THE AFRICAN BRAIN DRAIN AND THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF SKILLED MIGRATION

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Abstract

The rapid rate at which educated Africans are migrating to the West has garnered much attention among scholars and has been termed ‘brain drain’. This thesis presents two arguments. First, understandings of brain drain from the African continent must be rooted in a historical context. The problems that the continent faces today have been shaped by key historical events including slavery and colonialism. Secondly, the impact of brain drain extends beyond the cost-benefit analysis related to remittances and loss of investments to the countries involved. Brain drain has significant social impacts on African immigrants in the diaspora. As such, it is important to highlight some of the triumphs and challenges that characterize the migrant experience.
First and foremost, I thank God for the infinite grace and mercy He bestows upon me. The completion of this work would not have been possible without Him. To my supervisor, Professor Njoki Wane, thank you for your guidance and for expressing confidence in my work. I am grateful to my family for their unwavering love and support throughout this process. To my parents: you have instilled in me an insatiable thirst for knowledge and a love of learning. Thank you for your words of encouragement. To my brothers: Tsone, Ani, Timi and Ejuaye – thank you for infusing my life with joy and laughter. Timi, thank you for your thoughtful feedback. I love you all. I must also express gratitude to my friends who have cheered me on right from the beginning. I feel so blessed to have you in my life. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Brain Drain from the African Continent

Africans are moving to western countries at alarming rates. According to the World Bank (2007), “the official estimate of documented ‘voluntary’ African immigrants in North America and Europe is about 3 million – one million in the U.S.A., 282,600 in Canada, and 1.7 million in Europe (the figure for Europe does not include immigrants from North Africa)” (2). In the United States, the majority of Africans (36%) come from West Africa; 24% come from East Africa, 22% from North Africa, 8% from Southern Africa and 3% from Central Africa (World Bank, 2007). The majority of Africans in the US are Nigerians with a population of 134,940, followed by Ethiopians (69,5530), Ghanaians (65,572), South Africans (63,000) and Sierra-Leoneans (20,831) (World Bank, 2007). A similar pattern of distribution is present in the United Kingdom and arguably in Canada as well (World Bank, 2007). More specifically, the number of highly skilled or educated Africans migrating to the West has dramatically increased over the last four decades. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) over 300,000 African professionals live outside of the continent, and approximately 20,000 African professionals migrate to western countries every year (Ite, 2002; Jumare, 1997; Tebeje, n.d.). This sort of movement has been termed ‘brain drain’. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2013) ‘brain drain’ is defined as “the situation in which large numbers of educated and very skilled people leave their own country to live and work in another where pay and conditions are better”.

The concept of brain drain was first used by the British Royal Society to describe a situation in the 1950s, where scientists, doctors, engineers and other skilled individuals were migrating from Europe to the United States and Canada in search of employment (Gibson and McKenzie, 2011). After the Second World War, an estimated 100,000 highly skilled
Europeans migrated to the United States (Kaba, 2004). Many of these educated Europeans did not return and those who completed their education in the United States had no intention of returning (Kaba, 2004). This migration from Europe to North America, however, did not last long (Tucho, 2009).

Today, 40% of some of Africa’s brightest minds live outside of the continent (Benedict & Upkere, 2012). Moreover, “there are more African scientists and engineers working in the United States than there are in Africa” (El-Khawas, 2004:38). Thus it is not surprising that Africans have been reported to be “the most educated ethnic group in the United States” (El-Khawas, 2004:38). In fact:

According to a 2001 U.S. Census Bureau report, 94.9% of these African immigrants aged 25 and over have at least a high school diploma compared to 87% of the American population. The proportion of the 70,000 Africans in the United States (as of march 2000) aged 25 and over with at least a bachelors degree was 49.3%, substantially higher than the average for the general population of 25.6%, and other foreign born populations in the country such as Asians (44.9%) (Kaba, 2007:84).

Reports have also shown that, “87 percent of Africa’s skilled migrants who enter the United States are between 25 and 50 years old, with an average migrant age of 35 years old” (Arthur, 2010:62). The age range of skilled African migrants in Canada and the United Kingdom reflect a similar pattern (Arthur, 2010). This type of migration is understood to be a problem because it deprives the home country of essential professionals and results in billions of dollars in lost revenue.

Brain drain from the African continent became the subject of attention between 1960 and 1965 when 27,000 educated Africans migrated to the West (El-Khawas, 2004). This migration became more pronounced during the mid 1980s when Africans who had travelled abroad for the sole purpose of furthering their education, did not return to their home country. Between 1986 and 1996, almost half (44%) of Africans who completed their PhD abroad chose to remain abroad (World Bank, 2007). Reports show that “from 1999 to 2001, out of 34,649 non U.S.-citizen doctorate recipients in the United States, those from Africa
accounted for 1,515 (4.4%)” (Kaba, 2011:188). The World Bank (2007) also reveals that, “this incidence of no-return has been on the rise in the last 10 years with the result that more than one third of Africa’s highly qualified human resources are presently in the Diaspora” (3). Currently, it is estimated that “more than forty thousand Africans with PhDs now live outside the continent” (El-Khawas, 2004:42). Between 1985 and 1990, 60,000 doctors, nurses, engineers, academics and other highly skilled Africans migrated out of the continent in search of better standards of living (Nunn, 2005). According to El-Khawas (2004), migration during this period was said to be as high as 80,000. By the late 1980s, about thirty percent of educated Africans had migrated to Europe and “Sudan lost 17 percent of doctors and dentists, 20 percent of university teaching staff, 30 percent of engineers and 45 percent of surveyors in 1978; 60 percent of Ghanaian doctors trained in the early 80s are now abroad” (Ntuli 2004:7). Of the 100,000 African professionals reported to be in the United States, 21,000 are estimated to be Nigerian physicians (Nunn, 2005). Furthermore, “there are more Sierra-Leonean doctors practicing in the Chicago area than in Sierra-Leone itself” (Nunn, 2005:32). Grant (2006) notes that Witwatersrand medical school in South Africa has lost up to 45% of its graduates to migration since 1975. In the span of three years (1999-2002), the University of South Africa lost a staggering total of 100,000 professionals including doctors, engineers, scientists, academics and accountants (El-Khawas, 2004).

The problem with this phenomenon is that the African continent is being deprived of the very skilled professionals it needs the most. This ever-growing rate of skilled migration to the west, poses significant benefits and challenges for Africans at home and in the diaspora. Potential benefits include economic stability and improved standard of living, while some challenges may include over-qualification in the labor market and separation from family members. This realization sparked my interest in the topic of brain drain.
The topic of my thesis is inspired by what I find to be the countless contradictions that characterize the African migrant experience. As a Nigerian woman who immigrated to Canada in my early teens, I am fascinated by the diverse stories of Africans moving to the West in pursuit of occupational and educational opportunities. Some of these narratives range from inspiring stories of educated African migrants successfully establishing themselves and occupying influential positions in the West, to heart breaking stories of African doctors, engineers, bankers and PhD holders relegated to working in jobs that often do not require a high school diploma in the west. I have been moved by these stories of triumph, loss, perseverance and fortitude, as I too share in some of these experiences. As a result, I started asking myself a number of questions: What motivates us to migrate to the West in the first place? What impact does this type of migration have on our home countries and the host countries we migrate to? And most importantly: How does migration personally affect our lives as Africans in the diaspora and will we ever return to our country of origin? Finding answers to these questions became the impetus for my thesis on brain drain.

In investigating answers to these questions, I found that in order to gain a more complete picture of the phenomenon of brain drain, it must be understood in its historical context. The history of slavery and colonialism has undoubtedly shaped the current state of affairs on the continent and the relationship Africa has with the rest of the world. Nelson Mandela captures this idea so eloquently when he states that:

“For centuries, an ancient continent has bled from many gaping sword wounds. At an earlier time, it [Africa] lost millions of its most able sons and daughters to a trade in slaves, which defined these Africans as fit for slavery because they were African. To this day, we continue to lose some of the best among ourselves because the lights in the developed world shine brighter” (1996:3).

We need to acknowledge the role of historical events in shaping the present and the future, in order to begin to have honest conversations about the real impact of brain drain on the
countries involved and what the future holds for the next generation of Africans. In keeping with this point, we must also understand brain drain beyond the impact it has on source countries and destination countries. Brain drain is not merely the movement of “brains” from one country to another, but rather the movement of social beings from one particular context to another. When we migrate, we carry with us our history, our stories, our memories, our dreams and aspirations and leave behind the hopes of what could have been, for the promises of what is possible in the West. I have chosen to highlight some of the social and cultural dimensions of migration in this thesis. The reoccurring themes in the stories that often catch my attention, point to stresses related to separation from loved ones, setting goals and recovering from setbacks, managing new identities in the diaspora and contemplating the feasibility of returning home. In my experience, being away from loved ones is one of the most challenging aspects of migration. These and many other aspects of migration shape our experiences as migrants as well as our vision for where we see ourselves in the future.

The rationale for this study is manifold. First, this study adds a varied dimension to our understanding of brain drain from Africa. It reminds us that Africa is not the inherently chaotic and benighted continent that it is so often made out to be. Situating brain drain in a historical context allows us to engage in more informed debates about the roots of Africa’s problems and understand how traces of historical events continue to affect us today. Secondly, this thesis contributes to the ongoing conversation about the economic, social and cultural aspects of brain drain and migration in general. A number of studies have been done on migrants from the Caribbean (Korcok, 1974; Mishral, 2006; Pottinger, Stair, & Brown, 2008) and the Philippines (Pernia, 1976; Joyce & Hunt, 1982; Dimaya, McEwen, Curry & Bradley, 2012), but not enough has been done on African migrants. Focusing on the social and cultural dimensions of migration draws attention to an aspect of brain drain that may sometimes be taken for granted. This recognition may be for some, a validation of their experiences as
African migrants. Regardless of what age we arrived here, this study gives credence to our shared experiences of family separation, social disorientation in the diaspora, and the question of whether or not we will return to our country of heritage. Lastly, brain drain is a rapidly growing trend and like most trends, it comes with its advantages and disadvantages. I undertake this study with an eye for the implications it may have on shifting the paradigm of how we engage in debates on brain drain and most importantly how we can find practical, meaningful and lasting solutions to this problem. The following section provides a guideline for how this thesis is organized.

**Organization of Thesis**

This study contains a total of 8 chapters. The current chapter provides an overview of all of the topics that are covered in this thesis. It introduces the study of brain drain from Africa by describing the demographics of skilled Africans abroad. In this chapter, I provide the working definition for the term ‘brain drain’ and briefly summarize the migration of skilled Africans to the west from the 1960s to date. I also provide a personal account for the motivation and rationale for this study.

Chapter 2 presents the methodology and theoretical framework used in this study. Here I describe how I gathered my information vis-à-vis a literature review. I use an anti-colonial perspective to make sense of brain drain as it pertains to the African continent. I describe the characteristics of anti-colonial thought and explain why I chose this discursive framework for my analysis.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed review of the literature on brain drain. It outlines and elaborates some of the reasons skilled Africans leave their home countries for western countries. Some of these reasons include the presence of political instability, corruption, poverty, inaccessible educational systems and unemployment.
Chapter 4 highlights the historical context for the African brain drain and demonstrates how key historical events including slavery and colonization have shaped the continent and the migration of Africans across the globe. Here, transatlantic slavery is framed as the “first drain” of Africans from the continent, while colonialism subsequently displaced existing economic, political and social modes of operation.

Chapter 5 discusses the impact brain drain has on both the home countries and the host countries. I discuss how the loss of essential personnel affects the quality of services available to home countries. At times, the impact of brain drain can be opposing. On one hand, Africa loses significant amounts of money in lost investments in education. On the other hand, remittances from migrants in the diaspora have increased the cash flow on the continent and improved the lives of family and friends at home.

Chapter 6 presents the current discourse and debates among scholars about brain drain. In this chapter, I introduce the Push-pull theory, which is a commonly used theory for explaining migration. I also present the arguments of supporters and opponents of brain drain as well as some of the limitations of each argument. I close the chapter by providing a critical analysis of debates and literature on brain drain.

Chapter 7 brings some of the social, cultural and psychological aspects of the migrant experience to light. It addresses issues of family separation and changes in family structure and functionality. This section also highlights the growing phenomenon of employment discrimination and over-qualification in the labor market among migrants in their host countries. In addition to the social adjustment related to settling in a new country, migrants also undergo a transformation of identity. This transformation affects how they participate in social issues in their host countries and their home countries, and sometimes contributes to the question of whether or not they return home. The last section in this chapter points to some of the psychological impacts brain drain has on skilled Africans abroad.
Finally, Chapter 8 provides a summary of the main points covered in this thesis and provides some suggestions for understanding and managing the brain drain from Africa.
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL APPROACH TO THESIS

Methodology

This thesis is a literature review based study. It involves primary analysis using secondary data. The secondary data used for this study include, scholarly articles, books, policy documents, reports from government and non-governmental organizations and news articles. This study summarizes major themes and findings and builds on the literature where gaps exist. I critically engage with some of the major themes and point to new directions for further inquiry. My thesis is broadly focused on sub-Saharan African migrants living in North America and Europe. While African professionals are spread across other continents such as South America, Asia and Australia, a significant number of them tend to be concentrated in countries like Britain, the United States and Canada – hence the focus of this study.

I am cognizant of the diversity of the African continent in history, culture, languages and people. I am also aware of the differences in migration rates from one African country to another. However, due to the dearth of comprehensive quantitative data on individual African countries, this thesis pieces together existing information on various African countries and frames this study as a review of the international migration of professionals from the African continent as a whole. As such, there will be discrepancies in the figures provided by various authors and reports. Estimates for figures such as the rate of migration from Africa per year, the amount of money remitted annually and other statistics are assumed to be conservative because they are solely based on documented or recorded information available. I am working under the assumption that Africa as a whole, is suffering from the similar underlying problem of brain drain to the West. The limitation of this however, is that there will be a tendency to make broad generalizations, which in some ways is unavoidable given the
fragmented state of national statistics and literature on and from African countries. Also, the literature on brain drain uses a number of terms to describe migrants, these include but are not limited to the following: “(highly) skilled migrants”, “(highly) educated migrants” (Ouch, 2008:51), “professionals” and “talent”. I will be using these terms interchangeably throughout this thesis. Similarly, the terms “home country” and “source country” refer to the country that the migrant comes from while, “host country” and “destination country” refer to the country that the migrant emigrates to.

Furthermore, in providing a context for understanding how historical events have shaped the contemporary migration of Africans today, I do not intend to romanticize the lives and experiences of Africans prior to slavery and colonization. My goal instead is to review the literature on key historical events that set the stage for what we understand to be brain drain today. In highlighting some of the experiences of Africans in the diaspora, I pay particular attention to some of the difficulties African emigrants encounter in the diaspora. I recognize that every African migrant’s story and experience is different, complex and diverse, however, I have chosen to focus on what appears to be a reoccurring theme of social dislocation among skilled Africans studying, working and living abroad. The social impacts that I present should not to be interpreted to be representative of the experience of all African migrants. African migrants may experience all, some or none of the mentioned impacts of migration.

Finally, I approach this study, humbled by its complexity and optimistic about the ways we can continue to build new understandings of brain drain. Each section of this study is designed to be an entry point for further conversations on the topic presented. Much of the discussion I present on the challenges that African migrants face in the diaspora should be viewed as an introduction or preliminary analysis to an under-studied topic. It is my hope that these topics will inspire renewed interest in the experiences of African migrants abroad and
serve as a launching pad for further investigation and the implementation of practical and innovative solutions to this phenomenon. I begin the following section with the theoretical framework that I use to understand brain drain.

**Anti-Colonial Thought**

This theoretical framework recognizes the lasting and devastating effects of the colonization of the so-called “developing countries” in Asia, Latin America and especially in Africa. Colonialism is characterized by the oppression, exploitation, exclusion and an imbalance of power between the colonizer and the colonized (Dei, 2006). The colonizer is aware of his position of power and actively ensures that power relations remain unchanged and that the colonized remain oppressed (Dei, 2006). As such, anti-colonial thought emerged from the fight for liberation and independence from European colonialists beginning after the Second World War (Dei, 2006). Scholars like Frantz Fanon and Aime Cesaire and political leaders like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Mohandas Gandhi of India, spearheaded the movement to resist colonial domination and defined who they were and who they believed they could become (Dei, 2006). George Sefa Dei (2006) has done extensive work in the area of anti-colonial thought. He defines anti-colonial thought, “as an approach to theorizing colonial and re-colonial relations and implications of imperial structures on the processes of knowledge production and validation, the understanding of indigeneity, and the pursuit of agency, resistance and subjective politics” (Dei. 2006: 2). At the heart of anti-colonial thought is the idea of resisting, questioning and redefining dominant ideologies about the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized (Dei, 2006).

