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# Nigerian Women's Empowerment Status and its Influence on Access to Reproductive Health Services

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Abstract


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by

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MPH, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, 2008

BS, Pennsylvania State University, 2004



Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Nigeria is a patriarchal society, which puts women in subordinate positions that may prompt gender-based discrimination. While evidence of this phenomenon has been investigated in Nigeria and other African countries, no such investigation has been conducted with immigrant and first-generation Nigerian women in the United States. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of a Nigerian woman's perceived empowerment and status on her willingness to access reproductive health services. The research questions examined views of Nigerian traditional beliefs' influence on status and how attitudes around traditional beliefs relate to access to reproductive health services and/or knowledge. Data were gathered through semi structured interviews with 9 Nigerian women in the Washington DC-Maryland-Virginia area. The women were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling. Data were analyzed using the ecological systems theory as a framework, which theorizes that a woman's status is related to her ability to access services or information; empowerment increases that access of services/information, and that traditional Nigerian beliefs have mostly positive effects on their status. However, the findings revealed that, among these 9 women, traditional beliefs did not have an overwhelming direct effect to access to services or information. Empowering women is vital for social growth, no matter what the place of origin. This study contributes to positive social change by providing a resource that demonstrates the importance of these women's contributions to society, thus helping to move society forward.

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Dedication

I dedicate the receipt of this Doctorates degree to my late Uncle Tolulope Ojudun. He was always in my corner in everything I did in life, and has shared in every joy and accomplishment that I have made thus far. He told me I could do this when even I thought I couldn't. He was a beautiful soul that has left this world entirely too soon, and is never to be forgotten. Thank you for always believing in me. I love and miss you dearly.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

**Introduction**

Men and women are indeed different as it is implied in biological make-up. Like race and ethnicity, gender is a social construct (Grown, Gupta & Kes, 2005). The functions and responsibilities that society has put on men and women differ as well. Whether it is in the United States or developing countries, these factors influence causes, effects, and management of overall health, specifically, reproductive health (Ostlin, Eckermann, Mishra, Nkowane, and Wallstam, 2007). At the core, the extent of these factors will differ across cities, states, countries, and continents. The extent will also differ across time. It has been found that at the start of the twenty-first century, society, and all it encompasses still favors men and boys, allowing women and girls far less access to resources that would allow for the enjoyment of social, economic, and political power. and well-being (Grown et al., 2005).

This study is a an examination of the influence of empowerment and status on both immigrants and first-generation Nigerian women. The goal is to provide information (for Nigerian women specifically) that would give them a better understanding of themselves with respect to taking more interest in their reproductive health. The results of prior studies are mixed and continue to pose the same types of question, as evidenced by research by Nwagbara, Etuk, and Baghebo (2012). The researchers discussed empowerment in women in Nigeria, but still do not have an answer to the question as to why women's statuses continue to be low in light of all the global efforts towards

uplifting it. Not enough is known about immigrant and first generation Nigerian women living in the Unites States, especially in relation to their access to reproductive health services. This research will present a multifaceted look at empowerment in the target population while discussing the important issue of reproductive health.

Major points of discussion in this chapter inform the following chapters. This chapter covers the background information that highlights past research, the statement of the problem, the conceptual framework, the purpose, the guiding questions, the conceptual framework, the nature of the study, important definitions, assumption, scope/delimitations/limitations, and the significance of the study.

## Background

The United Nations held an event called the Millennium Summit in the year 2000. Its 189 member states made a pledge in the Millennium Declaration to achieve eight goals. They are referred to as the Millennium Development Goals. One of those eight goals. Goal 3, is to promote gender equality and to empower women. That goal in itself would be beneficial to national infrastructure and growth (United Nations, 2015). This growth would be in respect to the individual and his or her respective communities at large. The dedication is for this goal was to be reached by 2015. While there is much research to be conducted to determine if this goal has been reached, what is most important is that there is conversation around the need to empower women.

Nigeria is one of the most populated countries in Africa and women constitute about half of the national population of Nigeria (Gender Training and Development Network, 2010). At the same time, Nigerians migrate heavily, and are a part of the "melting pot"

that we know as the United States. Empowering Nigerian women in the United States to realize their full potential in terms of reproductive health is an important matter,  because these Nigerians are contributors to our society.

The fundamental issue is that there are institutional reasons obstructing the possibility of full public advancement of women. The societal conditioning of women as subservient weaker sex—including the conceptualized dichotomy of public and private spheres—are impediments to women's full participation in public life (Gender Training and Development Network, 2010).

Research has addressed various facets of this phenomenon. Family planning, sexual knowledge, employment, and level of education are highlighted in subsequent research. There are several sources that are a representative of scholarly findings that support the main assertions of the problem statement. In a study by Antai and Antai (2009), the objectives were to investigate the predictors of women's attitudes toward intimate partner violence in the Niger Delta in comparison to that of women in other parts of Nigeria. This article was selected as a means to provide a closer look at specific underlying issues that may hinder a Nigerian woman from accessing healthcare. The article is the first of several articles that address intimate partner violence within the Nigerian culture.

According to Dudgeon and Inhorn (2004), reproductive health has emerged as an organizational framework that incorporates men into maternal and child health (MCH) programs. As discovered through research, it is evident that there isn't enough dialogue around men and their involvement in interventions and reproductive health. Inclusion of men in the organizational framework of MCH is important for discovering what

interventions will be effective for protecting women in the long run. Empowering male counterparts is important in a discussion about female empowerment (Dudgeon and Inhorn, 2004).

Makinwa-Adebusoye (1992) conducted a survey of more than 5,500 males and females aged 12-24. Many of these young people, particularly males, have more than one sexual partner. Only around 15% of these young adults currently practice contraception. They also possess little information about reproductive biology (or what information they have is incorrect): About three in five do not know that pregnancy is possible with first intercourse, and even fewer knew that a woman's pregnancy risk varies during the menstrual cycle. The same rationale for selection that applied by Brabin et al., (1995) applies here. He looked at relationships (casual dating, engaged to be married, and married) and its correlation with empowerment. Younger Nigerian women may or may not be in relationships, but their knowledge of reproductive health would surely have an effect on whether or not they access reproductive health services.

Byayima (2012) moderated a discussion about the importance of empowering women and its direct effect on the social development on an international level. While Byayima did not discuss any countries in detail, it is important to know that, in recent times, despite traditional beliefs, countries are taking note in the importance of educating women and girls.

While research addresses a great deal in regards to empowerment status and how it affects the individual. it is vital that such investigation continue, and its influence on access to health services, specifically reproductive health.

**Problem Statement**

Nigeria is incontestably a patriarchal society. This patriarchal functioning of this country, as a whole, puts women in subordinate positions that may prompt various forms of gender-based discrimination. Most times it is the circumstances where males are typically dominant such as marriage, politics, and religion that perpetuate gender-based discrimination. Leadership roles in Nigerian culture that are equal to their male counterparts are very scarce. This is due, in part, to indifferent behavior of the majority of the women, a prejudiced culture, society, and the establishments that govern the people (Ojoh, 2012).

Generally, in Africa, women are grossly underrepresented in the political arena. This means little to no decision making power is yielded to them. Nigeria is one of the countries that are behind on addressing this issue. Not much seems to change for Nigerian women due to the male dominant society. The current First Lady of Nigeria, Patience Jonathan, has faced many challenges and has put in a great deal of effort to shed light on the issue. Even with her efforts, Nigerian women continue to have virtually no control in economic and political decision making. Thus, women are not used to their full potential, thus bringing about a decline in growth and development in all facets of the country (Ojoh, 2012).

There are various aspects that encompasses a woman's status. They include financial independence, decision making ability, refusal of the traditional gender role, marriage, and presence or absence of violence, just to name a few. As reflected in the 2008 NDHS, 71% of currently married women are employed, compared to 99% of currently married men.

Two in five women and one in three men agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife for certain reasons; 28% of women have experienced physical violence since age 15.

Researchers who have studied this phenomenon discussed empowerment of women in Nigeria, but still pose the question as to why women's statuses continue to be low in light of all the global efforts towards uplifting. Still not enough is known specifically about immigrant and first-generation Nigerian women living in the Unites States, especially in relation to access to reproductive health services. This research will present a multifaceted look at empowerment in the target population while discussing the very important issue of reproductive health.

**Purpose of the Study**

The existing research suggests the need for researching Nigerian women in the United States. There is plenty of data on Nigerian women in Nigeria, but it may not always be applicable to Nigerian women living in the United States. It is essential that we examine people within different cultures here in the United States, thus leaving one with a better understanding of how to better cohabit with one another. This study is an examination of empowerment and status influences of both immigrants and first-generation Nigerian women.The purpose of this study is to examine whether or not a Nigerian woman's empowerment status has an effect on her willingness to access reproductive health services. The goal was to help Nigerian women develop a better understanding of themselves so that they would take more interest in their reproductive health. It was also anticipated that this research would help Nigerian men in the United States have a better understanding of how to function on equal levels in relation to promoting gender

equality. In addition, the results of this study are expected to help  providers on how to better deliver services when a person from the study population presents for either medical or social services.

This research contribution to society is expected contribute to society by providing information to world of academia to spearhead dissemination of this information. Successful sharing of this information would help to empower Nigerian women in the United States.

As stated earlier in this chapter, it is believed that countries that create opportunities for their women and girls in the areas of education and work have achieved greater affluence as well as decreased child mortality and increased social progress for everyone (Byanyima, 2012). Thus, empowering women is vital for social growth, no matter what the place of origin.

In order for this study to be successful the right questions must be asked. This study raises three main questions.

**Guiding Questions**

GQ1:  Does a Nigerian woman's status and level of empowerment influence her access to reproductive health services and/or knowledge?

GQ2: How do traditional Nigerian beliefs affect Nigerian women's status?

GQ3: How do the attitudes around traditional beliefs relate to access to reproductive health services and/or knowledge?

**Guiding Questions' Theories**

Nigerian women's status and level of empowerment will influence their access to reproductive health services to a great extent. It is believed that women who are educated have an opportunity to be exposed and makes them more knowledgeable than their unexposed counterparts.

Traditional Nigerian beliefs will have impartial influence on immigrant and first-generation Nigerian women living in United States status' level. As theorized for the initial research question, the women who are educated, employed, and are liberal thinkers will more than likely not allow traditional beliefs to hinder them from empowering themselves, specifically in respect to accessing reproductive health information. However, the subsequent research suggests that as educated and empowered as women are, tradition and culture sometimes trumps the most correct and logical life choices.

Traditional Nigerian beliefs among immigrant and first-generation women living in United States will affect their access to reproductive health services moderately. The term *moderately* is being used because while there are very culturally motivated reasons why these women may or may not access reproductive health services, most women are well aware of prenatal issues. I believe that the immigrant Nigerian women may continue to operate more on traditional beliefs and may not access care as much as first-generation Nigerian women who have been exposed to, and are more knowledgeable about, western medicine.

**Conceptual Framework**

Qualitative methods are most suitable for studies that seek to gather in-depth and intimate information, where numbers alone will not answer the question or questions.

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research begins first with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of theoretical lens, and a social problem that affects individuals of specific populations.

Women's empowerment and societal status is an intriguing phenomena worthy of discussion in these progressive times. Add the rich culture and traditional values of Nigerian people to the phenomena, and that is where the core of this research begins. The opportunity to speak to individuals around the phenomena of women being the subservient and weaker sex, their statuses, and the effect of different facets of their lives, specifically reproductive health will be key in looking at the phenomena of Nigerian women's empowerment. The subject of female empowerment and its' influence on other aspect of life will aid in making sure more avenues are provided for this to take place. The women selected for this research are all women who have achieved success as per the standards of societal norms. They are educated and employed. Other variables include relationship status, salary level, and religious beliefs. These are all variables that contribute to the phenomena of empowerment.

Countries that have created opportunities for their women and girls in the realm of education and work have greatly achieved more affluence as well as decreasing child mortality and increasing social progress for everyone (Byanyima, 2012). This idea clearly concurs with the fact that empowering women is vital for social growth, no matter what the place of origin. Research speaks to such issues such as intimate partner violence being a barrier for growth for many Nigerian women here in the United States and Nigeria itself. Taking the phenomenological approach, I would be able to identify my

"subject" of human experience and develop a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals (Creswell, 2009). According to Patton (2002), phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of our everyday experiences. Phenomenology has roots in philosophy, and was first used by a German philosopher, Husserl (1859-1938). Husserl's original idea of phenomenology is that we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness (Patton, 2002).

Phenomenology commences with an analysis of the natural attitude. It says that human beings know the world through their experience. And so that conceptual framework directs one to study the world through the way people attach meaning to the world (Laureate Education, 2008). Language, culture, and common sense are experienced in the natural attitude as objective features of an external world that are learned by actors in the course of their lives. Creswell (2009) suggests that the type of problem best suited for this form of research is one in which it's important to understand several individual's shared experiences of a phenomenon.

The health promotion theory that was used to conduct this study is ecological systems theory. In this theory, the principal influences are intercultural, community-level, organizational-level, and interpersonal/individual. This theory suggests that the person, their community, their organization and their culture are like nested spheres, much like nesting dolls. Actions in one sphere can have an effect on another sphere (Rainberger, 2014). This theory is critical in understanding the effects of the many facets of one's environment, which in this case, are all factors that affect empowerment. Understanding

individual functioning in an environment that has a direct effect on his or her behaviors is essential in such a study.

The advantage of using a theory such as this is that, from a health promotion standpoint, strategies that are successful at this level are more likely to benefit a large number of people.

## Nature of the Study

Qualitative methods would be most suitable for studies that seek to gather information that is as in depth and intimate where numbers alone will not satisfy the burning question that only be captured through direct intimate contact with the research subjects. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research begins first with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into a social problem affecting individuals of specific populations. This study gathered robust information through the use of observation and inquiry. Nine immigrant and first-generation Nigerian women living in the Washington DC-Virginia-Maryland area, were individually interviewed using in-depth, semistructured interviews.

This population was selected because they speak to the phenomena of interest. The literature review conducted suggests that there hasn't been enough focus on women on a personal level, including their thoughts around empowerment and effects of it on accessing reproductive healthcare.

In the earlier part of organizing this research plan, ethnography was the theory of interest. Ethnography is able to attach a meaning to cultural experiences. Ethnography is the best approach to understand how certain cultures can affect how individuals perceive

their health. Creswell (2007) suggests that the ethnographic approach is appropriate when you undertake the study of behaviors of a culture because the focus of ethnography is on culture. Ethnographic research, therefore, attempts to fully describe a variety of aspects and norms of a cultural group to enhance understanding of the people being studied. While it seemed very compelling initially, it was soon discovered that it was the phenomena of the empowerment status of Nigerian women and its effects on other aspects of the women's lives, which brought about the consideration of phenomenology as the study of choice. Ethnography focuses on the culture specifically, but phenomenology allows for a broader look (outside of just culture) at the issues at hand.

## Definitions

Nigerian woman- A woman who is of Nigerian descent; a woman who has one or both parents who are Nigerian.

Immigrant- A woman who was born in Nigeria and migrated to the United States

First-generation- A woman who was born in the United States to one or both Nigerian parents.

## Limitations and Assumptions

Limitations of the results of the study were the responses of the participants being skewed due to respondent bias. Although the participants will not participate in any type of survey, the data (via interviews) were self-reported. Self-reporting is not always reliable because people may provide an answer they think is correct as opposed to what they genuinely feel (Siegel & Lotenberg, 2007). This basis diminishes the validity of the

data and thus of the conclusions. To address this limitation, the interview questions were crafted carefully in order to evoke unbiased responses.

## Scope and Delimitations

As stated earlier, a woman's status has many aspects. They include financial independence, the ability to make independent decisions, the refusal of a traditional gender role, marriage and violence, among others. Women's status also involves empowerment. Nigerian women, both immigrant and first-generation, are part of a huge melting pot, the United States. They are mothers, daughters, sisters, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and important members of society. However, the societal placement of women has yet to change in the United States. And the ideologies born of Nigeria traveled with the immigrant women, and are now being taught to the next generation. This fosters the endless circle of a no progressive culture.

Every woman is born with a right to their own thoughts, ideas, and dreams. Empowerment allows women to be in command of every aspect of their lives, especially their health. This research presented a multifaceted look at empowerment in the target population while discussing the important issue of reproductive health.

This study was delimited to Nigerian women (immigrant and first-generation) that live in Washington DC-Maryland-Virginia area.

Transferability addresses the degree to which research can be generalized or transferred to other settings. Transferability in this research can be enhanced by thoroughly working on the description of the framework of the research and addressing the assumptions that are central to the research (Trochim, 2006). In order for this research to attain maximum

transferability, it was important that the correct questions are asked. While this research is specific to Nigerian women, it will add to the much researched topic of women's empowerment generally. Looking at how levels of women's empowerment affect other facets of their lives, will be able to transfer to women, in general. As subsequent research suggests, the glass ceiling of progress for women is still prominent. Such discussions about empowerment are relevant for both men and women who seek to participate in women's empowerment and its effect on their well-being.

## Significance

Empowering women to realize their full potential, especially when it comes to their reproductive health is important. The contribution to society from this research is this: It will help Nigerian women in the United States realize that they are the master of their lives and health, despite what any Nigerian cultural artifacts may persist.

Creswell (2009) uses the term *world view* to refer to a basic set of beliefs that guide action. A scholar is someone who studies how the world is. What distinguishes research from being in the world we know is the commitment to record how we do it (Laureate 2008). These terms are very important to researchers and scholarly practitioners to have a firm grasp on these terms. If there is to be any difference made in the world it will be through research.

Dr. Kowlaczyk said it best when he said, "I like the fact that I'm creating social change by my work to help people in my situation in the field of public health to get people to change unhealthy behaviors, for people to think about what they're doing. The way I like to look at it-- I am planting seeds in people's minds. It might be a tiny little seed, but with

proper nurturing and care, that seed will blossom, and that seed was a seed of knowledge, a seed of information. And the person begins to make a change" (Laureate Education, 2009). This encompasses all the relationship of research and social change. It is the work one does as a researcher, that small piece of the full pie of academia that promotes social change. All people need is an experience of something that will give them the longing for more. That experience of this phenomenon through this research will serve as a contribution to academia, thus facilitating social change through those who have partaken.

**Summary**

Development is vital to the growth of any society. But this development and growth can be successful only if all members of society are involved. Every race, ethnicity, religion, gender, but especially women should have an opportunity to play a role in development in the world (Ojoh, 2012). In order for a society to call itself truly progressive, men and women should have equal access to create a better society. Making sure women are endowed with knowledge and skills to be valid contributors to society are essential. It's essential for society, and it's essential for them as individuals for making good decisions that will positively influence every facet of their lives.

A very important facet is health. There are far too many women, Nigerian and non-Nigerian, who are not thoroughly educated on how to care for themselves (Ojoh, 2012). The importance of discussing female empowerment has never been so critical. This time is the best time, because the subject of empowerment has been getting attention in the literature. Empowering women and making them the masters of their well-being and health should, and will, be a great thing for society.

Chapter 2 will review the literature on women's empowerment and health. The remaining chapters will provide a detailed description of the methodology of the study, as well as an analysis of the data collected via personal interviews. It is expected that the final results will be a valid resource to help promote social change.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

**Introduction**

Nigeria is incontestably a patriarchal society, which, as a whole, puts women in subordinate positions that may prompt various forms of gender-based discrimination. Most times it is circumstances in which males are typically dominant, such as marriage, politics, and religion. Leadership roles in Nigerian culture that are equal to their male counterparts are very scarce. This is due, in part, to indifferent behavior of the majority of the women, a prejudiced culture, society, and the establishments that govern the people (Ojoh, 2012). While evidence of this phenomenon has been investigated in Nigeria and other African countries, no such investigation has been conducted for immigrant and first-generation Nigerian women in the United States. The results of prior studies have been mixed and continue to pose the same types of question, as evidenced by Nwagbara, Etuk, and Baghebo (2012). The researchers discuss empowerment in women in Nigeria, and pose the question: Why does the empowerment status of women continue to be low in light of all the global efforts towards uplifting activities that foster empowerment? Not enough is known about immigrant and first-generation Nigerian women living in the Unites States, especially in relation to access to reproductive health services. This research will present a multifaceted look at empowerment in the target population while discussing the important issue of reproductive health.

