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Editorial Note:

This latest issue of the Journal of Contemporary Society Education (JCSE) arrives at a moment when the boundaries between the academic, the social, and the urgently practical have never been more porous. A glance at the twenty-one articles in this forthcoming collection reveals a publication that understands its mandate: to serve not merely as a repository of scholarship, but as a sharp, coherent lens through which to examine the pressing complexities of contemporary society, with a firm grounding in education as a transformative force.

What distinguishes this issue is its refusal to settle for disciplinary comfort. The contributions, drawn from institutions across Africa, demonstrate a welcome intellectual restlessness. We see scholars interrogating the intimate, such as Mudau et al.'s exploration of language as a source of family conflict within Vhavenda families alongside those grappling with structural questions, such as Sikwela and Diedericks' critical look at performance management as "a mirror of inertia" in public administration. This range is not a sign of incoherence; it is a testament to the journal's understanding that societal education occurs in classrooms, in homes, in municipal water governance (as Zulu and Nojiyeza's work on Zululand shows), and in the very language we use to communicate.

Several pieces stand out for their conceptual bravery. Maungedzo's reframing of academic literacy through sociocultural theory for rural teacher development tackles a perennial challenge with fresh theoretical rigour. Similarly, Lubombo and Zethi's work on "linguistic justice" and the Disciplinary Literacies framework asks a question that South African higher education can no longer afford to postpone: how do we re-imagine instructional communication not as a barrier, but as an equitable foundation? These are not abstract debates; they are core pedagogical interventions.

The journal also demonstrates a commendable commitment to surfacing marginalised voices and experiences. Nkumane's exploration of intersectionality and the lived experiences of Black women scholars at UNISA, and Sibango's ethnographic look at how belonging is negotiated in Anthropology departments, remind us that the university itself is a site of intense social contestation. When Lekoa and Nojiyeza connect off-campus housing to "ecologies of distress" affecting student mental health, they do what good contemporary scholarship must: they trace the material conditions of life directly into the outcomes of education.

If there is a through-line to this collection, it is the insistence that no social phenomenon, whether climate governance under the AU (Yemisi and Ani), the antinomies of decolonisation in literature (Moopi), or the gendered nexus of marital status and poverty (Dunga), exists outside the purview of rigorous inquiry. The JCSE is building a platform where scholars can hold those complex phenomena up to the light.

This volume does not offer easy answers. It offers something more valuable: a coherent, sharply focused set of questions, pursued with methodological care and regional relevance. For a journal of contemporary society and education, that is precisely the work that matters.

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A PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISSAL OF RENÉ GIRARD'S ARCHETYPAL SCAPEGOAT HYPOTHESIS IN THE LIGHT OF NIGERIAN MIGRANTS IN GERMANY

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Abstract

In view of contributing to René Girard's scapegoat theory, this article draws on the case of Nigerian immigrants in Germany to philosophically appraise the fate, identity formation and societal positioning of immigrants in civil societies. Its argument is that beyond marginalisation and alienation of immigrants in host societies (emanating mostly as a result of "moments of mimetic crises"-René Girard's scapegoats hypothesis), immigrants also face additional pressures from their country of origin, where they are often held responsible for the economic hardships of those that they left behind (reverse scapegoating). This dual scapegoating, both in the host society (Germany) and in their homeland (Nigeria) creates a cycle of frustrations, exploitation, and unfulfilled aspirations that leave migrants trapped between two worlds. Engulfed in the two worlds, migrants often end up in a life of unfulfilled dreams and aspirations. By appraising Girard's theory in this specific socio-cultural context, this article highlights the broader implications of scapegoat mechanism on migration, identity, and societal cohesion, and argues for a critical re-evaluation of these dynamics to foster a more inclusive and empathetic understanding of immigrants' experiences.

Keywords: Germany, Greener pasture Migration, Nigeria, Race, René Girard, Scapegoat,

1. Introduction

In contemporary debates on migration, exclusion, and identity formation, few theoretical frameworks have had as much influence as René Girard's scapegoat theory (Antonello and Gifford, 2015; Beaumont, 2014).