Anti-colonial thought possesses a number of distinctive qualities. First of all, anti-colonial thought recognizes the continuity of colonization into present times (Dei, 2006). Colonization did not end after independence; it is an ongoing process that has simply taken
on a different form. This is arguably one of the key characteristics that distinguish this theoretical framework from the post-colonial school of thought. Anti-colonial thought emphasizes the persistence of colonial practices into the present day while post-colonial thought associates colonialism with “nationalist/liberatory” practices of a bygone era following the independence of colonized countries (Dei, 2006: 13).

In a similar vein, anti-colonial theory understands colonialism to function beyond the mere occupation of land and exploitation of people and resources. It views the process of western knowledge production as a mechanism or tool for continued oppression (Dei, 2006). According to Nyamnjoh (2012), knowledge is political; it is not free of biases or vested interests. Knowledge reinforces social hierarchies and existing structures of power and domination (Nyamnjoh, 2012). Knowledge production is one of the main driving forces behind colonial projects. The construction of Africans and the African continent as perpetually in need of help is an example of how knowledge is produced and manipulated to shape public perception. Negative images and stories about Africa have become extremely pervasive in the media. This sort of knowledge production uses pathetic narratives and images of poverty and disease to elicit sympathy and to allow for the justification of western interventions committed to “saving” Africa and Africans from themselves and their “backwardness”. These ideas and images about Africa legitimatize the patronizing relationship the West has with Africa. In his book on How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Walter Rodney (1976) discredits these assumptions and provides a historical account of how the West deliberately and systematically crippled the African continent.

Thirdly, the anti-colonial perspective not only argues that knowledge production is a driving force behind colonial practices but also insists that western forms of knowledge production shape our perception of ourselves and our perception of the world around us. It is also through knowledge production that racialization or the formation of racial hierarchies are
produced and sustained (Dei, 2006). Racialization exploits differences based on external characteristics believed to be “biological” or “innate” by labeling a particular skin color for instance, as inferior, abnormal and evil (Dei, 2006). Similarly, the use of language goes beyond its basic communicative functions. In his seminal book, Black Skins White Masks, Fanon (1967) argues that language is key to understanding the ways in which the colonizer oppresses the colonized. He argues that one who holds command of a language has a certain degree of power of expression and dictation (Fanon, 1967). In fact, the mere command of a language can elevate one’s social status. Fanon (1967) speaks of how an educated black man returning from studies in the West is held in high esteem by the locals in his home country. His speech and mannerism are indication of the acquired whiteness (Fanon, 1967). Repeated exposure to these ideas and beliefs, results in the internalization of such ideas as well as the development of an inferiority complex. According to Fanon (1967) the need to be seen, recognized, approved and associated with the white man is a malady that plagues the black man (Fanon, 1967). The feelings of inferiority of the colonized and the feelings of superiority by the colonizer are mutually reinforcing (Fanon, 1967). The black man, Fanon (1967) writes, continuously strives to convince the white man that he too, is human.

Lastly, one of the most instructive features of anti-colonial thought is its refusal to allow dominant ideologies to define the self or inform what it deems best for the colonized (Dei, 2006). It not only calls for the production of knowledge by the so-called colonized but also demands the valuation of such knowledge (Dei, 2006). Dei (2006) writes, “anti-colonial thought is about ‘decolonizing the mind’” (1). Much work is required to “unlearn” ideas and beliefs that have been sown into the very fabric of our beings as “colonized people”. Language can also be used to counteract oppressive forces. He states that, “language is a powerful tool for decolonization. The power to name issues for what they are demonstrates an ability to use language as resistance, and to claim cultural and political capital that is
necessary to challenge domination” (Dei 2006:11). Anti-colonial thought uses language to resist the various ways in which the colonized is stripped of their sense of self and branded as the “Other”. In essence, an anti-colonial framework produces narratives that speak to and embody the real and lived experience of the colonized “Other”. These narratives fundamentally challenge dominant and oppressive narratives. They engage with indigenous bodies of knowledge and incorporate indigenous languages, cultures, histories and ways of knowing in order to understand the self and the world at large. Thus, the anti-colonial theoretical framework, unpacks, analyzes, questions the dominant discourse and ultimately seeks to turn the tables on the process of knowledge production (Dei, 2006). In so doing, this school of thought reaffirms and validates the narratives and experiences of the colonized.

The purpose of employing an anti-colonial framework to understanding brain drain from the African continent is two-fold. First, the goal of this project is to situate brain drain in a historical context that takes into account how past and present colonial practices shape the decision of Africa’s best and brightest minds to migrate to the West. Without providing a historical context, the understanding of brain drain from Africa is reduced to a narrative of the supposedly “inherent” problems of instability and “backwardness” of Africans. Furthermore, narratives void of historical context create room for patronizing accounts of “saving Africans” through the “generosity” of western immigration systems. Providing a historical context also sheds light on how colonial curriculum has been and continues to be a salient part of the African educational system. Colonial education informs the process of knowledge production and social interactions of Africans at home and abroad. Hence, the decontextualization of narratives reinforces dominant ideologies and perpetuates inequality.

Secondly, this project utilizes an anti-colonial framework in order to construct a narrative that speaks to the lived experiences of many African immigrants in the diaspora. It seeks to provide an insight to the challenges that Africans face abroad and to move beyond
the cost-benefit analysis brain drain has on the countries involved. To this end, it is important
to examine some of the social, cultural and psychological aspects of migration. I begin the
following section with a review of the literature that details reasons for migration.
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature provides numerous explanations for the tremendous increase in rates of migration of African professionals to western countries. Here, I will look at how conflict and corruption compromise access and quality of education received and increase unemployment. The combination of all these factors and more, contribute to the greater rate of migration out of the continent.

Conflict and Political Instability

Political instability and civil war are among the top cited reasons for migration. African countries, it seems, are in a perpetual state of war or conflict. Gyimah-Brempong and Traynor (1999) define political instability “as situations, activities or patterns of political behavior that threaten to change or actually change the political system in a non-constitutional way” (53). Political conflicts in Africa usually revolve around ethnicity, resource control and power. Power is always at the center of these conflicts whether they involve ethnic rivalry, resource management or a combination of all these factors and more. Conflict is rarely ever only about one of these factors. According to Adepoju (2008), “from 1969 to 1990, seventeen of the world’s recorded forty-three civil wars which caused major refugee populations were in Africa, including ‘high intensity’ civil wars in Angola, Liberia and Mozambique. In Sudan, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Burundi, ethnic tensions played visibly important roles in such conflicts” (23). As of 1996, 20 African countries have been involved in some form of political uprising or unrest (Tettey, 2002). Virtually all regions of the African continent have experienced some sort of civil conflict or political instability since independence. Countries like Nigeria, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic
of Congo (DRC) have experienced extensive periods of instability. I have selected these countries to represent the various regions in Africa that have faced major conflicts.

**West Africa**

Nigeria, the giant of West Africa, has had its own fair share of crisis and instability. In 1967, the attempt of Biafra (the southeastern portion of the country) to secede from the rest of Nigeria was met with violence and a civil war that lasted three years. Somewhere between one and two million people lost their lives, many were left homeless while others were left to starve to death after the rest of the country cut off the supply of food to the southeastern region of Nigeria (Smith, 2005). During this period, many educated personnel and intellectuals who dared to challenge the government fled the country for fear of persecution. Today, “it is estimated that the United States is home to about 10,000 ‘exiled Nigerian academics’” (Tettey, 2003:4).

The discovery of oil in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria in the 1950s ushered in a new era of heightened political instability. There are a number of different parties involved in this ongoing conflict including the government, various ethnic groups disputing over oil, identity and land ownership, militant groups and multi-national corporations. Though there has been increased economic activity in this area, the people of the Niger-Delta have not benefited from oil revenues and about 70% of the population lives on under a dollar a day (Rosenau, Chalk, McPherson, Parker & Long, 2009). Oil activities of multinational corporations and the increasing number of oil spillage, gas flaring and pipeline explosions have contributed to environmental degradation and have made the land and waters unsuitable for farming and fishing — activities which were a primary source of livelihood among the residents (Joab-Peterside & Zalik, 2008). Between 2006 and 2008, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and other armed groups have reportedly been
involved in 106 oil pipeline and infrastructure attacks, resulting in an estimated loss of 169,000 barrels of oil per day (Rosenau et al., 2009). It is estimated that 1,000 people are killed yearly (including state members, militants, and civilians) as a result of the conflict (Rosenau et al., 2009).

More recently, the growing religious tensions between Muslims in the North and Christians in the South have given rise to radical and violent groups like the Islamic extremists, Boko Haram that have claimed countless innocent lives. Close to 100,000 people are estimated to have taken flight from these unstable areas (African Economic Outlook, 2012). The insecurity and uncertainty that these conflicts bring about have compelled individuals to migrate from the affected regions, sometimes to other cities, and often times to other countries in search of more stable conditions.

East Africa

There are a number of African countries, where differences in ethnicity alone are enough to bring about a national blood bath. It is difficult to forget the bloody genocide of 1994 in Rwanda, located in central east Africa. The world stood still, as close to a million Rwandans were slaughtered in a matter of days. Rwanda, a country comprised of three main ethnic tribes: the Hutus (85%), the Tutsis (15%) and the Twas (<1%) was a society absent of fixed ethnic classifications and was based more on social status (Hintjens, 2001). Hutus for instance, were usually in charge of hard labor while identification with the Tutsi community reflected increased wealth and an elevation in social status (Hintjens, 2001). Thus, membership to the different tribes was fluid, with individuals identifying more with Hutus or Tutsis depending on their occupation.

However, under Belgian influence in Rwanda in the early 20th century, control was established through the system of ‘divide and rule’. As is typical of the divide and rule
strategies of colonialism, Belgians maintained power by inciting conflict along ethnic and tribal lines. Existing systems of governance were dismantled. The Belgians fabricated historical accounts that suggested the superiority of the Tutsi over the Hutu and the Twa (Hintjens, 2001). Policies barring Hutu and Twa people from public office and high rankings were instituted, leading to Tutsi aristocratic hegemony. Feeling oppressed and marginalized, a strong resistance and movement against the Tutsi emerged amongst the Hutu. This movement eventually displaced the Tutsi monarchy in 1957 and replaced it with a Hutu regime (Storey 2001).

On April 6, 1994, the plane carrying the Rwandan president, Juvenal Habyarimana was shot down, killing him along with the Burundi president who was also aboard the plane (Verwimp, 2003). Some have argued that this incident was the instigator of one of the bloodiest genocides in world history (Verwimp, 2003). At this point, the Rwandan genocide was organized at the state level, with Hutu civilians instructed to kill any Tutsi in sight. Within the span of about 100 days, over 800,000 Tutsis and Hutus were murdered (Verwimp, 2003). Till this day, the Belgian speculation of the superiority of the Tutsi over the Hutu generates severe tensions and animosity between the two groups. At the height of the conflict, thousands fled to neighboring countries and many sought refuge in western countries.

Central Africa

Similarly, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) of central Africa was also engaged in civil war for six years between 1996 and 2002 (McFerson, 2009). The war is linked to the Rwandan genocide between the Hutus and the Tutsis in 1994 where eastern Congo became a refuge for Hutus fleeing Rwanda (McFerson, 2009). However, hostility and conflict arose between the Hutu population and Congolese Tutsis (the Bunyamelenge) in Congo (McFerson, 2009). Uganda and Rwanda intervened in Congo with the intention of
quelling the violence, however, upon discovering the abundance of natural resources such as oil, gold, copper and diamonds, resources exploitation rather than peace keeping became the point of focus (McFerson, 2009). According to the Fragile States Unit report (2011), as of 2009, 1.4 million individuals were displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of Congo. While the conditions gradually started to stabilize in 2002, by 2008, the bloody violence resumed claiming the lives of many and displacing countless others (McFerson, 2009).

**Southern Africa**

The country of Zimbabwe located in the southern region of Africa has also been embroiled in decades of political unrest. Like its bordering neighbor, South Africa, the conflict is a highly racial one. Zimbabwe’s ongoing crisis over land ownership between the black and white populations is an example of how resource and race can become the center of political instability. In Zimbabwe, there was a disproportionate allocation of land, where “approximately 6,000 white commercial farmers owned 15.5 million hectares or 47 percent of the country’s agricultural land, while 8,000 black small-scale commercial farmers owned or leased 1.4 million hectares” (Shaw, 2003: 75). After independence, the controversial Land Reform Program was designed to redistribute land largely owned by white commercial farmers to black peasants and war veterans, as a means of redressing historical inequalities during colonialism (Shaw, 2003). The reform took a sudden and violent turn in February of 2000 when attempts to redistribute land were perceived by its supporters as slow and obstructed by white farmers (Mlambo, 2010). As a result, Land Reform supporters violently invaded white commercial farms and seized plots of land (Rutherford, 2004). While some welcomed the move with enthusiasm and praise, other criticized it fiercely. On one hand, the “pro-restoration-of-stolen-birthright” supporters have been drawn to the discourse of repossessing what is rightfully theirs because historically, land appropriated by whites was
obtained without any form of negotiation or payment to Zimbabweans (Mlambo, 2010:40). They seek to redress this wrong and believe their grievances are justification for farm invasions (Mlambo, 2010). On the other hand, opponents of the Land Reform Program argue that it is a blatant violation of property laws and human rights. They argue that if land is to be redistributed, it should be done in accordance with the law. The apportionment of land along racial lines during the colonial period and the history of oppression and subjugation are arguably at the root of the conflict that has manifested itself through the Land Reform Program.

Furthermore, election periods and campaigns in Zimbabwe are often characterized by violence, fraud and intimidation (Moyo, 2005). As a result of the contested election result of 2008, governance in Zimbabwe was under power sharing between two oppositional party members. These types of situations are not unique to Zimbabwe. In some cases, the electoral process alone is enough to induce political instability. During the 2007 Kenyan elections in East Africa, the country experienced high levels of violence over the election results that announced Mwai Kibaki as President (Phombeah, 2012). Approximately, 1,000 people lost their lives and 250,000 people were displaced as a result of the violence (Phombeah, 2012). The killings have largely been along ethnic lines. Shortly after its independence in 1975, the southern country of Angola also experienced a 27-year civil war between two political parties. These violent wars claimed the lives of 300,000 people and injured millions of people (McFerson, 2009). Hence, political unrest in general, gives rise to suspicion, protests, and violence. These conditions propel migration out of the continent and create an environment conducive to fraud and corruption.
Corruption and Poverty

Political instability has created convenient platforms for corruption and theft. African leaders often enjoy a strong and prolonged hold on power sometimes lasting for decades at a time. McFerson’s (2009) article on “Governance and Hyper-corruption in Resource-rich African Countries” provides an insightful description and analysis of how some corrupt African leaders contribute to the underdevelopment of their own countries. The presence of valuable natural resources is often cited as being directly correlated with the level of corruption in a country (McFerson, 2009). Nevertheless, corruption still occurs in countries without natural resources. Corruption takes many forms, one of which involves prolonged rulership. There are a number of leaders who have overstayed their presidential term. Angola and the Republic of Congo are examples of countries that have had heads of state serving for extended periods (McFerson, 2009). Thus, the presence of “irregularities” during elections is also not uncommon. Power can be obtained at any cost, whether it is through outright violence, intimidation, coercion or through fraudulent election activities. Armed groups are sometimes hired by both the state and community members to execute violent operations against corporations, groups and individuals (Rosenau et al., 2009). Political elites sometimes use these groups to intimidate opponents and rig elections. This type of stronghold on power is resistant to any political opposition, hinders prospects for development, and perpetuates the cycle of corruption.

Similarly, the misappropriation of public funds is among the array of corruption schemes that plague many African countries. High levels of corruption have impoverished entire nations. Despite being blessed with bountiful natural resources, a significant number of Africans live on under $1 a day. According to McFerson (2009) approximately 25 percent of the annual $1 billion oil revenue in Angola is swindled by politicians. Leaders of the Republic of Congo and their “beneficiaries” have enjoyed luxurious incomes from the annual
$1 billion oil revenues received, while the nation’s “under-five mortality rate is 117 per 1000 live births and infant mortality 75 per 1000; malnutrition stands at 14%; immunization coverage remains at a low 52%; and maternal mortality remains at a high eight deaths per 1000 live births” (McFerson, 2009:1536).

