AN EXPLORATION OF GENDER ROLE ATTITUDES AMONG AFRICAN
STUDENTS AT OHIO UNIVERSITY

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This exploratory study examines the gender role attitudes of African students at Ohio University. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect data. Western and nonwestern scholars have extensively examined gender and its many attributes and their advances have established that gender role attitudes are shaped by a variety of factors such as socialization, marital and professional status. The findings of this study confirm that gender role attitudes are shaped not only by socialization but they are also changed by cultural and contextual circumstances.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

In the last decade, the number of international students studying in the United States and in other western countries has dramatically increased. It is estimated that approximately 1.8 million international students are attending educational institutions around the world (Arthur 2004: 1). These students travel abroad to gain an education but also to learn how to live and work with people from different parts of the world (OECD 2004: 19). However, most of the literature on these international students focuses on their capacity to generate revenue for their receiving countries as well as their potential to become the future leaders of their homelands upon their return (OECD 2004 and Arthur 2004). Therefore, relatively few studies have examined the experiences of these students in their host countries and the impact of their temporary relocation on their way of thinking.

The goal of this study is to examine gender role attitudes held by African men and women who are currently studying at Ohio University. By examining these students’ views on gender roles, we can begin to understand the cultural and social norms and attitudes that can advance the spread of gender equality across the African continent. Furthermore, this investigation hopes to find out whether coming to the United States has any impact on these men’s and women’s perceptions of gender roles. There is a growing literature that examines the impact of permanent relocation on gender relations. However, this scholarship focuses on immigrant populations that have moved to the United States for employment purposes (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001 and George 2005). Thus, although some substantial efforts have been made to understand how traversing from one culture
to another affects gender relations, there is a significant gap in the literature that needs to be filled in order to understand the impact of educational exchange on students’ perceptions of gender roles. By learning about what these men and women think are the appropriate roles of men and women in society, this study can contribute to our broader understanding of the cultural norms and beliefs that sustain or challenge the inequality between men and women. Such knowledge can only be beneficial since the United Nations recently stressed the need to promote gender equality, as a means to eradicate poverty. Thus, by revealing the beliefs held by these educated men and women from African countries, this study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the role of beliefs and attitudes in reproducing gender norms that support or deny men and women equal rights, autonomy, and opportunities.
Literature Review

In the following chapter, I will examine the attempts made by various scholars in the United States to explain the reasons men and women are perceived differently and assume different roles and responsibilities in virtually all aspects of social life. Second, I will evaluate the empirical evidence offered to support these various theoretical arguments about gender and gender roles attitudes. Third, I will examine gender from a Third World perspective as well as from an African perspective to narrow my focus. This examination will reveal that gender, as a distributive mechanism that attaches different attributes and roles to men and women, is a powerful social force that shapes social reality and sustains inequality between men and women. Throughout this analysis, different perspectives will be discussed to reveal the challenge many scholars face as they ask the questions why and how social processes, standards and opportunities differ systematically for men and women. A large number of social scientists believe that men and women are equally entitled to all the opportunities, rewards and responsibilities that each society makes available to its members, and thus they recognize the need to promote change. However, while they agree on what needs to be achieved, they highly disagree in their interpretations and recommendations on how to promote this change. Some social scientists challenge the gender hierarchy itself while others question the standards and cultural norms that are used to justify the hierarchy between men and women.

Gender Roles

The topic of gender roles has received a lot of scholarly attention since 1960’s. Some of the earliest authors on the subject defined gender roles as roles that develop out
of gender identity and which guide men and women in socially defined sex-appropriate behavior (Lipman-Blumen and Tickamyer 1975). Since then, more attempts have been made to try to understand why men and women assume different roles and positions across cultures, historical time and over the life course. Various explanations have been formulated to address sex role differentiation. Some researchers believe that the notion of gender roles is a universal social fact that only varies in degree, over time, place and group (Lipman-Bluman and Tickamyer 1975). But in order to understand the polarization of the roles assigned to men and women, there is a need to examine the concept of gender in more in-depth.

**What is Gender?**

Cynthia F. Epstein (1988) defines gender as the distinctive qualities that are culturally created for men and women to sustain social order in every society. She maintains that through folk transmissions, men and women are taught to engage in different forms of activities, dress differently and learn different skills in order to meet culturally standardized expectations. While Epstein (1988) perceives gender to consist of culturally created characteristics for men and women, Risman (1998) sees gender as a social structure that organizes the social world but is seldom noticed because it is perceived to be natural and thus, it is often taken for granted.

Various scholars suggests that Margaret Mead’s (1935) well known study among the Tribes of New Guinea was the first attempt to illustrate that the roles men and women assume in society are not biologically determined but are instead culturally defined (Lipman-Bluman and Tickamyer 1975; Lindsey 1990; Bonvillain, 1998). Thus, after
Mead’s findings, social scientists begun to move away from the tendency to assume that the traits considered feminine and masculine were universal and biologically set.

Ferree et al. (1999) cite Hess and Ferree (1987) for identifying the three stages in the study of men and women since the 1970’s. In the first stage, the emphasis was on sex differences and their origin in biology. In the second stage, the focus shifted to individual-level sex roles and socialization. In the last stage, gender was recognized to be an organizing principle in all social systems that shapes identities, perception, interactional practices and forms of social institutions (Ferree et al. 1999). The rejection of biologically based arguments led to the concept of gender which, instead of examining men and women in terms of their anatomical and chromosomal differences, sought to understand the social and cultural meanings that define the appropriate roles and characteristics for men and women (Kimmel 2002). According to Lorber (2005) although physiological differences between men and women exist and should not be ignored “these differences are not socially meaningful until social practices transform them into social facts” (Lorber 2005: 21). Similarly, West and Zimmerman (1987) suggest that men are taught to be masculine and women are taught to be feminine and their performance of their gendered scripts becomes the criteria from which their identity and competence as men and women are judged.

The difficulty in trying to examine gender resides in the fact that gender categories are neither fixed by nature nor simply imposed by outside forces (Connell 2004 and Butler 1999). In other words, although men and women follow a script that contains the norms of their particular cultures, these norms are always changing due to factors such as technological changes, industrialization and globalization. Furthermore,
the meaning behind categories such as man and woman are produced through discourse. Thus, some scholars suggest that gender is open to change as social, cultural and political transformations affect the meaning of its categories.

In addition, gender is portrayed to be changeable by many scholars who argue that it is neither “a set trait nor a role but the product of social doings of some sort” (West and Zimmerman 1999: 152). In their concept of “Doing Gender”, West and Zimmerman (1999:152) bring up the notion that “gender is not something one is, but rather something one does in interaction with others.” For instance, women perform more household duties not because housework is considered “women’s work”, but because when women engage in household chores they do so to exhibit their nature as women. Thus, for both men and women, it becomes essential to “do gender” appropriately throughout their daily activities because doing so confirms their identities as men and women. This suggests that those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished, while those who perform it well are reassured that “there is an essentialism of gender identity after all” (Butler 1988: 424).

However, Collins (1990) criticizes this performance-based approach to gender because it fails to acknowledge the role of power in gender relations. Collins’ main disagreement with West and Fenstermaker, (2000) is that one cannot analyze any form of oppression without studying their historical and political meaning. Furthermore, both Collins (1990) and hooks (2000) assert the need to examine gender, race and class as multiple systems of oppression that need to be addressed simultaneously. Although power plays an important role in shaping gender relations, its contribution is not always
visible. For instance, Brush (2003) explains, “without the corrective of a gender lens, the evidence and effects of male dominance in politics are invisible” (Brush 2003: 16).

To illustrate how gender is deeply embedded in human perception, Bem (1993) underlines three distinctive “lenses of gender” that shape how people perceive their reality. The first lens, androcentrism assumes that men are superior to women and male experience is the standard while female experience deviates from that norm. The second lens, gender polarization perceives men and women to be fundamentally different in all aspects of human experiences, from the way they experience emotions to their mode of dressing. The third lens is biological essentialism, which legitimizes these assumptions by treating them as natural. These three hidden assumptions have significant impact on how men and women perceive their reality because they are embedded in cultural discourses, social institutions and individual psyches and as a result, they reproduce and sustain the inequality between men and women.

Simone de Beauvoir (1949) was one of the pioneers to bring up the issue of male superiority when she asserted that although masculine and feminine are used symmetrically, the relationship between men and women is not based on the notion of separate but equal. She remarked that man is used to designate human beings in general “where as woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria without reciprocity” (Beauvoir 1949: 101). Other theorists point out another important aspect of gender which is that the relationship between men and women should not be perceived in terms of “sameness” or “difference” because placing equality and difference in an antithetical relationship leads to an impasse because it suggests that sameness is the only
ground on which equality can be claimed yet, men and women are not identical (Bem 1993 and Scott 1988).

Most of the literature on gender describes a social order in which women are discriminated against and denied access to economic and political resources by cultural, religious and political policies and practices, because of their inferior position in society (Bem 1993; Epstein, 1988; Lorber, 2001). However, some theorists remind us that the focus should not be on trying to blame men for subordinating women. For instance, hooks (2000) makes it clear that the issue of gender is not about men against women, but rather it is about recognizing the powerful oppressive system, which hooks calls sexism, that has been institutionalized to promote male domination. Patriarchy is another term used to describe male superiority and although it is a difficult concept to understand, Hartmann (1981) attempts to define it as “a set of social relations between men and women, which have a material base and which, though hierarchal, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women” (Hartmann 1981: 211).

While scholars such as Hartmann (1981) and Bonvillain (1998) emphasize the link between patriarchy and economic forms of productions, they nonetheless recognize that patriarchy operates in all spheres of social life, from the economy to the household, patriarchal norms are taught and enforced. Although patriarchy is a powerful social force that creates gender inequality, some scholars argue that patriarchal relations are neither static nor universal, but instead they are based on a multiplicity of factors that are constantly contested and therefore can be changed through action and policy (Beneria 2001; hooks 2000; George 2005).
The new generation of gender scholars also recognize “agency” which refers to how individuals and collective social movements resist and transform the social order (Ferree et al. 1999). Nonetheless, challenging the social order in which men and women are ranked is a difficult task because in most societies, men are ranked higher than women, thus as a group, they gain a lot from maintaining the status quo (Boserup 1987; Epstein 1988). For instance, Amato and Booth (1995) suggested in their study that when wives adopt less traditional gender attitudes and begin to press their husbands to perform more housework and childcare, they encounter resistance from their husbands who benefit from a social order in which they are not required to perform household tasks. However, not all evidence points to a male reluctance to changing the ranking system between men and women. In the next section, I will examine empirical evidence to show how the gender system is sustained and contested through gender role attitudes that simultaneously reject while still supporting this binary system.

**Changes in Gender Role Attitudes**

A large number of studies have suggested that there is growing support for less restrictive views of gender roles in American society (Brooks and Bolzendahl 2004; Brewster and Padavic 2000; Thornton et al. 1983). This trend toward a more egalitarian conception of men’s and women’s roles is associated with increased participation of women in the workforce as well as women’s high educational attainment (Thornton et al. 1983; Smith-Lovin and Tickamyer 1978). Other factors identified as contributing to the changes in gender role attitudes are marital status and cohort replacement processes (Brooks and Bolzendahl 2004). However, it is difficult to know for sure whether
women’s workforce participation leads to more egalitarian attitudes or if women with egalitarian attitudes invest more in education and employment. For instance, Kiecolt and Acock, (1988) explain that gender role attitudes contribute to the decision women make to work outside the home, yet, at the same time, employment liberalizes gender role attitudes.

However, some studies do confirm that as women increasingly enter the labor force, they are exposed to nontraditional roles and as a result their support for nontraditional gender roles is greater compared to full time homemakers (Cassidy and Warren 1996; Tallichet and Willits 1986). It is surprising however, that even when women work outside the home and support nontraditional gender roles, they continue to perform the majority of housework (Hochschild 1989 and Shelton and John 1996). To explain this ambiguity, Greenstein (1996) argued that an individual’s gender ideology functions as a lens through which inequalities in the division of household labor are perceived. Thus, if a woman holds a traditional gender ideology, she might not perceive the unequal share of work in the household as unfair. Similarly, Pina and Bengston (1993) found that what women define as satisfactory help from their husbands varies depending on their beliefs regarding the appropriate roles for men and women. For instance, a traditional wife may accept her husband’s lack of involvement in the household chores by justifying it, as “husbands are not well suited to do housework” (Pina and Bengston 1993: 910).

By legitimizing this inequality as natural, traditional wives do not experience detrimental effects of unequal family work or feel unsupported by husbands who do very little housework. In contrast, other studies found that ideological variables explained very
little of the variation in wives’ perceptions of fairness and instead identified a strong
association between perceived fairness and the extent to which wives believe their labor
was appreciated (Blair and Johnson 1992).

The studies mentioned above examined the factors that determine how gender
inequality is perceived in the household, other studies however, have investigated
whether the trend toward a liberalization of gender beliefs will continue to increase. As
stated earlier, there has been a tremendous increase in egalitarian beliefs regarding gender
roles in the United States since the 1960’s. However, the pace toward less conservative
attitudes about gender roles has slowed down since the 1990’s (Cherlin and Walters
1981; Brewster and Padavic 2000). One suggestion offered for this slowed pace in
change of gender role attitudes is a decline in the quality of childcare and the rise to
prominence of political candidates with conservative views (Brewster and Padavic 2000).
However, such connections cannot be confirmed because no substantial evidence was
found for the association between changes in gender role attitudes and changes in
political attitudes along a liberal versus conservative dimension.

While it is important to identify factors that trigger changes in gender role
attitudes, it is even more important to examine the context within which these attitudes
are formed. For instance, some studies have suggested that gender role attitudes are
shaped by systems of production and reproduction, which create distinct life experiences
(Dugger 1988). For instance, historically, African American women have always had to
work, thus their conception of womanhood includes relatively high levels of self-reliance
and autonomy (Dugger 1988). However, Hartmann (1983) argues that since white
women have increasingly entered the labor force, their perceptions of gender roles are slowly resembling those of black women.

Another important factor that has been crucial in shaping gender role attitudes is the extent to which women depend on their husbands economically (Baxter and Kane 1995). In a study conducted in five Western countries, Baxter and Kane (1995) found that when women depend on their husbands for economic resources, they are less likely to develop “gender attitudes that diverge from men’s” (Baxter and Kane 1995: 194). It appears that women’s dependence on men creates a barrier to gender equality by restricting women’s opportunities and autonomy.

One cannot attempt to understand how gender role attitudes are constructed without examining the role of childhood socialization. Many social scientists studying gender role attitudes consider socialization crucial in transferring the norms and values from one generation to the next (Thomson, McLanahan and Curtin 1992; Moen, Erickson and Dempster-McClain 1997). For instance, Moen et al. (1997) found that adult daughters were influenced by their mothers’ earlier attitudes and behaviors. These authors make an important distinction between what parents do and what they say. For instance, a traditional homemaker may encourage her daughters to pursue educational and career goals and thus, in some way discourage them from identifying with her role as a homemaker. Furthermore, socialization can occur indirectly through the provision of resources and opportunities during and after childhood. Furthermore, Kiecolt and Acock (1988) suggest another way that socialization operates. In their study, they explain that the type of family structure (such as single parent household) that an individual grows up in, has long term effects on that person’s gender role attitudes.
Although these studies above emphasize the role of socialization, other studies demonstrate that gender role attitudes acquired through childhood socialization are changed and transformed during one’s life experiences (Liao and Cai 1995). For instance, Liao and Cai (1995) cite Gerson (1985) who explained that the stages of life that a person goes through have tremendous impact on their gender role attitudes. Similarly, Moen, et al. (1997) recognizes the importance of both adult experiences and childhood experiences in shaping gender role attitudes. These authors find in their study that although the gender ideology of adult daughters was influenced by their mothers’ attitudes, their work role was shaped by their own life experiences.

One important deficit in the literature on gender roles is the absence of men. According to Blee and Tickamyer (1995) very little research has examined how the attitudes of men and boys are formed and changed over time. However, there is a growing literature on male gender role attitudes, which indicates that there is no one standard of masculinity to which all men are taught to aspire. For instance, Connell (2002) explains that a man is not born masculine but rather “acquires and enacts masculinity, and so becomes a man” (Connell 2002: 4). As one of the pioneer writers on masculinity, Connell (1995) explains that masculinity is a relational concept that only exists in contrast with femininity. In other words, masculinity and femininity would not exist in a “culture that does not treat women and men as bearers of polarized character types” (Connell 1995: 68). Furthermore, Connell (1995) uses the concept “hegemony” to explain that male dominance and female subordination are legitimized through cultural practices and beliefs that embody patriarchy. However, Connell et al. (2005) remind us that men and masculinities cannot be understood exclusively in relation to gender, but
rather the “gendering of men exists in the intersection with other social divisions and social differences” (Connell et al. 2005: 3). In their groundbreaking attempt to conduct an overview analysis of this growing literature on masculinity, Connell et al. (2005) explore the social construction of masculinity by examining how it is constructed within specific social settings.

Other scholars suggest that masculinity is constructed differently depending on social class. For instance Pyke (1996) suggests in his study, that upper-class men are excused from performing family work because their successful careers and high incomes justify their absence in domestic and family work. Lower-class husbands on the other hand, earn less money and have no justification for not doing housework, yet they rely on “rigid gender divisions of labor in the home as a means of producing masculinity” (Pyke 1996: 541). According to this scholar, “egalitarian masculinity may not be appreciated by wives who view it as a threat to their feminine identity” (Pyke 1996: 542), particularly upper-class wives who expect their husbands to concentrate more on their careers and ambitions and live up to role of provider (Pyke 1996).

Similarly, Holter (2005) in his discussion about masculinity explains that although men benefit from gender inequality as a group, a closer look reveals that there are great variations among men concerning their experience with gender. This author suggests that the gender order is not fixed, but rather inequality consists of a varying relationship whereby women are not always disadvantaged by gender inequality, the same way men do not always benefit from it. The overall argument offered by most scholars is that research on men and masculinities needs to take into consideration
differences of age, class, ethnicity and race (Connell et al. 2005) as well as the effects of
global forces on local constructions of masculinity (Morrell and Swart 2005).