Girard's (1972; 1986; 1987) insights into the dynamics of violence, sacrifice, and social cohesion continue to provide an indispensable lens for understanding how societies construct and preserve order in moments of crisis. At the heart of Girard's thesis is the claim that communities, when faced with mimetic

rivalries and social unrest, unconsciously unite against a chosen scapegoat whose expulsion or sacrifice restores a fragile sense of stability. While originally developed with reference to myth, ritual, and the foundations of culture, Girard's scapegoat mechanism has increasingly been applied to modern sociopolitical phenomena, including ethnic violence, religious persecution, and, more recently, the treatment of migrants in societies around the world (Cabral, 1994; Antonello and Gifford, 2015; Donato and Ferris, 2020; Tarisayi, K. (2024)).

The use of Girard's framework in contemporary migration studies has not gone unchallenged. Some critics (Favell, 2022, Steinberg, 2018) argue that the theory risks oversimplification, reducing complex economic, cultural, and political structures to a symbolic process of collective expulsion. Others suggest that Girard's emphasis on the "host society" obscures the multilayered pressures migrants face, particularly those who remain entangled in transnational obligations and expectations. Such criticisms invite a reconsideration of whether Girard's model—powerful as it is - captures the full extent of migrants' experiences in today's globalised world. Are the experiences of immigrants such as Nigerian immigrants in Germany captured in Girard's framework? Or is it better captured through a neglected aspect of the scapegoat mechanism: what can be termed the **reverse scapegoat**?

The notion of reverse scapegoat draws attention to the way migrants, far from being scapegoated only by host

societies, often get 'scapegoated' from additional burdens from their countries of origin. Nigerian immigrants in Germany, for instance, not only face systemic marginalization and racialization within European public discourse, they are also frequently being cast as economic threats, cultural outsiders, or failed participants in integration (Obi, 2023). Like their diaspora counterparts, they also endure the reverse expectation from their homeland as families and communities in Nigeria often project their economic struggles and aspirations on them, often holding them responsible for alleviating their own hardships (Okunade & Awosusi, 2023; Obi, 2023; **Akinterinwa, 2024**). When they are unable to meet these heavy expectations of their relatives in the home country, they are accused of betrayal, selfishness, or moral failure, hence making them scapegoats for national frustrations. This double bind—ostracized in the host country and burdened by reverse scapegoating from home - can create a cycle of alienation that leaves migrants trapped between two worlds.

The implications of this dual scapegoating are profound. Firstly, Nigerian immigrants' in Germany naturally operate in contexts of deferred dreams, unfulfilled aspirations, and vulnerability to exploitation, both materially and psychologically. Secondly, in Girardian terms, they embody a sacrificial figure caught within two symbolic economies: the western society that marginalizes them as disruptive outsiders, and the homeland that interprets their struggles as evidence of irresponsibility or failure. These mean that far from achieving the celebrated narrative of upward mobility,

many of them will find themselves consumed by pressures that erode their sense of belonging in both contexts. What could emerge is a portrait of migration that may not be a linear progress, but a site of continuous crisis management, in which individuals must negotiate competing scapegoating logics.

By incorporating the reverse scapegoat mechanism in the Nigerian immigrant's experience, this article aims to broaden the socio-philosophical understanding of migration, identity, and social cohesion for African diaspora population. The focus on Nigerian immigrants provides a concrete case study through which to probe the limitations and possibilities of Girard's framework. The analysis underscores the need for critical re-evaluation of how societies, both host and sending countries construct narratives of responsibility, blame, and sacrifice around migrants. In doing so, the article argues for a more inclusive and empathetic discourse that resists the reduction of migrants to scapegoated figures, and instead recognizes the structural and relational complexities of accompanying pressure from their home countries that contribute in defining their experiences in the host country.

The article proceeded as follows. Firstly, a quick discussion that highlights the **history and current state of migration in Germany**, situating Nigerian migration within broader trajectories of labour recruitment, asylum flows, and political contestations. Secondly, a review of the **Nigerian migration in Germany**, that highlights demographic patterns and labour attractions that frame Nigerian

migrants' settlement in Germany. Building on this, the article thirdly examines **the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Germany**, explaining how their experience is defined by structural barriers and racialized system that makes them scapegoats in the host society. Finally, the article advances a theoretical reflection by **revisiting René Girard's scapegoat hypothesis**, interrogating its relevance for understanding Nigerian migrants' experiences, while introducing the notion of **reverse scapegoatism** to capture the additional pressures exerted by families and communities in Nigeria.

