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The Leadership Experiences of Immigrant Nigerian Women in New York City

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Osinachi Muoka

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

The Leadership Experiences of Immigrant Nigerian Women

in New York City

by

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MA, Ashford University, 2013

BS, State University of New York Institute of Technology, 2011

AAS, Borough of Manhattan Community College, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Public Policy and Administration

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Abstract

Nigerian women face numerous cultural difficulties in their quest to attain leadership positions in Nigeria, a developing country. They are often overlooked in favor of men due to politics, religious beliefs, education, and bias in gender roles. When Nigerian women emigrate to a new country, the challenges are even greater. Although several United States policies impact the ability of a female immigrant to attain a leadership position – the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act – little research has examined the challenges that affect their quest to attain leadership positions in the United States. This study explored the experiences of immigrant Nigerian women currently in leadership positions in New York City. Data for this study included interviews with 12 Nigerian female immigrants who responded to flyers placed throughout New York City; participants were also recruited via snowball sampling. Interview data were inductively coded, and then subjected to a modified Van Kaam method of analysis that revealed emergent themes. Many of the respondents reported the need to change career paths because organizations in New York City did not recognize the equivalent of their careers, work experience, and education from their home country. As a result of this research, new information will be available to policymakers, which may be used to revise existing policies that directly impact immigrant women's career goals. The results may also provide new and useful information to leaders of local organizations that help female immigrants gain meaningful employment.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to my parents who are my biggest fans and sources of inspiration. The motivational speeches and texts were really helpful and encouraging especially for a long journey as this. To my siblings, thank you all for your support every step of the way. Words cannot express how forever I am grateful to my wonderful family. We did it guys!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The idea of pursuing lifelong dreams and the opportunities that are available to those living in the United States are some of the reasons people decide to migrate (Geist & McManus, 2012). What is generally left out of the preparations to immigrate is how to achieve those dreams and goals. For Nigerian immigrant women who have faced the conundrum of cultural inequality in their home country, a move to the United States is one that is met with high expectations and joy. But after migrating, trying to settle in and take advantage of those opportunities may become a challenge. For many, it is a matter of being unaware of where to go, who to talk to, and what it will take to realize their career goals.

Immigrant Nigerian women face many significant challenges in trying to acclimate and settle into American culture (Nwabah & Heitner, 2011). In studying the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in Texas, Nwabah and Heitner (2011) were able to identify ways to get on the right path to success in Texas. The experiences of the participants were useful in helping to educate the new immigrants and the organizations that are focused on helping immigrants achieve their goal. Because there has been no research on this issue in New York City, I sought to explore the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women living and working in New York City.

Background of the Problem

Many immigrants face some form of discrimination at some point in their lives (Vedder & van Geel, 2011). It is not inconceivable to think that the majority of the immigrants move to a new country either to experience a new culture or take advantage of better opportunities to become successful. Immigrants from third world countries, such as Nigeria, usually decide to

migrate to an advanced country, such as the United States, for better opportunities for themselves and their families (Hollifield, Martin & Orrenius, 2014). For Nigerian women, the reasons to migrate can be traced back to their inability to break into the male-dominant positions and careers in their home country and no solution to the problem has been found. Nigerian women face numerous challenges in their quest to attain leadership positions in their home country (Akpotor, 2009). The cultural implication of this puts women at a great disadvantage as they are left to scramble for the lower positions despite having similar education and professional experience as their male counterparts. Differences in culture in many aspects can also be as a reason to seek better and equal opportunities in the United States (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010). Some of these cultural differences are reviewed in Chapter 2. The American workplace offers a better opportunity for the female Nigerian immigrant to reach her individual goals.

There have been previous studies on gender inequality in the workplace but there is limited research on the actual experience of immigrant women in the workplace. Nwabah and Heitner (2009) understood the need for a study that focused on the leadership experience of Nigerian female immigrants in Texas and it is what spurred this study to examine the same experiences of Nigerian women in New York City. There is evidence that supports a level of discrimination against immigrants (Vedder & van Geel, 2012), but none has directly focused on female immigrants. There are a substantial number of female immigrants who maintain a medium-level position, such as a college professor or a nurse, but relatively very few of them are leaders in those professions (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010; Tamerius, 2010; Yussuff, 2014). With the different policies on workplace diversity, many employers still allow a level of discrimination against immigrants (Ram, et al., 2013). The literature review in Chapter 2

provides a more comprehensive background on United States policies as contained in the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act and how they relate to gender roles and women's positions in the workplace.

With the high expectation to succeed following migration to the United States, many African women are shocked to find out that there are no clear paths toward becoming a leader. There are groups and organizations who help immigrant women realize their individual career goals. But because of their limited research on the experiences of immigrant women in the workplace, these organizations are not equipped with accurate information to help immigrants with their professional goals. This study focused on the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in New York City. With the data available from their individual experiences, these organizations can better provide the new immigrants with information on how to realize their career goals. America is a land of opportunities (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009) and hence, it should be an easier task for immigrant women to take advantage of those opportunities to grow and reach their professional goals.

Statement of the Problem

Immigrating to a new country is a challenging process. Adaptation is also a challenge. Having some knowledge and preparation for the potential problems an immigrant might encounter following immigration can be helpful in adapting, settling in, and pursuing opportunities. One problem associated with this research is that many immigrants struggle to adapt to their new host country (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009) and there are no policy regulations that focus specifically on providing an even platform for these immigrants to achieve their professional goals in America. Many of these immigrants are already professionals in their home countries but in migrating to the United States, they face a more difficult obstacle in attaining

similar positions in their new host country. United States policies, as stipulated in the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity, clearly identify different ways to provide equal employment opportunities, but they lack vital components on how to support immigrants who were career professionals in their home country to easily achieve similar position status in America. Some of the hardships as explained by Nwabah and Heitner (2011) include language barrier, cultural differences, and differences in educational and professional requirements. This research explored the experiences of immigrant Nigerian women, the problems they faced in attaining leadership positions in the workforce in New York City and what role the U. S. government policies in the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity play in either supporting or inhibiting their career ambitions.

In Nigeria, there is a misconception that women cannot lead and are better suited for supporting roles (Shore, Rahman & Tilley, 2014; Anker, Buvinic & Youssef, 2012). Leadership experiences in Nigeria are different for foreign women in America (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). The experiences of these women will be used to better understand these policies and how they can be revisited to help immigrants attain leadership positions. Previous studies reported on adaptation to the American workforce and culture by immigrants (Coll & Magnuson, 2014; Sanfascon et al., 2014; Scott & Scott, 2013) but there is no research on what role government policies have played in the experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in leadership positions in the New York City workforce. Although immigrant Nigerian women face many challenges in their quest for leadership positions, the government has not provided any mandates for organizations to focus on these challenges (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). Many instances have shown immigrants who had great careers in their home countries only to struggle to even get minimum wage jobs in America because the American immigration policies on the Equal Pay

Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity do not provide a platform to address these issues. This qualitative study focused on the experiences of immigrant Nigerian women who are in current leadership positions in the United States and what impact the United States government policies on the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity had in achieving those career goals. A phenomenological study on immigrant Nigerian women in leadership positions was used to gain better understanding on the struggles they faced in reaching these positions and how the American policies on the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity can be revisited to provide better platform and opportunities for immigrants.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following question: What are the experiences of female Nigerian immigrants in the U. S. who have attained leadership positions? Three sub-questions on the impact of federal policies supported it:

- a. What impact does United States public policy on the Equal Pay Act have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?
- b. What impact does United States public policy on Affirmative Action have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?
- c. What impact does United States public policy on Equal Employment Opportunity have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women who have lived in New York City for a minimum of 10 years and

who have overcome different obstacles to attain leadership positions in their various career fields. Another reason was to explore what impact U.S. policies—Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity—have had on these women in achieving their career goals. Many factors affect a decision to migrate to another country and with Nigerian women migrating to the United States, there is a need to understand the experiences of these immigrants and how the aforementioned government policies can be aligned to focus more on helping the women settle in and attain leadership positions. To understand the leadership experiences of the Nigerian immigrant women, one-on-one interviews were used to understand their individual, lived experiences and to create awareness of them, including the challenges, in attaining a leadership position in the New York City.

Theoretical Framework

Scheider and Ingram's (1993) social construction of target populations' postulates that some groups are advantaged more than others and policy helps alter such advantages. Their proposition was used to study how female Nigerian immigrants were able to overcome the challenges they faced, despite the fact that American policy designs do not sufficiently address these challenges. How policy helped alter the experiences of the immigrant Nigerian women were addressed in Chapter 2. I selected this theory in order to rely, as much as possible, on the views of participants as they were directly involved with the problems or views being studied. Social constructivists study the multiple realities constructed by people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others (Patton, 2002). This theory supports the notion that being an immigrant presents a considerable disadvantaged position in the American workforce and it relates to the research questions in understanding the impact of the United States government policies on the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal

Employment Opportunity on the experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in the New York City workplace. The disadvantaged target population, immigrant Nigerian women, experienced higher level of discrimination than their American-born colleagues which are in line with the ideas of Scheider and Ingram.

Operational Definitions

Immigrant – Referring to a person who comes to live permanently in another country (IRS, 2015).

Leadership Position – A positional title of someone who leads and manages people or a group. The person in this capacity has the ability to make decisions and influence others. For this study, the person has been in a leadership role for a minimum of 1 year and manages a minimum of 5 employees.

Gender Role – A pattern of behavior, personal traits, and attributes that define masculinity or femininity in a certain culture. The society has a set of norms that it prescribes for male and female (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012).

Acculturation – Common language describing the process of adapting to a new culture (Landrine & Klonoff, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations

With the vast population of immigrants in New York City, access to immigrant Nigerian women who met the criteria and were interested in participating proved difficult.

- The study focused on the leadership experiences of 12 participants. This is a small sample of Nigerian women living in New York City.
- The interview explored women's perceptions and experiences in their new country. It did not compare their experiences in Nigeria and the United States.

- The results of this study may not be generalized because of the limitation of the number of women and the positions they occupied in their various organizations. There might be different levels of challenges and difficulties based on type of job and position of the participant in the organization.
- This study excluded the perceptions of coworkers or families and any relations the participants had that influenced their opinions.

Significance of the Study

This research filled a gap in the literature by focusing on the migration and leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women who are in leadership positions and how they overcame obstacles related to three U.S. policies: Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action, and Equal Employment Opportunity. A previous study by Nwabah and Heitner (2009) researched the same phenomenon in Texas. Their results were used to compare the results I had among female Nigerian immigrants in New York City. Because there remains a level of discrimination against immigrants (Capps, McCabe & Fix, 2012), the results will be beneficial to policymakers as they may revisit these policies to provide a better platform for female African immigrants to face fewer challenges and succeed in the United States. Results of this study will also give organizations that work with immigrant women seeking leadership positions the information they need to help them achieve their goals. U.S. public policymakers can use the outcome of this study to revisit and restructure such policies to protect immigrant African women in general.

Summary

The Nigerian culture has limited women in their aspirations to attain a high ranking or leadership position. This, among many other reasons, has led women seeking fair and better opportunities to succeed in foreign countries such as the United States. After migrating to the

United States, Nigerian women are faced with many challenges on how to acclimate and adapt to a new culture. Nigerian immigrant women are capable of leading various organizations in the United States, opportunities abound for them to attain professional success in the American workforce. However, research has documented that women are discriminated against in the workplace; for example, even with similar qualifications and experience, they make less money than men. Thus, success is even harder for immigrant women.

The Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action, and Equal Employment Opportunity constituted the policy focus of this study. The goal was to learn how these policies have affected the women in their leadership positions. This study explored the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women living in New York City. Organizations that are interested in assisting Nigerian immigrant women meet their career goals may find the results of this study beneficial.

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature on factors impacting female Nigerian immigrants, such as gender roles, politics, religious beliefs, and culture. Chapter 3 describes the details of the study design including participant criteria, recruitment, procedures, data collection and data analysis techniques. Chapter 4 includes the settings and demographics of the research. Data collection and analysis were also described in this chapter. Chapter 5 discusses the interpretation of the analyzed data from chapter 4. It also included recommendations for solution and future research and finally, implications for social change.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The growing population in the United States is mainly attributed to the growing influx of people from different nations (Capps, McCabe & Fix, 2012). Migrating to the United States provides numerous opportunities for many families. There are many significant reasons why Africans decide to migrate to America, the most common of which is the economic and financial opportunities. There is however, a misconception among Africans that jobs are readily available and they can immediately get hired and start living the “American Dream.” This harsh reality was validated by Nwabah and Heitner (2009), who used a hermeneutic approach to study the lived experiences of immigrant Nigerian women already in leadership positions or aspiring to become leaders in their field in the Texas workforce.

Many established professional adult immigrants gave up their careers to move to the United States. Nwabah and Heitner (2009) wrote about the struggles that immigrant Nigerian women have faced in seeking leadership positions in the United States. In fact, it is similar to the struggles they left in Nigeria. No studies have been conducted on the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in New York City. To date, minimal attention has been focused on the experiences of these women and how their stories can help newly arrived or incoming female Nigerian immigrants understand the process of attaining leadership positions that supports their skill sets and job experiences from their home countries. While the search was exhaustive, there were very few articles on this topic.

This study is a replication of a study that was first conducted by Nwabah and Heitner (2009) as they sought to understand the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigeria women in Texas. To begin, the research strategies used in locating literature used to support the need for

this research were explained. Maintaining the original study being replicated, the templates on Nigerian immigration, Nigerian culture and influence on women and challenges facing immigrant Nigerians in America were followed to create a linkage that supports the main theme of this study. An in-depth look at issues relating to United States policies that focus on the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity, Nigerian culture, and immigrants in the workplace was done to highlight the impact of the aforementioned policies. The cultural differences between Nigeria and the United States were equally important to study to show the different roles that women play in each culture and how those cultural differences affected their quest for leadership roles in America.

Literature Review

Research Strategy

The literature search was conducted in a variety of ways using different sources for information. However, the original article by Nwabah and Heitner (2009) served as the reference point and template in choosing subheadings and sections. The following databases from EBSCO, SAGE and ProQuest vendors were used to help gather relevant articles: Philosophy, Google Scholar, Political Science, ProQuest Central, PsycARTICLES, SAGE Premier and SAGE Journals to this study. The terms '*women leadership*' and '*work culture*' were used as the root of all searches. These were then used to open other terms that show relation to the main theme. Other terms like '*immigration issues*', '*gender discrimination*', and '*cultural assimilation*' were also used to review factors that may contribute to a harder road blocks in attaining leadership positions in the American workplace. There was no literature that directly focused on immigrant Nigerian women roles in the New York City workplace so a more generalized strategy to study female immigration and leadership experiences of women in the workplace was used for this

literature review. Other sources of information included direct communication with the original author on potential areas of inquiry and guidance with reviewing relevant literature.