Many countries across the globe are experiencing the pressure to alter their local
gender order in order to participate in the global economy (Connell et al. 2005).
Furthermore, the emancipation of women in education and employment and the
increasing inability to rely on a male wage, challenge masculinity. These transformations
are met with resistance as they threaten to disrupt local gender arrangements. For
instance, Silberschmidt (2001) suggests that the socioeconomic changes in rural Kenya
and Urban Dar-es-Salaam, have created a situation whereby men are no longer able to
fulfill their responsibilities as heads of households and breadwinners, and as a result
many of “them suffer from feelings of inadequacy and lack of self-esteem” (Silberschmidt

Furthermore, this failure to live up to their notion of masculinity has led many
men to react by adopting certain behaviors that are supposed to reaffirm their identities as
men (Silberschmidt 2001). This author suggests that, “many men seem to be yielding to
an exaggerated owner/macho behavior and physical violence against women”
(Silberschmidt 2001: 665). However, Connell (2005) indicates that in spite of these
attempts to reaffirm local gender hierarchies, there is a growing acceptance of changes in
the gender order.

From this brief overview of the literature on gender role attitudes, it is clear that
gender role perceptions deserve the scholarly attention that has been given to them. They
shape the way men and women perceive themselves and behave within different contexts
and social settings. For example, Kaufman (2000) explains that gender role attitudes
matter greatly because “they signify the internalization of role responsibility, which goes beyond acting out a role” (Kaufman 2000:129). At the same time, Kaufman (2000) reminds us that it is difficult to identify the effects of attitudes on behavior because behavior also influences attitudes.

For instance, divorced women are described to have more nontraditional attitudes than married women do, but it is not clear whether their attitudes become less traditional following a divorce or if women with less traditional attitudes are more likely to perceive divorce as an acceptable choice. Nevertheless, it is crucial to understand how gender role attitudes are formed particularly when addressing household labor because the performance of this labor is highly shaped by what men and women think about the appropriate roles of men and women.

**Domestic Labor**

Household labor has received a lot of scholarly attention since the increase of women in paid labor force. Many social scientists have tried to investigate how housework is performed, who performs it and the negotiations and conflicts that occur between men and women as they attempt to understand their “roles” within this highly gendered terrain. According to Bianchi et al. (2000) three theoretical perspectives dominate the literature on domestic labor allocation. These perspectives are: (1) the time availability perspective, (2) the relative resources perspective, and (3) the gender perspective. The first two perspectives suggest that time and resources determine the amount of domestic labor performed by husband and wife. In other words, since men are generally encouraged more to invest in their professional careers, both the time they
spend away from home and the higher resources they obtain from their work release them from the responsibilities at home. The last perspective indicates that “housework is a symbolic enactment of gender relations” (Bianchi 2000: 194). This gender perspective also suggests that attitudes and beliefs about the appropriate roles for men and women cannot be ignored in the discussion about domestic labor because they also determine the amount and the type of housework men and women perform in the household.

For instance, Shaw (1988) argues that men and women define household labor differently because women, particularly employed women perceive housework as a “second job” or more recently a “second shift” (Hochschild 1989) which they are socially obligated to fulfill. Thus, although men also perform distinct forms of housework, their participation is less enforced, because housework is still perceived to be a woman’s work (Shelton and Firestone 1989 and Greenstein 1996). These scholars suggest that women continue to assume a disproportionate share of housework out of social obligations, while “men have more freedom of choice in their participation of housework activities” (Shaw 1988).

Many studies have consistently illustrated sex differences in spheres of responsibilities for men and women within the household (Garrison and Miller 1982; Shelton and John 1996). Women are responsible for a vast array of household tasks that need to be carried out repeatedly (i.e. cooking, laundry, cleaning), while men are only required to perform seasonal or periodic work such as household repairs and gardening. Due to this unequal division of labor in the household, an earlier study by Schooler et al.(1984) suggested that housework caused more psychological stress to women because they spend more time performing it and their activities are much broader in scope.
compared to men who “are held responsible for little housework” (Schooler et al.1984:122).

Even though married mothers are more likely today to be full time employed compared to the 1970’s, the division of household labor has not changed much. Granted, men have slightly increased their hourly contribution to housework, but women still do twice as much routine housework as men (Coltrane 2000). To explain this persisting inequality in task allocation, Greenstein (1996) explains that gender ideology, which he describes as “how a person identifies herself or himself with regard to marital and family roles that are traditionally linked to gender” (Greenstein 1996: 586), shape this gender division of household labor. In other words, the household is the arena in which husbands and wives behave in ways that validate their identities as males and females. For instance, Blair and Lichter (1991), explain that husbands who hold more egalitarian gender ideologies perform more housework than traditionally oriented husbands. Thus, both men and women rely on their beliefs about gender and marital roles to determine the amount of housework they should perform. Hochschild (1989) also suggests that when a husband and wife share the same gender ideologies, they are much happier because housework participation or lack of it, meets both their expectations.

Another important study that illustrates the gendered nature of household labor was conducted by Gupta, (1999) one the first researchers to conduct a longitudinal study on the effect of marital status on women’s and men’s performance of housework. This study found that men reduce their housework time when they enter marital unions, but women on the other hand, increase theirs. Yet, after the dissolution of marriage, performance of housework is substantially higher for men, until they enter new unions
and subsequently reduce the amount of time they spend on household labor again. Other studies suggest that “doing gender” is enhanced in couple households. For instance, South and Spitze (1994) examined the performance of housework among single, divorced and widowed individuals and concluded that men and women display more of their gender through housework when in the presence of each other. In other words, the dynamics of “doing gender” are increased in couple households.

What is more surprising, however, is a study by DeMeis and Perkins (1996) which found that even young adults who were raised in the context where gender equality was being promoted adopted traditional gender roles upon marriage. A more recent study by Kroska (2004) supports these findings by suggesting that despite the roles of gender ideology, relative resources, and available time in predicting men’s and women’s share of domestic work, domestic tasks are essentially gendered because “wives do a large share of the feminine chores, whereas husbands do a greater proportion of the masculine work” (Kroska 2004: 923). It appears that as men and women form unions, the pressure to adopt traditional gender roles increases.

Although these studies mentioned above illustrate that context is central to understanding the gender division of household labor, other studies show that childhood socialization plays an important role in shaping the way individuals display gender (Cunningham 2001). These studies recognize the importance of context-based explanations, but they also point out that family experiences during childhood “shape individuals’ understanding of the symbolic meaning of particular behaviors for identifying and enacting gender” (Cunningham 2001:234). Likewise, Spitze and Ward (1994) found in their study that among adult children who live with their parents,
daughters perform more housework than sons. These researchers suggest that daughters carry out more household duties than sons because their behavior is consistent with a general pattern of female responsibility for family related activities. However, some studies suggest that as more men share the provider role with women, the trend toward a more egalitarian household division of labor will continue to increase and more couples will perform non-gendered family roles (Zuo and Tang 2000). Yet, other scholars draw attention to the way women’s labor participation is defined. For instance, Wilkie (1993) found in his study that men were supportive of their wives’ economic participation as long as it was defined as earning extra cash as opposed to contributing in a substantial way to family welfare. It seems that men are unwilling to support women’s employment when it is perceived to be a threat to their status of provider.

Current explanations of gender inequality in the home attempt to include all the contributing factors that shape the gender division of household labor by examining gender ideology, life course situations, employment, and marital status of men and women. However, there is a growing critique that the majority of these studies are seldom applied to other ethnic groups (Orbuch and Eyster 1997). These scholars explain that ethnicity is an important variable because it shapes the meaning and experience of household roles and responsibilities (Kane 2002). For instance, Black women may hesitate to demand equal household participation from their husbands because of the “potential for undermining their husbands’ lower structural status and earning power” (Orbuch and Eyster 1997:305). At the same time, Black couples are reported to be more egalitarian than White couples because Black women are less economically dependent on their husbands than White women (Kane and Sanchez 1994).
Measuring household labor remains a major difficulty because housework is still not defined explicitly. For instance, Coltrane (2000) has critiqued the exclusion of activities pertaining to child minding and other forms of emotional labor in the study of household labor. Coltrane (2000) and Shelton and John, (1996) argue that this gap in the literature is a major shortcoming, because household labor cannot be fully understood without including invisible types of activities involved in this labor, such as emotional labor and care work.

**Emotional Labor**

Emotional labor is a term coined by Hochschild (1983) to define work “that requires one to induce or suppress feelings in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (Hochschild 1983: 7). Hochschild (1983) applied this concept within the household by explaining that although interactions within the family appear devoid of emotion work, they actually require more emotion work because “the deeper the bond, the more emotion work and the more unconscious we are of it” (Hochschild 1983: 68). In the study of gender division of household labor, emotional labor is crucial because it plays an important role in the way men and women have been assigned different roles (Erickson 2005).

Whether in the household or in the workplace, women are always selected for tasks that require emotional displays of friendliness and warmth, thus, most researchers agree that emotional labor is gendered because its characteristics are associated with femininity (Erickson 2005 and DeVault 1999). Erickson (1999) further explains that women are socially expected to perform emotion work because “femininity continues to
be conceptualized in ways that emphasize care, concern and connection to others” (Erickson 2005: 34). This suggests that women may not question the unequal distribution of emotional labor because performing this work is crucial to how they construct their gendered self.

One significant example that illustrates how emotion work reveals cultural assumptions about the roles of men and women is provided by DeVault (1991) in her acclaimed book *Feeding the Family*. Through detailed descriptions of how women carefully plan and execute their food preparations, this author suggests that preparing meals is a valuable task because “catering to a man is built into a cultural definition of woman” (DeVault 1991:161). Although cooking appears simply a matter of putting a meal together, it involves a lot of planning and the whole process has a deeper meaning because it reflects women’s unconscious attempt to exhibit their femininity through this task.

One form of emotional labor that is particularly gendered is care work. Himmelweit (1999) defines care work as, “activity of catering directly to another person’s needs, both physical and emotional” (Himmelweit 1999, p. 29). According to DeVault (1999) care work is a highly debated topic, because scholars are not sure whether women choose to meet the physical and emotional needs of their loved ones because they are pre-disposed to do such work, or whether they are socialized to care because they are less powerful than men and thus, need to “exchange caring for material support” (DeVault 1999:10). Himmelweit (1999) suggests that women were assigned care work after the institutional separation between work and family which enabled the ideal male worker to concentrate on his paid labor, while his ideal wife took care of all
the family’s emotional and physical needs. It appears that this arrangement was convenient because it clearly set the boundaries between work performed for a price and care work performed for its presumed intrinsic reward.

Some scholars believe that care work needs to be redefined before we can address how it can be shared by men and women (DeVault 1999). Others however, argue that the dichotomy in which men and workplace are placed on one side while women and care work are placed on the opposite side is what needs to change so that “care can cross the boundary into the workplace, or work can be recognized in the caring activities that go on in the home” (Himmelweit 1999: 28).

The literature on gender is vast and it continues to grow as new and old ideas are merged to account for historical and cultural changes. Furthermore, depending on what school of thought one adopts, the social construction of gender is perceived differently. As discussed in the review, some scholars assert that gender is structural while others believe that it is contextual. This literature on gender is further displayed to be divided on what needs to be done to address the gender polarization. Some of this reviewed scholarship questioned the concept of gender itself while other writings simply advocate for equal rights and access to resources between men and women. This lack of agreement does not however imply that scholars have failed to understand what gender is, how it is produced, and its overall impact on men and women. This disagreement only reflects the complex nature of gender. In the next section, I will examine gender from a nonwestern perspective in an attempt to understand how Third World countries have addressed this topic. By examining gender from a nonwestern perspective a broader understanding of
gender can be gained and a foundation can be built from which to analyze African
students’ attitudes and perceptions on gender roles.

**Gender From A Nonwestern Perspective**

Western feminists are recognized by nonwestern feminists to be the pioneers in
the study of gender. However, according to many nonwestern scholars, their advances
cannot be generalized because gender cannot be abstracted from the social context and
other systems of hierarchy (Oyewumi 2004). These nonwestern scholars critique the
tendency to examine nonwestern women using Western feminist concepts (Mikell 1995
and Oyewumi 2004) because they argue that gender needs to be examined in the cultural
and historical contexts from which it is experienced (Mohanty 2003). For instance,
concepts such as sexual division of labor, family and patriarchy cannot explain the status
of women, unless their cultural and historical contexts are specified.

Therefore, current nonwestern feminist scholars seek to formulate a gender
perspective that takes into consideration the needs and concerns of the women in
nonwestern countries (Nnaemeka 2003). However, through this endeavor, nonwestern
scholars face the challenge of trying to critique the traditions and beliefs that oppress
nonwestern women while at the same time they seek to affirm the values and traditions of
their once colonized cultures (Narayan 1998 and Mikell 1995). One of their main
concerns is that revealing the oppression women in the Third World face may
unconsciously reinforce, Western prejudices about the superiority of Western cultures
(Narayan 1998 and Lorber 2002). Furthermore, most of these nonwestern scholars are
suspicious of “Western feminism” which they perceive to be masking Western hegemony
(Mikell 1995). For instance, Nnaemeka (2003) cautions African women to remember that when other countries intervene to help them “often their interventions (moral or otherwise) are not aimed at saving the victims but rather at transforming them in the image of the interventionists” (Nnaemeka 2003:373).

However, according to Mohanty (2003) the most important challenge nonwestern feminists face is to avoid grouping Third World women in one homogeneous group that presumably shares similar interests and concerns. She argues that even among Third World women, there are tremendous variations in their experience of gender-based oppression. Similarly, Lewis (2004) explains that African gender research has been overly preoccupied with distinguishing itself from the West, which has inadvertently sustained the notion that “Africa is everything the West is not” (Lewis 2004:30). Although this scholar recognizes the value of examining Africa’s unique situation in global politics and culture, she also suggests that such analysis becomes problematic when, in its attempt to contest Western dominance, it portrays Africa as “antithetical to the West” (Lewis 2004:31). The danger of creating these opposing depictions between the West and Third World countries is that it privileges one group over another (Mohanty 2003).

In the midst of these challenges, a growing number of scholars are working to understand the dynamics of gender in various developing countries. Some authors emphasize the role of colonialism in creating the disparities between men and women while others acknowledge that patriarchy existed before the colonial period. Thus, even among nonwestern feminists there are many variations as to how gender is
perceived. Through in-depth analyses of these nonwestern perspectives, gender relations will be portrayed in a different light.

Post-Colonial Feminism

Post-Colonial Feminist perspective examines the exploitation of women in developing countries located in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (Lorber 2001). This perspective highlights the influence of colonialism in shaping the nature of gender hierarchy in those countries. For instance, Lorber (2001) cites Bose and Belen (1989) for their suggestion that before colonialism, women’s participation was equal to that of men in productive activities; however, when the colonials arrived they imposed “their European patriarchal relationships that presupposed the universal subordination of women” (Lorber 2001:58). This perspective, which accuses colonial regimes for the subordination of women in post-colonial countries, is refuted by some scholars who explain that “we cannot assume what the form and content pre-colonial gender relations took, but we can certainly argue that they varied depending on the class/ethnic/position of particular women and men in society” (Mbilinyi 1992:41). This opposing view suggests the need to explore the stories of the slaves, commoners and the colonized, in order to develop a full understanding of pre-colonial gender relations in different periods and locations.

Other scholars argue that although colonization might have played an important role in intensifying the inequality between men and women, patriarchal relations were present before the arrival of colonists (Mikell 1995). For instance, Tamale (1999) indicates that in Uganda as well as in many other African societies, patriarchy existed
prior to the colonial period but the only difference is it took on a different form when the colonials came. Tamale (1999) further asserts that in pre-colonial Uganda, men dominated the political, social and economic positions however; “a woman carrying out her duty was held in just as high esteem as a man carrying out his and the nature of the occupation was of no moment” (Tamale 1999: 7). Therefore, although African politicians sometime justify the exploitation of women in their countries as customary, many scholars argue that gender was not a significant category of organizing social life in indigenous African societies (Mikell 1997 and Cornwall 2005).

Many nonwestern scholars believe that the initial attempts made by anthropologists to examine African societies used Western concepts hence their failure to recognize that although women’s status in those societies differ from that of men, the difference was not hierarchal in nature (Sudarkasa 2005). Furthermore, Oyewumi (2004) explains in her “African critique” that much of what is suggested by feminism around the world is grounded on the Western nuclear family, which consists of a subordinated wife, patriarchal husband and children. This scholar argues that the nuclear family is not a universal family structure because among the Yoruba in Nigeria for instance, “the fundamental organizing principle is seniority based on relative age and not gender” (Oyewumi 2004:7).

Similarly, other scholars provide more examples to illustrate the complex nature of the status of women in Africa. Sudarkasa (2005) and Steady (2004) argue that in many African societies, power is not exclusively found in political institutions, but other forms of social institutions can confer power to individuals. For instance, women in Sierra Leone and Liberia derive power from their roles as mothers as well as their membership
in female secret societies. Therefore, these authors critique the tendency of most gender scholars to see power in gender relations, “ignoring power relations based on race, class, ethnicity, age and so forth” (Steady 2004: 48). In addition, these scholars go as far as to challenge the concept of gender itself because they claim it fails to recognize the complex organizational systems of many African societies. For instance, Steady (2004) asserts that changes in lifecycles can alter women’s status so that postmenopausal women are able to assume political functions and serve as elders and advisers on the same basis as men. These arguments mirror Oyewumi’s (2004) assertion, which states that seniority takes precedence over gender in many African societies.