2. Migration in Germany: Historical Trajectories and Contemporary Realities

The history of migration in Germany arguably extends back to antiquity. The earliest significant migrants to the region were Jews, who arrived with the Roman invasion of Germania between 12 BC and 16 AD. Although they gained social and economic influence, they were also subjected to periodic persecution, including mass expulsions from cities such as Cologne (1429), Mainz and Strassburg (1433), and Augsburg (1439). These expulsions marked the early development of antisemitism in German territories (Appadorai, 1968).

At the same time, Germany also served as a refuge for persecuted groups. Following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, approximately 40,000 Huguenots fled to German lands (Oltmer, 2016). In the centuries that followed, migration continued to be shaped by political instability and

persecution. Prior to the World Wars, the largest migrant group in Germany remained Jews fleeing antisemitic violence in other European countries. The Weimar Republic (1919–1933) likewise became a destination for refugees of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Yet, with the rise of National Socialism in the 1930s, immigrants, especially Jews—were targeted by systematic persecution and extermination campaigns justified through racial ideology (Appadorai, 1968).

After the Second World War, Germany entered a new phase of migration. Economic recovery during the 1950s led to large-scale labour recruitment programmes that brought “guest workers” (*Gastarbeiter*) from Turkey, Italy, and other countries. Between 1950 and 1973, around 14 million guest workers arrived in Germany; 11 million eventually returned home, while approximately 3 million remained and later reunited with their families (Hanewinkel & Oltmer, 2018). This pattern established the foundation for Germany’s modern immigrant population. Simultaneously, ethnic German re-settlers displaced during and after the war returned under the 1953 Expellee Law, with 1.5 million recorded by 1987. With the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989, there was also a major influx of immigrants into Germany, especially asylum seekers (particularly from Eastern and Southern Europe),

who saw Germany as a place for economic and political emancipation. By 1992, Germany, due to its economic power, has firmly established itself as a key migration destination in Europe (Hanewinkel & Oltmer, 2018).

In the last decade, migration has remained central to the German society and politics. Since 2005, the government has officially recorded people with a “migration background” in national statistics, reflecting the long-term presence of immigrant families (Statista, 2025). At the heat of Syrian and Ukrainian refugee crisis, Germany opened its borders to hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers. By 2025, the country recorded approximately 2.14 million immigrants, with Ukrainians constituting the largest asylum-seeking group at 1.24 million (Statista, 2025). Nigerians on the other hand, represent the highest number of African immigrants living in Germany. This influx of migrants has significantly reshaped German society, producing both opportunities and challenges. While, the migrants presence has contributed to the labour market and enriched Germany’s cultural landscape; it has also arguably intensified political debates, particularly over integration, security and identity. These debates have fueled the rise of right-wing populism, most notably the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD).¹

3. Nigerian Migration in Germany:

1 Founded in 2013, the AfD initially focused on Eurozone policy but shifted toward anti-Islam and anti-migration rhetoric after 2015 (Berning, 2017; Huneke, 2024). By 2025, it had grown into Germany’s second-strongest political party with 22% in opinion polls, largely driven by youth support and a strong social media

presence (Statista, 2025). The radical nature of its populism prompted condemnation from institutions such as the German Bishops’ Conference, which emphasized that “folk nationalism and Christianity are irreconcilable” (Huneke, 2024).

Unlike other immigrant communities, Nigerian migration to Germany is barely 70 years². Unlike European or Jewish communities, the Nigerian migration to Germany can be traced back to 1960 after Nigeria's independence (Obi 2023) when Germany represented a good environment for migration. The first groups of Nigerians to arrive in Germany were students, most of whom had received scholarships from the German government as a gesture of support for Nigeria's postcolonial development (NIDO Germany). During that period, the colonial formal education was seen as central to national reconstruction. Nigerian elite were encouraged to either study abroad or send their children, with the hope that they will return with skills for nation-building. Going to Germany or sponsoring a child's education in Germany therefore represented both a financial sacrifice and a hope for social mobility. This means, families often sold land or borrowed heavily to send one member to Germany, with the hope that the family member will one day return to Nigeria to make the family proud (Oluwabukunmi, 2021). By 1967, there were already around 1,500 young

and vibrant Nigerians students, ready to acquire the necessary skills and oriented toward contributing to Nigeria's modernization efforts.