In some cases, corrupt governments and other individuals profit from sustaining conflict. The oil conflict in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria is a prime example of this. On one hand, members of the Nigerian government profit from the conflict through the swindling of funds, corruption and the mismanagement of resources occasionally using the discourse on national security as a disguise. The government appears to face with the dilemma of providing favorable business environments for multinational corporations and providing protection, economic stability and security for its citizens (Newell & Wheeler, 2006). Evidently, promoting a business climate for corporations has taken priority over protection of its citizens. Even agencies such as the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADC) instituted in 1992 with the objective of addressing, “the difficulty and sufferings of inhabitants of the Oil producing Areas of Nigeria” have been involved in the embezzlement of funds (Omotola, 2010). Other government agencies such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) established in 2000 to reduce insecurity have also profited immensely from oil revenues while the Niger Delta remains one of the most underdeveloped regions of the country (Rosenau et al., 2009). Many of these agencies have concealed their criminal activities and attempted to appease the general public through negligible improvements in infrastructure and development.

The Niger-Delta militants, on the other hand, have profited from this conflict by engaging in oil bunkering and kidnappings for ransom. Funds obtained from such activities go to purchasing weapons as well as personal expenses unrelated to the cause (Rosenau et al., 2009). Some of these militants who may have initially been motivated to ensure the security
of the Niger-Delta, profit from the ongoing conflict and realize that the benefits of sustaining the conflict outweigh the benefits of seeking cooperation. Bunkered oil is sold within local and global markets in exchange for cash and weapons (Omotola, 2010). The presence of a weak state is conducive to this type of rebel activity (Herbst, 2000). Rebel organizations are attractive to young uneducated men whose prospects of economic advancements are dim and who perceive membership to the group as a means of upward social mobility (Collier, 2000). New recruits tend to be divorced from the original ideology of the social movement and are more preoccupied with monetary returns. The state of anarchy in the Niger Delta not only leaves citizens to fend for themselves, but also compels individuals and groups to take self-interested and even corrupt actions geared at ensuring their own security.

It is important to note here that corruption is present in every country of the world and takes various forms. The degree to which they occur vary from country to country. The above-mentioned cases are extreme examples of corruption; this is obviously not the case for all the countries across the African continent. In fact, the southern country of Botswana has been recognized for its political stability, provision of accessible social services and transparency in governance (McFerson, 2009). The following factors have been cited as contributing to Botswana’s stability: the “inheritance of pre-colonial political institutions; limited British colonialism; strong and accountable political leadership since independence [and] the political elite’s motivation to reinforce institutions” (McFerson, 2009:1544). Furthermore, “the government finances the entire cost of the education of 12,000 students to study at the University of Botswana” (McFerson, 2009:1543). Hence, Botswana has been described as a shining example for what is possible in Africa (McFerson, 2009).
Quality of Educational System

Political unrest and corruption undoubtedly contributes to the dilapidation of public infrastructure and services. Education is among the public goods that has suffered tremendously as result of worsening social and political conditions. Hence, the declining state of education in many sub-Saharan African countries is another reason some Africans migrate to western countries. It is important to note here that despite this fact, many African school systems still produce some of most brilliant minds. Those who successfully make it through the school system are likely to seek additional educational and occupational opportunities abroad because the prospects of “making it” at home are low. In other words, receiving an education in Africa does not make a doctor, engineer or academic any less competent than any other professional in the West.

The quality and access to education at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) have been great cause for concern. An Oxfam report suggests sub-Saharan Africa “has the developing world's lowest net enrolment rate - 57 per cent - with over 40 [million] primary school age children out of school…numbers out of school will increase to 51 [million] by 2005 and almost 55 [million] by 2015” (Holman, 1991:1). In sub-Saharan Africa, the primary school enrollment rate between 1999 and 2005 increased by 13% from 57% to 70% (UNESCO, 2008). However, there are still 33 million children out of school (UNESCO, 2008). In primary schools across the continent, there is often a high student to teacher ratio in classrooms. As of 2001, there were averagely 37 students to a teacher in classrooms across Africa (Mazonde, 2001). Reports have shown that even though there is an increase in the enrollment, most students are not learning enough (Winthrop, 2011). For instance, students often do not grasp the basics of literacy and numeracy skills by the time they have completed primary school (Winthrop, 2011). Moreover, salaries of teachers seem to decrease rather than increase year after year, sometimes by up to 10% in countries like Kenya and Senegal.
The low remuneration for the teaching profession has major consequences on the quality and delivery of education.

Furthermore, “In 2005, 33 million students were enrolled in secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa, an increase of 55% since 1999.” (UNESCO, 2008). Statistics from individual countries help to illustrate the disparities across the continent. Rwanda, for instance has a secondary school enrollment rate of 13 percent while Botswana has a secondary school enrollment rate of 91 percent (Majgaard & Mingat, 2012). It is important to note however that overall, school enrollment across the continent has increased over the last several decades. Nevertheless, these figures leave little to be excited about; the retention and completion rate vary widely (UNESCO, 2008). While enrollment rates have increased dramatically over the years, there is still much to be said about the content and quality of education being received by students. The lack of adequate learning materials as well as environments conducive to learning affects the quality of education received. For instance, many students often do not have access to textbooks for their classes (UNESCO, 2008). This is often coupled with poor educational infrastructure. The student-teacher ratios of some African countries range from 40:1 to as high as 83:1 (UNESCO, 2008).

At the tertiary level, the situation is even more disheartening. The absence of qualified and seasoned faculty has affected the process of critical thinking and knowledge production. In addition to this, academic liberty is highly restricted as a result of intolerant regimes. Academics and intellectuals are discouraged, punished, tortured and sometimes even killed for criticizing the government (Tettey 2002). Academics are often seen as a threat to the state because of the power they have in impacting knowledge and influencing the beliefs of students about the state (Jumare 1997). El-Khawas (2004) writes that academics in particular, have fled institutions of higher education because of the persecution they face when they speak out against the government. As a result, several thousands of PhD holders from Africa
have furthered their studies and sought occupational opportunities in the West (El-Khawas, 2004).

Sometimes, the classroom environment in African educational institutions is not conducive to learning. For instance, dilapidated buildings and infrastructure, the lack of appropriate forms of assessment and learning material such as textbooks, can greatly affect the educational experience of students (Mazonde, 2001). The educational curriculum is also a source of problems in the learning process. Many classrooms still use outdated and colonial style curriculums (Mazonde, 2001). Consequently, the subjects and teaching materials do not reflect the African context. To be fair, there is something to be said about students who manage to graduate at the top of their class despite operating under difficult and stressful situations such as the presence of strikes and protests that may extend the completion of their program or even compromise their safety. This is evidence of the tenacious character and of the emotional and psychological resilience that is often characteristic of top students, despite the odds faced.

Teachers have also had their own share of challenges. Mazonde (2001) suggest that, “because of the economic crises occurring in much of sub-Saharan Africa between 1983 and 1986, over 80,000 teachers found other work or were laid off because there was no money to pay them (IDS, 1989)” (Mazonde, 2001:13). In some schools in Uganda for instance, low salaries have also been associated with teachers regularly being absent from class (Majgaard & Mingat, 2012). Often times, teachers teach for extended period of time without pay which invariably has an effect on the motivation and effort put into teaching (Mazonde, 2001). As a result of this decline in the quality of education, there has been a proliferation of expensive and often inaccessible private schools for the elite in many African countries (Mazonde, 2001). While these schools are of higher quality when compared to public schools, they remain exclusive to the upper echelon of society and do not serve the needs of the masses.
Today, investing in education does not appear to be among African governments’ top priorities. In fact, it is unlikely that African countries will even reach the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of providing universal primary education to all Africans by 2015. It has been reported that some African countries spend up to four times more on repaying loans than investing in education (Holman, 1999). Moreover, UNESCO (2012) reports, “Only 1% of national education budget of most African governments is earmarked to address the issue of literacy” (1). According to the Fragile States Unit of the African Development Bank (2011), the extent of brain drain in other developing countries is not as extreme as that of African countries because other developing countries have since seen the benefits of an increased investment in higher education. With so little attention given to the condition of education, Africans are driven to search for better opportunities elsewhere even if these opportunities present themselves outside of the continent.

Unemployment and Job Satisfaction

It is no surprise that low investments in education bring about negative outcomes in the labor market. Unemployment is yet another one of the problems that persists in Africa and causes the mass exodus of the educated class from the continent. Africa is home to “the youngest population in the world”, with 200 million people ages 15 to 24 (African Economic Outlook, 2013a:1). According to the McKinsey Global Institute, this figure is expected to double by 2045. Other reports show that “between 2000 and 2008, Africa’s working age population (15-64 years) grew from 443 million to 550 million; an increase of 25%...the continent’s labour force will be 1 billion strong by 2040, making it the largest in the world, surpassing both China and India” (African Economic Outlook, 2013a:1). According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), only about 21% of the 73 millions jobs created between 2000 and 2008 were for the youth (African Economic Outlook, 2013a).
Consequently, youth unemployment is at alarming rates especially in South Africa where youth unemployment has risen to 48% (African Economic Outlook, 2013b). Nigeria is also suffering from unemployment, especially among its university graduates. According to the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, “the national unemployment rate increased to 23.9 percent in 2011 compared to 21.1 per cent in 2010 and 19.7 per cent n 2009” (Fanimo & Okere, 2012:1). Moreover, Nigerian universities admit less than 15% of the students that apply (Nunn, 2005). Nigerian “universities graduate about four million people with less than 200,000 getting jobs” (Fanimo & Okere, 2012:3). This means that institutions of higher education are producing more graduates than the labor market can handle. As expected, “the incidence of poverty among young people in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Uganda, Zambia and Burundi is over 80% (World Bank, 2009).” (African Economic Outlook, 2013a: 2). Reports suggest that even the educated youth population is affected by unemployment and unemployment rates tend to be higher among the educated than the uneducated (African Economic Outlook, 2013c: 2). A survey by the African Economic Outlook (2013d) showed that the lack of “connections” or opportunities for networking makes it difficult to find and secure a job. The youth are also at a disadvantage during economic crises, as employers are more likely to hire and retain older individuals with more work experience (DIAL, 2007).

Moreover, “at the tertiary level, young Africans are confronted with a university system which has traditionally been focused on educating for public sector employment, with little regard for the needs of the private sector” (African Economic Outlook, 2013e:3). A report by the African Economic Outlook (2013e) found that, “within ten years (1999 to 2009), the number of higher education graduates in low-income sub-Saharan African countries almost tripled (from 1.6 million to 4.9 million. It is expected that this figure will reach 9.6 million in 2020” (5). The African educational system is clearly sacrificing quality for quantity and this reflects in the difficulties associated with finding jobs after graduation.
Hence, universities are unable to accommodate the volume of students wanting to further their education and those that graduate from university are not properly absorbed into the labor market because the skills they obtained in school, do not reflect the needs of the modern African economy.

For those who manage to find employment, their wages are significantly lower than what they could be making abroad. For instance, Adepooju (2008) notes that, “a trained nurse in Uganda earns $US38 per month and a doctor US$67 per month while their colleagues in the US could earn about US$3,000 and US$10,000 respectively” (35). Similarly, a doctor in the UK gets paid over a dozen times more than what a Ghanaian doctor would make (US$ 200,000 versus US$14,600) (Kaba, 2011). Even Senegalese professors could earn as much as five times their salary if they worked in Europe or North America (Kaba, 2004). Evidently, social mobility via career advancement in some African countries is often stagnated. There is a tendency for older employees to occupy positions for extended periods beyond retirement often causing the youth to get stuck at a particular level and/or search for opportunities elsewhere (Tettey, 2002). Furthermore, there is often low valuation and respect accorded to certain professions such as teaching. Some university environments are hostile to professors and other teaching personnel. These environments may sometimes be characterized by violence and cult activity that threaten the safety of academic staff (Jumare, 1997). Lack of stability and high student to professor ratios discourage academics from working in such settings (Jumare, 1997). In addition to low wage compensation and low job satisfaction, many skilled workers become frustrated with the lack of appropriate tools, equipment and infrastructure to facilitate efficient and effective job performance (Tettey, 2002). Graduates, academics and other professionals migrate to the West in the hopes that they will receive better compensation for the skills and knowledge they bring to the labor market.
Thus, a number of social, political and economic factors simultaneously operate to create conditions where skilled Africans choose to migrate abroad. Each factor is invariably linked to each other, for instance, a dysfunctional and corrupt government threatens political stability and contributes to a failed educational system, unemployment and poverty. It is key to note here that migration in these instances can be viewed as a survival strategy (Nworah, 2005). Those who migrate tend to be individuals who are the most educated and who have the resources (financial and otherwise) to do so. In essence, these conditions force the most valuable human resources required for development out of the countries that need them the most – thereby causing a brain drain.

Given the above-mentioned conditions on the continent, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that Africa is an innately disorganized and dysfunctional continent doomed for failure. This is where it is important to analyze the historical events that have contributed to brain drain from Africa. The following section refocuses our understanding of brain drain. In addressing the responsibility we all have as authors, Chinua Achebe (1994) underscores the importance of being the authors of our own history when he states, “Until the lions produce their own historians, the story of the hunt will glorify only the hunter” (2). He goes on to add, “It’s not one person’s job. But it is something we have to do, so that the story of the hunt will also reflect the agony, the travail – the bravery, even of the lions” (2). In light of this, the following section of this thesis, tells a story of centuries of oppression and inequality through slavery and colonization that have spilled over into the present day through various processes, including brain drain. I shed light on the first wave of migration over 400 years ago and the devastating consequences it continues to have on the continent and its people.
CHAPTER 4: THE LEGACY OF SLAVERY AND COLONIALISM

The “First Drain”: Transatlantic Slavery

Transatlantic slavery was and continues to be one of the darkest and most dehumanizing epochs of African history and indeed world history. It began in the 15th century (Arthur, 2000). Kaba (2007) attributes the current state of underdevelopment of the African continent, (specifically in West Africa) to two historical instances of brain drain, namely: “(1) transatlantic slavery or European slave trade and (2) the post World War II exodus of skilled West Africans” (78). This parallel between slavery and brain drain has been drawn by others such as Nwosu (n.d.) who writes in his article, “Brain Drain is a Euphemism for Slavery”, that “we may now travel in the comfort of jet planes instead of slave ships of a bygone era, but the impact of exportation of scarce manpower overseas, where it is hardly needed is reminiscent of human enslavement” (5).

Historically, the majority of slaves originated from West and Central Africa (Kaba, 2007). Among those captured and sold into slavery like livestock were mothers, fathers, daughters, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, kings and queens, storytellers, herbalists, craftsmen and women, farmers, teachers, warriors, entertainers and elders with centuries of history, knowledge and wisdom. While some Africans were unaware of the magnitude and gravity of what was taking place at the time, scores more fought and shed blood in resistance and opposition. To date, the exact numbers of those killed, abducted and displaced is unknown (Sankore, 2004). Some scholars estimate that up to 100 million people were stolen between 1600s and 1800s (Sankore, 2004). Today, we are spread across North America, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. Black Africans make up 20 percent of the population in Latin America, while approximately 65% of the Caribbean population consists of individuals of African descent (Kaba, 2007). In Europe, it is estimated that there are close
to 1.7 million blacks (World Bank 2007). Similarly, the black population in the United States is estimated to be upwards of 50 million people and approximately 662,000 in Canada out of a population of about 30 million according to the 2001 Canadian statistics (Kaba, 2007).

Slavery ended in the 1870s however, the catastrophic effects that slavery has had on Africa and most especially Africans who were forcefully removed from their homes is unfathomable. The words in this study are insufficient to begin to articulate the devastating effects of transatlantic slavery. Patrick Manning (1990) writes, “Slavery was corruption: it involved theft, bribery, and exercise of brute force as well as ruses. Slavery thus may be seen as one source of pre-colonial origins for modern corruption” (124). First of all, families and communities were separated, disorganized and destroyed. Infants were ripped away from their mother’s bosoms, sisters and aunts raped, fathers, brothers and respectable elders beaten, maimed, killed, women and men shackled, stripped of their very humanity and reduced to an animal like state of existence. What was left behind were kingdoms, communities and people traumatized, disoriented and in despair. Slavery dismantled existing structures of governance and stability. A vacuum was created by the absence of women and men in various positions vital to the functioning and development of society. These position ranged from parents to chiefs, from orators to kings and much more.