The experiences of Nigerian women migrating to the United States provide a different perspective on what it entails. The immigration factors, reasons for Nigerian immigration, United States policies relating to the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity and how the Nigerian culture differs with that of America were reviewed. The following literature provides an understanding on what migrating to the United States from Nigeria involves and how the immigrants are affected. How these translate to the American workplace and their acceptability were also reviewed in the coming sections. Three main United States policies that focus on the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission that directly affect female Nigerian immigrants in their quest to attain leadership positions are discussed here. There is usually a great sense of euphoria and excitement for new immigrants into the United States (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). For immigrants from third world countries, it is like a dream come true to finally call America home (McCabe, 2011).

There are many reasons for this show of emotion; families believe a better future awaits their children (Arthur, 2012), adults are ecstatic at the career opportunities (Capps, McCabe & Fix, 2012), and the opportunities to enjoy the available streams of services and goods afforded by the American government (Ku & Bruen, 2013; Huber & Oberdabernig, 2015). The United States Department of Homeland Security (2015) has policies in place to monitor the issuance of Visas and other documentation that provides access to foreigners to America. Foreign nationals must obtain a visa to be admitted. The continual calls for policy reforms of the United States immigration stems from the growing population of immigrants and the competition local residents and nationals now face in maximizing the goods and services provided by the

government. Services like education, housing, security, and welfare benefits are areas of strong competition between residents and immigrants (Grisworld, 2012; Rabin, 2011).

In light of the growing terrorist trends against the United States, the Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of State (DOS), and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are all working to create stricter policies that would limit or downright block access to visas for high terrorist activity problem nations (Hing, 2012; Waseem, 2010). Locally, there are issues that have raised the awareness for immigration reforms. For example, Black Africans are among the fastest growing groups of immigrants in the United States (Capps, McCabe & Fix, 2012). In recent studies, Wo (2014) examined the crime rates in neighborhood and those populated by African Americans presented with higher crime rates than others. However, there are other relevant socioeconomic factors; for example, the unemployment rate among African Americans is twice that of whites (Pattillo, 2013). It is commonly understood that immigration policies are in need of reform; however, the issues range far beyond the negative impacts of immigration to include the acceptance of the economic strength of the United States

There are several ways how Africans migrate to the United States. The majority of Africans migrate to the United States through family relationships, followed by diversity visas, programs, and employment (Capps, McCabe & Fix, 2012). In comparison to other immigrants, Africans possessed a better skill set, educational attainment, and English language proficiency (McCabe, 2011). The American government is very welcoming to immigrants with advanced and proficient skills sets that will contribute to the positive economic trends (McCabe, 2011). Africans are generally ambitious (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009) and could be seen in many career sectors but most notably in health care and education. In an interesting study by Holzer (2011), the United States government actually benefitted from the admittance of less skilled immigrants

because it meant lower consumer prices, higher employer benefits, and greater efficiency. Jose (2011) found that internationally trained skill workers are still considered below their peers who were trained in the United States.

United States Policy relating to the Equal Pay Act

Wage discrimination has been an ongoing social issue in the United States for many years. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 summarizes that no employers shall discriminate between their employees on the basis of pay by using gender as a determinant factor (US Equal Employment Commission, 2015). This Act ensures that female employees are treated fairly and equally and are paid equally as their male counterparts in similar positions in the workplace. This is far from the truth in organizations where the male employee continues to earn more than his female colleagues. Feminists, for years, have continued to fight for equal rights among women and minorities in the workplace but there is still a wide gap in pay differential among genders (Bryant, Winters & Matson, 2015).

Studies have shown that the difference in pay among men and women cannot be satisfactorily explained by factors like experience and education (Lips, 2013; Rubery & Grimshaw, 2015; Stanberry & Aven, 2013). The studies showed that employers have considerably paid men more than women even with the same positions and qualifications. The Equal Pay Act sought to abolish these standards but the root of the problem is laid bare in organizations who, mostly deliberately, fail to follow the gender equality standards to close the gap between men and women. A recent event portrayed the United States women national soccer team filing a grievance for unequal pay in comparison to their male counterparts. The problems of unequal pay still exist in organizations (Hill, 2013) but the fact that these organizations still get away with it for an advanced country as the United States is concerning.

The gender wage gap in the United States has continually hurt women across the different job sectors. There are evidences of gender wage discrimination in sectors such as; healthcare (Muench, et al., 2015), private (Siniscalco, Damrell, & Nabity, 2014), education (Tharenou, 2014) and so on. Most government agencies regulate equal pay because of systems in place like standardized testing and examinations, and salary grading which have a fixed salary range for every position regardless of what gender occupies it. The difficulty in ascertaining the facts behind wage discrimination stems from the secrecy of organizations shielding the facts from the public (Kim, 2015). The onus, unfortunately, is on the woman to publicly voice these discriminations against in a bid to be equally compensated.

There are governmental entities that monitor equality in the workplace. The U.S. Department of Labor, U.S Commission on Civil Rights and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission are mostly involved for ensuring workers are fairly treated and are not discriminated against in any way. Nonprofit agencies have also joined the cause in fighting for equal pay and to close the gender wage gap. The responsibilities are on organizations to revisit their policies and human resources procedures to improve the process and change the standards to benefit everyone irrespective of gender.

United States Policy relating to Affirmative Action

Affirmative Action Act of 1986 ensures that appropriate act is taken to eliminate discrimination by the employment organization against women in employment related matters (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). An affirmative plan covers equality in employment and monitors the hiring process to ensure that all qualified applicants and employees are receiving equal opportunity for recruitment, selection, advancement, and every other term and privilege associated with employment (Electronic Code of Federal Regulations,

2015). It encourages women and minorities to enter competitions for job openings to put them at an advantage of being selected (Balafoutas & Sutter, 2012). Women and minorities are the focal point of this act as it includes practices and programs that organizations implement to evaluate the impact of equality in employment for all regardless of gender and status.

This plan determines availability of minorities and women in organizations as it estimates the number of available opportunities in relation to qualified minorities and women who are offered such positions. This plan guards against unlawful and bias hiring processes and supports the diversity in the American workplace by employing candidates on merits basis for women and minorities. In any organization, the affirmative action ensures that with any available titles and positions, minorities and women be given equal consideration and ensure that the percentage of this group in equal or higher positions is proportional to other groups.

Argument has been made that the affirmative action encourages reverse discrimination and lowering the qualifications of candidates hired because of the stipulations of the policy (Niederle, Segal, & Vesterlund, 2013). Proponents of the policy argue that this is a form of women and minority empowerment to diversify the work environment. Racism and sexism prevail in societies and workplaces and this policy helps to neutralize that. With many organizations offering no vital explanation on the huge discrepancy in gender and race of their staff, the affirmative plan if followed can offer avenues to eventually bridge the gap and increase the employment rates of women and minorities (Balafoutas, & Sutter, 2012).

Four states—California, Florida, Texas, and Washington—banned affirmative action citing various reasons like racial profiling and qualification disregard (Garces, 2013). The problem with banning such policy is that organizations hide under the banner that they only select qualified candidates and not by gender or race. The issue is that such organizations

indirectly discriminate against these groups as the records show that the staff ratio shows unfavorable statistics on this group (Garces, 2013). Prominent institutions like colleges and universities have also decided against this policy based on the fact that enrollment is only for the qualified and because an applicant is a minority or a female. Hinrichs (2014) added that states where this ban is in effect have showed considerable low enrollment and graduation rates for people of color. Hence, the need for affirmative action is stressed to ensure opportunities are given to underrepresented ethnicities and gender.

United States Policy relating to Equal Employment Opportunity

The U.S. Equal Employment Act of 1972 prohibits any organization from discriminating against any applicant based on race, color, religion or country of origin (US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2015). The American policy on equal employment opportunity entails that organizations are required to provide equal employment opportunities to applicants irrespective of country of origin or nationality. The problem still remains that many immigrants have a more difficult task of attaining leadership positions than their American-born counterparts despite having same qualifications and necessary skills to succeed in such positions. The difficult challenges women face that are already present in the American workplace enhances the need for policy reforms focused on leveling the status and criteria for immigrants in organizations who have the necessary skills and education to attain a leadership position.

For immigrant Nigerian women, the odds are even more stacked against them as data showed that women are currently earning less than their male counterparts (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013). The opportunities to attain leadership positions are present but the obstacles that hinder these opportunities are sometimes overbearing that many immigrant women rely on working medial or minimum wage jobs rather than go through a grueling process of trying to

attain such leadership positions (Bernhardt, Spiller, & Polson, 2013). One of the major goals of the United States for admitting foreigners is the skill set these immigrants possess and bring with them (Andersson et al., 2014). Studies have shown that the American economy is vastly improved by including immigrants who have specific skill sets designed to produce more efficient outcomes (Kerr & Turner, 2015; Kerwin, Chishti, & Bergeron, 2013; Manacorda, Manning, & Wadsworth, 2012). Despite the benefits of employing immigrants in the workplace, there appears to be growing discrimination of immigrants and wide wage disparities in comparison to their American counterparts (Card, 2012; Otaviano & Peri, 2012). Immigrants have little choice but to accept low-wage offers.

Workplace inequity continues to be rampant in many organizations (Wallace & King, 2013). Many employers subtly disregard the policy on equal employment opportunity even though they blatantly state they are fully cooperative. The increase in common litigation cases involving discrimination have led to calls from many equal rights organizations for tougher measures and monitoring of major organizations. Discrimination comes in many forms; age, sex, ethnicity, disability, and so on, and the equal employment opportunity commission prohibit these. Immigrants are more vulnerable to the negative effects of discrimination (Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, & Abdulrahim, 2012). With the many difficulties immigrants are faced with in regards to settling in, discrimination poses as the biggest one. Immigrants are discriminated against in every angle; education, employment, housing, and so on. The onus is on the federal government to thoroughly review major immigration policies to limit or outright prevent discrimination of this population.

Nigerian Immigration

Africans comprise 4% or 1.5 million of the nation's immigrant population (Capps, McCabe & Fix, 2012). This is no coincidence because of the limited opportunities in the continent and government corruption, among other problems that prevent Africans from benefitting from the resources they produce. Capps, McCabe and Fix (2012), identified West Africa and Anglophone countries as the major component of African immigrants. "Countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Cameroon, and Sierra Leone together accounted for 46% of all African immigrants. In 1980, Nigeria accounted for 37% of all African immigrants but that number has reduced considerably presently" (Capps; et al., p. 4). With the reformation of immigration policies, it is necessary to mention that Nigerians were prominent participants in the American visa lottery the U.S. government made available to foreigners to provide opportunities for Green Cards and naturalization. The population trend on immigrant Nigerians living in America has continued to grow with some states seeing a larger community of Nigerians (Boyd, 2011). Maryland, New York, and Texas have become populated with immigrant Nigerians and are well known for their cultural showcase and demonstrations especially during their annual Independence Day celebrations (Boyd, 2011). The population of Nigerian immigrants in the United States continues to grow at a steady rate.

Nigerian immigrants' continued growth in cities can be attributed to the many different reasons for migration and none better than the opportunity to create a successful life for themselves and their families (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). In studying the career aspirations of Nigerians in America, Balogun (2011) and Asoo (2014) explored the different stories of Nigerians who migrated to the United States. The consensus from these two authors is that Nigerians aspire to attain the highest possible career opportunities available to them. In sharing

the stories of some of the participants, the authors acknowledged that the desire to become successful and great among Nigerians is never lacking, but the common problem was the lack of awareness on how to go about these lofty goals became the hindering step.

There are many reasons that contribute to female Nigerians migrating to the United States. Some of the major reasons that have been explored in research include lack of respect and corruption (Azeez & Olawaiye, 2013), lack of employment (Akinsanya, 2011), lack of access to information for careers (Ojo-Ade, 2011), insecurity (Olusola & Marcus, 2014), poor education facilities and poor infrastructure (Nkechi, 2012), and widespread inequality (Afolayan, 2011). There is a variety of reasons for Nigerian women to migrate to the United States, many of which are linked to Nigeria.

Nigerian Culture and Influence on Women

The reason with the greatest impact on women migration to the United States is the culture present in Nigeria. As it stands, the Nigerian culture is one that puts women at the greatest disadvantage and lowest social status in comparison to their male counterparts. Culture is passed from generation to generation. Culture can be a unique characteristic that distinguishes a group from others. Nwaolikpe (2013) identified that the Nigerian culture is perpetuated in different forms like arts, music, language and food. However, there are cultural beliefs that have been passed on from generations that position women as inferior to men (Makama, 2013) and such has been embedded in the lives of generations over the years. Unfortunately, it has become a norm that Nigerian men belittle women at every opportunity they get. As it stands, the Nigerian culture is one that positions women at a disadvantage in social status, in comparison to men, and chiefly responsible for Nigerian women seeking to migrate to the United States. This is not just limited to individuals; research has proven that even as high as in the political sectors, women do

not get equal treatment as their male counterparts (Nwagbara & Umor, 2012). The marginalization is still noticeable in all of Africa and very much in Nigeria.

Cultural diversity has often been associated with Nigeria. With over 177.7 million people and over 500 indigenous languages, Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015). With this diversity and population come various and unique differences in culture. Nigerian women live in a secular country where male domination exists and they are left to fight for whatever is left behind by men (Ebohon, 2012). Being a woman is seen as a disadvantage in the Nigerian cultural context (Milazzo, 2014) as many husbands ultimately prefer sons for their pregnant wives (Ohagwu et al., 2015). Men who are unable to reproduce a male offspring are seen as weak but then ultimately transfer the blame to the women (Milazzo, 2014; Orisaremi & Alubo, 2012). The obvious limitation and discrimination is best explained by Ebohon (2012, p.2) when he wrote:

Women suffer considerable limitations in terms of access to resources for production such as land, capital and labor, relative to their male counterparts.

The consequence of gendered construction has been the rising feminization of poverty in the society. While women in Nigeria constitute about 49% of Nigeria's total population and about 60% of registered voters in the 1998-1999 period, they have remained grossly under-represented in the key sectors of the Nigerian State.