Unfortunately, the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) dramatically reshaped the migration flows. With the war devastating especially the Igbo heartland, displacing millions and forcing many to flee abroad, the Nigerian migrant students began to rethink returning to Nigeria after their studies. With the precarious situation in Nigeria, Germany became not only a destination for education but also a refuge for survival. Many, particularly the Igbo families, who had lost everything intensified sending their children and relatives abroad. They invested their last resources to send their relatives abroad (even under immense pressure and at great personal cost), with the hope they will one day return to uplift the families from poverty and from the Nigerian precarious economic conditions. Thus, the Nigerian migrants who came to Germany during and after the Nigerian civil war embodied a paradox: they were symbols of hope for

² It is important to note that migration has always been a fundamental part of Nigerian history. Long before the arrival of colonial powers, almost every ethnic group in Nigeria had experienced internal migration, moving from one region to another for trade, land, or safety (Obi, 2023). The advent of colonialism, accompanied by the rapid growth of urban centers, intensified these patterns as people relocated from rural villages to cities in search of white-collar jobs and business opportunities (Oluwabukunmi, 2021). By the mid-20th century, at the dawn of independence and establishment of new states in Africa, Nigerians

had started to extend these movements abroad, including to countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Germany (Ndiokwere, 1998). Many also went to Asia, particularly in countries such as Malaysia, China, and India, reflecting the common expression that *"anywhere you go without seeing a Nigerian person, leave that place because it is not habitable."*

their families, yet they themselves bore the weight of sacrifice (Obi, 2023).

The next significant wave came during Nigeria's years of military dictatorship (1983–1999). Successive regimes brought economic decline, political repression, and widespread insecurity. As a result, increased number of Nigerians migrated to Germany, searching for opportunities that are unavailable at home. By the 1990s, Nigerian migration to Germany had diversified. This time, it was no longer only students, but also families, professionals, political exiles, and irregular migrants. Some even adopted false national identities, claiming origins from war-torn countries to strengthen asylum applications. Others changed their names to align with these assumed identities, demonstrating the lengths to which Nigerians went to survive the asylum process (Adepoju, 2019).

With the return to civilian rule in 1999, the motivations for Nigerian migration to Germany became increasingly varied. Family reunification, professional training, labour opportunities, and asylum continued to drive flows. By this period, Germany had become a significant hub in the Nigerian diaspora, even though statistics on exact numbers

remained elusive due to undocumented migrants.

While many of the Nigerian immigrants travel to Germany officially by air, others start their journeys by land, through any of the neighbouring borders such as Niger and Chad, en route to Libya, where they are expected to cross over to Europe (Oluwabukunmi, 2021). In most cases, the migrants are ignorant of the dangers of illegal immigration. Both the males and females among them are often subjected to inhuman degradation such as prostitution and slavery. Many die in the desert as a result of hunger, sickness and dehydration (Eze, 2021). Some of them who survive the journey and manage to reach Libya, are further transported through inadequate ferries, which sometimes capsize on the sea (Eze, 2021). By the time, they reach Germany, they are already bereft with horrifying stories that contribute to defining their immigration experiences. As of 2021, official records estimate around **83,000 Nigerians in Germany**, with the largest concentration in Berlin. Factoring in undocumented migrants, however, the population likely exceeds **85,000** (Akinterinwa, 2024). Among them, **35,805** are asylum seekers, while others are students, workers, and families. Despite this visible presence, Nigerian migrants remain caught in cycles of precarity and marginalization.³

³ The above described scenario does not exhaust factors behind Nigerian migration to Germany. Other factors such as poverty for example has also been attributed to contribute to the wave of Nigerian migration to Germany. The argument is that even though Nigeria operates with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 379.3 billion dollars, and with Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.548, 60% of its population, remains

multidimensionally poor. This makes the country the poverty capital of the world (Ekwugha, 2024). With the West often idealised to the level of utopia, young Nigerians keep seeing migrating to places such as Germany as an escape route out of poverty. Migrating to places such as Germany therefore fulfils the proverbial search for greener pasture.

