, where, however, they are usually placed in supervised dormitories. Zainab Bala, a journalist and broadcaster from northern Nigeria, reasons as follows: "Because it is a threat to society. Some would say I don´t want my kids to associate with her, she lives alone. She might influence them in a bad way."[179] This also echoes the assumption that women* are often not seen as independent beings, as well as the fear of change towards the unfamiliar.

[175] Adeyemi 2021.
[176] Ovwasa 2021.
[177] Nigeria 2013.
[178] Izugbara 2004.
[179] Bala 2021.

3.1.2 Gender Injustices of Divorce

With a deafening rumble of thunder, a tropical storm began to pelt the roof as artist Esther Adebayo tried to drown out the noise of the rainy season on the phone in a loud voice, telling me she believed that "the higher proportionate of women in Nigeria are going through hell in their marriages."[180] She added that they would still stay in their marriages because the societal pressure was too high. She herself had married just a few weeks before our conversation in November 2021, and described her marriage as something that happened between her and her husband, where the wider family should have no say in when or if they decided to have children, for example, or who should work how much.[181]

Ayodele Olofintuade, however, while sitting in a bar surrounded by her friends, described an example of a woman from her neighborhood who had tried to leave her husband. She was abused by her husband, decided to leave, only to discover that she was pregnant. So people from the neighborhood begged her to go back to her husband because she could not deprive him of the child and because he needed her.[182] Ayodele Olofintuade commented: "This is an example of how women's bodies are displayed. Because from childhood on she has been told that the husband is the head of the home, and a woman* without a husband is as good as dead no matter what your achievements are."[183] Ayodele Olofintuade explained that when a woman* decides that she no longer wants to be subordinate, she is saying to all the other women*, you don't have to be subordinate either. This can have an empowering effect at best, but it often creates confusion and resistance from within the ranks of the women* themselves, who cling to their role as the oppressed of patriarchy. [184]

Aisha Mohammed made a similar statement when she said: "Most of the time women are supposed to be subservient and submissive. So, when women decide that they are not going to be submissive, [men] become scared and what they say to control is this is not Islam. This is a sin. This is haram."[185] Aisha Mohammed points out that there are many feminist aspects in Islam, but that a large gap opens up between the ideals and the practice. She justifies this in the cultural influence, which mixes with the religious aspects in a way that can hardly be separated. In addition to religion, which is instrumentalized because of cultural aspects, she also sees intersectional aspects, such as class, that have an effect on women*s situations. Thus, according

[180] Adebayo 2021.
[181] ibid.
[182] Olofintuade 2021; cf. Alonge 2018.
[183] Olofintuade 2021.
[184] ibid.
[185] Mohammed 2021a.

to Aisha Mohammed, it is primarily poorer women* in Nigeria who are affected by gender-based oppression.[186] Yet, Abubakar writes that women* of any class, educational level, or place of residence in Nigeria experience discrimination and oppression at the hands of patriarchal society, which is likewise reflected by the analysis of my interviews.[187]

The pressure is high when a woman* wants a divorce.[188] This is probably easier for men, described Aisha Mohammed as well as Zainab Bala, as "it is also easier for a man to remarry, than for a woman."[189] Zainab Bala reported that women* could divorce, however, society puts enormous pressure on women* considering divorce, especially if the couple has children. Zainab Bala described the expectations of Northern Nigerian society as follows: "Women are not allowed to voice their pain. They are not allowed to say no to anything their husband tells them to do. They are only allowed to absorb whatever pain comes."[190] She added, "I see that as a challenge for northern women."[191] Labelle, a young mother and student living in the southwestern part of Nigeria, mentioned this as well in our conversation, but added confidently that she also knew numerous women* who questioned all of this on a daily basis because they recognize that pain should not be normative.[192]

Aisha Mohammed is a law student and is familiar with the Muslim law practiced in northern Nigeria. She explained to me that after a separation of the parents, children in northern Nigeria usually live with their father as soon as they have passed a certain age. In reality, this often leads to mothers being denied the opportunity to see their children. It can be assumed that this significantly influences the decision to get out of a toxic marriage. Another reason for the pressure placed on a woman* when considering divorce is that divorced women* are often seen as "second hand property."[193] Aisha Mohammed elaborated, "by the time you are divorced, somebody else would not want to marry you because they feel like another man has been here before."[194]

In addition, the desire for divorce presents a very different situation for men than for women* in northern Nigeria, as they often live polygamously. "As a Muslim man you are allowed to

[186] Mohammed 2021a.
[187] Abubakar 2017.
[188] Enwereji 2008; Alonge 2018.
[189] Makama 2013: 131.
[190] Bala 2021.
[191] ibid.
[192] Omolora 2021.
[193] Mohammed 2021a.
[194] ibid.

marry four wives,"[195] elaborated Zainab Bala. She sees this as a hotbed of emotional abuse, which she described as more deadly, though invisible, than physical abuse. "So if a woman doesn't meet a man's standards, it's easy for him to say that he'll just devote more time to his second wife or marry or even divorce another woman, since he has other wives to take care of him anyway,"[196] Zainab Bala commented in an interview. It should be noted, however, that polygamy is a much more complex issue,[197] but this work does not leave the space to illuminate this complexity in its fullness.

To conclude, one might wonder, if a woman* is always considered property, who is she supposed to belong to if she wants a divorce? The narrative of women* as property already suggests that women* are not expected to live independently and autonomously outside of marriage and thus would have to return to their family.[198] Marriage can thus be a path to subjugation in part, because divorce is seen as a taboo, especially for women*.

3.1.3 Family Planning and Pregnancy: Women* as "breeders"

Another aspect that leads to the statement that women* or women*s bodies are perceived as property is that several of my interviewees said that women* are only seen as "breeders" by the society they live in.[199] Labelle summarized the following list of questions that she knows well from her surroundings:

> *"They tell a girl you have to find someone to marry. Why didn't you find someone from your tribe? When are you going to get pregnant? Why don't you get more children? Why do you only give birth to girls? When are you going to give birth to boys? When you have that, they tell you why do you have so many children?"*[200]

Here she again described the pressure on women* to fulfil these social expectations. Questions about well-being or what the woman* herself wants are left out. In addition, this quote tells of the social police lurking everywhere. This happens in the countryside as well as in the city. One is always being watched. So Labelle asked herself, "When exactly is a woman truly free?"[201] She spoke swiftly. In her agitated tone, it was audible how much this topic was close to her

[195] Bala 2021.
[196] ibid.
[197] see Fenske 2015.
[198] Enwereji 2008.
[199] Cf. Hollos 2003; Pillay 2020.
[200] Omolora 2021.
[201] ibid.

heart and how much this question about freedom pained her. She told me about a conversation with a friend to whom she had asked the same question a few years ago. The friend replied that "the only time a woman is truly free is when her husband is dead."[202] Labelle did not quite agree, however, pointed out that some women* then get into trouble all the more. Marriage has made them dependent on their husband's family, and after his death, in some cases the family no longer sees them as a member of the family, but only as the one who gave birth to their descendants.[203] They see the widow as only the "breeder."[204]

Temmie Ovwasa sounded similarly angry when they explained to me how reproduction is a charged and politicized issue in Nigeria.[205] They drastically described how, from early childhood, girls are told that they have to do everything to be married to a man and have children. It seems, according to their story, that the whole purpose of a girl's life is to be married off and bear children, and that society reminds them of this every day. "So from the jump we are treated like a womb, a walking womb."[206] At a certain age, they said, the question of when one would get married and have children is almost as common as saying hello. They themselves are a musician and have had to face questions from the press in numerous interviews about when they would neglect their career and focus on starting a family. Annoyed and emphatic, they added in our interview: "It is core Nigerian culture to remind you that your body is meant to house a child."[207]

From these conversations, it is clear that, should a woman* decide she does not want to bear children, it can lead to protest by surrounding people. However, it can also be seen as a form of protest if a woman* decides not to want to bear children despite these circumstances. Karimot Odebode, a confident young law student and poet with a big smile, lamented in our conversation that in this context a woman*'s body is often not seen as something the woman* is allowed to decide about, but her family, her environment, and the wider society tries to patronize her in this right over her own body. "But your body is your body,"[208] she countered indignantly. Through her NGO Black Girl's Dream Initiative, she has based her activism on the education

[202] Omolora 2021.
[203] Hollos 2003.
[204] Omolora 2021; Thomas 2003.
[205] Ovwasa 2021; Cf. Hollos 2003.
[206] Ovwasa 2021; cf. Thomas 2003.
[207] Ovwasa 2021.
[208] Odebode 2021.

of children and thus also sees sexual and reproductive rights as something that should already be brought to young girls.[209]

Another scenario would be that a couple might not have the opportunity to conceive children. In these cases, the problem is primarily sought in the women*.[210] They are urged to see various doctors or go through ceremonies to clear any spiritual blocks. "And so she starts thinking there is a problem with her," Karimot Odebode commented.[211] This is especially problematic when the fertility problem is not to be found in the woman*'s body. Zainab Bala told about a friend in this regard:

> *"She has been married for over nine years. It is very heavy on her right now. She is always crying. There is family pressure from her in-laws. Some are saying the husband should take another wife and kick her out. She has tried all sorts of things. The funny thing is, when there is a fertility problem, it is always put on women. […] I guess, in this case, the problem is not on her but on the husband. But she never expressed this. Nevertheless, the whole pressure, the whole insults, harassments is coming on her. As a woman she is supposed to absorb all of the pressure. Right now, she has lost so much weight. She is depressed."*[212]

This tragic story represents a reality for many women* in Nigeria. For many people, having children seems to be the central task in women*s lives and, as described above, often takes away a woman*'s autonomy over her own body. In addition, childless women* are often not respected to the same extent as those who have children. For example, Hollos writes of Ijaw society in southern Nigeria, "With children, a woman's prestige and value is assured,"[213] as only then is she considered a full woman*. Thus, infertility (whether the infertility of the man or the woman*) often leads to discrimination and marginalization of the affected woman* and is a significant factor in divorce.[214]

Another delicate aspect is added when women* decide to terminate an already existing pregnancy. There is not only a social stigma but also "illegal abortion has been recognized as a major cause of mortality rate in young women."[215] The issue of the (non-)acceptability of abortion is the subject of heated international debate. For example, a common "pro-choice" argument is that abortion can be an expression of agency, but that this agency can also be taken

[209] Odebode 2021.
[210] Cf. Hollos 2003.
[211] Odebode 2021.
[212] Bala 2021.
[213] Hollos 2003: 49.
[214] ibid; Milazzo 2014.
[215] Makama 2013: 130.

away if abortion is not allowed or enabled.[216] The interviewees with whom I spoke about abortion clearly expressed that they were pro-choice, that is, they would leave it up to the pregnant woman* herself to decide whether or not to keep her child.[217] It can be assumed that among them this is subject to varying conditions as to the circumstances and timing of an abortion. However, I do not want to delve into the depths of the complexities of abortion debates here, but, as part of the research focus, rather concentrate on the perspectives of my interviewees on the topic of abortion in general and the extent to which they associate this with the oppression of women*, the female body as property, or the reappropriation of agency.

Karimot Odebode, for example, became incensed, saying that it is "ridiculous" that a society can make decisions about women*s bodies by, for example, banning abortions, but at the same time is incapable of finding solutions to the fact that women* are raped and femicides are committed. She also reiterates the issue of blame that women* often have to endure in these situations:

> *"They might sleep with a woman and when she gets pregnant they drag her to a quack doctor without her consent and the baby comes out. And then they are also the ones saying abortion is wrong. They do things that favour them. But the woman is the one being nailed on the cross. They feel like women don't have the right over their body. They should do as the man says."*[218]

Another point that should not be underestimated when talking about reproduction and reproductive rights is that Nigeria has the fourth highest maternal mortality rate in the world (917 per 100,000 live births in 2017).[219] This is related to a lack of access to gynaecological services, family planning information and early pregnancies, among other factors.[220] This has an enormous impact on the safety of women*. It is mentioned here because a lack of sufficient safety in this context is also to be enacted in the framework of gender-based discrimination.

In summary, a recurring theme in the interviews as well as in literature is that women*s bodies are seen and treated as the property of others.[221] The autonomy and agency of women* is thus attempted to be denied. However, they defend themselves in various ways, as will become clear in the next chapter. Nevertheless, women* suffer violence of a physical, verbal and systemic nature in their family and domestic space. They are oppressed in different ways according to the descriptions of my interviewees and also to numerous literature. As individual as these

[216] Omolora 2021.
[217] Bala 2021; Odebode 2021; Omolora 2021.
[218] Odebode 2021.
[219] CIA, The World Factbook 2017.
[220] Abubakar 2017.
[221] Makama 2013.

experiences may be, recurring patterns can be discerned that transcend regional, religious, cultural, and class boundaries in Nigeria and tell of a male-dominated society.

3.2 Female Bodies in Public Spaces

Women*s bodies are not only seen as property but are also objectified. This is particularly evident in the public sphere, where it is a matter of how women* dress, are addressed and, according to the dominant attitude of society, have to behave and look. In this part, I will consequently discuss sexism and gender-based harassment, which are related to objectification. It will give us an insight into the role of women* in the Nigerian society today, though as described earlier, it is based on numerous factors and can therefore be very diverse.