Another reason many nonwestern scholars believe that applying Western feminist concepts to African realities is not appropriate is that “the oppositional man/woman duality and its attendant male privileging in Western gender categories is particularly alien to many African cultures” (Oyewumi 2004:7). This perspective echoes the Western view, which asserts that gender categories are not static, but rather their attributes change from culture to culture (Cornwall 2005). One popular illustration of how the meaning of gender categories changes from culture to culture comes from a study conducted by Ifi Amadiume (1987) which found that the position of a “husband” was not exclusively reserved for husbands in some African societies, because either sex could assume the roles of male and female.

These variations in the way gender is constructed in these nonwestern societies have led many scholars to conclude that feminists should avoid defining African feminism in the context of Western feminism, otherwise the struggles facing African women will be misinterpreted if they are examined using “imported, often colonial
ideals” (Nnaemeka 1998 and Oyewumi 2004). However, one could also question the tendency to categorize African women in one homogeneous group since Africa is a large continent that is made of different cultures and historical backgrounds. Amidst this valid concern, many African scholars believe that, it is “quite legitimate to speak of an African perspective or an African reality” (Steady 2004:50).

**African Feminist Approach**

Most of the research on gender in Africa has been conducted in the discipline of anthropology with a focus on development (Lewis 2004). The more recent studies also concentrate on the roles women play in social, political and economic institutions. Thus, Lewis (2004) suggests that this focus on development has left a major gap that need to be filled by more critical intellectual debate on gender relations in Africa. Another argument offered to explain this scarcity is that in general, gender research in Africa has been given low priority “thus the weak database in African gender research” (Steady 2004:50). However, Mikell (1995) suggests that there is an African women’s movement. This movement was initially against the use of the term feminism because it appeared to be highly individualistic and hostile to men (Mikell 1995). Furthermore, many African scholars were reluctant to promote female autonomy because they believed that establishing “culturally linked forms of public participation” was more effective in the African context (Mikell 1995: 4).

Other African scholars are advocates for an African feminist theory that takes into consideration the needs and concerns of the women it seeks to serve (Nnaemeka 2003). These scholars emphasize the need to identify priorities in each particular context.
because although all feminist issues are important they do not have similar meaning or impact in every setting. This focus on context is supported by various authors who suggest that rural and urban dwellers face different social and economic conditions and thus, experience different gender arrangements (Sofola 1998 and Aidoo 1998). In other words, although African women, educated or not, do not have as much freedom or share equal rights with African men, their gender experiences differ. One scholar who clearly explains one aspect of these gender-related differences is Narayan (1998). She explains that educated middle-class Third World women face the challenge of having to inhabit two incompatible contexts. In public, nonwestern educated women are required to display characteristics of aggressiveness and competitiveness to meet the demands of their professional careers, however, once they return to their private lives, they play “dependent and compliant roles” (Narayan 1998:88). Furthermore, Narayan (1998) suggests that educated women in developing countries are alienated from their rural counterparts because the latter group often questions their western attire and nontraditional behavior.

It seems that this gap between rural and urban is detrimental to the work that feminism intends to achieve, because without the cooperation of rural and urban women, the feminist cause cannot be an effective agent of change (Olabisi 1998). Unfortunately, neither rural nor urban women are truly in the position of supporting this cause. On one hand, urban women understand the value of engaging in the feminist cause; however, they are reluctant to do so because they fear “losing social respect or facing up to the social disrespect that being unmarried brings” (Olabisi 1998:75). On the other hand, rural women simply do not identify with the aims of feminism which they perceive to be
“elitist and illusory” (Olabisi 1998:66) and certainly outside the realm of their experiences.

Some scholars suggest that the educated African woman is fearful of engaging in the feminist cause because she is unaware of her culture and therefore doesn’t understand the cultural forces that formerly protected African women in pre-colonial times (Sofola 1998 and Olabisi 1998). For instance, Sofola (1998) points out that polygamous marriages were organized in such a way that sharing a husband reduced the importance of the husband because “the more he is shared, the less central he becomes in his wife’s life, and the more central the mother/child dynamic becomes” (Sofola 1998:63). However, other authors explain that feminism may be resisted in developing countries because it advances ideas that threaten the centrality of the family and question the fixity of roles such as male breadwinner and woman homemaker. These roles are deep-seated in the value systems of most Third World countries which are predominantly “pro-family, pro-religion and basically pro-life” (Goetz and Baden 1997:19).

Despite a growing interest in gender issues in nonwestern scholarship, very little has been written about men and their concerns within the gender frame. For instance, Mbilinyi (1992) explains that although feminism focuses on trying to understand the discrimination women face, it cannot afford to ignore men, because men too have been oppressed by gender relations. According to Morell and Swart (2005), only a handful of studies have been conducted on masculinity. These authors use an approach called “indigenous knowledge” which they define as “a value system that predates colonialism and was integral to, and supportive of, pre-colonial societies and life” (Morell and Swart 2005:97) to examine colonial and postcolonial influences on Third World men. They
suggest that the changing nature of work under globalization has tremendously affected the nature of masculinity. As men experience the inability to live up to the ideals of breadwinner, “their self-esteem has dropped dramatically” (Morell and Swart 2005:103).

Another challenge that is currently affecting men and women in the Third World particularly in the urban settings, is the struggle to survive in two different realities, “an urban modern reality and a pre-modernist and traditional reality” (Connell et al. 2005:104). These two realities operate simultaneously and affect the way men and women define their gender identity. Surviving in these two conflicting realities is an experience well known to international students who leave their families and friends to study in a different social and cultural environment. The next section examines the meaning of this temporary relocation as well as its impact on international students.

International Education

Hanson (2002) borrows a definition from Fraser and Brickman (1995) to define international education. She asserts, “International education is a dynamic concept that involves a journey or movement of people, minds, or ideas across political and cultural frontiers” (Hanson 2002:5). Furthermore, Hanson (2002) explains that this education occurs both inside and outside the classroom through interactions between students and faculty or between students and other students or staff administrators. In the course of these interactions, international students and their hosts learn about each others’ countries and share stories that have a great impact on them. International education is also an umbrella term used to include all educational activities such as teaching, studying, doing research that involves people of two or more nations (Hanson 2002). The majority of
literature on international education either focuses on its broad social and economic significance (Jenkins 1968; Bu 2003; OECD 2004) or its challenging outcomes (Baker 1968; Lacina 2002; Abel 2002). But before evaluating the literature, there is a need to first examine its multi-dimensional purposes.

Some scholars assert that international education is used by the United States and other Western countries to spread their values and way of life to other cultures (Bu 2002). Furthermore, Bu (2002) explains that this expansion of American values and beliefs began in the 19th century when missionaries assumed that by spreading the message of Christianity they were bringing social progress to those various societies in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Therefore, through the education and vocational training offered to foreign lands, missionaries introduced Western concepts such as individualism and democracy (Bu 2002).

However, OECD (2004) suggests that before the Cold War, the United States aimed to promote peace and mutual understanding through foreign education, but when the Cold War started, the goal shifted, and international education was used as a tool to stem the influence of the Soviet Union in developing countries. Nonetheless, according to this report (OECD), real interest in internationalization emerged in the 1980’s when the U.S sought to increase its economic competitiveness by using higher education to advance its interests through the spread of U.S. language, culture and business practices (OECD 2004). Today, one of the driving forces behind the promotion of international education is the amount of money it brings to the U.S. economy. For instance, in 1999-2000, $12.3 billion was brought in (Hanson 2002). Other authors also indicate that the
United States leads the world in terms of the number of students involved in international education (Arthur 2004).

Other less visible benefits that result from international education are international awareness and cross-cultural sensitivity. These two features benefit the global economy because it has become necessary for people from different countries to learn how to work together (Hanson 2002). In fact Jenkins (1969), one of the pioneers on this topic, explains that international education removed “cultural barriers that once isolated individuals to their respective civilized worlds” (Jenkins 1969:9). Other authors suggest that since international education began in 19th century, it introduced foreign students to modern technology and sciences and “also inspired them with modern ideas of democracy, equality and liberty” (Bu 2002:38).

It is important to mention that international educational also involves student exchange programs, which allow students from all over the world to travel to other countries and experience the language and culture of the receiving country for a limited period of time (Sowa 2002). While these exchange programs are beneficial since they increase cross-cultural knowledge, they are not very popular. For instance, Gore (2005) explains that during the academic year of 2000-01 only 1.1% of all U.S students participated in study abroad. Furthermore, Gore (2002) suggests that study abroad is perceived to be a frivolous experience for the young and wealthy to broaden their cultural horizons “but often suggesting leisurely, desultory and elitist and unprofessional aims” (Gore 2005: 28). Similarly, Sowa (2002) points out other significant shortcomings associated with these programs, such as disruptions of the academic cycle, and poor preparation for it. However, the focus of this project is on international students that
come from developing countries, more specifically from African countries, to study in the United States.

**International Students**

The majority of international students around the world come from Third World countries (Altbach 1991). Despite their diverse cultural, social and religious backgrounds, these students share important characteristics. Unlike immigrants, international students usually come for a short period of time and as a result “they are a group in transition for the purpose of achieving an educational goal” (Lacina 2002:21). Furthermore, as international students enter new environments, they struggle to reconcile their expectations and values with those of the receiving countries (Abel 2002). One of the most common challenges international students face is leaving their families and friends behind, and forming new social networks in an unfamiliar social and cultural setting. Thus, developing new friendships is difficult for international students because of the cultural differences, language barriers and other factors that can lead to misunderstandings between international students and host students (Lacina 2002).

For instance, “in the United States, people smile and say hello and ask questions such as, ‘how are you?’ But that question is meant as a statement rather than a question” (Lacina 2002:22). International students are also under great stress both academically and socially because they struggle to overcome their cultural shock. A substantial number of studies have been conducted to examine the adjustment process of these students in their host countries; however, most of these studies have been conducted by individual researchers, usually as part of their doctoral dissertation projects. The few published
studies are found in international educational journals, which focus predominantly in examining the adjustment process of this group of students. Altbach (1991) critiques these studies because most of them examine the academic experiences and social adjustment of foreign students in the U.S, without evaluating the push and pull factors that promote international education. According to Altbach (1991) there are a variety of factors that lead individuals to consider an international education. Some of these factors are the economic value of a foreign degree, the possibility to escape a difficult situation at home and the potential to migrate to another country (Altbach 1991).

International Students’ Experiences

The experiences of international students have been understood to occur in stages. For instance, Baker (1968) explains that in the early stages, international students are enthusiastic about their host country. After a few months, however, they become critical, until an undefined period of time during which they adjust to the culture and regain their initial positive outlook on their host country. Similarly, Abel (2002) elaborates in more details these stages of adjustments for international students. In the first stage, the “honeymoon stage” new students are excited about their new experiences. However, after a period of approximately half a year, the students experience “disenchantment” which involves feelings of loneliness and isolation. Students in this stage miss their family and friends and they have a hard time making new friends. In the third stage “beginning resolution”, they begin to make friends and easily navigate the environment hence their renewed confidence. In the final stage “effective function”, international students are
comfortable and fully integrated to the point that upon their return home, they experience “reverse cultural shock” (Abel 2002:72).

It is assumed that most of the stress international students experience is triggered by the fact they lack adequate means to solve the problems they encounter. For instance, Klineberg and Hull (1979) suggest in their study that the most important factors associated with the effectiveness of coping strategies used by international students are “prior foreign experience as evidenced by prior travel” (Klineberg and Hull 1979:182) and access to individuals who either come from the same culture or individuals who are foreign students themselves. Therefore, the presence of other international students can be a source of support for new students who can learn a lot from those who have gone through what they are going through. Due to the complexity and seriousness of adjustment problems that international students face, a large number of books have been written to try and prepare them for what they should expect during the difficult period of beginning months.

For instance, Abel (2002) highlights some of the most important factors that determine the academic success of international students: language proficiency, learning strategies and classroom dynamics. Boyd and Shirked (2001) and Cieslak (1955) outline some of the most important facts that international students should know before beginning their application process to an institution abroad; for instance, choosing the right accredited university, overcoming culture shock, and negotiating American culture upon arrival in the United States. While these books are useful and operate as instructional manuals for potential international students, they do not reveal how international students cope with this transition.
African Students’ Experiences

The Phelps-Stokes Fund (1949 and 1957) made the initial attempt to design manuals that aimed to prepare African students for their studies in the United States. These orientation handbooks outline the most common problems that African students should expect to encounter upon their arrival in the United States. Problems related to finances, language, transportation, housing and climate changes are described in these manuals. However, as much as these books prepare African students by forewarning them of a wide range of potential challenges, some of its suggestions are obviously outdated. For instance, one of the assertions made in the later manual is that students who come from Africa are exclusively male and can bring their wives for companionship if they want. Furthermore, this manual suggests that these male students’ spouses can also benefit from their experiences in the U.S, if they attend courses that train women in “home economics, childcare, secretarial work, and other useful skills where a woman can get valuable education” (Phelps-Stokes Fund 1957:49). This statement reveals that half a century ago; international education was highly gendered as it assumed that men deserve to gain an education while women ought to learn to be better wives and mothers. Although the situation has improved, the gender gap continues to be present because the number of men surpasses the number of women, and men still get funded more than women (El-Hassan, 2000).

Another study whose findings are interesting but perhaps not relevant anymore was conducted between 1959 and 1966. This study compared the experiences of African students who first went to study in the Soviet Union and then relocated to the United States, allegedly because they felt that they were discriminated against and manipulated both
academically and socially to follow communist ideologies (Baer 1970). According to this study, some of these students were able to resume their study in the U.S. and they reported positive experiences. For instance, they had more freedom in choosing courses, and they had access to advisors who helped them adjust. Therefore, although they still experienced discrimination in the U.S, it was not “as great a problem as in the East” (Baer 1970:20).

Unfortunately, no recently published studies have examined the current experiences of African students in their host countries as well as the impact of this education abroad in their lives. There is, however, one significant attempt made to capture the thoughts and feelings of some African international students by Gordon and Obiakor (2003). This book describes the experiences of former international students from Africa in various American institutions. Some of these students recall that coming to the U.S for educational purposes was a dream. However, this dream did not go as planned because many of these men and women hoped to return to their homelands, but instead stayed in the United States due to political and economic upheavals in their home countries. For instance, the story of Teshome Abebe, from Ethiopia illustrates the journey of a young man whose aspiration to acquire an education to take back to his home country changed fast when a military coup led his country into a long course of political unrest. Many of these former international students explained that academia became a way for them to remain in the United States, as they feared returning to countries that were either ravaged by war or economic hardships.

The non-return issue of international students is complex and leads to what many scholars have characterized as “brain drain” (Altbach 1991). A large number of international students express a desire to return home upon the completion of their studies, however, during their studying period, circumstances in their home countries change or
they realize that the skills they gained in their international education may not be appreciated in their homelands (Altbach 1991). Other important challenges that African students experience in American institutions are outlined by Morgan (1963) in his study of Nigerian students in America. The results of this study show that academically, the students struggled to adjust to a new educational system that had “different academic expectations and techniques” (Morgan 1963:210). In addition to language problems, most Nigerian students reported having difficulties adjusting to the food in the early stages of their stay. It is clear that international students need a supportive campus environment to achieve their goals. According to Arthur (2004), these students face unique problems due to their difficult transition, hence, the need for counseling services to help them cope with the changes associated with this transition.

However, Lacina (2002) explains that many international students do not seek counseling help because they are unfamiliar with its nature or they think it is dishonorable to their families because they fear that the information provided could be reported to their governments, which would result in great shame to them and their families. Furthermore, counseling services available in many host countries’ universities “are not very useful for many Third World students who come from a very different social and cultural milieu” (Altbach 1991). Therefore, counselors need to be well trained so that they can respond to the needs of these students because “without an awareness of the influence of culture on the educational process, there are dangers of stereotyping and cultural misunderstandings that can exacerbate student difficulties” (Arthur 2002:9).

The most detailed accounts of African students in the U.S are provided in non-published studies carried out by doctoral African students who examine the experiences
of their fellow countrymen and women. Some dissertations examine the learning experiences of African students in American institutions (El-Hassan 2000) while others focus on the non-return incidence of these students (Konfor 1989 and Okoli 1994). These studies examine different aspects of African students’ experiences. For instance, El-Hassan’s (2000) dissertation found that African graduate students at Ohio University socialize primarily with their fellow nationals and secondly with other African students. However, they hardly ever socialize with White or Black Americans. Another interesting finding from El-Hassan’s (2000) research is that African students not only gain from the knowledge and skills they learn in the classrooms, but their attitudes also change as they engage in activities that are normally gendered in their home countries. For example, one student is reported saying that Ohio University gave him a chance to learn typing and drama because in his culture, “typing is for women and people would laugh at him if he had been seen acting with children in school theatre” (El-Hassan 2000:139).

Therefore, coming to study at Ohio University allowed this young man to challenge the cultural gender barriers that had prevented him from trying new activities. It is unfortunate that, although El-Hassan (2000) mentions that African students encounter difficulties when they have families, he does not explain how balancing parental responsibilities with educational demands affect the dynamics of gender relations. However, Altbach (1991) does mention that women from Third World countries who come to study in the U.S experience a significant amount of stress as they attempt to reconcile the demands of traditional roles and their studies and professional aspirations. Furthermore, El-Hassan (2000) briefly points out is that African students who have children face many conflicting demands. For example, one parent quoted in his
dissertation explains, “we are trying to raise our children according to our traditions and value system but in many times these values contradict with American culture which our children encounter in school, media and the surrounding community” (El-Hassan 2000:148).

Such challenges are perhaps worsened as students consider returning to their countries and they realize that upon reentry, they will have to re-adjust to their cultural norms. According to Altbach (1991) a major contributing factor to the brain drain may be the fact that international students are expected to re-adjust to their homelands without any support, yet returning home causes a reverse cultural shock.

As one evaluates this literature on international students, it becomes clear that there is still a great need to conduct more studies on this growing population of individuals in transition. One might ask however why African students or international students deserve to be studied as a group in the first place. The answer to that question is that as diverse as this population is, it still has unifying characteristics. International students share powerful goals and experiences such as seeking a high quality education to fulfill their different versions of success.