The Nigerian Immigrant Experience in Germany

In Germany, the Nigerian immigrants are confronted not only by socio-political exclusions including racial profiling and systemic barriers to employment, but also by the trauma of asylum bureaucracy. Accounts of Nigerian immigrants' encounters with Germany reveal how refugee centres, where Nigerian asylum seekers are initially housed, often fail to meet the basic hygienic and social standards of the host society itself (Eze, 2021). Often these centres are isolated in rural areas with limited mobility, hence producing a second-order marginalisation where the immigrant becomes invisible and immobilised.⁴

These structural difficulties are also compounded by untreated trauma of perilous crossings from starvation, violence, sexual exploitation, and exposure to death, especially for those who had traversed the Mediterranean route through Libya. In most cases, such immigrants are presumed "normal," while confined in environments that amplify their exclusion from the German society. As Appadorai (1968) warned, experiences of exclusion and alienation, when left unaddressed, can breed revolt or despair, entrenching the perception of the immigrant as deviant before integration even begins.

Additionally, Nigerian immigrants, suffer some forms of social

dispossession that alienates them from the German society. Either because of racism or because of lack of exposure, there seems to be a systematic exclusion of Nigerian immigrants from adequate employment. While some of their intellectuals and professionals often find themselves relegated to menial labour despite high qualifications (Knight, 2025), undocumented Nigerian immigrants by contrast, are consigned to the shadows of cheap labour, vulnerable to exploitation both by corporations and by documented migrants thereby constituting a structural loss both for the host society and for migrants themselves (Favell, 2022). This situation as Favell (2022) notes is simply not because of linguistic problem, but epistemic: a tacit disbelief that Nigerians can competently participate in advanced knowledge systems, despite contrary evidences.

Overlaying all these dynamics is the broader atmosphere of xenophobia in Germany. Migrants are often portrayed as prone to crime, particularly in pre-election rhetoric. Public anxieties exacerbated by incidents of violence are projected disproportionately onto Africans, whose skin colour renders them hyper-visible and often conflated with other groups. Though recent research by the Ifo Institute demonstrates no necessary correlation between migration and crime, the manipulation of statistics and the silencing of German criminality sustain the stereotype of the immigrant as a threat. Such conditions exemplify

centres is often not different from the experience of other migrants.

⁴ It must be stated at the onset here that most of these conditions described here are not exclusive to Nigerian immigrants. What Nigerian immigrants face in German asylum

Girard's insight: the scapegoat need not be guilty to bear collective anxieties, but only different and vulnerable. For Nigerians, already stigmatised globally due to Nigeria's corruption index ranking (Ndiokwere, 2003), this scapegoating becomes intensified and racialised.

Theorising the Nigerian Migrants' Experience in the Light of René Girard's Scapegoat Model

The case of Nigerian immigrants in Germany illustrates the profound ambivalence of migration as both a quest for survival and a theatre of existential dislocation. Their experience can be read through the lens of René Girard's scapegoat mechanism, extended with the notion of *reverse scapegoating*, whereby pressures from the home country compound those in the host nation.

In theorising about conflict, Girard (1977) argues that human conflict originates in a *mimetic desire*—the tendency of individuals to desire objects because others desire them. Desire is therefore not autonomous but triangular: a *model* inspires the subject to covet an object. While this mimetic process fosters learning and culture, it also produces rivalry. When the object of desire is scarce or non-shareable, rivalry between the subject and the model escalates into violence, eclipsing the object itself. Such crises, Girard suggests, are inherently contagious, spreading across the community until they threaten its stability. To resolve such crises, societies often resort to scapegoating. A third party—typically an outsider, minority, or marginal figure—is identified as the source of disorder and blamed for the crisis. This

scapegoat, though not causally responsible, becomes the vessel of collective resentment and is either expelled, sacrificed, or symbolically demonised. The removal or punishment of the scapegoat restores temporary peace and cohesion, which the community interprets as vindication of the scapegoat's guilt. In Girard's words, it is "the stage process through which two or more people are reconciled at the expense of a third party who appears guilty or responsible for whatever ails, disturbs, or frightens the scapegoat" (Girard, 2000, p. 12). Over time, the victim may be sacralised in myth, seen both as guilty and as salvific, giving rise to rituals, religious institutions, and cultural norms (Kirwan, 2004).