Nigerian women face numerous challenges in partaking in the major aspects of the nation. Their vulnerable state has made them targets of violence (O'Brien, 2010). In general, African women in general face more battery and physical assault in their homes than any other continent. Nigerian men culturally believe that it is important to show dominance over their

women and this knowledge has been passed to upcoming and younger generations to continue this trend despite calls to stop from several organizations like the World Health Organization.

There could be some psychological effect on the Nigerian woman even after migrating to another country. The notion that they are not equal to the man and are not capable of handling responsibilities reserved for men in Nigeria can affect the women's pursuit of career success (Ehigie & Umoren, 2013). The Nigerian culture influences the women into thinking they are incompetent of leadership positions and are subsequently relegated to battling for understudy and low level positions. Women's inferiority remains a big issue in many parts of Nigeria (Uchem, 2015), and have such had a negative psychological impact on the women in their pursuit for career success and leadership positions.

Education

In an economy where calls for improved education to promote resource efficiency are relatively high, Nigerians have often overlooked the need to educate their girls and would rather send their boys to colleges and education centers than the girls (Iro, 2015). The tertiary institutions are meant to promote growth, contribute to national development, and develop the intellectual capacity of the individuals to understand the environment (Iro, 2015). The cultural discrimination against women in Nigeria is well documented as education does not guarantee automatic employment, many families are encouraged to sell their daughters for early marriage rather than invest in their education (Alabi, 2013). The dominance of male gender in schools is a worrisome development. The lack of fairness in monopolizing an important sector to benefit the male gender more than the female is attributed to the cultural belief that women are better suited for home making than becoming great leaders (Ojo, Anitsal & Anitsal, 2015). Globally, there are

calls to provide affordable education in developing countries to improve the overall economic standing of such countries.

Dauda (2012) argued that the economic structure of Nigeria can only improve if policy reforms are created to encourage more participation and enrolment of females in schools. The primitive reasoning continues to baffle many proponents of equal education accessibility because of the obvious advantages of providing such. Limiting access to quality education only exposes the Nigerian women to more humiliation and struggle to maintain a level of respectability and social status in the community (Unterhalter, Heslop & Mamedu, 2013). Culturally, Nigeria has a long way to go because of the hardship it faces in relation to job opportunities. The rate of employment and the disparity among gender is a national problem. Many women are subjected to lesser careers because their husbands do not allow them to take on high level careers (Ehigie & Umoren, 2013) and hence, become the bread winner of the family. This presents as a slight to the man as he is deemed incapable and inadequate of taking care of his family. Education is vital to the growth of any nation and should be made available irrespective of gender as it presents in Nigeria.

Educating women in Nigeria, in some cultures, is prohibited because such cultures believe that the man is more deserving of the financial investments of education to be better prepared to provide for the family than the woman (Ibrahim, Tripathy & Kumar, 2014). Hence, this has led to lack of proper educational requirements for the women and subsequently, decreased job availability. Nigerian women are often discriminated against in access to education for social and economic reasons which have led to lack of growth in many aspects of the Nigerian economy (Olakulein & Ojo, 2014). The need for women empowerment is related to providing accessible education for the girls and women. For some cultures in Nigeria, the women

are left to seek alternatives to education like learning trades, or out rightly staying at home as housewives with no tangible means of income. With this, has led to the control men have on their significant others because they are the sole breadwinners of the family.

While studying the impact of education on women empowerment, Olakulein and Ojo (2014) found a relationship between lack of education and the woman's diminished place in the society. This evidence was found when the authors compared women who were educated with those who weren't and found that the educated women provided more balance to the society and their families than the uneducated. With the many advantages for educating women, it begs to need to understand why many cultures Nigeria still deny women of their simple rights of access to good and quality education. Education is viewed as a means of leveling the great gender disparity among men and women (Mack & Boyd, 2013) so some cultures, mostly dominated by men, have made a conscious effort to deprive the women of educational access to prevent their empowerment and eventual equality in other aspects. Education is the key to unlocking the many different qualities and abilities in women and should be provided to all regardless of gender.

Politics

In a patriarchal country that believes in male superiority, it is not a surprise that the role of women in politics is reduced to the minimum levels (Kolawole et al., 2012). In its 55 years of independence, Nigeria has never elected a female governor in any of the states, one exception occurred in Anambra state due to the impeachment of an incumbent governor but the woman was not re-elected after the term (Kolawole et al., 2012). The problem is largely related to the cultural belief of the nation that does not entertain the idea of a woman becoming a competent leader over men. The ingrained corruption standard in Nigeria certainly adds to the dilemma but the average Nigerian woman faces more difficult challenges to attain a political position than the

male counterpart (Ezeifeke & Osakwe, 2013; Ngara & Ayabam, 2013). Women are marginalized in the political sector in Nigeria. The issue of inadequate leadership capabilities by a woman is ingrained in the global phenomenon which hinders women from active participation in politics and matters relating to policies (Sunday, 2013) and there has been little to no improvement despite the supposed free and fair democracy the country insists it participates.

The role of women in politics is an ongoing debate that just never seems to go away or reach an ending. In the political history of Nigeria, there has not been any female elected to a top level political office (Eme, Onyishi & Nwaoha, 2014) and only 3.1% were elected into political office (Ngara & Anyabam 2013). This has been attributed to the lack of support from men and recognition of the impact women can have in politics. The culture which inevitably limits women does not acknowledge women as capable leaders and hence, creates a strong roadblock in their pursuit of political leadership (Ogbogu, 2012). The only viable means for women to reach a high level political office is by through appointment (Nelson, 2012). In a supposedly democratic nation, where elections are meant to be free and fair, the voters and candidates are always dominated by men leaving women to fight for the lesser political offices or support a male figure in the hopes of being appointed to an office when their candidate wins.

The dominance of men in political offices showed that women are often secluded from running for offices in politics (Kaplan, 2015). This male dominance has often pushed women to comfortable accept the nonpolitical roles of housewives. In a recent article, Kaplan (2015) noted that in a major city in Benin, Nigeria, a law was passed that actually forbade women from ever assuming a kingly role in the community. The segregation of Nigerian women in politics can be linked to reasons such as negative perception of women, low self-esteem, cultural and religious barriers and low level of educational attainment (Ngara & Ayabam, 2013).

Religious beliefs

African men are quick to point to the Bible passage that shows the woman created to be a helper to the man. This concept, so misconstrued and misinterpreted, have become the foundation of many homes in Nigeria as many men have relied on it as a standard and model to be respected by women (Uchem, 2015). The problem with this fallacy is that women are hence subjected to the role of helpers and consequently, not afforded the same opportunities as men to become successful in different areas. With the vast tribes and religions in Nigeria, one thing remains common; the woman is never seen as superior to the man. The culture and tradition and how they overlap is seen as ignorance because of the misinterpretation of it. The different kinds of religion are rooted in ancient history and many have not grasped the reasons for such practices.

Many cultures still worship female deities and gods which would have presented some form of reprieve that women could be powerful in the religious capacity. However, this notion has not translated into the value of women in these cultures as the inferiority complex that continues to plague the Nigerian woman has become a mainstay. There are so many instances where religion seemed to initiate unfairness towards women. The Nigerian Anglican community forbids women from being ordained (Nelson, 2012), the Islamic religion encourages polygamy (Bamgbade & Saloviita, 2014) and the difficult Sharia Law as practiced in Northern Nigeria places greater blame on women for offences such as adultery and fornication than sharing equal blame between the man and the woman (Kendhammer, 2013). As the country continues to progress and reach a more stable democratic state, the need to reform policies to focus on gender empowerment more so in leadership quarters is garnering national attention and religious leaders are slowly accepting the fact that women can have prominent place in the society as the men.

Religious gender bias is significant in many cultures in Nigeria. For example, the Northern states, mostly Muslims, ban women from leading prayer groups if a male is identified as a participant in that prayer. There is a high rate of inequality and gender bias in Muslim-dominated societies (Lussier & Fish, 2016). These can be attributed to the fact that the Muslim males do not see the Muslim female as a leader but as a servant with the sole responsibility of catering to the man. Although, these high levels of disparities are not evident in many Christianity-dominated societies, when intertwined with culture, the Christian man fails to see the value the woman brings besides playing second fiddle. The religious interpretations of the women's place in the society absolutely favor male dominance (Balogun, 2013) which continues to segregate women and limit opportunities to succeed.

Gender roles

Gender roles are evidently marginalized to support male dominance (Israel & Johnmark, 2014) and this has negatively impacted the intellectual mindset of many females as they have been trained to accept their roles as inferior to men. It is a cultural acknowledgment that men are the “bread winners” of the family and the woman's role in the family is to have kids, take care of the man and complete the house chores. Even in the 21st century, many homes in Nigeria still entertain this notion. Oluyemo and Ola (2014) showed Nigerian females are prominent in lesser roles like farming, sewing and housemaids. The increased domination of male in high level positions ultimately reduces the competition for places by virtue of the woman not seen as worthy candidates.

Linos, Slopen, Subramanian and Kawachi, (2013) studied the societal norm and acceptance of violence by Nigerian men on their women as a method of exerting authority and proving masculinity. The resort to violence against women is a cultural practice that has long

been overlooked as women bear the brunt of the violence against them but yet maintain silence as it is a tradition to be beaten by your husband (Chika, 2012). The low status of women in the country has made efforts to combat these crimes more difficult as many women accept their roles and as such, fail to report these incidences of violence against them for fear of retribution and even more battery. Accepting their fate is the dilemma many Nigerian women face. The strength to speak up is overshadowed by the harsh criticism, unfair blame, and judgment that would be passed on them for being disrespectful and disobedient to their men. Violence against women is frowned upon and advised against, but with the superiority Nigerian men assume they have over the women, they result to violence as a means of abusing that power.

Understanding the differences in gender role is only complicated by the cultural beliefs of cities that do not see the woman as being equal to the man. These cultures believe that the role of the woman is that of a helper, a stay at home wife and an obedient servant to the master (man). Women who chose to defy their men in the society paid a high price (Nelson, 2013). It is uncommon that women publicly oppose men in gatherings as the consequences far outweigh the benefits of doing so. As with decision making, the women are not encouraged to participate, however, Muhammed and Ndaeki, (2013) reported that women participation in decision making enhances economic improvement and social change. The diminished gender roles of women in Nigeria show a society that has a stunted economic growth and development and one that fails to recognize the impact of women empowerment. Women empowerment brings stability, growth and development to nations.

Challenges Facing Immigrant Nigerians in America

Immigrants face a level of difficulty in maintaining cultural composition and identity because of the difference in American culture. The organizational culture in the American

workplace is certainly different from that of the Nigerian workplace. Organizational cultures refer to the norms, values and beliefs that are unique for the members of an organization (Olasupo, 2011). There is a common lack of acceptance of female workers in many organization top positions (Strøm, D'Espallier, & Mersland, 2014). With the many different reasons for migrating to America, and most common being family, Nigerians are faced with the dilemma of sacrificing well-paying jobs in their home country just to experience living in America which seems like an achievement on its own (Ette, 2011). Immigrants experience some level of discrimination in the workplace (Nwabah and Heitner, 2009) and subsequently, take on manual labor jobs just to support their families (Cangiano & Walsh, 2014). This situation is further complicated because of the educational background, experience, and social status of these women in their home country.

Among the many challenges faced by immigrants in America is the difficulty involved in trying to assimilate into the American culture (Cherry & Lucas, 2015; Rumbaut, 2011). The American culture is unique and very different in comparison to the Nigerian culture. The gender inequality that has plagued developing nations like Nigeria is not as rampant in the United States because of updated policy reforms but the immigrant is still faced with more difficult challenges than the native-born American (Cangiano & Walsh, 2014). The process of assimilating into the American culture is a daunting task for immigrants of third world nations because of the culture shock (Campbell & Kean, 2013). The language, dress code, mannerisms, food and overall behavior of the American populace are very different from the Nigerian culture and this lengthens the acclimatization period for these immigrants. This in turn affects how Nigerians perform at their given jobs because of the different process even for occupations with similar expertise such as medicine.

Women immigrants are exposed to even greater bias and discrimination than are male immigrants. Migrant workers are likely to be overlooked in employment opportunities (Ram et al., 2013). In the different sectors, women possess equal or higher qualifications than the men but are still not on equal grounds in terms of pay and opportunities (Johnson, 2014; Kelsey et al., 2014). As previous studies have shown, women are often overlooked in top level career positions in education (Tamerius, 2010; Yussuff, 2014; Grogran & Shakeshaft, 2010), military (Bragg, 2013), and businesses (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011). Women's rights continues to be an ongoing debate for even an advanced economy like the United States (Mcbride & Parry, 2014) but minimal progress has been achieved to close the gap in inequality between male and female in the job market.

There is a reality shock for immigrants as they gradually learn that the American workplace is not all rosy as advertised in their home countries (Jose, 2011). The idea that the United States is a land of many opportunities and one has to be really lazy not to at least attain some form of high status is often fed into the minds of Nigerians (Aju & Orugun, 2014). This misleading fact has led some to be unprepared for the hardships they encounter after migrating to America. The difference in the socio-economic status is another area that has posed as a greater challenge for immigrant Nigerians in America. There is a significant drop in the social status of immigrant Nigerians after immigration (Fossland, 2013; Hauser, 2014). The known experiences of how polished female professionals in fields like medicine, education, and government policy in Nigeria became irrelevant after migrating to the United States for various reasons will be studied. Halter (2014) supports the need for more research on how to improve underlying criteria for hiring immigrants into high level positions and careers.

Summary

There are impediments to women's career advancement in Nigeria (John-Kolade & Kehinde, 2013) and these translates to their experiences in the American workplace and are yet to be studied. People participating in the African Diasporas in several parts of world all share a common interest of succeeding in their new country (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). There have been several studies on the experiences of migrating to the United States but there are no studies on the individual leadership experiences of women in the American workplace. This study used the same criteria to focus on immigrant Nigerian women in New York City that Nwabah and Heitner (2009) used to study Nigerian women in Texas. The role of American policies on the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity were also vital to fully understanding the challenges the immigrant Nigerian women faced.