Furthermore, as different authors have suggested, through cross-cultural interactions international, students share another powerful experience. They expand their horizons, learn to adjust to new environments and work with people from different parts of the world. Thus, whether they return home or stay in their host countries, international students transcend cultural barriers to create new realities. However, a few questions are still unanswered. Does this experience abroad have any lasting effects? What are its long-term benefits and deficits? While this thesis does not seek to answer these questions, it
hopes to promote a greater understanding of this temporary relocation on one particular
aspect: their views on gender roles
Chapter Two: Methodology

The idea of conducting a study on African students’ gender roles emerged from a desire to understand how these students in transition understand the roles of men and women in the household, and in the workforce. Questions such as “should men and women share household tasks” were posed. Furthermore, this study hoped to gain a preliminary understanding of the impact of these students’ stay in the United States on their gender role attitudes. As an African student, it was my belief that being “one of them,” would give me an easier access to this group of students since I could relate to some of their struggles and concerns.

However, I was also mindful of the potential problems that this familiarity could breed. Therefore, I strove to maintain my role as a researcher by focusing on the tasks of asking the questions, listening and probing for clarification. Another important factor I was attentive to as I planned this study is the fact that these students come from different African countries. Thus, perhaps analyzing them as a group could be interpreted as inappropriate. However, I realized that there is an “African identity,” one that is given to African students upon their arrival in the U.S. It is this shared “African identity” that led me to believe that it was possible to study this diverse population as a group.

A multi-method approach to data collection was used to achieve a well-rounded analysis. This multi-approach included a survey questionnaire and interviews. The participants in this research were adult African men and women studying at Ohio University. These students were legally competent and mentally able. This study was carried out in two stages. In the first part, a survey was sent as an email attachment to all
African students studying at Ohio University. Those who completed the survey had an additional opportunity to volunteer for the second portion of the study which involved semi-structured interviews. By combining quantitative and qualitative research, this study sought to supplement quantitative data with qualitative data. According to Murray (2003), most researchers today see qualitative and quantitative methods as complementary rather than antagonistic. Furthermore, Newman (1994) suggests that triangulation improves measurement because “getting identical measurements from highly diverse methods implies greater validity than if a single method had been used” (Newman 1994:141). Thus, by combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, this study provided a depth of information from interviews, as well as obtained an overview of the population by surveying a representative sample.

**Quantitative Data Collection**

The survey questionnaire consisted of 12 questions regarding gender roles attitudes, selected and adapted from the General Social Survey (www.icpsr.umich.edu/gss/). These questions asked the participants to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5, (1 referring to strongly agree, and 5 referring to strongly disagree) their perspectives on the roles of men and women in the household and in the workplace. For instance, the students were asked to indicate whether they “agree” or “disagree” that men and women should share childrearing and domestic responsibilities. Furthermore, a variety of demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, place of upbringing, and length of stay in the United States were also included in the survey questionnaire (see appendix A for the complete survey instrument). Before the survey questionnaire was
sent out to all the African students, it was pre-tested on three African students who do not attend Ohio University.

To conduct the first part of this study, an email list of all African students was requested from the International Student Faculty Services (the office that handles all aspects related to international students). From this list, all African students were emailed the survey as an attachment. To uphold their privacy and secure their anonymity, students were asked to print out the survey, fill it out and drop it in a designated box (with the researcher’s name on it) at the Alden Library’s 4th floor entrance. In order to give potential participants the information they needed to make an informed decision regarding their participation, a cover letter was enclosed in the survey attachment to explain to prospective participants the purpose of their participation and the research procedure. The process of getting respondents to fill out their survey was not an easy one. At first, most of the students who found the enclosed survey in their email just ignored it, or deferred completing it. Thus, it took one reminder email before students began to turn in their completed survey in the designated box and an additional two reminders before I was able to get the total 48 completed surveys collected.

The total number of completed surveys represents 47% of the total population of African students at Ohio University. As of fall 2005, the office of International Student and Faculty Services, indicates that there were 102 African students at Ohio University. From this number, 60 are male and 42 are female. It appears that a greater number of women 31 (73.8%) completed the survey compared to only 17 (28.3%) men.

To analyze gender role attitudes, the survey questions assessed the extent to which African students at Ohio University hold traditional gender role attitudes or non-
traditional gender role attitudes. For the purpose of this study, I will borrow Amato’s and Booth’s (1995) definition to explain traditional attitudes as perceptions that stress the “dichotomy between husband-breadwinner and wife-homemaker-mother and the differential power relations implied in these specialized roles”(Amato and Booth 1995: 58), and nontraditional attitudes are views that “emphasize shared roles and egalitarianism”(Amato and Booth 1995: 58). It is important to mention that while it is vital to have a working definition, it is also imperative to acknowledge the limitations of this definition because gender role attitudes are not fixed or necessarily consistent. For instance, a person may hold egalitarian attitudes in regard to women having equal professional opportunities to men, yet still believe that it is a woman’s role to perform household and childrearing duties. Thus, in assessing the extent to which African students hold traditional or nontraditional attitudes, there is a need for multiple measures of a variable, because “two or more indicators are better than one” (Newman 1994:129).

The literature on gender role attitudes tells us that the attitudes and beliefs about the proper roles of men and women determine the amount and type of housework and childrearing activities men and women perform in their homes. Other important indicators that shape gender role attitudes are marital and employment status which also shape the nature of gender relations. Thus, some of the items on the survey were related to the gender division of labor in the household, while others pertained to the conflicting demands of family and paid work.

To measure participants’ responses in the survey questionnaire, the Likert scale was used to rank responses from “1” to “5,” respectively: strongly agree, mildly agree, disagree, mildly disagree, and strongly disagree. For the positive items, a nontraditional
response is designated by “1” and “5” designates a traditional response, but for the
negative items, a nontraditional item is indicated by “5” and “1” signifies a traditional
response. Since there were more negative than positive items, the positive items were
recoded so that “5” designates a nontraditional response and “1” indicates a traditional
response. Consequently, the Likert scale was also altered so that “strongly disagree”
designates “1” and strongly agree represents “5.” To conduct the analysis, a total score of
all items was obtained for each participant. Since there were 12 items regarding gender
role attitudes, and a scale of “1” to “5,” the lowest possible score is 12 and the highest
possible score is 60. Therefore, since “5” indicates a nontraditional response and “1”
signifies a traditional response, the lowest possible score is 12 and it suggests that a
participant holds traditional attitudes on gender roles, while the highest possible score is 5
(12) = 60 which displays nontraditional gender role attitudes.

Various statistical analyses such as t-tests were conducted to identify the impact
of different variables such as marital status, gender, and length of stay in the U.S on
gender role attitudes. Furthermore, new variables were created to transform the original
scale so that strongly agree and agree mildly were integrated into one variable while
strongly disagree, mildly disagree and disagree were merged to form another variable.
More details on the analyses conducted are further discussed in chapter 4 (Quantitative
Data Analysis).

Qualitative Data Collection

Those who agreed to participate in the survey part of the research also had an
opportunity to indicate if they were interested in volunteering for the interview portion of
the study. These willing participants were asked to provide their contact information on a separate sheet of paper labeled “interview request form” (see appendix D) which were deposited in the same designated drop box with the completed survey questionnaires. These volunteers were contacted and an interview appointment was scheduled. Before beginning the interview, each participant was asked to read and sign a written informed consent form (see Appendix C). Furthermore, an explanation of the purpose, procedures, and potential risks (if any) was read to them. These face-to face interviews were held in the Alden Library Learning Commons small study rooms to create a comfortable yet studious atmosphere. The interviews were tape-recorded with the participants’ permission and later transcribed by the researcher. Furthermore, in order to protect the identities of these participants, fictitious names are used during the analysis of the interviews.

The purpose of holding interviews was to probe participants in order to gain rich and more detailed information regarding their thoughts and beliefs about gender roles. Many researchers such as Reinharz (1992) promote the use of semi-structured interviews because they give the researcher the opportunity to probe for clarification. The six male and six female African students interviewed were asked to express their views on how they share (for those who are married) or would share (for those who are single) domestic and childrearing responsibilities in the home. Furthermore, through these interviews, participants were able to discuss their expectations of what they think men and women can and should do inside and outside the home (see sample interview questions in Appendix B).

Although interviews are the preferred method used to gain rich detailed data, Czaja and Blair (1995) point out that they also hold some drawbacks. For instance,
“respondents are more likely to provide socially desirable responses, in a face-to-face interview” (Czaja and Blair 1995: 48) due to their concern that they may be perceived negatively by the researcher if they do not embrace culturally acceptable values. In spite of this significant concern, using attitudinal surveys and interviews such as the ones used in this study is crucial because “we cannot understand the meaning of behavior without knowing the attitudes behind it” (Reinharz 1992: 85).

Thus, for the interview portion of the study, the goal was not just to determine whether African students hold traditional or nontraditional gender role attitudes, but also to identify the factors that shape their gender roles’ perceptions. The research questions guiding the qualitative analysis were:

- How do these men and women perceive the roles of men and women in the household and in society?
- What are the factors that have influenced their current perceptions of gender roles?
- How do they reconcile their career goals with their family responsibilities?
- How do they perceive their stay in America to have affected their gender role attitudes?
Chapter Three: Data Analysis of Quantitative Research

As described in the Methodology section, completed surveys were dropped in the designated ballot box, and the researcher was the only one with the key to retrieve them and keep an account of how many people were responding. The process of collecting quantitative data was slow, and it took a couple of reminder emails to increase the response rate. However, being a student myself, I understand this slow response rate, because it is not easy for students to find time in their busy schedules to fill out the various research surveys that fill their mailboxes. The total number of students who filled out the survey questionnaire was 48. From these 48 students, 31 were females and 17 were males. The records of International Students and Faculty Services indicate that the total number of African students at Ohio University is 102 of which 48 are females and 60 are males. Therefore, 28.3% of African men participated in the study while, 73.8% of African women completed the survey. This uneven representation is significant because of its potential effects on the results.

The first page of the survey consists of 12 items. These items provide information on several key demographic variables such as age, gender (male or female), religion (Catholic or Protestant), parental education (none, high school diploma, college degree) and country of origin (Uganda, Ghana etc...). In addition, the second page of the survey contains 12 items about gender role attitudes. These items ask participants to indicate on a scale of “1” to “5,” their attitudes regarding the appropriate roles of men and women in the household and in the workforce. The total number of items on this survey is 24 (see appendix A for a sample survey questionnaire).
A dataset of results was created and each variable was assigned a value in order to enter the data into an SPSS program. For instance, gender was coded as a dummy variable and given two values so that “1” represents Male and “0” represents Female. Furthermore, missing data which occur when respondents decline to answer a question were also assigned a value (-1). To understand the results obtained, various statistical analyses were conducted. The first step of this analysis consists of presenting the preliminarily results. For instance, the number of men and women who participated is indicated as well as participants’ marital status, age and other background information. Such information is necessary in order to gain a clear picture of who the participants are.

The second portion of the study displays the overall score obtained by each participant. For each participant, a sum of all items was reached by adding up their score on each item. Thus, with 12 items regarding gender role attitudes and a scale of “1” to “5,” the lowest possible score is 12 and the highest possible score is 60.

Next, the results of the attitudinal survey are presented by combining “strongly agree”, and “agree mildly” in one category, while “disagree,” “mildly disagree,” and “strongly disagree” are combined to form the other category. This binary scale is designed to portray the proportion of individuals who “agree” compared to the percentage of participants who “disagree” for each item. In addition, this scale helps to compare and contrast the frequency of men and women who agreed and disagreed for each item. The next segment of this analysis attempts to investigate the relationship between gender role attitudes and variables such as gender, age, length of stay in the U.S and marital status. To achieve this goal, multiple t-tests are carried out. Lastly, a multivariate analysis is
conducted to assess how different variables work together to influence the nature of gender role attitudes.

**Results**

**Table 1 Gender Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the distribution of men and women in this study. Thus, as shown in the table, 64.6% of respondents were women while the remaining 35.4% were men. This means that a higher number of women filled out the survey. In a population of n=60 (58.9%) African men and n=42 (41.2%) African women, this sample reveals that a disproportionately high number of women participated in this study compared to men’s response rate.

**Descriptive Statistics**

**Table 2 Marital Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 illustrates that most of participants are either married or single. There are very few individuals dating and virtually no persons in the remaining categories are divorced and separated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Africa</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Africa</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing -1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that most of the respondents originate from West Africa. Therefore, very few students surveyed come from Southern Africa, and North Africa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Table 4 we see that most of the students in this sample are pursuing their Masters, followed by some who are doing their Ph.D. However, only (10\%) of the total number of students surveyed is studying for a Bachelor’s degree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Upbringing</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big city</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small city</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing -1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Area of Upbringing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Exposure</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing -1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 Western Exposure

Tables 5 and 6 present more background information regarding the participants’ previous experiences in other Western countries as well as their location of upbringing. Many of the students surveyed come from big cities but the majority of them have not been to other Western countries prior to their stay in the U.S. This information is important because this study seeks to evaluate the relationship between a student’s
upbringing and their gender role attitudes as well as the influence of Western exposure on participants’ gender role attitudes. Such important questions will be addressed later when the results of the different t-tests conducted are discussed.

Table 7 Attitudinal Scores for Men and Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7.56</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 shows results that were obtained by adding the sum of all items for each participant. As explained in the Methodology section, there were 12 items regarding gender role attitudes, and a scale of “1” to “5,” thus, the lowest possible score for each participant is 12 and the highest possible score is 60. Furthermore, a lower score indicates that the participant holds traditional attitudes on gender roles, while a high score designates nontraditional views of gender roles. To insure that the scores were consistent, the positive items were recoded so that when a student “highly agrees” with a positive item, his or her score is "5". Therefore, if a student receives a "5" on all 12 items, his or her total overall is $5 \times 12 = 60$. This means that a nontraditional attitude is indicated when a participant’s overall score is closer to 60 and a traditional attitude is shown when a participant’s overall score is in the lower 30’s. Hence, Table 7 shows that among women, the mean score is 43.7 whereas for men, the mean score is 50.5. This suggests that men have more liberal gender role attitudes than women. In a 12-item scale, it is important to report that the scale used was reliable with a Cronbach's alpha equal to .714.
Table 8 Distribution of Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Scores</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 helps to understand the scores presented in table 7. For instance, the majority of men (59%) hold scores between 51 and 60, yet, only (10%) of women scored between 51 and 60. Most women (77%) scored between 41 and 50. These results along with the results in Table 7 suggest that for the most part, men hold more nontraditional gender role attitudes than women.
The results in Table 9 were attained by designing a binary scale that converged “strongly agree,” and “agree mildly” in one category while “disagree,” “mildly disagree,” and “strongly disagree” were collapse to form another category. This binary scale allows us to see the proportion of students who agreed with each statement, compared to the proportion of students who disagreed. It is interesting that only (40%) of the participants agreed that a wife’s role is to be a homemaker yet, (79%) of the participants indicated that it was a husband’s role to provide financial security for his wife and children. These numbers suggest that although participants are comfortable with the idea of men and women sharing the task of “earning the bread,” they are still not ready to challenge the
status of men as “primary breadwinners.” This is perhaps a result of the increase in women’s educational and professional participation, which adds a new dimension to their status without however, transforming the cultural norm that assigns the task of providing to men.

Another significant result from this table is that although the majority (96%) of the participants agreed that men should share child-rearing responsibilities, a surprisingly large number (64%) of the respondents “agreed” that young children are likely to suffer if their mothers work outside the home. This information suggests that while participants support the idea of men helping women perform child-rearing tasks, they still consider women to be the primary caregivers, especially when there are young children involved. This table also indicates that an overwhelmingly high number (92%) of participants believe boys and girls are entitled to the same opportunities and freedom. Similarly, most of these surveyed students approved that men and women should be equally encouraged to go to University. Yet, a slight majority (60%) and (52%) of respondents agreed that women need their husbands’ permission to engage in political affairs and business endeavors. The numbers above display an interesting contradiction. On one hand, participants support the notion that boys and girls are entitled to the same opportunities and freedom, yet, at the same time, these participants maintain that women need their husband’s permission to exercise their freedom to engage in business and political affairs. Perhaps, it is much easier to support abstract ideas of freedom and opportunity, but when such ideas are actualized their potential threat is revealed.
Table 10 shows results obtained by using the binary scale to evaluate the proportion of men and women who “agreed” with each of the items on the survey. In all the twelve

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Items</th>
<th>Male Agree</th>
<th>Female Agree</th>
<th>Total Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Men and women should share household tasks.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Husband's role is to provide financial security for his wife and children.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A woman needs her husband's permission to engage in political affairs.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Education is not valuable for women as it is for men.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. It is crucial for every family to have at least one son.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Young children are likely to suffer if their mothers work outside the home.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A wife's role is to be a homemaker.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Women do not need their husband's permission to engage in business affairs.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Men should share child-rearing responsibilities.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Girls and boys are entitled to the same opportunities and freedom.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Sons should be given more encouragement than daughters to go to University.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. If both husband and wife work, the husband’s job comes first, even if that means the wife might have to limit her career.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
items, a substantially larger number of men agreed more with nontraditional gender role attitudes than women. This gender-based difference is particularly visible in items 2 and 6. For instance, on the question of men being primary financial providers, 58.8% of men “agreed” that it was a husband’s role to provide for his wife and children. In contrast, 90.3% of women “agreed” that such a responsibility was suitable for a husband. This suggests that a greater number of women are in support of the belief that it is a man’s role to provide. Similarly, on item number six, 71% of women indicated that young children are likely to suffer if their mothers work outside the home, yet, only 52.9% of men supported that perspective. Other items that further illustrate this pattern of results are item 3 and 8. On these items, a greater percent of women support the view that women need their husbands’ permission to engage in political and economic affairs.