The existing research suggests the need for researching Nigerian women in the United States. There is a plethora of data that has been collected from Nigerian women in Nigeria, but it may not always apply to Nigerian women in the United States. It is

essential that we examine people within different cultures here in the United States, thus leaving one with a better understanding of how to better cohabit with one another. This study is an examination of the influence of empowerment and status on both immigrants and first- generation Nigerian women. It is anticipated that providing information (for Nigerian women specifically) would provide a better understanding of themselves in relation to taking more interest in their reproductive health. In addition, the results of this study could help providers deliver better services when a person from the study population presents to them for either medical or social services. It is the context of people's lives that determines their health. It is important that women be empowered to realize their full potential [Please explain how "full potential" is aligned with empowerment vis-à-vis reproductive health] with respect to their reproductive health

Research has addressed various facets of this phenomenon of empowerment and reproductive health. Family planning, sexual knowledge, employment, and level of education are emphasized in this literature review. An in-depth discussion of the literature highlights the research strategy, the conceptual framework, and the extensive literature review will follow.

## Literature Research Strategy

The following databases and resources were used to find resources for this literature review: Google Scholar, Google Scholar provides a vast array of information related to what is being researched. Using this search engine presented links to school libraries, reputable journal pages, blogs, on-line newspapers, academic websites, and book excerpts.

At the genesis of this research, the direction of it was quite vague which drove the search in many different directions. Upon reading several articles at the initial stages of searching, the topic of interest became more streamlined. Key terms that were used to find information were as follows: *empowerment, Nigerian women, education within Nigerian women, women's reproductive health, Nigerian women and empowerment, women's empowerment, women's reproductive health in Nigeria, Nigerian women and empowerment, Nigerian men and empowerment, Nigerian-American women in the Unites States and socioeconomic status of Nigerian women.*

When there was a resource that seemed applicable to the research, the abstract would be thoroughly read and reviewed. Thereafter, each section of the resource is briefly scanned in order to decide whether the article will be kept or discarded. Once the article is deemed relevant, the article is thoroughly read and dissected for use of the literature review.

As research continued, so did the discovery that there are many facets to the research topic. As discussed earlier, there are many factors that contribute to what considers a woman to be empowered. It is not just a singular act or item. Because of this, the resources are along a spectrum of ideas ranging from education for Nigerian women to power in sexual relationships to education being a catalyst for empowerment. There were pieces of these resources that were pertinent to supporting ideas that make this research relevant.

## Conceptual Framework

Creswell (2009) states that theory is an interrelated set of constructs (variables) formed into propositions, or hypothesis, that specifies the relationship among variables. A theory

might appear in a research study as an argument, a discussion, or a rationale, and it helps to explain or predict phenomena that occur in the world.

Ecological theories and models present health as an interaction between a person and his or her ecosystem or social environment. This includes their family, culture, community, and anything else in their physical environment. The interaction between behavior and one's environment can directly affect health and illness. There is said to be a reciprocal effect of people on their environment, and vice versa (Glanz & Rhimer, 2005).

The health promotion theory being utilized to conduct this study is the Ecological Systems Theory. In this theory, the principal influences are intercultural, community-level, organizational-level, and interpersonal/individual. This theory suggests that his or her community, their organization and their culture are like nested spheres, much like Russian stack dolls. Actions in one sphere can have an effect on another sphere (Rainberger, 2014).

The use of this theory in this research is critical in understanding the effects of the many facets of one's environment, which, in this case, are all factors that encompass empowerment. The comprehension of the individual functioning in an environment that has a direct effect on their behaviors is essential in such a study.

The advantage of using a theory such as this is that from a health promotion standpoint, strategies that are successful at this level have a higher capability to benefit a large number of people, as opposed to an individual.

The use of theory and a theoretical framework in this research will provide a comprehensive depiction of what this study will capture. Phenomenology commences with an analysis of the *natural attitude*. It says that human beings know the world

through their experience. (Laureate Education, 2008). Language, culture, and common sense are experienced in the natural attitude as objective features of an external world that are learned by actors in the course of their lives. Creswell (2009) suggests that the type of problem best suited for this form of research is one in which it is important to understand several individual's shared experiences of a phenomenon. According to Patton (2002), phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of our everyday experiences. Phenomenology has roots in philosophy, and was first used by a German philosopher by the name of Edmund H. Husserl (1859-1938). According to Kafle (2012) it is an attempt to unveil the world as experienced by the subject through his or her life world stories. This school believes that interpretations are all we have and description itself is an interpretive process.

Using this type of approach, one attempts to understand and describe how one experiences a certain phenomenon, as well as the implications that evolve from that basic experience, before the experience is analyzed or theorized. While there is no specific process for conducting hermeneutic phenomenological research projects, there is a specific outcome sought, which is to create a rich, comprehensive, and sensitive account of how a phenomenon is experienced immediately and pre-reflectively (Goble et al. 2012).

Women's empowerment and societal status is an intriguing phenomena worthy of discussion in these progressive times. Add the rich culture and traditional values of Nigerian people to the phenomena, and that's where the core of this research begins. The opportunity to speak to individuals around the phenomena of women being the

subservient and weaker sex, their statuses, and the effect of different facets of their lives, specifically reproductive health will be key in looking at the phenomena of Nigerian women's empowerment.

## Literature Review

As this literature review began and progressed, it was found that there is a rather large gap in the literature that addresses the topic of Nigerian women's empowerment within the context of United States dwelling. While the studies that have been found during the course of the research has been compelling, it still did not capture the phenomena specifically. In Nigeria, it is known that traditionally, lack of access to material sources has been a huge disadvantage for progress. This in turn, leads to deprivation of resources such as education, employment, and modern technology. All of these factors have negative implications for any type of future progress for the woman as an individual (Uchendu, 2007). With this in mind, the literature overall was found to have addressed empowerment and reproductive health issues within Nigerian women that live in Nigeria. That only speaks somewhat to Nigerian women here in the United States. A plethora of research has been highlighted in this review that reflects these findings.

The topic of empowerment is an international one. It has been discussed in many facets. Literature that addresses other developing nations has lent great resources to the discussion around women's empowerment. The literature surrounding empowerment of the population of interest has been mostly discussions, presentations, analytical papers. This review did not reveal too many research studies that addressed the phenomena of Nigerian women's empowerment. As discussed earlier, literature has addressed several

points related to women's empowerment, which line up with determinants of health. The data that was collected has been found to be mostly qualitative. When there's actually a study that was conducted, both qualitative and quantitative figures are presented. The literature found for issues around access to reproductive health in relation to empowerment status of women, Nigerian women, in general, reveals a plethora of data. The data is usually reflective of surveys that were conducted in specific areas in Nigeria.

A theoretical approach to the social phenomenon of women Empowerment in Nigeria was carefully dissected in the paper by Nwagbara, et al. The authors, much like many authors that discuss topics similar to this, believe that women contribute heavily to development of Nigeria. While they experience challenges at every juncture, the fact remains that those junctures are not absolutely necessary in the process in growth. This is why such issues and discussions are of great concern. While it is not a traditional study, this paper examined empowerment of Nigerian women under the pretense that many authors do. Every study and research begins with a discussion where questions are asked to begin conversation. Just as is intended in this study, there will be questions asked to answer the research question. This resource was very relatable because the authors were asking very similar questions that would aid in the thought process for question selection for this study. The authors asked several questions that were highlighted throughout the paper. The authors pose questions such as are the strategies based on faulty theoretical assumptions? Is their application in the Nigerian situation faulty? What is the problem of their application in the Nigerian context? This paper made a huge effort to analyze these questions against the background of the tenets of women empowerment strategies

(Nwagbara, et.al, 2012). Like many authors who use a theoretical lens to write a paper, the expectation is to strike stimulating thought and curiosity for the sake of gaining more insight into the subject matter. The subject matter discussed in detail is the 'persistent problem of women's empowerment in Nigeria'. By building such curiosity around this problem, the goal is to have Nigeria form innovative strategies for gender equality and empowerment. The effort that has been put forward in order to bring this issue to light had led to the adoption of various strategies towards making women relevant in every sphere of life in the society (Nwagbara, et.al, 2012). This is a theoretical paper in which the authors tried to stimulate general intellectual curiosity on the persistent problem of women empowerment in Nigeria, hoping that new and innovative strategies for attaining gender equality will emerge at the end. The paper is based mostly on library research that was supplemented with internet resources and government publications. This resource supports the ideas on the importance to discuss Nigerian women's empowerment.

A resource entitled *Education: A catalyst for Women Empowerment in Nigeria* was an exceptional resource to aid in understanding empowerment with the use of primary and secondary data within the Nigerian population. The paper delicately scrutinizes the subject of education being a catalyst for women's empowerment in Nigeria. While it doesn't address Nigerian women in the United States, it is important during this research to understand the basis of how empowerment is viewed in Nigeria. This is one of the main reasons why this resource posed to be very useful while conducting this research.

As stated earlier primary and secondary data were used to draw the conclusions that were made, which was that, in spite of the lofty educational goals Nigeria has set forth, Nigerian women still deal greatly with constraints that do not proliferate personal and national development. The author's methodology was that of a descriptive survey method in order to learn whether or not education was a catalyst for empowerment. The author interviewed officials from the Federal and State Ministries of Education. The primary data collected was through interview and documentary analysis. Secondary data was collected from textbooks, articles, journals, magazines, and newspapers. A qualitative data analysis technique was utilized to analyze the responses received during the interviews and information from the secondary data collected. The conclusions drawn from this study were based heavily on the responses of those being interviewed.

The author discussed the theoretical framework of analysis being the systems theory. It was very interesting to read about a theoretical framework that is also being used for the standing research topic of empowerment. It was interesting to see it work in discussion around empowerment from an author who has successfully conducted a study. While the theory being utilized is formally known as the ecological systems theory, it has the same basis. Ojobo states "In its simplest sense, "systems" has been defined as a set of assemblage of things connected, or inter-dependent, so as to form a complete unity, a whole composed of parts in orderly management according to some scheme or plan. In a more pragmatic sense, it is "any combination of human and material resources, including the organization and procedures required to coordinate their functioning employed to achieve a mission or objective" (Ojobo, 2008). The formal definition of the ecological

systems theory suggests that the person, his or her community, their organization and their culture are like nested spheres, much like Russian stack dolls. Actions in one sphere can have an effect on another sphere (Rainberger, 2014). Both address the analysis very similarly. This is another excellent validation of this study's relevance to the research topic. The author brought a great deal of information into the discussion section. The discussion section delved into socio-cultural factors that are the cause of impingement on women's access to education in Nigeria. Matters discussed in-depth were economic constraint, male chauvinism, gender differentials, religious constraints, traditional/cultural constraints, housekeeping/family and school life constraints, negative attitude of parents to women's education, stereotypes about women, unequal employment opportunities, and early marriages. These are all issues that through this literature review, have been found to be what causes hindrance to empowerment for Nigerian women.

In the end the author recommends, among others, the involvement of women in educational policy formulation, a general movement for enlightenment, the discarding of stereotypical division of work into men's and women's work. There is also the recommendation that women must organize themselves to meet the challenges of a positive and meaningful role in the struggle for personal and national emancipation, development and progress (Ojobo 2008). This author has a passion for the subject matter, and it is undoubtedly clear in the scope of the work that has been done to be able to offer the recommendations that were offered. This paper is one of the better orchestrated papers around the topic of interest. Unlike any of the resources found during this literature review, this was an actual study as opposed to a theoretical write-up of ideas

and propositions of what should and should not be, all based on secondary data. The only weakness found was that of the methodology section. While it was made clear that there were interviews conducted, it would have been very useful to have some quantitative description such as the specific number of people that were interviewed.

The topic of religion is rather unique from culture to culture. Within the Nigerian culture, it plays a very dominant role in everyday life as found in much of the literature that has been reviewed. This particular resource addresses women's negotiation for leadership in within the religious scope, specifically in the Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Seraphim Church (ESOCS).

The Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S) church has been cast within the context of the African Independent churches that emerged during the colonial era in Nigeria. It is viewed as the second generation development after the arrival of missionary Christianity. They were known to have separated from the missionary churches from1918.This religious order does not entertain or acknowledge women at high levels of leadership (Oluwaniyi, 2012).

Leadership for women in the religious sector is a neglected subject matter when hosting discussions around socio-cultural involvement of women to act as a catalyst for empowerment. The author discusses the traditional view of women in the religious sphere dating back centuries. She goes on to state that women were seen as the repository, sustainers and transmitters of religious traditions (Oluwaniyi, 2012). This statement is one that goes hand in hand with women's traditionally held positions in the Yoruba traditional religious settings such as Oya, Yemoja (the most senior goddess of Yoruba

Pantheon), Otin (goddess of Otin River), Osun (goddess of Osun River) and the Gelede cult, which relates to fertility in women (Oluwaniyi, 2012). These female figures, up until today are worshipped because they were thought to have power that was needed but could not be controlled like the ability to give life, to obtain good harvests through fertility rituals, to intervene as mediators in the complex marriage strategies, to defuse quarrels, handle children and women's medical needs, and to heal (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1997). Having all this knowledge of the powerful roles that female figures have that are so rooted in the culture, women were sometimes removed from having the ability to fully participate in some of the core traditional practices. Women are the majority in churches and very active, however, they continue to be understated and sidelined when it comes to attaining high positions in religious leadership. Women in other sects of the Nigerian Christian church have done well in negotiating for higher leadership positions and roles within their churches. Some have actually been quite successful leaders (Oluwaniyi, 2012). The level that they have succeeded in negotiating these roles are the basis of this study.

From the study carried out within the ESOCS, it was found that the women are not challenging the male leaders for their earned roles within the restrictions of the woman's "space". The author was able to draw this conclusion by using the methodology of participant observation and oral interviews with some members from Gideon House of Prayer, one of the branches of the ESOCS in Nigeria, and Mount Zion Headquarters. The paper delves into limitations that adversely affect successful evolution of women into leadership positions in the church.

This resource is very valid in several ways to the topic of research. It asked questions pertaining to empowerment through a specific lens, which is religion. Religion is a part of the culture that directly plays a role in women's level of empowerment. The researcher utilized a qualitative method of interviewing to attain data, which is the same method of data collection being used for this research. The paper draws on many historical facts from text books and other articles to aid in explaining the findings, and providing insight to the history of the religion.

However, as it has been found in many other articles regarding this subject matter, the methods section seemed to be a bit vague. While the researcher did well in providing charts that compared the marginalization of the leadership roles that were held, there was a lack of description of the interviewees. The author merely suggested that there were interviews and observation, but did not explain what actually went into the observation and pertinent information about the interviewees. Information like that could have been very valuable and made the paper much more robust in terms of recognizing the study population.

The nested spheres in the systems theory continues to be propagated throughout this review. Political involvement of women is another essential part of discussion around empowerment. The following quote is a worthy way to begin this discussion:

*"If half of the world's population remains vulnerable to economic, political, legal and social marginalization, our hope of advancing democracy and prosperity will remain in serious jeopardy. We still have a long way to go and the United States must remain an*

*unambiguous and unequivocal voice in support of women's right in every country, every region, on every continent."* Hillary Clinton.

Nigerian women constitute about half of the population of the country (Nigeria) and are known to play vital roles as mother, producer, time manager, community organizer and social and political activist (Alagbajobi 2010). Notwithstanding these major roles that are being fulfilled successfully by Nigerian women, society still viewed these same women as being capable to have them function as equals to their male counterparts. This is due to some cultural stereotypes, exploitation of religion and traditional practices. Nigerian women have consequently, over the years, become targets of violence of varied form based on their positions in promoting topics that speak to a change in the political arena in regards to women.

The author of this paper discusses subjects surrounding the main fact that Nigerian society is very rooted in cultural beliefs and values. These same beliefs that have somehow turned themselves into what should be portrayed as the norm. Sex and gender role acclimation disseminates the political positions, which perpetuates the discriminatory and unequal work within the political arena. The problem expressed in this paper is that women have been expressing a strong desire to participate in politics, but because of them being viewed as the weaker sex, their cries go unheard. Societal value has placed women in Nigeria in a place where their positions are always as a subordinate position, a place where one's voice is silent.

This paper is not that of a study conducted, but rather a theoretical discussion around the discriminations and inequality that has been experienced by Nigerian women.

The research methodology is entirely qualitative research with the use of secondary data gathered from university libraries, news print and journals. The author also proposed to access the current status of women in politics in relation to efforts for political empowerment. The identification of other issues that women face as they seek participation in the political arena is another major topic of discussion in this paper.

The author delves into detailed discussion in the conceptual framework, the theoretical perspective, the current status of women in politics, women's conception of politics, discriminatory customs and laws, general representation, and factors that are facilitating the growth of women in the political arena. The theoretical perspective of this paper is simply the statement that throughout recorded history in all part of the world, women have been subjected to domination by men (Algbajobi, 2010). As mentioned earlier, the culture and societal structure is what propagates this idea and it is nested in every facet of life.

The author believes that women's participation in Nigerian politics is an issue of great importance. Women have been the backbone of their families and are expected to play many traditional roles. However, in the realm of politics, they are put in the background not being able to give voice to their concerns. This has fostered a true under-representation of women in the political and public sphere. Women just want the opportunity to support other women and create a platform where issues affecting women in society can be heard. It seems there are steps that are being taken, and seems promising, because women are becoming more relentless in their pursuit for gender equality in the political arena (Algbajobi, 2010).

This resource was very valid and useful. Political involvement, while it may seem obscure and futile in this specific research, but it too is important. Politics is what fuels any society's governance. Part of being a governing body is to create laws that are for the betterment of ALL people. When women are not allowed the opportunity to have similar roles as their male counterparts, how are women's voices heard? How can one expect by-laws, laws, and cultural shifts to be fairly considered when there is a lack of female representation? Women's political empowerment also has a direct effect on empowerment status of a woman, just as religion and education do. There are many folds as to issues that affect women's empowerment. This resource was very informative in respect to discussion around the history of women's participation in politics, and what it means for decision-making for women's rights and issues.

As with any theoretical paper, a methodology is assumed to be qualitative with use of secondary data. However, this paper did not specifically have a methods section. It was mentioned very briefly in the abstract, and was not mentioned at any other point in the paper. This was the only weakness found in the paper. Otherwise it was filled with very pertinent information around the mildly discussed matter of Nigerian women in politics.

Entrepreneurship is an opportunity that is afforded to anyone if they are given the resources to do so. This too can also be a factor that contributes to a woman's level of empowerment. In a paper by Nwoye (2007), the topic of entrepreneurship within the female population in Nigeria delves into the crippling factors that do not necessarily foster growth within the economy. The author begins by addressing the need for growth

and development within the field of economics, and applying those primary principles to the Nigerian economy. As discussed by other authors addressing Nigerian women's place in society, Nigerian women historically have been disadvantaged on so many fronts. They are not only disenfranchised when it comes to accessing the common material resources, they have little to no access to education and modern technology. These factors are directly related to a woman's development, and before they even have an opportunity to start, it is stunted by the road blocks of nonaccessibility.

Nigerian women, like their counterparts in other parts of Africa traditionally have multiple responsibilities as mothers and producers and therefore tend to engage in activities that are home-based and less risky. These have negative implications, as low risk activities are often those, which produce limited returns. The reduced physical mobility of many of the women who operate in this category also often prevents them from seeking out information on better economic opportunities (Nwoye, 2007).

In the American culture, it is safe to say that most will venture into self-employment because it offers independent working and flexibility to say the least. However, for Nigerian women in Nigeria, their reasons for considering small business ventures are to get over the hump of poverty. The need for household provisions such as food, clothes, children's education, and spousal unemployment are just a few of the driving forces around small enterprises. The entrepreneurs are not represented due to the lack of education, lack of opportunities for training, and an inadequate financial return on their businesses. At the end of it all it is the policy and institutional changes that can deal

with the causes of gender inequalities, and lift the constrictions to Nigerian women's involvement in economic development.

There have been many discussions around the value of the Nigerian woman to society and economy. This paper by Nwoye (2007), thoroughly highlights the importance of building women up in an economically crippling society that does not value women's contribution to the economic systems currently in place in Nigeria. As stated once before, this is part of a woman's nested system that contributes to her level empowerment. This is why this resource proved to be very useful. It is discussion around such matters like gender issues in participation, entrepreneurship for Nigerian women and politics of inclusion, cooperation in entrepreneurship, and building bridges across gender barriers just to name a few, are most relevant to a woman's empowerment status. All the topics were discussed on the policy and institutional level. The author's objective of this paper is to raise awareness around the subject matter. The author was specifically targeting policy makers, investors, bankers, and the men and women of Nigeria. The idea is to show that women's entrepreneurship stands for an untouched resource for job development, economic growth, and social solidity. As always, the latter parts of discussions such as this were suggestions for initial official steps that should be taken as decisions are being made around gender budgeting in the policymaking process. Similar to the hypothesized results of the study topic, this author also seeks establish appropriate measures for strengthening women's participation in making Nigeria an entrepreneurial economy. In the end, this new point of view if properly implemented will not only create wealth for Nigeria, but also improve the quality of life of the people. As a means of social

change, this is the great means to an end for people seeking women's empowerment all over the world.