Secondly, transatlantic slavery dislocated, disoriented and disenfranchised Africans bought and sold into slavery in the West. Upon arrival, a monetary value was placed on African slaves. The African’s sense of value, autonomy, intelligence, relevance and perhaps most importantly, the African’s sense of self was not only undermined but also utterly destroyed. African slaves were forced to detach and completely rid themselves from any form of their culture, language, or identity. In addition, slavery came with the introduction and reinforcement of “racial” categories. These racial categories have now become the basis for discrimination, marginalization, exclusion and disenfranchisement of the so-called “negro” or
“black” race. The racial category of being black alone (especially in America) implicitly denotes worth, level of intelligence, (in)ability and status in society. As Africans, we continue to live in a world where our sense of worth and identity is defined by everyone but ourselves. The calamity and suffering experienced by Africans in the West and the instability and disorganization slavery generated among Africans at home, only created fertile grounds in Africa for the next phase of oppression and exploitation that was to come in the form of colonization.

Colonialism

The increased presence of Europeans on African soil came after the 1884 “Scramble for Africa” at the Berlin Conference. European officials created arbitrary boundaries around territories in Africa irrespective of the diverse ethnic groups, local histories or heritage that existed there (Kieh, 2009). European armies were sent to secure these artificial boundaries. They forcefully dismantled existing social, economic and political structures and replaced them with ones that served their interests. This arbitrary demarcation of boundaries in Africa not only separated ethnic groups into different countries, but has also contributed to conflicts between countries sharing borders (Englebert, Tarango & Carter, 2002). Countries like Niger and Mali, Kenya and Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, Nigeria and Cameroon, Zambia and Botswana are just a few of the countries that have been involved in disagreements related to boundaries (Englebert, Tarango & Carter, 2002). These conflicts are especially heightened when natural resources are involved (Englebert, Tarango & Carter, 2002). When the Europeans arrived on the African continent they came with their mission of “evangelizing” and “civilizing” the “savage beast” in the African. In reality, this was a mission of economic, cultural, social, and political obliteration of African peoples, knowledge systems and ways of life.
Economic Impact

Colonialism transformed the local economic structure into a capitalist one, centered on the mass generation and accumulation of capital in the hands of a few. This system displaced previously existing forms of distribution (Nyamnjoh, 2012). The introduction of a money economy widened class differences and created a capitalist system (Mazonde 2001). For instance, prior to colonization, the Rwandan economy was similar to that of a feudal society. It was based on trade by barter and gift economy (Hintjens, 2001). However, the Belgians eventually replaced this economic system with a cash crop economy and imposed taxes on the population. This, as well as the drop in coffee sales led to the collapse of the cash Rwandan crop economy in the 1980s (Hintjens, 2001).

Similarly, in many parts of pre-colonial Africa, there was a pastoral economy, which was centered on an “exchange between nomadic herdsmen and small agriculturalists” (Chossudovsky 2003:95). The household was the basic unit of production; tasks of land grazing and managing resources were presided over by family members and organized at the clan level (Jones, 2008). Much of what was produced and exchanged was meant to maintain an adequate level of subsistence among families and clans. Goods produced were occasionally traded on the market to meet the demands of subsistence, but it was not used as a means of accumulating wealth or extracting surplus from the primary producers by an elite class (Jones, 2008). The effects of colonization gradually shifted many African economies towards commercialization and eventually integrated them into the global market. African countries were unable to sustain the economic progress it required to keep up with the global market and many of their economies collapsed after independence (Samatar, 1993).
Political Impact

Colonization also brought about the transformation of political structures. Many African communities were characterized by elaborate and fully functioning political structures. For example, prior to the arrival of colonial powers in 1869, Somalia’s sociopolitical system was characterized by a decentralized stateless authority and by shared power among pastoral groups and clans (Weberstik, 2004). Clan relationships were central to the pastoral Somali political system and the most prominent political unit was the *Jilib*, which consisted of several hundreds of families bound together by security needs and the understanding that survival was dependent on mutual support and compromise (Jones, 2008). Communal matters and conflicts were dealt with through traditional institutions that were shaped by customary norms and values (Jones, 2008). Furthermore, there were no, “permanent officers, chiefs or committees. Clan membership was not necessary ascribed at birth; movement between clans was possible under various circumstances” (Jones, 2008:188).

However, with the increasing influence of western powers (Britain, Italy and France), such traditional practices and systems of governance were devalued and even considered a crime towards the state (Doornbos & Markakis, 1994). The integration of Somalia into the global market gave rise to new social classes, namely, pastoral producers, merchants, petty bourgeois, and intelligentsia (Doornbos & Markakis, 1994). As with most stratified societies, class solidarity was formed and the pursuit of class interest was the primary goal. This system had no regard for traditional values and little to no concern for the consequences posed on the other classes. The ruling class, petty bourgeois and intelligentsia operated to widen social gaps and emphasize class differences. What followed was the establishment of a centralized government characterized by the Western bureaucratic system of governance. Europeans implemented policies that required strict membership to a particular clan, which was to be headed by a chief (Weberstik, 2004). Additionally, their policies encouraged the
concentration of wealth and resources in the hands of a small newly created political elite. Consequently, clan identity and bureaucracy became prerequisites for a functioning society in Somalia (Weberstik, 2004). The increasing tension between clans and the imposition of foreign types of administration, fuelled opposition towards this newly created state. Increasing levels of apprehension led to a civil war in the 1980s, which Doornbos & Markakis (1994) state, “remains the pattern of current conflict” (86). This dismantling of political structure was replicated in virtually all countries across the continent.

Europeans were able to achieve their goals through the use of violence, coercion, repression and racist ideologies (Kieh, 2009). For instance, “as Crowder (1987:11) notes: “[The colonial state engaged] in burning of villages, destruction of crops, killing of women and children and the execution of leaders” (Kieh 2009:8). In true colonialist fashion, the system of divide and rule was used to maintain power and incite fear and suspicion between ethnic groups that previously coexisted. It discouraged cooperation and cohesion and operated to disintegrate ties between ethnic groups (Davis & Kalu-Kwiw, 2001). Large sums of wealth were amassed, and power was maintained by polarizing and exploiting ethnic differences (Kieh, 2009). Colonizers would favor one ethnic group to become middlemen in business and administrative affairs while marginalizing other groups (Kieh, 2009). Such favoritism elevated the status of the “chosen” ethnic group by allowing them access to resources and power they would otherwise be deprived of by the colonialists (Kieh 2009). Naturally, tension and animosity arose between the newly favored ethnic group and other ethnic groups (Kieh, 2009). This system of governance has been replicated across the continent, from the violence between the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda, to the hostility between the various ethnic groups within Nigeria. Several thousands of lives have been lost due to ethnic conflict since 1999 (Lampert 2009). The effects of the system of divide and rule still persist today and have crippled efforts to form a united government in various countries.
in Africa (Lampert, 2009). In fact, many African governments have perfected this divisive system of governance introduced by the colonizers because it affords them a similar level of power and control.

**Social Impact: Reforming Education and Ways of Life**

Steve Biko (1987) once wrote, “the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed” (68). As such, the greatest “weapon” of the colonialist is his ability to control and transform the way people think about themselves and others, their environment and their way of life. In the social sphere, African knowledge systems were not only devalued but they were also replaced by so called “civilized” western values. Traditional names were replaced with English names by way of brainwashing (Nyamnjoh, 2012). People’s ways of life were condemned as dark, evil and meaningless (wa Thiong’o, 1986). Abdi (2006) argues that, “the ‘deculturation’ of African education systems was an important catalyst in the magnitude as well as the qualitative aspects of the current regimes of underdevelopment in the continent” (13). According to Abdi (2006), to say that Africa was a fairly peaceful and stable continent prior to the arrival of colonialists is not a romanticization of African history: it is accurate. While, there were obvious variations in cultures, beliefs and lifestyles among diverse ethnic groups across the continent, political structures and systems of education were not divorced from the day-to-day realities of life (Abdi 2006).

Systems of education were mostly informal but relevant to their history, traditions and most importantly, their immediate surroundings (Mazonde, 2001). Furthermore, “the transmission of knowledge, skills, ideas, attitudes and patterns of behavior” were done by way of storytelling, proverbs, myths and legends (Mazonde, 2001:3). Informal or traditional education was based on experiential learning of skills required for survival and communal living (Anyanwu, 2011). Formal systems of education ranged from “knowledge of
genealogical positions of different clansmen” to “initiation ceremonies and formal training for adulthood” (Mazonde, 2001:3). The most formal educational system prior to colonization were the Islamic Koranic schools which date back to the fifteen century and taught children to read, write and recite in Arabic (Mazonde, 2001). It also specialized in other areas such as theology and “logic and jurisprudence” (Mazonde, 2001:4). Formal education in some African societies also included training in various crafts to become “herbalist, drummers, blacksmiths and priests” (Mazonde, 2001:5). There was also training that involved “farming, house-building, herding and hunting…cooking, keeping the home and childrearing” (these were largely gender-based) (Mazonde, 2001:5). Both formal and informal systems of education were accessible to all individuals and community members (Anyanwu, 2011).

All this changed with European missionaries in Africa, who not only sought to show Africans “the light” but also sought to destroy traditional customs and systems of knowledge. Suddenly, knowledge production and learning became confined to the walls of classroom buildings when previously, education could take place anywhere and at anytime (wa Thiong’o, 1986). Colonialists destroyed indigenous forms of knowledge, displacing kinship relationship and introduced and enforced European knowledge systems (Abdi 2006). Colonialism was successful because it strategically infiltrated vital systems of education and knowledge production. This was facilitated through ideological discourse on westerners being of a higher racial breed than Africans (Nduka, 1964). During this period, the discourse on the “White Man’s Burden” was widely read and built upon (Nduka, 1964). According to this racist discourse, the white man’s burden or the task of the white man was to civilize the black race (Mlambo, 2010). The internalization of racial inferiority among Africans is arguably the most tragic outcome of the interaction of Africans with Westerners (Nduka, 1964). As such, cultural and ethnic pride rapidly eroded and the imitation of Western values, knowledge systems, religion, attire and monikers became central to becoming more like the
Western (Nduka, 1964). Missionary institutions served to convert the indigenous population from what they believed to be dark, superstitious, mystical beliefs into Christianity. This was primarily done through the school systems. Christian evangelization of Africans was a vital part in inculcating western values and promoting the obsession with Western culture (Nduka, 1964). Western education on the African continent was designed to train Africans to occupy low ranking positions in government and in administration (Nduka, 1964).

Flag Independence, Colonial Mentality and Structural Adjustment Programs

The road to independence in many African countries was characterized by several contradictions. Even as independence drew closer towards the 1960s, a nationalistic discourse on black consciousness grew, however aspirations to become more western through western education became so deeply sewn in the fabric of African society. In Nigeria, even before independence, an effort to replace the foreign administration of the Cambridge School Certificate Examination with a local and ‘Africanized’ school certificate examination was met with strong objection by some elites and some members of the general population (Nduka, 1964). While many questioned the ways western cultural knowledge, infiltrated vital social institutions and systematically displaced African knowledge systems, others believed that implementation of such a proposal would cause Nigerians to revert back to a more backwards form of education (Ashby, 1964). Western education afforded Nigerians a respectable level of prestige, which was directly proportional to the amount of western education acquired (Nduka, 1964). British credentials for instance were (and still are) considered more valuable than locally obtained credentials in many Anglo sub-Saharan countries (Fadayomi, 1994). Imitating the ways of the white man including his knowledge systems, language, religion and way of life was viewed as a means to elevate one’s status
(Nduka, 1964). Similarly, some Africans had become so conditioned to believing in the superiority of western knowledge and their human value over Africans, that for some, the lack of foreign expatriates in institutions of higher education made the standard of that institution questionable (Ashby, 1964).

After independence, several countries across the continent including Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and many others made strides to ensure greater access to primary, secondary and university education to the general population (Arthur, 2000). This process was referred to as “massification” and was also intended to promote nation building (Anyanwu, 2011). In spite of all of this, educational systems in many African countries still employ colonial curriculums and are considered branches of educational systems in the “mother countries” of Europe (Puplampu, 2006:35) Schools and educational material continue to provide a Eurocentric worldview to African students (Zachernuk, 1998). Sadly, even some educated Africans have “come to accept the prevailing view of their history and culture held by the colonial masters” (Zachernuk, 1998:485). Indeed, education in Africa remains a means of discouraging indigenous knowledge and perpetuating colonial domination (Abdi, 2006). Moreover, what is learnt in school no longer relates to the realities of the immediate African environment and everyday life. While efforts of African countries to gain independence initially appeared promising, the mental, social and spiritual assault inflicted on the psyches and beings of African people through colonization, challenged any meaningful emancipation.

Colonization did not end after independence. What followed a few years after independence was a complete stagnation and even reversal of any form of social, political or economic development across the continent as a result of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). The introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programs by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank only compounded an already volatile situation
across the continent. The supposed aim of the SAPs was to “save” African banks from collapsing as well as to help integrate African economies into the global markets (Ntuli, 2004). There were a number of limitations to this program. First, in order to continue being recipients of aid from the West, African countries were forced to “open their markets to globalization and privatize utilities such as water and electricity services” (Ntuli, 2004:7). This resulted in the devaluation of local currency and African countries were compelled to make massive cuts on public goods and services, especially in the sectors of health and education (Ntuli, 2004). International market and trade policies discouraged local competition, which put many farmers out of business (Adepoju 2008).

By the mid 1980s, the SAPs had kicked into full gear with devastating consequences across the board. In the educational sector, there was increased job insecurity, low wages, decreased enrollment and increases in tuition (Jumare, 1997). In Nigerian universities, wages were stagnant for six years; the value of the currency depreciated by 95 percent and inflation was at its highest (100 percent) (Puplampu, 2006). SAPs forced extensive cuts at all levels of education especially at the university level, where lecturers and professors were sacked or forced to retire (Jumare, 1997). The low wages, poor infrastructure, out-date equipment and poor working conditions caused a number of academics to leave the African educational institutions for western institutions (Puplampu, 2006). As of 2007, Nigeria only had 75 universities catering to the needs of a general population of 140 million (Okoroma, 2008). Efforts to expand public universities failed under the SAP.

A great deal of economic, political and social instability ensued in the form of protests, violence and civil conflicts (Kieh, 2009). Many African economies now rely on several millions of dollars in aid every year to fund basic education while educational infrastructure continues to fall short of basic standards and expectations (UNESCO, 2008). A number of scholars have argued that the SAPs were simply a display of the evolving capabilities of
modern day colonialism (Jumare, 1997; Chacha, 2007). Jumare (1997) is unapologetic in his assertion that policies by the World Bank, the IMF and other international bodies are making deliberate attempts to ensure that there is limited economic, social and political progress on the African continent. He goes on to argue that, the above-mentioned international institutions implement more favorable and beneficial policies in industrialized countries that promote growth and progress (Jumare, 1997). Similarly, Chacha (2007) argues that financial assistance offered by the West is designed to keep the African continent dependent on aid and discourages any form of sustainable growth. According to Tucho (2009), in 1970, a report by the “Committee on the International Migration of Talent” under the United Nations shows that “wealthy nations intentionally and systematically attract talented personnel from poor nations to derail their development” (24). Research funding from international bodies is not concerned or interested in funding research that promotes indigenous knowledge or a sense of agency and self-identification in the educational system (Jagusah, 2001).

Prior to, and shortly after independence in the 1960s, many African students who travelled to Europe and North America to further their education returned almost immediately after completing their degree because with the discovery of natural resources, countless employment opportunities awaited them at home (Nworah, 2005) For example, Nigerians who migrated to the United States, in the 1960s were mainly males under the age of 35 and were usually the first born in their families. These individuals often bore the responsibility of financially supporting their families (Fadayomi, 1994). Moreover, at the time, Nigerians cited “institutional racism” as a reason for wanting to return home to work (Nworah, 2005). Brain drain started becoming a problem around the 1970s when students who went to study abroad never returned home (Eni, 2011). This was as a result of the declining social and economic conditions on the continent due to the implementation Structural Adjustment Programs (Eni, 2011). Consequently, countless individuals in
professional and managerial positions at home, saw migration to the West as an escape from the deteriorating situation at home and an opportunity to improve their lives abroad.