Organizations that work with immigrant women seeking leadership positions may utilize the outcome of this study to help such women achieve this goal. The Social Construction Theory was the theoretical framework for this study because it focuses on the participants who are directly involved with the problem and to gather their experiences. This study intended to interpret the lived experiences of the participants and what impact their status made in their quests of attaining leadership positions. The Nigerian culture and its influence on women in areas like education, religious beliefs, gender roles and politics were all discussed to show relevance on the struggles Nigerian women face in their native countries and how it affected the decision to migrate to the United States. Chapter 3 discusses the methods of inquiry, how the participants were selected, and how the data were collected, organized, and analyzed.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women who have lived in New York City for a minimum of 10 years, and who overcame different obstacles to attain leadership positions in their fields. The purpose of this chapter was to present the study's methodology, which reflects the guiding questions and its sub-questions. The methodology includes approach, design, participants, how the data were collected and analyzed and finally, how the findings were verified.

Immigrants from developing countries, including Nigeria, hope to take advantage of the vast opportunities in the United States; they seek a better life. But migrating to a new country is a challenging experience for many. For one, there are the cultural differences; for another, there are the American policies relating to equal employment, equal pay, and affirmative action. I sought to understand the different experiences Nigerian women have had in their quest for leadership positions. The social constructivism theory (SCT) of population helped explore these individual experiences.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research methodology was selected to study a topic that focuses on interaction with participants. Qualitative research "provides an in-depth, detailed information which explores issues and their context, clarifying what, how, when, where, and by and among whom behaviors and processes operate" (Bryant, 2011, p. 75). Qualitative researchers seek to provide a full comprehension and understanding of the problem and experiences. Nigerian women immigrants in leadership positions New York City workforce have been exposed to many different experiences. It is these individual views, experiences, and perceptions that were

explored using the qualitative research design. As this is a replication of the study initially done by Nwabah and Heitner (2009), the templates were slightly modified and the research questions were also changed to include public policies and their impacts on the participants' experiences.

Research Design

Qualitative research includes the following five types: narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Creswell, 2013). Of these, the phenomenological approach was chosen to examine the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in the New York City workforce. Phenomenological design focused solely on the participants and described their common experiences (Creswell (2013).

The other four types of inquiry were considered, but none directly explored the experiences of these women who shared a common phenomenon. For example, ethnography involves studying the characteristics of a group of people and the activities of the people in the group by actively participating in the group (Moustakas, 1994). Because ethnography mainly involves participant observation, with limited formal interviews, it would not be ideal for understanding the concept of being a female Nigerian immigrant in the United States. Also, the population for this study was not large enough to use this form of inquiry.

Grounded theory seeks to investigate a process, with the goal of developing a theory (Birks & Mills, 2011). But in seeking to understand the experiences of these women, in the context of attaining leadership goals, it would be of little help.

The narrative method of inquiry was considered but it ultimately did not provide sufficient backbone to exploring and understanding the meaning of the experiences. It does well to narrate how participants describe incidents they experienced, but for this study, narration will not completely help describe the actual meaning of the experiences (Potter, 2013).

A phenomenological approach is concerned with what is being currently experienced as a result of a common phenomenon and most appropriate to understand the professional challenges of female Nigerian immigrants in New York City and how the government can refine its policies to make immigration and acculturation easier.

Nwabah and Heitner (2009) used a hermeneutical approach for their study because I experienced the same phenomenon and hence was in perfect position to provide interpretive meaning of experiences of other participants. This study followed a similar pattern but was an illustrative phenomenological based approach. Rudestam and Newton (2014) expanded on the illustrative phenomenological approach by explaining this method as involving I collecting descriptions from open ended questions through interviews with the participants and relating them to the problem and purpose statements.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was that of a participant because, in line with phenomenological inquiry, the researcher is directly involved in the conversation and interaction with the participants. The researcher is the interviewer who schedules interviews with participants and leads the interview process and data collection. There were no known relationships, either personally or professionally, with any of the participants. The researcher is a male Nigerian immigrant but had techniques in place to guard against researcher biases. These techniques included member checking and fact checking with participants. I sought out to explore the leadership experiences of the participants in the New York City workforce and hence did not invoke any comparisons with female experiences in Nigeria to prevent biased responses and opinions.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study consisted of 12 women using a combined criterion and snowball sampling methods. The decision for selecting 12 candidates for the study is based on the population of the study in New York City. A phenomenological researcher can choose a sample size between five to twenty-five depending on the amount of previous research done in similar contexts and provided that saturation of the responses has not occurred. (Moustakas, 1994). As Moustakas (1994) explained, saturation occurs when there is no longer new information being obtained from new participants in the research. Criterion sampling is critical to this study because it means that all individuals to be studied have experienced or are currently experiencing the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The need for snowball or chain sampling is important because it allows for better target of information-rich participants (Patton, 2002). The sampling of the population is important because it allows for estimation of the qualities in a larger data set (O'Sullivan, Rassel & Berner, 2008). As with the criteria sampling, potential participants were individually approached for a pre-screening for criteria, and participant met the criteria, a verbal consent to participate was offered. If a potential participant did not meet the criteria, a referral to other potential participants who met the minimum criteria was asked. In essence, there was not a limit on the participant's career field, except that they must meet the parameters for the study. As per Nwabah and Heitner (2009), the parameters set for this study were as follows:

- Gender: female
- Employment status: currently employed in a leadership role for a minimum of 1 year and overseeing a minimum of 5 employees
- Country of origin and status: Nigerian immigrant

- New York City resident: minimum of 10 years.

The location to meet 3-5 participants who met the criteria as described above was Vineyard International Christian Ministries. This is a local Nigerian church and thus served as a great location to meet participants. A Letter of Cooperation was sent to one of pastors for permission to grant access to participants. Participants were recruited through informal conversations to gauge their interest to participate after which they were asked for referrals to other participants who may meet the criteria using the snowball sampling by handing out the flyer in Appendix C. A formal letter seeking the participant's agreement to participate in the proposed study was sent to the participants to begin the interview process. This letter is found in Appendix A.

Measures

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in the New York City. For this case, the targeted samples to be studied are Nigerian women in the New York City workforce who are already in leadership. An immigrant Nigerian woman for this study would have lived in the United States for a minimum of 10 years to be considered. This is important because it provides validity to their experiences by ensuring the participant had ample time to adjust and focus on a career path. The generalized research questions to better understand their recounted experiences are included below. However, the specific Interview Questions (IQs) are included in Appendix B.

Research Questions and Sub-questions

The research questions are different from those utilized in the pilot study by Nwabah and Heitner (2009) because I focused on a different set of public policies which are gender-related and anti-discriminatory.

1. What are the experiences of female Nigerian immigrants in the United States who have attained leadership positions?
 - i. What impact does United States public policy relating to the Equal Pay Act have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?
 - ii. What impact does United States public policy relating to Affirmative Action have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?
 - iii. What impact does United States public policy relating to Equal Employment Opportunity have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?

Ethical Protection of Participants

For this study, the volunteer participants were adult female Nigerian immigrants. There was no projected harm, either physical or psychological, associated with this study. However, if any harm occurred to any of the participants, the necessary actions will be taken to address it. Local authorities and relevant parties would be contacted. Each participant was presented with a consent form to complete prior to the interview that offered confidentiality of information. The interview sessions were recorded with an audiotape and all files pertaining to the confidentiality of the participant were stored in a password-protected safe; only I had access to them. Any identifying information on the transcripts was removed or redacted prior to validation of the data by outside parties. A copy of the consent to use audiotape and statement of confidentiality is located in Appendix D.

Procedures

The following steps were maintained as a guide in recruiting and informing participants, collecting and analyzing data and finally, validating the findings from the data.

1. Attended local Nigerian meetings and churches and engage potential participants to ensure they met the criteria for the study.
2. After acknowledging their intent to participate, a phone call to give them a brief overview of the nature of the study was scheduled.
3. Prior to scheduled interview date, a consent form to use audiotape and statement of confidentiality, found in Appendix D, was sent to the participants along with the Interview Questions found in Appendix B.
4. The interview sessions lasted no more than 45 minutes and were open-ended allowing the participants to be more expressive and forthcoming with their responses.
5. Audiotapes were transcribed and analyzed as described later in this chapter.
6. Participants received a copy of their transcripts and audio recordings for review to ensure the information they intended to pass across was received appropriately.
7. An independent transcriber was contracted to transcribe the audiotape recordings.

Data Collection

Data was collected through one on one interview with the participants, although three of the participants preferred phone interviews. A semi-structured interview was utilized to collect data and gain different perspectives from the participants. The semi-structured nature allowed for all the participants to be interviewed the same questions (Qu & Dumay, 2011), however, I asked follow-up questions based on the answers the participants provided. To ensure validity and reliability, I utilized the services of an expert in the field of phenomenological research and

interview techniques who reviewed the structure and content of the questions and ensured the questions capture the study's intent and focus on the problem of study. My intent was to collect data that solely addressed the problem of the study so the Interview Questions focused on the areas that related to the immigrant Nigerian women leadership experiences in the New York City workforce. The questions were reliable as all participants had the option of answering them within the context of their own experiences. The extent to which the evidence and rationale support the appropriateness and adequacy of the measurement is important to show validity and reliability (Guion, 2002). The validity of the questions is rooted in the responses provided. How well the questions reflect the main problem topic was examined by relating content of responses to the questions. Also, criterion validity shows that all participants met the minimum criteria for participating. Data collection did not begin until the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The early parts of the interview focused on the background of the participants as I sought out to identify an underlying relationship between the participants and the validity of their responses. It is important to build a rapport with the participant to allow them more freewill to participate and become engaged with the topic and questions as the interview session progresses. Rapport building with the participants can lead to mutual trust and honest sharing of personal information as well as reduce tension and uneasiness between two unfamiliar people (Elmir et al., 2011; Kieckhaefer, Vallano & Schreiber Compo, 2014). A more relaxed environment means better rapport for both the participant and I.

The interview session then progressed towards the participants' experiences in the New York place City as a leader. It is important to investigate this spectrum to fully grasp the different experiences the participants go through in their quest for leadership attainment. United States policies relating to the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity

and how it affected the leadership aspiration of the participant were explored. Other topics addressed that were included in the process are their educational background and professional history, immigrant status and how it played a role in attaining their current positions in the workplace. Open ended questions were used during the interviewing sessions. These open ended questions allowed for active participation and freedom for the participants to go into more depth with their responses (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2011; Qu & Dumay, 2011).

The sub-questions are focused on the United States government policies on the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity and how it impacted the participants' quest for leadership positions. Interviews are important for interaction and listening to these individuals explain and recount their experiences is important in the generating new data and findings on the topic (Angel, 2013). The intent of this study was to capture as much information on individual perspectives to help Nigerian female immigrants achieve their career goals and organizations helping them.

The interview with the participants was conducted in a relaxed and comfortable location of their own choices. I maintained an active communication log with the participants, via phone and e-mail. After the interview date, time, and location had been agreed upon, other options were made available in case of cancellations or reschedules. Each interview session was taped at the knowledge of the participants. Notes were also taken during the interviews to inform on the environment and nonverbal cues of the participants. Nonverbal cues in interviews can be useful in understanding how a participant reacts to certain questions which can then allow me to probe for more information (Knapp, Hall & Horgan, 2013). Hesitation to respond and silent pauses can mean more pressing is needed to gather more data from the participant (Siegman & Feldstein,

2014). My notes and transcribed interview data were available to the participants to review. The recorded tapes from the interviews were transcribed and then analyzed.

Data Analysis

The organization of data collected is important in analysis of the data. How data is organized can make analysis very difficult or easy to complete. Data was organized by systematically storing the transcripts from each interview. For example, all responses for each participant were stored in a separate file and this system was used for all the Interview Questions and responses. During the course of the interview, some follow up questions were asked based on the individual's response and these transcripts were stored as well. For the sake of privacy, the interviewees' names were not mentioned as per the agreement they signed. However, two participant accidentally mentioned their names during the course of the interview but I guaranteed them such information would not be seen or heard by anyone. Lacey and Luff (2001) advised that it is important to remove names and identifiable data from the transcripts if it will be seen by a third party. These transcribed data were backed up in three different storage locations to prevent loss of data. The locations are three different flash drives and a password-protected home computer only accessible to me.

The next step in the analysis stage was to gain a general overview and familiarity with the data. A modified Van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data was used analyze data to reveal key themes. This method involved using the full transcription of each participant, abstracting notable quotes and responses and clustering them to develop themes that are compatible with the expressions of each participant (Moustakas, 1994). This was done by listening to the audio tapes and reading both the transcripts and the notes taken during the interviews several times. It is important that the researcher is familiar with the data to be

analyzed to prevent biased, inconclusive, and inaccurate analysis (Lacey & Luff, 2001). The next step was coding of the data. It was at this stage that I sought out to find relevance to the phenomenon being studied. The responses that fittingly met or addressed the phenomenon were highlighted and coded. Responses that provided knowledge on the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in New York City will be coded. The analytic stage can be difficult to navigate so I used the inductive analysis to develop a probable meaning to the responses from the participants (Heit, 2000). With this analysis tool, personal life experiences can be captured to a broader sense and made meaning of which can be generalized.

After coding important statements and responses, I then identified themes from the highlights and codes. “Themes come both from data (an inductive approach) and from our prior theoretical understanding of whatever phenomenon we are studying” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 53). Themes are words that are used multiple times by the participants. It could mean a common problem that affects immigrant women. To identify these themes, Ryan and Bernard (2003) listed some techniques that are useful. The authors advised to look out for repetitions, indigenous typologies or categories, metaphors and analogies, transitions, similarities and differences, linguistic connectors, missing data, and theory-related material. These are all components to the inductive approach of analysis. “The inductive approach involves analyzing data with little or no predetermined theory, structure or framework and uses the actual data itself to derive the structure of analysis” (Burnard et al., 2008, p. 3). After having identified these themes, I comprehensively reported on the findings and developed a final description of the individual and collective experiences of the participants.

A formal and comprehensive description was the final step in data analysis. After having transcribed and coded the data, I then identified themes after which a full description of the

findings was then required. Data analysis is not complete until the researcher have reported the major themes in a more descriptive manner to be interpreted by the readers. The goal was to capture the individual findings and then describe and interpret them as a group. Hence, it is important to capture every detail that can serve as a defining theme and these could include the nonverbal cues. This description presented a better understanding of the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in the United States. Qualitative comprehensive descriptions “must accurately convey events in their proper sequence, or have descriptive validity and the meanings participants attributed to those events” (Sandelowsky, 2000, p. 3). To this end, direct quotes of participants’ responses were included in the comprehensive description.

Verification of Findings

Verifying data described from the findings is important to guard against researcher bias. Qualitative researchers commonly use data verification. Hence, I sent the transcripts and notes of the interviews back to the participants for review and validation.