This paper by Nwoye (2007) was very well put together, and delved into the relevant subject matter pertaining to the study, very well. The only fault found was that there was no true methodology section. It can only be assumed that much of this paper is attributed to secondary data sources that are reflected in the references section.

As discussions are taking place around women's empowerment and access to healthcare, it is important to take into account a male or masculine aspect in such a discussion. The paper by Uchendu (2007), talks about the opinions of what it means to be masculine and masculinity. The sample is a cross-section of Nigerian men and women, specifically undergraduates in the University, to define various types of masculinity among youths. The determination of masculinity differs from man to man, and it also shapes how they see society, including their female counterparts. While this study did not specifically go into much detail regarding women, their views on life including women's roles are discussed, and proves to serve some relevance for the discussion of the study topic of women's empowerment.

The author states that views of masculinity had only been viewed in the older population, and not much is known about the views of the younger population. This specific study addressed the gap in the literature that looked at views of Nigerian male youth on masculinity. The author believes that the study will reveal how an educated and not-so traditional group may express masculinity as they age. The paper is that of a discussion based on a focus group that was facilitated with thirty-seven males and thirty-

three female undergraduate students. The common variable is that the students have all been exposed to some years of University education. While it was not mentioned this way by the author, but it may be safe to say that the assumption is that the participants are likely to be influenced to have a semi-mastery of critical thinking. The students also would an understanding of gender issues, and most importantly, contradictory levels of impartiality from traditional values (Unchendu, 2007). The ethnic groups represented in the study were Igbo, Yoruba, and Ijaw. The religious groups represented were Christian and Muslim.

The different ethnic groups were said to have shown similarities and differences in the notion of what masculinity is. The author expresses again that the University environment is an avenue that encourages a different level of exchange of ideas that isn't afforded to those who are not in an institute of higher education. The participants in this study were asked four questions: What does it mean to be masculine? What are the features of masculinity? In what ways can you fulfill your dream of being a man? And, what are the good and bad aspects of masculinity? (Uchendu, 2007). What the author found is that the responses, for the most part, show that Nigerian youth are definitely more cognizant of masculinity and gender and that they are more forward thinking than the earlier generation. A major finding is that masculine gender expressions can't be generalized. The response varied greatly. Most responses are influenced greatly by traditional practices, their environment, and other contributing factors.

This study revealed that being in an environment of enlightenment, the participant's feedback highlighted a new take on the understanding of masculinity based

on current and economic circumstances. Their views on masculinity show that the way

the society is constructed socially burdens these students to behave specifically one way

over the other. Masculinity had a different meaning to everyone one. As it has been found

in other literature, culture, religion, education, and environment play a huge role in how

participants viewed what masculinity was, and it also will link to how they will view it in

the latter parts of their lives. A noteworthy point made by the author was that the views of

their forefathers now co-exist in the contemporary spaces in which they dwell. While a

lot of the participants have detached from rural environmental behaviors, the relentless

patriarchal functioning of the Nigerian society remains.

The gender difference in Nigerian culture groups allowed men more power and

status than women. It implied the social placement of men above women and the

privileges that accrue to men in almost everything (Uchendu, 2007). At the end of this

study, the author expresses that maleness and being masculine increases your social

placement, which will always be above the woman.

This paper by Uchendu (2007) was well written in expressing what was learned

during the focus group. The group was asked to answer the questions that were discussed

earlier in this review. They specifically discussed changing masculinities, attaining

masculinity, features of masculinity, and masculinity as perceived by the youth. As stated

earlier, women's empowerment is not a subject to be discussed without considering

males. Women dwell in a society where they live and work with males who have a major

say in what may or may not happen in their lives. This study also does well in capturing

influences of different aspects of one's life and how it affects through and behavior,

much like the System's Theory. While it was not specifically stated that way, it was noticed, thus revealing why it is relevant to study topic of empowerment. The paper was very well organized; however, it would have been beneficial to see the data in some type of table format that would make it easier for the reader to see how responses were grouped. The information was presented in another setting, but for the sake of the readers of this paper, it would have been beneficial.

As discussions around empowerment takes place, it can be suggested that control through violence should also be a part of the discussion. Violence is a subject matter that is sensitive but has gained notoriety up to international levels. The author of the resource entitled *Violence Against Women: A Global Public Health Crisis*, delves into a riveting discussion around violence against women, the effects, and the importance of addressing it on a global scale. As other authors have stated, limiting women only does a disservice to social and economic development. When a woman's human rights have been violated, she in no longer in the position to be a valid contributor to her society. Ellsberg (2006) addressed violence against women as a public health concern because of the previous statement. Disturbing statistics that state globally at least one woman in every three women is beaten, raped or otherwise abused during her lifetime is disheartening. Violence has many different faces and varies from country to country. However, at the core of it all, inequality of power within men and women in any given society is the main issue in addressing violence against women. In order to effectively eradicate violence against women, the first step is to promote gender equality and women's empowerment (Ellsberg, 2006).

The author delves into discussion around intimate partner violence, female genital mutilation, sexual assault/child sexual abuse, trafficking, and femicide (murder of a woman by their partner). That carried into discussion about the health consequences that violence has on a woman. This is one of the major points of relevance for the chosen topic of empowerment and access to healthcare. Violence begets a plethora of health problems ranging from physical injuries, gynecological issues, mental issues (such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder), adverse pregnancy outcomes, and STIs. These issues do not only affect the woman, but her children and family as well. Victims of violence will not always be the most outgoing or pleasant people to be around. Violence directly creates negative consequences for a woman's health. The woman, due to metal issues, may not be as proactive to take care of herself. They even resort to alcohol or drug use. In this case, violence, not the drug use itself, would be the risk factor for many different health conditions of a victim of violence (Ellsberg, 2006).

By discussing the existing gaps in the literature about violence as an impediment to empowerment, it has led to the World Health Organization (WHO) to step in. WHO played a major role in this issue by conducting a multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence. This author did well in expressing the importance of the need to have conversation around this topic. It was not a study, but rather a proclamation with the use of vital statistics to contribute to the logic as to why it is very significant.

The relevance to the study topic is evident. Violence is not a part of everyone's life on a daily basis. But for many women around the world, including the United States,

suffer from violent behavior towards them regularly. These women are the individuals whom this author speaks for. In order to seek empowerment for those who have been stripped of their power through violence, the subject must be discussed, and equality must be a part of it. This resource has proved to be a very useful one as it discusses a layer of one's environment that could directly contribute to a woman's empowerment status. It was well developed, and it is firmly believed that the purpose of the paper was fulfilled (Ellsberg, 2006).

In a paper by Asogwa (2012), there was a very interesting display of comparison of the women's rights in pre-colonial times and the current experiences with Nigerian women. The author looks through several lenses while making these comparisons. One lens that made this paper unique is heavy discussion around religion. In addition to working around the major theme that women's empowerment is directly related to development in the country of Nigeria, the author delves into powerful religious discussions. The author reminds readers of God's original plan for men and women by quoting scripture from the book of Genesis in from the Bible. The author like, many authors addressing women's empowerment reiterate Nigeria being a patriarchal country and society. Also discussed in other resources, women are not heavily involved in the political arena, thus putting political and governing power in the hands of men. The last area of emphasis, which made this paper unique in comparison to similar papers, is the discussion around media and its' role in discussion around women's empowerment. Asogwa (2012), states that the media has a hegemonic function and it is in addition seen as an agent of socialization. That statement heavily infers that everyone plays a role in

women's empowerment, since the media itself is connected to everyone in some way shape or form. This paper at its core insists on the need to empower Nigerian women to all for a more holistic development in the country.

The topic of religion is another topic that has seemed to be very common through the literature in this literature review. Religion is interwoven in cultures, and for Nigerians, it does not differ. The author, Asogwa (2012) surprisingly began the discussion by quoting scripture to support their idea of what God's original intention for men and women were. The author states that God was clear when it came to relaying this information. The bible plainly stated "Male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). There wasn't any discussion about how man needed to reign above her, and that they would be unequal in any way. "It is not good for man to be alone, I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18). The author does well to highlight Pope John Paul II's anthropological collections related to this matter. According to him, "the creation of woman is thus marked from the outset by the principle of help: a help which is not one-sided but mutual." He went on to say "Woman complements man just as man complements woman: Men and women are complementary. Womanhood expressed the "human" as much as manhood does, but in a different and complementary way" (John Paul II, 1998). The author uses this biblical basis as the foundation of her discussion around women's empowerment. The author felt the need to elaborate on the supposed "divine order" of things, before going into discussion on how it all changed.

As with any subject of interest, knowing the history of where the "movement" began is extremely valuable in a discussion such as this. From the 18 century figures such

as Mary Wollenstonecraft (1759-1799) was mentioned, an icon who led the suffragist movement. She made the way for those who continued the woman's empowerment movement in the 60s and 70s such as Margaret Sanders (original founder of Planned Parenthood), Betty Friedan (author of the Feminine Mystique), Susan Browsmiller (author of Feminism), Gloria Steinem, Germain Greer, and Anne Oakley, just to name a few. The trip through the centuries and decades were essential to understanding where it has started in comparison to where we are, and we are going in relation to women's empowerment.

Empowerment literally means to give power to, to give strength and confidence (Asogwa, 20102). This empowerment can only take place through a complementary contribution of both man and woman for the benefit of both (Asogwa, 20102). Empowerment of the Nigerian woman, according to the author, will take the involvement of their male counterparts doing their part to create that balance needed for women's equality. As other authors have discussed, development of a society needs every society member involved. Such is the case for the Nigerian people. The author made a powerful statement in saying "Nigeria is like a baby estranged succulent embrace, starved of the nurturant milk and deprived of the soothing caress of his mother, can he grow? Surely it will, but a stunted growth (Asogwa, 2012). This powerfully projects the need to address women's involvement in the growth of the nation. The world has taken note over the years. The United Nations has held several global conferences since 1952 to address this issue, and the conferences continue to hold fast as the milestones are being made to address women's empowerment.

Lastly, the involvement of the media is an important part of society buy-in. The author (Asogwa, 2012), states in the article entitled 'Women Empowerment for a Holistic Development in Nigeria', that the media is a platform that can be used to infiltrate the masses with images and information that can portray the woman in a way that is empowering, but has failed to do so. The author makes several recommendations as to what can be done to tackle this issue such as: including equality in the legal system, ending all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones ruling out discrimination against women; guarantee protection of women; guarantee elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by anyone including private and corporate stakeholders.

As with other resources, there have not been many studies parse. There is a plethora of authors who take time to share their thoughts on the topic of interest in a scholarly manner. This resource is very relevant in the sense that it is addressing the need for inclusion of women on many levels to guarantee growth and true socialization of the Nigerian community. Like many authors discussing this issue, the hope is to get enough notoriety to make it a global issue to bring women to a place of equality where they belong. There were no specific methods noticed other than an extensive review of literature to back up thoughts and ideas. The phenomena of women's empowerment are addressed in every juncture of this paper, and proves to be very relevant to research questions addressed for the topic of interest.

Literature that addresses specific lines work and its relation to empowerment and equity proved to be very valuable and interesting. Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009) provided an in-depth look into agriculture and the woman's role. Even though it speaks specifically

to agriculture, it is synonymous with women's roles in other employment paths such as politics, as discussed earlier in this literature review. As in other literature, it does not come as a surprise that women comprise most of the agricultural labor force in Nigeria, and their contributions go unnoticed for the most part. Nor do they participate in making any decisions when it comes to agricultural development. The authors facilitate a very interesting dialogue around women's roles in agriculture; development, and what Nigeria is doing to provide women with tools to empower and acknowledge them.

The biggest protagonist of the lack of acknowledgement of women in agriculture is the gender inequality that's at the forefront of Nigerian culture. According to Ostlin et al. (2003), women and men are different regarding their biology, the roles and responsibilities that society assigns to them and their position in the family and community. This role that has been assigned to the women a socio-cultural one that perpetuates the patriarchal society that Nigeria falls under. The authors suggest that there must be a conversation about gender equity in farming. Women are expected to care for the home which includes providing food. It unfortunately, is a shame that economically, the work that they have put in on farms does not allow them the right to have a say in decision making around profits and dispersal of funds from farming. This notion, in turn, removes them (from) policy making decisions and statistics that include their contributions. It is all quite daunting. Thankfully, there are several organizations that include women's groups, community based organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have given these women a voice and acknowledgment for their respective contributions. These organizations also help to address the barriers to

empowerment for these women including limited access to economic resources, food processing machines, and financial education (Ogunlela & Mukhtar 2009).

Considering the recommendations that the authors have set forth, the hope is that more discussion around such issues gain notoriety enough for more things to change on a policy level to allow empowerment for these women who are only doing their part to help their country develop as a nation.

Ogunlela & Mukhtar (2009) proved to be valuable due to the discussion around gender inequality and work. When determinants of health are discussed, economic status is a part of it, and it clearly fits into the mold of the ecological systems theory being used as part of the analysis for the topic of interest. These Nigerian women's economic status is directly related to their level of empowerment. It is an interesting take on "careers" of women and its relation to empowerment. This was not a study, therefore there was no methodology that was apparent. The authors of this resource conducted an extensive review of relative literature to support their thoughts and arguments. The paper was well organized, and did provide a table to clearly delineate the different types of farming and what the women's profits were. Unlike other discussion, papers, this one provided tabulated quantitative data, which is very helpful when one needs a better idea of what things are from a numerical standpoint (Ogunlela and Mukhtar 2009).

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, established by Congress in 1968 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., is a living national memorial to President Wilson. The Center's mission is to commemorate the ideals and concerns of Woodrow Wilson by providing a link between the worlds of ideas and policy, while

fostering research, study, discussion, and collaboration among a broad spectrum of individuals concerned with policy and scholarship in national and international affairs (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars [WWICS], 2008).

In 2007, WWICS assembled a group of experts to host a panel discussion around women's development and equity. The discussions were riveting. For anyone who is not versed on the subject matter in any way shape or form, these experts addressed issues in a very insightful and educational way. Discussions started with approaches to promoting gender equity. That was followed by new avenues for change and the way forward. There were six experts on the panel that were representing several organizations.

Promotion of gender equity continues to be a constant throughout this literature review. All experts who are familiar with this issue continuously say there needs to be more conversation around it, there needs to be more attention to it, and something substantial needs to be done to address it.

Women are key to the development challenge (WWICS, 2008). That statement is very powerful. Throughout the literature that has been reviewed, there has not been such a strong statement to begin the discussion. It is not all experts' beliefs that reflect this statement. According to the authors of this resource, women all over the world continue to be very limited in the roles they are allowed to playing the household, community, and society at large. Lack of access to education and political representation also leave them in a position or limited involvements in the societal level. These are very similar issues that authors addressing this issue. The similarity in discussion is resonant. This definitely means that the world must take notice. While these discussions are still happening, there

have been some progress over the past few decades in relation to women's equity and empowerment. However, there are disputes over exactly how effective those efforts actually were.

The topics of discussion were not so different from others expressed in other literature. However, there was one topic during the first part of discussion that was very unique, that has not been mentioned much called gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming at its core suggests that in policy making, gender should be made relevant at all levels of decision-making and a part of the criteria for programs (WWICS, 2008). It seems to be something that failed according to the panelists who played major roles in the effort marginalize it. It was noted that it had more failures than overall achievement. It was supposed to be a protagonist for social change, but it is argued that it needs more work. There needs to be a thorough examination of the all the problems related to implementation that contributed to the failure of gender mainstreaming (WWICS, 2008).

What was not very clear in policy making was the actual agenda. When gender mainstreaming is actually in action, it usually involves creating/adopting a gender policy, create some type of work group to address it. Part of this includes conducting trainings, increasing staff, and organize program in relation to it. It seems that this approach was not very helpful in retaining funding, and has not undergone the transformative change that has been hoped for. Aruna Rao facilitated the first parts of the discussion in regards to what the approaches moving forward should be. Her recommendation was first clarify what falls under the guise of gender mainstreaming. Once that is understood, delegation

of activities will be better so that the relative organizations can work on the various facets of gender mainstreaming.

"The range of diverse strategies all termed gender mainstreaming—including policy reform, advocacy, capacity building, analytical frameworks, program development, and monitoring systems—should be disaggregated and analyzed in terms of their particular gains and failures. This would facilitate strategic thinking about what particular institutions are well positioned to accomplish, and what they can be held accountable for" (Aruna Rao, WWICS, 2008).

The new avenues were vast and were tried on an international level. New actions ranged from gender-neutral programming to public awareness campaigns. At the conclusion of this part of the discussion, the recommendation was to make sure that various organizations work together concurrently creates a "virtuous circle."

"Building an awareness of rights encourages women to exercise their rights; trainings position people in the community to help individuals enjoy their rights; and a knowledgeable and active constituency motivates lawmakers and judicial sector workers to protect the rights through court decisions, new laws, and enforcement" (Lyn Beth Neylon, WWICS, 2008).

In the end it is argued that the way forward is to think bigger. A larger conceptual framework is needed in addition to mainstreaming. More stakeholders need to be at the table that will create more gains on a social and policy making level. All the panelists shared personal encounters with women in programs they were directly involved in. The constant is that it is apparent in all the work that they have all done over the years that the

issue of equality is still very powerful. As experts and public health professionals, the ultimate achievement would be to provide the access to women to be able to fulfill the idea of achieving equality. As stated by Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda "Women simply need proper mechanisms for financing their idea for equality and rights" (WWICS, 2008).

This resource was extremely informative and filled with great information. This resource allowed one to see what this mater looks like across the globe. All the panelists worked for various organizations, and had done work in countries all over the world. The interesting facet to this panel discussion is the resounding statement that women are very important in development in a society, and leadership all over the world still has not come around to seeing that this is the case. It was a very interesting discussion that had a cohesive beginning and end. The speakers were well versed, and lent a great contribution to the world of academia through this panel discussion.

The Population Council is an international, nonprofit, nongovernmental institution that seeks to improve the well-being and reproductive health of current and future generations around the world to help achieve human, equitable, and sustainable balance between people and resources (Population Council, 2001). This organization has successfully partnered with other organizations such as the United States Agency for International (USAID) and other cooperating agencies to work within a network called the Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWD). As discussed in the paper previously discussed partnership to combat the issue if inequality is essential in making substantial progress. The Population Council and IGWD combined forces to provide this resource.

The paper was the product of a meeting on power in sexual relationships. It convened in Washington, DC, on March1, 2001.

What's greatly appreciated is when this issue, when being discussed, is addressed with power. To begin the discussion, the authors state that sexual power within the population and public health wasn't even a public health concern until the HIV/AIDS epidemic surfaced. The assumption that sexual relations between partners was consensual and power distribution in the relationship is equal, was far from what was reality. Public health did not want to go into people's home and relationships. It was a boundary that for quite some time was not crossed.

While there was a great deal of information shared during this meeting, there were three key issues that were noticeably echoed throughout the paper and they were: the role of gender based power in sexual relationships in determining of reproductive and sexual health outcomes; clinic and community-based interventions that address power; and highlight gaps in knowledge and priority areas for future interventions and research (Population Council, 2001).

The main topic that was attractive and most relevant to the topic of interest is that of power in relationships being the determinant for reproductive and sexual health outcomes. As this review progressed, this is the first resource that blatantly addressed the exact topic of interest by combining power (empowerment status), and reproductive healthcare. It was found that while the authors did not address a specific ethnic group, general statements, using supporting literature, stated that culture plays a role in power distribution and access to reproductive health care. Ann Blanc (Blancroft Research

International), a speaker at the firmly stated that the relationship between decision

making and gender based power is often difficult to fully comprehend. There are many

facets that are attached to it. She generally states that a female in a male-female

relationship may not always agree in timing of pregnancy, or even the use of

contraception. According to research, the issue of whose opinion matter most is not

generalized across cultures. The Nigerian culture for example would be on one side of the

spectrum where a woman's say is more often not as accounted for as the man's opinion.