While some may be quick to point out that other non-African countries were colonized and appear to be doing significantly better, Sankore (2004) argues that, Asian colonies for instance, “were not suspended or destroyed by 400 years of slavery followed by carving up and imposition of mostly artificial states. The result is that Asia has an unbroken sense of history and culture and recovered quickly but not yet completely from colonialism” (25). The next chapter discusses the impact of brain drain on the African continent and the West.
CHAPTER 5: THE IMPACT OF BRAIN DRAIN

Brain drain has significant impacts on both sending and receiving countries. The process of recruitment through the immigration system in the West is highly selective. Adepoju, van Naerssen, & Zoomers (2008) note “in general, migrants are a selected population compared to the non-migrant populations of their societies of origin: they are healthier, better-educated, more enterprising, with sufficient funds to defray the costs of travel” (25). In other words, western countries are literally selecting out the best and brightest Africa has to offer in terms of educational and socio-economic background. Western countries benefit enormously from African brain drain. With an increasing aging population, countries like United States and Canada enjoy the benefits of filling labor shortages without having to pay the cost of educating them. Documented effects of brain drain range from the decline in the quality of service as a result of the absences of skilled individuals in the home country to the economic benefits derived from remittances. This section of this thesis presents some of the commonly cited consequences of brain drain. While this list is not exhaustive, it attempts to capture general understandings related to the impact of brain drain.

Loss of Essential Personnel and Decline in Quality of Services

The first and perhaps, most obvious consequence of brain drain is the dearth of qualified professionals in the vital sectors such as health, education, science and technology, business and governance. The absence of skilled individuals has a direct and negative effect on the delivery and quality of services available to the public in the home country. For instance, in the educational sector, the emigration of qualified teachers and academics has led to the decline in the quality of education received. It has also stagnated the process of knowledge production (Adepoju, 2008). At all levels of education whether primary,
secondary or tertiary, the quality of education has been compromised. The increase in the
teacher-student ratio has limited the amount of time and attention devoted to each student.
Furthermore, at the tertiary level, the mass exodus of academics limits the program options
for students because academics specialized in certain disciplines are not available to teach
those courses or programs (Odunsi, 1996). Consequently, it is likely that educators with
average competencies may replace emigrant faculty members. The danger of this of course, is
that students are deprived of the best educational experience possible and in some cases, this
leads to the production of “half-baked” graduates who are unequipped with the necessary
skills and knowledge to enter the labor market.

In the healthcare sector, brain drain has resulted in the inadequate delivery of
healthcare services (Adepoju, 2008). In some parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the spread in
HIV/AID cases has increased the number of patients that have to be treated by a single nurse.
This situation also increases the nurse’s risk of contracting the disease due to inadequate
preventative resources and facilities (Chikanda, 2004). The disparity in the ratio of health
professionals to patients is disturbing. In some areas in Nigeria, the ratio of healthcare
professionals to patients can be as high as 1 to 41,000 (Odunsi, 1996). In Liberia, there is one
pharmacist servicing 85,000 people (Kaba, 2011). On the continent in general, the ratio of
physicians to patients is 1 to 8,000 (Kaba, 2011). Countless communities are underserved as a
result of brain drain. Consequently, scores of individuals and communities suffer and even
die from preventable and treatable diseases. Education and health are inextricably linked and
are just two examples of sectors that are significantly affected by brain drain. The availability
of a physician or any professional for that matter has serious implications on the access,
effectiveness and quality of care and service in both the public and private sectors of society.
**Loss of Investment and Potential Revenue**

Another consequence of brain drain is the loss of educational investments. Brain drain results in a financial loss for African countries because the handful of highly skilled individuals that African countries have managed to educate are absorbed by western countries at little to no cost to western countries (El-Khawas, 2004). For example, “According to the 2001 report of the UN Development Program, in Kenya, ‘it costs about $10,000 to $15,000 to train a student for four years…it can cost nearly $40,000 to educate a physician’” (El-Khawas, 2004:46). Other reports estimate that it takes US$ 60,000 to train a general practitioner and upon migration to the host country, this investment is lost (Ntuli, 2004). Tettey (2002) writes that “based on the US Congressional Service’s 1971-72 assessment that the United States gained $20,000 a year on each skilled immigrant from the developing world, Oyowe (1996) extrapolates conservatively that Africa lost more than $1.2 billion of investment on the 60,000 professionals who left the continent between 1985 and 1990” (6). This value is likely to have increased dramatically given the increase in educational attainment in the last two to three decades. This is a loss of human capital and a wasted investment in education from the standpoint of the home country. In less than forty years (1970-2008), the African continent has lost about US$700 billion in capital (AfricaFocus, 2011). Furthermore, “there is a loss of potential tax revenue that might have been raised from the income of the emigrant” (OECD, 2008:71). Moreover, “A World Bank study estimated that between 1994 and 1997 South Africa lost 8.4 billion rand in tax earnings and 285,000 rand in GDP, due to emigration of its professionals” (Tettey, 2003:1).

The brain drain of physicians from South Africa presents an example of how African countries continue to lose investments and potential revenue. While it only cost the government of Alberta in Canada $1.2 million to recruit South African physicians, the Canadian government makes a profit of $10.4 million through this process (Kaba, 2004).
According to the Globe and Mail, “Canada has saved nearly $400-million by poaching doctors from Africa” (York, 2011:1). In the span of ten years, the United States has generated a savings of close to US$4 billion from the migration of 21,000 Nigerian doctors (Ntuli, 2004). The United Kingdom is also actively trying to fill in labor shortages in the professional skilled sector. Its policy is designed to recruit students and foreign trained professionals to fill shortages that cannot and perhaps will not be filled by locals (Nunn, 2005). It is even common for schools in the UK to actively recruit teachers from South Africa and Namibia to make up for the shortage of teachers in the UK (BBC News, 2001). A 1979 report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimated “a cash value of $184,000 on each African professional migrant (and this only for those between the age of 25 and 35)” (Oyowe, 1996:59). Canada, Australia, the United States and Britain have saved a total of $4.5 billion through the recruitment of African doctors (York, 2011). As a result of the emigration of Africa’s best and brightest minds, the continent spends US$4 billion every year to hire 100,000 foreign expatriates (Woldetensae, 2007).

Remittances

Contemporary literature on brain drain is filled with references to remittances as a generally positive aspect of an otherwise negative process of brain drain. Bucklaschuk and Wilkinson (2011) define remittance as “monies sent by immigrants to family members in their home country. These monies are used by families to elevate their quality of life and may assist in sending siblings and children to school, purchasing new residences, renovations to existing structures or other familial expenses” (22). Remittances are such a significant aspect of brain drain and “according to a recent report (Migration and Development) by the International Development Select Committee (UK), over $300 billion was sent from developed to developing countries in 2003 by diaspora living in the developed countries”
Furthermore, remittances are now estimated to exceed the amount of foreign aid received by developing countries (Nworah, 2005).

Africans are reported to remit two times the amount migrants from other developing countries remit to their home countries (Bollard, McKenzie & Morten, 2010). Some reports have approximated yearly remittances of African migrants to be between US$10-40 billion (World Bank, 2011). In 2008, remittances to sub-Saharan Africa totaled at US$ 20 billion up from a total of US$4 billion in 2002 (Bollard, McKenzie & Morten, 2010). There are significant discrepancies between documented remittances and undocumented remittances; undocumented remittances are believed to be significantly high as well (World Bank, 2007).

The World Bank and the European Commission (2011) reports that, “Nigerians and Ghanaians in the US are among those who remit more than US$1 billion to their home countries in 2006” (1). Furthermore, “Nigeria is the only country within Africa among the top 25 remittance-receiving countries” (The World Bank and the European Commission, 2011:11). Similarly, “in terms of sheer volume, the top three remittance recipients are Nigeria (US$3.3 billion), Kenya (US$3.1 billion) and Sudan (US$1.2 billion)” (Kaba, 2011:191). A report estimated that official remittances from Nigerians in the United States using channels such as Western Union is as high as US$ 12 billion every year (Nworah, 2005). As mentioned earlier, statistics of exact figures for remittances are highly fragmented and vary.

Studies claim remittances “offset” the negative impact of brain drain (Nunn, 2005). At the micro level, remittances help to support the lives of family members and communities back home by helping to pay for expenses related to education, healthcare, food, accommodation, and the setting up of small businesses (Adepoju, 2008). Remittances also help increase the standard of living of families of emigrants. For instance, remittances to rural areas in Burkina Faso cut poverty levels down by almost 10% (Adepoju, 2008). At the macro
level, remittances have a significant impact on the economies of sending countries. Between 5 – 20% of African GDP is derived from remittances (African Economic Outlook, 2012). 5% of Nigeria’s GDP is derived from remittances from across the globe (Nworah, 2005). Adepoju (2008) notes that remittances “are the second most important source of foreign exchange after exports. For example, in Senegal in 2004, an estimated 2.5 million emigrants sent about US$618 million home: this is equivalent to a third of the national budget, excluding informal transactions” (Adepoju, 2008:37). Similarly, in 2004, Ghana received a total of US$1.2 billion in remittances. (Adepoju, 2008). In addition, “Malian residents in France remit US$50 million, about the same amount as France’s annual aid to Mali, and have built schools and health clinics, paid for road repairs and invested in small business enterprises in their home communities” (Adepoju, 2008:38). In Lesotho, remittances make up more than a quarter of its GDP (World Bank, 2008).

While some argue that remittances increase consumer activity and promote economic growth (Lowell, 2002). Others argue that because remittances are spent on day-to-day necessities of life such as food, clothing, and social activities, remittances are not properly invested, and thus do not necessarily promote economic growth (Lowell, 2002; Tiemoko, 2004). Scholars warn against the illusion that reliance on remittances alone is enough to eliminate poverty, instead, it is important to understand the ways in which remittances affect and are affected by social, economic and cultural dimensions of society (Ouch, 2008). Arguably, an over reliance on remittances can lead to a situation of dependency and further increase the rates of emigration. Much can be said about the impact of brain drain in increasing emigrants’ standard of living. Aside from the significant difference in wage compensation, professional migrants are reported to experience greater job satisfaction, increased chances at career advancement and upward social mobility (OECD, 2008). Also, the perceived sense of safety and security is higher in developed countries than it is in
developing countries. There is a certain level of predictability of the social environment and the political climate.

While the African continent is not the only part of the world to be experiencing the loss of its professionals to western countries, the rate at which it is occurring and the impact it is having on the continent and Africans in the diaspora, is cause for concern. For instance, “between 25% and 50% of the college-educated citizens of countries including Ghana, Mozambique, Kenya and Uganda live overseas in OECD countries. This contrasts with just 5% of the skilled citizens of newly emerging powers such as India, China and Brazil opting to do so” (Rundell, 2010:14). These figures are significant by any standards and it is especially concerning in the case of a continent that is in dire need of these skilled individuals. This situation has sparked much debate on the role that destination countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, play in recruiting Africa’s most valuable resources and perpetuating inequality. The next chapter explores the current debates on brain drain.
CHAPTER 6: DISCOURSE AND DEBATES ON BRAIN DRAIN

Push-Pull Theory

The Push-Pull theory is a core theoretical approach widely used to make sense of brain drain and migration in general. The debate on brain drain is essentially a question of whether the cost of brain drain outweighs the benefits and vice-versa. There are generally two opposing perspectives: those who believe that brain drain is actually beneficial (supporters of brain drain) and those who argue that brain drain not only presents negative consequences but also perpetuates inequality between the countries in the Southern and the Northern hemisphere (opponents of brain drain). It is important to note here that there are obviously more perspectives with varied accounts, but for the purposes of this section, these two main opposing views will be presented.

The predominant theoretical framework used to understand and debate the brain drain phenomenon is the push-pull theory. Central to this theory is the idea that poverty and underdevelopment motivate individuals to migrate (Portes & Borocz, 1989). Push factors are elements or circumstances within the source country that cause individuals to leave (Bach, 2006). Low standards of education, economic instability and political unrest are examples of push factors that encourage migration (Bach, 2006). Other factors include inadequate resources and facilities for the practice of one’s profession and precarious working environments (Buchan, Parkin & Sochalski, 2003). Pull factors on the other hand, are features of a country abroad that are economically and socially attractive and cause individuals to want to migrate (Bach, 2006). They are all of the factors that promise a better standard of living, opportunities for career advancement, better wages, safe and stable work environments, job flexibility and a balanced workload (Buchan et al., 2003). Labor shortages in Europe and North America also serve as an additional incentive or as a “pull” factor for
immigration (El-Khawas, 2004). Many countries in the West are not reproducing at a rate fast enough to meet the demands of aging populations and a growing economy, particularly in the health sector (El-Khawas, 2004). Consequently, the European Union has implemented policies to facilitate the entry of highly skilled immigrants to help sustain its economy (El-Khawas, 2004). Another pull factor for immigrants looking to further their studies abroad is the availability of scholarships offered by the host country to finance their education (Ite, 2002). Thus, the analysis of migration vis-à-vis the push-pull theory forms the basis for understanding forces at play during migration. It has also given rise to much debate about the advantages and disadvantages of brain drain.

**Supporters of Brain Drain**

Supporters of brain drain believe that global migration has an overall beneficial effect on both the sending country and the destination country (Easterly & Nyarko, 2008). They espouse a more liberal position on migration and claim that in the long run, migration of skilled persons from developing countries to developed countries can contribute to national progress in developing countries (Easterly & Nyarko, 2008). They also claim that individuals simply *choose* to migrate to places where there is a higher remuneration for their skills (Ansah, 2002). This approach can be likened to the neoclassical economic approach, which has been used to understand issues of migration and development since the 1950s (Castles, 2009). It is based on the idea of an individual making a personal and rational choice to migrate (Castle, 2009). According to Easterly and Nyarko (2008), the benefit of brain drain is that it promotes personal freedoms and is “voluntary” (3). It stimulates increased investments in human capital and enhances the standard of living of family members left behind through remittances and returnees returning with “technology” (3). Moreover, migration is bound to happen and serves as an outlet for surplus labor, which would
eventually allow for a more even distribution of wages (Castles, 2009).

Grubel and Scott (1966) were among the pioneers of this positive understanding of brain drain. They deviated from the standard belief that brain drain mostly presented negative consequences and proposed that brain drain could actually promote ‘brain gain’. The brain gain hypothesis posits that the migration of highly skilled individuals from developing countries to developed countries actually has a positive developmental effect on the home country and promotes transnational activities (Hunger, 2002). According to Grubel and Scott (1966) emigration of the educated individuals from their country only poses a short term cost to society and equilibrium is eventually restored once emigrants are replaced. Grubel and Scott (1966) argue that the emigration of these educated individuals only has negative consequences in very specific and “rare circumstances” (273). Furthermore, they argue that the emigration of the highly skilled individuals can cause the society and government to become introspective and critical about the state of affairs in the country and this can ultimately drive development (Grubel and Scott, 1966). With respect to the emigration of highly skilled individuals, Grubel and Scott (1966) state that “as a consequence of such migration by scientists, the native countries not only obtain scientific knowledge free, but they are actually likely to get more than they would have had the men stayed at home” (Grubel and Scott, 1966:274). Grubel and Scott (1966) go on to claim that, “as far as national prestige from scientific achievements is concerned, the scientists’ native countries are perfectly free to claim these men as native sons, which in no way reduces the host-country’s right to be proud that the work was done within its borders” (Grubel and Scott, 1966:274). Grubel and Scott (1966) repetitively downplay the economic, social and political consequences of the emigration of highly skilled individuals describing such concerns as “anachronistic” (274). Throughout their article, they propose specific conditions under which arguments pointing to the detrimental effects of brain migration would be “valid” –
conditions ranging from paying more taxes for reduced public services to having a “nationalistic view of the country” (Grubel and Scott, 1966: 273).

A number of contemporary scholars including Mountford (1997), Stark (2004), Commander, Kangasniemia & Winters (2007), and Easterly & Nyarko (2008) to name a few, have followed in the footsteps of Grubel and Scott (1966) in pointing to the benefits of brain drain. They argue that brain drain is an essential process that helps funnel excess talent that would have otherwise have been underutilized or gone to waste to the West (Lowell, 2002). According to Fan and Stark (2002), brain drain actually induces ‘brain gain’; “the migration prospect raises the expected returns to education, a “brain gain”: the developing country ends up with a higher fraction of educated individuals” (28). There would be an overall increase in the human capital development in the home country as a result of migration (Vidal, 1998). Supporters of the ‘brain gain’ hypothesis also argue that the exposure and associations that a migrant makes in an industrialized country is an advantage to the migrant and “increases their human capital” (Hunger, 2002:3). Furthermore, migration of skilled individuals from developing countries to developed countries allow for better employment prospects as well as the accumulation of capital (Hunger, 2002). This capital becomes a source of remittances, which would have an overall positive effect on the home country (Hunger, 2002).