Funmi Adeyemi described that in her Christian upbringing she was always taught that as a woman* you do not love your body and you do not show your body. “Modesty” and “decency” are central terms in this discourse.[222] Esther Adebayo confirmed this by saying: “In Nigeria people so much believe that the way you dress is the way you will be addressed. They define you instantly.” One of her experiences in this regard is that every time she leaves the house without her wedding ring, she is harassed by strange men.[223] Zainab Bala brings in a perspective from a Muslim woman from northern Nigeria who recounts similar experiences. She said that a Muslim woman* in northern Nigeria is expected to dress in a certain way.[224] However, as soon as you deviate from that, you would get this feeling reflected back to you that you are not accepted in your own society because of the way you dress. However, there should be a certain degree of choice in how one dresses.[225]

There are official and unofficial dress codes. At schools, for example, there is usually a dress code that must be followed. This is checked by guards at the entrance to the school, Lola Meduteni told me. The short pink hair she wore to our interview probably would have gotten her in trouble in high school. The dress code, she explained to me, was there to make people less sexualized. The look of the guards, however, who were supposed to classify what was appropriate and what was too revealing, sexualized the wearers all the more, Lola Meduteni complained. As a female student, she said, one is constantly on guard. It is a power game that

[222] Adeyemi 2021.
[223] Adebayo 2021.
[224] cf. Mohammed 2021b.
[225] Bala 2021.

pushes women* to submit to the will of the powerful.[226] Even when moving around in other public spaces, such as markets, women* are said to be constantly on guard. Sexual harassment lurks everywhere, especially for young women*. In the markets, this is "the common practice. It's normal,"[227] for traders to grope women* as a form of "aggressive marketing."[228] Lola Meduteni explained, "They try to draw your attention and at the same time they sexualize you."[229] For herself, she said, it had long been normal. Even if she didn't like it, she put up with it like so many other young women* she had observed, until she eventually participated in a march of millennial women* protesting against sexual harassment on the markets in Ibadan. It takes a lot of courage to defend yourself, she admitted.[230]

Omolola Akinsanya reported the same from markets in Lagos, where she grew up. There are men employed to lure women* into stores, she said, and they are not afraid to touch women* and harass them verbally and physically. When she goes to the market, she always internally prepares herself to fight. "Women in public spaces in Lagos or throughout Nigeria are consistently in survival mode,"[231] commented Omolola Akinsanya her daily experiences. She has always been taught to be careful and not to dress too provocatively or flashily. That was for her protection, but she wanted to stand proudly by the fact that she was a woman and not let these power games get her down.[232] Still, notes Temmie Ovwasa, "you could go out every day of the week here and be sexually harassed if you are a woman."[233] They, too, have lived in Lagos for several years and are used to the turbulent life of the megacity. They said some women* hardly notice the harassment and sexism anymore because it has become the norm: "Women don't even notice it anymore. I have interactions with women who believe they have not been harassed. And then, when they describe their interactions with men, even their partners, they describe harassment." Temmie Ovwasa expressed a deep anger and pain in her words as they continued, "Nigerian men believe in chasing women. They believe in persisting until you say yes."[234] This is often supported by cultural narratives. One of them is "that men are created to just want sex."[235] Their mother, they said, had said this to them just a few days ago. And so men, as well as women*, are thrust into a role that feeds sexual harassment. You

[226] Meduteni 2021.
[227] ibid.
[228] ibid.
[229] ibid.
[230] ibid.
[231] Akinsanya 2021.
[232] ibid.
[233] Ovwasa 2021.
[234] ibid.
[235] ibid.

could say it is a systemic problem. Funmi Adeyemi claimed: "It is a system that has propagated to remove, to diminish, to make women be less, feel like less. And because this system is being in operation for a while it has come to gain such legitimacy."[236]

Adedoyin Bello, a Muslim artist I interviewed at a gallery in Lagos, agreed that women* are still subjected to a lot of harassment, but she was the only one of my interviewees to say that women* also do their share and should not be surprised if they walk the streets scantily clad and are harassed as a result. Skimpy clothing conveys that one can be bought, she argued. This would support the sexualization of women*. All women*, however, should work together against harassment and stand together, Adedoyin Bello said.[237] Nevertheless, it can be assumed that Aisha Mohammed's point of view is similar to Adedoyin Bello's. She spoke of how it is part of her identity, and the identity of many other Muslim women*, that they dressed a certain way and covered specific body parts with it. One of the reasons she gave for this was that it was a statement that said, "you can't sexualize us."[238] She said one should not appear sexually appealing to other people on the street. According to Aisha Mohammed, a hijab or other "Muslim conservative clothing", as she calls it, is meant to help women* not be viewed solely as sexual beings, but to be taken more seriously in all that they are. "You should be paying attention to me as a person, and it shouldn't matter what I'm wearing. It should matter what I'm saying, how I'm acting," Aisha Mohammed explained.[239] She went so far as to describe her choice of clothing as "a form of protest in a hypersexualized world."[240] Hereby Aisha Mohammed and Adedoyin Bello addressed the fine line between on the one hand the support of sexualization through skimpy clothing and on the other hand that women* should wear what they want to wear with confidence without being harassed, whereby those who sexualize women* would primarily be those who would have to learn to perceive and treat women* in a non-sexualized way. This is a discourse that is discussed many times in feminist circles around the world and is by no means locally specific.

Accordingly, one could assume that sexuality is not supposed to be shown, but from the outside, women* are regularly sexualized[241] and harassed.[242] Karimot Odebode also made this point

[236] Adeyemi 2021.
[237] Bello 2021.
[238] Mohammed 2021a.
[239] ibid.
[240] ibid.
[241] According to the American Psychological Association (APA) sexualization occurs when a person is reduced only to their sexual appeal or behavior, disregarding any other characteristics, or when a person is sexually objectified, denying their autonomy. (Zurbriggen et al. 2007)
[242] Izugbara 2004.

when she told me that the term *Ashewo*, which means prostitute in the Yorùbá language, was constantly used on the street. "Every man out there wants to call every woman out there *Ashewo*. It's a weapon to them."[243] She specified that women* would often be called *Ashewo* if they stood up for their rights or if they were successful at something.[244] It is assumed, she said, that women* with successful careers achieved this not by themselves and because of their abilities, but because they slept their way to the top of the career ladder. By calling you *Ashewo*, "they want to bring you down," Karimot Odebode concluded, since sex workers are still stigmatized.[245] However, she also showed a more hopeful side by talking about how some women* responded by saying, "Yes I am, thank you. If this is your definition of an *Ashewo*, then I am one."[246] In this way, they reclaim their agency and do not allow themselves to be demoralized.

Some cases also report another way in which women* are demoralized in Nigeria. This involves them being stripped against their will. This can happen both in private and in public spaces. Videos and newspaper articles surface again and again on the internet reporting such incidents.[247] One such case happened during the EndSARS protests in Lagos in 2020. In a video, a woman*, trembling and distraught, reports how police officers tried to remove her clothes: "They tore my clothes. They were pulling my clothes off my body."[248] Karimot Odebode commented on this incident in an interview as follows: "They felt like they could shame her if they would strip her and take her power away. They want to attach our morality to our power."[249] Another such incident was reported in Abuja in November 2015, where two women* were reportedly caught shoplifting in a store and were subsequently beaten up and completely stripped by some of the employees until police arrived to arrest the women*.[250] These are not isolated cases. Through undressing and the shame and morality associated with it, an attempt is made to take away agency. These cases differ from the intentional undressing of groups of women* as a form of protest, through which agency is reclaimed rather than taken away.

It can be said that often the attempt to portray the female body and gender as less sexualized, or the tabooing of female sexuality, can lead to women*s bodies being sexualized and objectified all the more. A woman*'s body is thus made invisible, but at the same time it is also

[243] Odebode 2021.
[244] cf. Izugbara 2004.
[245] Odebode 2021.
[246] ibid.
[247] Chukindi 2022; Ndubuisi 2021; Kossy Derrick Blog 2021.
[248] SaharaTV n.d., 0:13.
[249] Odebode 2021.
[250] News Extra 24 2015.

oversexualized. It is significant in which situations women*s (bodies) become predominantly visible and when they often seem to become invisible. Funmi Adeyemi describes this situational change between visibility and invisibility in the following example: "When it comes to domestic tasks, women are visible, but when it comes to more profound decisions, they are overlooked and hardly given a voice."[251] However, when it comes to a woman*'s sexuality, it is seen, but often in a reduced objectified way. So women* are supposed to behave discreetly and not stand out, but they are still sexualized.[252]

Labelle agreed with this drastic statement by saying: "Everything about a woman is reduced to her sex. It is not about what you can do. It's about tits and ass at the end of the day."[253] This makes situations more troublesome for women* on many levels. A prominent example of this in Nigeria is that male lecturers at universities (i.e. University of Lagos) offer female students "sex for grades."[254] In other words, they urge them to perform sexual acts in order to then offer them good grades in return. Such cases have come to public attention and have been publicly denounced several times in recent years.[255] The result is not only that female students are sexually abused and traumatized, but also that any woman* who is successful in her career is blamed for the fact that this is not due to her abilities, but that she only got to this position through sexual services. It is a vicious circle of a patriarchal system. Nevertheless, it must also be pointed out that many of my interviewees said that something was slowly changing.[256] More attention is being paid to these issues so that they are no longer accepted as the norm. More and more women* are standing up for their rights and integrity, even if there is still a long way to go.

3.3 Women*, Sexuality and Sexualization

Women* are not supposed to show their sexuality to the outside world, but they are still sexualized all the time.[257] This is ultimately also reflected in private bedrooms, as far as it is researched or talked about at all.[258] Zainab Bala, for example, reported that in northern Nigeria, women* are always taught to be submissive. Women* would be objectified. Further, she said,

[251] Adeyemi 2021.
[252] ibid; cf. Izugbara 2004.
[253] Omolora 2021.
[254] Adeyemi 2021; Adebayo 2021; Mordi 2019.
[255] Cf. Mordi 2019.
[256] Adebayo 2021; Ovwasa 2021; Omolora 2021.
[257] Izugbara 2004.
[258] Wangila 2013; cf. Pillay 2020; cf. Izugbara 2004.

"you are not supposed to enjoy your sexual desires [...]. You are supposed to make the husband enjoy his sexuality."[259] Abubakar also wrote in an article: "a successful marriage means […] providing sex whenever their husbands demand it."[260] Aisha Mohammed agreed, talking about how much women*s relationship to their bodies is dominated by a so-called male gaze, and how much of what women*s bodies are and what they are meant to be is determined by that outside view. One's own sexual satisfaction is not part of that, Aisha Mohammed said, as a woman*, "you're not supposed to explore yourself."[261]

Funmi Adeyemi used similar words. Women*s bodies are objectified, she said in an interview. Writing poetry is the young lawyer's passion. One of her poems is titled "My body is a crime scene."[262] It is about her own story and how she was always told to be careful and dress moderately or something might happen to her. However, even if she followed all that, yet in the end she would be blamed should she be raped or sexually harassed. Her poem talks about how she is sexualized over and over again. How she is urged to use her sexualized body as a "bargaining chip" to achieve good grades or to get a job. She herself in her essence is hardly seen in the process.[263] This poem by Funmi Adeyemi, it can be assumed, speaks from the heart of many Nigerian women*.

Nevertheless, Funmi Adeyemi also raises the point that although women* are encouraged or even urged to use their bodies as "bargaining chips," they are also expected to be sexually inexperienced. Thus, women* are often expected to enter marriage as virgins, whereas "men are regarded to have sexual experience."[264] Women*, then, according to Funmi Adeyemi, are despised for what men are admired for. This is a dangerous double-standard.[265] Funmi Adeyemi rightly drew a connection here to the issue of rape. "Many men are raised to feel entitled to the bodies of women,"[266] she reported. This supports a culture that has an astonishingly high number of rape cases. No reliable figures can be found on this, as it can be assumed that the number of unreported cases that remain invisible are enormous, since very few cases actually go to court or are recorded by the police. This is due to the fact that the Nigerian law makes it very hard to get a conviction for rape, as it requires testimony from a third person who is neither the perpetrator nor the victim. However, lawyer Funmi Adeyemi explained that "thankfully a

[259] Bala 2021.
[260] Abubakar 2017.
[261] Mohammed 2021a. cf. Pearce 2001; cf. Izugbara 2004.
[262] Adeyemi 2021.
[263] ibid.
[264] Ibid; cf. Izugbara 2004.
[265] Cf. Izugbara 2004.
[266] Adeyemi 2021.

number of judges are beginning to embrace that this is difficult and they are looking for circumstantial or collaborative evidence."[267] Accordingly, medical reports, among other evidence, could then be invoked. Nevertheless, the official numbers remain relatively low, as the issue of sexual abuse or rape remains a topic fraught with shame.[268] Among others, Oyo state, a state in southwestern Nigeria, has never convicted a rape case to date despite the many rape cases happening.[269] This eventually led to protests in Ibadan in 2019.[270]

The majority of my interviewees reported that they themselves or women* close to them had experienced rape or sexual abuse in the past. Often, the perpetrators were family members or even their own husbands. Labelle commented that "in Nigeria marital rape is not recognized. It is assumed that once you are married your partner has the right over your body."[271] She told about a friend who had experienced this every day in her marriage. This friend had the courage, after suffering for weeks, to tell her husband one day that he should no longer have any access to her body. "It's been a few years now and she says she feels good. She doesn't wake up every morning with blood between her legs. She is taking back her power,"[272] Labelle concluded. She herself had experienced a lot of sexual abuse as a young girl, and she can also report that another friend of hers had been raped several times, even by people she had trusted. "When are women truly safe?"[273] asked Labelle the rhetorical question in our interview. While we were talking, various colleagues and fellow students of Labelle were walking around us. All of them could have listened to our conversation, but she seemed to have shed all her shame and spoke freely, willing to make the issue heard.

Another point that can be assumed to contribute to the fact that many acts of rape against women* are not reported is that women* are often the ones who are blamed when they are sexually abused.[274] Questions are asked about what they were wearing. The tables are turned and the blame is placed on themselves, no matter how moderately one dresses.[275] This is reported by numerous of my interviewees.[276] Labelle for instance said: "at the end of the day it all comes back to the women, because she gets blamed. And they don't even say anything, because they know that. They have seen this happening to someone else. So they keep quiet

[267] Adeyemi 2021.
[268] ibid.
[269] Faniyi 2021.
[270] Meduteni 2021.
[271] Omolora 2021; cf. Makama 2013.
[272] Omolora 2021.
[273] ibid.
[274] Izugbara 1997.
[275] Naija News Portal 2019.
[276] Mohammed 2021a; Omolora 2021; Adeyemi 2021; Olofintuade 2021.

and keep it in."[277] According to my interviewees, female victims of rape are often held responsible for this and it goes so far that some victims take this responsibility upon themselves.[278] It is seen as a disgrace to have been sexually abused,[279] and so even the families of the victims, should they have witnessed this, are often relieved when the perpetrator declares that he wants to marry the woman* he had previously raped in order to get the rape and the associated shame out of the way.[280] The statistics of the West African polling group NOI Polls support these statements. According to their data, "47% of Nigerians blamed rape on indecent dressing."[281] Moreover, less than half of all Nigerians thought that rapists should be punished for their actions.[282]

Temmie Ovwasa even spoke of a "rape culture," which they associated with Nigeria.[283] "Every Nigerian family has a rapist. I feel like I can stay on a building with a megaphone and scream this. This is how convinced I am."[284] Sexual abuse and rape, the appropriation of the female body against her will, is so commonplace that many perpetrators hardly face any consequences.[285] Often, according to Temmie Ovwasa, it is even argued that the woman* enjoyed it. "They don't see rape as violence. They see rape as a type of sex. And that's how it's treated,"[286] they explained. Here they drew a clear connection to the Nigerian porn industry, which supported exactly this narrative and additionally a lot of violence and thus undoubtedly influenced male society in this way.[287]

They also mentioned the Christian church as another actor and in general how religion (Christianity and Islam) and traditional believes are used as an instrument of defence of discrimination against women*.[288] This also becomes visible in an article by A. A. Idowu on "Women's Rights, Violence, and Gender Discrimination," which represents different female Nigerian voices that, while advocating for greater attention to women*s rights, ultimately argues for the subordination of women* to men using Bible verses.[289] This is just one example of numerous similar articles published in scholarly formats in Nigeria that promote ideas of

[277] Omolora 2021.
[278] ibid.
[279] Makama 2013.
[280] Adeyemi 2021.
[281] George 2021.
[282] ibid.
[283] Ovwasa 2021; cf. Faniyi 2021; cf. Odebode 2021.
[284] Ovwasa 2021.
[285] Makama 2013.
[286] Ovwasa 2021.
[287] ibid.
[288] Makama 2013; Pillay 2020; Faniyi 2021; Ovwasa 2021.
[289] Idowu 2013.

women* as the inferior sex and gender inequality. I mention this here because it is well worth noting that women* in Nigeria naturally hold different viewpoints and the liberation of women* from oppression is promoted to varying degrees.