The need to address researcher bias is also important in maintaining the standards of scholarly writing (Creswell, 2013). The researcher is a male Nigerian immigrant who has had experiences in leadership positions in New York City. Researchers bring their different levels of experiences. Prejudices and bias is inevitable in research but by stating this in advance of the study, the potential for bias is reduced (Simundic, 2013; Smith & Noble, 2014). The social constructivism theory was important in showing that my perception did not affect the outcome of the study on immigrant women.

The findings were described in details to show participant interpretation and meaning of experiences and what roles United States policies related to the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity played in affected the leadership goals of the

participants. Direct quotes from the interviews were used to describe some of the individual experiences of the participants. Hunt (2011) advised that researchers use direct quotes to add richness and depth to the findings. This is a major source of data verification as the comprehensive description using direct quotes showed active involvement of participants in the data collection process which can be validated. A substantial write-up that carefully details the data captured is essential to showing the validity and reliability of the processes used in gathering and analyzing the data.

Summary

Phenomenological method of inquiry allows me to interact and communicate with the participants of a study to gather information-rich responses and data (Moustakas, 2001). To capture the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in New York City, it is important to focus on the individual's different perspectives and how they were impacted by the United States government policies on the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity. The research questions showed justification in approach and clear correlation between the intent of the study and the problem and purpose of the study. My role as the researcher was to conduct an unbiased study as an interviewer. The sampling and instrumentation are necessary due to the unknown population of immigrant Nigerian immigrants in New York City so the recruitment of potential participants warranted a criterion and snowball sampling strategies. The ultimate goal was to protect the integrity and confidentiality of the participants and hence, the ethical conducts as described by the IRB were strictly adhered to.

Chapter 4 included the settings and demographics of the research and how data was collected and analyzed to show the results and findings.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in leadership positions across New York City in different job sectors. The reason for this study was to explore what impact these U.S. policies had on these women achieving their career goals. The semi-structured nature of the Interview Questions was based on the experiences of the participants and their perceptions of how immigrant women are viewed by peers, colleagues, and subordinates who are also in leadership positions. Adding to the importance of this study, I also focused on the impact of U.S. public policies related to the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity on the goals and roles of the participants with regards to their immigrant status and leadership positions. This was a replication of the study conducted by Nwabah and Heitner (2009); they studied the same parameters for immigrant Nigerian women in Texas.

To do this, I used the research questions below to fully explore these lived experiences and the connection the aforementioned policies have with the immigrant achieving their individual career goals of becoming a leader in New York City.

The research question was as follows:

1. What are the experiences of female Nigerian immigrants in the United States who have attained leadership positions?

However, to further validate and explore the relationship and impact of the United States policies, three sub-questions, each of which identified a public policy, was sought out:

- i. What impact does U.S. public policy relating to the Equal Pay Act have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?

- ii. What impact does U.S. public policy relating to Affirmative Action have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?
- iii. What impact does U.S. public policy relating to Equal Employment Opportunity have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?

This chapter also discusses the setting of the interviews, participant demographics and characteristics, how the data were collected and analyzed, evidence of trustworthiness (including credibility and dependability), and finally, the results of the data collection and analysis.

Methodology

A phenomenological design was used to explore the lived experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in leadership positions in New York City. The idea was to focus on their overall experiences, whether positive or negative, and what role public policies relating to the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action, and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission played in helping these women achieve their goals. Vineyard International Christian Ministries was the first point of outreach to engage potential clients. Having received a Letter of Cooperation from one of the residing pastors, I went to several of its Sunday services to engage participants. I approached several of the women to sort through who met the criteria and who would be interested in participating. Unfortunately, only three women met the criteria.

Not to be discouraged, I handed out the flyer to the women who met the criteria and six others who didn't meet the criteria but acknowledged they might know a friend who does. I received numerous calls from different women spread across New York City that were interested in the study. I screened these women on the phone to ensure they met all the criteria which led to an additional 9 participants for the study. However, three of the participants mentioned

beforehand that they would not be available for in-person interview sessions but are open to conducting a phone interview. I verified with my chairperson, Dr. Singh who authorized this means of data collection. A transcription agency was contracted to transcribe the audiotape recordings which they did after signing the Confidentiality Agreement Form (Appendix D). This was done via email and it took 48 hours from the day I sent the audiotapes to when I received the transcripts.

Setting

There were two conditions that might have influenced two participants and their responses to the interview questions. P10 was pregnant and nearing her due date. During the interview session, she experienced some discomfort and I reacted by asking to suspend and postpone the interview for another time but she declined the request insisting that she will not have any free time after the interview date to meet. The rest of her responses was rushed to expedite the process and end it earlier than expected. P12) experienced a personal loss in her family as a relative passed during the week of the interview. She was brave enough to go ahead with the interview as planned but I felt that her opinions might not have been fully thought through. These two conditions might have influenced the responses of the two participants but the overall interpretation of the results was not affected by it.

Demographics

The 12 female participants interviewed for this study were Nigerian immigrants and leaders in some capacity in their respective organizations. These participants varied in levels of leadership experience, education, number of years of residence in New York City. The different job sectors included; private, nonprofit, government or public, education and health. The

experiences of the participants which are discussed in the upcoming section varied depending on what job sector they worked for. The participants' profiles are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Participants

Descriptors	Year of migration	Highest education level attained	Job sector	Religion	No. of staff supervised (approx.)
P1	1995	Masters	Nonprofit	Christian	10
P2	1995	Bachelors	Govt./Health	Christian	20
P3	1997	MD	Nonprofit/Health	Christian	8
P4	1987	PhD	Education	Christian	15
P5	1993	Bachelors	Govt./Health	Christian	40
P6	1992	Masters	Govt./Health	Christian	12
P7	1996	Bachelors	Public	Christian	40
P8	2005	Bachelors	Private	Christian	10
P9	2008	Bachelors	Nonprofit	Christian	25
P10	1997	Masters	Education	Christian	10
P11	1982	Bachelors	Private	Christian	25
P12	1999	PhD	Education	Christian	10

The criteria for selecting the participants were based upon the following: (a) must be a female Nigerian immigrant; (b) must be employed in a leadership role for a minimum of 1 year and overseeing a minimum of five staff; (c) must be a New York City resident for a minimum of 10 years.

Data Collection

After receiving approval from the Walden Institution Review Board (IRB, Approval No. 02-05-16-0482839), I began the data collection process. To ensure validity and reliability of the research I: (a) maintained the standards set by Walden's IRB; (b) ensured that only candidates who met the criteria were interviewed; (c) ensured that proper protocols were followed including receipt of signed consent from participants prior to conducting the interview; (d) ensured that the

interview sessions were tape recorded at the knowledge of the participant; (e) ensured that each interview was transcribed and a copy sent back to the interviewee for verification; and (d) all data collected were stored in a password-protected safe only accessible to me.

Having already received approval from one of the resident pastors to approach the women, I waited till after church service to begin informal conversations and introducing myself to the potential participants. Initially, many of the women I approached did not meet the criteria to be studied so it was frustrating. I continued to attend church services and finally got a breakthrough when I approached three different women and all met the criteria and showed interest in the study. A copy of the consent form was sent to the 3 participants for review and to schedule a time and place to meet.

The flyer (Appendix C) helped a great deal with recruiting participants. I had approached a colleague who worked for a nonprofit that focused on immigration and asked if she knew any potential candidates. After reviewing the flyer, she directed me to 5 potential participants who met the criteria. I reached out to these women and got a response from 3 of them. A pre-screening of the criteria was quickly done and they all met the criteria for the study and the consent form which detailed the nature and intent of the study and their anticipated involvement was forwarded to the women. I distributed the flyers to the women who met the requirements to assist with the snowball sampling technique that was mentioned to be used to recruit participants and I received many calls from women who showed great interest in the study and who volunteered to participate. I began screening for the criteria and the field of potential participants was whittled down to six more women to add to the six already consented to participate.

I intended to meet the participants at their convenience and hence, opted to work with the schedules and availability of the participants. However, as earlier stated in Chapter 3, three of the

participants mentioned they would be unavailable to meet in person but were very much interested in discussing and sharing their experiences. I explained this to my chairperson whom approved this mode of data collection. The first five participants and P8 all (P1 – P5 and P8) made arrangements to meet me at their place of work. These locations varied because of the different job sectors they were involved in. The locations included the all the other boroughs in New York City excluding Staten Island. For reliability of data, participants' job locations were in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens.

I tried to locate potential participants in Staten Island and even posted flyers in front of libraries, train and bus stations but was unsuccessful. This was included in the limitations of the study section of this research article. Participants 7, 11 and 12 (P7, P11 and P12) decided to interview in the confines of their homes so I traveled to their homes to interview them. They were all graceful enough to offer refreshments after the interview sessions which were appreciated. The remaining three participants (P6, P9 and P10) preferred to interview over the phone. The major problem I encountered with this approach was the inability to observe nonverbal cues. As Knapp, Hall and Horgan (2013) mentioned, these cues are important to I to probe for more information based on the responses of the participant. Another problem using this method of data collection was that the voice recordings weren't as clear as the in-person recordings. This was highlighted by the transcription agency as they reported greater difficulty processing the audio recordings of the phone interviews.

There were not a lot of variations in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3. I initially intended to interview 10 participants for the study. With the high response rate received from the flyers, I decided to accept two more participants who fully met the criteria and worked in job sectors I had not received any participants yet. The other variation was the phone

interviews. I did not plan to have any phone interviews except calls to interviewed participants for clarifications on responses they gave. I found this method more relaxing and comforting as I was able to make these calls in the comfort of my own home. The interviews lasted between the ranges of 13 minutes to 35 minutes. Table 2 below represents the range and number of participants.

Table 2

Interview Time Log

Interview time range (min.)	Number of participants
15 – 20	9
20 – 30	2
30 – 40	1

The major reason for the huge discrepancy in time of response is that question 1 on the Interview Questions mainly asked; When did you move to the United States? This is a straightforward question that the participant wasted no time to respond to. With the semi-structured format of the interview questions, I was able to probe and ask more questions depending on the responses I received like did you move by yourself or you came with family, friends or relatives? This allowed for more rapport with the participants especially in the initial stages of the interview. The differential in time range did not impact the content of the participants' responses as all questions were answered and elaborated upon as needed.

After all interviews had been completed and the notes collected, I ensured that all information were entered and stored in a password protected safe and drive only accessible to me. During the earlier stages of data collection, I reached out to a transcription agency to obtain an agreement to transcribe the data I was collecting. I sent the Confidentiality Agreement Form (Appendix D) which was subsequently completed, signed and emailed back to me. I opted to

wait till all interview sessions were completed and recorded before sending the audiotape recordings to the transcription agency. After the agency's initial review of the recordings, I was informed that the agency would not guarantee a 99% transcription success because of two major issues: (a) heavy accents by some of the participants; and (b) lack of clearer voice because of the phone-taped interviews. I agreed to the transcription which took a turnaround time of 4 business days after date of payment. These transcribed files were also stored in password-protected safe and drive.

Data Analysis

This process began as early as the first interview session. Inductive analysis to develop a probable meaning to the responses (Heit, 2000) was used at this stage of the study. While I waited to interview all 12 participants before sending the recordings to the transcription agency, I began to code interview sessions as soon as I completed each one. I listened to the recordings multiple times while making new notes on possible themes, keywords and words that repeated several times. The main focus of this strategy is to understand the underlying meaning behind the responses and experiences of the participants and to then provide a collective description in the lenses of the researcher. As Moustakas (1994) advised, the experiences of each participant are important in describing how the overall phenomenon was experienced. By listening to the audiotape recordings of each interview immediately after the interview sessions, I was able to highlight major themes that developed from those sessions while not relying on the transcribed notes yet. This strategy also points to the validity of the themes because my only and most important source of data coding was data collected directly from the participants.

With the important statements and responses directly from the audiotape recordings now coded, I began a systematic coding where the audiotape recordings were played as the transcripts

were read. With a highlighter in hand, I highlighted sentences and phrases that directly answered the interview questions. This technique was useful in cross-referencing the statements and responses I noted from listening to only the audiotapes. I decided against using any software program because I wanted to grasp the intended meaning of the participants' responses manually. This approach was more difficult as the computer software would have easily coded the transcripts and notes; however, I found it to be very rewarding and ensured greater attention to words, synonyms, sentences and phrases.

The Interview Questions were grouped under the research questions to provide a laser focus on the responses and to correctly identify the data that sheds more meaning on the research questions. Tables 3 and 4 below shows how these questions were arranged for effective coding.

Table 3

Main Research Question and Corresponding Interview Questions

Main Research Question:	What are the experiences of female Nigerian immigrants in the U. S. who have attained leadership positions?
Interview Question 2:	How would you describe your position of leadership?
Interview Question 3:	Could you tell me how you came to be in this position of leadership?
Interview Question 4:	How does being an immigrant woman affect your leadership position in your organization?
Interview Question 5:	Has your status as an immigrant affected your experience of becoming a leader? If so, in what ways?
Interview Question 6:	Have there been situations when you felt like you were treated unfairly because of your immigrant status? If so, can you please provide an example?

Table 4

Sub-Research Question and Corresponding Interview Questions

	What impact does United States public policy on the Equal Pay Act have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?
	What impact does United States public policy on Affirmative Action have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?
Sub Research Questions	What impact does United States public policy on Equal Employment Opportunity have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?
Interview Question 7:	Do you think the United States policies on the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have impacted your goals in the United States? In what ways?
Interview Question 8:	Are there ways in which United States policies the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have positively or negatively impacted your role as an immigrant woman in a leadership position? If so, can you describe them?
Interview Question 9:	With your experiences so far with these United States policies mentioned above, what advices can you give newly female Nigerian immigrants or women in Nigeria contemplating migrating to the United States soon?

Categories and Codes

The importance of grouping the Interview Questions with the research questions was evidenced by the development of categories and codes that emerged from my notes and transcribed interview data. Themes and key words from my repeated listening to the audiotapes were mapped out and compared with the codes and generated from listening to the audiotapes and reading the transcribed interview excerpts at the same time.

