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## GLOBALIZING IMPACT OF MODERNITY IN AFRICA

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*Modernity as a dynamic phenomenon resulting from its elements of time-space distancing, disembedding mechanisms and reflexivity impacts enormously the very personal and intimate lives of people, including social and religious institutions around the world. This article describes Giddens's theory of modernization and globalization and uses it to interpret the globalizing impact of modernity in the African context. It argues that Giddens's idea of modernity as the end of tradition falls short of interpreting adequately the impact of modernity in Africa.*

**Keywords:** *disembedding mechanisms, expert systems, friendship, family, modernity, marriage, pure relationship, reflexivity, self, time-space distancing.*

### Introduction

One of the most pervasive global phenomena that affect human social life all over the world is the impact of modernity. Modernity influences not only the intimate and personal aspects of human lives, but also impacts social, cultural, and religious traditions and institutions around the world. In this article, I describe Anthony Giddens's ideas of modernity, its dynamic elements as well as the impact of globalization on the self and intimacy in friendship and family. Drawing on Giddens's theory of modernity and other scholars' works, I explore the global impact of modernity on social, cultural and religious institutions in Africa with specific reference to Nigeria. I would argue that though the globalization of modernity affects the African family, humanity, culture and Christian religion, Giddens's concept of the end of tradition does not fully apply to the African context. I will show that there are still certain traditional values that are consistent with the Christian faith which many African people are willing to retain even in the face of modernity.

The article consists of three main sections. The first section describes Giddens's views on modernity and its impact on globalization in the West, while the second part explores the impact of globalized modernity in Africa, with specific emphasis on Nigeria. The third part deals with certain traditional values rooted in the Christian faith, which African Christians still hold unto and preserve even in the face of the pervasive globalized impact of modernity.

### Giddens on Modernity

According to Giddens, modernity is characterized by capitalism, military power, surveillance systems and industrialization (Giddens 1991: 15). The dynamism of these modern institutions not only undermines traditional habits and customs worldwide, but also intrudes into the most personal and global aspects of human life. Giddens claims

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that modernity has been radicalized and, through globalization, its institutions have spread all over the world. This radicalization is partly due to the criticism of its foundation in the Enlightenment, certainty, and confidence in human reason (*Idem* 1990: 51–52). Inherently globalizing modernity has unstable consequences and its reflexivity has created an atmosphere in which risk and hazard have assumed a new global dimension. The global tendencies of modernity have interconnected social affairs of the local with the global, thereby complicating the functions of nation-states (*Ibid.*: 77, 65).

He maintains that modernity has institutionalized doubt such that ‘all knowledge takes the form of hypotheses’ (Giddens 1991: 3) which may be true in principle but is open to revision at any moment. There exist multiple sources of authority, each of which is valid on its own terms. Having a single absolute knowledge becomes impossible because we cannot necessarily predict human invention. This creates an unreliable world bedeviled with uncertainties. ‘The point is not that there is no stable social world to know but that knowledge of that world contributes to its unstable or mutable character’ (*Idem* 1990: 45). Doubt becomes part of everyday life and the existential aspect of human social life.

Giddens claims that modernity is a juggernaut, which is restlessly driven forward but never steered by humanity, and consists of complicated counteracting parts which humanity cannot control. Its path is characterized by insecurity and risks, which threaten to destroy human existence. There are new inescapable and unavoidable risks emanating everyday over which humanity has no control. Humanity is increasingly threatened by manufactured risks rather than external risks from nature. Today humankind is faced with risks from itself, such as ‘global ecological risks, nuclear proliferation or the meltdown of the world economy. Others affect us as individuals much more directly, for instance those involved in diet, medicine or even marriage’ (*Idem* 2003: 35).

In late modernity, Giddens claims that crisis looms large. Nowhere is safe. Crisis has become an endemic and even integral part of human life. ‘A crisis exists whenever activities concerned with important goals in the life of an individual or collectively suddenly appeared inadequate. Crisis in this sense becomes a normal part of life, but by definition they cannot be routinised’ (Giddens 1991: 184). He claims that modernity has certain dynamic elements which exert enormous impact on the self in the West.

#### *The Dynamism of Modernity*

Modernity is dynamic. This dynamism is characterized by a *time-space distancing*, *disembedding mechanisms*, and *reflexivity*. Giddens maintains that the dynamism of modernity has created a ‘run-away world’ which is different from traditional society both in terms of social change and in the manner in which it alters normative social modes and practices of conduct of pre-modern society (*Ibid.*: 16).

According to Giddens, in the pre-modern society, time and space were inseparable from a definite place; ‘when’ was virtually connected with either ‘where’ or identified by natural occurrences. Crude maps and calendars were used to fix time and order space. Spatial dimensions of human life were dominated by localized social activities. Human relationships and social interactions between people were limited to the immediate local setting. They had no association with other people outside their local community. People's social interactions and patterns of social life were not influenced by any distant event other than their day-to-day local occurrences.