As found in previous literature, education of the woman matters greatly when it comes to

decision making around contraception and family planning. Blanc goes on to say men

have approved family planning, but contraception use raises issues around masculinity

and being competent enough to fulfill his duty of procreating and holding his position as

the head of the household, as to not be emasculated by member of their respective

community. A common statement that was made that speaks to the relevance of the topic

of interest is that distinctiveness at the individual, couple, and community level have a

direct influence on both the power and the extent to which individuals access productive

health services. Gender based power relations have a huge effect on a person's

willingness to access information that would help them to make informed decisions, thus

having a direct relation to their reproductive health and all round well-being (Population

Council, 2001).

  The relevance of this resource was truly immense. To be able to see the topic of

interest as it is being fashioned for my study and addressed in a way that it shows the

importance of the issue was reassuring. It is reassuring in the sense that the research

being conducted in not for naught, as it is of great importance. There were not faults in this paper by the Population Council (2001). The authors did well to insert a graph of the ecological model displaying that power can be displayed on many levels from the individual, to interpersonal, to the macro-environment, to their communities. It was also very stimulating to see the ecological systems theory show up in this conversation. This was not a study parse, but there was specific research that was discussed, and used as points of discussion. The meeting attendees were experts in their specific field, so there were many scholarly statements made, with back up from other literature. Thus far, this specific resource has been one of the more truly relevant resources related to the topic of interest.

The issue of domestic violence is a true testament is seizing of an individual's power. As discussed in a review of previous literature, it is a public health crisis. However, in the country of Nigeria, it is still prevalent. It is prevalent to the point that it is acceptable. There is actually a law that currently exists that states that a man can physically abuse in order to correct his wife, as long as they are married according to native law (Awusi et al., 2009). In short, it is not against the law for a man to "correct" his wife as he sees fit. The law does not state that there is an exception for pregnant women, so again, due to lack of empowerment on the woman's part; she is forced to be victim to the laws of the land.

Awusi et al. (2009) delves into discussion around domestic violence (DV) against pregnant women. It is a matter that as the authors reveal, a unique one that has not been researched a great deal in African countries. The author clearly illustrates that DV has no

face, no age, no religion or ethnicity. DV does not recognize any barriers because it goes across all ages, races, religions and cultures.

The authors wanted to learn what the prevalence, knowledge, and opinions of DV among 400 pregnant women in a hospital in Delta State in Nigeria. Unlike most of the resources that have been reviewed thus far, it was an actual study. It was a cross-sectional study using questionnaires as the means to collect data. The figures that were presented were very clear and informative. It allowed the reader to draw their own conclusions, which probably would not differ much from the authors'. What the authors realized is that much of the DV cases go unreported because of fear and not wanting to bring shame to their homes. Because it is already a part of the law, many women are forced to keep it a secret. Most of the pregnant DV victims were between 21-30 years old. 36% of these woman experienced DV either during their current pregnancy or a previous one. This rate was said to be higher than found in similar studies. An outstanding seventy-seven% of the participants would rather keep the DV a secret. There was a great amount of figures that were clearly outlined in the results and discussion with the use of tables. The figures were quite daunting. As this article was being reviewed for relevance, it became apparent that education is key in understanding oneself enough to discern from what is right and wrong. The authors used the term "worrisome" to describe a specific finding. A quarter of the women who participated in this study felt that the abuse was excusable. That finding alone is disheartening. Regardless of what the women think, no one deserves to have pain in any way shape or form inflicted on them due to one's power over them. This off-putting development pushed the authors to make stern recommendations. The first

was to increase public awareness about the issue. So many people are living in pain in the dark with no one to help. When the issue is brought to light, change can be facilitated. A recommendation of screening at hospitals was also made. The last and most significant was to make DV against pregnant women punishable by law. While the authors were not specific in saying all women, it is at least appreciated that the discussion of bringing in the law as a means to facilitate change is commendable.

This paper by Awusi et al. (2009) entitled Prevalence of Domestic Violence During Pregnancy in Oleh, A Suburban Isoko Community, Delta State, Nigeria', was very well developed. The authors took a very sensitive subject, made it relevant, and make the reader want to learn more. It was expressed that there is a need for more research, and with such detailed information found through this study, definitely a great platform to continue research on. This resource is relevant in an indirect way. Women who suffer from DV loose whatever power it is that they have. When laws are set in place that actually don't allow for growth on an individual level, a woman's level of empowerment is stifled instantly. Throughout this study, it was apparent that lack of education on both ends (the man and woman) that perpetrated the DV instances to take place. DV is an issue that is an impediment to a woman's growth, therefore very relevant in the discussion around women's empowerment.

The resource titled 'Women's Experiences with Infertility: Exploring The Outcome of Empowerment' was a unique and riveting discussion around empowerment and disempowerment. Throughout this review, this was the first resource that used the

term disempowerment. Upon searching, it was that word alone that captured attention that led to a deeper need to learn what this paper entailed.

The paper was done through a feminist lens, which was very interesting. There are some feminists that critique a woman who has used various reproductive technologies to conceive, while there are feminists that argue, it is a woman's right to go about reproducing however it is they would like. While feminists tend to be on two different ends of the spectrum, the commonality that feminists have concerns about is disempowerment. What does disempowerment mean? What does infertility look like in reference to empowerment? Those are the key terms of discussion throughout this paper.

The author utilized snowball sampling to recruit 32 women. She gained insight to her research questions by conducting what she called active interviewing. Active interviews focus on mutual disclosure so that both the interviewee and interviewer contribute to the meaning-making process. Together, the research participants and the author examined their life course with infertility (Parry, N.D). The relevance of the methodology used was striking. The methodology that will be used to gather data is very similar to the methodology used in this study. From snow ball sampling to the interviewing, this method most certainly seems to be the best when addressing individuals, especially women, on sensitive subject matters. The author also used grouping techniques when analyzing the data collected from the interviews. The women who were interviewed were ranging from ages 30-53.

Through these interviews, the author found that there was a sense of empowerment that the women dealt with as they dealt with infertility. There were a few

women who related her empowerment directly to their ability to conceive, but those responses were minimal. Most women seemed to have developed a strength that would have never existed had it not been for their infertility and battling with reproductive technology. The author describes it confidence to face life, determine their own choices, and personal control to improve their life situations. It also demonstrates how the women developed the ability to stand up for themselves, demonstrating that they are active participants in their own experiences (Parry, n.d.). That statement is a powerful statement that suggests empowerment can be found not just through yourself, partners, and your environment. Power and empowerment can be found in experiences, hard experience where one comes out the victor.

The term disempowerment was not seen as a threat by the end of this study. Parry, (n.d) aimed to investigate lives of women who dealt with infertility and the results from using reproductive technology in relation to empowerment. The author found that most of the women did their part in playing active roles in learning exactly what it was they were dealing with and having that control over their bodies. They had enough control over their bodies to be able to discern when they would fight and when they would not. That alone is empowering in itself. Having the self-realization of acceptance was also considered to be empowering. The author implied thorough the paper on her position is in respect to feminism. It was apparent that the author was very much in support of the feminist movement, but recommended that more feminist frameworks need to look more into social reforms to ensure all women's empowerment, not neglecting the importance of personal empowerment.

The resource by Odutolu et al. (2003) is as close as it will get to the topic of interest. It seeks to address empowerment and its effects on reproductive behavior with young women in Nigeria. It was an outstandingly informative paper. It was very intriguing to see the topic of interest play out in Nigeria and with the use of a different method that what is currently being proposed. By far this resource is the most relative to the topic of interest.

As discussed in previous and subsequent resources, development within communities has everything to do with women's roles in the community. Women are on their way to equity thanks to the spare headers of movements to facilitate it. Little by little women are being acknowledged as equal contributors in development in communities. However, there are still some barriers to this which include adverse health and lack of resources for social and economic development. Odutolu et al. (2003) fosters a very important discussion around economic empowerment and reproductive behavior of young women in Nigeria. Again it is imperative that these types of conversations happen, however there is a gap in the literature that addresses young Nigerian women who reside in the United States. While this is a discussion focused on women in Nigeria, its' relevance is in the subject matter, which is an essential part of discussions while researching the topic of interest.

According to the author gender equity and women's empowerment is a catalyst for promoting and sustaining economic growth and development. This statement resonates through various discussions during this literature review. Various authors, panelist, and experts have all expressed similar point in regards to the need to empower

women. When women are empowered, society gains an upper hand. The sooner decision-makers in general understand that, the better. As noted by Odutolu et al. (2003), issues around empowerment (especially on a global perspective) have had a platform discussion at numerous conferences. It is at these conferences that women are given the opportunity to speak about their empowerment status and their reproductive health. In a time where HIV/AIDS is rampant and heavily affecting Nigerian women, having a platform to speak about issues, with an opportunity to learn is essential to empowerment.

One interesting perspective that the authors took is to take time to discuss the importance of empowering adolescent girls. Unfortunately, the culture perpetuates situations where an adolescent girl is in a relationship with a much older man. At this point there are already at a loss of being valid contributors to society. They would already be at a point where there is loss of power and little to no understanding of the importance of reproductive health. When a young girl is already at a loss due to lack of exercising any power, receipt of an education, that is where the cycle begins. Often these younger girls become teenage mothers thus solidifying the loss of any opportunity to be empowered due to lack of education, economic knowledge, and health knowledge. The dynamic of power in their relationships are toxic and most times unevenly distributed within the parties in the relationship, which is a direct barrier for empowerment and access to reproductive health.

This study by Odutolu et al. (2003) was conducted in order to observe the relationship between empowerment and reproductive behavior in women ages 19-25. The authors conducted a qualitative study that seemed to be three-fold. The initial part of the

study includes data that was collected from a 2-year intervention program sponsored by and NGO in Osogbo, Nigeria. There were two main goals for the program. The first goal was to increase reproductive health knowledge and access to services. The second was to increase access to economic resources for young women who had already received formal education or have completed and apprenticeship. An evaluation of knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs were conducted by a specific evaluation person.

The second part of the study was that of the focus groups. These focus groups consisted of between 8 and 10 participants from young women who had gone through the latter part of the intervention program that was focused on the business acumen side of things. Focus groups were also held with the women's parents and relative leaders in the community. There were a total of eight focus groups that were conducted.

The third part of the study was case studies, five in total. The case studies were conducted with five young women who had successfully started their own businesses after attending the intervention program. The authors were clearly able to gather a plethora of data to draw the conclusions they drew, and address their hypotheses. The authors utilized a qualitative data analysis software called Open Code, after coding and organizing all the information that was collected.

The authors found that through every avenue they had taken during the course of this study, yielded several valid conclusions. The authors firstly recognize that conversations around the relationship between empowerment and access to resources are only acknowledged by researchers, other stakeholders, and some policymakers. Its apparently something needs much more attention. According to Odutolu et al. (2003),

education allows young girls to acquire skills that allow them to realize and attain a positive balance of power in their relationships. With this balance of power comes independence. It is this same independence that will give them dominion over their bodies and reproductive health, as opposed to being dependent on a man to make prominent reproductive health decisions. This independence and education also provides a platform of where comically, the girls are motivated to work and contribute substantially to their family units. All of this encompasses an empowered woman.

Odutolu et al. (2003) did a magnificent job at capturing the essence of the relation of economics to reproductive behavior. The levels at which they went to attain data in order to answer their hypothesis was commendable. The relevance of this resource to the topic of interest, as addressed earlier is huge. This is the very first study that put empowerment and reproductive issues in the context that is very similar to the topic of interest. The difference of course is that this study was based in Nigeria, and not in the United States. This is where the gap in the literature lies. Nigerian women in the United States deal with different pressures, expectations, and a melting pot of cultures. It will be very interesting to be able to conduct a comparison of finding with the findings in this paper.

A substantial body of evidence suggests that for many women in Africa, the greatest risk of HIV infection lies in marriage, and the greatest source of HIV infection is unprotected sex with their husbands (Stephenson, 2010). This is the first statement that was made in a paper entitled 'Community-Level Gender Equity and Extramarital Sexual Risk-Taking Among Married Men in Eight African Countries'. This statement alone is

powerful, informative, saddening, and eye-opening all at the same time. Nigeria is one of the countries that was discussed in this paper. The Nigerian society, as discussed in various literature, is patriarchal in functioning. There are even laws that perpetuate adverse treatment of women by their husbands. It does not come as surprise that the issue of risk-taking extramarital sex is an issue worth discussing.

Stephenson (2010) saw the need to conduct the study because research has shown that African women are most likely to contract HIV from their husband's due to their risky behaviors outside of their marriages. However, on the community level, there is still an unknown gray area around exactly what it is that shapes men's attitudes around extramarital sexually risky behaviors. All of this is discussed in relation to gender equity. The mere fact that gender equity is being discussed displays the relevance of this paper to the topic of interest. When equality, equity, and gender are a part of the discussion, women's empowerment is not that far off.

Unlike most of the literature that has been reviewed, this is a quantitative study where secondary data from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) from Chad, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe were utilized to observe relationships between risky extramarital sex within the male population to gender equity and other community behaviors. The author utilized a series of separate multilevel logistic regression models that incorporated individual, household and community measures that was created for each country.

DHS collects data on fertility, family planning and maternal health among women aged 15–49, together with information on the demographic, social and economic

characteristics of the women and members of their household. The author discussed

many facets of this issue that highly suggests men need education and attention when it

comes to matters of equity and sexual health. It is mentioned that a woman's layers of

issues that contribute to her empowerment status; the same rings true for a man and his

risky behaviors. It was found that there are quite a few confounding factors that

contribute to it. Firstly, it is been studied that most African men's first sexual encounters

had little to nothing to do with intimacy. It was more about sexual aptitude within a group

of their peers. Another contributing factor was lack of education of HIV transmission.

The men were simply operating under the guise of being able to tell upon seeing a

person. This then does not prompt them to have safe sex.

Other contributing factors included poverty and lack of power from the woman

(Stephenson, 2010). This of course was the most relevant point. Poverty sometimes

"pushed" the men out to seek approval of his manhood outside his marriage by engaging

extramarital affairs. When the frustration of not being able to provide on all levels for his

family, he looks to other partners to gain some sort of approval that they don't have on

their own due to low-self-esteem. The interesting spin off to this is the woman that is

involved. Most times she is in a position where she is not educated, and is not employed,

and would not be able to survive on her own without her husband's support. Because of

that she is forced to tolerate the behavior. Due to lack of power, she is also not in any

position to address anything when it comes to contraception or condoms. That decision is

mostly the decision of the man. This, in turn, will always leave the woman at the most at

risk, without having engaged in risky behavior.

Stephenson (2010) found that the ratio of men and women in a community contributed greatly to the likelihood of a man engaging in risky extramarital sex. The understanding at the end of this study is that lowering gender inequality in HIV education and prevention programs is very important. However, the cultural factors that play a major role in the shaping of men's masculinity directly affect their sexual behaviors, thus needing to be examined much closer than it currently is.

Stephenson (2010), conveyed a relevance that is substantial to this body of knowledge. The author did well in displaying the data in graphs and tables. This is something that has not been done too much in a lot of the literature discussing the topic of interest. While the chosen methodology for the topic of interest is all qualitative, it was greatly appreciated to be able to see figures that coincided with what the author spoke of. In the beginning stages of this review, the need to incorporate males in discussing the topic of interest didn't seem very useful. That thought process has changed immensely. The need to bring men to the table when gender equity and empowerment is discussed is becoming more apparent through this literature review. Because Nigerian society is a patriarchal one, it is important that the men are taught in a way that equalizes the playing field for their female counterparts. They will in turn have better ways of dealing with women, allowing women to live up to their full potential, thus directly contributing to the positive development of society. Men need to be taught that masculinity is defined in many ways that they create for themselves. In doing so their though processes can change in respect to how they view and treat women.

The involvement of men in this discussion is becoming very apparent in this review. Two other resources addressed the issue of extramarital sex within the Nigerian population. They were both riveting and expressed very similar statements in findings and their discussions. There was no need to separate these two papers due to the heavy similarity in discussion. The comparison of these two papers stands to be an interesting and exciting one.

One paper was entitled 'Modern Marriage, Men's Extramarital Sex, and HIV Risk in Southeastern Nigeria'. According to the author Smith (2007), there is much to be done to combat this issue, and it is not going to be eradicated by a single session intervention of any kind. Smith (2007) conducted an interesting qualitative study by which he lived in Southeast Nigeria from June-December 2004. He conducted 20 case studies with married couples, 14 residing in Abia State and 4 residing in Imo State. In these case studies he conducted interviews, with the help of research assistants. Along with the case studies, this author conducted participant observation in both places, and performed key informant interviews at both settings. The methodology alone is what makes this paper so relevant. It is truly entrenched in qualitative methods that are essential in capturing a person's genuine attitude or behavior, that cannot always be quantified.

The second paper in entitled Attitudinal and Behavioral Factors Associated with Extramarital Sex Among Nigerian Men: Findings from A National Survey. The authors, Vu et al. (2011), unlike the first paper in first paper in this review, but similar to a previous one, conducted a quantitative study that again utilized the DHS 2008 survey. The authors utilized couples' data that totaled 8,371 married couples. The dependent

variable was "men's extramarital sex" within the past 12 months. That eliminated 432 men, leaving a sample number of 8,299 to be analyzed. The authors conducted a multivariate analysis with whole cases, and STATA software (version 11) to conduct the analysis for cases with missing information.

It was very interesting to concurrently analyze these two resources. The indeed captured valid in depth information all while using both quantitative and qualitative methods. What's most interesting is the information that both paper present are very similar. Smith (2007) found, through his interviews was that the extramarital sex was not always about the sex itself. It seemed to have more to do with societal status and perception of their manliness from their peers. In analysis, Smith suggests that there are three sociological factors that perpetuate and explains men's partaking in extramarital affairs. They are all gender based. These three factors are work-related migration, socioeconomic status, and involvement in predominately male peer groups that encourage or reward extramarital sexual relations (Smith, 2007). In one of the author's key informant interview during participatory observation, a man blatantly expressed that the Igbo culture is a polygamous culture; it is Christianity that introduced monogamy. The same person also expressed that men need to have multiple partners. It is this type attitude that intensifies the spread of HIV/AIDS. Smith (2007), based on his interviews and participatory observation, drew the conclusion that a one tiered approach to addressing this issue of women being victim to the consequences of their husband's infidelity will not suffice and would be unrealistic. The suggestion for a sensible approach would be to harness on the already existing need to be a "responsible man".

These responsibilities are what already cause some of the men to be more careful in their extramarital affairs. In regards to the women, this fostering of responsible men begets social and economic development for them. This way, women are not likely to engage in sexual relationships with married man due to poverty and inequality that comes with the gender disadvantage, this having them be empowered, and not a slave to traditional values that are not beneficial to them. Lastly, in order for all the other suggestions to fall in line, something needs to be done about the stigma around HIV and its link to immorality. This stops people from talking about, addressing it when it needs to be addressed, and most of all, protecting themselves from it. More advocates in the public health world need to join the cause, as it cannot be done within the studied community alone.

Vu et al. (2011) found similar results. The similar findings were that most of the extramarital risky behaviors were due to their attitudes towards it. The other three contributing characteristics that were not found in the Smith article were alcohol abuse, early sexual debut, and DV against their wives. Vu et al. also found that a woman who is educated was less likely to experience extramarital affairs. However, much like the Smith (2007) findings, social norms and attitude is very indicative of extramarital risky behaviors. Changing social norms would pose to be a huge challenge. These authors similarly suggest that the change has to come from addressing and challenging the current status of thinking. The accepted attitude and norm in the society is what perpetuates the risky behavior. Interventions need to focus on changing sexual behaviors and combating the social norm that perpetuates the behavior.

These two resources were excellent in content and in methodology. It was very interesting to review two articles that spoke to the same issue with the same population, tackled in two different ways, and still come to similar conclusions. While there were no direct conversations around women's empowerment, it was mentioned indirectly. This facet of Nigerian culture is important. It can be interwoven into any Nigerian woman's life. It's important that extramarital sex be a part of discussion of women's empowerment and their reproductive health. When an article opens with a statement that reads *"For women in Nigeria, as in many settings, simply being married can contribute to the risk of contracting HIV"* (Smith, 2007), it's a reality that needs to be known for women in the Nigerian community. There are many important staples in Nigerian culture, as observed by Smith (2007); marriage, death, childbirth, baptisms, and birthday. Marriage is the ultimate illustration of responsibility and masculinity. It was gives the man the right to do as he pleases, including extramarital affairs. But where does it leave the woman; most times, especially in Nigeria, it leaves her independent and powerless, even over her own body. Learning about the attitudes that have for so long been tolerated by Nigerian women in Nigeria is sure to migrate with immigrant Nigerian women. This is where the relevance of these articles comes in to play. This is entrenched in the culture. Addressing it for the topic of research will be difficult, but it must be a part of conversation in order to facilitate any change that will be beneficial in the movement to empower Nigerian women.

The Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) has been mentioned a few times throughout this review. Many researchers utilized the data from the survey as

secondary data that was used to support various research. The 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey is the most up to date of this survey. It was designed to provide data for monitoring the population and health situation in Nigeria. The 2008 NDHS is the fourth of its one that has been conducted in Nigeria.

The relevance of including this resource is essential to the broader perspective of health matters in Nigeria. Researchers utilized this data due to its robust collection of information. The survey provides the most recent information on subject matters such as fertility, family planning, childhood mortality, nutrition, maternal and child health, domestic violence, and HIV/AIDS-related knowledge and attitudes.

More than 34,000 households participated in this survey. This included 33,385 women age 15–49 and in half of the households, 15,486 men age 15–59. This represents a response rate of 98% for households, 97% for women, and 93% for men. This sample provides estimates for Nigeria as a whole, for urban and rural areas, for the 6 zones, and the 36 states, plus the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (National Population Council (NPC) & IFC Macro, 2009).

The most relative key findings area in this survey was that of women's empowerment and health. It was interesting to see that that even during a survey of such great proportions, there was room to have a discussion about empowerment and its influence on health, specifically reproductive health. Under the guise of women's empowerment was employment, participation indecision-making, empowerment and health, and attitudes towards wife beating and refusing sex. There was subsequent

discussion around female genital mutilation (FGM). FGM is most certainly a staple in the Nigerian culture and heavily influences sexual attitude and behaviors.

There is a plethora of facets that is annexed to a woman's status. They include financial independence, ability of decision making, refusal of traditional gender role, marriage and violence just to name a few. As reflected in the 2008 NDHS, 71% of currently married women are employed, compared to 99% of currently married men. As mentioned in previous studies, Nigerian women don't really have much of say and are very restricted when it comes to decision making authority in their respective homes. The decision making authority for the woman is so limited that only 38% of women stated that they assist indecision making in the home in respect to purchases and family issues. Only about half of the women surveyed have full authority in decision making on their own health. As is reflected in the ecological systems theory, every facet of a woman's life affects another. When a woman is allowed to make decisions in the home, it is found that family planning is put into play, rather than ignorantly ignoring it. The more empowered women are forward thinking and typically want fewer children, and are more prone to access pre-natal, delivery, and post-natal care. Two in five women and one in three men agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife for specific reasons. An assumption would be that these ideologies do not leave Nigerian women as they migrate to the United States. The same women raise female children with the same ideologies. While there is American influence in how these women function on a day to day basis, the core values remain the same.

A decade ago, at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, representatives from 179 countries, including the United States, agreed that reproductive rights are human rights (Germain and Kidwell, 2005). Many authors have discussed women's rights, equity, and political equity. These authors capture the need to address reproductive health and rights be viewed as any other rights entitled to any human being. It is a powerful statement in itself, and the discussions that follow in this paper are very informative.

The ICPD interestingly enough, linked poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation and political instability to the insecurity of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. It has been mentioned that one must provide the tools for women to be empowered, thus taking control over each aspect of their lives including reproductive health. This was a very unique way of framing this issue, as it has not been seen in the literature this way. This theory however, differs and is interesting.

Global initiatives in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, such as the UN's Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been influential in the reproductive health discussion. Out of those eight goals, one very important goal is Goal 3. MDG 3 is to promote gender equality and empower women. That goal in itself is one that, as research suggests, would be beneficial to national infrastructure and growth. This growth is in respect to the individual and their respective communities at large. The dedication is for this goal to be reached by 2015. While there is much research to be conducted to determine if this goal is close to being reached, what

is most important is that there is conversation around the need to empower women. While this MDG does not spell out reproductive rights, it is embedded in it.

The authors ask: What must happen in the next 10 years to secure sexual and reproductive health and rights for all? What should our priorities be? Coincidentally, the authors used Nigeria as the example of where there has been positive impact. The ICPD put a program in place called Girl's Power Initiative (GPI). It was an internationally recognized success. The program taught information about reproductive health and rights. By providing young girls with this knowledge, the program in turn helped the girls develop the skills needed to protect themselves, speak up for themselves, and positively influence attitudes and behavior. The program interjects at to avoid early marriage, something that seems to immediately seize a woman's voice and power almost immediately. The girls also take the information they have learned and share it with their female family members, and anyone they can share it with for that matter. The success of this program transcended expectations. This program has a reach of 25,000 through 28 participating educational institutions. The government has come on board by adopting a sexual education curriculum and similar organizations are assisting in implementing it.

At the end of the discussion in this paper the authors suggest that while there has been progress, there is more to be done. The suggestion is that policy makers need to be at the table now more than ever to be able to make substantial progress. The world of public health needs to be an alternative approach to discussing the widespread reproductive health problems, violations of sexual and reproductive rights and the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Germain & Kidwell, 2005). The community must be involved. In

those communities, important contributors such as HIV/AIDS activists, women's health advocates, youth leaders, human rights activists and the reproductive health experts must be included in conversation. Coalitions must be built to combat the issue. There is power in numbers, and when organizations come together to fight one cause, the effect could be monumental. As stated by Germain and Kidwell "The payoff will be huge—saving millions of lives, both now and in generations to come" (add page number here).

That last statement is why public health exists. The work being done now is to save women now and the future. This paper's relevance is unprecedented. While it was not a study that utilized any methodology, it was informative paper that exudes the "unfinished business" of reproductive health rights for women. As discussed without end in this review is that of facets of a woman's empowerment. Reproductive rights are a huge part of who a woman is. Empowering her to make informed decisions around reproductive health is something that should not be taking lightly. Women are the vessels of the future. A healthy and informed woman will more than likely birth healthy informed children, thus perpetuating what these authors have suggested. The change must start somewhere. The earlier the changes start, the better chance future generations will have when it comes to this issue.

## Summary and Conclusions

The major themes in the literature are spelled out in a concise manner. The one constant is that there is a need to have conversation around empowering women, especially Nigerian women. Empowering women will only create a better society for us all. Another constant is the subject matter of Nigerian women, without a doubt being

second class citizens. Their role in the home, work, education, political arena, and health is at the governing of their male counterparts.

As of now it is known that there is much to be done in regards to the subject matter. There have been several studies where data has been collected from Nigerian women that live in Nigeria. There is yet to be discussion around the immigrant and first-generation Nigerian women that now reside in the United States. The research suggests that Nigerian women that live in Nigeria are unfortunately subject to the ways of the land. Whereas women that live in the United States have freedoms that are unknown in Nigeria. According to the research, that does not mean that they are any more entitled to being empowered parse. Women's empowerment conversations are still taking place on international levels, not excluding the United States.

As stated above, there is a need to discuss Nigerian women's empowerment. There is an even larger need to have those discussions here in the United States. The literature does well in capturing data on women in different areas in Nigeria. However, at no point of this research have there has been a study presented that addressed reproductive health, empowerment, and the Nigerian woman in the United States. It is a clear gap in the literature, and one that will be hard to fill. The great American dream is why most people migrate to the US. The knowledge this study will provide will be beneficial for the women and social/health care providers. Women will gain a wealth of knowledge around Nigerian culture, empowerment, reproductive health, and how it relates to Nigerian women. It will be a catalyst for more research and programs that will aid in women's growth in many facets that have been discussed. Health care providers

will have access to a great amount of knowledge that will aid in better delivery of health services. Education and health literacy may be another research topic to delve into. Nonetheless, understandings of different cultures are important in any human services field. In regards to reproductive health, providers of health care would better know how to address reproductive health concerns of a Nigerian woman. This will make all visits to her health care provider a culturally appropriate and comfortable one.

The phenomenon of empowerment status directly correlates to other facets of a Nigerian woman's life, especially her reproductive health. The intention is to provide in-depth information directly from the study population. This will provide sufficient evidence of the need to have these important discussions. Chapter 3 will delve into the methodology that brought all of these important ideas together, providing a cohesive body of work.

Chapter 3: Research Method

**Introduction**

Nigeria is one of the most populated countries in Africa. At the same time, they migrate heavily, and are vital members of society in the United States. In 2009, the top five countries of origin for the 1.5 million African immigrants in the United States were Nigeria (209,908, or 14.1% of all African immigrants), Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, and Kenya. No individually reported country accounted for more than 14.1% of the African immigrant population (McCabe, 2011).

In Africa, according to the literature review, women are grossly underrepresented in many arenas. This means little or no decision making power is yielded to them. Not much seems to change for Nigerian wo the rich culture and traditional values of Nigerian people to the phenomena men due to the male dominant society. Women's empowerment and societal status is an intriguing phenomena that is very important to discuss, especially in these progressive times. Speaking to individuals about the phenomena of women as the subservient and weaker sex, women's status, and the effect of different facets of their lives, specifically reproductive health, were key in looking at the phenomena of Nigerian women's empowerment.

The existing research suggests the need for researching Nigerian women in the United States. There is strong data collected from Nigerian women in Nigeria, which may not always be applicable to Nigerian women living in the US. It is essential that we examine people within different cultures here in the US, thus leaving one with an enhanced understanding of how to better cohabit with one another. This study is an

examination of empowerment and status influences of both immigrants and first-generation Nigerian women. This research anticipates providing information (for Nigerian women specifically) that would provide a better understanding of themselves in relation to taking more interest in their reproductive health. These women should be able to independently examine their overall willingness to access reproductive healthcare services without a feeling dependency on anyone but themsleves. It is also anticipated that this research will help their male counterparts have a better understanding of how to function on equal levels in relation to promoting gender equality. In addition, the results of this study will assist providers on how to better deliver services when a person from the study population presents to them for either medical or social services.

In this chapter, there is extensive discussion on the research design and rationale. The research questions will be re-examined, as well as the research tradition phenomenon and concepts

## Research Design and Rationale

The research questions for this study are essential in this chapter. In order to thoroughly expound on the methodology, a reiteration of the guiding questions is key. They are as follows:

GQ1: Does a Nigerian woman's status and level of empowerment influence her access to reproductive health services and/or knowledge?

GQ2: How do traditional Nigerian beliefs affect Nigerian women's status?

GQ3: How do the attitudes around traditional beliefs relate to access to reproductive health services and/or knowledge?

**Guiding Questions' Theories**

Nigerian women's status level and level of empowerment does influence their access to reproductive health services to a great extent. It is believed that women who are educated have an opportunity to be exposed and makes them more knowledgeable than their unexposed counterparts.

Traditional Nigerian beliefs had impartial influence on immigrant and first-generation Nigerian women living in United States status' level. As theorized for the initial research question, the women who are educated, employed, and are liberal thinkers will more than likely not allow traditional beliefs hinder them from furthering themselves. However, the research suggests that as educated and empowered as women are, tradition and culture sometimes trumps the most correct and logical life choices.

As a researcher, one must understand that the body of knowledge the world uses to reason and analyze phenomena is always changing. There is always a place to improve upon, refine, and add to the knowledge in your discipline. Research design is the "blueprint" that enables the investigator to come up with solutions to these problems and guides him or her in the various stages of research. Qualitative methods would be most suitable for studies that speak to gathering information that is as in depth and intimate where numbers alone will not satisfy the burning question that only be captured through direct intimate contact with the research subjects. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research begins first with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into a social problem

affecting individuals of specific populations. This study will provide a thorough examination of a qualitative plan using a phenomenological approach.

According to Patton (2002), phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of our everyday experiences. Phenomenology has roots in philosophy, and was first used by a German philosopher by the name of Edmund H. Husserl (1859-1938). Alfred Shutz (1899-1959) was essential in applying phenomenology heavily in social science. Other important contributors to phenomenology were, Merleau-Ponty, Whitehead, Giorgi, and Zaner.

Through the forward thinking of other contributors, Phenomenology has evolved to exist in various formats. They are transcendental phenomenology, Existential phenomenology, and Hermeneutical phenomenology. The difference between them is extent of focus. The foci vary from crucial meanings of an individual's experience, the social construct of group reality, the language, and the structure of communication (Schwandt, 2001). Husserl's original idea of phenomenology is that we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness (Patton, 2002).

Phenomenology commences with an analysis of the *natural attitude*. It says that human beings know the world through their experience. And so that theoretical framework directs one to study the world through the way people attach meaning to the world (Laureate Education, 2008). Language, culture, and common sense are experienced in the natural attitude as objective features of an external world that are learned by actors in the course of their lives. Creswell (2009) suggests that the type of problem best suited

for this form of research is one in which it s important to understand several individual's shared experiences of a phenomenon.

Women's empowerment and societal status is an intriguing phenomena worthy of discussion in these progressive times. Add the rich culture and traditional values of Nigerian people to the phenomena, and that is where the core of this research begins. The opportunity to speak to individuals around the phenomena of women being the subservient and weaker sex, their statuses, and the effect of different facets of their lives, specifically reproductive health will be key in looking at the phenomena of Nigerian women's empowerment.

According to the literature review, the research tradition is mixed. Most are qualitative in nature, and a few were solely quantitative. Creswell (2009) states that theory is an interrelated set of constructs (variables) formed into propositions, or hypothesis, that specifies the relationship among variables. A theory might appear in a research study as an argument, a discussion, or a rationale, and it helps to explain) or predict) phenomena that occur in the world. Traditionally in this research, ecological theories were used in analysis. It was a prominent fixture in the literature directly and indirectly.

Ecological theories and models present health as an interaction between a person and their ecosystem or social environment. This includes his or her family, culture, community, and anything else in their physical environment. The interaction between behavior and one's environment can directly affect health and illness. There is said to be

a reciprocal effect of people on their environment, and vice versa (Glanz & Rhimer, 2005).

The use of this theory in this research is critical in understanding the effects of the many facets of one's environment, which in this case, are all factors that encompass empowerment. The comprehension of the individual functioning in an environment that has a direct effect on his or her behaviors is essential in such a study.

The advantage of using a theory such as this is that from a health promotion standpoint, strategies that are successful at this level have a higher capability to benefit a large number of people, as opposed to an individual.

The health promotion theory being utilized to conduct this study is the Ecological Systems Theory. In this theory, the principal influences are intercultural, community-level, organizational-level, and interpersonal/individual. This theory suggests that the person, his or her community, their organization and their culture are like nested spheres, much like Russian stack dolls. Actions in one sphere can have an effect on another sphere (Rainberger, 2014). The use of this theory in this research is critical in understanding the effects of the many facets of one's environment, which in this case, are all factors that encompass empowerment. The comprehension of the individual functioning in an environment that has a direct effect on his or her behaviors is essential in such a study.

The advantage of using a theory such as this is that from a health promotion standpoint, strategies that are successful at this level have a higher capability to benefit a large number of people, as opposed to an individual.

## Role of the Researcher

It is very important that as a researcher, the roles are clearly defined. The method of collecting data was through the use of semi-structured interviews. All the interviews will be done in person. With that being said, the role of the observer will be expanded upon.

As the observer, the researcher observed participants' body language, tone of voice, inflections, and overall mannerisms. A voice recorder was used to allow for minor note taking and close observing of the person being interviewed. Because these were one on one interviews, the researcher did not play a role of a participant. The interview took place in secluded settings that was conducive to the facilitation of the interview.

All relationships with the participants in this study were purely professional. No participant is a subordinate or supervisor of the researcher. The researcher biases did exist due to selection of about half of the sample. This bias was being managed by utilizing two types of sampling which is purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling can be very useful for situations where a targeted sample needs to be reached quickly. With a purposive sample, one is likely to get the sought after opinions of your target population (Trochim, 2006). The expected sample size was 10. The sample size ended up being 9. I recruited 5 women meeting the criteria, then used snowball sampling to recruit the other 4 women, to eliminate some bias. Snowball sampling in simple terms, is getting a contact from each person that has been interviewed (Patton, 2002). The bias was not eliminated entirely, but the use of these two sampling methods helped to eliminate some of it.

**Methodology**

**Participant Selection Logic**

The population being studied is that of Nigerian women, immigrant and first-generation to be exact. An immigrant is defined as a woman who was born in Nigeria and migrated at some point to the United States to live. A first-generation Nigerian woman, as it pertains to this study, is defined as a woman who was born and raised in the United States by Nigerian born parents. The women were 25-50 years of age. The only other determining variable is their relationship status, which is being married. Other information was being gathered through the use of observation and inquiry through in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

As stated earlier in respect to addressing bias, two types of sampling were used. Purposive and snowball sampling will be best for this study. Initially, the researcher only intended to utilize purposive sampling. After doing some research, it was discovered that purposive sampling is also known as a judgmental sample. In short, it is a sample that is one that is chosen based on the familiarity of a population and the purpose of the study. The subjects were selected because of some specific attributes (Babbie, 2001). This method of sampling proved to be the easiest way to gain a sample for this type of research. The women (five) were familiar with the researcher in one way or another. According to Babbie (2001) purposive sampling can be valuable for circumstances where a targeted population needs to be reached fairly quickly and where sampling for proportionality is not the focal point. However, to eliminate bias in the sample selection, snowball sampling was also used. Typically, snowball sampling is used when members

of the target population may be difficult to locate Babbie (2001). This sampling method

requires the current participant to refer another participant for the study, as opposed to

recruiting them. While there is not much difficulty in finding members of the study

population, the logic behind utilizing this method was to help alleviate some bias. I was

the one to recruit about half of the participants of the study, while the participants would

be essential in recruiting the remainder of the sample.

The women in this study had to meet only minimal criteria. Those criteria were as

follows: being between 25 and 50 years old, an immigrant or first-generation Nigerian

woman, and married. I wanted to leave the criterion at the bare minimum so that other

facets could be compared, such as what women deem makes them empowered. Based on

research it may be fair to make the assumption that education, employment, and overall

decision making in the household equals empowerment. However, it may be discovered

that the idea of empowerment is different for everyone.

The participants did not need to undergo screening of any sort due to the method

of sampling. The researcher hand selected the initial participants based on personal

knowledge of them meeting the criteria. The criteria were explained to the participants as

they made recommendations for other participants via the snowball sampling.

There were 9 participants in this study. According to Patton (2002), how valid,

meaningful, and insightful a qualitative study is not dependent on a large sample size.

The robustness of the information that is collected is most important. In light of that

realization and lectures attended through Walden, keeping the sample size small was

important to make sure the work to be done doesn't become entirely too tasking to

complete the dissertation process. According to the Walden University lecture, a rule of thumb for a qualitative study utilizing a phenomenological approach, should have a sample size less than or equal to 10 (Laureate Education, Inc., 2008). The research and readings that were reviewed prior were essential tools in attaining a sample size that would be suitable for the study and study design. The participants who were recruited through purposive sampling were personally contacted by the researcher either face-to-face or any other means of communication. At this time, the study was explained to the prospective participant. Upon agreeing to participate, the researcher then asked her to think of someone they could recruit within the criteria of the study.

According to Mason (2013), saturation is the point at which no new information and themes are found in the data that has been collected. The sample is homogeneous, and a great deal of data will be collected. There was not any major saturation. There were some common themes. Each person came with a different story, and those stories all come with a uniqueness of their own that were not be affected by saturation.

**Instrumentation**

The data collection instruments for this study was an interview question sheet, an audio recorder. There were no other artifacts or archived data that were utilized in collecting data. The interview question sheet was researcher produced. It was developed with the use of information gained through research. The data collection instruments were sufficient in capturing the information.

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**Researcher-developed instruments**

The most important instrument that was used to capture pertinent information were the interview questions. While the researcher had a handle on professionalism and conduct, the questions must adequately garner responses that will produce information-rich answers. The interview sought to address the phenomenon of empowerment within Nigerian women. Two resources were prominent in researching for instrument development: Biswas (1999) and Kvale (1996). Biswas (1999) developed 11 indicators of women's empowerment: mobility, decision making power, autonomy, economic security, freedom from domination by the family, political and legal awareness, participation in public protests and political campaign, contribution to family expenditure or income, reproductive right, exposure to information, and participation in development programs. These 11 indicators were essential in developing the right format for the questions. Kvale (1996) recommended that, for a good qualitative interview, one should ask nine types of questions:

*Introducing questions*-are questions that ask for the origination of interest of through around the subject matter.

*Follow-up questions* serve as a means to get the interviewee to give more detailed versions of their answers.

*Probing questions* are also a way to get more in-depth answers from the direct questions.

*Specifying questions* ask specific questions about actions and feelings.

*Direct questions* are direct, and usually will garner one or two sentence responses. These questions should be asked closer to the end of the interview so that it does not sway the path of the interview into a pace that is unintended.

*Indirect questions-* These questions are follow-up questions that are asked to gain a person's view on the subject matter.

*Structuring questions-* A structuring question helps to steer the interview in the direction intended by the interviewer.

*Silence-* Silence is essential in allowing the interviewee time to process their thoughts and give augmented answers.

*Interpreting questions-*These questions ask more in-depth questions based on an answer that was given.

Kvale also suggested that qualitative interviews should be designed to asked questions about values, beliefs, behavior, formal and informal roles, relationships, emotions (of the interviewee and maybe others). The last and most important is to allow the interviewee to tell their stories. Content validity was established by having a small group of experts and peers review the questions. By doing this, ambiguity was reduced and questions that seem leading can be eliminated. Poignant and stressing questions can also be eliminated if found.

**Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Data was collected directly from the interviewee through answers given during the interview. The researcher collected this data via interviews that was recorded. There was only audio data that was collected for the purpose of this research. The data was

collected only during the interview period. The interviews were designed to be up to an hour long. The frequency of the data collection was the frequency of the interviews themselves, which was one at a time, at specifically scheduled times. Data was recorded by hand through note taking and audio recorder. The protocol for exiting the study was as follows:

The researcher extended her gratitude for the participant's willingness to participate in the study.

The researcher then asked the participant if she has any questions she would like to ask about the interview process or the study itself.

The researcher extended her contact information to the interviewee in case any concerns at any point after the interview.

The researcher made sure all recording devices functioned accordingly, and all documentation of the interview were organized before leaving the interview site.

There was no reason to follow up other than to clarify something that was not clear audio wise in the recorded information. There was a member-check in order to share significant findings from the interviews. This allowed the opportunity to validate the findings, but as stated earlier, lend clarification on certain points. The goal, however, was to gain all the information needed, and possibly missed during the set time of the interview.

**Data Analysis Plan**

Data management is a very important facet of organizing this research. Descriptive coding will be used to organize the information collected from the

interviews. Gibbs and Taylor (2005) suggest about descriptive coding, "it essentially forms a summary description of what is in the transcript or text" (para. 16).

The use of the software package NVivo was very good with managing the data. NVivo allows one to track ideas and steps with ease. It allows the use of annotations to jot down thoughts, and create memos to capture detailed observations or use links to 'glue' items with similar themes together (QSR International, 2011). Features that would be very useful for coding and organizing this data are: the importing of the audio into several designs, presenting/formatting codes, and creating categorical themes within the data. In coding the interview information, the researcher utilized the nodes application. This was done by creating the nodes first, then inserting the statements that work with each node to see what themes would be created.

While the NVivo software was an excellent tool, which at certain points become tedious given the time constraints. The researcher was at an intermediate level with the software and using for analysis was still slightly cumbersome. Because of this a second analysis tool was used which was the traditional Excel spreadsheets and analysis tools. Both tools played its roles in data analysis

**Issues of Trustworthiness**

According to Creswell (2007), there are several ways to address credibility or internal validity. It would be fair to say while there was a great deal of recommendations, only several were applicable to this research. They are prolonged contact, member check, and peer reviews. Establishing prolonged contact with the participants is essential because it will result in a good rapport with the researcher and participant. That, in turn,

produced a great deal of data through the numerous conversations that would take place on and off the record. This leads into member-checks. It is understood that member-checks can take place at any point during the study. Making sure it takes place at the end of the interview, as well as after data is analyzed is important to establish and confirm the credibility of the data that has been gathered. Peer reviews are important in establishing credibility as well. A peer debriefing during the design of the instruments and data analysis was essential in making sure that the organizing of the information being gathered and shared is of a quality that meets academic good standards.

Transferability is the ability to generalize the findings from the research to other to other circumstances and research. In order to address transferability, the documentation of all the data analyses is an appendix to this document. All data analysis documentation is available upon request. Access to such information creates the opportunity for other researchers to either duplicate the study or utilize it in drawing conclusions for other research. Also, the use of purposive sampling adds to transferability. Through use of purposive sampling instead of random sampling, the range of homogenous and specific information was capitalized on.

In this analysis of trustworthiness, dependability was addressed and assessed using the same mechanisms that were used to establish credibility. Credibility speaks to internal validity. If something is not valid, the fair assumption would be that it is also not dependable. The researcher did not see it as compulsory to demonstrate dependability separately, considering it has already been indirectly addressed via credibility. The

techniques would be the same. Instead, dependability and confirmability will be established simultaneously.

According to Lincoln and Guba, (1985), an effective way to establish dependability and conformability, is through a meticulous inquiry audit. The auditor is a professional who is knowledgeable of qualitative data collection, and can critically review all of the documentation that took place throughout the study. These documents include the interview questions, interview notes and data analysis documents. A good audit also includes the review of the actual findings, interpretation of those findings, and suggestions that were made. The auditor can then attest that that the findings are sustained by the collected data and research. This review helps to establish confirmability. Documentation of proof of the auditor's attesting to the confirmability of this study is also an appendix to this document.

**Ethical Procedure**

The agreements to gain access to participants were in the form of signed consent forms by each participant. All of the actual documents were included in the IRB application for ethical review and approval. IRB approvals that were needed were obtained with the approval number of 10-15-15-0202289. The IRB approval number is valid until October 14th, 2016. There were no ethical concerns of the materials being used in this study as well as the means or recruitment Data is not anonymous, but it is confidential. The data were not reproduced in any way for dissemination to anyone. Participant's physical identities were not shared with anyone. The researcher alone has

access to the data, which is in safe keeping in the home office of the researcher. The

researcher will keep the data for 5 years, thereafter it will be destroyed.

**Summary**

According to Patton (2002), in qualitative interviewing, the interviewee needs to

become actively engaged in providing descriptive information as soon as possible,

instead of becoming accustomed to giving short and succinct responses, especially in

response to unintended questions. The interviewer must be keen to the responses, as well

of lack of response to questions in order to draw valid conclusions. The analysis of the

robust information collected during the course of the interview revealed a great deal in

relation to the research questions. Coding of this data is essential to analysis and

interpretation of qualitative research. Unlike quantitative research, there is more detailed

activity that goes into coding because there are no numbers or mathematical calculations

to tell the story.

The subject of female empowerment and its' influence on other aspect of life will

aid in making sure more avenues are provided for this to take place. Professor Sen is a

professor of economics and philosophy at Harvard University. He believes that countries

that create vast opportunities for their women and girls in the realm of education and

work have greatly achieved more affluence as well as decreasing child mortality and

increasing social progress for everyone (Byanyima, 2012). This idea clearly concurs with

the fact that empowering women is vital for social growth, no matter what the place of

origin. Taking the phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to identify the

subject of human experience and develop a composite description of the essence of the

experience for all of the individuals (Creswell, 2009). This phenomena were explored and

a plethora of information was collected. Over the course of Chapter 4, the findings will

be throughly explained and analyzed.

Chapter 4: Results

**Introduction**

The literature review suggests the need for researching Nigerian women in the United States. It is essential that people within different cultures are examined here in the United States, thus leaving one with a better understanding of how to better cohabit with one another. This study is an examination of culture, empowerment, and status influences of both immigrants and first-generation Nigerian women on reproductive health knowledge. This research anticipates providing information (for Nigerian women specifically) that would provide a better understanding of themselves in relation to taking more interest in their reproductive health. These women should be able to independently examine their overall willingness to access reproductive healthcare services and information without a feeling of dependency on anyone. In addition, the results of this study are expected to help providers better deliver services when a person from the study population presents to them for either medical or social services.

This study raised three main questions:

1. Does a Nigerian woman's status and level of empowerment influence her access to reproductive health services and/or knowledge?

2. How do traditional Nigerian beliefs affect Nigerian women's status level, and what does it mean in terms of access to reproductive health services and/or knowledge?

3. How do the attitudes around traditional beliefs relate to access to reproductive health services and/or knowledge?

This chapter will present the results of this study. There will be in depth discussion on the setting, demographics of the participants, the data collection/analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness.

## Setting

Seven of the nine interviews took place in the participant's home in a quiet space. One was conducted in the researcher's home office, and another was conducted in a neutral office space.

## Data Collection

I interviewed nine participants for 20–60 minutes using the same data collection tool: a series of specific questions. There were some follow up questions that were asked if the participant did not divulge enough information through a specific question. Those "follow-up" or "probe questions" were used as needed.

One woman who was contacted to participate decided she did not feel comfortable with being recorded. She did, however, speak to me off the record and wanted to have a more informal conversation about the study as opposed to the actual interview. She did not formally participate in the study.

The data was recorded using a USB mass storage that included a recording function. The responses were recorded as they were spoken and stored on the device as an audio file.

## Data Analysis

The process used to move inductively from coded units to larger representations started with audio data collection. All nine participants were interviewed individually and

their voices alone we recorded; thereafter, the audio was transcribed into text documents.

During transcription, recollection of body language, pitch, and overall tone were noted.

The text was organized using two methods: the traditional Excel spreadsheet, and the use

of NVivo software. Both methods aided in coding, developing categories and themes that

would support the theories of this study.

The specific codes for the data were: residency status, age, education, career,

length of marriage, length of time in United States (where applicable), career, future

aspirations, empowering moment, non-empowering moment, role in household,

knowledge rating on reproductive health, culture's influence on reproductive health

access, cultures influence on conversations with spouse (about reproductive health), and

anecdotal words of advice for growing Nigerian girls.

Three main categories came from the coding. 'Status' includes their residency

statuses, age, education, career, and role in household. Another category that emerged

was 'Cultural Insight'. This category included their take on empowerment,

nonempowerment, and cultural influences. The last main category that emerged was

culture and reproductive health. This category included conversations around knowledge

base, influence of culture on accessing services or information, comfort levels, and

communication with spouses.

The main themes that emerged from the data are these Nigerian women,

regardless of age or residency status were well aware of the glaring hindrances culture

creates for women. They value education and faith as means of their getting ahead in

different facets of their lives. This is seen through the anecdotal messages. The last

question of the interview was for the women to leave a message behind you young

Nigerian girls who are still growing up. This will be discussed more in depth in the

results section.

The discrepant case which was the informal interview that was not recorded was

indirectly factored into the analysis. This was done by taking her relevant statements

about women's empowerment and applying it to the themes where it fit. Her statements

were relevant to discussions around education and using it to eliminate ignorance within

the culture.

## Evidence of Trustworthiness

There are several ways to address credibility. They methods that were applicable

to this research were prolonged contact, member check, and peer reviews. Establishing

prolonged contact with the participants was essential because it resulted a good rapport

between the researcher and participant. That, in turn, produced a great deal of data

collected through interview as well as the conversations took place off the record. All

recruited participants firstly received an e-mail with the consent form and letter on

invitation. Participants then had the opportunity to speak with the researcher in order to

establish comfort, build rapport, and schedule the in-person interview. This lead into

member-checks. It is understood that member-checks can take place at any point during

the study. Member-checks for this study took place approximately two weeks after the

interviews were completed. All participants received a personal e-mail to thank them for

participation and allowing additional opportunities to ask any questions about the study.

Approximately one week after (at the point of transcription), participants were called to

verify various information as well as gain additional information that was overlooked

during the interview. Making sure it took place at the end of the interview, as well as

after data was analyzed was important to establish and confirm the credibility of the data

that had been gathered. Peer reviews are important in establishing credibility as well. A

peer debriefing during the design of the instruments and data analysis was essential in

making sure that the organizing of the information being gathered and shared is of a

quality that meets academic good standards.

Transferability is the ability to generalize the findings from the research to other

to other circumstances and research. In order to address transferability, the

documentation of all the data analyses will be an appendix to this document in chart

form. All the information that has been coded, grouped, and categorized will be provided

in a format that can be used for general purposes. The data collection tool will also be an

appendix to this document. All data analysis documentation can be made available upon

request. Access to such information will create the opportunity for other researchers to

either duplicate the study or utilize it in drawing conclusions for other research. Also, the

use of purposive sampling added to transferability. Through use of purposive sampling

instead of random sampling, the range of homogenous and specific information was

capitalized on.

In this analysis of trustworthiness, dependability was addressed and assessed

using the same mechanisms that were used to establish credibility. Credibility speaks to

internal validity. If something is not valid, the fair assumption would be that it is also not

dependable. The researcher did not see it as compulsory to demonstrate dependability

separately, considering it has already been indirectly addressed via credibility. The techniques would be the same. Instead, dependability and confirmability were established simultaneously.

According to Lincoln and Guba, (1985), an effective way to establish dependability and conformability, is through a meticulous inquiry audit. The auditor is a professional who is knowledgeable of qualitative data collection, and can critically review all of the documentation that took place throughout the study. Dr. Langley (Walden University faculty) critically reviewed the data collection tool, and offered advice on how to improve it in order to capture the information needed to gain necessary information. She also reviewed the data in its' state of analysis. Dr. Langley (the auditor) attested that that the findings are sustained by the collected data and research. This review thus established confirmability. Documentation of proof of the auditor's attesting to the confirmability of this study is an appendix to this document.

## Results

### Demographics

The nine participants of this study were all Nigerian women. Five were immigrants and four were first-generation Nigerians. All of the women were married and between the ages of 25 and 50. Most of them had children that they there were caring for and did not have options for childcare at the time of the interview. However, it did not hinder the collection of the data as they were excited to participate, and willing to cooperate in any way to make the interview work.

There were many common attributes that were found during the interviews, but the characteristics listed are the ones relevant to participant selection for the study. The women were all educated, employed and contributed to the sustainability of their families. All of the women were recruited from the Washington DC-Maryland-Virginia area of the United States.

The main themes that emerged from the data are these Nigerian women, regardless of age or, residency status was the awareness of the glaring hindrances culture creates for women. They valued education and faith as means of their getting ahead in different facets of their lives. This is first seen through the anecdotal messages. The last question of the interview was for the women to leave a message behind young Nigerian girls who are still growing up. The responses to this question are summarized in the pie graph below.
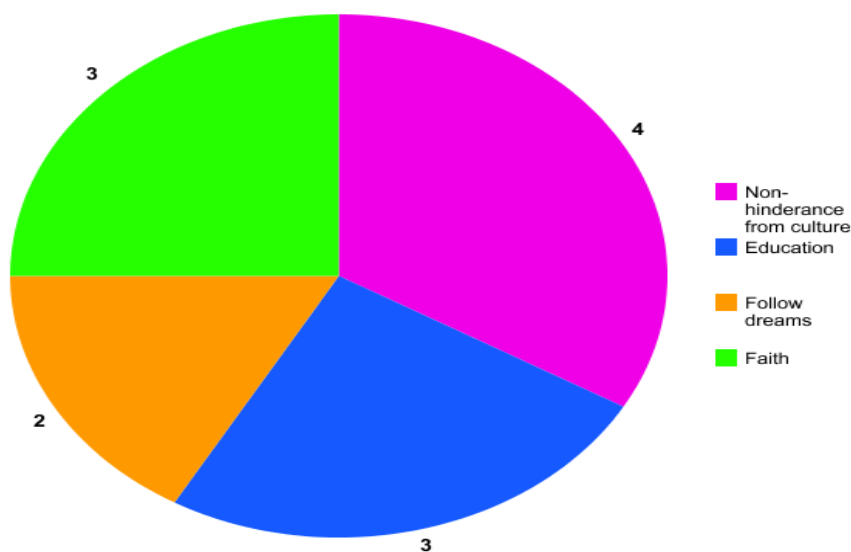
*Figure 1*. Main themes drawn from the anecdotal question.

Their responses were:

"Man. Follow your dreams. Follow your heart. Unfortunately, there is a lot of pressure on young NIGERIAN women young Nigerian women in particular to be to go in a certain skill with the medical field law and engineering. A lot of people, they may not necessarily want to pursue those endeavors. We truly have a beautiful talent on the inside of them. And they may want to drop out of school. They may want to pursue. Entertainment or be an artist or whatever the case may be. I'm just huge on dreams in the fulfillment of dreams, so I would definitely tell them pursue your dreams follow your heart. And let God guide you. Because with him there's no failure. He orders your steps people orders the steps of the writers thought follow your dream and give it your all. Because you only got one life to live. Right…YOLO: (B.E.)"

"What I'll say is that they should take it upon themselves to learn, educate themselves about things and not necessarily allow the culture to solely like determine how they're going to live their life. Because sometimes Nigerian culture and tradition sometimes it is not – some of the things that they have you-- or they believe, what they have you believe is not based on any kind of science of fact on anything. So I think that definitely people should read up-- it's not everything that I take in my culture, there's some things that I value from my culture. So it is not like I'm totally against Nigerian culture and tradition. There are certain things that I hold to heart and I also intend to pass on to my children.

But there are certain things, I pick and choose what I want. And that's what being an adult, I think that Nigerian girls should just educate themselves and just not limit themselves, don't let what people say, limit you-- if you want to be an engineer, be an engineer, if you want to be-- whatever it is, if it is a career that, it is mostly men that dominate in that field and that's what you want to do? Then go ahead and do it. I just feel like they should just be themselves and explore and don't be afraid to do your research about whatever it is, be a productive health, be a career path, whatever it is and not let the culture. Not just Nigerian culture, American has a culture too, just do what's best for you: (G.M.)."

"Don't let anyone tell you, you can't do something you want to do. But remember at the end of the day it is your life to live and so as much as your parents are going to try to guide you in a certain way when there is no one left its you and if you're no happy doing want you want to do then that's not good so consider your feelings as well as the thoughts of others but do what makes you happy: (B.F.)."

"Be who you are, embrace change because it is what a lot of, we Nigerians, especially the immigrants, we really-- we are lacking. Because we're so-- what do you call it-- what's the word-- we're so like one dimensional with our thoughts because that's what we've learned and try to learn other people's culture. Because sometimes also what we have thought also is ours is better, ours is the best, there is this not and it is a 100% wrong because once you learn other people's culture and learn how they interact or not interact. Just look at the

difference between yours, that makes you appreciate life in general and I think

that's what a lot of-- that's the honest truth. A lot of Nigerian immigrants-- Yes,

immigrants lack, just because they instill it in us, "Well, you can't do this, you

shouldn't do that." So I think those are the two things that would be my advice to

Nigerian immigrants: (E.O.)."

"Yes, be yourself. Honestly be a 100% yourself and speak out. Don't try

to hide behind the culture. And know I guess, know the people that you're dealing

with. If you know what works for you and your situation and just go with it, but

be yourself first and foremost: (R.I.)."

"I think I would say, you have a right to be respected, your body and your

voice, you have a right to be respected and you being respectful of others, does

not mean that you now have to-- there's a difference between like humility and

totally like losing your voice. There's a difference. And I think too often, respect

and humility are equated with just being silent. [laughs] And I would want them

to know that, there is a respectful way to make whether-- to make your opinions

known and to still also value yourself and value men, like it is not about

necessarily. Because there are obviously there are men who-- who even if they

don't understand, want to understand and want to do the best thing for their wife

or their partner. So go in knowing that those men exist, but at the same time you

have a right to speak up, if someone is doing something disrespectful to you

whether it is another woman, a family member that saying, this is what you have

to do. Or your actual husband or partner or whatever. So yes, know that, you don't

have to be silent because of culture. It is going to be hard but [chuckles] it is better you speak and don't say anything. Culture is not going to make you-- I don't know – there's life after– make offending someone because of culture: (C.N.)."

"Actually having your faith. And if you have it, use it. You can do anything you want, anything. The only thing in this life that's stopping you is you. It is not what somebody else said. If you allow them to tell you that you can't, you can't. If you allow them to tell you that. And I'm not saying them telling you, I'm saying you walking away remembering that they told you that: (A.E.)."

"Education. Have a plan, start at a very young age. Don't give your cookies away to the first person that asks for it. Once when it is gone, it is gone. Then what? You are stuck having a baby. That's in your power. You misuse it, it is done. Stay in school. And if you don't want to go to school, that's fine too. Figure out what you want to be when you grow up and choose something that will feed you for the rest of your life. Do something with your hands. Learn something, learn a trade. Be self- sufficient. Be independent. You are responsible for your own happiness. Not a man, a man does not define you. He adds to what you already have. And you know what? Look around. A lot of Nigerian men-- I am going to leave this to the Nigerian-ness-- a lot of Nigerian men these days are looking for successful women. They're like, "Oh, she didn't go to school? She still works at McDonalds?" [laughs] "But she is very pretty." No, it is just not enough anymore: (D.M.)."