The Girardian theoretical framework has been adopted as a hermeneutic lens by many scholars in various fields of life. Feminist theologians have used Girard's model to expose the structural victimisation of women in patriarchal institutions and to fight for the emancipation of women (Daly, 1973; Kailey, 2008). Historians have traced its dynamics in the persecution of Jews during the Black Death and the Holocaust (Cabral, 1994; Rordán, 2011). Migration and race studies also reveal the mechanism's ongoing relevance: phenotypical difference, reduced to biological categories, fuels racial profiling and exclusion thereby sustaining modern racism (Cabral, 1994; IMISCOE, 2015).

We could also say that racism and all forms of segregation could be explained based on this interindividual psychology of scapegoating (Cabral, 1994). In actuality, there is only one human race with different tribes. The adoption of

race for humans would later lead to the application of biological categories to social realities (Cabral, 1994). People are treated and judged by their external appearances leading to a dangerous ethnic profiling. Phenotypical categorisation would finally lead to the stratification of humans based on their external looks. This is the basis of the modern racism. Recently, there has been a withdrawal of race and anti-racist debate in migration studies thanks to the International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe (IMISCOE).

In the German context, Girard's theory resonates powerfully with the country's historical trajectory. From the racial theories of National Socialism (Hitler, 1925/1998) to the antisemitic stereotypes perpetuated by segments of German philosophy—including Kant's derogatory remarks on Africans (Kant, 1788/1996) and Schopenhauer's depiction of Jews as “masters of lies” (Schopenhauer, 1851/1966)—scapegoating has operated as both intellectual and political practice. However, the most exemplified application of the Girardian hypothesis was the racial theory of the National Socialist (Hitler, 1925; Appadorai, 1968). In his famous book, *Mein Kampf* which translates as *My Battle*, Adolf Hitler propounds the theory that people of the same blood should be in the same *Reich*. He therefore condemns a multicultural society. He believes that the Aryan race is the most superior of all races and the creators of civilisation. Any admixture with another racial blood will result in lowering the racial bar of the Aryans. Adopting the Darwinian law of natural selection, he is of the view that the extermination of the lower races would be necessary for the

self preservation of the superior Aryan race. This self preservation morally accommodates and justifies the campaign of colonisation aimed at the extermination of the indigenes for the habitation of the Germans. His first target was therefore the Jews, who he dehumanised with every instrument of scapegoating propaganda available to him. They are, for him, a rot that poisons the general body politics. The Jews were blamed for the economic and cultural crises in Germany then. The Social Democrats and the Marxists were repudiated and condemned. Thus, to achieve the scapegoating, the Germans were canonised while the Jews and the Blacks were demonised. Such a dangerous binary was the height of the antisemitism of this era. The Jews were purged from commerce, press, politics. They were banned from the acquisition of land. This ultimately led to genocide. Even after the holocaust, the Nazi youths were still indoctrinated that the Jews are a threat to the German State (*Führerinnendienst des Bundes Deutscher Mädel in der Hitler-Jugend*, 1944).

Importantly, one can argue that antisemitism was not unique to Hitler but resonated with broader currents of German society, even if resisted by dissident voices (Veltri, 2003; Waldmann, 1934/2005). Teachings, such as Hitler's did not spring from a vacuum. They were inspired by the German idealist philosophers. For Kant, the Negroes' colour depicts stupidity. The tropic favours the growth of animals including the Negroes. They lack immediate drive to activities and are full of passions (Kant, 1788). Schopenhauer not only described the Jews as the great masters of lies, he also

attributed civilizational supremacy to the white race (Schopenhauer, 1851). This makes them acquire the culture of slaves. Even though Hitler was of the view that Goethe was against the marriage between Jews and Christians (*Mein Kampf*), there is hardly any material to justify this. It could be part of the apologetic current that began in the 1840s, whereby, both camps; Jews and Germans; were using the literary works of Goethe both for and against German Jewry. However, his political stance against the Jews especially in the struggle for equal right was a negative one (Veltri, 2003).