These results suggest that the majority of women support traditional norms that assign men and women different responsibilities, especially when young children are involved. Perhaps women are reluctant to challenge the established gender division of labor because they are afraid of the potential repercussions, or maybe they have internalized the cultural dictates that assign childcare and domestic work to women. However, when it comes to education, women are willing to defy cultural barriers because education is slowly being promoted in most African countries as a catalyst to eradicate poverty. In fact, Table 10 shows that while 9.7% of women agreed that education was more valuable for men, the remaining 90.3% disagreed with the statement.

The other two items that received surprisingly overwhelming support by women are items 3 and 8. It is bewildering that while most women hold the view that education is as important for women as it is for men, they also believe that a woman needs her
husband’s permission to engage in political and business activities. The qualitative analysis will illustrate that perhaps women perceive husbands’ permission as a mechanism to discuss everything with them in order to achieve a semblance of equality. Therefore, permission in this context appears to be a hidden strategy used by women to foster a relationship based on equal say in the household.

Another possible explanation for women’s high support for conservative gender roles may be that their responses reflect the harsh realities of their lives. These women are aware of the cultural forces that determine which tasks are for men and which tasks are for women. For instance, in the qualitative analysis, I suggest that although women want men to help with childcare and domestic work, they are realistic enough to know that their cultures are not ready to address the gender division of household labor. Similarly, men’s surprisingly high support for nontraditional gender role attitudes can also be interpreted as an indication of their “ideal,” an ideal which seems desirable in the abstract form. For instance, the interview analysis will reveal that when men are questioned, their comfort level with nontraditional attitudes diminishes as certain fundamental aspects of their gender roles appear to be threatened. In the next section, statistical analysis will be carried out to assess the significance of these gender differences.

Statistical Tests

Researchers use a variety of tests to explore the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. According to Yates (2004:78), although statistical tests do not tell us if our hypotheses are correct, "they inform us of the
likelihood that the results we have are simply the product of random chance, or, in contrast, that they are unlikely to be due to chance.” In this study, I want to determine if the differences in the mean scores illustrated in cases sorted by categorical variable such as men and women, old and young, single and married are a result of chance or not. Therefore, t-tests are used to find out if the overall variability in people's scores is statistically significant. By comparing the sample means of two variables, t-tests reveal whether the observed difference between two sample means is significant enough to convince us that the grouping variables have different means.

To carry out these t-tests, the grouping variables chosen are gender (male, female), age (younger or older than 30 yrs), Western exposure (yes or no), length of stay in the U.S. (more or less than 3 years in the U.S.) and marital status (single, married). By comparing the mean scores of participants in the categories mentioned above, this study can determine whether the conditions in each category differ significantly.
Table 11 T-tests for Gender Role Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Exposure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 yrs old or less</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 30 years</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of stay in the U.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3yrs or less</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>.802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 3 yrs</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 illustrates the results of the different t-tests conducted. Starting with gender as the grouping variable, a t-test was executed to find out if the difference between the mean attitudinal score for men and the mean attitudinal score for women was statistically significant. The results of the t-test show a t-value of 3.73, with 46 degrees of freedom, and a probability of .001. As this is less than 0.1, I reject the null hypothesis that this is a random result (due to chance) and conclude that there is significant difference between the mean scores for men and women. This means that the mean score for men is significantly higher than the mean score for women. Therefore, the t-test confirms that men do hold more egalitarian gender views than women.
The second t-test was performed to examine if the difference between the mean score of married individuals and the mean score of single individuals was statistically significant. The results of the t-test show a t-value of -1.847, with 41 degrees of freedom, and a probability of .072. As this is marginally less than 0.1, we cautiously reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant difference between the mean scores of married individuals and single individuals. Therefore, the mean score of married individuals is significantly higher than the mean score of single individuals.

Another t-test conducted tested to see if the differences between the mean score of participants who have previous Western exposure and the mean score of those who do not have any prior Western exposure was statistically significant. The results of the t-test show a t-value of 1.042, with 41 degrees of freedom, and a probability of .304. As this is greater than 0.1, we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant difference in the mean score of individuals who were exposed to other Western countries and the mean score of those who were not. Thus, the mean score of individuals who have not been exposed to other Western countries is not significantly higher than the mean score of individuals who have previous Western exposure.

The fourth t-test conducted tested to see if the difference between the mean score of participants who are 30 years old or younger and the mean score of those who are older than 30 years old was statistically significant. The results of the t-test show a t-value of 3.27, with 46 degrees of freedom, and a probability of .002. As this is less than 0.1, we reject the null hypothesis that this is a random result due to chance and conclude that there is significant difference between the mean scores of individuals who are 30 years old or younger and those who are older than 30 years old. This indicates that the mean
score of participants who are 30 yrs or younger is significantly higher than the mean score of participants who are older than 30 yrs.

The last t-test conducted sought to find out if the difference between the means score of participants who have been in the U.S for three years or less and the mean score of those who have been in America for more than three years was statistically significant. The results of the t-test show a t-value of -.25 with 46 degrees of freedom, and a probability of .802. As this is greater than 0.1, we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant difference between the mean score of individuals who have been in the U.S. 3 years or less and the mean score of those who have been studying in America for more than 3 years. In other words, the mean score of individuals who have been here more than 3 yrs is not significantly higher than the mean score of participants who have been here 3 yrs or less.

The overall results of the t-tests conducted reveal that gender and age are the only variables that have a significant impact on the gender role attitudes of the participants. The difference in the mean scores for men and women is statistically significant with men having more nontraditional beliefs than women do. Similarly, the difference in the mean scores of participants who are below 30 years old and those who are above 30 years old is statistically significant with younger participants holding more nontraditional gender role attitudes than older participants. Likewise, the difference in the mean scores of married participants was slightly significantly higher than the mean score of single participants. Although these t-tests establish important facts regarding the impact of age and gender on gender role attitudes, no conclusive remarks can be made yet, because to fully understand why young males have substantially more liberal gender role attitudes than their
corresponding groups, an in-depth examination of qualitative data is required. In the meantime, further statistical analyses are performed.

Multivariate Analysis

This section presents the correlation between gender role attitudes and variables such as gender, age, Western exposure and length of stay in the U.S. In addition, an attempt is made to determine how much of the variation in the participants’ attitude can be explained by variables such as, age, gender, Western exposure and length of stay when they are taken together. Lastly, this section will attempt to find out what percentage of the variation in the scores can be attributed to the variables mentioned above.

Table 12 Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(constant)</td>
<td>45.362</td>
<td>7.427</td>
<td>6.108</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of stay</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>.567</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.322</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>7.121</td>
<td>2.392</td>
<td>.478</td>
<td>2.977</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.268</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>-1.966</td>
<td>2.765</td>
<td>-.134</td>
<td>-.711</td>
<td>.482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rsq, adj Rsq</td>
<td>.298</td>
<td>.210</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p<.05
p<.01
p<.001
The linear regression procedure examines the relationship between a dependent variable and a set of independent variables. This study seeks to analyze the relationship between gender role attitudes (dependent variable) and age, gender, length of stay and marital status (independent variables). This analysis is performed to answer the following question. How well can we predict gender role attitudes if we know something about the gender, age, marital status and length of stay of students? Table 12 shows the regression coefficients for each independent variable. The regression coefficient is very important because it gives us an idea of the importance of each variable. For instance, the regression coefficient of gender is 7.121 and the value of the intercept is 45.362, this suggests that gender, as a variable, adds or removes 7.121 points on participants’ gender role attitude scores. Table 12 also indicates that R-squared equals .298. Substantively, 29% of the variation in gender role attitudes can be accounted for by the combined influence of gender, age, marital status and length of stay. Furthermore, the t-value for gender is 2.977, with a probability far less than .05. Thus, we can conclude that gender is highly related to gender role attitudes. To further illustrate the importance of gender, a regression analysis is performed exclusively on gender.

Table 13 Regression Analysis on Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(constant)</td>
<td>43.774</td>
<td>1.077</td>
<td></td>
<td>40.560</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>6.755</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>.482</td>
<td>3.733</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rsq, adj Rsq</td>
<td></td>
<td>.233</td>
<td></td>
<td>.216</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=48
p<. 05
p<. 01
p<. 001
In table 13, we see that R-squared equals .233. This suggests that 23% of the variation in gender role attitude can be explained entirely by gender. Therefore, gender has the most predictive power over gender role attitudes than any other variable.

**Discussion**

The overall results of the quantitative research suggest that the majority of participants believe that men and women should share child-rearing and domestic tasks. Similarly, these respondents support the notion that men and women should have equal access to opportunities and freedom. Yet, among these African men and women, there is a widespread belief that a husband’s role is to provide financial security to his wife and children. These results reveal that although a large number of respondents hold strong egalitarian beliefs such as equal share and access to responsibilities and opportunities, they also seem to think that equality is fair and just as long as men and women maintain control over their separate spheres of influence.

This important fact is confirmed by qualitative interviews which will indicate that men are comfortable with the idea of women pursuing their educational and professional goals only when that pursuit does not threaten men’s primary role of breadwinner. Likewise, the qualitative analysis will also suggest that women welcome the help of men in caring for the children, yet they still believe that women as nurturers are better fitted for childrearing. Thus, in theory, men and women want to share both domestic and childrearing responsibilities provided that men continue to do a large proportion of masculine work and women maintain control of all feminine chores. These findings are similar to Kroska’s (2004) study, which suggested that despite the influence of gender ideology,
relative resources and available time in predicting men’s and women’s share of domestic work, domestic and childrearing tasks are essentially gendered.

Comparison of Men’s and Women’s Gender Role Attitudes

The difference in the mean scores for men and women were confirmed to be statistically significant by a t-test. Yet, it would be premature to conclude that male participants support more nontraditional beliefs than women do. Furthermore, despite the fact that a surprising 90.3% of women agreed that a husband’s primary role is to provide, there is a need to interpret these gender differences carefully. The qualitative analysis will suggest that although women are reluctant to disapprove certain values and beliefs that assign different roles to men and women in the household, they are adamant about advancing their educational goals. In addition, the forthcoming qualitative analysis will show that women carefully choose their battles in order to achieve their goals without appearing threatening. Therefore, their lack of criticism for traditional household and domestic gender roles should not be interpreted as an indication of their conservative thinking. Similarly, the interview analysis will demonstrate that although men appear to support nontraditional beliefs such as sharing household and childrearing duties, they also hold conservative attitudes in regard to women earning more money than their husbands. One can suggest that men and women support gender equality as long as it does not threaten their gendered notions of self.

The findings of this study are substantiated by the literature on gender roles which suggests that men and women perform masculinity and femininity as required by their respective cultures, yet the norms guiding these performances are not fixed by nature nor
simply imposed by outside forces (Connell 2004; Butler 1999; West and Fenstermaker 2002). Therefore, to fully understand African students’ gender role beliefs, we have to look at a variety of factors which shape and alter these ever-changing gender role perceptions. For instance, although another t-test revealed that the mean score of younger participants was significantly higher than the mean score of older participants, the forthcoming qualitative analysis will suggest that perhaps age is not as significant because experiencing different situations and environments has a stronger impact on individuals’ gender role attitudes. Therefore, in order to deepen our understanding of the nature of gender role attitudes, we need to take a look at the interview analysis.
Chapter Four: Qualitative Data Analysis: Face-to-Face Interviews

Introduction

For the second part of this research, twelve African students who indicated their willingness to participate were interviewed. The interviews were held in the quiet study rooms of the Alden Library Learning Commons. Although it was not deliberate, the number of men and women interviewed was equal. Among the men, three were married, and three were single. Among the women, four were single, and two were married.

Table 14 Interview Participants’ Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Country of Citizenship</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>Single man</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Southern Africa</td>
<td>Single man</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbert</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>East Africa</td>
<td>Married man with two children</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>Single man</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Late thirties</td>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>Married man with two children</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Late thirties</td>
<td>East Africa</td>
<td>Married man with one child</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eba</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>East Africa</td>
<td>Single woman</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>Married woman without children</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>East Africa</td>
<td>Single woman</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>East Africa</td>
<td>Married woman with two children</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachael</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>East Africa</td>
<td>Single woman</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>Single woman</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 shows that the majority of the students interviewed are pursuing their Master’s degrees but to preserve their anonymity, their particular fields of study and
specific countries of origin were withheld. The interviews were tape recorded with the participants’ permission. Furthermore, they were semi-structured which means the interview questions did not follow a certain order but were dependent upon the participants’ responses. Thus, some questions were shortened, while others led to other unexpected questions.

The participants in these interviews were asked to express their views on the roles of men and women within the household and workforce. In addition, the interviewees were asked whether living in the United States had affected their perceptions of gender roles. Thomas Murray (2003: 39) explains that this type of data gathering has the potential to display “the uniqueness of individuals’ lives and the similarity among lives that are lived under different circumstances”. This statement is relevant to my research because although the participants come from different African countries, their perspectives on gender roles are strikingly similar while still maintaining unique individual characteristics. The individuals interviewed shared their thoughts and ideas on gender role attitudes through a narration of their lives’ stories. Some stories were very detailed and emotional, others were brief and formal, but all of the narratives were rich and informative. In this analysis section, the interviews will be examined in detail so that the researcher can analyze the factors that shape these participants’ perceptions of gender roles. The main themes to be discussed are the perceptions of African students’ views on domestic work and childrearing as well as education and workforce participation.
Domestic Work

A wide range of factors need to be scrutinized in order to understand the different ways that the participants think about their gender roles. As a researcher, it is important to carefully interpret the data once it has been organized into meaningful categories. Coffey and Atkinson (1996:47) caution researchers that although coding consists of examining the data to look for recurring themes and patterns in order to generate broader conceptual frameworks, “we should not be tempted to ignore incidents, events, individuals, or chunks of data that do not fit into the codes.” Therefore, there is a need to move beyond the coded data and ask ourselves during the whole process of coding how we can use the data to “identify its dimensions, its consequences and its relationships with other phenomena” (Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 49).

In the interviews, the first question posed to all the participants was “How do you or how would you share (for those that are not married) household and childrearing tasks with your spouse?” This question was crucial because it went straight to the issue at hand. Initially, the first noticeable factor that seemed to influence these students’ perceptions on domestic chores and childcare was childhood socialization. For instance, Claudia, a single woman from West Africa explained that when she gets married, housework will be her duty “childrearing is serious, he should be part of it...but housework, seriously, unless the housework is becoming too much for you to bear, then maybe he can help out sometimes.” Claudia goes on to insist that she will take on most of the household work except “when it comes to things like the yard work or carrying heavy stuff.”
Using her childhood experiences, Claudia explains why she considers housework her domain. As an eight-year-old girl, Claudia learned how to cook, but unlike her older brothers who also knew how to cook, it was her responsibility to prepare all the family meals everyday after school, because both her parents worked. Claudia goes on to say that as much as she hated being in charge of cooking, she could not challenge this norm because both her parents believed that it was a woman’s role to cook, and since her mother worked, this task fell to her. Thus, when Claudia left for University, her younger sisters took over this role.

Another illustration of how childhood socialization shaped some of these participants’ perceptions of domestic work is the story of Wendy. Wendy is a married woman from East Africa who enthusiastically explained that she learned from her mother that in order to get men to participate in certain household chores such as paying the electricity bill, women have to create a peaceful atmosphere in the house so that men don’t feel forced to get involved. As Wendy puts it, “if I am to remove his shoes when he comes from work and he is tired, and then he says, I am tired, and then I will be like oh! Are you? Should I pull off your shoes and your socks? Do you want to take a bath? Then it makes him so happy, I would just do it, because I know that in return, it makes life easier.” Wendy’s narrative suggests that performing a subservient role, led her husband to respond accordingly as he reciprocates by doing nice things for her as well. Whether this woman’s deferential attitude is the reason behind her husband’s participation in domestic activities is not the issue, but what seems to be significant is that Wendy believed it and as a result, it confirmed what her mother had taught. Furthermore,
Wendy’s submissiveness led both her and her husband to feel that they had successfully negotiated the boundaries of power within their household (see Hochschild 1989).

To further illustrate the role that socialization plays in influencing other participants’ perceptions of domestic labor and childcare, the story of Joseph, a single man from West Africa, can help. Joseph explains that he wants to marry a woman willing to stay home and take care of all the childrearing and domestic responsibilities, because he believes women are “more nurturing.” Joseph goes on to say that since “girls play with dollhouses and that kind of things, and boys are into sports or cars, being in the kitchen is boring but women are used to it.” In this sentence, Joseph expresses his assumption that women are fit to be in the kitchen because they play with dollhouses.

Although Joseph fails to articulate the connection between kitchen work, dollhouse games, and the nurturing capacity of women, he seems to be suggesting that boys are encouraged to play outdoors while girls are told to stay indoors and play games that are designed to enhance their nurturing capacities and prepare them for homemaking. Similarly, another single man from West Africa named Daniel confirms Claudia’s assumption when he says, “With things that have to do with heavy lifting and stuff, that will be my part, whatever else will be left to her.” In this statement, Daniel conveys his belief that men should only perform aspects of household labor that require “lifting heavy stuff.” Many of the participants seem to share this belief that men and women perform different household duties because of their presumed distinct physical and emotional capacities. Words such as “nurturing” and “affectionate” were mentioned by both men and women to refer to women’s ability to care for children. In regard to housework, the
participants made the distinction between “heavy” work for men and “easy” or “boring” work for women.

Other participants’ narratives brought up additional concerns surrounding domestic work and childrearing. For instance, Eba, a single woman from East Africa, explains that she doesn’t mind if her husband doesn’t help her with house and child related work. She insists that she will do everything herself. In what appears to be an attempt to justify her answer, Eba asserts, “although you can’t calculate this work in money, maybe it’s more valuable.” In this statement, Eba exposes the dilemma surrounding domestic labor, especially when it is combined with childcare. Both Eba and Claudia consider childcare important, however, Claudia and other women interviewed seem to give little value to domestic work. The literature on domestic labor confirms that housework is either ignored or given low consideration, while childcare is considered too precious to put a price on it.