Table 5

Researcher Codes Comparison

Audiotape recordings only	Audiotapes, researcher notes, and transcribed data
Challenging	Difficulty to adapt
Education	Challenging
Accent	Language barrier
Prejudice	Inferiority complex
Stereotype	Favoritism
Career change	Disrespect
Hard work	Education
Remain focused	Empowerment
Seek mentors and advisors	Social circle
Negativity	Better opportunities
Lack of respect	Discrimination
Preferential treatment	Gain knowledge
Lack of support	Unequal pay
Communication issues	Lack of leverage
Perseverance	Gender issues
	Racial issues
	Major obstacles
	Family demands
	Positioned to fail

Table 5 showed more similarities than differences to the general themes derived from the strategy employed by I to code only audiotape recordings and the audiotape with I notes and interview transcripts.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To ensure data credibility, reliability and validity, I checked with the participants to verify my findings and accuracy of data collected. I immediately asked to replay the audiotape recordings after the interview which was agreed upon by 50% of the participants. The remaining opted to receive a copy of audio along with the transcripts. After I received the transcripts from the transcription agency, I proceeded to send a copy to the respective participants including the

audiotapes and researcher notes I took during the interview sessions. I waited for about a week and reached out to the participants through email, text messages or phone calls. Participants 4 and 12 (P4 and P12) who ironically are in the education sector provided a list of feedback, additions and subtractions to the transcript. The other participants verified the data and all accepted it was accurate from their perspective.

After coding the data and analyzing it, I began to write a formal and comprehensive description of the data collected using participants' direct quotes as is discussed in the next section. The use of direct quotes is important in ensuring data reliability and validity as it adds richness and depth to the findings (Hunt, 2011).

Results

This section provides a comprehensive description of the experiences of the participants. Many of the individuals' direct quotes are highlighted in this section depending on the research and interview questions. This section will include a complete analysis of the participants' intents and messages they tried to convey and how their responses were received and interpreted. This section will include a breakdown of the research and sub-questions and the direct focus of the Interview Questions on those questions. Finally, the general themes will be described in detail using direct quotes to convey meanings to the questions.

Themes

After having coded and analyzed data collected from the interviews, several themes emerged per interview questions. These themes were shared across the 12 participants either through using same words or sentences or through my coding of terms using synonyms.

Research Question

The first and main research questions asked; what are the experiences of female Nigerian immigrants in the U. S. who have attained leadership positions? This presented as the focal point of the study as it directly relates to the intent and purpose of the study. The interview questions that were aligned to discuss this research question as highlighted in Table 3 are explained in the upcoming sections with participants' direct quotes.

Unrecognized Leadership. Interview Question 2 asked the participants to describe their position of leadership they all had nearly identical opinions on how they are viewed as a leader except P9 and P11 because they were involved in the private sector and hence, were their own bosses and hired their own staff which made leadership recognition a lot easier for them.

Participant 9 explained:

P9: I work in a private nonprofit agency where I started a company that focuses on helping children in West Africa obtain great education. I am the CEO of this organization so I hire staff on my terms.

P11: I own my business and my staff recognizes me but the outside vendors seem surprised when I introduce myself and you can almost tell the shock on their faces.

Other participants were not as lucky as P9 and P11 because their roles were not given full recognition by their supervisors, colleagues and subordinates.

P2: I am a nurse administrator that supervises about 20 staff but I always hear about an incident or event last because I am always bypassed in these reports. The chain of command clearly states that for any event in my department, I should be notified.

P8: My position of leadership is interesting. I am a leader but I am not a leader. When I attend meetings with peers and offer suggestions or input, everyone completely ignores it.

P12: As a classroom teacher and head of my unit, I have not been recognized in my leadership role because my colleagues feel I do not have the necessary qualifications.

The rest of the participants briefly described their position of leadership by listing their job titles and number of staff they supervised. They all expressed some level of frustration by the lack of recognition of their roles by their supervisors, peers, or subordinates.

Preferential Treatment. It was interesting to note that three participants (P4, P8 & P9) had different experiences from the group in regards to Interview Question 3 which focused on how the participants came to be in their current leadership position. The theme generated from Interview Question 3 focused on the biased nature of employers regarding immigrant women which forced many of the participants to change careers and go back to school. It is important to note that these participants all had a minimum of undergraduate education in Nigeria prior to their migrating to the United States. The figure below shows this:

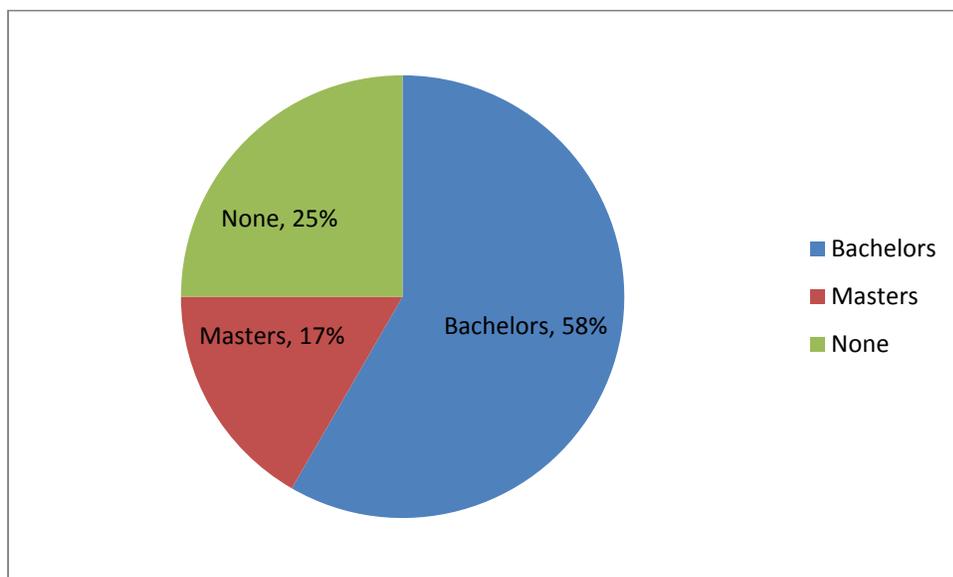


Figure 1. Minimum Degree Level Attained

Seven of the participants obtained at least a Bachelor's degree in Nigeria before migrating while two went further for their Masters and the remaining three did not attend a Nigerian university prior to migrating to the United States.

The degrees ranged from nursing degrees, to academics, to accounting and all the participants listed as having a decent job in their career fields before migrating. However, securing a leadership position job in the United States proved challenging and difficult because the employers preferred candidates with degrees and qualification from an American university. Employment was difficult to come by and which resulted of the participants switching careers and re-enrolling in colleges to be given equal treatment on the job market. Many participants voiced their displeasure in that their qualifications from Nigeria were not recognized by organizations and agencies in the United States and this led many of the participants to make career changing decisions. To further validate this point:

P3: '.....I had to change my career and go into the health field'.

P5: I re-enrolled in college to gain a degree in America because they would not accept my credentials and years of experience in Nigeria.

Participants 4, 8 and 9 began their college experiences after they migrated to the United States so they had a slight advantage over the other participants who had to change careers or go back to school to obtain a degree.

Immigrant Challenges. When faced with Interview Questions (4), how does being an immigrated woman affect your leadership position in your organization and; (5) has your status as an immigrant affected your experience of becoming a leader? If so, in what ways? The participants shared different perspectives on the impact their statuses as immigrant women have

had on their positions and overall experiences. There were sub-themes that were developed for these two interview questions based on the responses of the participants.

Inferiority complex

Several of the participants expressed their feelings on this issue in a tensed state because there was a level of sadness and dissatisfaction with their expressions. I relied on my notes to elaborate on this. Many of the women showed anger and had high pitch when these questions were asked because they feel forever discriminated against for being female Nigerian immigrant. This is stemmed from chapter 2 literature review where I focused on cultural disparities. The women have been exposed to playing second fiddle to men in Nigeria to the point that even as leaders in their different organizations, they still present a level of inferiority to their peers based on their experiences. There were certain examples and stories that were shared;

P4: I was being stereotyped and was too timid to speak up because no one would listen.

P7: One time a colleague made a comment by mentioning that African women are used to staying at home as housewives and have no business leading departments.

P8: My opinions were not valued.

P10: Bosses never sought for my advice despite my experience and expertise.

Higher expectations

Based on their immigrant status, the participants mentioned they were all expected to perform at a higher expectation than their peers to prove themselves. A few of the participants shared instances where they brought valid problems to their bosses but were told to ‘figure it out’.

P2: I am assigned to supervise the night shift but many of the night staff are usually mandated to work overtime so I am left with grumpy and tired group of nurses to supervise.

P3: As a clinical director, I hold myself in the highest regards and expect to perform at a level above my peers because I have a target on my back as an immigrant woman.

P12: I stayed late after work hours to prepare for the next day because the sub teachers will not do it and instead of being blamed for their ineptitude, I take the fall.

Personal and professional development

It has not been all negative experiences in terms of how their status affected their experiences. Some of the participants were encouraged to work hard and develop personally and professionally. With the opportunity to live and work in the United States presenting itself, the participants were all determined to succeed because of their statuses.

P1: I met my husband here in New York and we have three kids. I work hard for my family and tune out the other negative stuff that happens at work.

P11: I refused to accept failure and I was determined to overcome the obstacles so I gain all the necessary education and experiences necessary to do my job. I have matured as a person because of these experiences.

P10: I wanted to break the boundaries that have been limiting immigrants so I have taken advantage of this opportunity to develop professionally and to ensure I leave a great impression on everyone I come in contact with.

Prejudice. Question 6 focused on situations when the participant felt she was treated unfairly because of her immigrant status and if she can provide an example. The participants all had many and different stories to tell and majority of them led back to prejudice. They were viewed as incompetent and unqualified to lead meetings, speak at seminars and offer solutions. All the participants shared experiences on where they were unfavorably treated, referred to,

addressed to and spoken of because of their nationality and status. When pressed further, there were some sub-themes that developed from their individual stories.

Accent jest

Almost all the participants recounted being made fun of because of their accent. Many colleagues took it as far as asking the participant to either speak slowly or write what she intended to say.

P5: As per the organization's policy, I am supposed to lead rounds on my shift but after the first round that I led, my supervisors relieved me of that duty which I felt was because of my accent.

P7: My supervisor once told me to come to her directly with any suggestions or solutions I have rather than present them in head of department meetings.

P12: In the education sector, communication is vital but I have been a subject of ridicules and fun by my peers and subordinates because of the way I speak.

Discrimination

There is a certain level of discrimination against female African immigrants as attested by the statements and stories shared by the participants. Three main reasons were identified as the basis for discrimination.

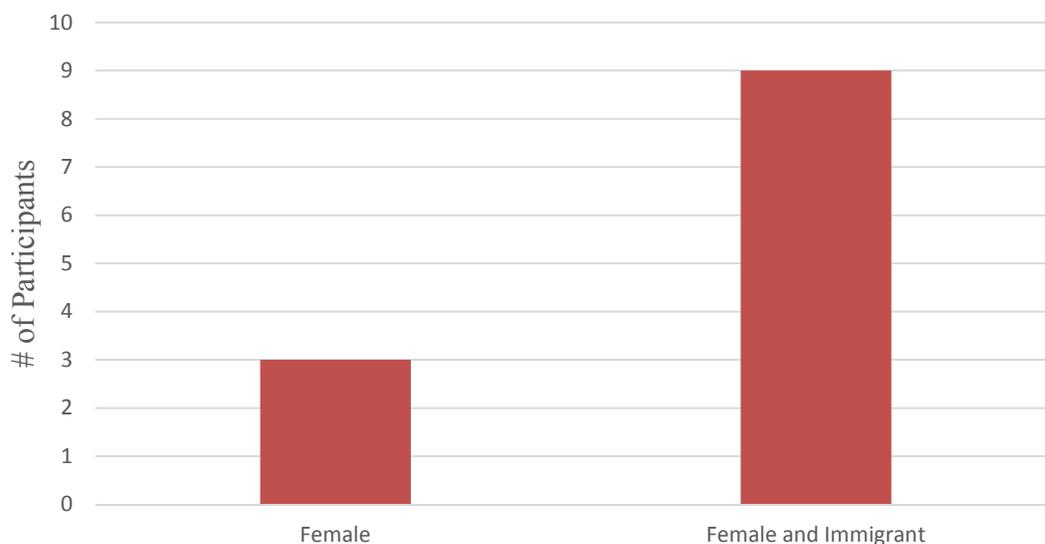


Figure 2. Participants' Reasons for Discrimination

The above figure presents a much larger problem in the American job stream. As identified in chapter 2, women are still being paid less than a dollar compared to their men counterparts. As an immigrant woman, the participants seemed surprised at the discriminations experienced in a country like the United States. By relocating from an underdeveloped country like Nigeria to a more developed and technologically advanced country like the United States, the participants were expecting a level playing field for everyone in terms of opportunities but instead were faced with the reality that being an immigrant woman was already a disadvantage.

Research Sub-questions

Having already explored the leadership experiences of the participants in the New York City workforce, I directed my attention to how United States policies related to Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission affected these experiences. The sub questions that supported the main research question are;

1. What impact does United States public policy on the Equal Pay Act have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?

2. What impact does United States public policy on Affirmative Action have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?
3. What impact does United States public policy on Equal Employment Opportunity have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?

The Interview Questions were strategically arranged so that the first part focused on the overall leadership experiences of the participants and the second part focused on the United States policies and their impact. Themes were developed to report the findings and responses of the participants.

Opportunities to Succeed. Interview Question 7 asked: Do you think the United States policies relating to the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have impacted your goals in the United States? In what ways? The participants' responses were more positive in this aspect with an underlying complaint. A very common line that was mentioned by the participants is; 'The policies provide a better platform to succeed but many employers do not adhere to them'. However, the participants acknowledged that these United States policies have impacted their goals in more positive ways than not.

P6: The New York State (NYS) government has been fair in its process because it involves grade levels. It is hard to deny anyone a position if they meet the requirements and take necessary exams with a pass grade.

P7: The public sector provides examinations for growth and career advancement and I have taken advantage of those opportunities.

P9: There are many jobs and opportunities to grow which have helped me further my career goals.

Mixed Reactions. While there were a lot of positive responses to question 7, there was mixed reactions to question 8 that asked: Are there ways in which United States policies on the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have positively or negatively impacted your role as an immigrant woman in a leadership position? If so, can you describe them? Table 6 shows the different responses and reactions.