Today, though not exhibited openly, the blame/hatred for foreigners in Germany is still there. The rise of parties such as Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) demonstrates how economic crises and anxieties over national identity are projected onto foreigners. Non-European immigrants often bear the brunt of racialised blame that visibly renders them perpetual outsiders within the German society. The increasing unemployment rate among immigrants, persistent accommodation and security problems that threaten their lives and livelihoods remain a reality (McLaren, 2003; Berning, 2017). Yet, these experiences of the migrants are not only as a result of the social and structural scapegoating phenomenon within the German society. There is also the rarely spoken aspect of the scapegoating phenomenon, “reverse Scapegoatism” that amplifies immigrants negative situations within the German society.

Pressure from Home: A Reverse Scapegoatism

Broader explanation of the Nigerian immigrants’ experiences in Germany can be explained with the incorporation of the idea of a reverse scapegoatism. The idea that a Nigerian immigrant is not only a product of his German environment, but also a product of the Nigerian environment. A Nigerian abroad rarely migrates solely as an individual but as a representative of familial and communal hopes. A young man or woman in Berlin may carry, in addition to personal belongings, the invisible weight of debts incurred from selling a family land, the expectations of remittances, and the existential demand to vindicate the family’s sacrifice (Obi, 2023). In this sense, the migrant becomes a sacrificial lamb, who is charged with rescuing kin from economic servitude. At the same time, he or she is simultaneously condemned to marginalisation in Germany. This dual sacrifice leaves the migrant suspended in a tragic dialectic: never fully at home in Germany, yet never free from the burdens of Nigeria.

The consequences of this dual scapegoating manifest at multiple levels. At the family level, the Nigerian immigrant experiences a recurring isolation and fragmentation fate that keep him or her away physically from his Nigerian family. Nigerian Refugees often remain in asylum processes for years without the possibility of returning for funerals or weddings at home, thereby rupturing kinship ties (Groody, 2008; Zehnder, 2023).

At the identity level, a Nigerian immigrant experiences destabilized and reversed gender relations and roles. The Nigerian man particularly, who is accustomed to patriarchal norms often

encounter disempowerment in Germany, where state welfare and gender equality policies empower women in ways that may invert domestic hierarchies. A redefined gender roles in German contexts often means that at homes in Germany, the Nigerian man is expected to engage in certain domestic chores, which are often 'reserved' for women in a typical Nigerian home context (home country). Also, disciplinary measures toward children, which are normalised within Nigerian households in Nigeria are also criminalised within the German law, producing serious anxiety over parental authority. These shifts, though emancipatory from one perspective, frequently produces psychological disorientation, fractured households and broken identities for the Nigerian immigrant.

At the cultural level, a Nigerian immigrant is also alienated further by cultural dissonance. Conceptions of issues such as illness and lineage continuity often clash with German norms. While illness in Nigerian cosmology for example is frequently interpreted through spiritual or ancestral frameworks (Obi, 2023), such dimensions are dismissed in biomedical contexts, leading to a perception of Nigerian patients as "irrational." With this, the Nigerian migrants begin to perceive themselves as 'outsiders' within the German system, and such becoming alienated not only socially, but also culturally from the German system (König, 2019).

More importantly, the Nigerian man is also pressured from the home-front at the economic level. Maximally exploited and minimally paid, the

Nigerian immigrants still have to send money home, as it is one of their primary responsibilities (Obi, 2023). They are also expected to maintain social and economic ties with their Nigerian families and communities because these institutions remain where they get their 'true' validation as human beings. The implication of this validation is "living in two worlds at the same time", which is often unsustainable on the long run. Those of them that are able to manage living in such two worlds often end up losing out on many life issues on the host country. For example, remaining relevant in Nigeria for a Nigerian Igbo person, means owning a mansion in the home town (village) in Nigeria, which the Igbo culture demands. To achieve this, an Igbo Nigerian migrant has to therefore squat in a shared-one bedroom apartment in Germany, because that is what he can economically afford. To remain relevant in Nigeria, the immigrant also has to own a flashy car in Nigeria, even if this means continuous use of trains and buses to work everyday in Germany. He also has to use the little time he has for his holiday in Germany, to quickly travel to Nigeria to visit relatives. These socio-cultural expectations in Nigeria and the expectations of living in two worlds continuously force him to perpetually live a difficult life in the host country.