In late modernity, there is a new dawn of relation between 'absent' others (Giddens 1990: 8). Time and space have been increasingly separated and ordered to connect 'presence and absence' of people across spans of time, space, and distance. Modern systems of 'dating' and standardized time zones provide a worldwide single past, whereby 'time and space are recombined to form genuinely world-historical framework of action and experience' (*Ibid.*: 21). Time and space separation has not only 'disembedded' traditional face-to-face interaction between people living in the same local, but has also promoted networks of social relation with distant and absent others. The social life of local people has been influenced and transformed by social influence and events quite distant from them. 'What structures the locales [now] is not simply that which is present on the scene; the "visible form" of the locale conceals the distanced relation which determines its nature' (*Ibid.*: 19). The disembedding of social interaction from the local context and its restructuring across infinite time-space distances has liberated modern life from the shackles of traditional practices. It has provided novel ways for people to organize their social activities without regards to place and traditional practices.

Giddens claims that the emergence of print and electronic media is instrumental in separation between time and space. They are used in the late modernity to transmit masses of information instantly to different but distant people dwelling in different time zones. Human experience is now mediated such that there is 'the intrusion of distant events into everyday consciousness' (Giddens 1991: 27). Everyday life is thus shaped and reshaped by this mediated experience. People do not have to be present where global events take place before they know or are even influenced by them. The free flow of information from modern media has connected people in different places and times worldwide so that their relationships are no longer bound by time and space.

The disembedding mechanisms that also constitute the dynamism and structure of modernity are symbolic tokens and expert systems, which Giddens calls 'abstract systems'. Symbolized tokens such as money are not only mediums of exchange with a standard value, which is interchangeable across different contexts, but they also bracket time and space. This allows physically absent others to transact business between themselves across spans of infinite time-space distances. 'Money does not relate to time... as a flow, but precisely as a means of bracketing time-space by coupling instantaneity and deferral, presence and absence' (*Idem* 1990: 25). Similarly, expert systems help to bracket time and space by using technical knowledge, the validity which transcends both the practitioners and their clients. Such expert systems penetrate into every aspect of ordinary life, *i.e.*, social relations and interactions of the self in the condition of modernity (*Idem* 1991: 18).

These abstract systems operate in the condition of modernity based on trust. People trust modern experts in virtually every aspect of life (medicine, law, nutrition, transportation, communication, *etc.*) for daily survival and continuity of life. Thus, trust, which has become necessary in pre-modern social life, is configured in modernity based purely on absence of time and space and partly on ignorance. Trust is based on absence in the sense that the abstract systems are essentially out of our view. Trust is required by ignorance because people do not possess all the technological knowledge they need to know in every aspect of life. Giddens asserts 'trust brackets the limited knowledge which most people possess about coded information which routinely affects their life'

(*Ibid.*: 19), so people have to place trust in expert systems without actually knowing what they are or how they function. They simply trust that they are reliable and cannot disappoint because they are based on expert knowledge, which has validity independent of the modern experts. Trust is therefore invested not in the morality of individuals but in the abstract systems themselves. It is trust in expert systems that is the condition for disembedding: 'An expert system disembeds ... by providing "guarantees" of expectations across distanced time-space. This ... is achieved via the impersonal nature of tests applied to evaluate technical knowledge and by public critique ... used to control its form' (Giddens 1990: 28).

The increasing separation of time and space, coupled with the disembedding mechanism, has transformed social life in late modernity. People in the West have now become liberated from pre-modern social practices that constrained their reflectivity in the past. This freedom has brought about new ways of being in the world, where people construct their identity through personal choices. This process by which people determine who they are, is what Giddens refers to as 'thoroughgoing reflectivity' (*Idem* 1991: 20), the third dynamic element of modernity. All aspects of human social life are now susceptible to constant revision in light of new information or knowledge. The reflexivity of modern institutions has undermined the certainties and security attached to knowledge about the social and natural worlds, which Enlightenment thinkers thought would make modern life stable and secure. The truth is now the opposite, for all knowledge, even the most exalted scientific knowledge, today is provisional, subject to revision and discarding in light of new research findings and evidence. As Giddens observes, this condition of 'radical doubt' is not only disturbing to philosophers themselves but also existentially worrisome for ordinary individuals. Under conditions of modernity, self-identity becomes more a deliberate and reflexive endeavor that requires the 'sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised biographical narratives... in the context of multiple choices as filtered through abstract systems' (*Ibid.*: 5).