Table 6

Participants' Reactions

Participants	Responses
P1	'I have not been impacted in any way because I worked hard to get here'.
P2	'I wouldn't say positive but it isn't entirely negative, I am still been addressed like someone with a less social status because of my immigrant status'.
P3	'It is fun to think that a female immigrant is leading a full department'
P4	'My role has not been positively impacted because I do not feel like a leader even though my title says so'.
P5	'My colleagues are first contacted about decision making before I am, so the policies have done nothing for me'
P6	'More positive impact because I work in a public organization that comply with these policies'.
P7	'I have been impacted positively because the exams for promotions are available to anyone who wants it'.
P8	'Negative impact.....my supervisors are stricter towards me than my colleagues'.
P9	'I occasionally find myself afraid to speak up in fear of losing my job so I am not sure if the policies have impacted me'
P10	'Indifferent.....the policies have done nothing for me'.
P11	'After I left an old job, they began to reach out to consult so because I worked hard, they finally noticed the void I left when I wasn't there anymore'.
P12	'I gained more education and hence, my role has been positively impacted because I was finally promoted'.

Interview Question 9 asked: With your experiences so far with these U.S. policies mentioned above, what advices can you give newly female Nigerian immigrants or women in Nigeria contemplating migrating to the United States soon? There was not a specific theme that was developed as the participants shared important tips and advices based on their experiences. I used a method of synonyms and word clustering to group words and phrases that had similar meanings. I was able to compose ten sentences or phrases from the list of advices these women shared to encourage newly immigrants or women in Nigeria who are contemplating migrating to the United States to pursue their career goals. Figure 3 lists the top 10 responses.

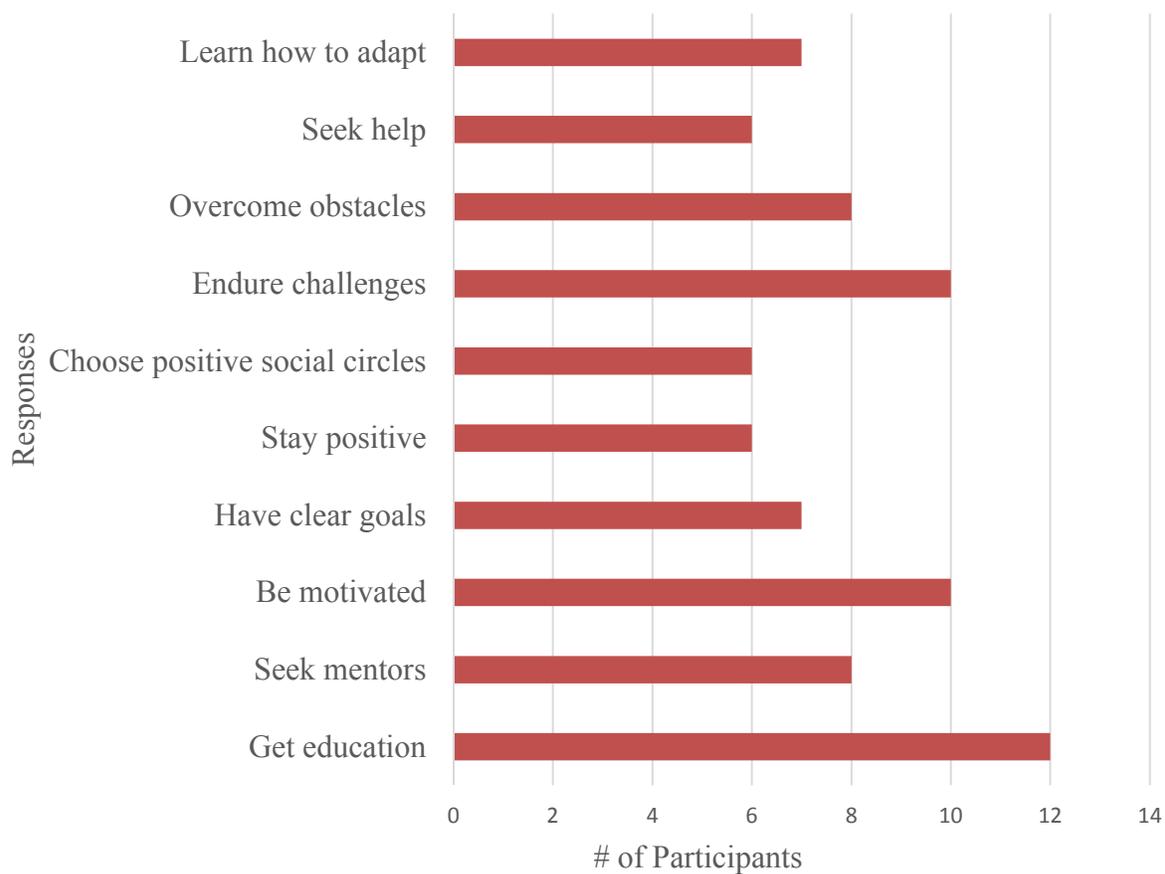


Figure 3. Top Ten Recommendations from Participants

Discrepant Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership experiences of female Nigerian immigrants in New York City and how United States public policies relating to Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity affected these experiences. However, a major discrepant finding which was mentioned by some of the participants is the fact that gender and continent of origin and not immigrant status played significant role in negative experiences and discriminations they faced.

P3: "I'm an African professor with an accent. Go figure".

P9: "Gender also play a role in being accepted into a position or not. As a woman, I have seen my male counterparts get promotions or raises while I remain stuck at my current position".

P10: "I am a person of color so regardless of my immigrant status; the odds are already against me".

These discrepant findings do not take away from the main issue that immigrant Nigerian women face great odds at reaching their ultimate career goals and have experienced different levels of difficulty in their positions of leadership when compared to their American or non-immigrant counterparts.

Summary

This study was solely focused on following the lived experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in leadership positions in the New York City workforce. The research question was developed from this topic and the sub research questions focused on the impact of United States public policies relating to the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have had on these women. The participants were diverse in the job sector, and this offered different lenses to understand the importance of United States policies

mentioned earlier. All 12 participants were interviewed with 3 opting for phone interviews following logistics and lack of availability for in-person interviews. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Member checking was also used to verify statements comments from the participants.

The major themes developed from analyzing the interview, transcripts and researcher notes include: (a) Unrecognized leader, (b) Preferential treatment, (c) Immigrant challenges, (d) Prejudice, (e) Opportunity to succeed, and (f) Mixed reactions. The final research question focused on the participants' sharing advices for incoming Nigerian female immigrants or new immigrants who all have career goals on reaching those goals.

Chapter 5 includes the meaning and interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications for social change. This chapter will discuss the study's theoretical considerations and the potential impact of the research on the struggles of female immigrant seeking leadership positions and experiences in the New York City workforce.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study—which replicated the Nwabah and Heitner (2009) study on the immigration and leadership experiences of women in Texas—was to investigate the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women who had lived in New York City for a minimum of 10 years and who overcame various obstacles to achieve leadership positions in their various fields. The reason for this study was twofold: (a) to explore the impact that U.S. policies—the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action, and Equal Employment Opportunity—have had on these women as they sought to achieve their career goals and (b) to explore whether their experiences suggested the need for reform of these policies so that they could help immigrants.

Data were collected via one-on-one, semi-structured interviews in order to capture participants' words and stories. 12 female Nigerian immigrants were interviewed; they were in leadership positions in various job sectors, including health, education, the nonprofit sector, the public or government sector, and the private sector. Using a variety of job sectors was important in order to reveal participants' varied experiences and the many lenses through which they saw these experiences. . . Another important point was the 10-year minimum residence; it was chosen for this study so that the women had ample time to settle in, gain valuable education and experiences, and incorporate those in their current positions. An interview protocol (Appendix B), the Interview Questions, and a consent form were sent to the participants who all signed and returned the forms. I enlisted a transcription agency to transcribe the audiotape recordings after signing a confidentiality agreement form (Appendix D).

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following question: What are the experiences of female Nigerian immigrants in the U. S. who have attained leadership positions? Three sub-questions on the impact of federal policies supported it:

- a. What impact does United States public policy related to the Equal Pay Act have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?
- b. What impact does United States public policy related to Affirmative Action have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?
- c. What impact does United States public policy related to Equal Employment Opportunity have on female Nigerian immigrants in attaining leadership positions in the United States?

In analyzing data, several themes developed from the interviews, which further validated the need for government policy revision (in immigration, the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action, and Equal Employment Opportunity) to help lessen the struggles and the obstacles that immigrant women face in seeking their career goals. . There were some key findings which will be elaborated upon more in this chapter. Themes like (a) Unrecognized leader, (b) Preferential treatment, (c) Immigrant challenges, (d) Prejudice, (e) Opportunity to succeed, and (f) Mixed reactions all served to substantiate the struggles of immigrant Nigerian women and hopes to serve as a basis for social change and policy revision. The participants were also asked to provide advices that can help organizations that are focused on helping immigrant women, Nigerian women are newly migrated to the United States and those who are contemplating migrating to the United States

Interpretation of the Findings

There were a total of nine Interview Questions asked of the participants to explore their lived experiences working as an immigrant woman in the New York City workforce. As identified in Chapter 4, the Interview Questions were broken down to target the research questions with Interview Questions 2 to 6 relating to the main research question and Interview Questions 7 to 9 relating to the sub-research questions. Interview Question 1 was for demographic purposes mainly.

Interview Question 2: How would you describe your position of leadership? This described the participants' title and position of leadership in her current organization. As I tried to cast a broader net on job sectors, many of the initial responders from the flyers (Appendix C) mostly worked in the health sector. At some point, I received calls and emails from either nurses, nurse administrators or someone that worked in the health field. This showed that many immigrant Nigerian women changed their careers to the health sector because it provided the best opportunity to make a substantial income in the United States. Participant 1 (P1), after I asked for other potential participants she may know, she said, "all my friends all work in the hospital or medical field". This is a recommendation for further research to investigate why so many Nigerian immigrants choose the health sector.

In describing their positions of leadership, the main theme that was developed was lack of leadership recognition. The problem as experienced by the participants is that, even though they are currently in leadership positions, they are not recognized as leaders as they are bypassed by peers and supervisors during decision makings that directly or indirectly affect them. This is illustrated in the literature review in chapter 2 that detailed the lack of leadership jobs for Nigerian women because they are incapable of leading. For an advanced country like the United

States, it is quite alarming that sure discrepancies exist in the workplace. Immigrant female leaders should be accorded proper recognition and be included in all matters that affect them and the departments they supervise.

Interview Question 3: Could you tell me how you came to be in this position of leadership? The findings showed a considerable high level of discrimination by hiring companies on immigrant women when compared to the native born candidates. From the study, it seemed that employers preferred to hire candidates with qualifications and experiences from United States colleges and companies. With the difficulty in securing high end supervisory jobs in Nigeria already pushing the participants to greater lengths of struggle and perseverance, it was shocking that many of them expressed similar bias during the hiring process.

According to literature review in Chapter 2, the female gender roles are evidently marginalized to support male dominance (Israel & Johnmark, 2014) and there is a common lack of acceptance of female workers in many organization top positions (Strøm, D'Espallier, & Mersland, 2014). Hence, the marginalization experienced by the participants showed that revisions are needed on United States policy on Equal Employment to provide a more level playing field for all. Findings also showed that many of the participants had to go back to school and/or get recertified in order to be qualified for certain positions despite the education level and work experiences they already had in Nigeria.

This stands to be a serious problem for not just Nigerian immigrants but African immigrants in general that possess the perfect qualification and experience from their home countries only to be asked to retake national examinations, or go back to college to gain a Bachelor's degree in the field. One of the participant mentioned that no accounting organizations were able to give her a chance even with her lengthy experiences working in big money banks in

Nigeria thereby forcing her to go back to school and change her career to the health field. This finding is important because many female Nigerian immigrants have resulted to switching their careers to the health field, mainly nursing, because other job sectors did not provide them opportunities to ply their trade with them. Only the participants that worked with the government or public organizations found a less difficult path to success. The question beckons, why have other organizations not followed the standardized testing government organizations have to ensure equal employment opportunity to everyone regardless of their country of origin? It is important that policymakers dwell on these issues to limit bias in hiring processes.

Interview Questions 4 and 5 were combined in the analysis section because both are somewhat related in understanding how the participants' immigrant statuses affected their leadership positions and experiences of becoming leaders. The subthemes that were developed included: (a) inferiority complex, (b) higher expectations, and (c) personal and professional development. The cultural differences between Americans and Nigerians are evident as described by the participants through their experiences. From the literature review, among the many challenges faced by immigrants in America is the difficulty involved in trying to assimilate into the American culture (Cherry & Lucas, 2015; Rumbaut, 2011). The styles of leadership are different and subsequently, some of the participants experienced an inferiority complex where they felt their styles were not good enough because of the backlash or feedback they received either from peers, superiors or subordinates. This may have affected their style of leadership as they were forced to perform at a higher expectation than their peers.

Many of the participants shared that their workload was systematically increased without adequate help and support. The reason for this is that the immigrant women are not being recognized as leaders and hence, they have to continuously prove themselves in their

organizations. This was well documented for the participants in public or government organizations who despite having a better chance of attaining leadership positions than the other participants, they are put in situations to fail. As one participant put it:

P1: “They (supervisors) know exactly what they do when they assign you to a high incident area with little supporting staff and expect everything to be run smoothly.”

There seems to be a notion that female African immigrants are being targeted as the same participant mentioned having a Ghanaian immigrant colleague who experiences the same difficulties and treatment as their non-immigrant colleagues.

With the opportunity to migrate already presented itself and the opportunities to achieve their career goals available to them, the participants all agreed that their immigrant status challenged them to professional and personal growth and development. One participant expressed that she did not want to let the obstacles prevent her from achieving her goals so instead of sulking or complaining about it, she got additional training and education. Many participants also commented on how they do not want to be viewed as failures by family and friends back in Nigeria and hence, they have all seemed to work beyond the difficulties at the workplace and to maintain their jobs and positions. P7 noted that she has had to work twice as hard as her colleagues which motivate her to continue to march towards reaching higher leadership levels.

Interview Question 6 provided more emotional reactions and compelling stories than other interview questions. The participants were asked to share situations where they felt they were treated unfairly because of their immigrant status and the stories shared were interesting in many aspects. While language and other cultural differences came up as some of the incidents they were made fun of or targeted by, I focused on a theme that seemed to resonate among the

participants: workplace discrimination. This took on two different angles; discrimination for being a female and a female immigrant. While early researches has pointed out the discrimination against females in the workplace (Johnson, 2014; Kelsey et al., 2014), this study confirms those findings that discrimination still exist in workplaces and immigrant women are faced with even more discrimination. Most of the participants listed being an immigrant as a disadvantage. Ram et al., (2013) also confirmed this by reporting that migrant workers are very likely to be overlooked in employment opportunities in comparison to non-immigrants.