Temmie Ovwasa themselves grew up Christian with a priestess as their mother, but in recent years they have turned their backs on the church because, among other things, as a queer person they do not feel accepted or discriminated against there. They also see religion as something that strongly contributes to the oppression of women* in Nigeria.[290] There are some cases from the near past in which pastors of large churches in Nigeria were accused of sexually abusing several women*.[291] In most cases, however, there was only a brief outcry and then everyone would dutifully go back to church.[292] It is easier to silence victims because the culture protects the perpetrators, said Temmie Ovwasa. Women* themselves protect the perpetrators. The patriarchy protects them. The system protects them. "You don't talk about things that you are not supposed to talk about. No matter how big the elephant is in a Nigerian room, Nigerians can sit there and sleep there and wake up there and do everything there and ignore that elephant." [293]

One of my interviewees, whom I decided not to name in this case for protective reasons, can understand this well from their own experience. They themselves had to experience being raped by their stepfather when they were seventeen years old. When they confided this to me during our interview, they were calm, even though they described it as a traumatic experience that still affects them today. One point that seemed to particularly upset them was their mother's and uncle's reactions to the incident. Their mother apparently dismissed it as less serious because it had only been "anal." "That is how Nigerians interact with sexual abuse. It doesn't strike that part of them that feels like somebody has been hurt," the interviewee concluded.[294] They went on to tell me that the uncle responded with the pidgin phrase, "that body no be firewood now."[295] By this he meant that my interviewee would eventually have sexual intercourse and be married anyway, so according to his argumentation there was no reason to be mad.[296] This case report confirms what has already been elaborated above. It is difficult to report rape cases and often the associated shame and accusations affect the victims more than the perpetrators.[297] In

[290] Ovwasa 2021.
[291] BBC News 2019; Olowolagba 2022.
[292] Ovwasa 2021.
[293] ibid.
[294] Anonymous 2021.
[295] ibid.
[296] ibid.
[297] Makama 2013.

addition, many cases are not sufficiently heard, which leads to the assumption that repeat or copycat acts are common.[298] In this way, rape finds a place that is ubiquitous but invisible in a society.

Ololade Faniyi reported in an interview that it could be assumed that the Covid19 pandemic caused an extreme increase in the number of rapes and gender-based violence in Nigeria.[299] Numerous newspaper articles also reported this.[300] Reuters, for example, referred to "official data" when it reported a 40% increase in rapes, as well as domestic and sexual violence, in 2020.[301] During the two to three months lockdown in the spring of 2020 alone, over 3600 rape cases were recorded in Nigeria, according to Amnesty International.[302] As described earlier, it is likely that the number of unreported cases is significantly higher. Even before the pandemic, the 2018 official Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey had indicated that 30% of all women* between the ages of 15 and 49 had experienced sexual abuse.[303] With the numbers rising dramatically during the pandemic, President Muhammadu Buhari finally declared a nationwide state of emergency over rape and gender-based violence in June 2020, promising to improve the situation.[304]

Ololade Faniyi additionally reported an increase in femicides related to the increased rapes that made the press during the 2020 pandemic. Even home, which "is supposed to be a safe space," was no longer safe, she lamented.[305] She further reported, "I saw an article that said women were facing a dual pandemic and that was very true for Nigerian women. Because as much as there was the fear of being infected, fear of Covid, fear of dying of the virus, there was also a fear of being killed, being raped and not just on the street."[306]

The voices of the interviewees give an idea of the magnitude of this issue in Nigeria and yet the need for a larger platform where it can be openly talked about and informed. In 2020, during the pandemic, women* joined together in numerous protests and marches to bring attention to the issue of gender-based oppression and associated violence. This will be elaborated on in the following chapter.

[298] Makama 2013.
[299] Faniyi 2021.
[300] Makinde 2020.
[301] George 2021.
[302] Toromade 2021.
[303] George 2021.
[304] ibid.
[305] Faniyi 2021.
[306] ibid.

In summary, it can be said that according to the research subjects and the mentioned literature, many women* in contemporary Nigeria are potentially exposed to numerous forms of gender-based oppression and discrimination. These include violence, inequality of opportunity, a missing right over reproduction and their own bodies, sexual abuse, harassment, and sexism, but also other issues that have not been addressed in this chapter, such as forced marriages, trafficking and female circumcision. In this chapter, I have focused primarily on those points that were raised more frequently in my field research and that proved to be present for my interviewees, when discussing the discrimination against women* in Nigeria. However, they do not remain silent and surrender to this discriminatory and hurtful system, but protest and resist. Some do this in small ways in their own households, others join protest movements, take to the streets, seek publicity. Each of my interviewees resists and protests in their own way with the hope that they will leave their world a little better than they found it.

4. Female Protest and Resistance in Contemporary Nigeria

> *"If you are not bold then what is the point? I mean, you live a life you are just living for no reason. You live in a system that is against you structurally, politically, across board and so you have to be bold."*[307]

The previous chapter analyzed the voices and experiences of my interviewees, which told stories of oppression and discrimination. However, anger and hope resonated in all of these testimonies. An anger that drives the quest for improvement and hope that yearns for a gender-just Nigeria. So, where there is oppression, there is resistance. Where there is resistance, there is an awareness of injustice and hope that it might be overcome. The following chapter will focus on this resistance and other related, different forms of protest. Interviewees reported on protest movements, online campaigns, marches, traditional forms of protest, and their own individual forms of resistance. Running through all of the interviews conducted is also the element of primarily involuntary resistance that occurs, because these women* simply live as they are, because they express what matters to them.

As described in the introduction, the terms protest and resistance cannot be clearly distinguished from each other and will consequently in part be used interchangeably (as it is also mostly used interchangeably in papers on new protest history).[308] Protest and resistance are thus given a deliberately broad definition: "Protest is any action which expresses discontent with a more powerful individual, group or ideology. This can range from overt, collective action such as riots and marches, to covert, individual acts of 'everyday resistance.'[309]"[310] Forms of protest include a variety of individual or collective expressions, behaviors, and concepts.[311] The broadness of this definition makes it possible to look at the relationships between different forms of protest. Different forms of protest are thus often used in combination with each other and form a new effect through their relationship to each other. These intersecting protest actions lead to resistance, as Awcock defines it.[312] Furthermore, the spaces in which protest takes place must be considered. Domestic and private spaces, I argue, play a significant role and should not be overlooked in the study of protest and resistance. The historiography of protest has so far

[307] Faniyi 2021.
[308] Awcock 2020.
[309] Acts of everyday resistance, as will be elaborated, can be actions that express nonconformity or disagreement with a circumstance in an everyday context. Scott (1985) provides an example of this in slowing down at work. Examples from this thesis are expressed by, among other things, dressing out of conformity with norms and expectations or acting out gender roles in everyday life that do not conform to the broad norm. (cf. Jeffery 2001)
[310] Awcock 2020: 2. cf. Scott 1985.
[311] Eckert 1997.
[312] Awcock 2020.

placed little focus on this, as domestic space and everyday resistance has hardly been documented and archived. Through my field research on contemporary movements of resistance, however, I have the opportunity to pay attention to those very spaces and consider them in their connection to public, collective protests. By using the terms "protest" and "resistance" interchangeably I am attempting to underline that protest always stands in a context of spaces, interactions, persons, and ideas, and thus often occurs at the intersection of the private and the public, the individual and the collective, the visible and the invisible. Protest can therefore arise in the private and grow into resistance in the public as well as the other way around.

The first subchapter will explain individual forms of protest and resistance in private space and private interactions. These are forms of protest that do not necessarily fall under political movements or require a collective. However, the following subchapter then focuses on collective and also individual forms of protest in public spaces, which may be able to reach a larger audience and require more organization. The narratives of the interviewees on which this chapter is based refer primarily to contemporary Nigeria and thus follow on from the historiography of protests from the first chapter.

4.1 Resistance in the Private Realm

> "*Imagine the power that comes from knowing, simply knowing that I am not alone."*[313]

The realization that one has a choice about how to live one's life is not self-evident, and how far this freedom of choice goes may vary enormously from one life circumstance to another. Nevertheless, this realization described by some interviewees can be interpreted as the first step of resistance. The artist Ayoola Omovo from Lagos in her traditionally dyed indigo robe even described this as art: "Every step is your choice. You create your story. [...] Thinking about what is good for me and what is not good, is already art."[314] Zainab Bala, a journalist from northern Nigeria who is passionate about telling human interest stories to create change, reported: "I learned from [my mother] to strive to make a living for myself, to make my choices regardless of what society would say."[315] And she added: "You need to be strong as a woman.

[313] Arogundade 2021.
[314] Omovo 2021.
[315] Bala 2021.

Particularly in the north."[316] Funmi Adeyemi, the young lawyer and poet, also stressed that it is important to realize that you have a choice in how you want to live. She related this to the fact that everyone is responsible for society being the way it is; that it is not an excuse to give up responsibility by saying that this is the way culture is. Culture is human-made and can be changed as well, she said. It must be changed, Funmi Adeyemi added firmly.[317] Lola Meduteni, the self-proclaimed "raging radical feminist"[318] confirmed this statement, but also acknowledged that culture shapes mindsets and "a mindset is the hardest thing to change."[319] So there is a choice in how one wants to live. However, going against societal expectations and norms can take a lot of strength, as Zainab Bala and Lola Meduteni made clear. Yet it is in everyone's hands to reshape these norms, and that is where the hope of many of my interviewees lies. The exact ideas of what these changes should look like may vary, but the idea that something can be changed to the better and everyone can do their part leads everyone to try to live and enforce their values and ideas in their everyday lives against societal expectations. This is a form of resistance that all my interviewees share.

Labelle, for example, said said in her determined way, while drowning out the noise surrounding us, "I think every day is a choice. Is this the day where I listen to and do everything that I have been told or is this the day where I stand up and I choose to be a human being with an own identity."[320] She added that she believed that many Nigerian women* did not have or had not yet found their own identity because they conformed too much to learned norms and did not reflect and question them. However, Labelle is also aware that "you can choose not to conform, you can decide. Although know that the moment you do that you will have issues."[321] Temmie Ovwasa was more optimistic. Having gone through a lot of changes themselves, they also already perceived societal changes in recent years, describing a new generation of young women* who place a lot of value on their autonomy and on deciding independently what is best for themselves, "refusing to listen to what their mothers told them."[322] This can be expressed in different ways. For example, there are reportedly more and more young women* who are deciding to put themselves before the expectations of family and wider society described in the previous chapter and to consider whether or not they actually want to bear children, if so, how many, whether or not they actually want to marry, how they present and dress themselves, and

[316] Bala 2021.
[317] Adeyemi 2021.
[318] Meduteni 2021.
[319] ibid.
[320] Omolora 2021.
[321] ibid.
[322] Ovwasa 2021.

what occupations they pursue. Ololade Faniyi, who is active in the civil society sector fighting for gender justice, commented on this change, "there is more conversation around women owning their own bodies, women activating their agency and women becoming bolder."[323] This is very apt, especially if one wants to consider it in the framework of resistance, where the reclaiming of agency plays a significant role. Through resistance against an expectation and through the power of deciding, which is reclaimed through resistance, agency emerges and power relations appear in a new light.

Referring to a change in the style of dress of many young women* in Nigeria and the expression of agency through their choice of clothing, Temmie Ovwasa said that they perceived more and more young people opting for provocative clothing. This is not just a fad, they said. "It's intentional because I realized that a lot of women are reclaiming their autonomy by wearing whatever […] they want, and sometimes whatever […] they want is not acceptable in Nigerian culture, but they do it anyway."[324] Ololade Faniyi herself, for example, reported that her decision to wear dread locks was basically a political statement against the system, expressing "I don't pander to your standards of what a woman should look like."[325] As mentioned in the previous chapter, Aisha Mohammed, who herself was wearing a headscarf with her flowered blouse when I met her in a cafe in Abuja, also described traditional Muslim clothing for women* as "a form of protest in a hypersexualized world,"[326] because by wearing this clothing some women* were choosing to go against the norm and expressing that they did not want to be sexualized. She sees it as an expression of agency, as one decides to foreground one's faith and the identity associated with it.[327] In this discourse, the discrepancy between different social, regional, and primarily religious groupings of my interviewees becomes clear. Furthermore, this example illustrates the extent to which feminist protest and protest in general can be framed and expressed differently.

How did this change take place, which some of the interviewees described between their parents' generations and their own generation? Funmi Adeyemi described it as a slow and complex process. Today, she said, many young women* are willing to doubt and ask questions. Funmi Adeyemi also drew a parallel here to the declining religiosity of many young Nigerian women*. She herself grew up in a Christian environment, but today describes herself as agnostic. Twenty years ago, she said, deciding not to go to church often meant punishment and

[323] Faniyi 2021.
[324] Ovwasa 2021.
[325] Faniyi 2021.
[326] Mohammed 2021a.
[327] ibid.

social exclusion. Today, people have more freedom. It is increasingly developing in a direction where life paths and decisions that deviate from the norm are becoming more acceptable. Nevertheless, Funmi Adeyemi still sees a long way to go before this acceptance and tolerance permeate all areas of life and society.[328]

Change takes time, everyone and everything is in the process of change, and yet it must be actively addressed. Ayoola Omovo argued that education is an important building block for this. If girls today experienced good education, they would pass this on to following generations as mothers. Ayoola Omovo repeatedly focused on the quality of women*s role as mothers in our discussions, emphasizing that through this maternal role, women* have a special influence on social change as they bring up future generations.[329] Women* who do not wish to have children or other family constellations that do not emphasize women* as caretakers, were not mentioned in her descriptions of an ideal future. This, once again, illustrates that the social realities of the women* represented in this work are diverse and yet all have their legitimacy and significance. The relevance of the role of the mother in protests will also be discussed in depth in the following chapter.

Other interviewees, such as the queer-feminists Ayodele Olofintuade and Temmie Ovwasa, were more radical in their statements. “My agenda is to make people as uncomfortable as possible,”[330] Ayodele Olofintuade said firmly. She was referring to which pronouns she uses and also how she generally presents herself in public. She described herself as a queer homosexual person who does not feel like she belongs to a “gender box,” but as a feminist she chose to use the pronoun she because it has a political meaning for her. Just by living out her identity as a queer person, she becomes an activist. For her, this is something that she is not free to choose, but which comes to fruition solely through her personal identity. She reported that she is openly in favor of trans and queer inclusive feminism. This, she said, is something that is not widely voiced in Nigeria and often comes with a certain level of punishment. She added that “especially in a country as gatekept and controlled as Nigeria, people are aware of this punishment and choose to avoid it. That’s when people subvert the system and thus, they become part of the system. That’s a choice which can harm others.”[331] By “others,” in this case, she also meant herself, who had to experience again and again how difficult it can be psychologically and also economically when one moves outside the social norm.[332] Labelle

[328] Adeyemi 2021.
[329] Omovo 2021.
[330] Olofintuade 2021.
[331] ibid.
[332] ibid.

confirmed this, saying "people want the status quo to remain. If people don't find to box you so well, they begin to weaponize religion, politics, social structures, society."[333] As our conversation continued, she added, "when they see they cannot get through the channel of culture or religion, they weaponize your family. They use shame. Are you not ashamed? What would your family think? It is always a challenge. But I have also seen people who even in their daily life are questioning whatever it is because pain should not be a normative."

Temmie Ovwasa described similar experiences as Ayodele Olofintuade. They identify as a lesbian and non-binary person, which brings them daily death and rape threats. This made them so angry, they said, that they decided they could no longer sit by quietly. All these experiences, they said, "made me realize that I'd rather die fighting. [...] I'd rather die speaking up."[334] They also did not originally describe themselves as an activist, but also admitted that unfortunately they probably are, because they stand out and are visible as different and queer, even though they just want to be themselves. They added, "actually, if I'm being very honest, my look is very carefully curated to piss Nigerian men off. So yes, my look is very much a political statement. I think I like to get into a room and be the complete opposite of everything you think a woman should be."[335] Like Ayodele Olofintuade, they also represent a trans and queer inclusive feminism in their statements, as well as Beatrice Arogundade does.

Beatrice Arogundade became an artist after quitting law school, which she went to, to please her family as she reports. She is a Lagosian in her mid-twenties who identifies as homosexual. I met her in a park in the middle of Lagos, where the idyll was overshadowed by the noise of everyday traffic. Before we began the interview, she unpacked her guitar to play me the beginnings of a song she had started writing that morning. It expressed a freedom she had recently gained by coming out as homosexual and at the same time telling her family that she wanted to pursue her passion as an artist. This freedom is only an inner freedom that encounters countless obstacles on the outside. "Queer love is something that is demonized in Nigeria. [...] You can't openly live your life as such because it can get very violent,"[336] she reported from her own experiences. Regretfully, she went on to say that queer people were merely living their lives and expressing their identities freely, but that society alone was turning this into a political statement and into a fight. Beatrice Arogundade explained, leaning on her guitar as we sat on a park bench, that she sees this not only as something that queer people encounter, but something

[333] Omolora 2021.
[334] Ovwasa 2021.
[335] ibid.
[336] Arogundade 2021.

that women* encounter as soon as they go against the norm and societal expectations. "In living your life and your identity, you become so bright that even people that hate you can't help but notice you,"[337] she described. Therefore, everything would be politicized, even though many women and queer people wished they could live a normal life without standing out and falling off the grid.[338] As described at the beginning, it takes a lot of effort to go against the norm, and it also takes a lot of effort to conform to the norm if you don't comply with it.

The struggle of queer women and persons is not the same as the struggle experienced by non-queer women in Nigeria. Rather, it is usually an additional struggle that must be fought, an intersection of marginalization. Nevertheless, I want to give these nuances a space here, as queer women equally represent a group of female Nigeria and their resistance can often be attributed to feminist resistance and narratives. It should be noted here that feminism in Nigeria, as described earlier in this thesis, can also have numerous faces, facets, definitions, and foci, and my interviewees, as well as the broader Nigerian society that advocates for women*s rights, may differ greatly in these focal points of feminism (if it is even called that).

The painter and art teacher Esther Adebayo is one of my informants who does not identify with the queer community. Yet she clearly expressed, "I don't want to conform."[339] She was primarily referring to her marriage. "I speak up if I don't agree with something in my marriage for instance, even though the family might disagree. It's not their deal. It's him and I,"[340] she said firmly. She added, "I don't like doing things the way people expect me to."[341] Again, it is resistance in small ways that is expressed here; resistance to family expectations; resistance to silence and subordination in a marital partnership.

Labelle also emphasized her everyday resistance in the family context. She primarily referred to how she wanted to have freedom to deal with her body as she herself deemed appropriate and not to accept her body as the property of others. In doing so, she says she faces a daily struggle. "You will not dictate what I do with my body. I cut my hair. I wear shorts, if I choose to."[342] Resistance shows up in these small expressions, Labelle says. "As a matter of fact, I rebel against everything that is termed normal. [...] It makes me feel alive."[343] It makes her feel alive because only then she is herself and does not subordinate herself, she described. She

[337] Arogundade 2021.
[338] ibid.
[339] Adebayo 2021.
[340] ibid.
[341] ibid.
[342] Omolora 2021.
[343] ibid.

perceives an increasing change towards body autonomy, "I am so happy because now there are girls who know exactly what they want and they don't care. There are ladies who tell you I don't want to have kids."[344] Labelle herself is already a mother of two children and tried to have a sterilization after her last birth. However, she says doctors forbade her to do so because of her young age. In this case, she was not given autonomy over her own body. She herself is pro-choice when it comes to abortions, she said, and she described it as an expression of agency when women* make a conscious decision to have or not to have a child. However, that agency can be taken away, she added, if abortions are not allowed or family planning becomes an issue that the environment and extended family have a say in.[345] At the end of our conversation, Labelle made the clear statement, "Your body is yours. Express yourself. You can choose. I don't think expressing yourself hurts anybody. Be true to yourself. Express yourself to the fullest. Be rebellious. Challenge and wake up every day and choose to live."[346] Then, the young veiled Muslim student quickly said goodbye to pick up her children from kindergarten.

Karimot Odebode also showed that she would not be held back by expectations and, as a result, became an inspiration to other women*. The following story illustrates this. In her university, she decided to run for the office of president of the student council. At first, she was apparently met with astonishment and rejection, since this office had been held exclusively by male students in the past. In the end, although she did not win the election, she inspired various women* to run for the presidency of their faculty in the years that followed and to win elections as well.[347]

Another point raised by some of the interviewees is the extent to which they fight for their autonomy and agency through financial independence. Esther Adebayo, for example, clarified, "I don't want to make myself financially dependent on a man."[348] For this reason, she made her passion of painting her profession. Zainab Bala, a journalist, reported that she would still be looked at askance because she works full time and still has a family. She added, "as a woman in Nigeria, it's not easy, but as a Muslim woman from the north, it's even worse. It just doubles up."[349] As she progressed in her career, she kept hearing that no man would want to marry her when she worked so much. As previously pointed out, marrying and having children is often seen as the ultimate goal of every woman* in Nigeria. Now Zainab Bala is married and has an

[344] Omolora 2021.
[345] ibid.
[346] ibid.
[347] Odebode 2021.
[348] Adebayo 2021.
[349] Bala 2021.

important job with social responsibility. As a journalist, she strives to amplify the voices of underreported people, and thus women* primarily in northern Nigeria, with her stories.[350] With this attitude, and especially with the stories Zainab Bala provides a platform for as a journalist, she becomes an activist.

In addition to the activist opportunities that come with being a journalist, Zainab Bala also gains financial independence through her professional work. Aisha Mohammed described economic self-reliance and independence as a significant milestone to resist gender-based oppression.[351] It must also be noted here that sexism is systemic and can be seen as interrelated to capitalism. Accordingly, sexism cannot be overcome by women* pursuing wage labor in addition to care work alone, and yet it can provide them with certain freedoms, as Aisha Mohammed described. Business, she said, "is a woman's thing in Nigeria."[352] Since time immemorial, women* have kept the markets running and acted as traders. This, she said, brings with it the possibility of financial independence and, with it, a certain reassertion of power.[353]

For Adedoyin Bello, her profession as an artist is equally significant and her form of protest for more gender justice. She described it as important for women* to do what is important to them, thereby showing that they are not the weaker gender. "This is my form of protest against outdated norms,"[354] she added, as her youngest son slowly fell asleep on her lap. Adedoyin Bello goes to the studio when her children are in school and she is done with chores. She emphasized that this alone expressed the strength of women*, that they worked hard all day in the house, raising children and often doing other wage jobs on top of that. This makes their bodies strong, Adedoyin Bello added, and they should be worshiped like a temple for this.[355]

Through the different narratives of the interviewees, it becomes clear that they all face their personal struggle of equality and recognition on a daily basis. They have all found their own ways of resistance, applied in private, in public, or at the intersections of these spheres. Examples include, as described, the choice of outfit and the symbolic message that accompanies it, or the expression and acceptance that one has, to some degree, the choice of how to shape one's life and deal with one's body, thus reflecting and revolutionizing possibly learned norms. Raising one's voice and speaking out decisively for or against something is likewise a significant part of everyday resistance that is applied both in private interactions between

[350] Bala 2021.
[351] Mohammed 2021a.
[352] ibid.
[353] ibid.
[354] Bello 2021.
[355] ibid.

individuals and can be understood collectively as a movement on a larger scale, as will be clarified below. The women* I was privileged to meet through my fieldwork, express their resistance and protest in their autonomy and spiritual freedom to reflect what is modelled for them. Through daily choices of how to live their lives and thereby encounter others and bring statements across, they often unintentionally become activists. It is not uncommon for the sole courageous living out of one's identity to even become an act of resistance. This is especially evident in the preceding descriptions and experiences of the queer interviewees. Labelle aptly summarized, "This everyday private struggle is some form of protest that is going on simultaneously to public protest."[356] With this, she points to the connection between the two spaces and levels of protest, which I assume is of enormous importance for effective resistance. The different forms of protest, which are exercised in different spaces, such as the domestic and the public, interact with each other and cross-fertilize. In the next subchapter, therefore, protests in the public sphere will be discussed in more detail, before the connections between the spaces are finally discussed in more detail in the conclusion.

4.2 Resistance in the Public Realm

> *"These feminists out there […] Do you know the energy it takes to wake up every day and decide that I have to put on my armour? […] That person has to wake up each morning, mentally put on an armour, physically put on an armour and go outside and be ready for bullets and be ready to fight. Those are warriors. That is how I see them. That is what helped me. Because I realized, those people are just human beings like me."*[357]

The resistance reported to me by my contacts in Nigeria transcends domestic walls and finds access to public space. Public space is intentionally or unintentionally appropriated in protest. This means, on the one hand, that attracting attention can be seen as an instrument of protest in public space, whereby this is used in a planned and intentional way. On the other hand, protest in public space, and with it the call for attention, can also happen in an unplanned and thus in an unintentional way. In this case, it is a matter of individuals or groups not having the intention of protesting and thereby attracting attention in public space, but for example merely expressing their identity through appearance, gestures and words, or spontaneously reacting to circumstances with disagreement. The primary focus is not on attracting public attention, but

[356] Omolora 2021.
[357] Arogundade 2021.

merely on expressing one's own identity. The appropriation of public space can thus include both individual and collective, spontaneous and organized forms of protest, as will become clear below.

As was already demonstrated in the previous subchapter, speaking up is a term that kept coming up from several of my interviewees in the context of their resistance. "What about coming generations of women? If I do not speak up, I don't want to give birth to a daughter in this kind of environment,"[358] Ololade Faniyi said firmly. Standing up and speaking up can take place in different contexts in public as well as private spaces. The public space also includes online spaces, such as Twitter, which plays a significant role in Nigeria in networking, informing and reporting political content despite temporary nationwide bans of the platform. Ololade Faniyi described what is happening on online platforms like Twitter as an "instant documentation."[359] "Within the 40 words limit they are writing their own stories,"[360] she said, describing the change young generations in Nigeria are experiencing. Women* are bolder and forming communities, she said.[361] They are finding like-minded people, women* who have experienced similar things, think similarly, fight similar battles, which gives them the strength to know that they are not alone.[362] Lola Meduteni described that "sometimes on twitter I feel invincible, but then I crash back into reality and I see so many things that are not politically correct."[363] She characterized online discourse and offline reality as separated by a large gap.[364] And yet, it can be assumed that these online discourses have an increasingly decisive influence on the everyday reality of young Nigerian women*. However, Esther Adebayo points out that women* in certain rural areas may not have access to social media and online platforms.[365] This is called the "digital divide."[366] The difference between the situation in rural and urban areas must therefore be taken into account.

Nevertheless, the impact of Internet platforms and social media should not be underestimated when dealing with protest and resistance. Dynamics of networking are changed through this. However, it is not only about better collective organization via social media, but also about the simple exchange of content, opinions and experiences. Bennett and Segerberg distinguish

[358] Faniyi 2021.
[359] ibid.
[360] ibid.
[361] ibid.
[362] Arogundade 2021.
[363] Meduteni 2021.
[364] ibid.
[365] Adebayo 2021.
[366] Njoroge 2016. Njoroge also points out, however, that the greatest increase in mobile phone and Internet use is being witnessed in Sub-Saharan Africa.

between collective action and connective action. Collective action refers to organized collective action and the conscious formation of collective identities. The lesser-known concept of connective action, on the other hand, refers primarily to the individual sharing of personalized content via social media. Here, too, a movement or network can form with people influencing and inspiring each other. However, central organizing coordination is avoided.[367] "The linchpin of connective action is the formative element of 'sharing': the personalization that leads actions and content to be distributed widely across social networks."[368] Connective action in online spaces thus operates in an intermediate space of the public and the private. Private content is made publicly available to connect with others and to form a community.

The following example makes the relevance of connective action clear. Beatrice Arogundade who is from and lives in an urban area burst into tears when she talked about how much some people had helped her to find and live her own identity through their openness on social media. It had given her enormous strength to see that she was not alone in how she thought and felt. It inspired her to think for herself that she could do things she had not dared to believe in before. "They are doing this to be a beacon to other people," she concluded.[369] She sees individuals like influencers on social media as the people who can create real change. She feels, she described, that they actually reach people far and wide, and that NGOs, for example, sometimes fall short in their ability to reach people directly because they were using outdated methods. So, according to Beatrice Arogundade, the potential for change is with individuals who act as role models, and this is where a significant part of Nigerian feminist movements lies nowadays.[370]

Ayoola Omovo does just that when she, as an artist, teaches women* and girls to "be proud of who you are, be proud of what you do."[371] Through her art, she says, she enables young women* to believe in themselves and to take a path that goes beyond what their parents might model for them.[372] The artist Esther Adebayo used similar words when describing how she dreams of using her art as an educational opportunity. She sees herself as a role model for other young women*, "as a mentor for coming generations."[373] Karimot Odebode also expressed, "I want every African girl to be and do whatever they want and whoever they want to be. I don't want

[367] Bennett & Segerberg 2012.
[368] ibid: 760.
[369] Arogundade 2021.
[370] ibid.
[371] Omovo 2021.
[372] ibid.
[373] Adebayo 2021.

them to be stopped by what society thinks of them. [...] I want every African girl to be able to notice their potential and to use their potential."[374] With her NGO Black Girls Dream Initiative, she creates educational, sports, arts and social events that encourage girls to unite and to discover and live out their potential.[375] Several of my interviewees have experienced themselves that role models could give them great confidence on their way to making their own choices.

It is visible in the career choice and activism that some of my interviewees practice that they also want to act as role models. It is part of their resistance in which they try to give women* more power and freedom. As has already become apparent, a large number of the women* interviewed for this thesis are also artistically active in their free time or professionally. These include fine artists and painters such as Ayoola Omovo, Adedoyin Bello, Esther Adebayo and Beatrice Arogundade, musicians such as Temmie Ovwasa, poets such as Funmi Adeyemi and Karimot Odebode. These inevitably bring creative forms of protest to feminist or womanist resistance, as is visible in Funmi Adeyemi's poem described earlier, or in the song lyrics of Temmie Ovwasa, who made a clear statement with Nigeria's first publicly queer music album. Also, Esther Adebayo shows in her paintings themes like sexual violence against women*. She shows the strength of women* in different forms. Protesting women* raise their fists in her paintings and symbolize a generation that questions and speaks up against their silencing.[376] Ayoola Omovo described the power of art in that "women don't have the voice verbally, but we have it in the visual. That can educate people."[377] And Beatrice Arogundade asserted, "I have chosen my instrument of fight: That is art."[378]

Other interviewees explained that they were active as journalists or bloggers and that this was a significant part of their form of protest. For example, Zainab Bala, a journalist and broadcaster, described how she always tried to give a voice to marginalized groups through her reporting and advocated for women*s rights.[379] Ayodele Olofintuade started a blog on queer feminist issues and Aisha Mohammed writes articles about the lives of women* in northern Nigeria for the Nigerian organization Document Women to provide them with a platform and break stereotypes of poverty, oppression and illiteracy.[380] Ololade Faniyi, like Aisha Mohammed and Karimot Odebode, also works with NGOs that advocate for women*s rights

[374] Odebode 2021.
[375] ibid.
[376] See title image. Adebayo 2021.
[377] Omovo 2021.
[378] Arogundade 2021.
[379] Bala 2021.
[380] Olofintuade 2021; Mohammed 2021a.

and against sexual violence. In addition, she decided to write and document the stories of Nigerian women* because history has shown that women* are often misrepresented or underrepresented when they do not choose to take the writing of history into their own hands.[381] All of these activities and professions are significant not only because they advocate for equality and women*s rights, but also because their choice of work demonstrates that they have the opportunities to do what is important to them and what brings them joy. Expressing this alone can be seen as a way of resisting social norms. These women* decided to not do what the broader society expected them to do, but what they themselves considered important. Of course, it should not be ignored here that equal opportunities do not exist and that women* in different economic and social classes have different freedoms in their choice of activities.

Beyond the forms of resistance described above, which are often not called activism by those involved, but rather as the expression of their identity and needs, there are of course those who actively describe themselves as activists and choose this title for themselves. Others, however, would not actively ascribe themselves to activism, but recognize that the way they live their lives often involuntarily leads to a type of activism and the constant voicing of political statements. Bobel explains the rejection of the term 'activist' by arguing that "one can 'do activism' without 'being activist'."[382] He refers to numerous empirical studies that support the claim that many participants in social movements do not identify with the label 'activist'.[383] His argument for this is not that the term activist is poorly regarded, but rather that it is associated with a "perfect standard"[384] which makes it seem like something unattainable. "Thus, *doing* activism and *being* activist can, in some cases, be seen as distinct and separate and this distinction is linked to a particular set of values that shape the definition of activist."[385]
Musician Temmie Ovwasa is one of the people, who do not refer to themselves as activist but who perform activism simply by the way they are living their life. "I wouldn't necessarily call myself an activist,"[386] they stated and continued by saying, "I would call myself an artist, a very angry artist."[387] Anger was frequently mentioned in the conversations I held during my fieldwork. Women* expressed their anger toward a patriarchal system, describing it as something that drove them to become politically active, to speak up and resist. "Anger drives

[381] Faniyi 2021.
[382] Bobel 2007: 149.
[383] Bobel 2007; Thompson 1997; Blackstone 2004.
[384] Bobel 2007: 156.
[385] ibid: 156.
[386] Ovwasa 2021.
[387] ibid.

me,"[388] Karimot Odebode reported and Beatrice Arogundade pointed out that "underneath an angry person is a person with very high hopes and pain."[389] Temmie Ovwasa used the energy of anger to release Nigeria's first publicly queer music album. In response to the solidarity-based but mostly threatening messages they then received on a daily basis, they described, "I got tired. I got angry. And I genuinely thought I was going to die. That's why I started talking anyways."[390] The death and rape threats that reached them after they came out caused anger to rise in them and turn into productivity, a productivity of speaking up, posting their queer-feminist thinking and misogynist experiences on social media, dressing provocatively and actively not conforming to a system that wanted to suppress their identity. Yet, they lamented, "there is still the existence of the system, no matter how much effort I put in as an individual."[391] They continued, "the system is so intricately designed to keep people marginalized. Releasing my album sounds nice, but I got blacklisted in the industry, so I don't get shows anymore. [...] You always pay a price when you decide to fight for anything here."[392] Still, they refuse to let it get them down and fall silent.

Karimot Odebode, on the other hand, actively decided to dedicate large parts of her life to activism. She introduced herself as a "women's rights activist,"[393] whereupon she first recited the long list of her activities and accomplishments. For example, as described, she founded an organization that "aims to fight for the rights of women and girls"[394] and that strives to get more women* into leadership and political decision-making positions. She also got involved by participating in various projects, conferences and campaigns that advocated for the rights of young people and especially young women*.[395] Thus, she is primarily active in civil society organizations and campaigns. Ololade Faniyi is also involved in civil society organizations, but equally stresses the importance of everyday statements such as adding to her Twitter profile that she is an "afro-feminist."[396] Furthermore, she stated that she herself had the choice to decide to engage in feminist causes because she came from a position of privilege. Others, however, such as the women* who took to the streets naked in southern Kaduna in 2020 to protest the mass killings of their children by religiously and ethnically motivated gangs and politically

[388] Odebode 2021.
[389] Arogundade 2021.
[390] Ovwasa 2021.
[391] ibid.
[392] ibid.
[393] Odebode 2021.
[394] ibid.
[395] ibid.
[396] Faniyi 2021.

motivated banditry, did not have a choice but were made "inadvertent activists"[397] by these circumstances.[398]

The active decision to engage in political activism often arises from a position of privilege, as became clear in my fieldwork. Some cannot avoid living their lives as a kind of permanent resistance, others feel they can decide whether to actively oppose gender injustices, still others are so busy with daily survival that capacities for issues that go beyond the mere satisfaction of basic needs are not or hardly available. This is how it was described to me by some of my interviewees. For example, Karimot Odebode described, "My parents have encouraged me all my life to use my voice and do what I want. I want to use that privilege to encourage girls who don't necessarily have that support in their families."[399] Whether activism and resistance actually emerge from privileged situations is always controversially discussed. Aisha Mohammed also pointed out that this is often an excuse and that the situation and the privileges associated with it will only change when more women* are in decision-making and leading positions.

Another aspect of activism and resistance are protests in the form of marches, by people who gather their collective energy to take to the streets, to step into the light of publicity and as a movement to point out concrete grievances. As described in the first chapter, these protests are nothing new from a historical point of view, although new forms of protest are used sometimes. However, traditional forms of protest, such as the undressing of women*, still take place today. One example of contemporary protests by women* in Nigeria is the so-called Market March Movement, which was launched in Lagos in December 2018 against sexual harassment.[400] Sexual harassment and groping are common practice in Nigeria's markets. I was able to observe this myself during my field research. Traders justify this as a sales strategy, as "aggressive marketing,"[401] which they have been using for decades. "They try to draw your attention and at the same time they sexualize you,"[402] Lola Meduteni lamented. Many see this as normality, as everyone would experience it. The Market March Movement wants to put an end to this. Women* took to the streets, walking through the markets chanting, carrying banners and T-shirts that underscored their intentions.[403] Of course, they had to deal with backlash, and yet

[397] Faniyi 2021.
[398] Faniyi 2021. Confiance News 2020.
[399] Odebode 2021.
[400] Ukiwe 2018.
[401] Meduteni 2021.
[402] ibid.
[403] Unah 2019.

Jekein Lato-Unah, head of projects of the NGO Stand to End Rape Initiative, reports that something has changed since then and there is more awareness about what sexual harassment is and that it is unacceptable.[404] The Movement has inspired more women* to fight back, she said. That takes a lot of courage.[405] And, according to the experiences of many women*, it has encouraged men to be more respectful of women*.[406] The movement has also inspired further market marches in other regions of Nigeria.[407]

The following year, a protest against rape was held in Ibadan in south-eastern Nigeria. This, too, was styled as a march and thus as a demonstrative form of action, as Balistier would call it.[408] With loudspeaker wagons, placards and slogans such as "no means no"[409] and "don't tell us how to dress,"[410] these demonstrators expressed that consent was an important component in the fight against sexual and gender violence. Lola Meduteni reported of the protest, "it felt empowering that we did that."[411] Karimot Odebode also participated in the forefront of the so-called "Ibadan walk against rape" in 2019, which was organized in response to increasing reports of rape and femicide in the Corona pandemic period and also related to the fact that in Oyo State, of which Ibadan is the capital, no rape case has ever been convicted before. According to Karimot Odebode, the protest achieved on the one hand to reach out to civil society and draw attention to this issue, and on the other hand, it was aimed directly at the state government.[412] "We stood together as women"[413] in this protest, Karimot Odebode declared. Pride and hope resounded in her voice.

This protest was not an isolated case. Ololade Faniyi also reported about numerous protests against sexual violence against women* that took place in Lagos and other major cities in Nigeria during the Corona pandemic between March and June 2020.[414] She also counts herself among the organizers of the protests. There had been enough silence and silencing and it had to be put to an end, she reported. "We had to be out there to speak, because if we don't go out who is going to speak for us?"[415] Women* of any age group had taken to the streets week after week, but unfortunately they could never have achieved the level of media coverage with the

[404] Iruoma 2019.
[405] Meduteni 2021.
[406] Ovwasa 2021; Meduteni 2021.
[407] Iruoma 2019.
[408] Balistier 1996 in Haunss 2009.
[409] Meduteni 2021.
[410] Akinsanya 2021.
[411] Meduteni 2021.
[412] Odebode 2021.
[413] ibid.
[414] Faniyi 2021; Dark 2020.
[415] Faniyi 2021.

women*-related issues that the EndSARS protests achieved a few months later. Ololade Faniyi explained this as follows: “It points to how, when violence is targeted at male bodies, it is overrepresented. But when it is female bodies no one cares.”[416] Simultaneously with protests against gender-based violence in Nigeria, women* in other West African countries also took to the streets. Direct success remained limited.[417] However, it can be assumed that the effect that the cohesion had on the protesting women* themselves already represents a significant step of resistance. In addition, Nigeria’s first sexual assault referral center was launched in response to pressure from protesters. Ololade Faniyi commented that this had been an important step, but she was concerned that it was primarily a political message to reassure protesters and would not introduce effective measures.[418] Change is slow but steady.

The EndSARS Movement, which came to a peak in October 2020, reached global media.[419] People of all ages, genders or social groups took to the streets across Nigeria to protest police violence. Everyone protested in solidarity for the common goal to end police brutality.[420] The basis of the protests did not relate to any particular gender, Karimot Odebode commented. She said, “It was a matter of human rights. This had not to do with gender.”[421] Ololade Faniyi, on the other hand, reported that the protests were initially primarily directed at police violence against young men, or at least that this was the main trigger for the protests, although police violence was also clearly linked to gender based violence, as numerous cases prove.[422] She had said in conversations with female friends at the beginning of the protests that men now finally had the opportunity to understand why women* had been taking to the streets week after week all this time: “Now that the violence is turned to you, you can maybe realize some of what we have been saying all of this while,”[423] she said. Still, thousands of women* took to the streets as well, and eventually the feminist group Feminist Coalition even took over coordinating much of the protest.[424] Women* and feminists were at the forefront, putting their lives on the line, Ololade Faniyi and Temmie Ovwasa noted.[425] However, beyond the violence perpetrated by the state against the protesters, there were also reports from women* and members of the

[416] Faniyi 2021.
[417] ibid.
[418] ibid.
[419] Dark 2020; Desmond 2020; FabWoman 2020; Haynes 2020; Maclean 2021.
[420] Dark 2020; Haynes 2020; Maclean 2021.
[421] Odebode 2021.
[422] Faniyi 2021. Faniyi is referring to cases like #justiceforTina and reports of women* who were being arrested and raped or sexually harassed by policemen. cf. Makinde 2020; cf. Guardian Exclusive 2020.
[423] Faniyi 2021.
[424] Olaoluwa 2020; Dark 2020; Desmond 2020; FabWoman 2020; Haynes 2020; Makinde 2020.
[425] Faniyi 2021; Ovwasa 2021.

LGBTIQ+ community of sexist violence and harassment among the protesters.[426] "It was so terrible. It was heart breaking because we were all fighting for the same thing,"[427] Temmie Ovwasa reported from the protests in Lagos.

The means of EndSARS protests were online as well as offline resistance.[428] Twitter was flooded with posts with the hashtag #EndSARS, while several thousand people took to the streets of major cities across the country for several days. People marched, protested, went on strike, blocked, were loud, chanted, carried banners and national flags.[429] In addition, some artists joined forces, like my interviewees Adedoyin Bello and Ayoola Omovo, who expressed the demands of the protests in paintings on the streets of Lagos.[430] Accordingly, it is evident that EndSARS united and effectively used different types of protest, like direct action (strikes, blockades, etc.), symbolic expressive action (paintings and other forms of art etc.), as well as demonstrative forms of action (marches, rallies etc.).[431] In the end, the protests were violently brought to an end.[432] A year after the big protests, Temmie Ovwasa told me: "I really think people are still recovering from EndSARS. There haven't been movements this year, that I know of."[433] A few months earlier, Fakhrriyyah Hashim, a prominent activist in Nigeria who also took a leading role in the EndSARS protests, had declared "this is just the beginning of a youth awakening in Nigeria, of things that we can do to improve the state of the country."[434] And she continued hopefully: "We will continue to do this, especially in the lives of women."[435] Social movements are phenomena whereby, through a collective view of a circumstance as wrong or unacceptable, diverse actions are taken by a number of individuals or groups to change and improve that circumstance. "The political culture of such movements grows from commitments to righting wrongs," Kaplan wrote in 1990, continuing with "sometimes by achieving social justice for all, or by protecting those it views as even less powerful."[436]

As has become visible in this chapter, activism, protest and resistance are carried out in the individual, as well as in the collective. People take to the streets collectively, using the effect of a crowd as a means of protest. In other cases, there is often spontaneous, less organized

[426] cf. Ovwasa 2021; Olofintuade 2021.
[427] Ovwasa 2021.
[428] Dark 2020; Haynes 2020.
[429] Olaoluwa 2020; Desmond 2020.
[430] Omovo 2021; Bello 2021.
[431] Haunss 2009.
[432] Olaoluwa 2020; Dark 2020; Desmond 2020.
[433] Ovwasa 2021.
[434] Olaoluwa 2020.
[435] ibid.
[436] Kaplan 1990: 259.

protest, which can be considered individual in the sense that individuals decide to protest and do so without relying on a group. The extent to which this is in fact exclusively individual or nevertheless shaped by a collective ontology will be the subject of further research. Examples of collective resistance that were prominent in my field research are the marches described above, as well as online movements that occurred in parallel, for example in the case of EndSARS, and can be seen as an interweaving of protest modes. In addition, various traditional forms of protest, which have been used in a similar way in Nigeria since pre-colonial times, can be seen as collective means of protest. Examples include the undressing of women* as a form of protest, most recently reported from Kaduna 2020;[437] the gathering of women* under a central tree of a town for several days, often going on a hunger strike until responsive political action is taken; rolling on the floor; or the collection of garbage and dirt, which is then spread around the house of the person whose decisions are being protested against.[438] The latter is also frequently used against politicians and can be seen as a form of "sitting on a man," as described at the beginning of this thesis. Temmie Ovwasa concluded, "I think the biggest thing Nigerians do when they protest in any way is they do things that call attention."[439] This describes the core of forms of protest and resistance.