"Look before you leap. When it comes to marriage all that glitters are not gold and he that deprives you of educating you has denied you the greatest assets you can ever imagine. Get education. Open your eyes, see the world. Don't allow anybody to limit you regardless. That's my word to my little girls: (P.E.)."

The responses varied greatly, but it's apparent that western influence infused with the Nigerian culture, influenced their self-esteem. The high self-esteem then filters into their ideologies of what should and shouldn't be important to the next generation of young Nigerian women.

The first research question asks does a Nigerian woman's status and level of empowerment influence her access to reproductive health services and/or knowledge? Through the answers received from the interviews, a woman's status (immigrant or first-generation, education, and career) had a direct effect on her accessing services or information. All of the women were educated with at least a Bachelor's degree. Four women had Masters degrees; out of the five who had Bachelors, two of them are completing Masters degrees. All of the women are working in a field where they directly help people such as non-profit organizations, nursing, social work, and academic advising for college students. The women regardless of their immigration status shared a similar sentiment; being learned and exposed to western ideals is what helped to make access to services and information more tangible. The women's level of empowerment did have a positive influence on accessing services and information. Level of empowerment was gauged by answers to questions such as:

What is your role in your household?

Describe an empowering moment.

Responses to the first question varied, but most responses yielded similar ideas:

I take care of the family physically and financially: (P.E.).

I'm the boss and the glue: (D.M.).

I'm superwoman. I'm going to be honest. I am superwoman. I have to remember everybody's everything: (A.I.).

We share a lot of the responsibilities evenly. Kitchen is my domain. My roles are aligned a lot with women in Scripture: (C.N.).

I'm the dominant person. I take care of everyone and everything in the house: (R.I.).

I am the one that makes a lot of things happen indirectly or directly, in terms of making sure that things are put in place with the children and my spouse, all of that. (…) I'm the one that puts the glue in everything to make sure that things are supposed to be where they're at: (D.M.).

I feel my role is to be a support to my husband: (G.M).

I definitely know that the man is the head of the household. And that's just standard eyes for me in the Christian woman not just the Nigerian women. I guess the best analogy will be in the assistant coach to a head coach: (B.E.)

Most of the women assertively stated that they were the keepers of their homes. Only a few made statements alluding to "partnerships" in taking care of the home. During the interviews, the women went more in depth about their responsibilities in their homes,

and never lamented about having to do it. In fact, they proudly were the caretakers of

their homes.

Responses to the second question "Describe an empowering moment" yielded

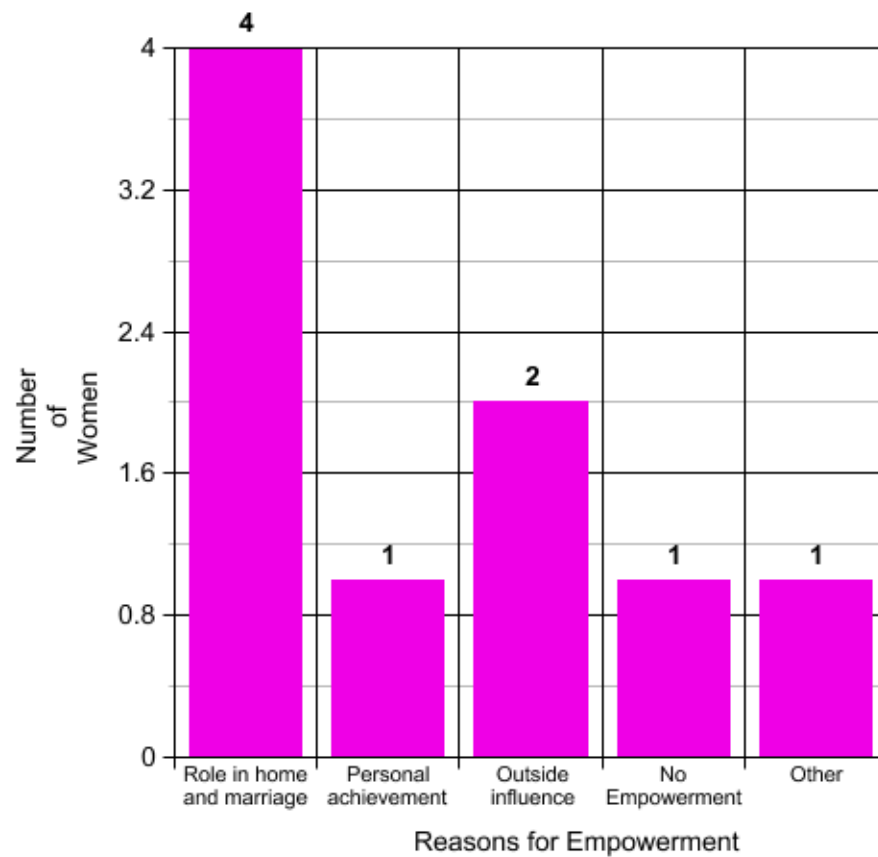very different responses unlike the first question.



*Figure 2*: Empowerment Contributors

Their responses were:

"I remember one of the youth pastor just really emphasized that on its

okay to work however you always have to realize that a woman's place is in the

home and no matter how busy you may get it your job your first priority is the

home your husband your children and. It was kind of like a. I guess a small group of people discussing with a soon to be bride. And I just remember thinking that and trying to remind myself that because I know sometimes I can be super focused. When it comes to career whatever goals it is an aspiration that I have that kind of reminding myself that yeah that's very true that. First the home takes first priority on takes Precedence over anything and everything else: (B.E)."

"There's a level of submission that you can have and still have a functional relationship with your husband which is outside of what the Nigerian culture actually tells you. Being taught by older Nigerian women, my aunties my mom and things like that is that, it seems like they--in their relationships or the way they view, a man's role is, …makes the women very submissive to a fault. Because I think that– I totally agree that the man is the head of the household, I'm not against that at all. But I also believe that the woman is-- if you will the neck, that holds the head up. So I feel we also have an opinion, we also can express ourselves. I feel secure enough to be able to communicate with my husband, how I feel if to be involved in decision making about things. So maybe an older Nigerian woman, may not agree with how I choose to function with my husband but that's just-- I feel empowered in that sense: (G.M.)."

"Starting my online talk show which, actually, is all about promoting a positive image of our people place and thing. I found that to be empowering because it was rewarding in our mission which was to really promote us in a positive image and light, and not letting other people just dictate who and what

they think we are. That's for me what is empowering, achievement or moment, if you will: (B.F.)."

"I use marriage as an example in terms of the culture where they-- once they are doing the marital rights, they don't expect the women to be a part of it. And the person that I'm married to-- he's an immigrant but I feel like is… really not only [that he's educated] education, I think exposure because you can be educated and still be really into like core culture and culture. I think exposure and talking to a whole bunch of people and reasoning it out, makes you like, you think in the right light. I would say during my marriage rights in Nigeria, which was last year, he wanted me to be involved in all of it. He wanted me to know, yes-- since I wasn't able to get the answer to it [from other family members], he made it okay, for me to be there. Even though a lot of people frowned at it, they frowned at the fact that, "Okay, what is she doing here, she is not supposed to be here." But he wanted me to learn as it is in the culture because there's no right or wrong answer. Because at some point our daughters are going to get married. And you really, really want to know, what happens during the process. So I felt really happy afterwards, so I would consider that as a big empowering moment: (E.O)."

"It is hard for me to say I have an empowering moment in relation to my culture because being a Nigerian woman it's in conflict to be empowering – it is hard. I can't really say that there's a time where I felt confident actually because we are taught to be subordinate to our husbands even if we have this great idea. We're taught that when we go to a function we are supposed to sit and look while

your husband does the entertaining nitty-gritty. In my church there is never a female pastor talking. We have subordinate roles and my church being celestial church of Christ, so in relation to my culture I really honestly cannot think of any moment where an empowering event happened in my life: (R.I.)."

"I'm saying my mom was my most empowering Nigerian experience because if you ever experienced her, you'd know what I mean. She says she's a non-traditional Nigerian mom. I'm like, "No. You're more traditional than you know. You're just Americanized." I got to experience Nigeria through her. Everything we know, everything we've experienced, it was really with her. My mother empowered in a very unique way. "Why can't you just tell me I'm pretty like normal people do? Just say, 'No sweetie you're gorgeous, you're pretty, you're beautiful.' I don't have ugly children. Who's your mom? I'm a princess" that's what she used to tell us. "I'm a princess: (A.I.)."

"I would have to say maybe dealing with my in-laws. When they would come to my house, and say things to me like, "Wow, your children are so well raised. Your household is run-- you cook like you need to open up a restaurant." And I would hear that over and over and over again from them. And I think it is really hard to impress in-laws especially in-laws like mine from a totally different--we don't speak the same language. He's Igbo. I'm Yoruba. And for them to appreciate my Yoruba food and compliment me over and over and over again, I think I like that, moments like that. I feel like they have proven me as a woman. I feel like I'm the queen. I'm the woman. I'm the lady of this house. And

I'm able to actually feed all of them, accommodate all of them and still feel like this is my home and I'm running this. So I like that: (D.M.)."

"George Bush has two daughters and they were doing pretty awesome. Myself I had my first two girls and each time my husband will always be emphasizing having a son, a son, a son. When I heard a speech by -- I think one of the congressmen then. I can't remember the congressman's name and is relation to George Bush and the family and how they -- it talked about George Bush and Laura, his wife and their daughters and how good they were doing then. I felt so much empowered because I was looking at myself because you have this thing people singing it into your head. If you don't have a baby boy you're just like stuck.(…)So when I listened to it and then I drew my strength from Hilary Clinton who has only one girl. And then I felt so empowered and the next one that came and I looked at our current president, he has two beautiful girls. Each time I look at these men and the way they look at their family and they take care of their family, I feel so much empowered: (P.E.)."

All of the women had very different sentiments about what it meant to be empowered. One went on to say she doesn't even think it is possible to be Nigerian and be empowered. The common theme in all their empowerment stories was that they all drew strength from something that made them a bit more confident in themselves as women, wives, mothers, and contributors to society.

The second research question asks how do traditional Nigerian beliefs affect Nigerian women's status, and what does it mean in terms of access to reproductive health

services and/or knowledge? According to the interview data, traditional Nigerian beliefs had mostly positive effects on their statuses. The understanding that the culture can sometimes be a hindrance to progress is what fueled the women to want to do better for themselves as individuals. For those who did not feel that the culture affected their statuses, it still had some bearing. Some of the quotes that highlighted this were:

"I think exactly the same way. I don't know many Nigerians who's a slacker. I'm not saying every single Nigerian person is perfect. But really, I look around me. My friends, people I associate with, we are all the same way. And that's probably the bond that keeps us together. That's why we get along because we can bounce ideas off of each other and it is great ideas. Nigerians are smart (D.M)."

"Again in our earlier conversation when we spoke about-- when I kind of explained, short comings of my culture is, in terms of a woman is, back in the day, a women were just expected to be home. But thinking back and think of the 2015 and for education, that motivates me to even be more and just aspire higher and go higher. And just let people, because some people are still back, 60 years passed, they still, their minds are still set in that way where they feel is still like a woman, "All she is good for is just be a homemaker." So that motivates me a lot and that makes me, even aspire even higher and push myself, even to go beyond what my limits are: (E.O.)."

"Because my culture is what drives the reason why as someone who grew up here in the US, I would still be looking to do media that's promoting and

discussing us. By us, African people, for us, but to educate the world on who we are. Without that background, it will pretty much just be me wanting to be in media production, but here, I'm not going to say we didn't have purpose but the purpose is greater because there's something that I'm trying to achieve by my aspirations and so, being an African, a Nigerian, and a woman, especially and seeing how we're viewed in the world, plays a big reason as to why I want my platform to focus on promoting that image and educating people so that they don't think we're just some third world country without any oomph to it, if you will: (B.F.)."

"Because I mean culturally at least my background, the norm is to like go do medicine. If you're going to do a health field, it feels like Nigerians only know doctor or maybe a nurse. But public health is I think they have at least older-- sometimes they have a puzzled look and you say, you're doing public health. So I don't necessarily think that it has because I diverted away from the norm. But I do know that-- like I said, I diverted away from the norm, in terms of what Nigerians, older people do: (G.M.)."

"Sure. First of all, my culture pushed me to be a social worker because…I witnessed a lot of domestic violence back home. And then I witnessed also these men feeling that they're the lord and master, you have a wife in the house and you go and you bring another woman in that same house. Well I'm a product of polygamous home. I detest polygamy. For whatever it stands for, I detest it. I'm a social scientist. I hate polygamy. I have seen a lot of people; a lot of women get emotion torn apart: (P.E.)."

However traditional beliefs did not have an overwhelming direct effect to access to services or information. Five of the woman stated there was a direct effect on access, and four women said there was none. Some of the responses that supported this were:

"I wouldn't say it [the culture] helped me much. But when it comes to the parent's aspect of things they're not as open with even talking about sex education or talking about anything pertaining to sex, condoms. To OB/GYN visits or anything. And as an immigrant, not having certain documentation and active the health care. That definitely affected me having regular visits I didn't have much experience with that either: (B.E.)."

"For me personally, going away to college really gave me the opportunity to be more empowered with my reproductive health decisions. Because I feel like I was sheltered up to the point that I went to college. That's where I think my knowledge base, my information gathering began was when I went to college, about things, about my body because to be very frank, and I tell people this all the time, like my dad, he never had a conversation with me about sex until, we were driving. He was driving me to college. That was the first time he ever had the sex talk with me. College was the defining moment for me as far as-- so prior to college, it affected my ability negatively: (G.M.)."

"It really hasn't. I think because I grew up here, it is always been preached in school. So, it is something that from the time I had my period, I knew exactly what I needed to do, where I needed to go. I knew the education behind it, I've always had my visits. I am not uncomfortable. Whether it is a man or woman, I

just need to be comfortable with the person. I think it is because I grew up here, I don't know if I was back home, if it would have been the same way. But, I think growing up here, even though I lived with my Nigerian uncle, it is something that I knew that I needed to do or as I grew up progress to my own and make sure I did all those things: (C.N.)."

"Yes. The cultural plays a great role, like it is crazy and to be honest, I plan to teach my daughters very differently about it and not to be ashamed to speak to me about whatever it is going on. For example, I never knew what a pap smear was, ever. I was never talked, never told about it. Never ever. It is the truth. The first time I ever got my first pap smear was at 23 years old. Yes. And how I got my first pap smear, my husband. It sounds funny. I was very fortunate to have somebody who understood, what our culture is, it is it's not an excuse, it is an embarrassment, a disgrace. And I'm not saying that – Yes, I will say, I would say that my mother failed me in that light. Because there's no exposure when it comes to reproductive health, when it comes to sex. We shy away from that. So much that we don't know that we're killing our children because you go out there oblivious to what is or is not. And then you find yourself in a lot of mess. So yes, our culture, till this day 2015, we are shy about it, we don't talk about it. And I hope at some point, that who are immigrants and also Nigerian born, children of first immigrants would be able to like have some kind of forum to talk about it…because you'll find an average Nigerian who is also educated, who is back home, they still share that mentality of-- well, we don't talk about it, we don't do

it. If we're able to like unite as a unit and talk about it, and say, hey, we're not

ashamed of it and it helps, it prevents a lot of things: (E.O.)."

"I don't know. Maybe I could say, I mean definitely his [her husband]

parents never spoke to him. Still have never spoken to him about anything related

to sex. And he actually kind of laments that like, he's now, he wishes he could talk

to his dad a little bit about even at least relationship stuff. But they don't really

have that kind of relationship. Yes. I feel like my culture because there's no

conversation. Like it really didn't have a bearing because it is like, "Okay, I have

to learn, I have to know about my body, I have to you know this stuff, no one else

is going to tell me." So, I guess in that case, it made me more proactive to learn

on my own. Because no one was telling me anything: (C.N.)."

As stated previously, there were 9 formal interviews. These are the interviews that

there are records of signed consent forms for participation. However, there was a tenth

informal interview. The person, on the scheduled day of the interview decided she did not

feel comfortable with being recorded. She also stated that the questions were too

personal. She didn't think she would feel comfortable with answering such questions and

having her responses recorded. She did however did not want the scheduled time to go to

waste so she gave permission to take notes while she informally spoke about her take on

women's empowerment. While notes were collected, not much of it was relevant to

addressing any of the research questions. Her responses have not been reflected in the

data that has been presented in this study.

**Summary**

A woman's status (immigrant or first-generation, education, and career) had a direct effect on her accessing services or information. The women regardless of their immigration status shared a similar sentiment; being learned and exposed to western ideals is what helped to make access to services and information more tangible. The women's level of empowerment had a positive influence on accessing services and information. The common theme in all their empowerment stories was that they all drew strength from something that made them a bit more confident in themselves as women, wives, mothers, and contributors to society.

It was also found that traditional Nigerian beliefs had mostly positive effects on their statuses. The understanding that the culture can sometimes be a hindrance to progress is what fueled the women to want to do better for themselves as individuals. However traditional beliefs did not have an overwhelming direct effect to access to services or information.

The results of this research have merely been presented in totality in this chapter. A comprehensive interpretation of the results will be facilitated in the next and final chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusion, and Recommendations

**Introduction**

This study is an examination of culture, empowerment, and status influences of both immigrants and first-generation Nigerian women on reproductive health knowledge. This research anticipates providing information (for Nigerian women specifically) that would provide a better understanding of themselves in relation to taking more interest in their reproductive health.

During the course of this research, the key findings were that a woman's status (immigrant or first-generation, education, and career) and level of empowerment had a positive effect on her accessing reproductive health services or information. The common theme of their empowerment stories was this: All drew strength from something that made them a bit more confident in themselves as women, wives, mothers, and contributors to society. Traditional Nigerian beliefs had mostly positive effects on their status but did not have an overwhelming, direct effect on access to services or information.

**Interpretation of the Findings**

The first guiding question asked whether a Nigerian woman's status and level of empowerment influence her access to reproductive health services and/or knowledge. The theory stated in previous chapters was that Nigerian women's status and level of empowerment did influence their access to reproductive health services to a great extent. According to the data, women who are educated have an opportunity to be exposed and

makes them more knowledgeable than their unexposed counterparts. The findings
confirmed the theory.

Based on the answers from the interviews, a woman's status (immigrant or first-generation, education, and career) had a direct effect on her accessing services or
information. All participants had at least a Bachelor's degree; two of them were
completing Master's degrees. Four already had Master's degrees. All were working in a
field where they directly help people, such as non-profit organizations, nursing, social
work, and academic advising for college students. Regardless of their immigration status,
these women shared a similar sentiment: Being educated and exposed to western ideals is
what helped to make access to services and information more accessible. Five of the
women assertively stated that they were the keepers of their homes. Four of the women
made statements alluding to "partnerships" in taking care of the home. During the
interviews, the women went more in depth about their responsibilities in their homes, and
never lamented them. In fact, they were proud of being the caretakers of their homes.

These findings most certainly extended knowledge in the discipline. The gap in
the literature was more apparent when compared to the peer-reviewed literature in
Chapter 2. The literature review delved into research on women's empowerment within
the Nigerian culture. Research topics ranged from education, reproductive health,
religion, domestic violence, socioeconomic status, and to the political standing of
Nigerian women in Nigeria. All these issues came up in the conversations with the
interviewees. While these issues did not directly affect them, they noted that the before

mentioned issues continue to be prevalent among other women they know who live in Nigeria.

The women shared similar sentiments around the understanding of the culture being one that was extremely patriarchal and put women in a specific place. This was very apparent as the role in the household was discussed. Being the caretaker of the home was understood to be their main responsibility. Unlike women that live in Nigeria, they also knew that they had a say in other matters pertaining to the functioning of their families. This notion of significant participation in the functioning of families is typically unfamiliar to their counterparts that live in Nigeria. A very good example of this was discussed in the literature review in a paper by Alagbajobi (2010). Nigerian women constitute about half of the population of the country (Nigeria) and are known to play vital roles as mother, producer, time manager, community organizer and social and political activist (Alagbajobi 2010). Notwithstanding these major roles that are being fulfilled successfully by Nigerian women, society still viewed these same women as being capable to have them function as equals to their male counterparts. This is due to some cultural stereotypes, exploitation of religion and traditional practices. Statements such as this were highlighted immensely in the literature. The findings of the study however revealed the opposite ideas. Most married women in Nigeria are to be seen, not heard. The comparison of the role in the households here in the United States and in Nigeria has to do with the mindset of the woman. Almost every woman made a comment alluding to the greatness of this country allowing them to have voices and become more than what their parents ever intended. Being in the United States, having exposure to

learned individuals and advanced thinking definitely molds their thought processes, thus molding their husband's thought processes. Every woman stated that they had high comfort levels when it came to communicating with their husbands in regards to matters concerning their reproductive health, among other things. This is not very typical of the Nigerian woman living in Nigeria, as voiced by most of the women during the interviews.