According to Giddens, in late modernity, the self and the globe are 'two poles of dialectics' whereby changes in intimate personal life are tied to social connections of a world dimension. In such a context, the transformation of the self takes the form of this dialectic between the local and the global in which self-identity and society are inseparable. Modern media, which brackets time-space by disseminating information across the globe, permits distant events and absent others to intrude into peoples' lifestyles and provide them with multiple options of life opportunities. This calls for a new way of being in which people turn inward to compose their identity. The self becomes a reflective project. In pursuit of this project of self-construction, people rely on experts' systems of therapy and counseling, which aid them in constructing and reconstructing their identities, which further enhances their reflexivity.

In traditional society, the self was a passive entity given by circumstances of birth and local traditional culture. But as modernity sweeps away tradition, the self is no longer a passive entity determined by external influences. The self is actively and reflexively constructed, 'yet, this task has to be accomplished amidst puzzling diversity of options and possibilities' (*Ibid.*: 2). Lifestyle becomes a matter of negotiated choice. There may be a collection of life chances commodified into a standard unit, but there is a plurality and diversity of authorities. A reflexively organized life project takes place

only in light of information provided by expert systems on risk. Giddens insists that social inequality does not vanish under the condition of modernity but this does not mean exclusion or marginalization, as everyone has a choice, even 'under conditions of severe material constraint' (Giddens 1991: 6). The globalization of modernity impacts intimacy in friendship and family and tradition.

### *Intimacy in Friendship and Family*

Giddens asserts that in the traditional society, friendship choices were limited by proximity and social status. People made friendship essentially for prestige and protection against potential enemies. Marriage was contracted not based on romantic love, but on social position and economic well-being. Men and women were unequal, with the latter subordinated to the former. Children had no rights; they were cared for based on their economic contribution to the family. Sexuality was dominated by reproduction; hence, women could give birth to as many children as possible. Homosexuality was considered unnatural and a perversion of sexuality (*Idem* 1990: 56).

In late modernity, Giddens says intimacy in marriage and friendship has been transformed. Sexuality is now separated from reproduction. Sexuality, which used to be fixed, for the first time has become that which is 'to be discovered, modeled and altered'. Sexuality is no longer bound by marriage and legitimacy. A person does not need to marry to find sexual fulfillment. Sexuality has lost its traditional content; hence, it is not defined in terms of heterosexuality. Family has ceased to perform its traditional economic function and marriage is now based on romantic love between married partners. Marriage and family have been transformed into 'shell institutions'. They look the same on the outside but they are different inside. Giddens uses the term 'coupledown' to describe the basic changes in these shell institutions. This coupling down arises as economic motives that guide relationships between married partners decline, and inequalities between them disappear. Sexual attraction and love have become the determining factors for contracting marriage. What guarantees a happy married life is emotional communication and satisfaction.

Giddens claims that the relationship in marriage, friendship, and between child and parent has been transformed into 'pure relationship.' Pure relationship is a 'free floating' relationship that is not based on external conditions. Unlike in the past, pure relationship is created and sustained only for its sake, for the benefit partners derive from it. Pure relationship is bound to last as long as partners assume it gives them the much-needed satisfaction. Giddens maintains 'marriage becomes more and more a relationship initiated for, and kept going as long as, it delivers emotional satisfaction to be derived from close contact with one another' (Giddens 1991: 89). Pure relationship in marriage, friendship and parent-child relationships are therefore created and maintained on the bases of trust, intimacy, and emotional communication. They are also based on democratic principles of equal rights and responsibility, mutual respect, dialogue and freedom from arbitrary powers, coercion and violence. Giddens describes pure relationship in this way: 'a good relationship is a relationship of equals, where each party has equal rights and obligations. In such a relationship, each person has respect, and wants the best for the other. The pure relationship is based on communication... dialogue... and trust' (*Idem* 2003: 62). In the West, married couples now decide their sexual, domestic, and parental roles without external forces.

Giddens claims that children in the West have now become financial burdens rather than economic benefits; their care and protection are sanctioned and enshrined in the law. Hence, parents are legally obliged to care for their children until they are of age regardless of their living condition. Like any other person, children have rights to be respected and cannot be lorded over by their parents.

As marriage becomes a commitment to stabilizing fragile relationships, it has ceased to be an exclusively heterosexual relationship. In this context, homosexuality and cohabitation can now fulfill the condition of pure relationship. They have become a legitimate and viable alternative married relationship to those who have this sexual orientation. Sexual equality of married partners is a core democratic principle which gives partners the much-needed happiness and fulfillment in their relationship.

Giddens maintains that the emergence of pure relationships in the West is a double-edged phenomenon; while pure relationship has given individuals the freedom to choose who they love and create a common history, they are very unstable. Pure relationships, however rewarding they may be, are by their nature conditional. Pure lovers constantly entertain fear that at some unknown point in the future their relationship will be broken. As Giddens puts it, 'no doubt all personal relations of any duration are testing and tensionful as well as rewarding. But in relationships which exist only for their sake, anything that goes wrong between the partners intrinsically threatens the relationship itself' (Giddens 1991: 90). Once the relationship is dissolved, the divorced partners engage in a painful process of reconstructing their self-identities to establish a new set of lifestyle and routines capable of serving as the 'core of (accomplished) normalcy with individuals and groups surrounding themselves'. The threat of dissolution which characterizes pure relationships creates anxiety, anger and depressive feelings in pure lovers. As such, all pure relationships often suffer from ontological insecurity. The impact of globalization of modernity on tradition is not farfetched.