While the pro brain drain camp acknowledges that there is a loss of professional personnel and financial capital in the home country as a result of migration, they insist that this loss is only temporary and stability is restored once enough individuals are trained to replace the emigrants (Easterly & Nyarko, 2008). The problem with this approach as stated by Ansah (2002), is that there is a tendency for these replacements to want to emigrate as well. The hypothesis of brain gain is strongly based on the assumption that emigrants will actually return to their country (Hunger, 2002). This is clearly not the case and some scholars have pointed to the “chain reaction” of emigrants sponsoring migration of family members;
this often occurs as a result of one person migrating beforehand (Hunger, 2002). Moreover, this perspective does not take into account that other factors such as war, political oppression and crime can drive individuals to migrate, making migration less of a choice and more of a necessity (Ansah, 2002). The extent and gravity of the brain drain on the home country is often downplayed among scholars like Easterly and Nyarko (2008) and Mountford (1997) who claim brain drain “fears are overblown” (Easterly & Nyarko, 2008:2).

**Opponents of Brain Drain**

Critics of the brain drain, on the other hand, believe that the global migration of skilled individuals is an uneven process and produces a zero-sum situation. According to this perspective, brain drain is characterized by the “exploitation” of developing countries by western countries through the poaching of their educated elite (Ansah, 2002: 21). Brain drain increases social inequality and rates of poverty (Lowell, 2002). Critics view brain drain as an economic loss to the home country. Furthermore, this perspective insists that brain drain is simply a continuation of colonial practices by the West, which ensures the continued domination of the southern hemisphere and the perpetual state of poverty of developing countries (Ansah, 2002). According to Tucho (2009), the political and material imbalance between countries in the northern and southern hemisphere is not accidental. It is sustained through a number of oppressive practices and policies. Opponents of brain drain point to the importance of the development and utilization of a homegrown workforce (Ansah, 2002). By way of illustration, Tucho’s (2009) survey of highly skilled Ethiopian individuals in Ethiopia and in the United States shows that the social, economic and political development of a country is highly dependent on the utilization of its skilled personnel. Destination countries aggravate the situation by specifically selecting out the most educated individuals during the immigration process (Ansah, 2002). According to this approach, migration of skilled
individuals leads to the complete loss of public investment by the home country and the complete profit of these investments by the destination country (Ansah, 2002).

Critics of brain drain who often (but not always) have nationalistic tendencies, are very vocal about the corrupt and dubious relationship that western countries have with countries in the southern hemisphere. They note that the capital accumulation and the exploitation of poor countries are often articulated in the language of ‘aid’ and ‘development’ (Ansah, 2002). According to Adams Walter (1968) cited in Ansah (2002), western countries are simply cashing in on the returns of the investments they made in African countries through the dispensing of "foreign aid". Foreign aid from western countries is basically a business investment. Much of this ‘aid’ money that developing countries invest in education is taken back with higher returns through the absorption of educated individuals from developing countries into developed countries (Ghosh & Ghosh, 1966). This ultimately boosts the economy of western countries and stagnates those of developing countries.

Moreover, opponents of brain drain also use a historical-institutional framework as a backdrop for their analysis. The historical-institutional perspective understands migration to be an exploitative form of accumulating wealth and a mechanism for advancing colonial interests (Castles, 2009). It takes a more critical stance on migration and points to the overwhelmingly negative effects it has on developing countries such as increasing inequality and perpetuating poverty and dependency (Castles, 2009). What is more, Schiff (2005) argues that the literature on brain gain misrepresents the reality of the brain drain. He argues that the benefits of brain drain are inflated and the consequences of this phenomenon continue to be detrimental to source countries (Schiff, 2005). As a matter of fact, he argues that the extent of the benefits of brain gain are “greatly exaggerated” (Schiff, 2005:2).

The drawback of this approach is that it does not shed light on the factors that attract migrants to the receiving countries (Castles, 2009). Some nationalists among opponents of
brain drain are often criticized for not paying enough attention to the factors that make it difficult for professionals to remain in their home countries (Ansah, 2002). Another criticism of this approach is that it places greater onus on the home country to try and retain and attract its citizens abroad back home through nationalistic discourses on patriotism and allegiance (Ansah, 2002).

An alternative approach to understanding brain drain is the global perspective. While this approach bares much resemblance to the internationalist approach or the supporters of brain drain, it seeks to find a middle ground between the two opposing approaches and points to the benefits of migration to both the sending and destination countries. This perspective argues that what we understand as brain drain is actually ‘brain circulation’ (Ansah, 2002). As such, globalists suggest that brain drain allows for the flow and transfer of knowledge and ideas among academics at home and in the diaspora irrespective of borders and serves as a means of mitigating the negative effects of brain drain (Ansah, 2002). The exchange of knowledge and information through virtual communication and technology has been cited as a form of brain circulation (Ansah, 2002). The criticism that this perspective receives is that it focuses on managing human capital that has already been lost through migration as opposed to addressing how to prevent the further loss of human capital (Ansah, 2002).

While these debates provide stimulating discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of brain drain to the countries involved, discussions on the social experience of the migrant in the diaspora tend to fall in the periphery of these debates. Hence, the following section focuses on some of the immeasurable effects such as the social, cultural and psychological transformations that skilled African migrants undergo while in the host country. It attempts to provide a narrative that details some of the challenges that skilled African immigrants experience once in the host country including the heartaches of family separation, the acquisition of new identities, the disorienting effects of discrimination, the disillusion
associated with unfulfilled goals and the challenges involved with returning home.

A Critical Reading of the Literature on the African Brain Drain: Whose Narrative is it Anyway?

The literature on brain drain provides a breadth and depth of information on the migration of skilled individuals from African countries to western countries. However, there are a number points I find problematic about the manner in which discussions and debates on the African brain drain is taken up in the literature. While the push-pull theory is the dominant theory used to explain migration, it oversimplifies the process and overlooks some critical aspects. Migration is not unidirectional (Goulbourne, Reynolds, Solomos, & Zontini, 2010). Migrants periodically travel back and forth between their host country and their home country and sometimes return permanently to their home country. The push-pull theory does not explain this aspect of migration; what compels a migrant to move back to their country of origin despite relatively unchanged social and economic conditions at home? This theory assumes that the host country invariably meets all the needs of the migrant. To be sure, the push-pull theory is important for establishing a preliminary understanding of why we migrate. However, we need to build upon this theory in a way that identifies gaps in the literature and points to the diversity and complexity of the migratory experience.

The second point pertains to the displacement of “African voices” in the literature on brain drain. Much of the intellectual debate about brain drain is emerging from outside of the continent. Individuals living in the West overwhelmingly dominate analyses on brain drain. With the exception of scholars such as Adepoju, Tettey, Arthur, Oyowe, Kaba and a few others, most of the scholars engaging in intellectual discourse about the African brain drain are non-Africans. This may lead to the hijacking of narratives and a Eurocentric understanding of the phenomenon. Eurocentrism can be defined as “a discursive tendency to
interpret history and cultures of non-European society from a European (or western) perspective” (Encyclopedia, 2013). Such a perspective is likely to be divorced from the lived realities of the African migrant or any African for that matter. It begs the question of: “Who is speaking on behalf of whom?” and “for what purposes?” Furthermore, the predominance of “western analysts” on the subject of African brain drain, grants western authors significant control over the content and dynamics of the debate and analysis. They determine what is relevant or worthy of focus and what is irrelevant. These distinctions may or may not be compatible with the realities in Africa. As such, prescriptions about how to address the issue of brain drain are limited to finding solutions to what authors deem problematic. This has serious implications on the direction debates and solutions for brain drain will take. What is covered in the literature is just as noteworthy as what is not because what we choose to discuss in any setting is an indication of our biases and its perceived importance over other topics or aspects of a topic. This is not to say that western analysts cannot have the continent’s best interest at hand, however we must be mindful of how our social positioning in society informs our work and the lens through which we view the world.

Similarly, brain drain from Africa has led to the lack of participation in scholarly discourse by African academics on the continent (Kaba, 2011). Woldetensae (2007) states that, “Africa’s share of global scientific output has fallen from 0.5 in the mid-1980s to 0.3% in the mid-1990s” (4). In a year, the African continent as a whole publishes about the same amount of papers (27,000) that countries like the Netherlands and India produce (Kaba, 2011). The lack of participation in the process of knowledge production pushes African knowledge and ideas to the periphery and undermines the ability of African scholars to actively engage with and participate in knowledge production and matters that concern them. It also perpetuates the dominance of western knowledge as universal and the standard for measuring all systems of knowledge by. In this sense, the African continent is losing out on
opportunities to solve their own problems and contribute to the betterment of humanity in areas of science and technology, arts and social sciences and the humanities. Hence, this thesis is a call for an increased number of African academics and governments to become more engaged in the process of understanding and finding solutions to brain drain.

Finally, the literature on brain drain is heavily steeped in quantitative descriptions and analysis. This is especially the case with scholarly articles and reports from organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank. Quantitative analysis, while important, only tells part of the story. There is a dearth of information about what the qualitative implications of brain drain for Africa and Africans are. Quantitative analysis alone cannot answer questions like: “What are the social, cultural and political impacts of brain drain on Africans at home and Africans abroad?”; “How are African emigrants adjusting to their new environment?”; “What are some of the successes and challenges they face in the host country?”. In this sense, the discourse on brain drain lacks a narrative on migrant experiences. The sole preoccupation with statistics does not allow for a deeper understanding of the social and personal implications of migration at the micro level. Moreover, the literature treats the entire process of brain drain like an economic transaction, focusing on what there is to gain or lose in the process. Migrants are reduced to commodities on the global market to be bought over by the highest bidder – the highest bidder in this case, being the country that is supposedly able to make better use of the commodity. Even the vocabulary we use to describe and analyze the process of brain drain is indicative of a sort of objectification of the migrant. For instance, we speak of emigrants as being “pushed” and “pulled” by certain conditions as though they were a herd of cattle with no sense of agency. We need to understand more about the decision making process involved in migration and other important considerations. The following chapter discusses some of the social impacts of migration on African migrants.
CHAPTER 7: BEYOND THE NUMBERS: THE SOCIAL IMPACT ON MIGRANTS

The impact brain drain has on African migrants varies greatly. All too often, the literature highlights the impact brain drain has on source countries, destination countries and the state of their economies as a whole but rarely pays sufficient attention to the impact brain drain has on skilled African immigrants in the host country. Discussions on the impact of brain drain usually revolve around more quantifiable elements such as remittances, (un)employment, salary, level of education etc. Moreover, the narrative on brain drain is often restricted to the immediate events surrounding the departure of African immigrants from their home country and ends abruptly with their arrival in the host country. In other words, with exception of discussions on remittance, accounts on the implications of brain drain appear to end once African emigrants arrive at their destination. Very little is known about experiences of educated Africans in the host country. This creates a significant gap in the literature. As such, this section attempts to shed light on a different aspect of brain drain; it will move beyond the understanding of brain drain that focuses on the economic dichotomy of profit and loss to countries involved. Nwosu (n.d.) and Kaba (2007), argue that these effects of brain drain bare eerie similarity to the destabilizing effects of transatlantic slavery and colonialism. They contend that we are witnessing the continuation and replication of the catastrophic effects of these oppressive systems. It is important to note that, in many cases migration leads to successful outcomes in the diaspora, however, migration can also come with its own share of heartaches, pain, confusion, frustration, disappointment and nostalgia. Some of these feelings can be induced by the experience of being separated from family members and loved ones.
Family Separation and Adjustment

Migration can often be a very strenuous experience for both the immigrants and their families. As such, “migration tends to weaken family bonds” (Adepoju 1997:34). Definitions of the family in the African context deviate from the standard western notions of what constitutes a family. Citing Locoh (1989), Tiemoko (2004) writes that the African family is characterized by a number of qualities including the “tendency for extended family structures, high separation of gender responsibilities, stronger lineage than conjugal solidarity, integration of reproductive and productive functions, and dominance by elders.” (157). This is obviously a broad generalization, African families are complex and come in multiple forms but for the purposes of this section we will employ this definition. African households are usually composed of both nuclear and extended family members whether related by blood or not. The African family functions both as an economic and social unit. As an economic unit, it operates to meet the production and consumption needs of the family and improve the overall quality of life of its members (Adepoju & Mbugua, 1997; Arthur, 2000). Also, “as a social institution, it procreates, socializes and educates the children” (Arthur, 2000: 41).

According to Arthur (2000) “to the majority of African immigrants, the journey to America is a family’s investment in its future. It is hoped that those who are sponsored to come to the United States will one day assist other relatives as well” (Arthur, 2000: 96). This is because the decision to migrate is often a joint decision that involves the participation of extended family members (Findley, 1997). A study of 304 returning migrants (of varying educational backgrounds) from Ghana and Ivory Coast, showed that migration is a family ordeal, in that the decision to migrate is often made as a family especially among skilled individuals where family members sponsored the migrants to go abroad to further their studies (Tiemoko, 2004).
It is almost impossible for an individual to bring all the members of their nuclear and extended family along with them at the same time. Men and women leave behind wives, husbands, children, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, cousins and other extended family members in pursuit of better educational and occupational opportunities abroad. In this sense, the process of migration is disruptive to kinship relationships. Often times, husbands leave their wives and children behind in the hopes of eventually sponsoring them to reunite with him abroad. More recently, women are increasingly migrating in search of educational and career opportunities (Adepoju, 2004). Some of these women (who are often mothers), face the difficult situation of travelling abroad to work while leaving their spouse and children behind (Adepoju, 2004). Such practices are also common among Nigerian physicians and nurses who may migrate alone or sometimes with their children (Adepoju, 2004). This is in contrast to past trends of men migrating first and then having their wife and children meet them later. This growing trend of husbands remaining in their home countries while their wives and children travel and settle abroad puts an enormous strain on the marital relationship as well as on the parents’ relationship with their children. This shift in migratory patterns has contributed to the changing roles and expectations of women in the family. As such, traditional gender roles become challenged. Women become more resourceful and have more power to make decisions concerning themselves and their households (Adepoju, 2008). This newfound autonomy and social and economic independence can be threatening for some men who may view this trend as undermining their role as breadwinners and transforming the traditional role of women as homemakers and caregivers (Arthur, 2000). In the same vein, migration can also cause children to mature quickly and take on roles that require more responsibility (Pottinger, Stair & Brown, 2008).

In addition to tension created by transformation of gender roles, expectations from family members can also be a source of tension. Since a number of family members are often
involved in facilitating the migratory process, there is usually an expectation that migrants will reciprocate these efforts by regularly remitting money to family members (Findley, 1997). The migrant is usually expected to continuously remit funds for as long as they remain abroad irrespective how much time they spend abroad. This can obviously become a source of tension when family members do not receive funds on time or funds are considered insufficient (Findley, 1997). Such a situation is stressful for migrants and puts a strain on their familial relationships. Another source of tension with regards to remittances is how remittances are apportioned when received by family members. Findley (1997) writes that during this period, the valuation of lineage solidarity over conjugal solidarity may surface. For instance, an African male migrant is more likely to remit money to members of his family to share among themselves and his wife as opposed to sending the money directly to his wife (Findley, 1997). Consequently, suspicion and distrust about the actual amount the wife is entitled to, can arise between her and her in-laws (Findley, 1997).

Aside from remittances, there are a number of perceived responsibilities competing for the attention of the immigrant. For instance, family members may also be eager to be sponsored to join the immigrant abroad. This eagerness may be fueled by unrealistic expectations of immediate social and economic stability upon arrival. Also, concerns may arise from an immigrant’s ageing parents who may feel neglected or abandoned in the home country. Extended stay in the host country means that immigrants may become unavailable to cater directly to the needs of their ageing parents who may still reside in their home country (Adepoju & Mbugua, 1997). For immigrants who have settled down with spouses and children abroad, the pressure to return home to establish relationships between grandchildren and in-laws may be increased. All of these factors place undue stress, anxiety and pressure on the immigrant who may still be struggling to find their own footing abroad.
Moreover, for families that immigrate with young children, the adjustment in their new environment abroad can be challenging. Children who may have been used to being surrounded by cousins, aunts and uncles growing up, may suddenly feel overwhelmed with a sense of loneliness and isolation. Some children of immigrants might grow up not having a personal connection or contact with their relatives due to geographical distance. Others might never be able to enjoy the company of their grandparents or even the storytelling, wisdom and advice that is often characteristic of grandparental relationships. Child rearing by individuals other than the biological parents of a child is common in Africa particularly in West Africa (Coe, 2008). Adepoju and Mbugua (1997) note that, “the family seems to have gradually abdicated its socialization role to the educational institutions” (47). For the most part, African children are known to excel and outperform their peers in western educational systems (El-Khawas, 2004; Kaba, 2007), however sometimes the difficulty in adjusting to a new environment can manifest itself through poor academic performance, deviant or delinquent behavior, and the exhibition of disrespectful behavior to their parents.