To further illustrate the predicament surrounding domestic labor and childcare, Joseph’s concerns need to be discussed. As described earlier, Joseph wants a housewife because he believes women are trained from an early age to be nurturing, however, when probed for further explanations, he explains that he worries that “nowadays, it feels like schools are the ones raising kids.” From his perspective, when both parents work, children are either “raised by schools or television.” Thus, Joseph wants a housewife to stay at home and raise children. In contrast, Joseph’s peers are counting on the help of extended family members to balance childrearing duties with professional responsibilities. For Joseph however, this type of family help is not going to be available in the future. Joseph’s concerns are realistic and they reflect an unspoken dilemma shared
by many of his peers: how to reconcile family responsibilities with professional demands?

While Joseph suggests a strict gender division of labor in the household as his solution to this dilemma, other men interviewed offered less drastic suggestions. For instance, Herbert and Peter, the two married men interviewed, indicated that they share all domestic tasks with their wives so that they can both meet professional and family demands. In the case of Herbert, a married man from East Africa with two daughters, sharing seems to have emerged as a survival strategy. Herbert explains, “I come from a male dominated society whereby domestic responsibilities are taken care by women, but my wife and me found ourselves living in the city without a maid, so I was always there as her helper and more than willing to share responsibilities.” Throughout his narrative, Herbert frequently asserts that he comes from a male dominated society but since he and his wife could not afford a maid, they had to share the work at home.

Without the financial means necessary to acquire a maid, Herbert and his wife, who both held full time jobs, (before Herbert came to the U.S) could not afford to follow the cultural norms of delegating domestic and child caring responsibilities to the “appropriate” spouse. Hence, they struggled to juggle the demands of paid work and childcare. However, it is interesting that although Herbert maintains that his marriage is based on a partnership, the words he uses to describe it depict a different picture. For instance, Herbert explains that when his wife gave birth to their first daughter, his mother-in-law came to help, but when she returned back to her village “it was just me and my wife again and I had no problem taking care of the child when she was at work or fixing a meal.” In this statement, it seems that Herbert participated in childrearing tasks when
his wife was occupied with other tasks. This suggests that while Herbert claims to share childcare and domestic responsibilities, it appears that he still considers such work to be his wife’s responsibilities. Therefore, his involvement can only be categorized as that of a “helper,” indeed a helper born out of necessity.

Peter’s story illustrates another aspect of “marital sharing” that deserves attention. Peter and his wife are both Ph.D. students at Ohio University, and they have a two-year-old boy and a newborn baby boy. Peter explains that in order “to manage everything, they share everything, for example, when she cooks, I clean and I also have had to learn how to change diapers and wash babies.” It seems that Peter, like Herbert, had to learn to adjust to a situation that left him no choice but to get involved in child rearing and domestic work. However, when probed further to explain how he feels about this situation, Peter refers to his childhood. He explains that he learned as a young boy that “it didn’t matter whether you were a boy or girl.” Growing up, Peter was never treated differently from his sisters. In fact, he insists that his parents “made sure from the beginning that boys and girls would perform all the duties in the house.” Furthermore, Peter recounts that he and his brothers did more housework than his older sisters, because seniority mattered more than gender. While Peter’s childhood socialization helps us to understand how he was able to adjust easily to a life where he “had to learn how to change diapers,” it seems that his current life situation also made an impact on the way he thinks about family and domestic work. One wonders whether Peter would be as involved as he is now in family tasks if he and his wife were back home and able to access help from family members or purchase the services of a maid.
One significant factor that permeated many of the interviews is the hope shared by most of the participants that they will be able to rely on extended family members as a support network to care for their children when they return home. Three single women, Rachael, Emma and Eba, and two single men Patrick and Daniel, explain that without the presence of a supportive family, it will not be feasible for them to balance the demands of paid work and family life. For instance, Rachael from East Africa explained “if we are back home, it will not be an issue because we have people who can help, like my mother, but if we are here, it’s different because this society is more individualistic, so it would be difficult to find a family member to help.” Rachael shares this belief with Emma and Eba who both felt that in order to pursue their career goals and still manage to care for their children and households, they will have to hire a maid or seek the help of other family members.

It appears that the presence of a support network and the availability of inexpensive domestic workers delay or eliminate the need to address the existing issue of sharing domestic and childcare activities. Thus, for most educated African women and men, questioning the gender norms surrounding the distribution of tasks within the household may not be a priority because they can still seek out other alternatives. The issue of sharing household and childrearing tasks becomes unavoidable in cases such as Herbert’s or when a couple relocates to the West for educational or professional purposes.

According to Paul, a married man from East Africa doing his Ph.D. at Ohio University, performing domestic work in the West did not require a difficult adjustment process because there is less societal pressure to abide by a strict gender division of labor.
Paul explains that he could not perform domestic work in his home country because he
would be socially ostracized. However, he does so in the United States without any
trouble. To emphasize his point, Paul explains, “even my wife wouldn’t allow me to help
her, because she would be criticized and, as her husband, I wouldn’t be respected.” The
pressure to follow cultural expectations seems to be a powerful force that fluctuates as
individuals move from one cultural environment to another. Therefore, while it appears
that childhood socialization plays a significant role in sustaining the status quo, other
context- based factors seem to shape the nature of the gender division of labor in the
household. Factors such as the presence of a support network, the availability of
affordable maids and the type of cultural environment seem to play significant roles in
determining who performs childrearing duties. In the next section, the issue of childcare
will be examined in more detail to reveal other layers of influence.

Childcare

The question of whether each partner would consider staying home after the birth
of a child raised some interesting comments. Most men rejected the idea of a man taking
time from work to care for the children, for a variety of reasons. For instance, Patrick, a
single man from Southern Africa, explains that, “because a young baby needs to be
breastfed, obviously the mother should stay home.” However, when probed further,
Patrick adds, “I am a very ambitious man, so I would never consider staying home, but
that doesn’t mean that I expect my wife to stay home, it only means that it would be
something I would not consider.” At first, it seems that Patrick suggests that women
should stay home because of the need to breastfeed, but when he mentions his ambitious
nature, he reveals his true concern which is that taking time from work would interfere with his career goals.

Other men justified their reluctance to be the primary caregivers by blaming the social structures of their respective countries which do not provide men with paternity leave. For instance, Daniel explains that his wife should stay at home because “his boss” would not let him take the time from work. Similarly, Patrick explained that taking time from work will depend on the job he will get. It is important to understand that many of the men interviewed were unaware of the concept of paternity leave. For instance, when I told Daniel that men could request paternity leave in some countries, he was shocked to hear that such a concept existed.

Most women interviewed stressed the need for breastfeeding as their justification for asserting that women should stay at home with a new born baby. For instance, Rachael candidly explains that the mother should be the one to stay home because “the old fashion way of raising a child is healthy, I mean today, you can decide not to breastfeed for example, but I think it’s good to breastfeed.” Even when the idea of pumping milk and storing it for later consumption was suggested, most women reacted negatively saying that the thought of storing breast milk was “unnatural” or “just not right.”

Other women who did not use breastfeeding as a rationale for their rejection of stay at home dads simply explained that men are providers, and society expects them to fulfill this role. For instance, Faith, a married woman from West Africa (without children), explained, “in my culture men are supposed to provide everything for the family, so people will say, your wife is taking care of you, she’s providing for you, he is
not a good man.” Similarly, another single woman from East Africa named Emma confidently asserted, “men who stay home are useless, a man cannot stay home, he has to work.” Thus, for Faith and Emma, men cannot stay at home because it would be a violation of their expected role of breadwinner.

In addition, these same women pointed out that men should not become stay-at-home fathers because women as nurturers are better fitted for childrearing. For instance, Rachael explains, “women can teach the child so much more…it’s deeper when it’s the mother.” Both Rachael and Faith believe that women have more impact on their children than men. Asked why they believe so, these women struggle to explain their reasons. Faith explains this by saying that mothers “spend more time with their children, if let’s say to do homework, they always do it with their mum…sometime men don’t have time or they don’t care.” In this sentence, one identifies two underlying causes. The first is that men’s limited involvement is accepted because traditionally, their primary task is to “pay for school…buy clothes and food.” The second justification is that women are fit to look after children because traditionally they spend more time with them and thus, are trained for the tasks involved with childcare. These traditions seem to be highly correlated with an important concept known as emotional labor.

According to the literature on emotional labor, most of the work performed in the household is assumed to consist of tasks such as cleaning, cooking and ironing. Yet, there is another aspect of domestic work that scholars such as DeVault (1991) describe as “care work” that goes on unseen. For instance, the time women spend with their children is often described in terms connoting relaxation, yet it involves a variety of tasks such as doing homework, talking, counseling and encouraging which are rarely considered “work.” It
seems that women such as Rachael and Faith protect their role as caregivers because the literature on emotional labor suggests that care work is assigned to women because they are presumed to have a natural capacity to express love through this work.

Therefore, challenging this belief is difficult because as long as “care work” is merely perceived as love rather than effort, a woman unwilling to do it will be considered to be unloving or unnatural. Emotional work reveals cultural assumptions about relations between husbands and wives. According to DeVault, (1999) while women are expected to do the cooking, cleaning and all the other tasks associated with femininity, men, are required to do the heavy lifting, yard work and providing for their families, all masculine activities. This suggests that asking men to become stay-home fathers might be a direct threat of their masculinity. It seems men and women are both expected to perform distinctive forms of emotional labor, yet such activities appear invisible because they are built into cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity.

However, not all the participants consider childcare a woman’s job. Peter and Paul challenged the assumption that childcare was a woman’s exclusive role. Peter explains that he and his wife decided that when they both complete their Ph.D.’s, whoever gets a job first will work while the other remains at home with their young children. Nonetheless, it is interesting that although Peter is open to the possibility of being a stay-at-home father, he still does not value the work performed in the home. For instance, he asserts, “even as a stay-home dad, I would create some type of business for me to do, I wouldn’t be doing just housekeeping work, I believe I can do both.” In this statement, Peter reveals his assumption that being a staying at home dad does not involve a full day’s worth of work. One wonders whether Peter ignores the demanding work
involved in being a stay-home parent out of ignorance or whether he purposely denies it to suggest that the work performed in the household by women is not very demanding or time-consuming.

Paul, on the other hand, is fully aware of the demands of being a stay-at-home parent because he used to be one. When Paul and his wife first came to America, his wife entered a Ph.D. program while he stayed home to care for their son. However, when Paul gained employment, their son was put in daycare. Both Paul’s and Peter’s cases suggest that when a situation emerges that requires individuals to step outside the norms of their culture they will do so. Thus, as individuals enter new environments, they are often required to adopt new gender attitudes.

From this brief overview of African students’ different opinions regarding domestic work and childrearing responsibilities, it is evident that a variety of factors shape how these individuals perceive the responsibilities of men and women in the household. Childhood socialization, cultural norms, social location and “participation born out of necessity” are some of the main elements that can shed some light on these participants’ perspectives. The significance of social location suggests that gender norms are highly contextual. As individuals alter their gender behavior to accommodate the demands of each situation, their perceptions are modified as well to justify the new behavior. This explains why Paul and Peter seem to hold more egalitarian beliefs, since they both have had to change their gender norms when they entered situations that forced them to transform their gender strategies. The concept of “doing gender” by West and Zimmerman (1987) seems appropriate in explaining that although men and women engage in particular behavior to confirm their membership in their gender category, it is
crucial to understand that their gender performances do not involve a well-defined set of behavior guidelines which can be easily regimented. The next section will discuss the conflicting educational and career goals held by the students in order to further our understanding of the changing nature of gender roles.

Educational and Professional Goals

In terms of education, men expressed a desire to marry educated women. For instance, Patrick, explains, “I, personally, would never date a girl without a bachelor’s degree, I want a progressive woman, I don’t want a woman who just sits and watches soaps while she depends on me for everything.” In this statement, Patrick associates being a stay-at-home parent with doing nothing. Patrick’s attitude corresponds to a widespread belief among many of the students that the work done in the household is not work.

Although most men and women asserted that women need education as much as men, they nevertheless agree that when a woman holds a higher degree than her husband problems emerge. At first, most of the single women interviewed asserted that holding a higher degree than their husbands would not be an issue for them, but they all established that it would without any doubt be a problem for their prospective husbands. For instance, Eba explains that “a man always wants to be the head of the house or something like that, so in the case when they are lower than the women, then they feel like he is not the head of the household, she’s taking everything from him.” Similarly, Claudia argues that if she were to marry someone with a lower educational level than she, “it would create problems in a marriage when a man thinks you are above him.”
Even though, most of these women claim that the problem lies with the men rejecting the idea of a woman holding a higher education degree, it appears that there are other dimensions that need to be examined before we can understand these women’s perspective. For instance, despite the fact that Claudia insists that it depends on the man she also adds, “if you love and respect the man, then there is no problem, but if you have problems it can become an added problem, but if it’s a good relationship, and there are no outside forces trying to force ideas into you, then it will be fine.” In this sentence, Claudia reveals certain conditions under which, a marriage can survive when a woman holds a higher degree than her husband. It seems that respect is a significant factor for Claudia but what is more, her belief that outside forces are significant exposes the power of culture in shaping perceptions about what is acceptable.

The power of culture and societal pressure can be better illustrated by examining the responses other women gave to the issue of earning potential and educational credentials. For instance, Emma, explains that her husband would definitely mind if she earned more money than he does because “he would feel threatened and the threat comes from outside.” By outside, Emma refers to the society-at-large and the pressure from others who would mock him because he has failed to meet the norm of earning a higher wage than his wife. This fear of being shunned or mocked operates as a powerful barrier to social change. The more pressure there is to abide by this culturally constructed ideal of a male breadwinner, the less likely men and women are to challenge it. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the status quo. For instance, Silberschmidt (2001) suggests that the socioeconomic changes that occurred in some parts of East Africa have created a situation whereby men are no longer able to fulfill their
responsibilities as heads of households and breadwinners, as a result, many of “them suffer from feelings of inadequacy and lack of self-esteem” (Silberschmidt 2001: 657).

The fear of not living up to culturally defined notions of masculinity is further demonstrated by examining Daniel’s response to this dilemma. Daniel explains that he wouldn’t be comfortable marrying someone with a higher degree, but he immediately adds, “I think education is not a real big deal, I think it’s going to be more about money, so if she makes more money than me, that would be a problem.” From Daniel’s perspective, when a woman makes more money than her husband, whenever a fight erupts, she will always bring it up. Furthermore, Daniel explains that in his tradition, “the guy is the provider” therefore, if his wife makes more money than he “I would feel less responsible.” While, Daniel is able to freely talk about this issue, Herbert struggled to answer this question. At first, Herbert explains that he would not know how he would react if his wife made more money than him, but after taking a moment to reflect, he asserts, “I have heard people in my culture say that once a woman is a breadwinner, she becomes too forceful and the man no longer has any say in the house.”

Both Daniel and Herbert indicate that money is the source of conflict and not education. Similarly, Joseph expresses his perception on the matter by saying, “I would probably marry someone with a higher level of education, definitely, but it would be someone who wants to stay home.” Joseph wants a marriage partner who is willing to stay home and take care of the children “for about 7 or 8 years” when the children are young. Furthermore, Joseph explains, “it seems like a man’s job to go out and make money” because he considers money-making part of what being a responsible man is about. He firmly states, “I am the protector and the breadwinner.” The concern shared
by these men can be interpreted as fear of losing their sense of worth, which seems to be highly connected with their ability to fulfill their role as providers.

It is important to indicate that not all men expressed the same reasons for rejecting the idea of a woman making more money than her husband. For instance, Peter explained, “I would not have a problem with that because the money would be family money, so it would benefit both of us, the only time I would be bothered is if I was a stay at home father and my wife started bossing me around.” Peter, like Herbert, is concerned that if his wife made more money than he, she would begin to control him. Joseph and Daniel, on the other hand, seem to fear that their identities as men are questioned, when their role as the primary breadwinner is eroded. The only man whose response was completely different from all the others is Paul. Paul narrates that he did experience a time in his life when his wife made more money than he and it did not bother him. When asked to explain how he felt, Paul says that he learned from an early age that nothing was stationary, thus, when that happened he just took it as something he had to adjust to. Similarly, Wendy recounts that there was a time when she made more money than her husband, because he had bought a car and they were deducting a lot of money from his paycheck. From her description, however, it did not make any difference to them because they have both learned that throughout the lifecycle, circumstances change. These two cases suggest that a woman earning more money than her husband is less threatening if it is a temporary situation.

Another case that portrays this complex situation very well is Herbert’s. On one hand, Herbert seems to agree with his cultural norms which hold that when a woman becomes the breadwinner, it can be a problem; yet, at the same time he admits that
without his wife’s ability to handle all the financial needs of his family, he wouldn’t be studying for his Masters. Thus, although her current position as breadwinner would appear threatening in normal circumstances, it is not in this context, because it is enabling Herbert to fulfill his educational goals. Therefore, one can suggest that violating one’s cultural norms is more acceptable when it is temporary and justifiable.

Nevertheless, it seems that some cultural norms are difficult to challenge even as one enters a different contextual setting. For instance, to Faith, what troubles her in the concept of making more money than her husband is the fact that “it’s difficult to succeed in your career and also in taking care of your husband and children.” Faith struggles with the idea of pursuing her educational and career goals, because she thinks it comes at the risk of failing in her responsibilities as wife and mother. Faith doesn’t have children yet, thus, she hopes that before she has children, she will “try to make money” and then after having children “I will do something less demanding.” Her biggest concern is that she doesn’t think she will be happy pursuing a career because she will feel that she is neglecting her family responsibilities.

Most of the single women interviewed also pointed out similar conflicting demands. On one hand, they are pursuing Master’s degrees and many hope to get Ph.D.’s, yet, they faced both internal and external pressures to think about marriage and children before their “eggs dry out.” Narayan (1997) describes this situation very well when she writes that Third World educated women are given contradictory messages. They are encouraged to be confident and assertive yet, at the same time, they are taught conformity. Furthermore, although their education and financial independence are encouraged, they are also perceived as threats to their cultural integration because they
render women unable to be compliant, deferent and submissive which are qualities “deemed essential in good wives” (Narayan, 1997: 8).