### *Tradition*

Tradition in the West is also not immune from the globalizing impact of modernity. Giddens maintains that tradition in pre-modern society not only 'stored-up wisdom' but also provided an unquestionable 'framework for action' to people. In late modernity, tradition has become increasingly obsolete in the West. Just as modern society is now 'living after the end of nature', so it is beginning to live 'after the end of tradition' (*Idem* 2003: 43). He maintains that public institutions and ordinary life have become liberated from constraints of tradition in the West. Similarly, traditional societies across the world have become 'detraditionalized'.

What this means is that people are freer than ever before to engage in open discussion and dialogue, to question, reject and invent their tradition. They are emancipated from the constraints of the past to freely determine their lifestyle. In other words, they can pick and choose their traditions, which according to Giddens is antithetical to how tradition functioned in pre-modern times. As tradition wanes away, the sense of self-identity, which is limited and bound by social roles, has also changed in the West. It has taken a new dimension. The waning of tradition allows personal autonomy according to which self-identity is created and recreated more actively than before. People in the West do not need any traditional beliefs or values anymore to determine who and what they are. As Giddens puts it, 'in more traditional situations, a sense of self is sustained

largely through the stability of social positions of individuals in community. Where tradition lapses, and lifestyle choice prevails, the self is not exempt. Self-identity has to be created and recreated on a more active basis than before' (Giddens 2003: 47).

In such a situation, therapy and counseling services have emerged in the West to facilitate people renewing and reconstructing their self-identity. As said earlier, trusting expert systems has become necessary in the absence of tradition coupled with the inability of science to guarantee a solid framework for meaningful daily life. Latini associates the demise of tradition with the unreliability of today's human knowledge, awareness and social relation with the global other. She claims that people do not need any single traditional value system, belief, religion or next of kin to shape the course of their lives. 'Giddens refers to this as the end of tradition', she observes, 'We have traditions, *i.e.*, customs, but we freely choose, nuance and discard. In this sense, our traditions are anti-tradition' (Latini 2006: 19).

### **Globalizing Impact of Modernity in Africa**

The globalizing effects of modernity on Africa's social, cultural and religious life are real and far-reaching. Like in the West, the dynamic elements of modernity have transformed and shaped traditional social relations in Africa. Africans are now able to engage with the global community more than ever before, even as the global community intrudes into their intimate personal life as never before. The effects of this interaction between the rest of the world and Africa, which are made possible through modern print and electronic media, are not to perceive. This section deals with globalizing impact of modernity on specific aspects of life in Africa.

#### *Family and Friendship*

Giddens's depiction of pre-modern traditional Western family life is reminiscent of the pre-colonial African traditional family. Like the West, in the pre-colonial African society, parents or their close relatives arranged marriage between intending couples. Young men and women had no right to choose whoever they wanted to marry without the approval of their parents. In Nigeria, for instance, a thorough investigation into the family background of the bride and vice versa was done to ascertain the credibility of the family. Women and children had no right in the family. Women were married for child bearing and rearing as well as for home making, while children were born essentially for economic benefit and social security. Virginity before marriage was a virtue; men commonly practiced polygamy. The extended family system was an integral part of Nigerian society. Interethnic marriage was rare and to some extent prohibited (Falola 2001: 118–120).

In the 'modern' Africa, the globalizing effect of modernity has altered the marriage and family institutions. Unlike in the West, where Giddens claims that child bearing has been separated from sexuality, in Nigeria, the traditional meaning of sexuality still remains fixed but the traditional moral values, which regulate sexual expression are virtually lost. The watching of Western modern pornography on the Internet and television has devalued the sanctity of sex. Regarding pornography, Laurenti Magesa's comments on Kenya are also quite true: 'the print and electronic media have combined to "demystify" the taboos which restricted marital and extramarital relations... The electronic me-

dia exposes pornographic materials from the Western world, which are readily accessible in internet cafes in the major centres in Kenya' (Magesa 2004: 27). Extra- and pre-marital sexual affairs, which traditional norms frown at, often with severe consequences for the individuals involved and the society at large, have become part of everyday sexual life. As a result, sex has been commercialized. As Teresa Okure comments about Africa: 'Globalization has introduced and sustained the sex commerce. Western tourists have penetrated even into the remotest villages to attract young girls with cheap money', and this is not only responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa but also for increasing the 'high rate of exportation of young African girls into Europe' (Okure 2001: 72).