Studies have shown the differential levels of well-being of children whose father migrates and children whose mother migrates. It has been reported that the well-being of children whose mother migrates abroad is lower than those of children whose father migrates (Mazzucto & Schans, 2011). Sometimes, the migration of one parent is accompanied by feelings of resentment and abandonment by the children of the parent. These feelings can also lead to anti-social behavior such as gang related activities and dropping out of school (Mazzucto & Schans, 2011). In the United States, more and more female migrants are been treated for psychological distress and disorders, which are often associated with being separated from their families (Falicov, 2007). These visits become more frequent with the reunification of their children who may have difficulty adjusting into their new environment (Falicov, 2007).
In cases where a parent is abroad and the child is left behind, or separated from one or both parents, the periods before reunification can last for several months and even years. This is lost time for intimacy and bonding between spouses and their children. A study on Senegalese families shows migratory separation can last up to 10 years (Gonzalez-Ferrer, Baizan & Beauchemin, 2012). Distance and time spent apart can take a toll on the quality of family relationships. For some individuals and families, a visit home does not occur for several years and sometimes several decades. Such trips are fairly expensive and require a lot of planning and arrangements both abroad and at home. For those who can afford to return home for a visit, initial feelings of excitement are slowly dissolved by feelings of disorientation and disconnection from the culture and from family and friends as a result of prolonged absences.

In some circumstances, children are left behind and raised by relatives for economic reasons including “high cost of child care…[and] employment and educational demands” while for some, the decision to leave their child(ren) behind is deliberate and unrelated to economic demands (Arthur, 2000: 96; Gonzàlez-Ferrer, Baizán & Beauchemin, 2012). Research on migratory patterns of Senegalese families showed that some Senegalese individuals purposely delay family reunification so that their children can be fully immersed in the Senegalese culture and ways of life before migrating abroad (Gonzàlez-Ferrer et al., 2012). According to Tate (2011), “both separation and reunification may be associated with higher rates of divorce and other forms of disruption, adding another layer of adjustment for family members” (4). More specifically, the insertion of an African child into a white world causes a social and psychological shift where the child moves from being a ‘normal’ child to being an ‘abnormal’ child as a result of occupying a ‘white’ environment which may challenge previously held beliefs about one’s self (Fanon, 1967). As such, migration for children can be a stressful process as it may induce a sense of disorientation.
Currently, it is estimated that about “25% of children in selected migrant-sending countries have at least one parent abroad” (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011:705). A Harvard study on immigration in the United States, projects that by 2040, about 85% of children of immigrants will be separated from their parents at some point during migration (Pottinger, Stair & Brown, 2008). While family separation is associated with most types of migration, family separation is of particular interest because Africa has a history of disruption of kinship relationship through the slave trade. The literature on family separation and reunification among African migrants is still in its early stages and there is still much to be researched (Tate, 2011). Most of the literature on transnational families has revolved around migration from Latin American countries to the United States (Mazzucto & Schans, 2011). More attention needs to be devoted to the impact that migration has on shaping the dynamics of African families at home and abroad.

**From Brain Drain to “Brain Abuse”: Employment Discrimination and Over-qualification in the Labor Market**

The experience of discrimination is perhaps one of the most shocking aspects of migration for many African immigrants. The common perception is that most western countries are founded on meritocracy – a fair system where individuals are rewarded according to their efforts. While this may be true to some extent, the reality is that meritocratic systems are often tainted with racism and other forms of discrimination. Racism as a form of discrimination is so foreign to many African immigrants that initially it is quite difficult to comprehend or even identify it as such. For some African immigrants, trying to make sense of this experience and how their identity changes within this context can prove to be very unsettling and disorienting.
One of the first situations where discrimination is most apparent is in the experience of trying to find employment abroad as a foreign trained African. In the article, “‘Brain Abuse’ or the Devaluation of Immigrant Labor in Canada” by Harald Bauder (2003), the term “brain abuse” is used to describe a common situation in Canada where the skills and experience of educated migrants are devalued and underutilized. As a result, immigrants become overqualified for the positions they occupy and work in positions that do not require the full utilization of their skills and experience (Chen, Smith & Mustard, 2010). The Canadian immigration system operates under a very selective recruiting process where it attracts highly skilled professional immigrants to the country based on their educational attainment and work experience (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Brouwer, 1999). The majority of immigrants entering Canada are admitted through the Skilled Worker Program (Dean & Wilson, 2009). However, the lack of recognition of foreign credentials have become of increasing concern as research shows that income gaps between recent immigrants and native-born Canadians are widening over time (Bucklaschuk & Wilkinson, 2011). The most puzzling aspect of the Canadian immigration system is the seemingly contradictory process of giving immigration points for educational attainment and work experience at the time of application yet failing to recognize these credentials in the labor market (Bucklaschuk and Wilkinson, 2011). The Canadian immigration system is partly designed to help sustain the economy through the importation of labor, yet the very labor it is importing is of no value upon arrival on Canadian soil (Picot & Sweetman, 2005). Furthermore, employers require “Canadian experience” for employment, which is perplexing considering the fact these are recent immigrants to Canada with foreign experience (Creese & Wiebe, 2009). Consequently, highly skilled Africans find it difficult to integrate themselves into the labor market.

These contradictions challenge the principles of the human capital theory that states that social and economic outcomes of individuals are proportional to their investment in
human capital (Scott and Marshall, 2009). Human capital commonly takes the form of education among laborers and serves as a driving force for economic growth (Scott and Marshall, 2009). If the human capital theory were applicable in the Canadian context, we would expect to see higher returns for education among African immigrants and perhaps a reduced income gap between immigrants and native-born Canadians. This is clearly not the case. Studies show that recent immigrants are increasingly more educated than previous cohorts, but their returns for educations are much less than those of native-born Canadians (Frenette and Morissette, 2005). As Boyd & Naomi (2011) note, “one obvious conclusion to be drawn form all these studies is that having high human capital alone does not protect immigrants today from economic hardship” (10). The implication here is that there is more to this phenomenon than the devaluation of foreign credentials.

Further analysis shows that there are variations in credential recognition and income among various immigrant groups. Picot and Sweetman (2005) note that the, “decline in returns to foreign experience is not evident among immigrants from the traditional source regions (e.g., Northwestern Europe, the English-speaking countries) and is concentrated among immigrants from the newer source regions” (Picot & Sweetman: 20). These “newer source regions” include immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa (Creese & Wiebe, 2009). Bucklaschuk and Wilkinson (2011) argue that visible minorities have a harder time in the labor market than non-visible minorities and “perceived racism on the job is twice as high among racialized immigrants as it is among white immigrants” (18). Oreopoulos (2009) takes this observation even further through his ‘Field Experiment with Six Thousand Resumes’ study. He gets at the core of the issue that some researchers seem to be “tiptoing around” – namely racism. The study shows that even in the absence of face-to-face interaction, a person’s name not only becomes a marker of difference but also provides employers with the
discretion of engaging in discriminatory practices. As such, African professionals are often victims of these practices.

Similarly, just as foreign credentials can be an indicator of country of origin; accents can also be a marker of difference. In the article, “What Color is Your English?” Gillian Creese and Edith Kambere (2003) interview African women in Vancouver, Canada about their experiences with discrimination based on their accent. They found that these educated women who are clearly proficient in English, are still the subject of linguistic scrutiny, infantilization, and discrimination before and during employment. Creese (2003) notes that, “through the act of speech and even without the visual marker of color, African women are perpetually marked as immigrants” (16). Creese’s (2003) findings seem to suggest that the passage of time alone is not sufficient to be regarded as a “Canadian”. Distinct characteristics such as skin color and accents may make full integration into Canadian society difficult if not impossible. Such discrimination even extends to the ability to rent a home. Upon hearing the accent of individuals of African descent over the phone, it is not uncommon for landlords to falsely claim that the property requested for is unavailable (Creese, 2010). For some, African accents can be an indication of lack of “western civility”, which may render the African individual unsuitable or unworthy of certain types of housing. Critical race theorists would argue that the discourse on accents operates on the assumption that there is a standard and “normal unaccented English” (Creese, 2010: 297). Evidently, African accents do not embody these “standards” and so discriminatory practices become justified. The point here is that accents alone do not necessarily impair communication; it is their social undesirability and the value attached to them that become a marker of difference and a source of discrimination in social and economic spheres (Creese, 2010). Consequently, for skilled Africans, language proficiency and foreign credentials alone are not sufficient for the full integration into the Canadian labor market.
The lack of recognition of foreign credentials is compounded by the significant
disjuncture between the skills of immigrants and their employment position, and status in the
host country. Mattoo, Neagu & Ozden (2008) argue that such a situation allows for potential
“brain waste” – “where the skilled and educated leave their home country, but then make
little use of their skills and education in the host country” (2). According to the Globe and
Mail (2012), a “study of 50,000 cab drivers concluded that half are immigrants. Two hundred
are doctors or have PhDs, compared with just 55 of their Canadian-born counterparts. Twenty
per cent have undergraduate university degrees or master’s, compared with 4 per cent of
Canadian-born drivers” (1). 60% of those who are employed are overqualified for the current
position they hold (Dean & Wilson, 2009). In “Survival Employment’: Gender and
Deskilling among African Immigrants in Canada”, Creese and Wiebe (2009) write that,
“Settlement agencies pass on knowledge, contacts and employment strategies in ways that
can both foster and hinder access to jobs. For example, employment programs designed for
new immigrants help channel immigrant workers into the lower echelons of the labor market”
(59). These are jobs that most native-born Canadians refuse to take up. According to Wald &
Fang (2008) discrimination has compelled some immigrants to settle for menial, low paying
jobs or what is often referred to as “survival jobs” (Creese & Wiebe, 2009). These “survival
jobs” are characterized by what is commonly known as the 3 ‘Ds’. Often times, these jobs are
Dirty, Demeaning and Dangerous. A report by Statistics Canada indicates “More than one-
half (52%) of recent immigrants with a university degree worked in a job requiring only a
high school education at some point during the six-year period [1996-2001]. This was almost
twice the proportion of 28% among their Canadian-born counterparts” (Li, Gervais & Duval,
2006: 8) Even more frustrating for professional African immigrants, is the inability to secure
employment in their areas of expertise (even in lower level positions) (Creese & Wiebe,
2009). Stories of medical doctors, engineers and professors reduced to occupations that are
extremely below their qualifications such as driving taxis or cleaning buildings, have become frightfully common in many western countries (Globe and Mail 2012; Tham, 2011; Afolabi, 2009).

Thus, there is an ever-increasing income gap between immigrants from African countries and native-born Canadians in spite of the higher educational attainment of African immigrants (Picot & Sweetman, 2005). For some immigrants, a means of arresting this trend is to retrain in Canadian educational institutions, as it appears to provide more favorable outcomes for employment. Bucklaschuk & Wilkinsn, (2011) state that “African and Caribbean visible minorities are 200% more likely to pursue additional education” (11). This probability is even higher among African immigrants who already have a university degree (Arthur, 2000). In recognition of the value placed on Canadian credentials as opposed to other foreign credentials, offspring of immigrants tend to be high academic achievers. In fact, African students are known to “have higher rates of postsecondary education than those of non-immigrant Canadians” (1). Hence, education is recognized and used as a tool for empowerment and upward social mobility among African immigrants (Arthur, 2000).

In essence, the African immigrant’s experience of employment discrimination and racism is not accidental or imagined; rather, it is institutionalized, systematic and it impedes the social and economic trajectories of skilled African immigrants. Discrimination pushes educated African immigrants to the margins of the labor market. As such, Africans recognize this, and are consistently finding ways to overcome these obstacles even if it means spending significant amounts of years and financial resources retraining for credentials they may already have.
Becoming Black: Identity Crisis

The experience of racial discrimination by African immigrants is a rude awakening to the realities of racism abroad. This realization also causes a shift or a transformation in identity. Identities in the diaspora are no longer based on kinship or membership to a particular tribe. A new identity is taken on and this identity is based on race.

Perceived differences among Africans at home are usually based on membership to a particular ethnic group. As Arthur (2000) notes, African immigrants come “from countries where blacks are in the majority and control every aspect of social organization, the immigrants approach the black and white racial divide with extreme caution, sometimes disengaged, distanced, and reluctant to participate fully in the affairs of the host society” (4). As a result, ideas and understandings about race and racial differences may be unfamiliar to most African immigrants (Arthur, 2000). However, with time and with the experience of racism, African immigrants start to internalize notions of race as it pertains to themselves, native-born blacks and the dominant white society. Arthur (2000) notes that because the migration is economically motivated, and because most African immigrants presume their stay to be temporary, there is less of a preoccupation with race relations between native blacks and whites in America among African immigrants. Sadly, the knowledge of slavery, the historical origins of racism and the struggle for emancipation of blacks in America is often lacking among most African immigrants. Similarly, knowledge of the African continent, Africans and African history among native blacks in America is often distorted by negative media images of Africans as savage, uncivilized and perpetually in need of help (Arthur, 2000). These conflicting ideas are often the source of misunderstanding, distrust and hostility between the two groups. In fact, this hostility may extend to other sectors including the academia. Jumare (1997) states that:

Many Nigerian academics are not only surprised, but indeed shocked when they arrive in their refuge and confront the hostility from Africans in diaspora whose
minds have already been set against the continent and its people through centuries of indoctrination and propaganda of hate. They have to compete not only with members of the host population, but also with Anglo-Africans, African-Americans and African-Canadians so that the process of adaptation and adoption takes a longer time than they imagined (116).

Aside from feeling somewhat disconnected from the conflict between blacks and whites in America, African immigrants might not be fully invested in engaging in this conflict because they may also be preoccupied with national politics in their home countries (Arthur, 2000).

Nevertheless, African immigrants in the diaspora undergo a process of racialization. Racialization can be defined as “the social processes by which a population group is categorized as a race” (Scott & Marshall, 2009:626). It has the effect of homogenizing individuals and assigning an inferior status to them based on origin and phenotypical characteristics such as skin color and other physical features. In discussing the experience of exclusion, Fanon (1967) quotes a passage from René Maran’s work, that states that “To be ‘The Other’ is to feel that one is always in a shaky position, to be always on guard ready to be rejected” (76). For African immigrants, racialization or the process of “Othering” comes with the adoption of a new identity. In the diaspora, Africans acquire a new identity of being “black”. Despite extended periods of stay and assimilation, Fanon (1967) writes that the even the educated black man remains an outsider in the white world. In the United States, complete assimilation is almost impossible for our skin color is a pestering reminder of our difference. In Canada, the rhetoric on multiculturalism conceals a system that appears to celebrate diversity but implicitly points to a white “Canadian” identity, distinct from all other cultures that make up the Canadian society including the Aboriginal owners of the land. While not as explicit as its US neighbor, Canada uses words like “immigration” and “multiculturalism” as substitute terms for race (Li, 2003).

Much of one’s identity is tied to where “home” is believed to be and the concept of “home” is imbued with political tropes of nationhood, citizenship and belonging (Notisha,
According to Notisha (2004), “our identity is based on a constant longing for the imagined home, the one that no longer exists, that many of us were too young to remember, that we have infrequently visited, and the one which became frozen in time and romanticized at the moment of arrival in Canada” (141). As such, the involuntary adaptation of this new “black” identity expands, refocuses and even disorients our ideas of what it means to belong to a nation and/or a state. The coming together of Africans from various countries and backgrounds in the diaspora is a reminder of our shared history and our common struggle. This recognition expands our understandings of the nation to include a pan-African nation. Personal ties to home countries refocus our attention on the economic, social and political state of affairs in our respective countries. The challenge of simultaneously engaging with our new identities in the diaspora and our identities at “home” can be extremely disorienting and a source of internal conflict. It can even play a role in deciding whether or not we choose to return home.