To elaborate on the aspect of undressing, which, as described earlier, is as historical as it is contemporary and has neither lost significance nor been changed in its implementation,[440] I would like to briefly summarize how my interviewees described this act today. The cultural context of the taboo of undressing as a mother and the accompanying implications of protest as described in chapter one do not appear to have changed. Beatrice Arogundade described, "if you see a mother fighting against the government and stripping, her child has probably been taken away from her. And that's the purest form of rage."[441] Temmie Ovwasa described the act of stripping as a form of protest as "very empowering" and "it just brings a lot of agency back."[442] Moreover, the symbolism of the act still causes fear of a curse today, Temmie Ovwasa and Ololade Faniyi described from a Yorùbá perspective.[443] Accordingly, the protesters are using cultural taboos to gain attention and thus reclaim a power. "I think it's a way of taking power back,"[444] Temmie Ovwasa concluded their interpretation. Ololade Faniyi went on by

[437] Confiance News 2020.
[438] Bello 2021.
[439] Ovwasa 2021.
[440] Confiance News 2020; Fallon & Moreau 2016.
[441] Arogundade 2021.
[442] Ovwasa 2021.
[443] Ovwasa 2021; Faniyi 2021.
[444] Ovwasa 2021.

saying that "it is not a choice but a matter of survival for them to go out on the street [naked]."[445] It is a means of last resort, she said, to break the yoke of silence and force the government to look and listen to what is causing pain to the protesters. Ololade Faniyi also described the maternal component that can be attributed to this form of protest. The bodies of women* who have already given birth are seen in Yorùbá culture and in other cultures based in Nigeria, as described at the beginning, as something that has the power over life and death. To see one's mother naked, the body that gave birth to one, is associated with a powerful curse. In public protests, this understanding that children who see their own mother naked are cursed, is transferred to the government. Accordingly, the stripping women* threaten to curse the government and thus force it to take action.[446] This was also the case in southern Kaduna state in July 2020, where primarily elderly women* stripped or bared their breasts and rolled on the ground adorned with green leaves and gathered to protest growing insecurity, banditry and endless killings.[447] Why, however, has this form of protest persisted through all this time and historical changes from pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial times, and not lost its impact in the process? Fallon and Moreau argue that the tactic of shaming associated with deliberate undressing has persisted because the gendered cultural signification and understanding of the symbolism associated with it has remained intact despite processes of colonization and decolonization. "The endurance of the gendered meaning and its symbolic resonance allowed the tactic to remain in the contentious repertoire toolkit for recent protest events,"[448] they wrote.

The gender aspect of undressing as a form of protest is clear and the importance of motherhood in this type of protest has now also been highlighted. Frequently scholars argue that motherhood, as a central aspect of femininity, does indeed play a significant role in political protests. Kaplan, for example, articulated that it is often women* who take a leading role in political "movements for survival."[449] This assumption is also supported by looking at the 21st century climate movement. Despite the primary presence of male dominance in public sectors or in decision-making positions, these social and political movements that have taken up the cause of protecting life more broadly are overwhelmingly dominated and organized by women*. "This has nothing to do with biology, but it has much to do with social relations women experience from childhood, when they are generally taught that they must be the

[445] Faniyi 2021.
[446] ibid.
[447] Confiance News 2020.
[448] Fallon & Moreau 2016: 333.
[449] Kaplan 1990: 259.

world's caretakers,"[450] Kaplan reasons. Saleh also argues that the parallel of women* as potential mothers and women* in political movements depends on patriarchal socialization.[451] Abelove goes a step further by arguing that it is heteronormative thinking to speak of the general maternal essence of women*.[452] A cross-cultural assumption is that women*, mothers, and wives should be the ones who care for the well-being of their family and community. Yet, of course, it must be noted that assumptions about what constitutes "a good woman's obligations" can vary considerably by class, culture, and historical period.[453] This analogy between women* as (potential) mothers and humanity permeates diverse levels of society and political institutions, and continues to generate controversy among feminists of different trends.[454] Despite the possibly problematic assumption of the link between the culturally-historically drawn image of women* as potential mothers and protests for survival, it also becomes clear from numerous described movements and acts of protest by women* in Nigeria that these usually address issues of gender justice, the struggle of their own survival or the protection of the lives of an affected group.

It becomes clear that despite or precisely because of the strong oppression of women* in Nigeria described in the previous chapter, there is strong resistance. "Women have always been the ones who get things done. Any protest that led to change has always been women-led,"[455] explained Aisha Yesufu, a Nigerian activist in the context of the EndSARS protests. This is not always explained as feminist or stems from feminist ideals. Nevertheless, women* see the need to protest for themselves and others in the face of injustice and insecurity. In addition, there are definitely people who ascribe to feminism despite its stigma. Temmie Ovwasa stated, "I have met fierce radical feminists here. Those are probably the strongest group of people I have ever met. I have been with women in movements where everybody was afraid to die. But they still do it regardless."[456] These groups are present and the resistance is happening, but how much does it actually reflect society or the broader situation in Nigeria?

The voices seem to be very different when randomly asking people on the street what women*s movements or protests they know about. The majority simply answered that there were not many protests in Nigeria, and certainly not protests related to women*s rights. The view of

[450] Kaplan 1990: 259.
[451] Saleh 2021.
[452] Abelove 1993.
[453] Kaplan 1990: 260.
[454] ibid.
[455] Olaoluwa 2020.
[456] Ovwasa 2021.

gender injustice or gender-based violence also varied greatly according to my fieldwork. For example, some people assumed that feminism and gender injustices were merely a Western invention imposed on their culture, but that feminism was actually not necessary because there were no injustices in Nigeria. Nigeria is large and diverse, uniting about 219.5 million different voices. Among my interviewees alone, I found that perspectives could differ significantly in terms of feminist or women*s rights concepts, but also in terms of the general existence of women* resisting and protesting in Nigeria. In addition to the diversity of voices and perceptions, there are also geographically diverse cultural and political differences. For example, it was widely reported about northern Nigeria that "you don't see a lot of women protesting in northern Nigera."[457] Although there are always exceptions, Zainab Bala added here, "Protests generally in Nigeria are not really a thing. There are so many rigid rules, so many regulations."[458] Omolola Akinsanya also said, "We don't fight for much in this country."[459] Aisha Mohammed agreed that there are not many protests in the country, but most of those that do exist are primarily led by women*.[460] However, it must also be added here that the majority of women* do not participate in collective forms of protest and there are indeed women* who act as opponents to some women*s rights movements.[461] This, I would conclude, is not a Nigeria-specific phenomenon, but can be observed in women*s rights movements all over the world.

One movement that confirms the exception that women*s movements also occur in northern Nigeria is the #Arewametoo movement.[462] This was initially an online-only movement which was launched in early 2019 with the hashtag #Arewametoo by a tweet from Fakhriyyah Hashim in response to the international #MeToo movement.[463] Arewa is Hausa and stands for northern Nigeria. Shortly after, Fakhriyyah Hashim tweeted "Time's up, it's over. You are done getting away with monstrosities against women."[464] Through the hashtag, women* in Northern Nigeria used their voices collectively for the first time to speak up against sexual violence and share their experiences with each other to de-taboo the issue.[465] This form of protest shows a clear example of the reappropriation of agency: through sexualized violence, women* were oppressed and agency was taken away. By speaking out individually and especially collectively

[457] Bala 2021.
[458] ibid.
[459] Akinsanya 2021.
[460] Mohammed 2021a.
[461] Cf. Omolora 2021.
[462] Naija News Report 2019; Nuhu 2020; Uwaisu 2019; Gänsler 2019.
[463] Mohammed 2021c; Uwaisu 2019.
[464] Hashim in Mohammed 2021c.
[465] Naija News Report 2019; Nuhu 2020; Gänsler 2019.

about these incidents, this agency is reclaimed, as a community of victims is formed to defend themselves against their oppression. #Arewametoo eventually evolved into a march and rallies across northern Nigeria advocating for the implementation of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition act (VAPP).[466]

This movement in turn inspired the hashtag #Churchtoo, with a pastor being accused of rape. This generated a great deal of public attention and a short-term social divide. A group of men reportedly then took to the streets wearing t-shirts that read "feminists are children of disobedience," which included a Christian undertone, Ololade Faniyi explained.[467] She went on to say that many feminists or women*s rights activists involved in the campaign then concluded "if obedience is accepting an oppressive system, then yes, I am a child of disobedience."[468] Words that were initially meant to assault were thus claimed by feminists and so agency was reclaimed here again. While this occurred collectively in this case, it was also described by numerous interviewees as an individual protest in which they were, for example, called feminists and subsequently insisted all the more vehemently on being called feminists in anticipation of the possibility of discrimination by a shift in agency.[469]

4.3 Concluding remarks on this chapter

In summary, protest can be described as expressing itself in multiple forms, spaces, and dimensions. Traditional and culturally specific forms of protest such as undressing and modernized versions of 'sitting on a man' continue to be used. At the same time, new spaces of protest have been emerging in recent years. Social media and online space have been claimed as a site that moves between the public and the private, and have been used for novel forms of protest, as well as for the associated connecting of marginalized groups and activists. This also highlighted the importance of role models in social movements, which today are often stated through social media, but also through other media, such as art, music and literature. Speaking up against discrimination and oppression also plays a role in the virtual space of social media as well as in public and domestic spaces.

Furthermore, this chapter has made clear that the way of life and the expression of one's own identity alone can lead to a form of resistance. Examples include career choices, the design of

[466] Mohammed 2021c; Nuhu 2020.
[467] Faniyi 2021.
[468] ibid.
[469] Cf. Odebode 2021.

one's body including hair and clothing, the way one interacts with others, the expression of one's inner self or relevant socio-political issues through art forms or teaching others in everyday life or institutions.

It became clear that resistance is often fed by an anger that the state of affairs as it is, cannot continue. This resistance is expressed not only in individual but also in collective forms of protest and social movements, such as street protests (e.g. EndSARS), marches (e.g. Market March), online and offline campaigns (e.g. #Arewametoo), and the building of civil society organizations. Reasons for anger and resistance as described in this thesis are primarily gender-related injustices and violence, as well as protecting one's own life or the lives of loved ones. To what extent feminisms play a role in this cannot be elaborated on with a single answer, since some of the individuals and movements do refer to feminist trends and ideas, whereas others strictly reject the association with the term feminism. Here, the complexity of the relationship with the concept of feminism in Nigeria must be understood and it must also be pointed out that feminist trends and also African feminisms in particular are to be understood in a variety of ways.

Another point that has been made clear in this chapter is that there is often no clear dividing line between individual and collectively organized protest. Through individual voices, movements with a collective voice eventually form, even if they do not necessarily involve mass protests. Through online space, these dynamics often become even more apparent. An expression of opinion surges, inspires, is copied consciously or unconsciously, and eventually swells into a large wave that has effective power both for the individual elements of the wave and for what the wave intends to crash against. In these cases, agency is amplified by the collective.

The concept of agency is significant in the study of the role of women* in history. "It highlights the individual action/social structure explanatory dichotomy,"[470] Lee and Logan wrote. Agency differs from activism in that it focuses on the extent to which "women have challenged, resisted, overthrown, or gained entrance to social structures and institutions that had tended to ignore, exclude, disadvantage, or penalize them."[471] Focusing on women*s agency in research, therefore, on the one hand opposes a victimizing historiography, which is all too common, and on the other hand has the potential to look at women* or other marginalized groups in the context of their agency and influence on social structures, which can have an empowering

[470] Lee & Logan 2019: 831.
[471] ibid: 831.

effect.[472] Agency thus plays a significant role, particularly in gender-specific protests, as it is often about how agency can be reclaimed through speaking up or through the deliberate use and embodiment of certain terms that are otherwise used discriminatorily against them. Women's agency is thus always political.[473] Where agency is denied, which happens primarily to marginalized groups such as women*, it can be reclaimed all the more powerfully through resistance

[472] Anderson 2000; Lee & Logan 2019.
[473] Lee & Logan 2019.

Conclusion

By analyzing different phenomena and settings of protests against gender-based marginalization by women* in contemporary Nigeria, this thesis has illustrated the diversity of forms and spaces of resistance that intertwine and support each other. It has examined how women* talk about their resistance (as well as about their marginalization), how they perceive it, where, why and in what form they express it. As a result, this thesis has shown how different spaces of resistance, such as the domestic/private and the public, cannot be clearly separated and feed each other, as well as how individual and collective protest are intertwined, and how different forms of protest are used in collaboration. Connecting different spaces, people, and forms of protest is necessary for effective resistance and especially significant in the regional and sociocultural context of this work.

The intersection of spaces also became clear in the analysis of the oppression and the existing or non-existing agency of women* in Nigeria in the third chapter. Here, I elaborated on how research subjects assess the situation of women* in Nigeria and how they experience it themselves. This chapter illuminated how many women* suffer from gender-specific oppression, and how oppressive circumstances also give rise to anger among many of the interviewees, which motivates them to reclaim their agency through protest. The oppression of women* and female bodies in particular was described by the interviewees in that female bodies were often perceived as properties as well as breeders. This was expressed, among other things, in discourses around marriage, divorce, and family planning. The narrative of women* as property already suggests that women are not expected to live independently and autonomously outside of marriage. As a result, an objectification of women* takes place, which also extends into other areas, such as societal expectations of how women* should dress or behave. These expectations and norms are often accompanied by sexism and gender-based harassment. Choosing to go against those expectations and acting contrary to them expresses a form of resistance that was evident in all of the interviews.

Nevertheless, it became apparent that women* suffer violence of a physical, verbal and systemic nature in their family and domestic space as well as in public spaces. While women* are not supposed to show their sexuality to the outside world, they are still often sexualized. It can thus be said that women* in contemporary Nigeria are exposed to numerous forms of gender-based oppression and discrimination based on patriarchal ideas and systems. These include violence, inequality of opportunity, discrimination, a missing right over reproduction

and their own bodies, sexual abuse, harassment, and sexualization, as well as other issues that have not been extensively addressed.