However, the free choice of sexual partners from multiple possibilities, which, Giddens claims is a common feature of the modern system of marriage in the West, is true of Africa. As Giddens says, 'it is characteristic of modern systems of sexual intimacy and friendship that partners are voluntarily chosen from a diversity of possibilities... The lonely hearts column computer dating and other forms of introduction service demonstrate well enough that plural choice is easy to achieve...' (Giddens 1991: 87). In many parts of Africa today, most young men and women freely choose whoever they want to marry with little or no consent of their parents. Parents are merely informed as a mark of courtesy. Like in the West, online dating, interethnic and even interracial marriages take place across the continent today.

Giddens is right to say that the influence of globalization has made women in most parts of the world ask for greater freedom and rights to participate in the labor force than in the past (*Idem* 2003: 4). Though the relationship of married couples is largely patriarchal, modern Western education has liberated some African women from traditional constraints, which in the past deprived them of their rights and subjugated them to men. Women are increasingly becoming vocal and active in claiming their rights both at home and in society. As Toyin Falola says, 'The enhanced economic power of women has translated into more democratic household management. In elite homes, children have a voice, women have authority, and traditional values of patriarchy have been eroded' (Falola 2001: 134). In some educated families, married couples jointly decide their sexual practices, for instance, regarding family planning, parental responsibilities and financial contribution to the well-being of the family. Children are increasingly being viewed more or less as an economic burden rather than an asset; hence, many educated Nigerians have accepted the use of contraceptives to cut down the size of the family. Single parenthood is now common.

Similarly, globalization is changing the African traditional family (Falola 2001: 134). In Nigeria, the polygamy system of marriage even among some fundamentalist Muslims is gradually decreasing. As such, E.O.C. Ijeoma accurately writes: 'The Western model of the nuclear family is now seen as an acceptable way of life in many communities and countries, including Nigeria' (Ijeoma 2004: 208). The extended family system that was valued in the past is today gradually giving way to the Western individualistic family system. This happens because time-space distancing allows for geographic mobility and because of self-reflexivity and lifestyle choices. Though Peter Kimani's assessment of the impact of modernity on the African tradition of community is exaggerated, his critical observation is somewhat true:

Individualism in society is increasing. Even families in rural areas like to operate in isolation ... The (conjugal) family is becoming more independent. The loss of community networks and the development of individualism have resulted in (increased occurrences of) suicide, loneliness, drug abuse and mental illness. The communal system is breaking down. The extended family had certain functions to perform, for instance, to reconcile couples at loggerheads with each other, but this is no longer the case. It is no one (else's) business to know what's happening in one's marriage today (Kimani 1998: 1).

More than ever, some Africans tend to care for their immediate family members than their extended relatives. As a result, orphans and widows are left alone to fend for themselves or perish. This is causing pain and hardships to these unfortunate persons.

The effect of modernity is also felt in Africa in the area of friendship. In pre-colonial African society, there was little or no opportunity for people to make friends outside of their immediate environments and kinsmen. In fact, strangers were considered potential enemies and not to be befriended unless proved otherwise. As Giddens rightly says: '... [In] many traditional cultures... [a] friend ... refers to mainly insiders, as contrasted to outsiders-strangers, and potential enemies' (Giddens 1991: 87). People made friends with each other without strings attached, except in the African communal spirit, essentially for the protection of themselves and community against external aggression. This scope and pattern of friendship has changed in Nigeria today. Through modern social media, mobile telecommunication and internet networks, many Nigerians have been able to make friends with other people across indefinite spans of time-space distance. The making of friends with 'absent others' both within and outside of Nigeria has been on the increase since the introduction of Internet and cell phones in the country.

Pure relationship has pervaded friendship in Africa, though not strictly in the Western sense, as Giddens notes, but largely different from the traditional communal style of friendship. Proximity still generates friendship but it may be maintained so far as it is materially rewarding to the parties involved. While Giddens says in the West people make friends for emotional fulfillment, in Africa, the motive for friendship is different. In Africa, where not only wealth and power are 'worshipped' (O'Donovan 2000: 14), but also globalization has worsened the disparity between the rich and the poor, people often make friends largely for economic benefit. A friend is not a person who gives the other partner emotional support, but the person who satisfies their financial needs even in marriage. The partners remain friends as long as they can meet each other's financial needs. In married relationships, whenever the couple falls short of this expectation, they either divorce or are compelled to keep the relationship for the sake of their Christian faith and their children (if any).

The rich and powerful, because of their financial resources, coupled with the abject poverty in the country, are more often objects of friendship in Nigeria than the poor. The poor are more often lonely, despised and alienated, for no one ordinarily wants to befriend them. In such a context, many Nigerians have gone and are still going to any length to acquire money and power at all costs to remain relevant and friend-worthy.