Both Claudia and Rachael have experienced these contradicting demands. On one hand, they were encouraged to go to school and excel, on the other, they were also told, “if you don’t learn how to cook, you are not going to get a good man to marry you” or they are constantly asked: “when are you going to get marry and have children”? These statements remind young educated women that in spite of their educational achievements they cannot forget their most important roles, which are wifehood and motherhood.

To survive in these conflicting worlds, most of the young women interviewed reported that they had a powerful family member who encouraged them to pursue their educational and career goals despite the pressure of marriage. For instance, Eba explains that her mother discouraged her from getting a Master’s degree because she believed that a woman had enough education with a bachelor’s degree and should concentrate on getting married. It was Eba’s father who was the force behind her determination to get a Master’s degree: “my father, he always wanted me to go to school, he doesn’t care whether I get married or not, he says it’s up to me.” Similarly, Rachael recounts that if it wasn’t for her father who frequently tells her “if you get your Ph.D. that would be great,” she might have listened to her aunt who constantly counsels her to think about getting married and having children.

From listening to the accounts given by many of the women interviewed, marriage is a powerful force that shapes their life course. The pressure to get married is strong and it operates as a reminder to women that the clock is ticking. For instance, Claudia asserts that after she graduated from her Bachelor’s degree, she and her friends
heard from their respective families, statements such as, “marriage was next” and “who is going to marry you if you get too old”. Thus, for single women such as Rachael, marriage poses a serious dilemma because, on one hand, they want to delay marriage in order to concentrate on their educational and career goals, on the other, the pressure to get married increases as they get older. For married women, this issue takes a different shape. For instance, Faith and Wendy face a lot of guilt because coming to the U.S. to pursue their educational goals has led them to relinquish their family responsibilities temporarily.

From these interviews, one understands the many challenges women face as they try to reconcile their career advancement goals with family responsibilities. It seems that although education and professional advancement are valued for both men and women, it is still a struggle for women to pursue these goals without neglecting their roles as wives and mothers. Another contradiction surrounding the issue of work is that although most participants support women’s education and career participation, many of them were opposed to the idea of a woman making more money than her husband. However, it is important to understand that cultural norms and expectations change from context to context. Thus, when individuals enter different environments, they are able to adapt and alter their strategies to accommodate the demands of their new circumstances. Nevertheless, the need for a supportive environment needs to be supplemented by the presence of an encouraging father-figure in order for women to realize that they have choices.

The crucial role of fathers in daughters’ lives reminds us that change cannot occur without the inclusion of men because their commanding role in the family partially
determines the extent to which daughters overcome societal pressures. As Claudia explains, women have to rise above the ideas they are exposed to as they grow up. Statements such as “I cannot do math, I cannot do sciences,” need to be neutralized by someone who can convince them otherwise. The next section will discuss the subtle yet powerful ways women challenge cultural norms while still continuing to adhere to them.

**Covert Resistance**

Initially, it appeared that most of the women interviewed had resigned themselves to accepting their cultural gender norms. For instance, as mentioned before, many of them expressed their beliefs that it is a woman’s responsibility to perform most of the tasks involved in housework as well as taking on most of the childrearing responsibilities. While such beliefs may be interpreted as an indication of their conformity and support of the status quo, it seems, however, that their awareness of their limitations instead forced them to make wise choices in order to promote their interests while still safeguarding their cultural norms.

For instance, Faith understands the challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities, in fact, she struggles with the idea of focusing too much attention on her professional goals at the risk of neglecting her family duties. However, she was able to come to Ohio University and pursue a higher education because she wanted to inspire her younger sisters to value education. Faith goes on to say that although she was making enough money back home, she chose to come here and study for her Master’s degree because, “I want to show them that education is very important and they can also do it.” Although this decision led Faith to leave her husband temporarily, she was able to justify
it to herself and her family as essential to promote education for herself and her siblings. Thus, although she feels bad about neglecting her spousal duties, education was worth the sacrifice. Likewise, Rachael reveals her determination to pursue her educational goals and reach the highest level of success when she says, “love is not everything, when you choose someone to marry, you have to make sure that they will share your views when it comes to these issues.” Rachael understands that in order to achieve her career goals, she will have to marry wisely otherwise she will encounter resistance rather than the encouragement she needs to succeed. Although Faith and Rachael still support the cultural norms that assign childcare and domestic work to women, they nevertheless take explicit measures to empower themselves. Wendy’s story reveals another important version of resistance.

Wendy is a married woman who believes that it would be ridiculous for her to ask her husband at this point in their lives to go to the kitchen and start cooking. In her own words, she explains, “you can’t start talking things that a man has not heard before.” With this knowledge in mind, Wendy negotiates cultural boundaries by fighting for “the right to have equal opinion in the household.” By equal opinion, Wendy refers to having a voice that is heard in the household so that every decision regarding the children and the household is first discussed by her and her husband before a mutual agreement is reached. For instance, if her husband wants to buy a car, he has to discuss it with her so that they can assess how they can manage this new cost. Through this strategy of consulting one another, Wendy was able to talk her husband into agreeing to support her decision to come and study for her Master’s degree.
Hence, while she protects his masculinity by not asking him to cook or clean or stay home to take care of the children, she uses her weapon of choice, communication, to get what she wants which in this case is education. One can suggest that that the commonality among these women is that they are able to decide for themselves which battles to fight. Therefore, while Wendy fights to keep her voice heard in her household and uses it to pursue her educational goals. Faith fights to promote education for herself and her sisters and Rachael battles to control the obstacles that could divert her attention from her educational and professional goals.

Another powerful example that illustrates how women choose their resistance carefully is again Faith’s story. On one hand, Faith believes that men should be the breadwinners because her culture doesn’t respect a man who doesn’t provide for his family. Furthermore, Faith is unwilling to focus too much attention on her educational and career goals because family comes first. However, Faith announces during the interview that she selected a polygamous marriage over a monogamous one. Unsure what that meant, I asked her to explain her choice and its implications. In her culture, Faith explains that people have a choice whether to have a polygamous marriage or a monogamous marriage under civil law. This decision is very important because it determines the nature of the relationship between husband and wife. Choosing a polygamous marriage implies that a husband can have multiple wives but each wife is able to own her properties and decide for herself how to spend her money. However, in a monogamous marriage, husband and wife have to share everything and so all the family’s wealth is managed under the family’s name. Although Faith’s husband wanted to have a monogamous marriage, Faith insisted that they opt for a polygamous marriage instead
because “I don’t want my husband to tell me how to spend my money, I don’t want his permission to buy a car to my mum. I would want his opinion, but if we disagree, I still want to do it.”

Faith admits that choosing a polygamous marriage was a difficult decision to make because both options came with costs and benefits. On one hand, a monogamous marriage offers the protection of being in an exclusive marriage, yet it fails to provide the freedom to own and manage one’s wealth, which is exactly what Faith wanted. A polygamous marriage, on the other hand, brings more opportunities to be self-sufficient but it comes with the possibility of having to share a husband. This alternative would not be a problem if Faith did not mind sharing a husband. However, it seems that the idea of sharing a husband with another woman troubles Faith because she states, “it’s just a paper, he knows that I don’t want him to marry someone else.” Although she dismisses it as “just a paper,” Faith knows that her husband could acquire another wife under the law. Thus, while Faith can now enjoy the freedom of spending her money as she wishes, this financial independence came at a potentially high price, if her husband decides to get another wife.

This story depicts the struggles involved in making positive choices among alternatives that can all be potentially detrimental. Yet, making these choices is an important aspect of negotiating gender boundaries. As depicted in the stories described above, women are constantly required to make choices that will enable them to balance the multiple demands they incur as mothers, wives and employers. Some women like Rachael hope to marry someone who will enable them to pursue their career goals so that
they can have both a family and a career. Others, like Wendy, adopt a subservient role that in reality masks a powerful voice that gets heard when it needs to be.

Each of the women interviewed encounter some form of resistance. Some are told by family members to settle down and focus on building a family, while others are frequently reminded that their biological clock is ticking. Men, too, encounter some forms of resistance. Their resistance is often in the form of the “generalized other” which dictates to them proper behavior. Even men such as Paul and Peter, who are willing to change their gender role attitudes in order to accommodate the demands of a new social environment, are frequently reminded to follow their cultural norms.

As Claudia explains, “wherever you go, you are reminded where you come from.” However, coming to the United States seems to have for the most part enabled these students to experience an environment that has less restrictive gender norms. Yet, one wonders to what extent coming to the U.S. has affected these students’ gender role attitudes. In the next section, I will examine whether these students believe that living in the U.S. has affected their gender role attitudes.

**Western Influence on Gender Role Attitudes**

The literature on gender role attitudes tells us that it is difficult to evaluate how attitudes change across space and time. One cannot know whether individuals who are exposed to a Western environment focus on their education as a result of their experience in that environment or whether such individuals seek education because they already value education. Furthermore, as mentioned in the methodology section, the fact that this study is not longitudinal prevents us from making broad conclusions, because we cannot
measure whether students’ experiences in the U.S will have a lasting effect on them especially when they return home. Among the students interviewed, some claimed that coming to the United States had not affected their attitudes about the roles of men and women, while others admitted that their stay in the U.S had indeed influenced their thinking about gender roles.

For instance, Eba explains that she was surprised that “gender issues still exist here.” Prior to coming to the United States, Eba thought that American women were very independent; however, her time in the U.S has taught her that they, too, still struggle to achieve autonomy. As she compares American women with women in her country, Eba reveals how much she has benefited from this change of environment. For instance, she explains that while American women take steps to empower themselves by getting an education and building their professional lives, women in her country are afraid that if they are highly educated and competitive in the workforce, “they may not find a husband.” Therefore, although she claims that coming here has not affected her perception of the roles of men and women, it seems that it has, because she is able to recognize that women from different parts of the world experience different challenges because of their diverse circumstances.

Therefore, since context matters in determining the nature and intensity of the gender hierarchy, it is perhaps reasonable to suggest that some environments expose individuals to less restrictive gender norms than others. For instance, Rachael explains that coming to the U.S. has allowed her to be more open-minded. She narrates that prior to her arrival in the U.S. she thought “that gays and lesbians were not natural because I had never been exposed to them, or known about them back home, but when I started
talking to people about it, and learning more about them, I came to understand and accept them.” However, it is important to know that Rachael comes from a family that is relatively liberal thus perhaps her ability to embrace new ideas derives from the way she was socialized as well.

The other two participants who also stated that coming to the U.S had affected their gender-role attitudes are Paul and Claudia. Both Claudia and Paul explain that one cannot go from one environment to another without being changed. For instance, Claudia asserts, “when you are in an African environment, that’s what you have, so you base on that and make sure you don’t get out of it, you come into another environment and you realize that you have less forces against you.” In other words, although, Claudia still experiences the pressure to get married, the pressure is weaker in the U.S because Claudia lives in an environment that encourages her to focus on her other goals. In contrast, Paul explains that he began to notice changes in his attitude regarding gender roles when he moved from the village to the city before coming to Ohio University. Paul explains that in school he learned about romantic love, which he did not know about in the village. He then continued to change as he moved to the U.S where he learned to adjust and become a stay-home dad for sometime.

It is interesting, however, that while Paul attributes his ability to adjust his thinking to his transition from village to city and city to America, Peter accredits his liberal thinking to his childhood socialization. He insists that his parents, especially his mother, shaped his current perceptions on gender roles by making sure he participated in all the household chores. However, it seems that Peter is unaware of the effect of his current environment in strengthening what he learned as a child because as stated earlier,
Peter and his wife are both Ph.D. students and sharing domestic responsibilities is imperative to their survival.

Both socialization and context-based experiences shape individuals’ attitudes on gender roles. Perhaps socialization operates as a foundation that determines how the adjustment to new environments will be experienced. For instance, Wendy explains that coming here has not changed her thinking about gender roles, because she doesn’t “want to go into this radical thing of oh, I have my rights, women should fight for their rights.” As mentioned before, Wendy learned from her mother to adopt gender strategies that at first, seem to be characterized by extreme submissiveness, but in reality mask a hidden boldness that enables her to get what she wants. Thus, for Wendy, adopting the Western notion of resistance may not seem appropriate since her upbringing has led her to value another approach that she maintains worked for her mother. Wendy’s case illustrates what Arndt (2002) talks about when she writes, “African women expand the horizon of feminist engagement by posing new questions and imposing new demands” (Arndt, 2002: 10). Thus, as Wendy challenges Western notions and their relevance to a different political, economic and social location, one can begin to understand why some African women have been reluctant to adopt the label “feminist.” For instance, Emma explains that although coming here has made her aware of how “things are different here, women in this country are more aware of their rights than women back home,” she would “not support feminist ideas.” It seems that both Emma and Wendy are distrustful of Western concepts which they perceive as promoting a commonality of struggle and resistance that perhaps doesn’t exist.
While Wendy’s and Emma’s experiences in the U.S. lead them to question the applicability of Western concepts on an African context, Joseph sees the Western context as confirming the need to reinforce a traditional gender division of labor. He asserts that “coming to America makes me see why it’s important to have a mother stay home,” Joseph goes on to say that he would feel more comfortable knowing that his children are spending more time with their mother than school or television. Unlike his peers who are counting on their parents and other family members to help out with childrearing duties, Joseph doubts that such help will be available to him because everyone, including his parents and aunts, are working. Joseph’s critique of current methods of delegating parental responsibilities to other people is understandable, yet surprising because none of the other participants were troubled by the idea of entrusting their children to maids or other family members. In fact, one can suggest that many participants hoped for such alternatives because they would be able to fulfill their career goals without having to address the gender division of labor in their households.

Discussion

The goal of these interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the gender role attitudes held by African students at Ohio University. Such an understanding was sought to identify the main factors that shape and influence gender role attitudes. The literature on gender role attitudes tells us that these perceptions are constantly changing due to a variety of factors such as marital and occupation status, socialization and contextual experiences. These interviews confirmed the ever-changing and complex nature of gender role attitudes.
The stories shared by the participants have illustrated the complex mechanisms men and women use to challenge cultural norms while still consenting to accepted gender expectations. As Daniel Explains, “we should both be educated, either on the same level, or she is not far behind me.” This sentence summarizes this dilemma very well. On one hand, the majority of participants try to confront the cultural norms that deny equal educational opportunities to women. Yet, at the same time, they do not seek to upset structure and content or their cultural norms. The idea of a woman being superior to her husband in the context of careers remains disconcerting for many of the participants. However, all the students interviewed asserted that they would vote for a woman President if she were qualified.

It is interesting that the notion of a woman President was less threatening than the idea of a woman earning more money than her husband. Perhaps it is easier to accept a threat to cultural norms, which is abstract, as opposed to one that is personal and therefore has the potential to ostracize a family or an individual. While it is tempting to speculate that these men and women will continue to alter their beliefs and attitudes as they encounter new conditions and environments, such assumptions would be premature and would require longitudinal investigation.

Nevertheless, by critically examining these interviews, and comparing and contrasting the participants’ responses, it is possible to reach cautious conclusions and recommendations for future researchers. For most of the men and women interviewed, regardless of their marital status, domestic work and childcare tasks were avenues through which they re-affirmed their gender. For instance, the majority of women agreed that cooking, cleaning and childrearing were a woman’s primary responsibilities.
Similarly, most of the men supported the notion that the vast majority of domestic and childcare belonged to women except tasks such as gardening and house repairs, which they believe, are appropriate for men. The underlying assumption for both men and women is that tasks and responsibilities within the household are divided along cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity.

The gender division of labor was even more evident in respect to childcare. Almost all the men and women interviewed asserted that women have a natural capacity to express love through this work. Consequently, by defining childrearing as love, most of the participants (both men and women) did not perceive it to be work. According to West and Zimmerman (1987), men and women “do gender” because “their competence as members of society is hostage to its production” (1987:4). However, such gender-based performances remain contextual because different cultural environments expect different forms of masculinity and femininity. For instance, the two married men who are completing their Ph.D.’s observed that they have had to adjust their cultural beliefs in order to accommodate the demands of a different environment.

The challenge in reconciling conflicting demands is clearly illustrated in the interviews held with single women. Most of the single women stressed the difficulty of trying to plan for their professional careers when they are continually pressured to focus on their future roles as wives and mothers. Although single women are reluctant to challenge cultural norms that assign them future domestic and childrearing responsibilities, they are determined to make education a contested ground. As stated before, both single and married women interviewed choose their battles carefully, to avoid contesting the basic values of their culture. For instance, married women have
temporarily sacrificed their marital and maternal responsibilities for education, while single women have delayed marriage in order to focus on their education and careers.

Although these women do not challenge some fundamental aspects of their patriarchal society, they do exercise their resistance in other ways. Selecting which battles to fight is a delicate task, one that requires women to navigate through cultural norms without appearing threatening. For instance, the majority of women interviewed desire education because they perceive it as holding the key to opportunities that will advance their goals; yet, few of them are willing to address issues such as “sharing housework.” It appears that single women have internalized the cultural dictates surrounding the household and childrearing activities, while married women are afraid that challenging the gendered nature of these tasks might bring shame and disrespect to their household. Therefore, both married and single women cautiously seek to achieve their independence while still obedient to the same norms that restrict their autonomy.

Women have adopted education as their weapon of choice. Although the benefits of education cannot be diminished, one wonders if education gives women the tools they need or whether it simply fosters the illusion that equality is achieved. In other words, once women acquire an education, they assume there is no need to challenge other aspects of gender relations; yet, the fact that they are still held responsible for childrearing and domestic work restricts their educational and career goals.