The second and third guiding question asks how do traditional Nigerian beliefs affect Nigerian women's status level, and what does it mean in terms of access to reproductive health services and/or knowledge. The theory stated in previous chapters was that traditional Nigerian beliefs will have impartial influence on immigrant and first-generation Nigerian women living in United States status. However, the literature review suggests that as educated and empowered as women are, tradition and culture sometimes trumps the most correct and logical life choices. In terms of access to services and knowledge, the theory was that there would be an overwhelming direct effect on willingness to access service and information.

The findings that address the second and third guiding question disconfirmed the theory that was stated. According to the interview data, traditional Nigerian beliefs had mostly positive effects on their statuses. The understanding that the culture can sometimes be a hindrance to progress is what fueled the women to want to do better for themselves as individuals. For those who did not feel that the culture affected their statuses, it still had some bearing. However, traditional beliefs did not have an overwhelming direct effect to access to services or information. Five of the woman stated there was a direct effect on access, and four women said there was none. The direct effect

came mostly from lack of communication with parents. In the culture it is considered

taboo to discuss such matters. So the women who expressed that there were direct effects

on their access to reproductive health information and services, it affected them

negatively. They learned what they learned later in adulthood due to the lack of

knowledge that could have been provided at an earlier age. The women who stated there

wasn't a direct effect on their access to reproductive health information said so for 2

basic reasons: education in the United States as a child and not allowing culture dictate

what they taught themselves.

Four out of the five women who stated there was a direct effect on accessing

information were immigrants. It is fair to say that their exposure to the culture prior to

their migration to the United States (regardless of the age of migration), is what made

them have such strong responses to the issue around how it negatively affected their

being able to access reproduction or services regarding reproductive health. These

women regarded the tradition and culture as a strength, but also Nigerian people's

downfall. These women have been in the United States for an average of about 17 years.

It was interesting to find that after being in the United States for as long as they had, that

they still felt very strongly about how the culture had a rather negative effect on how they

approached accessing reproductive health services and information. The one woman who

was first-generation expressed that her dismay came from watching her parents and the

approach that they took in approaching such matters with her as she was growing up. For

example, she stated that when she was going to college, her mom asked her about birth

control. She stated her mother was more concerned about her getting pregnant than her

actually being educated about her body. It was a discussion they never had, but it was very odd that at the age where she had taught herself most of what she knew, that was the only time such a conversation ever happened.

The women who stated that there was no direct effect were predominantly first-generation Nigerian women. Only one woman was an immigrant. The women stated that part of the reason they did not feel a direct effect on access to information or services because they grew up here, and certain ideals have been drilled into them. They knew where they could get information if they did not get it from their parents. Also, going to school in the United States exposed them to health education classes, programs, and various resources if need be.

There was expectation of an overwhelming response for the second and third guiding questions. The findings definitely suggest that there are some women that do not allow culture and tradition to impede on how they function on a day to day basis. This is contrary to what has been discussed in the peer-review. These findings most extend knowledge in the discipline. In comparison to the peer-reviewed literature in chapter 2, the gap in the literature again is revealed. Nigerian women living in the United States are multidimensional. As stated in chapter 2, the traditional beliefs of the culture can be overbearing, hence why some of its' pieces are so embedded in their basic functioning. However, their exposure to western ideologies can cause a battle between what culture says they should do, what they believe they should do, and what everyone else expects them to do. This can be further analyzed in the context of the ecological systems

The health promotion theory that was utilized to conduct this study is the ecological systems theory. In this theory, the principal influences are intercultural, community-level, organizational-level, and interpersonal/individual. This theory suggests that the person, their community, their organization and their culture are like nested spheres, much like nesting dolls. Actions in one sphere can have an effect on another sphere (Rainberger, 2014). The use of this theory in this research was critical to understanding the effects of the many facets of one's environment, which in this case, were all factors that encompass empowerment.
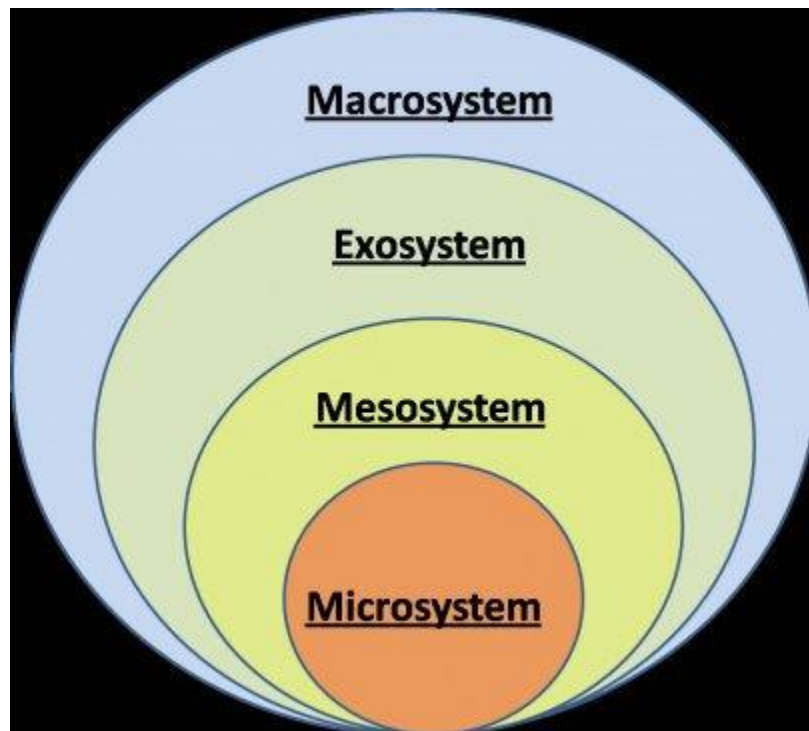


*Figure 3:* Ecological Systems Model (Nielsen, 2011). Reprinted from Grand Strategy: A View from Oregon, Retrieved January 8th, 2016 from

https://geopolicraticus.wordpress.com/2011/03/22/metaphysical-ecology-

reformulated/#comments. Copyright 2011. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 3 encompasses all that the ecological systems theory is in its' simplest

terms. Every sphere has an effect on the next, but at the core is the individual.

### Macrosystem: Culture

The Nigerian culture is rich and has transcended in all the women's lives

regardless of immigration status. Traditions and culture influenced their statuses. The

culture being very rigid, the women felt the need to always excel because culturally

failure is seldom tolerated. Because of this all of the women had at least a Bachelor's

degree, and most of them had advanced degrees. The women who did not have advanced

degrees were working on one, or intended to receive one in the near future. They were all

gainfully employed and helping to support their families. They all viewed this as part of

their responsibilities of taking care of the home.

### Exosystem: Community

Due to the culture, the women socialized in tight knit communities that were

mostly religion based. Many of the women spoke of attending churches in which they

mentored on how to be a Godly wife, mother, and caretaker of their households. Some of

the women went to predominantly Nigerian churches where culture was interjected in

preaching thus asserting cultural values in their daily lives.

### Mesosystem: Work, School, and Peers

The women's communities had an effect on where they chose to work, where they

school, and who they socialize with. Their culture and community also played a role into

why the women dedicated their energies to the work and the people they did. Familiarity with hindrances the culture brings pushed the women to aspire to be achievers in work, school, and their homes. Also recognizing the downsides of the culture influenced the women to go into fields such as social work to help give their peers a voice.

**Microsystem: Family**

As stated above, all the women had very strong ties to their roles in their households, and stressed the importance of their role in taking care of the family. Keeping their families together made them happy and proud when they did so successfully. The culture calls for the woman to be the caretaker of the come. Family is also a very important part of a woman's status and well-being. While the all the different layers of this system affect one another, some directly affect one another than others. In the case of this study, culture had a direct effect on how the women managed and represented their idea of family. At the core, family is where the women seemed to solace, and that molded who they are as individuals.

**Individual**

The women shared very similar sentiments, but were all still very unique in their own ways. They all appeared to be assertive, inquisitive, audacious, intelligent, and empathetic. Their cultural and traditional ideologies that was taught to them were appreciated, and they voiced that. However, understanding the other influences that shaped them outside of the culture made them the free thinkers that they are today. Every woman, as shown through the shared quotes, is empowered in her own way. She is aspiring to be more, and is hoping the same for her counterparts.

Taking the phenomenological approach, one would be able to identify the "subject" of human experience and develop a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals (Creswell, 2009). According to Patton (2002), phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of our everyday experiences. The experiences this study is viewing in empowerment, access to reproductive health information, and the Nigerian culture's influence on these matters. Phenomenology commences with an analysis of the natural attitude. It says that human beings know the world through their experience. And so that theoretical framework directs one to study the world through the way people attach meaning to the world (Laureate Education, 2008). Creswell (2009) suggests that the type of problem best suited for this form of research is one in which it is important to understand several individual's shared experiences of a phenomenon. The nine Nigerian women who were interviewed for this study have several shared experiences that contributed to the discussion around empowerment and its direct effect on other facets on their lives.

## Limitations of the Study

There were not many limitations that presented itself during the study. However, as assumed in earlier parts of this research, there was a minuscule amount of respondent bias. Self-reported information is not always reliable because people may provide an answer they think is correct (Siegel & Lotenberg, 2007), as opposed to what they genuinely feel. At the earlier stages of the interviews all of the women would ask if they answered the question correctly. They would all look at the researcher seeking approval for the response they had given. At some point in the middle of the interview, the

researcher had to reiterate that there were no correct or incorrect answers. After this reiteration, body language changed, they became more comfortable and spoke freely without worrying about their responses. This, however did not hinder the analysis of the collected information and drawing valid conclusions. The researcher was prepared for such a limitation by crafting the interview questions very carefully in order to solicit responses that were as unbiased as possible.

## Recommendations

As the literature review was conducted, it was found that there was a rather large gap in the literature that addresses the topic of Nigerian women's empowerment within the context of United States dwelling. While the studies that have been found during the course of the research had been compelling, it still did not capture the phenomena specifically. In Nigeria, it is known that traditionally, lack of access to material sources has been a huge disadvantage for progress. This in turn, leads to deprivation of resources such as education, employment, and modern technology. All of these factors have negative implications for any type of future progress for the woman as an individual (Uchendu, 2007). With this in mind, the literature overall was found to have addressed empowerment and reproductive health issues within Nigerian women that live in Nigeria; that only speaks somewhat to Nigerian women here in the United States.

As the research came to its' conclusion, the gap in the literature became more apparent, as stated earlier and in previous parts of this paper. Studies that are conducted in Nigeria are very helpful to Unites States researchers to draw some ideas and conclusions to matters pertaining to Nigerian women here. Conversely, it does not

directly speak to women that are living here in the United States. As discussed in the analysis through the ecological systems theory, there are many layers of a person's life that affects who then end up being. Culture plays a part, which comes directly from Nigeria. Nonetheless, so does their fraternizing with peers, work colleagues, and their families, who are all based here in the United States. A Nigerian woman who has exposure to western ideals and the American way of living cannot possibly have the same exact mindset as a woman living in Nigeria where she has had no other cultural exposure.

Nigerian women that live in the United States are an untapped resource of great information. Speaking to more women about the ins and out of their lives in relation to culture is definitely needed. The research in Nigeria tap into many different issues affecting the women, thus seeking ways in which to address increase in empowerment. In the United States there is a great deal of conversation about women's empowerment. There are even discussions around it on an international level by which the United States takes the lead on the initiative. But research can be done right here in our back yards with women who are sometimes marginalized by their culture, but still want to be heard. Research can go further by talking to the women by tribe. There are hundreds of tribes in Nigeria. The Hausa Yoruba and Igbo constitute about 70% of the population of Nigeria (National Geographic, 2015). Research of Nigerian women by tribe could also be another area of research to take note of. Each tribe has specific traditions that are not necessarily the same, which can produce rather robust information on culture, empowerment, and other relevant subject matters.

During the course of recruitment for participants recruited through purposive sampling, there were a few older women who did not understand, or feel comfortable with having their voices recorded. While one of the women who refused to participate spoke to the researcher, several of the women in the older age group refused to participate in the study altogether. In light of that, if this study were to be advanced in any way, a recommendation would be surveys that can be answered anonymously should be conducted. In additional to that a focus group should be facilitated, and then brief individual interviews can follow. This way a significant amount of data can be collected, and analysis would be more extensive due to the nature of data being collected.

## Implications

The potential for positive social change via this research will be on a societal and individual level. Nigerian women, immigrant and first-generation, who live in the United States are a part of American society. There are society's teachers, doctors, lawyers, social workers, public servants, business owners, engineers, and leaders. They contribute just as much as anyone else who deems themselves a prominent member of the society. Providing a look into their culture, their thoughts, and their ways of existing is essential to the ever evolving state of society as it is known to be. Understanding our fellow women; how to speak to her; how to address certain issues with her; being sensitive to her outlook due to her culture. These are all part of a movement toward social change on a societal level. This research will help society better understand and cohabit agreeably with these very important key players in the United States of America. People naturally

fear what they do not understand. Providing tangible information to help society understand this group is key in eliminating misperceptions of who they are as a people.

On an individual level, this research has the potential to facilitate positive social change. As discussed heavily through this study, the Nigerian culture is rich and can be overbearing. As the women in the study stated, it is a gift, but it also stifles. Providing this research for the women on an individual level would allow them the opportunity to understand the mindset of their peers. Perhaps it would fuel them to be better versions of themselves, simply knowing there are other women who are like them; other women like them who have voices and are thriving.

## Conclusion

Empowering women is vital for social growth, no matter what the place of origin. While evidence of this phenomenon was investigated in Nigeria and other African countries, no such investigation has been conducted for immigrant and first-generation Nigerian women in the United States. The results of prior studies have been mixed and continue to pose the same types of question, as evidenced by research by Nwagbara, Etuk, and Baghebo (2012). The researchers discuss empowerment in women in Nigeria, but still pose the question as to why women's statuses continue to be low in light of all the global efforts towards uplifting. Still not enough is known specifically about immigrant and first-generation Nigerian women living in the Unites States, especially in relation to access to reproductive health services and information. Ringing true to the times, "All Lives Matter". Nigerian women are a part of society, an important part that is.

Understanding them as valid contributors to society will only help to move society

forward.

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Appendix A: Document of Attestation (External Audit)

DOCUMENT OF ATTESTATION

External Audit

Cheri Langley, Ph.D.

Temi Aregbesola requested that I complete an educational audit of her qualitative dissertation titled: *Nigerian women's empowerment status: influence on access to reproductive health services.* The audit was conducted between January 4-5th, 2016. The purpose of the audit was to ascertain the extent to which the results of the study are trustworthy.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that the audit may be one of the most essential practices available to the naturalist. The educational audit is "based metaphorically on the fiscal audit". In order achieve a successful audit, it is vital that the researcher maintain thorough records during the course of the inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also explain two tasks in the audit process: 1) analysis of the process of the inquiry to ensure that participants are represented properly in recorded accounts, and 2) analysis of the final product (data-wise) to ensure accuracy.

To meet the outlined purpose of this audit, numerous materials were reviewed. The researcher submitted the following materials for review:

1. Data collection tool prior to and after the data collection took place

2. Transcripts of Interview (in summary)

3. Research question along with hypotheses

4. An Excel document containing five worksheets

A. All data coded with node listed

B. Education/Career/Self-description of roles

C. Reproductive health knowledge and relation to spouse

D. Anecdote

E. Notes

Although the issue of "reliability" is problematic for qualitative researchers and generalizability from specific cases may be limited, the results of this audit demonstrate that the researcher maintained an excellent audit trail. It was apparent in reviewing the materials that Temi had been methodical in her data collection and record keeping. The materials presented for the purpose of the audit were detailed, complete, and well organized. Other researchers could follow this researcher's clear audit trail. The findings of the study are presented with rich, thick description to enable readers to make the determination regarding whether the results might be transferable or comparable to their settings.

My primary expertise is quantitative methods with some experience in mixed methods. With that said, I have reviewed the data and Temi's assessment and I do believe that she has captured what she intended to capture in her study.

Attested to by Cheri Langley this 30th day of January 2016.

Cheri Langley Ph.D.

Professor

College of Health Sciences

Walden University

Appendix B: Interview Guide

**Interview Guide**

According to Catherine Adams and Max van Manen, the focus of phenomenological interviews is to elicit the 'direct description of a particular situation or event as it is lived through without offering causal explanations or interpretive generalizations', (Roulston, 2010). The phenomenological interview is designed to explore and gather descriptions of a lived experience.

In light of this being the basis of the methodology of this study, the questions below have been designed to capture the phenomena of the lived experience of empowerment Nigerian women

1. Think of a time when you experienced an empowering moment in relation to your culture and describe that in as much detail as possible.

Possible follow-up question

You mentioned_____ can you tell me more about that

Possible probe question

Really? Can you tell me more about _____

2. How do you view your role in your household?

Possible Follow-up question

You mentioned_____, can you explain what you mean by_____

3. Have you ever felt like you were not empowered in any way due to the Nigerian culture?

Possible follow-up question

You mentioned that you felt _____, tell me more about that.

4.      Briefly tell me about your educational background

5.      Briefly tell me about your career

6.      Briefly tell me about your future aspirations

Possible follow-up questions

Do you feel that your culture plays a role in your views of_____as your

future aspirations?

How do you feel other Nigerians view your thoughts?

Possible probe question

Tell me more about why you feel this way?

7.      I am going to adjust our discussion a bit to ask questions that focus

on reproductive health. How comfortable are you about discussing matters

pertaining to reproductive health, services and why?

Possible Follow-up question

How has Nigerian culture affected your ability to gain knowledge

surrounding reproductive health and reproductive health services?

8.      Do you feel that you are well versed on reproductive health matters

as an individual?

Possible follow-up questions:

On a scale of 1-10 (1 being you know absolutely nothing 10 being you

know just about everything there is to know), how knowledgeable are you on

reproductive health matters?

You mentioned_____, can you tell me more about why you feel that way?

9. How do you and your significant other communicate around matters concerning your reproductive health?

Possible follow-up questions:

How has Nigerian culture affected the way you and your partner communicate regarding matters of reproductive health?

Do you feel that there's an equal exchange of ideas while these conversations take place?

You mentioned_____, can you tell me about it?

10. If there was an empowering message you wanted to leave behind for young Nigerian girls, what would it be?

Reference

Roulston, K. (2010). Reflective interviewing: A guide to theory and practice. London: Sage.

Appendix  C: Letter of Invitation

Date

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Dear Madam,

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Doctoral degree in the School of Health Sciences at Walden University under the supervision of Dr. Amany Refaat.

As a participant you will play a part in the very important conversation around empowerment within the Nigerian female community and what it means for reproductive health. Research has many suggestions as to why Nigerian women function the way they do in Nigeria. You will have an opportunity to be a part of something that has never been done, which is giving the perspective of a Nigerian woman living in the United States of America.

Why have you been approached?

You have been approached on the basis that you identify yourself as a Nigerian woman who is either first-generation or immigrant between the age of 25 and 50. You have not been approached randomly, but rather, have been identified by the key researcher OR by one of your friends, family or acquaintances that might be aware of you being a Nigerian woman who meets the study criteria.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 1 hour in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may

decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for approximately 10 years in locked office in home office. Only researchers associated with this project will have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

As always, if you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 917-513-9286 or by e-mail at temi.aregbesola@waldenu.edu. You can also contact my committee head Dr. Amany Refaat, at amany.refaat@waldenu.edu.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Institutional Review Board at Walden University. However, the final decision about participation is yours.

I hope that the results of my study will be of benefit to those directly involved in the study, other voluntary recreation organizations not directly involved in the study, as well as to the broader research community.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,

Temi Aregbesola-Okere, MPH

Walden University Doctoral Candidate