#### *Cultural/Personal Identity/Language*

The global impact of modernity has affected the cultural identity of many Africans. The mediated experience in modern times, which Giddens calls 'the intrusion of distant

events into everyday consciousness' (Giddens 1991: 27), has affected the personal and cultural identity in Africa. Ijeoma has this to say: 'At present Nigeria has become one of the countries in the Southern Hemisphere where the general dressing patterns no longer depict the fact they are Africans... Most of this way of learning comes from watching television programs that tend portray the Western dressing and cultural identity as if it is the most acceptable way of life' (Ijeoma 2004: 204). This has no doubt brought the average African to a crossroad. They are therefore asking, 'Who am I?' meaning that they have lost to a great extent their African identity and essential cultural values which bind them together. Sadly, there are many young African men and women growing up today who know neither their culture nor modern Western culture fully well. By culture, I mean what Kwast refers to as a 'patterned way of doing things within a particular society. The superglue which binds people together and gives them a sense of identity and continuity' (Winter and Hawthorne 1981: E-5). Cultural identity is about who people are and the way they live, and without such an identity, people will ordinarily feel lost and confused.

The fundamental feature of African cultural identity is the emphasis it places on the community rather than the individual. According to John Mbiti, the individual has little ambition for self-determination outside the context of the traditional African family and community. 'Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am"'. This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man' (Mbiti 1969: 109). Similarly, a person is only a person because of others. A person defines who they are through association with others. Augustine Shutte has this to say: 'In European philosophy of whatever kind, the self is always envisaged as something "inside" a person, or at least as a kind of container of mental properties and powers. In African thought it is seen as "outside", subsisting in relationship to what is other, the natural and social environment' (Shutte 1993: 46).

I think Giddens is too pessimistic in assuming that globalization of modernity will destroy local cultures (Giddens 2003: 15), even when he affirms that the media, printed and electronic, by disseminating 'mediated experience... has long influenced... self-identity...' (Giddens 1991: 4). How can one's self-identity be influenced while their culture remains intact, especially in an African context where the two are inseparable? But a critical look at African culture over the years proves that Giddens's claim does not hold water with respect to Nigeria because the destruction process has started. The global impact of late modernity has not only created a crisis of identity but has displaced many Nigerians from their culture, which may eventually be destroyed. It is what I call 'cultural displacement.' As Teresa Okure claims, 'Globalization is an ill wind that blows no culture any good, a broad road that leads to subtly but steadily to destruction of local cultures and persuades many world-wide to follow it' (Okure 2001: 69). The global modern Western culture has been transmitted through the modern entertainment industry, Internet and satellite communication across the country from the West. This mediated experience has exerted irresistible and pervasive influence on the thinking and the decisions of many Africans. Instead of turning inward to construct their identities, they turn outside to uncritically take on modern values at the expense of

their African values. As O'Donovan claims, 'When African people uncritically take on Western values in place of their own community values they sacrifice some of the most valuable parts of their culture' (O'Donovan 2000: 14). He claims that this uncritical mindset is informed by the popular notion that anything 'West is best'. African people unreflectively accept Western values in order to be considered modern, successful in business and education, but inwardly they know that they should live by the African traditional value of living for the good of the community, which puts people before one's personal plans and goals.

Globalized impact of modernity has compelled Africans to live with separate cultural worlds, modern and traditional, which have distinct sets of values and worldviews of life. As a result, they are experiencing inner conflict over identity and values. They are neither truly African nor truly modern in culture and identity. The global impact of modernity has severed and uprooted them from their traditional practices but has not essentially integrated them into Western modern culture. They are merely drifting without having a sense of cultural direction, for they have lost a firm grip over most of their traditional values. As Okure puts rightly, 'Traditional hospitality and spirit of sharing are replaced by a "me first" culture and every little service is expected to be rewarded at least with a "tip"' (Okure 2001: 69). The change has come so swift, plunging them into confusion about culture and self-identity in unimaginable ways. Ijeoma claims 'presently, government, families and tribal structures in Nigeria are thrown into crisis by [the] sweeping "cultural cloning" created through modern Western entertainment industries'. Ijeoma warns that if nothing is done to check it with better local entertainment programs "the future of the nation state of Nigeria will be swept aside by Western culture and will lose its own identity"' (Ijeoma 2004: 203). They are now forced to live not only with two separate half cultures that can never unite to form a single culture, but also with fragmented identities. Yet, to make matters worse, unlike in the West, where Giddens says therapy and counseling systems exist to renew Westerners' self-identity, there is virtually no modern therapy and counseling in Africa to construct and reconstruct their identities and overcome inner conflicts. Language, which is a gift that gives people cultural identity, is under threat of global impact of modernity.