The inability to live in the two worlds is also compounded by the economic situations in Nigeria. Because of the difficult economic situation, relatives and friends in Nigeria expect the Nigerian migrant to send them money and economic help. To permanently solve such financial problems, a Nigerian migrant often tries to establish

businesses in Nigeria. However, such businesses are usually mismanaged or run-down by the same family relatives and friends, due to the poor environment in Nigeria. Decision to close down or stop funding such businesses is often frowned at by the relatives, who at this stage have begun to see the Nigerian immigrant as the family's proverbial "sacrificial lamb". At a point, the family members develop a certain entitlement mentality, whereby, the spirit of gratitude is eclipsed by the force of demand. Whereby the money is no longer forthcoming, a situation of hatred and condemnation also arises. At this point, the Nigerian migrant may become a target for theft and kidnapping. Or he or she is blamed as "responsible" for the plight (unemployment, economic hardship and setback in business) of the family members or friends in Nigeria, forgetting that other people suffering the same fate as themselves, do not necessarily have family members abroad.

Implicitly, the experience of Nigerian migrants in Germany, therefore, cannot be reduced to sociocultural pressure from the host country alone. It represents a complex interplay of philosophical and sociological forces: scapegoating in the German society and reverse scapegoating from their homeland. This dual mechanism situates Nigerian migrants in a liminal, sacrificial role—never fully belonging in the host society, Germany; yet unable to escape obligations to the homeland. Germany, imagined as a land of opportunity, often becomes instead a site of suspended dreams—a "cemetery of aspirations" where the migrant works, remits, and survives, yet rarely attains full recognition or integration

because of socio-cultural expectations from Nigeria. The Nigerian migrant is thus condemned to a tragic double exile: estranged from the homeland yet perpetually foreign in the host land.

Conclusion

In the light of René Girard's archetypal model of scapegoating, the Nigerian immigrants' experience reveals a complementary dynamic: the *reverse scapegoating*. From post-independence educational ventures to civil war displacement, military-era asylum, and contemporary economic migration, the story of Nigerians in Germany is one of continuity, alienation and marginalisation. While in Germany, their experience is shaped by a complex interplay of opportunity and structural constraint within the German migration system; many also face barriers linked to restrictive asylum laws, residency situations, and structural racialised profiling, which often relegate them to precarious or underqualified employment, as well as social alienation, poverty and economic hardships in their host country. However, this is not all. They also suffer profound pressure that comes from the home country, Nigeria. These include economic and social obligations. Families and communities in Nigeria, facing economic precarity, often hold them (Nigerian migrants) accountable for local hardships, interpreting their inability to send remittances or achieve their own visible success as 'betrayal.' All these phenotypical markings make the Nigerian migrants victims of fear, hatred and possibly, violence.

The implication of the above finding is that migratory experiences may not be treated in isolation from the belief systems in a host country, but as part of their broader historical narratives of

mobility, resilience, exploitation, aspiration and unfulfilled promises from home countries. People's experiences are not product of only their immediate environments, but also the products of the every environment in which they identify. This dual contextuality underscores the importance of adopting a transnational lens in migration research; one that critically examines both the structures of reception in host societies and the enduring obligations imposed by home communities. It also deepens the Girard's scapegoat model and extends its understanding to include how migrants become sacrificial figures in *two worlds*: demonised in the host society and morally indebted in the home society.

Based on the above understanding of the experience of the Nigerian migrants, the paper recommends the following;

- An intensified effort in telling the migrants' true story to people at home, so as to facilitate understanding and reduce unnecessary expectations that compounds migrants plight and stress in their host countries. The migrants on their own should not shy away from telling their own story as it is instead of trying to meet up to the expectations of those at home.
- Related to the above is a conscious effort by the state actors (particularly those within the communication departments), to correct the narrative that idealises the West by properly informing Nigerians of the sordid reality of those in diaspora. An authentic narrative should tell them that there is no utopia anywhere. Even beneath the green pastures are dry grasses. A Nigerian migrant in Germany makes the money but his or her life is broken and unfulfilled.
- An improvement on how state actors such as the German interact with the Nigerian migrants. This includes in how they try to win the confidence of the migrants, for their optimal protection.
- The migrants on their own should also acknowledge the fact that the Germans are not responsible for all their problems. Hence, separating wheat from tare is also a step in the right direction. In this regards, improved effort to distance themselves from crimes could be a start. At the long run, this could force many Germans to change their mindset on Nigerian migrants.

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