The Challenges of Return Migration: A Stranger at Home and Abroad

Even before leaving their home country, most migrants view their migration to the host country as temporary and move with the intention of returning to their home countries in the near future (Baffoe, 2010; Arthur 2000; Apraku, 1991). While some skilled Africans are slowly trickling back home, the majority of professionals are remaining abroad and choosing western countries as their permanent and new home (Hunger, 2002).

Scholars like Cassarino and Cerase classify returnees into a number of different categories, including the “the return of failure”, the “return of conservatism”, “retired returnees” and “returnee of innovation” (Togunde & Osagie, 2009: 119; Tiemoko, 2009: 158). ‘The return of failure’ describes immigrants who have been unsuccessful at meeting their economic goals as result of structural and systematic impediments such as discrimination.
Secondly, the category of ‘return of conservatism’ include immigrants who migrate with very specific financial goals and who are certain they will return due to family ties they have at home. ‘Retired returnees’, on the other hand, are immigrants who return home after spending most, if not all of their working years abroad. Finally, the “returnee of innovation” is characteristic of immigrants who return home with the intention of employing their knowledge, skills and experience towards the development of their countries. This category of immigrants are relatively successful at reaching their economic and career advancement goals in their host countries (Togunde & Osagie, 2009: 119; Tiemoko, 2009: 158).

There are a number of social factors that are involved in return migration. Similar to other findings (Baffoe, 2010; Arthur 2000; Apraku, 1991), a study of skilled African immigrants in the United States showed the majority (90 percent) of skilled African immigrants interviewed had plans to relocate back home at some point (Apraku 1991). Plans to return are also associated with the desire to reconnect with family and to aid in the development of their country (Apraku, 1991). The prevalence of racism in the host country, improved social and economic conditions at home and the desire to bring up their children in the African context have been cited as reasons for wanting to return (Apraku, 1991). Respondents noted that systematic racism and discrimination in the workplace hampered prospects for professional and career advancements (Apraku, 1991). This study also found that if the African immigrant is married to an American, they are more likely to remain in the host country (Apraku, 1991). As mentioned earlier, family expectations continuously shape the experience of immigrants abroad and their decision on whether or not to return. For those who feel they have fallen short of these expectations in terms of material wealth or social status abroad, coming home to family members would only be a painful and even shameful reminder of their shortcomings. This may especially be the case for those who left the continent as professionals or in managerial positions; the expectation of wealth and status is
likely to be higher than those who left the continent as semi-skilled or unskilled emigrants. There is often an expectation that extended periods of stay abroad are proportional to the amount of wealth amassed over that period (Tiemoko, 2004). Nevertheless, the presence of family at home remains among the top cited reasons for wanting to return home. Ironically, one’s family can operate as both an incentive and deterrent for returning.

Moreover, the desire or plans to return are most strongly communicated through the purchase or ownership of property in the home country (Goulbourne, Reynolds, Solomos, & Zontini, 2010). Such an undertaking requires a significant amount of financial capital. The likelihood of return increases with the ownership of property or business at home (Arthur, 2000; Arowolo, 2000). The exchange rate for the US dollar when converted to African currencies allows more money to be spent and invested (Arthur, 2000). Another indicator of whether or not African migrants want to return home is based on where they want to be buried (in the host country or in their home country) (Minta, 2007). A study of Africans immigrants (many of whom had at least a tertiary education before arriving in the US) found that, almost half of the respondents (46 percent) wanted to be buried in their country of origin (Minta, 2007). The ability to fulfill these desires whether it involves owning property or being buried at home requires that the immigrant be economically stable. There is a pronounced difference in desire to return between economic classes. A survey of African immigrants living abroad found that close to 80 percent desired to retire in their home countries (Arthur, 2000). Those with higher income (between $30,000 and $50,000) expressed more desire to return to their native countries, buy homes and start businesses than African immigrants with lower incomes (between $20,000 and $29,000) (Arthur, 2000).

Thirdly, the political climate in one’s home country can determine whether or not they choose to return. The extent to which feelings of patriotism or loyalty towards one’s home country influences Africans’ decision to migrate is unknown. However, fear of political
oppression and persecution among academics has been cited as a reason for remaining in the host country (Gidley-Kitchin, 2000). Academics may be even more apprehensive about prospects of returning home because of the existing social and political climate that continues to be unfavorable to those who challenge authority. This is one of the many reasons that force them to migrate to the West in the first place. As a Kenyan professional working in Boston noted, “we would like to return but domestic conditions don’t allow us to do so. You cannot eat patriotism, can you?” (Madamombe, 2006:1). There is an emphasis on survival. The point here is that a patriotic appeal alone is not sufficient to attract skilled migrants back home. The appeal needs to be supported by concrete evidence such as creating social and political infrastructure conducive to return.

Much of the literature on return migration points to a common concern of migrants involving being perceived as “failures” (Zoomers, Adepoju & van Naerssen, 2008; Tiemoko, 2004; Arowolo, 2000). As such, these authors caution against interpreting any form of return migration as counteracting or reversing the effects of brain drain. Tiemoko (2004) writes that the return of immigrants to their home countries should be understood in context. The return of immigrants in general, has little to no impact on prospects of development if they return without skills and motivation required to drive innovation in their home countries (Tiemoko, 2004). Peil’s (1995) study on immigrants from Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone, found that those migrants who returned were individuals who were older and wanted to retire in their home countries (Arowolo, 2000). ‘Retired returnees’ may be more concerned with reintegrating themselves and settling back into their home countries than being active participants in the process of development. This may pose a challenge to tapping into and optimizing the skills and experience that retired returnees have to offer (Tiemoko, 2004).

There are many fears and concerns associated with returning home. For some, the difficulty in returning stems from the uncertainties associated with adjusting to the social and
economic conditions back home. Upon return, there are a number of challenges that returnees may be faced with including the difficulty in adapting to the new environment, the inability to find employment and the experience of an identity crisis or confusion (Arowolo, 2000). Depending on the amount of time spend abroad, the return home can invoke a poignant sense of being a stranger in one’s own home. Not surprisingly, there is often a lot of stress and frustration associated with return migration especially when things are not going as expected (Arowolo, 2000). Returning home may involve rekindling and strengthening old friendships and creating new networks. Furthermore, after so much of one’s life has been established in the West whether this pertains to raising a family, owning property in the host country, having a secure job or maintaining one’s social networks, the thought of leaving all that behind can be very daunting and be perceived as a risky endeavor. For those who return, the challenge becomes trying to come up with ways in which their knowledge and expertise can best serve their society in an environment where the appropriate infrastructure may or may not be readily available to carry out such tasks. The study of returnees to Sub-Saharan Africa is an area of research that has yet to be explored in depth (Arowolo, 2000; Togunde & Osagie, 2009). This could be because “return migration tends to be a private, individual or family affair” (Arowolo, 2000:69). Hence, the idea of return is something that is never too far from an immigrant’s consciousness. While return migration may be in the near future for some immigrants, sadly for others, the desire to return may forever remain just that – a desire. The final section of this chapter highlights how the stresses of migration can take a toll on the mental health of immigrants.
Skilled African Immigrants and Mental Health

The process of migration and settling down can be a very stressful and anxiety-inducing experience. Family separation, discrimination, un/under-employment, identity crisis, nostalgia for one’s home country and a number of other factors can have grave effects on one’s physical and psychological well-being. Shaw-Taylor and Tuch (2007) cites a study by Jasso et al. (2004) that found stresses associated with migration and settling in the host country “increased risks of hypertension, leading to a likelihood of blood clots and greater risks of obesity and type II diabetes” (258). According to Shaw-Taylor and Tuch (2007), “as a phenomenon yielded by one’s social circumstance, stress may be conceived of as a distress or discomfort experienced in daily life events, and these daily changes are often accompanied by loss and grief” (164). They argue that, “the concepts of social isolation, cultural change, and goal-striving stress describe the changes encountered by African immigrants in the migration process” (Shaw-Taylor and Tuch, 2007: 259).

Social isolation refers to feelings of loneliness as a result of migrating from one’s home country and the weakened ties with family and friends at home (Shaw-Taylor & Tuch, 2007). The feeling of loneliness and depression is particularly pronounced when spouses and children are separated from each other. In the United States, more and more female migrants are been treated for psychological distress and disorders, which are often associated with family separation (Falicov, 2007).

Similarly, “the term culture shock suggests that immigrants undergo strain, a sense of loss, and feelings of deprivation, rejection, role confusion, surprise, anxiety, disgust, indignation, and impotence as they adjust to their new status” (Shaw-Taylor & Tuch, 2007:260). As such, the changes associated with adopting a new environment and familiarizing one’s self with the culture, values, norms and code of conduct can be daunting (Shaw-Taylor & Tuch, 2007). The transformation of roles and expectations among migrants
can be a source of stress and can contribute to mental illness (Shaw-Taylor & Tuch, 2007). For some individuals, their profession is a significant aspect of their identity and the inability to work within their field of expertise is in many ways an assault on their identity (Dean & Wilson, 2009). The inability to support accompanying dependents in the host country as well as the challenges of meeting expectations of remittances to relatives back home can exacerbate an already stressful situation (Dean & Wilson, 2009). This loss of identity as a result of underemployment or unemployment signals a shift or demotion in social status (Dean & Wilson, 2009).

Stresses associated with attempting to achieve one’s goals also affect the mental health of African immigrants (Shaw-Taylor & Tuch, 2007). As ambitious and goal oriented as many African immigrants are, setbacks or even failing to achieve certain goals whether educational or occupational have serious effects on their mental well-being (Shaw-Taylor & Tuch, 2007). There are positive correlations between employment status and mental health (Dean & Wilson, 2009). That is, being employed is associated with more positive health outcomes including increased self esteem versus being unemployed which is associated with depression and anxiety (Dean & Wilson, 2009). Underemployment (i.e. being employed in a position below one’s qualifications) and unemployment are associated with negative mental health outcomes including “stress, depression, unhappiness, worry, tension, irritation and frustration” (Dean & Wilson, 2009:193; Baffoe, 2010). Self-esteem and self-confidence are particularly affected by employment status (Chen, Smith & Mustard, 2010). Feelings of inadequacy and the gradual loss of skills as result of underemployment or unemployment compound mental health problems (Dean & Wilson, 2009). Physical symptoms of stress can include, aching muscles and joints, and weight loss and/or weight gain (Dean & Wilson, 2009).
These health trends are particularly concerning in the Canadian context, as recent immigrants are found to be significantly healthier than the general Canadian population as a result of the “medical screening process imposed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada” (Dean & Wilson, 2009: 200). However, research indicates that there is a steady decline in health and wellbeing with increased stay in Canada (Dean & Wilson, 2009). Chen et al. (2010) also found that both mental health and general health of immigrants suffer upon arrival and can last for the duration of their stay in Canada. The difficulty in addressing this issue appropriately lies in the fact that most Africans suffering from mental illness associated with migration may be unaware that they are suffering from mental illness. The stigma attached to mental illness may also make it less likely that the appropriate help and treatment is sought (Shaw-Taylor & Tuch (2007).
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The brain drain from the African continent is cause for much concern. I employ an anti-colonial framework for the analysis of this phenomenon because as a school of thought, anti-colonialism seeks to disrupt and sever colonial ties of dependency and exploitation (Dei, 2006). This thesis surveys the literature to examine some of the reasons that African migrants leave their home country. Civil conflict and political strife create unfavorable conditions for transparency and legitimate governance. This invariably affects all aspects of society including the access to and quality of educational systems, the availability of relevant employment after graduation and the experience of job satisfaction. These problems did not spontaneously arise within the last few decades. They are for the most part, by-products of a historical legacy of slavery and colonialism that have had lasting effects on the African continent and its people. Consequently, the brightest among us are leaving the continent at unprecedented rates. Among these brilliant minds, it is only those with the social and financial capital that can afford to migrate. On one hand, brain drain has cost the continent billions of dollars in lost revenue and expertise and has been cited as a source of cheap labor for western countries. On the other hand, brain drain has been praised for the amount of cash flow it generates in the continent through remittances. What I find, however, is that debates on brain drain including discussions of the push-pull theory do not adequately capture the social impact of migration and some of the lived experiences of African immigrants in the diaspora. Among the challenges faced by immigrants is the feeling of isolation and loneliness that may be experienced as a result of being away from family members. The devaluation of migrants’ knowledge and expertise reflect the realities of employment discrimination and the over-qualification of African immigrants in the labor market, especially in Canada. Similarly, the formation of new identities in the diaspora complicates how we engage with the politics at home and in the diaspora. While most immigrants relocate with the intention of returning
home at some point, a number of factors can affect our decisions on whether or not we will return home including: funds available, location of the majority of family members, socio-political conditions and employment opportunities in the home country, career type and social status in the host country. Lastly, the stresses associated with migration as well as setbacks in achieving desired goals can affect the psychological well being of migrants.

As noted earlier on, this study is designed to be a stepping-stone for further inquiry on the social impact of brain drain from the African continent. In the future, interviews with focus groups can be conducted with African immigrants in the diaspora detailing their personal experiences as skilled migrants. This area of study would provide information on issues surrounding the decision-making process involved in migration. A similar study can also interview returnees to investigate reasons for their return, the expectations they may or may not have had about returning and the adjustment process involved with returning home.

The migration of Africa’s best and brightest is not a voluntary process, it is a survival strategy induced by historical and contemporary structures that continue to impede growth and development on the African continent. African heads of state need to start having serious conversations about the implications of brain drain on the continent and on its people. This must begin with the recognition of their shortcomings as leaders of their respective countries and must be sustained by their willingness to address these shortcomings. African governments must restore a sense of trust and confidence among their citizens, otherwise any attempts to bring about change will be met with skepticism and suspicion. Transparency and accountability in governance is likely to nurture trust and establish appropriate expectations. The country of Botswana is an excellent example of how good leadership can result in political stability, provision of social services and improved standards of living.

Moreover, the African educational system is in need of significant reform. The curriculum in particular must be redesigned to reflect the African context and meet the needs
of the African labor market. We need to move away from theoretical approaches to learning to more practical approaches to learning; this includes encouraging more critical thinking and problem solving skills as opposed to the emphasis on outdated systems of learning that focus on memorizing and reciting facts and theory (Frimpong, 2012; Dembélé & Oviawe, 2007). Hence, an increase in vocational institutions is more likely to curb youth unemployment and provide the skills required for successful integration into the African labor market (Frimpong, 2012:2). Educational reforms should also inspire a renewed sense of African consciousness and pride. African children need to know our history and know that Africa is not an inherently dysfunctional continent with seemingly endless problems. We need to educate a generation of leaders and community members that not only envision boundless opportunities for growth and development on the continent but are also provided with the necessary tools to make that vision a reality.

Finally, if remittances alone were all that was needed to develop the African continent, then African countries would be well on their way to joining the league of the so-called developed countries. But the continent needs more than this. In order to retain professionals, we need to nurture the talent we have at home, create outlets for maximizing their potential and acknowledge their value and importance. Doctors, teachers, engineers, lawyers, and academics are less likely to leave their country if they work in safe environments, are provided opportunities for career development and are compensated fairly for the services they provide. African governments can only successfully encourage the return of skilled immigrants if the appropriate infrastructure is in place to facilitate relocation and reintegration into the home country. An appeal to patriotism is an ineffective means of attracting skill migrants back to the continent. A reintegration program prior to return and upon arrival in the home country is key (Arowolo, 2000). Mentorship programs can be established where returnees partner with fellow citizens in their field of expertise to help
returnees network with others, get reacquainted with their surroundings and familiarize themselves with the local system of operation. Attention must also be given to immigrants returning with children to ensure that they also become well adjusted. African governments can also create incentives through offers of employment, health benefit packages and other allowances to attract this class of immigrants back to their home countries (Goulbourne, Reynolds, Solomos, & Zontini, 2010). As African migrants in the diaspora, we also have a role to play in supporting development on the continent even if we cannot physically relocate. We should seize opportunities to exchange knowledge and ideas with our fellow citizens on the continent. We have so much to learn from each other. Various communication technologies can facilitate this process including the use of webinars and other distant learning tools. In closing, I hope this thesis helps to refocus our attention on pressing issues on the continent as well as issues facing Africans in the diaspora today. I hope it inspires us to come up with effective and innovative ways to collaborate with one another and contribute to the uplifting of our countries – countries that our daughters and sons would be proud to call home.
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