However, where there is oppression, there is resistance. Where there is resistance, there is an awareness of injustice and hope that it might be overcome, as is shown in chapter four. And where there is agency taken away there is the attempt to reclaim it. The reclaiming of agency through simply speaking up for one's rights, by reclaiming expressions that were initially supposed to discriminate or by for example actively using the concept of shame through the act of intentional undressing instead of being shamed by being undressed is a significant act of resistance. It runs through all the described forms of protest in this work and specifically in chapter four. The expression of agency is thus at the core of resistance.

The fourth chapter also examined the correlations between different types of protest and resistance. It became clear that the boundaries between protests in private and public spaces are blurred, that individual protest cannot be clearly distinguished from collective protest, and that even spontaneous forms of protest are correlated with organized forms of protest. This becomes evident through the interplay of different forms of protest, which rarely take place in isolation from other forms of protest.

The blurred boundary between the different realms in which agency is expressed and protest against gender-based injustices takes place becomes clear, for example, in the online space of social media. Here, individuals express themselves from their private space into the public sphere. At the same time, they act as individual voices and may simultaneously contribute to or be empowered or influenced by a larger collective movement. In addition, virtual spaces such as social media help people connect and share experiences. The feeling of not being alone with certain experiences, thoughts and discriminations can thus create a connective or even collective understanding, which in turn can support common resistance.

However, it is not only online spaces that show the connections between the private and the public. The stories of the interviewees showed that these boundaries are also blurred when, for example, a private person dresses in a certain way, but takes this to the street in public. The intention behind this is not necessarily to attract public attention, but rather to express an identity or an attitude, or simply to be oneself. The inspiration that can be transferred from individual to individual can therefore lead to an individually executed, but ultimately collective phenomenon, a collective expression of resistance.

Resistance on a small scale, for example through certain methods of raising or educating one's own children, through self-determined decisions such as whether, whom or when to marry, whether, when or how many children to have, which professional activity to pursue or not, etc., is, as this work makes clear, of relevance not to be underestimated in the study of protest and resistance. Simply realizing one's freedom of choice and identity in the midst of gender-based injustice, as well as reflecting on it, led to different kinds of resistance in the case of all interviewees. This they express through decision-making, lifestyles, career choices, through public writing of feminist posts and texts in the broadest sense, through educating others, through collective marches and protests, through their art, through their being, all in their own way. On the one hand, this is met with incomprehension, and on the other, it has the potential for them to act as role models for others. This should not be overlooked, since it can form the basis for larger organized collective protest movements. It can have an influence on social change that should not be underrated, and on top of that, the private, spontaneous and initially individual forms of protest can already be seen as a kind of protest movement, since they empower and inspire each other as soon as they become visible, legible, audible or tangible.

In addition to small-scale and private protest, however, this field research also points to traditional and modern, organized and collective forms of protest, such as intentional undressing, street marches, or online campaigns like the #ArewaMeToo campaign. These can be seen either as gender-specific protests, or as protests which are directed against gender-based injustices. Here, too, it is important to consider the empowering impact that these public movements can have on private resistance.

Through the dense interviews of my field research, it became clear that while many women* express resistance, they would, however, not describe themselves as activists. This is often because they are simply living out and expressing their identity, and because of the circumstances that describe their identity as something different from the norm, this can already be seen as a form of resistance to those norms that oppress them. They thus become inadvertent activists by not conforming to norms and expectations. It takes a lot of effort to go against the norm, and it also takes a lot of effort to conform to the norm if you don't comply with it. Ololade Faniyi concluded our interview by stating "one of the things we have seen from our conversation here is how the system has made activists of people who do not choose to be activists."[474] This involuntary everyday protest runs through all interviews which were

[474] Faniyi 2021.

conducted in the course of this thesis. It again expresses the interconnection of the private and the public realms.

Research on civil society organizations and women*s movements in Nigeria has been abundant, as can be seen in the first chapter. At the outset, a historiography of women* protesting in Nigeria described which forms of protest have been made visible and archived in history. However, the relevance of private and everyday resistance has often been overlooked. Accordingly, they are arguably often taken for granted or considered void in the writing of history. With this field research I hope to fill this gap by providing insight into various forms of private resistance through the interviews I conducted. It shows that "the personal is political."[475] Additionally, by doing so, I hope to stimulate further research on the relevance of private spaces and protests in resistance, as well as on the interconnection between private and public spheres in protest.

However, attention must also be paid to the fact that the heterogeneous group of interviewees who contributed to this thesis cannot represent the broad society of women* in Nigeria. There are also women* themselves who stand in the way of the protests. Accordingly, this thesis must be understood in its specific context. This includes the fact that the research question and thus the focus of this thesis refers to protest and resistance. Accordingly, various forms of resistance were identified, which are certainly present, although, due to the limited focus of this thesis, it is difficult to say how present these actually are in the broader Nigerian society. This is because those statements of the interviewees must also be heard who say that, according to their perception, the awareness about gender based discrimination is growing, however, there are not many intentional or organized protests by women* in Nigeria.[476]

Ultimately, it can be summarized that the different narratives of the research subjects have made clear that they all face their personal struggle of equality and recognition on a daily basis and they have all found their own ways of resistance, applied in private, in public, or at the intersections of these spheres. Accordingly, activism, protest and resistance are carried out in the individual, as well as in the collective: taking to the streets collectively, using the effect of a crowd as a means of protest or protesting spontaneously, less organized and individually. The extent to which protest can in fact be exclusively individual or is nevertheless shaped by a collective ontology should, however, be the subject of further research.

[475] This is a popular phrase from second-wave Western feminism firstly coined by Carol Hanisch in 1969. (Hanisch 2000)
[476] Akinsanya 2021; Oladejo 2021.

With this thesis and by choosing an approach that gives space to the interviewee's ideas and experiences, I hope to have done some justice to the hope that my research subjects placed in it - the hope that awareness and resistance to gender-based injustices and marginalization in Nigeria and in general would increase, and that societies expressing justice, equality and safety for all could be formed.

Bibliography

Interviews

Adebayo, Esther. 2021. Interview by author. Online. November 1, 2021.

Adeyemi, Funmi. 2021. Interview by author. Ibadan. November 17, 2021.

Akinsanya, Omolola. 2021. Interview by author. Lagos. October 30, 2021.

Arogundade, Beatrice Mobolade. 2021. Interview by author. Lagos. October 25, 2021.

Bala, Zainab. 2021. Interview by author. Abuja. November 25, 2021.

Bello, Adedoyin. 2021. Interview by author. Lagos. October 28, 2021.

Faniyi, Ololade. 2021. Interview by author. Online. October 22, 2021.

Meduteni, Lola. 2021. Interview by author. Online. November 11, 2021.

Mohammed, Aisha. 2021a. Interview by author. Abuja. November 23, 2021.

Odebode, Karimot. 2021. Interview by author. Ibadan. November 10, 2021.

Ogunsheye, Felicia Adetowun Omolara. 2021. Interview by author. Ibadan. November 17, 2021.

Oladejo, Mutiat Titilope. 2021. Interview by author. Ibadan. November 12, 2021.

Olofintuade, Ayodele. 2021. Interview by author. Ibadan. November 15, 2021.

Omolora, Oyewunmi. 2021. Interview by author. Ibadan. November 15, 2021.

Omovo, Ayoola. 2021. Interview by author. Lagos. October 28, 2021.

Ovwasa, Temmie. 2021. Interview by author. Lagos. October 18, 2021.

Primary & Secondary Sources

Abelove, Henry. 2012. *The lesbian and gay studies reader*. New York and London: Routledge.

Abubakar, Ghazali Bello. 2017. "Condition of Women in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges." Arts and *Social Sciences Journal* 8 (4): 1-3.

Adeb́owàĺé, Olúyẹ́misí. 2003. *Ìgbal̀oniǵbaàḱa*. Lagos: The Capstone Publications.

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. 2014. *We should all be feminists*. New York: Vintage.

Akintan, Adeoti Oluwatosin. 2002. "Women in Yoruba Culture: An Overview." In *Women and the Culture of Violence in Traditional Africa,* edited by Dorcas Akintunde and Helen Labeodan, 1-14. Ibadan, Nigeria: Sefer.

Alonge, Sede. 2018. "Why are African women more at risk of violence? Nigeria tells a patriarchal tale." *The Guardian*, November 26, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/26/african-women-risk-violence-nigeria-abuse.

Amadiume, Ifi. 1987. *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society.* Chicago: Zed Books.

Anderson, Amanda. 2000. "The Temptations of Aggrandized Agency: feminist histories and the horizon of modernity." *Victorian Studies* 43 (1): 43-65.

Awcock, Hannah. 2020. "New protest history: Exploring the historical geographies and geographical histories of resistance through gender, practice, and materiality." *Geography Compass* 14 (e12491): 1-10.

Bakare-Yusuf, Bibi. 2003. "Yorubas Don't Do Gender: A Critical Review of Oyeronke Oyewumi's The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses." *African Identities* 1 (1): 121-142.

Baur, Nina. 2021. "Decolonizing Social Science Methodology: Positionality in the German-Language Debate." *Historical Social Research* 46 (2): 205–243.

Bawa, Aisha Balarabe. 2016. "Gender, Identity and Change: The Case of Muslim Women in Northern Nigeria." In *Being and Becoming: Gender, Culture and Shifting Identity in Sub-Saharan Africa,* edited by Chinyere Ukpokolo, 95-110. Bamenda, Cameroon: Spears Media Press.

BBC News. 2019. “Nigerian pastor Biodun Fatoyinbo steps aside over rape allegations.” *BBC News*, July 1, 2019. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48825936.

Beer, Bettina. 2003. “Einleitung: Feldforschungsmethoden.“ In *Methoden und Techniken der Feldforschung*, edited by Bettina Beer, 9-32. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag GmbH.

Bennett, W. Lance and Alexandra Segerberg. 2012. “The Logic of Connective Action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics.” *Information, Communication & Society* 15 (5): 739-768.

Berger Gluck, Shema and Daphne Patai. 1991. *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. New York: Routledge.

Blackden, C. Mark and R. Sudharshan Canagarajah. 2003. “Women in Development.” *World Bank UNECA Expert Meeting on Pro-Poor Growth*. Kampala, Uganda.

Blackstone, Amy. 2004. “‘It’s just about being fair’: activism and the politics of volunteering in the breast cancer movement.” *Gender & Society* 18 (3): 350–368.

Bobel, Chris. 2007. “’I’m not an activist, though I’ve done a lot of it’: Doing Activism, Being Activist and the ‘Perfect Standard’ in a Contemporary Movement.” *Social Movement Studies* 6 (2): 147-159.

British Council Nigeria. 2012. “Gender in Nigeria Report 2012: improving the lives of girls and women in Nigeria.” *issues, Policies and Action*.

Castro Varela, Maria Do Mar and Nikita Dhawan. 2020. *Postkoloniale Theorie: Eine kritische Einführung*. Stuttgart: Utb GmbH.

Chilisa, Bagele. 2012. *Indigenous Research Methodologies*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Chilisa, Bagele and Gabo Ntseane. 2010. “Resisting dominant discourses: Implications of indigenous,African feminist theory and methods for gender and education research.” *Gender and Education* 22 (6): 617–632.

Chukindi, Joe. 2022. “Woman stripped, tortured after husband died during sex.” *Daily Post*, March 13, 2022. https://dailypost.ng/2022/03/13/woman-stripped-tortured-after-husband-died-during-sex/.

CIA, The World Factbook. 2017. “Maternal mortality ratio.” People and Society. Estimated in 2017. https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/#people-and-society.

Confiance News. 2020. “Women strip naked in Protest against endless Killings in Kaduna.” July 23, 2020. https://confiance.com.ng/women-stripe-naked-in-protest-of-endless-killings-in-kaduna/.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé W. 2010. “Die Intersektion von „Rasse“ und Geschlecht demarginalisieren: Eine Schwarze feministische Kritik am Antidiskriminierungsrecht, der feministischen Theorie und der antirassistischen Politik.“ In *Fokus Intersektionalität*, edited by Helma Lutz, Maria Teresa Herrera Vivar and Linda Supik, 33-54. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Criado Perez, Caroline. 2019. *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*. London: Penguin Random House.

Daase, Christopher. 2014. “Was ist Widerstand? Zum Wandel von Opposition und Dissidenz.“ *APuZ*, June 20, 2014. https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/186866/was-ist-widerstand-zum-wandel-von-opposition-und-dissidenz/.

Dark, Shayera. 2020. “Female leadership in Nigeria’s EndSARS protests was vital.” *Quartz Africa Weekly*, November 03, 2020. https://qz.com/africa/1925923/female-leadership-in-nigerias-endsars-protests-was-vital/.

Desmond, Vincent. 2020. “How Women Powered Nigeria’s #ENDSARS Movement.” *Elle*, November 18, 2020. https://www.elle.com/culture/career-politics/a34699000/endsars-nigeria-feminist-coalition/.

Dillard, Mary. 2018. “Oral History and Life History as Sources.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*.

Disney, Jennifer Leigh. 2008. *Women’s Activism and Feminist Agency in Mozambique and Nicaragua*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Eckert, Andreas. 1997. “Widerstand, Protest, und Nationalismus.“ In *Geschichte in Afrika. Einführung in Probleme und Debatten*, edited by Jan-Georg Deutsch and Albert Wirz, 129-147. Berlin: Verl. das Arabische Buch.

Ehiemen, Thomas. 2016. “Women and Social Control: An Esan Penology.” In *Esan People: Our Culture, Our Faith*, edited by Matthew Ovabor Ihensekhien. Benin City, Nigeria: Catholic Archdiocese of Benin Printing Press.

En, Boka, Tobias Humer, Marija Petricevic, Tinou Ponzer, Claudia Rauch and Katta Spiel. 2021. *Geschlechtersensible Sprache – Dialog auf Augenhöhe: Leitfaden.* Wien: Gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.

Enwereji, Ezinna E. 2008. “Indigenous Marriage Institutions and Divorce in Nigeria: The Case of Abia State of Nigeria.” *European Journal of General Medicine* 5 (3): 165-169.

Esike, S. O. 1965. “The Aba Riots of 1929.” *African Historian* 1 (3): 13.

FabWoman. 2020. “Meet The 9 Women At The Fore Front Of The #EndSARS Protest In Nigeria.” *FabWoman*, October 19, 2020. https://fabwoman.ng/nigerian-women-championing-the-endsars-protest-fabwoman/.

Falaiye, Atinuke. 2021. “Everything You Need To Know About Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti.” *Document Women*, March 12, 2021. https://documentwomen.com/funmilayo-ransome-kuti/.

Fallon, Kathleen M. and Julie Moreau. 2016. “Revisiting Repertoire Transition: Women’s Nakedness as Potent Protests in Nigeria and Kenya*.” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 21 (3): 323–340.

Falola, Toyin and Matthew M Heaton. 2008. *A History of Nigeria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Falola, Toyin. 2018. *The Toyin Falola Reader on African Culture, Nationalism, Development and Epistemologies.* Austin, TX: Pan Africa University Press.

Fenske, James. “African polygamy: Past and present.” *Journal of Development Economics* 117 (2015): 58-73.

Gänsler, Katrin. 2019. “#ArewaMeToo: Mit Hashtag gegen Missbrauch in Nordnigeria.“ *Focus*, March 12, 2019. https://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/arewametoo-mit-hashtag-gegen-missbrauch-in-nordnigeria_id_10443240.html.

George, Libby. 2021. “Nigerian women take action as rape, assault cases surge during pandemic.” *Reuters*, April 28, 2021. https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/nigerian-women-take-action-rape-assault-cases-surge-during-pandemic-2021-04-28/.

Green, Margaret M. 2012. *Igbo Village Affairs: Chiefly with Reference to the Village of Umbueke Agbaja (1947)*. New York: Routledge.

Guardian Exclusive. 2020. “How Police murdered 17-year-old Tina Ezekwe in Lagos.” *Guardian Exclusive*, May 31, 2020. https://tv.guardian.ng/guardiantv-exclusive/how-police-murdered-17-year-old-tina-ezekwe-in-lagos/.

Hanisch, Carol. 2000. “The Personal Is Political.” In *Radical Feminism: A Documentary Reader*, edited by Barbara A. Crow, 113-116. New York: NYU Press.

Harris, Jack S. 1940. “The Position of Women in a Nigerian Society.” *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences* 2 (5): 141-148.

Haunss, Sebastian. 2009. “Die Bewegungsforschung und die Protstformen sozialer Bewegungen.“ In *Kommt herunter, reiht euch ein: eine kleine Geschichte der Protestformen sozialer Bewegungen*, edited by Klaus Schönberger and Ove Sutter, 30-45. Berlin: Assoziation A.

Haynes, Suyin. 2020. “’We Are Able to Get Things Done.’ Women Are at the Forefront of Nigeria’s Police Brutality Protests.” *Time*, October 21, 2020. https://time.com/5902123/nigeria-women-endsars-protest-movement/.

Hollos, Marida. 2003. “Profiles of Infertility in Southern Nigeria: Women’s Voices from Amakiri.” *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 7 (2): 46-57.

Hooks, Bell. 1981. *Ain’t I a woman: Black women and feminism*. Boston: South End P.

Idowu, A. A. 2013. “Women’s Rights, Violence, and Gender Discrimination.” In *Gender and Power Relations in Nigeria* edited by Ronke Iyabowale Ako-Nai, 31-45. Lanham, MD: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.

Ifeka-Moller, Caroline. 1973. “”Sitting on a Man:” Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women:” A Reply to Judith Van Allen.” *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 7 (2): 317–318.

Iruoma, Kelechukwu. 2019. “Stop Touching Us’: Women Protest Against Harassment At Nigeria’s Street Markets.” *NPR*, April 11, 2019. https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2019/04/11/711388869/stop-touching-us-women-protest-against-harassment-at-nigerias-street-markets?t=1646242523963.

Izugbara, Chimaraoke Otutubikey. 1997. “Framework for Research into Sexual Harassment in Nigerian universities.” *Ibom Journal of Social Issues* 4 (1): 91-99.

Izugbara, Chimaraoke Otutubikey. 2004. “Patriarchal Ideology and Discourses of Sexuality in Nigeria.” *Understanding human sexuality seminar series* 2 (21). University of Uyo, Lagos, Nigeria: The Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

Jacob, Fatile Olufemi, Ighodalo Akhakpe, Chinyeaka Justine and Oteh Chukwuemeka Okpo. 2012. “Feminism and Political Participation in Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis.” *International Journal of Asian Social Science* 2 (7): 1077-1092.

Jefferess, David. 2008. *Postcolonial Resistance: Culture, Liberation, and Transformation.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Jeffery, Patricia. 2001. “Agency, Activism, and Agendas.” In *Women, Gender, Religion: A Reader*, edited by Elizabeth A. Castelli, 465-491. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Johnson, Cheryl. 1982. “Grass Roots Organizing. Women in Anticolonial Activity in Southwestern Nigeria.“ *African Studies Review* 25 (2/3): 137–157.

Kaplan, Temma. 1990. “Community and resistance in women’s political cultures.” *Dialectical Anthropology* 15: 259–267.

Kolawole, Mary Modupe. 2002. “Transcending incongruities: Rethinking feminism and the dynamics of identity in Africa.” *Agenda* 17 (54): 92–98.

Kossy Derrick Blog. 2021. “(Video) Jungle Justice: Nigerian lady beaten & stripped naked for stealing an iPhone 12 Pro.” *Kossy Derrick Blog*, January 16, 2021. https://www.kossyderrickent.com/2021/01/video-jungle-justice-nigerian-lady.html.

Lacey, Linda. 1986. “Women in the Development Process: Occupational Mobility of Female Migrants in Cities in Nigeria.” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies.* 17 (1): 1-18.

Lee, Catherine and Anne Logan. 2019. “Women’s agency, activism and Organisation.” *Women’s History Review* 28 (6): 831-834.

Leith-Ross, Sylvia. 1939. *African Women: A Study of the Ibo of Nigeria*. London: Faber and Faber.

Maclean, Ruth. 2021. “In Nigeria, ‘Feminist’ Was a Common Insult. Then Came the Feminist Coalition.” *New York Times*, March 12, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/12/world/africa/nigeria-feminist-coalition.html.

Madunagu, Bene E. 2008. “The Nigerian Feminist Movement: Lessons from Women in Nigeria, WIN*.” *Review of African Political Economy* 35 (118): 666–673.

Makama, Godiya Allanana. 2013. “Patriarchy and Gender Inequality in Nigeria: The Way Forward.” *European Scientific Journal* 9 (17): 115-144.

Makinde, Tami. 2020. “In Nigeria, When Will Justice Catch Up With the Present.” *Vogue*, October 27, 2020. https://www.vogue.com/article/end-sars-nigeria-movement-feminist-coalition-op-ed.

Mba, Nina Emma. 1982. *Nigerian women mobilized: Women’s political activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965*. Berkeley: Univ of California Intl.

Mbonu, Caroline. 2011. “Women in Religion, Leadership and Development: The Igbo Experience.” In *Against All Odds: The Igbo Experience in Postcolonial Nigeria,*

edited by Nwauwa Apollos and Chima Korieh. Glassboro, NJ: Goldline and Jacobs Publishing.

McGarvey, Kathleen. 2008. *Muslim and Christian Women in Dialogue: The Case of Northern Nigeria.* Bern: Peter Lang Ltd.

Meinhof, Ulrike. 1968. "Vom Protest zum Widerstand." *Dokumente einer Rebellion: 10 Jahre Konkret-Kolumnen* 5: 5.

Mikell, Gwendolyn. 1997. *African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Milazzo, Annamaria. 2014. "Son Preference, Fertility and Family Structure: Evidence from Reproductive Behavior among Nigerian Women*." *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* 6869.

Mohammed, Aisha Kabiru. 2021b. "Gender Roles in Arewa: are stereotypes holding back the region?" *Document Women*, September 1, 2021. https://documentwomen.com/gender-roles-in-arewa/.

Mohammes, Aisha Kabiru. 2021c. "#Arewametoo: A timeline of the movement breaking the silence in the north." *Document Women*, October 12, 2021. https://documentwomen.com/arewametoo-timeline/.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 2003. *Feminism without Borders*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Mordi, Kiki. 2019. "Sex for Grades: undercover inside Nigerian and Ghanaian universities." *BBC News Africa*, October 7, 2019. Documentary, 53:51.

Naija News Report. 2019. "#ArewaMeToo: Women from Northern Nigeria speak up on sexual abuse." *Naija News Report*, February 18, 2019. https://naijanewsportal.com/2019/02/18/arewametoo-women-from-northern-nigeria-speak-up-on-sexual-abuse/.

Ndubuisi, Victor. 2021. "Painful: Woman Stripped Naked, Flogged Mercilessly And Filmed (Video)." *a.naedo online*, May 5, 2021. https://www.anaedoonline.ng/2021/05/05/painful-woman-stripped-naked-flogged-mercilessly-and-filmed-video/.

News Extra 24. 2015. "Mob Strips Women Naked For Stealing in Abuja." *News Extra 24*, November 2, 2015. https://newsextra24.com/mob-strips-women-naked-for-stealing-in-abuja-pictures/.

Nigeria. 2013. *Criminal Code Act*. Part III, Chapter 21. "Offenses Against Morality." Sections 214-217.

Njoroge, Dorothy. 2016. “Broken Silence: #Bringbackourgirls and the Feminism Discourse in Nigeria.” In *Digital Activism in the Social Media Era: Critical Reflections on Emerging Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa*, edited by Bruce Mutsvairo, 311-326. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG.

Nkealah, Naomi N. 2006. “Conceptualizing feminism(s) in Africa: The challenges facing African women writers and critics.” *The English Academy Review* 23 (1): 133–141.

Nuhu, Hauwa Shaffi. 2020. “The #ArewaMeToo movement endures.” *Sahelien*, December 28, 2020. https://sahelien.com/en/the-arewametoo-movement-endures/.

Ogunyemi, Chikwenye Okonjo. 2006. “Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi’s African Womanism.” In *The womanist reader*, edited by Layli Phillips, 21-36. New York: Routledge.

Okon, E. 2007. *Rural women under siege*. Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Environmental Rights Action.

Okonjo, Kaneme. 1976. “The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Mid-Western Nigeria.” In *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, edited by Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, 45–58. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Olaoluwa, Azeezat. 2020. “End Sars protests: The Nigerian women leading the fight for change.” *BBC News*, December 01, 2020. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55104025.

Olowolagba, Fikayo. 2022. “Actress, Juliana Olayode accuses pastor of sexually assaulting her sister.” *Daily Post Nigeria*, January 26, 2022. https://dailypost.ng/2022/01/26/actress-juliana-olayode-accuses-pastor-of-sexually-assaulting-her-sister/.

Oyewumi, Oyeruke. 1997. *The Invention of Women. Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Paddock, Adam. 2018. “The Women’s War of 1929.” In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*.

Pearce, Tola Olu. 2001. “Women, the State, and Reproductive Health Issues in Nigeria.” *JENdA: a journal of culture and African women studies* 1 (1): 1-21.

Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson. 2015. *The Oral History Reader*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Pillay, Kimméra Sherrilyn. 2020. "Wifely Submission and Filial Obedience: Patriarchal Subjugation of Women and Children and Strategies of Resistance in selected Literary Texts set in Africa." PhD diss., University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

SaharaTV. n. d. "Nigerian Police Officers Try To Strip Female #EndSARS Protester Of Her Dress." YouTube. n. d. News video, 0:36. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBXQaFb9TxA.

Saleh, Ariel. 2021. "A Regenerative Ethic for a Gender Just Transition." Interview by Somali Cerise. *Institute for Global Development Magazine*, January 28, 2021. https://www.igd.unsw.edu.au/conversation-just-transition-ariel-salleh.

Salo, Elaine. 2001. "Talking about feminism in Africa." *Agenda* 16 (50): 58–63. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2001.9675993.

Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of resistance*. London: Yale University Press.

Soetan, Funmi. 2016. "African Feminisms in Nigerian Intellectual Landscape". *Gender and Career Advancement in Higher Education in Nigeria: A Labyrinth.* Ibadan, Nigeria: University of Ibadan.

Steinmetz, Katy. 2018. "The Oxford English Dictionary Added 'Trans*': Here's What the Label Means." *Time*, April 3, 2018. https://time.com/5211799/what-does-trans-asterisk-star-mean-dictionary/.

Strutton, Laine. 2015. *The New Mobilization from Below: Women's Oil Protests in the Niger Delta, Nigeria.* New York: ProQuest LLC.

Tamale, Sylvia. 2020. *Decolonization and Afro-feminism*. Wakefield: Daraja Press.

Tamuno, Tekena N. 1978. *The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase, 1894–1914.* London: Humanities Press.

Thomas, Lynn M. 2003. *Politics of the womb. Women, reproduction, and the state in Kenya*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thompson, Becky and White Women Challenging Racism. 1997. "Home/work: antiracism activism and the meaning of whiteness." In *Off White: Readings on Race, Power, and Society*, edited by Michelle Fine, Lois Weis, Linda C. Powell and Larissa Mun Wong, 354–366. New York and London: Routledge.

Toromade, Samson. 2021. “Nigeria recorded over 3,600 rape cases during COVID-19 lockdown.” *Pulse Nigeria*, April 7, 2021. https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/nigeria-recorded-over-3600-rape-cases-during-covid-19-lockdown/x5cweh3.

Turner, Terisa, and Leigh S. Brownhill. 2002. “Women’s Oil Wars in Nigeria.” *Labour, Capital and Society* 35(1): 132-164.

Turner, Terisa E. and M. O. Oshare. 1993. “Women’s Uprising against the Nigerian Oil Industry in the 1980s.” *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d’études du développement* 14 (3): 329–357.

Ukeje, Charles. 2004. “From Aba to Ugborodo: Gender identity and alternative discourse of social protest among women in the oil Delta of Nigeria.“ *Oxford Development Studies* 32 (4): 605-617.

Ukiwe, Urenna. 2018. “See Reactions to Yaba Market March.” *Guardian Nigeria*, December 16, 2018. https://guardian.ng/life/whatsnew-entertainment-celebrity-gist-and-so-on/see-reactions-to-yaba-market-march/.

Ukpokolo, Chinyere. 2020. “Women in Nigeria.“ *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*.

Unah, Linus. 2019. “‘Normalised but not normal’: Nigerian women call out gropers and catcallers.” *The Guardian*, February 4, 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/feb/04/normalised-but-not-normal-nigerian-women-call-out-gropers-and-catcallers-market-march-movement-yaba-market-lagos.

Uwaisu, Idris. 2019. “Street Debate: How #ArewaMeToo shed light on sexual abuse in Nigeria.” *Deutsche Welle*, October 07, 2019. https://www.dw.com/en/street-debate-how-arewametoo-shed-light-on-sexual-abuse-in-nigeria/a-50705429.

van Allen, Judith. 1972. “”Sitting on a Man”: Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women.” *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 6 (2): 165–181.

Wangila, Mary Nyangweso. 2013. “Western Religions and Female Sexuality: Engaging Dualistic Thinking in Attitudes to African Women’s Sexuality.” In *Women, Gender, and Sexualities in Africa*, edited by Toyin Falola and Nana Akua Amponsah, 101-122. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.

Wohlgemuth, Marcus. 2010. “Was ist Protest? Abhandlung über den Begriff und über unterschiedliche Ausprägungen von Protest.“ Intermediate diploma paper, University of Vienna.

Young, Robert J. C. 2016. *Postcolonialism. An Historical Introduction*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Zurbriggen, Eileen L., Rebecca L. Collins, Sharon Lamb, Tomi-Ann Roberts, Deborah L. Tolman, L. Monique Ward and Jeanne Blake. 2007. "Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls." *American Psychological Association*. http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report-full.pdf.