One of the best legacies of early missionaries in the area of culture in Africa is the preservation of local language. As Sulayman S. Nyang says, 'The mission[aries] were solely responsible for the intellectual conservation of many African languages...'. (Nyang 1984: 72). But many local Nigerian languages have become endangered species under the condition of modernity. The English language, which was introduced into the country by British colonial domination during the colonial era, coupled with influences of modern print and electronic communication networks, is gradually replacing mother tongues as the formal medium of communication in many Nigerians homes. Consequently, there are many young Nigerian men and women growing up today knowing neither their native languages nor English fully well. The rich vocabularies of the local languages, which the native speakers would have used to construct their life narratives, are being lost. In addition to language, global modernity has also affected the *traditional music and dance*, as well *medicine*, which is part of cultural heritage, and to which we now turn.

### *Music, Dance, and Traditional Medicine*

In the African art sector, music and dance are also not spared from the influences of late modernity. In pre-colonial Nigerian society, people have their traditional music and dances. Musical instruments were made from natural resources and (include among others) drums, harps, pots, calabashes, *etc.* The music was composed in local dialects and was played for pleasure/leisure and entertainment for important events such as weddings, birthday ceremonies, and consolation at burials.

In today's Africa, modern Western musical instruments such as guitars, keyboards, kit drums *etc.*, are gradually replacing traditional musical instruments. Musicians now make use of this equipment in making their music/art works more often in English than in local languages. Modern Western musicians, through videos, CDs and satellite channels, have influenced them. Richard Letts claims that many Nigerian artists 'imitate this musician in their music style, rhythm, dressing, speech intonation, dance style and musical videos' (Letts 2003: 57). He claims that Nigerian youth prefer popular music from Europe and America to traditional music: 'They have come in close contact with the pop music through the satellite TV stations and music channels. Programs like the UK and US top ten chart shows keep them abreast of the latest developments in music as they are released into the market. The Internet also allows young adults to listen to the latest releases as they come out' (*Ibid.*: 56). The establishment of cyber cafés in the country has made it easier and cheaper to access these releases online and surf the web at any moment. The popular trend in global musical appeal is on the increase in both rural and urban areas. This has not only impacted the attitude of youth toward traditional music but has also destroyed the rich cultural heritage of traditional music and dance.

As for African traditional medicine, before the advent of modern Western medicine, Africans had their traditional medicines and healers who used herbs to cure various illnesses. Medical plants were used to treat diseases like ulcers, pain, mental disorders, snakebites, worms, *etc.* There were also traditional mid-wives who cared for pregnant women during labor. Witchcraft, evil spirits (of deceased people), and other mystical forces were believed to be the cause of illness. Traditional healers had to focus on maintaining a balance between the spirit and physical worlds in the treatment of their patients. They provided holistic treatment to their patients.

The global impact of modern Western health facilities has undermined worthwhile traditional medicine. The trust, which people had in traditional medical services, is now invested in modern healthcare, drugs and facilities, which are not only scarce and inaccessible, but also beyond the reach of the average Africans. Hence, in times of critical health crises that seem to defy modern medical solutions, many Africans revert to traditional medical practices. Globalized modernity has dis-embedded many Africans from their traditional medical services, but has not successfully re-embedded them in the modern health care system. The traditional health system is still intact, but largely degraded and marginalized.

### **Christian Religion**

Christian religion is a Western religion introduced into Africa through missionary conversion and Western education in the nineteenth century. Since its introduction, though

it has remained vibrant, it has not succeeded in converting all the adherents of traditional religion; hence, it exists side-by-side with traditional religion, and in times of existential crisis, the average African Christian reverts to traditional practices (Imasogie 1986: 70). Christianity is one of the fastest growing religions in Africa. Though the globalizing impact of late modernity has not slowed down its pace of growth and influence, it has transformed its mode of worship and practice in Africa.

With the global impact of modernity, modern Western musical instruments and media are used in worship and communication in churches. Worship services are increasingly being conducted in English and modern Western instruments have become an integral part of Sunday worship in both rural and urban areas. Magesa is right to say 'church music in many Christian denominations in Africa has been enriched over the years by the introduction of [modern Western] musical instruments such as organs, piano, keyboard, guitar and others', while at the same time, it threatens to replace the traditional musical instruments (Magesa 2004: 206). Modern Western print and electronic media are used to minister the gospel to infinite numbers of people simultaneously across indefinite spans of time-space distances within and outside of Africa.

Also, with the capitalistic effects of modernity on the country, Christianity has also ceased to be a religion of the cross of Christ. As T.U. Nwala observes, 'It is now the religion of Western Capitalist society. It now sees the world in the eyes of the industrial capitalist society and defends it even though it may verbally criticize it' (as cited in Isiguzo 2008). The average Nigerian Christian sees their mission and destiny on earth as nothing other than becoming richer than their neighbor. The Ministry has today become a veritable commercial career that has made many pastors rich, successful and influential in society. This is truer of presidents and founders of the Pentecostal religious movements, which believe and preach prosperity gospel more often than mainline churches.

