

## **Negotiating Sexuality in the Shadow of Neo-liberal Globalization: Perspectives Within the Charismatic Churches in Southwestern Nigeria**

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The Charismatic movement developed in the 1970s in South-western Nigeria among the youthful budding middle class at a time when the nation anticipated continued prosperity. Since then, both HIV/AIDS and neo-liberal globalization have thrown a wrench into the nation's plans for economic development and the effort of groups, like Charismatic Christians, to forge an endogenous path to modernity. This paper examines the Charismatic engagement with these unanticipated social changes. I focus on two core aspects of their ongoing identity construction: marriage and sexuality, two areas in which much has been written in Nigeria in terms of the need to manage the Charismatic identity. These churches believe that their way of being in the world must be anchored in a form of marriage and sexual practices that set them apart from the general population, and even from other Christian groups. Sexuality and marriage are identified as crises zones given the longstanding conflict between polygyny and monogamy in Africa. Perspectives on sexuality revolve around narratives of the body---its meaning and purpose, marital equality, reproduction and sexual pleasure. On these issues, my attention will turn to the construction and use of emotions. These need to be brought to the forefront in understanding practices and gendered expectations for relationships today. I believe this focus has been neglected. What kinds of emotions are constructed/endorsed in intimate relations and how are they expected to achieve the desired goals of marriage and sexuality? Further, since Charismatics pay attention to global discourses on sexuality and human rights, their dissenting perspectives will be compared to the arguments of others, particularly those of African feminists, HIV/AIDS activists and Gay rights advocates. My interest here is in such matters as contraceptives, abortion, and homosexuality. Given global discourses on these issues, it is relevant to investigate the contributions of those church members who are simultaneously members of secular human rights organizations, since membership in each type of association is not mutually exclusive. The study will be a textual analysis of books, as well as other written and recorded/audio material that outline the theories and practices of the Charismatic churches.