However, most men interviewed suggested that education is slowly becoming a powerful threat to the traditional gender division of labor in the household. They explained that although they expect women to be educated, they do not want them to earn more money than men. Nevertheless, the interviews with married men and women
revealed that such differences in earning potential are not always threatening. For instance, Wendy indicated that her husband earned less money than she for some time due to a car purchase. Similarly, Herbert explained how his wife is currently the breadwinner because he is away from home, studying for his Master’s degree. Likewise, Peter talked about how he and his wife expect whoever gets a job first to work while the other stays home with the young children. These married students share one common experience: they have all learned to adjust their thinking and behavior in order to meet the demands of a new situation or environment. Unlike most of their single peers who expect their relatives to help them raise their children, these married students have experienced moments when financial resources were scarce and family assistance was unavailable. Therefore, the thinking of married students seems to be more flexible because they have lived through situations that required them to alter their gender strategies.

From these interviews, it is evident that context shapes how gender role attitudes are perceived. As individuals experience different environments and circumstances, their views on gender roles vary. However, it is still not clear whether the effects of such contextual-based experiences are momentary or long-term. For instance, for the married men who have learned to change diapers and wash babies, what will happen to them when they return home? Will they carry on these tasks in their home countries? Or will they yield to societal norms and pressures that consider such activities to be unfit for men?

Furthermore, what will the single men and women do, if upon their return home, they do not receive the support network they expect, or have enough money to hire a
house cleaner? Will they address the issue of sharing duties in the household? If so, how will they negotiate this sharing? In addition, will their respective cultures facilitate or impede their attempts to find a mutual compromise? These questions confirm the need to conduct further investigation on gender role attitudes, particularly among individuals who are exposed to different cultural environments, so that researchers can determine the long-term effects of a change in circumstance and environment on gender role attitudes.
Chapter Five: Overall Conclusion

This study was designed to investigate gender role attitudes among African students at Ohio University. Some of the questions addressed by this study were: how do African students perceive the roles of men and women in society, and what are the factors that shape their views on gender roles. To answer these questions, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Qualitative data were collected to examine detailed opinions of twelve students on their gender role attitudes, while quantitative data were gathered to measure the extent to which African men and women hold traditional or nontraditional gender role attitudes.

Another major goal of this study was to add to the body of research that has been done on gender role attitudes. Many researchers have suggested that gender role attitudes matter, because they are internalized and shape the way individuals act out their roles as men and women (Kaufman 2000). Furthermore, the literature on gender role attitudes suggests that these attitudes are shaped by a variety of factors such as socialization, marital status and professional and educational attainment.

Although the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other similar groups of African students because of the limited sample size, its results have broadened our understanding of the current challenges African men and women face as they struggle to articulate a version of masculinity or femininity which best fits their cultural and contextual circumstances. Both Western and nonwestern scholars stress the need to examine gender within its cultural and historical context, thus, the need to consider both students’ background as well as their experiences in the United States.
One of the main challenges involved in examining gender role attitudes is the fact that they are constantly changing across time and space. Additionally, social scientists indicate that it is difficult to identify the effects of attitudes on behavior because behavior also influences attitudes. With these intricacies in mind, this study combined qualitative and quantitative methods to try to make sense of gender role attitudes among African students at Ohio University.

Overall, the current research has produced valuable information regarding gender role perceptions. The interviews confirmed the complex nature of gender. In respect to domestic work, we learned from the participants that sharing household tasks is a concept shaped by context. Furthermore, the interviews with married students confirmed West’s and Zimmerman’s notion of “doing gender”, because although men and women follow a script that contains the norms of their particular cultures, these norms are always changing due to social, cultural and contextual changes. However, even as gender norms are transformed with time and across cultures and situations, they are also reinforced.

For instance, the majority of women agreed that cooking, cleaning and childrearing were a woman’s primary responsibilities. Similarly, most of the men supported the notion that the vast majority of domestic and childcare belonged to women except tasks such as gardening and house repairs, which they believe, are appropriate for men. To understand these deeply rooted assumptions, Greenstein (1996) argues that an individual’s gender ideology shapes how the division of household labor is perceived. For instance, if a woman is socialized to believe that men and women should occupy different spheres of influence, she will not perceive the unequal share of work in the household as unfair. Thus, the beliefs that individuals hold regarding the appropriate roles
for men and women determine whether the unequal share of household chores is accepted or contested.

The nature of gender division of labor is even more complex in regard to childcare. Almost all the men and women interviewed asserted that women have a natural capacity to express love through this work. Consequently, by defining childrearing as love, most of the participants did not perceive it to be work. This finding confirms Erickson (1999)’ suggestion that women may not question the unequal distribution of care work, because performing this work is central to how they construct their gendered self. Erickson (2005:34) goes on to say that as long as “femininity is conceptualized in ways that emphasize care, concern and connection to others,” women will continue to hold and be held responsible for childcare.

Therefore, for women who wish to pursue their educational and professional goals, the challenge is to achieve their dreams without violating cultural norms that will expect them to focus primarily on their childrearing responsibilities. Narayan (1998) clearly explains this dilemma, when she says that nonwestern women are encouraged to excel educationally and professionally yet, they are still expected to concentrate a large proportion of their time and energy on their roles as wives and mothers. To resolve these conflicting demands, the majority of the single men and women hope that they will have access to a family support system or be able hire a maid. The need to address the gender division of labor in the household is deferred by the availability of such alternatives. However, the issue of sharing household labor becomes unavoidable when individuals enter situations or environments that lack the supply of cheap domestic workers or the presence of a support network.
An in-depth analysis of the interviews also revealed that both married and single women cautiously choose their battles in order to achieve their goals without appearing threatening. The fact that women have to design covert strategies to achieve their goals suggests that the very core of gender inequality is a struggle over power and resources. Wilkie (1993) confirms this element of power in gender relations, when he writes that men tend to be supportive of their wives’ economic participation as long as it is defined as earning extra cash. In other words, female participation in higher education and paid work is welcomed as long as it does not threaten the superiority and authority of men in the household.

Yet, some studies have suggested that as more women share the provider role with men, the trend toward a more egalitarian household division of labor will continue to increase (Zuo and Tang, 2000). Unfortunately, this study clearly illustrated that there is a strong resistance to women’s financial advancement because it endangers men’s dominant position in the family. Nonetheless, the interviews with married individuals validated Connell’s (2004) and Butler’s (1999) assertion that context is a powerful force that shapes the way men and women perceive their role in society and within the household. As individuals experience different environments and circumstances, their views on gender roles change, at least temporarily.

While qualitative results suggest that gender role attitudes are highly shaped by context, quantitative results indicate that male participants hold more nontraditional gender role attitudes than women. However, a comparison of qualitative results with quantitative results illustrates a more complex situation. Examining men’s responses in the interview analysis reveal that quantitative data failed to capture their fear of losing
their financial dominance in the household. Similarly, although women appear to hold more conservative gender role attitudes in the survey results, the interview analysis shows that they exercise their resistance through the pursuit of educational goals. Thus, women’s lack of support for equal sharing of household tasks cannot be interpreted as an indication of their complete support for traditional gender role attitudes because it hides a veiled resistance.

Therefore, comparing qualitative and quantitative research suggests that gender role attitudes are too complex to be categorized as either “nontraditional” or “traditional”. Individuals can hold traditional gender role opinions in one context, yet still support nontraditional gender roles in another. Perhaps one can conclude that African men and women studying at Ohio University hold gender role attitudes that simultaneously reject and support traditional gender roles. However, these individuals continue to be guided by the norms and beliefs of their particular cultures even though their gender role attitudes are a product of contextual factors as well.

Marital status, presence of children, availability of family support networks and cultural context all determine how masculinity and femininity are defined and performed. Furthermore, the men and women interviewed exhibited “agency,” they are able to resist and transform their perspectives on gender roles in order to adjust and adapt to new demands and situations. As some of the male participants have stated, living in the U.S. has taught them to change diapers and become stay-home fathers. Nonetheless, it seems that challenging cultural beliefs remains a difficult process, one that is characterized by a series of small progressive steps that lead simultaneously to success and loss.
Addressing gender inequality in Third World countries is a sensitive issue. These cultures resist change in their traditions, partly because they fear being perceived as “Westernized.” For instance, Narayan (1997:19) suggests that Third World women often oppose change to their status, because subscribing to their traditional values allows them to remain “untainted by Westernization and its implied pollution.” Consequently, the construction of a national identity against “Westernization” and “western culture” prevents ideological changes from occurring because upholding traditional gender roles is defined as central to preserving national identity and cultural pride.

It appears that African men and women begin to question or challenge culturally assigned gender roles when the need for such a change is of the essence. For instance, women are able to make education a priority in their lives because of its indisputable rewards. Similarly, men participate more in domestic and child rearing activities when their help is indispensable. This suggests that changing gender role attitudes is a process that can only be successful if it is perceived to be essential, thereby minimizing its potential threat. Narayan (1997) suggests that in the Third World contexts, efforts should be made to “think critically about the elements that should be preserved and those that need to be challenged, to distinguish cultural changes that should be valued from those that should be resisted, opening up these questions to widespread political debate” (1997:31). Narayan’s suggestion needs to be taken seriously, because barriers to gender equality can be broken if all elements of society are mobilized in the search for sustainable strategies. Many African countries are determined to promote gender equality and although talk is not action, discussion and agreement are the basis of action.
Unfortunately, one cannot expect progress to be made if the gender relations in the family remain unchanged.

The overall results of this study clearly show that gender segregation is an integral part of socialization. Therefore, any initiative to sensitize people on gender issues should first address the way children are nurtured by their families, teachers and the society at large to believe that men and women should hold different responsibilities, tasks and privileges. Okeke-Ihejirika (2004:178) suggests that education in Africa should promote critical thinking so that boys and girls can begin to ask the following questions: “is culture perpetually stagnant? Must things remain the way they are for no clear reason? Should tradition serve us or must we serve tradition? Must we bow to tradition regardless of the burden it places on the shoulders of certain groups? Might tradition be invoked in some instances as a platform on which we can stand to fight our cause?” These questions are vital in challenging gender biases, yet they are difficult to address, because they confront patriarchal norms that are still uncontested by groups and institutions that are not ready to challenge its ideology.
References


Slavkin, Michael and Anne Stright D. 2000. “Gender Role Differences in College Students from One- and Two-Parent Families.” Sex Roles 42.


Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire:

Instructions: Please complete this survey (check the appropriate box to indicate your response) and email it back to me at pi323704@ohio.edu. Or print it out and complete it with a pen and drop it in the box at the entrance of the 4th floor library (my name will be on the box) near the directory.

☐ Male ☐ Female Age: ______ years

Education level: ☐ Bachelors (Specify in what) ------------------------
☐ Masters (Specify in what) -----------------------------
☐ PhD (Specify in what) ----------------------------------

How long have you been in the United States? --------------------

Have you worked or studied in other western countries before ☐ Yes ☐ No

Country of birth: ______ Area of upbringing: ☐ Big city ☐ Village ☐ Small City

Marital status: ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Separated ☐ Dating ☐ Single

Number of children________

How important is your particular religious belief to you?

☐ Very Important ☐ Important ☐ Not Important

Religion:

☐ None ☐ Catholic ☐ Protestant ☐ Muslim ☐ Other (Specify)________

Parents’ education level

Father ☐ None ☐ Below high school diploma ☐ A high school diploma ☐ Some University ☐ A University degree

Mother ☐ None ☐ Below high school diploma ☐ A high school diploma ☐ Some University ☐ A University degree
The statements below describe attitudes toward the roles of men and women in society. There is no right or wrong answer, only opinions. Please indicate how you feel about each statement by circling (1) strongly agree (2) agree mildly (3) disagree (4) disagree mildly (5) strongly disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree Mildly</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Mildly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Both men and women should Share household tasks.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The Husband’s role is to provide financial Security to his wife and children.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A woman needs her husband’s permission to engage in political affairs.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Education is not as valuable for women as it is for men.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. It is crucial for every family to have at least one son.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Young children are likely to suffer if their mothers work outside the home.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A wife’s role is to be a homemaker.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Women do not need their husbands’ permission to engage in business activities.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Men should share child rearing responsibilities.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Girls are entitled to the same opportunities and freedom given to boys.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Sons should be given more encouragement than daughters to go to University.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. If husband and wife both work, the husband’s job comes first, even if that means the wife might have to limit her career or decline a promotion.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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Appendix B

Sample Interview Questions for Married Participants

1. Do you have children? How many?
2. How do you and your spouse share childrearing and domestic responsibilities such as cleaning the house, cooking and washing the kids?
3. Are you satisfied with the way you share these tasks? Is there anything you would want to see changed?
4. What do you think about men who stay home to take care of their children? Would you consider such an alternative?
What do you think about women who stay home to take care of their children? Would you consider such an alternative?
5. Describe to me how you think men and women should decide about:
   1. The number of children to have
   2. The way money should be spent
   3. The way children should be disciplined
6. Are children important for a marriage to be satisfactory? Would you be fulfilled if you had daughters only and no sons?
7. As a parent, how long did you take off from work? When did you decide to return to work? How did you reach your decision to return home?
8. How important is your spouse’s level of education and income? Do you think a man should have a higher degree and earn more money than his wife?
9. If a woman were educated and qualified as a leader, would you vote for her as President of your country?
10. How have your ideas about the roles of men and women in the family and in society change?
11. What do you think has contributed the most to your current ideas about the proper roles of men and women in society?
12. Do you think that gender inequality is an issue? If so how do you think it should be addressed?

Interview Questions for Single Participants

1. If you were married, how would you share the housework and childrearing responsibilities with your spouse?
2. If you became a parent, would you take some time off from work? If so, for how long and why?
3. What do you think about men who stay home to take care of their children? Would you consider such an alternative?
4. What do you think about women who stay home to take care of their children? Would you consider such an alternative?
5. Describe to me how you think men and women should decide about:
   1. The number of children to have
   2. The way money should be spent
   3. The way children should be disciplined
6. Are children important for a marriage to be satisfactory? Would you be fulfilled if you had daughters only and no sons?
7. How important is your spouse's level of education and income? Do you think a man should have a higher degree and earn more money than his wife?
8. If a woman were educated and qualified as a leader, would you vote for her as President of your country?
9. How have your ideas about the roles of men and women in the family and in society change?
10. What do you think has contributed the most to your current ideas about the proper roles of men and women in society?
11. Do you think that gender inequality is an issue? If so how do think it should be addressed?
Appendix C

Statement of Voluntary Participation and Confidentiality.

My name is Pamela Inaterama and I am a Sociology Graduate Student at Ohio University. My thesis research is about African students’ attitudes toward gender roles. For this research, I designed a short survey questionnaire that will need to be filled out by you if you choose to participate in this study. Your participation is highly valued and appreciated as well as voluntary and confidential. If you choose to participate, please print out the survey questionnaire and fill it out. After you have completed it please turn it in to the information desk of the second floor library. To preserve your anonymity, I ask that you do not write your name or any other information that could be used to identify you on the survey. By completing this survey and dropping it in the designated area (second floor library information desk) you will be demonstrating your consent to participate in this first part of the research.

For the second part of the research, I am also looking for volunteers who would be willing to participate in a short interview that will only last about 30 minutes. The questions in the interview are designed to supplement the ones in the survey. Your participation is again voluntary and highly valued and appreciated. If you do choose to participate in this second part of my research study, please fill out the interview request form below and drop it along with your survey on the second floor library information desk. You will be contacted and an appointment will be scheduled. The interviews will not be videotaped but if you feel comfortable they will be audio taped. Thank you in advance for your participation. If you have any questions feel free to contact me at pi323704@ohio.edu or at Pamela_i@hotmail.com.
Appendix D

Interview Request Form

For those of you who wish to volunteer for the second part of the research, you will be asked to participate in a short semi-structured interview that will only last for about 30 minutes. Please fill out the interview request form below and drop it along with your completed survey in the box located on the fourth floor library entrance. Alternatively, you can also send me an email telling me that you are willing to participate in the interview, you will be contacted, and an appointment will be scheduled. The questions in the interview are designed to supplement the ones in the survey. Your participation is again voluntary and highly valued and appreciated. The interviews will be audio taped only if you feel comfortable. Thank you in advance for your participation. If you have any questions feel free to contact me at pi323704@ohio.edu. or at Pamela_i@hotmail.com.

Interview Request Form

I am willing to participate in the interview part of the research
Yes    No

Contact information: Name: ______________

Email: ______________

Phone Number: ______________
APPENDIX E

Ohio University Consent Form

Title of Research: A Foot in each world: Gender role attitudes Among African men and women studying at Ohio University
Principal Investigator: Pamela Inaterama
Co-Investigator: 
Department: Sociology/Anthropology

Federal and university regulations require signed consent for participation in research involving human subjects. After reading the statements below, please indicate your consent by signing this form.

The goal of this research project is to broaden our understanding of the gender role perspectives of African men and women who come to further their studies at Ohio University. The interviews will consist of semi structured questions that will be audio-taped for research purposes. This is the only time you will be interviewed; after the interview, you will not be contacted again.

The questions in the interview will be about your beliefs and attitudes as an African student about gender roles. Thus, you should expect questions that ask you about your thoughts and ideas about the roles of men and women in the workplace, and in the household sharing of child rearing and domestic responsibilities. If you feel uncomfortable, you may stop the interview at any time.

At no time will your name be released to anyone other than the immediate interviewer. From that point on, the data you provide will be identified by number only. The tapes will be destroyed once the project is complete.

There is no compensation for participating in this research.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Pamela Inaterama at pi323704@ohio.edu or 740-566-8175 or Ann Tickamyer at tickamye@ohio.edu or 740-593-1382.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

I certify that I have read and understand this consent form and agree to participate as a subject in the research described. I agree that known risks to me have been explained to my satisfaction and I understand that no compensation is available from Ohio University and its employees for any injury resulting from my participation in this research. I certify that I am 18 years of age or older. My participation in this research is given voluntarily. I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of
any benefits to which I may otherwise be entitled. I certify that I have been given a copy of this consent form to take with me.

Signature _____________________ Date __________________

Printed Name__________________