#### *Retention of Traditional Values*

With due respect for Giddens's idea of the end of tradition, which accords people the freedom to choose and reject their traditions/customs, I argue that there are certain essential traditional values which Africans still retain even under the conditions of modernity. These values not only resonate with their cherished tradition and Christian faith, but also bind people together and give them a sense of unity and identity. Prominent among them is African tradition of sexuality and communal life. Christian Trinitarian theology is a human rational attempt at explicating the idea of plurality and unity in God. It holds that God is the communion of three persons who always exist not in isolation from each other, but in relationship with themselves. Therefore, the life of the Triune God, which is distinct from all forms of human community, but yet resonates with the African communal living, disallows individualistic life (Ogbonnaya 1994: 10–11, 80–81). In any African society, a person exists and finds fulfillment outside of themselves in relationship with others. What Mike Boon speaks of regarding African communal existence is true: 'One's humanity can, therefore, be defined through interaction with others. It is believed that the group is as important as the individual and a person's most effective behavior is in the group. All efforts towards this common good are lauded, as are all acts of kindness, compassion and care and the great need for human dignity, self-respect and integrity' (Boon 1996: 32). Thus, the self is the center of relation-

ship in family and community. It is in relating with other persons that the self lives, moves, and finds its happiness.

Global impact of modernity has given Africans more freedom from tradition to choose from a multitude of options concerning careers, lifestyles and sexual preferences than ever before, yet many of them make this choice without abandoning the African traditional value of communal relationships. This is in part because Africa is not utterly de-traditionalized by the global impact of modernity, unlike the Western society, where the self is free to recompose its identity without taking into consideration traditional values that unite it with other members of the community. Moreover, Africa has not gone through the providential historical process of de-traditionalization like the West, but is merely caught in the risk of an alien view of progress through mechanisms of globalization. The end of tradition does not mean that African Christians are arbitrarily choosing their customs and traditions and abandoning even the essential ones without recourse to the truth of their Christian faith. As Nicolette Neville claims,

As [African] Christians we need to be on the cutting edge of technological change and opportunities, but resistant to ideological change that undermines absolute truth. People need to be aware of their uniqueness, individuality and destinies in God because as cultures are increasingly homogenized, they will feel lost and unimportant within this global environment (Neville 2008: 6).

Their choice of their custom and tradition appears to be guided by the Word of God, and whatever tradition practice is in conflict with the teaching of the Bible has to be discarded. As Byang Kato writes: 'Practices incompatible with the Bible have to give way... The good part of African culture which meets the Biblical standard will be preserved and promoted...' (Kato 1987: 178).

The African communal life is bound up with the institution of marriage, since without it there will be no family and community. In Africa, marriage is a cultural and sacred institution to which value is greatly attached despite the fact that marriage has modernized dramatically. For example, African Christians still believe in, and desire to preserve marriage as a sacred indissoluble hetero-sexual union in keeping the Word of God. They insist that this was God's intention for humanity from the beginning when Jesus said 'that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female"... therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate' (Mat. 19: 4–6). Thus, the Christian church in Africa is largely homophobic. As Nigerian Anglican Primate Peter Akinola expresses, 'I didn't write the Bible. It's part of our Christian heritage. It tells us what to do. If the word of God says homosexuality is an abomination, so be it' (as cited Jenkins 2006: 3). Consequently, homosexuals still live as excluded members of the church and society in Africa.

### **Conclusion**

The globalizing consequences of modernity on self-identity, friendship, family and tradition around the world are irresistible. As Giddens asserts under the conditions of modernity, the self is increasingly reflexive and pure relationship has permeated family and social life in modern times. The end of tradition has also given people freedom not only to determine who desires to be without external restrictions of beliefs, values, kin, *etc.*, but also to freely choose to question, discard and reinvent their traditions in the West.

Globalizing impact of modernity in Africa has also altered the self, and social and African traditional lives. Under the condition of modernity, the African traditional family system is changing to an individualistic nuclear family life. The inequality between men and women is steadily reducing. Multiple choices of sexual partners abound for many Africans to choose from without most former external restrictions. But most Africans who have uncritically embraced modern Western values have now been plunged into personal/cultural identity crises.

Though the globalizing impact of modernity has marked an end to tradition so that Africans now freely pick and choose their career, life partner and lifestyle, African people still largely hold unto their traditional idea of fixed sexuality, and person-centered culture, which values people and human life over and above personal interest and material gains. They believe these traditional values are consistent with the Christian faith and African tradition. Whether or not they will abandon entirely these African traditional values and embrace the modern ideas of dynamic sexuality and autonomous self, only time will reveal. At any rate, Giddens's concept of modernity as the end of tradition is not yet fully practicable in the African context.

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