In addition to workplace discrimination, data also showed that the participants were subjects of constant fun and jest in the workplace. P8 recollected when she was having homemade lunch in the cafeteria when a few of her colleagues walked by and one of them made a comment on how her food does not look appetizing to the eye. She laughed it off but also noted that it isn't the first time either her food, or hair style have been made fun of. Another participant also recollected that she had walked in on her colleagues mimicking her and speaking in an 'African accent'. This shows that African immigrants have had to endure non-conducive work environments and many are afraid to speak for fear of being retaliated against or even losing their jobs.

Interview Questions 7 to 9 focused on the sub research questions which addressed the impact of United States public policies on Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Commission on the participants' goals, roles and experiences in the work place. The positive reactions to question 7 were mainly based on the participants' experiences in Nigeria which is a stark contrast to the American policy. There were no policies in place that mandated equal employment rights or equal pay for men and women in Nigeria. Hence, the United States policies served as a positive reminder on the differences among the two countries

and why the United States is currently in its high position of power compared to Nigeria. The participants however, expressed reservations on how these policies are adhered to by organizations. The data showed that mostly, only government or public agencies adhered to the policies of providing an equal platform for employment purposes. Participants in other job sectors like private and health lamented at how immigrants are consistently overlooked in job hiring and promotions in favor of United States born colleagues or candidates.

Interview Question 8 provided a mixed response on whether the aforementioned policies have positively or negatively impacted the roles of the participants in their leadership positions. The data shows that the mixed reactions are dependent on the job sector and agency the participants worked in. The participants from the education and public sectors talked about unionized agreements of their organizations that protected them from being intentionally discriminated against. However, some participants argued that even with these policies in place, employers constantly find ways to go around them to take advantage of the participants' immigrant statuses. P2 recalled working in an organization for about eight months and then discovering she had been underpaid in comparison her colleagues. When she finally realized this and brought it up to human resources, she was told it was human error with data entry and it will be taken care of. She had her reservations with the response and demanded to be back-paid for the earlier months but she never got it. Employers find ways to underpay immigrants and it is important that potential candidates do a thorough research on their position including average pay for such positions before agreeing with employers or else, they will be taken advantage of.

Interview 9 sought to provide the participants' opinions and advice on how to help incoming Nigerian immigrants, women in Nigeria who are contemplating migrating to the United States and organizations that are involved with helping immigrant women on how to

successful navigate around the obstacles and hardships involved in settling in and attaining leadership positions. Although many key items of advice were given, I concentrated more on some of the top advice given by majority of the participants. The first and most common advice shared by the participants was to get education. All 12 participants agreed that regardless of the immigrant's career and education level in Nigeria, going back to school to gain an American degree is an easier way to being recognized and reaching their career goals faster. The second important advice was to seek out mentors. Some of the participants understood the need for mentorship as they regretted not knowing anyone to guide them initially towards their goals. Mentors are important for immigrants because these individuals have a general understanding of how the system works and can usually direct the immigrants to the right avenues that will help them achieve their goals. Lastly, another important advice is to endure difficult times and challenges. Nothing comes easy and the notion that it is very easy to get jobs in the United States should be debunked. Many of the participants advised that hard work will eventually pay off and new immigrants should be prepared to fail and be disappointed but also to persevere because they will reach their career goals.

Theoretical Interpretation of Findings

Scheider and Ingram's (1993) social construction theory served as the theoretical framework for this study. It postulates that some groups experience greater level of advantage than others and policies help to balance such inequities. By maintaining this theoretical aspect in the study, I was able to include in the research study how the United States public policies on Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Commission affected and impacted the goals and experiences of the female immigrant. "The social construction of target populations refers to the cultural characterizations or popular images of the persons or groups whose

behavior and well-being are affected by public policy” (Scheider & Ingram, 1993, p. 334).

Immigrant Nigerian women in leadership positions have been directly impacted either positively or negatively, by these public policies and the findings showed a link to the theory that policymakers need to revise these policies to alter the disadvantaged population.

To alter these disadvantages, Scheider and Ingram (1993) postulated that the policies are purposeful and are aimed towards achieving goals by changing people’s behavior. However, the challenges the female Nigerian woman faced shows a greater issue that suggests that the current policies on Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Commission have not adequately achieved their aim of changing people’s behavior. Employers are still taking advantage of immigrants and many organizations do not provide a fair and equal opportunity when selecting candidates for positions. When employer’s minds and perceptions are changed, then the goals of policies have been achieved. The onus is now on policymakers to create and revise policies that focus on this disadvantaged population to be positively impacted.

Key Findings

Finding 1: Contrary to popular opinion, Nigerian female immigrants are subjects of discrimination in the workplace. The United States policies relating to Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Commission are geared towards stopping this but many employers do not adhere to the guidelines as stipulated by the policies.

Finding 2: Many female Nigerian immigrants make a career switch to the health sector as a viable means of income. During the data collection process, the number of Nigerian women I came across who worked in healthcare related jobs were larger than the other job sectors combined.

Finding 3: The United States government and by extension, the New York State government do not have stipulations in place to monitor how nonpublic organizations select their candidates for openings or promotions. The participants mentioned that they could have been in better positions or made more money if the process was fair across the board.

Finding 4: Organizations prefer candidates who obtained their educational requirements and work experience from the United States than candidates who obtained the same requirements from outside the United States. Majority of the participants argued that they have been in situations where they had more years of experience combined in Nigeria and the United States and more educational credentials than their colleagues but they are overlooked regardless.

Finding 5: Communication barriers and language difficulties remain prominent in the workplace and employers, rather than come up with better solutions to the problem, alienate staff with accents from participating in decision making and meetings.

Finding 6: The findings confirm with some of the findings of Nwabah and Heitner's (2009) study in Texas. This shows that the struggles and discriminations are not limited to New York City and that it could be a nation-wide problem. The United States policies certainly need some revising by policymakers to provide an equal platform for immigrants to succeed and to minimize the negative experiences and unequal treatment of female Nigerian immigrants in the United States

Limitations of the Study

The findings from this study highlighted the many different experiences of female Nigerian immigrants in leadership positions, however, there were some limitations that need to be addressed and acknowledged.

A major limitation of this study was sample size and scope. Access to immigrant women who meet the criteria proved a major hurdle. The study was focused on participants in New York City to include all the 5 Boroughs. However, I was unable to locate any participants from Staten Island to share their leadership experiences. Only 12 participants were studied for this research, their responses and experiences reflect a small sample of women from Nigeria living and working in New York City.

The 12 participants used for this study do not accurately represent all segments of Nigerian women in New York City. As with the vast cultural background, language, and religion, the study only focused on the women's role as a leader in their different places of employment and not on their different cultural background.

As with Nwabah and Heitner's (2009) research, this study focused on the lived experiences of the women in the United States. Their experiences in their country of origin were not considered to show comparisons. Additionally, the participants' perceptions on the United States policies relating to the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Commission were the main focus of the study. There are other public policies that focus on immigrants and workplace diversity that were not explored.

Researcher bias is inherent in phenomenological studies (Moustakas, 1994). To overcome this bias, I maintained an open level of communication with the participations and reported extensively using the data collected from the participants. The interpretation of the data was as intended by the participants because they verified the interview notes and transcripts of the interview. This ensured I did not assume or infer any responses not provided by the participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of the study have shown that female Nigerian immigrants experienced greater difficulty in attaining leadership positions in Texas and in New York City. A recommendation will be to conduct a research on immigrant women from a non-African country for comparison purposes. Researchers may also be interested in understanding the psychological impact from the women's experiences in Nigeria on their leadership aspirations in the United States. The literature review in Chapter 2 confirms that women are often marginalized and segregated in Nigeria in terms of leadership opportunities, gender roles and education availability.

I recommend that future researchers study the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women who are business owners in New York City. Their experiences could be different as they focused on building their own businesses as opposed to pursuing their career goals of becoming leaders in other organizations.

Also, it may be beneficial for future studies to examine the experiences of female Nigerian immigrants who are not in leadership positions but are aspiring to become leaders and if United States public policies have negatively or positively impacted their aspirations. Finally, an examination of other United States policies not researched for this study will be helpful in determining if there are any other policies that have a more positive impact on the female Nigerian immigrants attaining their career goals.

Implications for Social Change

At the federal government level, the findings suggest that although the United States provides female Nigerian immigrants the best opportunities to attain career goals that may have proved difficult in their home country, the issue of workplace discrimination by employers has been overlooked. Governments have an important role to play in ensuring that employers abide

by the standards as established by the United States policies relating to the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Commission.

At the state level it is important that the state governments may use the results and findings of the study to: (i) Mandate organizations to report on their diversity plans for recruitment, (ii) Regulate employment strategies by organizations that will provide an equal platform for all qualified candidates irrespective of nationality and background, (iii) Create uniform standards for employers to adhere to in verifying educational and job experience of immigrants, and (iv) Ensure that the minimum requirements for job positions include work experiences of immigrants in their home countries.

At the individual level, new immigrants or women in Nigeria contemplating migrating to the United States may use the results of this study to become more informed and well prepared in adjusting to a new culture both in the workplace and outside of it. The results of this study will be helpful for these individuals as it serves as a guide to attain the minimum requirements needed by employers to be employed. Important information from the study like seeking mentors, gaining valuable education and being prepared to work harder than peers will be valuable to the individuals.

Finally, at the local organizations level, there are several organizations that are involved with helping immigrants settle in, acclimatize and pursue their career goals. The findings of this study may be beneficial to them as they are exposed to the experiences of immigrant women in leadership and can subsequently adjust their scope to include the positive and negative experiences reported in the study.

Recommendations for Solution

Decision makers, government agencies, private agencies and nonprofit agencies can all utilize the results of this study to revisit their employment strategies to include diversity and cultural unification. This will provide a work environment with improved organizational effectiveness and success. It is also important that policymakers review United States policies that address the issues of workplace diversity to promote equal and fair employment procedures by organizations for immigrants.

I also recommend that newly immigrant Nigerian women and those who are contemplating migrating to the United States to utilize the results of this study to prepare themselves and become informed on the requirements of organizations in their field of interest.

Conclusion

Female leadership has been an ongoing issue and topic of discussion in the United States. There are several challenges for females in attaining leadership positions. For an immigrant Nigerian woman, the challenges become much harder with so many obstacles to overcome. Migrating to the United States, for the female Nigerian immigrants presents an opportunity for a fresh start and to achieve their career goals which may have seemed difficult in their native country. However, the path to meeting those career goals may have proven difficult with the different levels of discrimination against immigrant women. Many female Nigerian immigrants face considerable discrimination in the workplace. Many see their goals impacted or slowed down because they were not given equal and fair consideration by employers.

This study highlighted the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women who overcame different obstacles and challenges to get to a position of authority. Their experiences were revisited and shared to bring to the forefront, the main issues that impact the achieving of

individual goals by the immigrants. The United States policies on Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Commission have all either positively or negatively impacted the experiences of these women in their different organizations. It is now left to the state government, different employment agencies and organizations and individuals to use the results of this study to improve employment practices to provide an equal and fair treatment for all regardless of gender, nationality or country of origin. Like all women, immigrant Nigerian women are capable of becoming successful leaders. All they need are opportunities to succeed.

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Appendix A: Letter to Participant

Name of Participant:

Date:

Dear (Name),

My name is Osinachi Muoka and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am conducting research on the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women in New York City. There has been previous research that focused on the challenges of immigrants in the US but there is limited research on what these women experience American workplace. This research will provide insight into what these immigrant women experiences as it relates to policies on the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The results may also be helpful for new female immigrants and organizations that are committed to helping immigrants achieve their career goals and aspirations after migrating to the US.

I understand that your time is valuable to you and I appreciate your consideration to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, we will meet one time at a convenient location and time and this meeting which will be in form of an interview will last about 45 minutes. This interview is solely voluntary and will not require you to do anything you don't feel comfortable doing. The meeting is simply to get your opinion and your experiences as an immigrant Nigerian woman working in New York. All information gathered during the interview session will be kept strictly confidential.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience to let me know if you are interested in participating in the study. If you are interested, we will schedule a date and time for the

interview. My telephone number is (646) 206-1644. You can also email me at Osinachi.muoka@waldenu.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.

Osinachi Muoka

Doctoral Candidate

Walden University

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Date: _____

Location: _____

Name of Interviewer: _____

Name of Interviewee: _____

1. When did you move to the United States?
2. How would you describe your position of leadership?
3. Could you tell me how you came to be in this position of leadership?
4. How does being an immigrant woman affect your leadership position in your organization?
5. Has your status as an immigrant affected your experience of becoming a leader? If so, in what ways?
6. Have there been situations when you felt like you were treated unfairly because of your immigrant status? If so, can you please provide an example?
7. Do you think the United States policies on the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have impacted your goals in the United States? In what ways?
8. Are there ways in which United States policies on the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have positively or negatively impacted your role as an immigrant woman in a leadership position? If so, can you describe them?

9. With your experiences so far with these United States policies mentioned above, what advices can you give newly female Nigerian immigrants or women in Nigeria contemplating migrating to the United States soon?

Appendix C: Seeking Participants

Topic: LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRANT NIGERIAN WOMEN IN NEW
YORK CITY

The purpose of the study: To investigate the leadership experiences of immigrant Nigerian women who have lived in New York City for a minimum of 10 years who overcame different obstacles to attain leadership positions in their different career fields.

Eligibility Requirements

- At least 18 years of age
- Gender: Female
- Employment status: Currently employed in a leadership role for a minimum of 1 year and oversee a minimum of 5 staff.
- Country of origin and status: Nigerian immigrant.
- NYC resident: Minimum of 10 years.

Study Requirements

One on one interview that will last approximately 30 – 45 minutes at participant's chosen location and time.

Benefits of Participation

- Help broaden the knowledge on the experiences of immigrant Nigerian women leaders in NYC.
- Help incoming or new immigrants with settling in and ultimately pursuing and reaching their career goals.
- Self-fulfilling experience of being part of a social change.

This study is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Raj Singh, Department of Public Administration, Walden University. 100 Washington Ave S Ste. 900, Minneapolis, MN 55401.

He can be reached at Raj.singh@waldenu.edu.

For more information, please contact I, Osinachi Muoka at 646-206-1644 or email at

Osinachi.muoka@waldenu.edu

ALL ENQUIRIES ARE CONFIDENTIAL!

Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer:

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: “Leadership Experiences of Immigrant Nigerian Women in New York City”, I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant’s name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I’m officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature:

Date: