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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

IMMIGRANT NIGERIAN WOMEN LEADERS IN CALIFORNIA: THEIR EXPERIENCES,  
CHALLENGES, AND SUCCESSES

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Scholastica Ogomaka

June, 2019

Margaret J Weber, Ph.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Scholastica Ogomaka

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my lovely husband, Sir Greg Iheanyi Ogomaka, who is my best friend, confidant, adviser, soulmate, highest supporter, and cheerleader, and to our daughter Onyinyechi. The love and support from both of you has made this journey much easier and bearable. I was able to complete this journey because both of you were by my side. Your prayers and encouraging words at those times when I wanted to give up made the difference.

To the rest of my family members, thank you all for your support, prayers, and encouraging words.

To all the immigrant Nigerian women leaders living in California who participated in this study, thank you so much. You are the best. Your openness and willingness to share your experiences with me lead to the success of this research. Thank you all for trusting me with your most intimate and personal information.

To all the immigrant Nigerian women and women in general who are leaders or aspiring to be leaders, keep the light shining and do not give up.

In loving memories of my late parents Mr. Nathaniel & Chancellor Mrs. Angelina Nandi, my parent's in-law Chief Aloy & Ezinne Cecilia Ogomaka, and my brother-in-law Mr. Cyril & my sister Mrs. & Christiana Egwumba. Thank you all for laying the foundation that led to my completion of this program. Continue to rest in perfect peace. Amen.

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First, I would like to thank God whose love and grace enabled me to complete this journey. I could not have completed this program without God.

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dean Emeritus Dr. Margaret Weber, for your guidance and support, and for trusting in me even when I did not trust in myself. Thank you so much for staying with me and encouraging me, even when I wanted to give up. Your rich and timely feedback during this study made this journey possible. Thank you so much. You are the best.

To Dr. June Schmieder-Ramirez, thank you so much for taking out time out of your busy schedule to be one of my committee members. Thank you again for your support, suggestions, and expert feedback.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Keri Heath for your support and encouraging words. You believed in me and trusted that I had all it takes to complete this journey. You promised that you would stay with me and ensure I finish my program, and you did. Despite going through your own dissertation at same time, you still made time for me, and accommodated my request.

I will not end this acknowledgement without mentioning and thanking professor emeritus Dr. Diana Hiatt-Michael, who convinced me to change my initial research topic to study immigrant Nigerian women. She also went the extra mile to suggest and introduce me to Dr. Margaret Weber and asked her to be my committee chair. Thank you Dr. Hiatt-Michael for introducing me to the best chair ever. All you said about her was true and more. Thank you for directing me to the right path.

## VITA

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2012 AZ	Master's Degree	University of Phoenix, Phoenix,
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	Nursing	

## PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

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2011-2014	Unit Nurse Manager Critical Care/DOU Kaiser Permanente, Downey, CA
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2008-2010	Unit Nurse Manager Critical Care, Observation & Hemodialysis Kaiser Permanente, Baldwin Park, CA
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## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP AND AFFILIATIONS

American Organization of Nurse Executives	Member
American Nurses Association	Member
Igbo Catholic Women Association St Eugene Parish	President
Knight of St John International, Los Angeles	Member, board of trustees
Daughters of the Holy Spirit, LA Chapter (non-profit)	Chapter moderator
Imo State Women Organization (Non- profit)	Member

## ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological research inquiry was designed to explore the lived experiences, challenges, and successes of 24 immigrant Nigerian women leaders living and working in California. It also explored the factors that influenced these women to aspire to leadership positions despite the challenges and closed doors they constantly face at work. The women who participated in this study were in leadership positions in both governmental and private sectors. Their positions ranged from a frontline supervisor to an assistant superintendent in a public school district. Like other minority groups living in the United States, including women, immigrant Nigerian women leaders face similar, or in some cases more, challenges than their White counterparts in the workplace. Through the interview questions, this study elicited the women's experiences from early childhood through adulthood, including their current experiences and what they see in their future, as well as the influence these experiences have on their ability to be successful. The researcher conducted a one-on-one interview with each participant. Some participants were directly recruited by the researcher, and others were recruited by snowball sampling. Through the interviews, the participants shared the impact of their childhood upbringing, religion, and faith on their survival in the workplace as well as in the United States. Several themes emerged from the analysis of the interview data. The participants believed that they had to work harder than their White female counterparts to climb up the corporate ladder and to remain at each level they attained. They shared that they had to put in more hours and constantly had to prove that they had the skills and qualifications to do a job. They also noted that, despite their skills and education, they were not paid as well as, or compensated equitably for, doing the same work as their counterparts. Some discussed conflicts between their Nigerian culture and the American system and shared how they assimilated into

their new environment. Some also expressed that their ascent sometimes prevented them from achieving some of the goals they set at work. Two participants expressed their frustrations with the American educational system because they did not receive credit for their degree or education in Nigeria and they had to start over again. Despite the challenges they faced, the women credited their faith, trust in God, and family upbringing as motivators for their success at work and in American society.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Immigrants migrate to other countries with the goal of making a new and better start in life and enjoying political and religious freedom (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). Like other immigrants in the United States, immigrant Nigerian women migrated to the United States to seek better futures for themselves and their families. The decision to migrate varies among individuals according to nationality, culture, and experiences, and factors affecting immigration decisions can be political, educational, religious, economic, and personal (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). Immigrant Nigerian woman in the United States migrated based on some or all of the factors mentioned. Factors such as religion, age at marriage, education, age difference between spouses, and family structure are significant positive determinants of women's employment in Nigeria (Togunde, 1999). These factors affect women's zeal to attain leadership positions in their jobs in their new country. Some immigrant Nigerian women leaders who have attained leadership positions face challenges that affect their success at work and the attainment of higher levels of leadership positions in their organizations. For example, immigrants have been historically denied opportunities because of the color of their skin, the accent with which they speak, or the clothing they wear.

This qualitative phenomenological research inquiry explored the experiences, challenges, and successes of immigrant Nigerian women who are leaders in their organizations in California. It also involved conducting personal interviews with, and collecting demographic data from, the participants. Women face cultural, economic, legal, and political factors in their home and host countries that limit their access to, adjustment in, and success with expatriate assignments (Cordano, Scherer, & Owen, 2002). Cordano et al. (2002) contended that research on these factors are necessary to increase expatriate opportunities for women, as well as to increase their

satisfaction and overall success in these assignments. Cordano et al.'s (2002) statement highlights the need to study immigrant Nigerian women leaders not only to help current and future Nigerian immigrants to be successful as leaders in American society but also to help immigrant women from other countries and cultures similar to Nigeria, who experienced similar struggles and experiences in the countries of origin. According to Chovwen (2007), "Some areas that can be relevant in understanding the career development of black women are their families, their knowledge of self, and the world of work including the impact of sexism and racism" (p. 68). The overlap of gender with ethnicity adds another degree of complexity. Individual and structural factors combine to both hinder and enable professional and managerial career progression among minority ethnic women (Atewologun & Singh, 2010). Thus, immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California are not immune to the difficulties faced as women or as an ethnic minority group in the work environment in the United States. Some of these women are asked intrusive personal questions at work, such as "Why did you immigrate to the United States" "Where did you go to school?" "Do you speak English in Nigeria?" These types of questions make immigrant Nigerian women feel uncomfortable and unwelcome in the workplace. Nwabah and Heitner (2009) noted, "Factors that become stressful pressures include interpersonal conflict, family role conflict, poor self-esteem, and sheer confusion on how to adapt to the new environment" (p. 27). Nigerian women might migrate because of their inability to break into male-dominated positions and careers in their home country, as no solutions to the problem have been found (Muoka, 2016). Immigrant Nigerian women's ability to succeed in the workplace is dependent on their ability to conform to American cultures and norms in the workplace. These women must assimilate to their new environment, which includes not only their new work environment, but also the societal environment outside of the workplace.

## **Problem Statement**

Despite great educational advances for women in recent decades, gender bias continues to be an obstacle for the advancement of female candidates to leadership roles (Vial, Napier, & Brescoll, 2016). Women remain underrepresented in top leadership positions in U.S. corporations, which has led to broad consensus that a glass ceiling exists that acts as an invisible barrier to women's ascension to top positions (Cook & Glass, 2014). There is a lot of scholarship concerns regarding the barriers that prevent women from attaining leadership positions. Sex categorization and gender stereotypes lead decision makers to view women as less capable and less competent leaders, while in-group favoritism leads men to prefer other men for high-level promotions and appointments through a phenomenon termed homosocial reproduction (Cook & Glass, 2014).

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences, challenges, and successes of immigrant Nigerian women leaders working in organizations in California. The problems immigrant Nigerian women face are more compounded than the problems White females and other females born in the United State face (Sanchez-Hueles & Davis, 2010). Immigrant Nigerian women face all the difficulties and road blocks faced by White women leaders, as well as added challenges as a result of their national origin, ethnicity, accent, and skin color. Women of color in leadership roles may therefore experience triple jeopardy because of the multiple stereotypes associated with gender, race, and ethnicity that they trigger in others (Sanchez-Hueles & Davis, 2010).

White women can afford to focus on gender differences, whereas women of color must focus on all the areas of differences for them and the way these sources of identity influence their struggle to achieve success and feel comfortable in majority-dominated organizations (Sanchez-



Hueles & Davis, 2010). However, the gap between men and women in managerial roles and political empowerment remains wide. Evidence indicates that women are rarely appointed or elected into top leadership positions (Sojo, Wood, Wood, & Wheeler, 2016). Women leaders cite stereotyping as a significant barrier to advancement, and stereotypes are especially problematic for racially and ethnically diverse women (Sanchez-Hueles & Davis, 2010). According to Vial et al. (2016), “There is some evidence suggesting that subordinates might be more likely to enact negative behaviors when led by a woman (vs. a man)” (p. 404). Like their American counterparts, immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California aspire to have successful careers as leaders in the organizations where they work. While aspiring to leadership positions, these women face challenges such as how to conform to the general societal norms in America while maintaining their cultural and ethnic identity.

This phenomenological study examined the lived experiences, challenges, failures or missteps, and successes of immigrant Nigerian women who, despite all odds, managed to attain leadership positions in their current or past jobs. This study also explored their perceptions on the challenges and discrimination they encountered in their journey to leadership positions.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences, challenges, and successes of immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California. The participants were women who have been in frontline management to executive-level positions with a minimum of three direct or indirect reports. They are all employed in governmental and private companies. The focus of this study was (a) their experiences, (b) their challenges, (c) what influenced their decision to aspire to leadership positions, (d) what kept them going despite all the challenges and their source of strength, (e) their leadership styles, and (f) their coping skills

and work–life balance. Understanding the factors that motivated these women was vital because motivation helped them in achieving career satisfaction.

### **Recent Statistics**

Nigerians are part of the growing immigrant population in the United States, including Nigerian women. Approximately 376,000 Nigerian immigrants and their children live in the United States (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Nigeria is the largest source of African immigration to the United States. The size of the Nigerian-born population in the United States has grown from a small base since 1980, when an estimated 25,000 Nigerian immigrants were U.S. residents (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). The highest population of Nigerian immigrants is in Texas, which has 40,000 such immigrants. The next largest Nigerian immigrant populations are in New York and Maryland, with 25,000 each (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Despite educational and professional advantages, households headed by a member of the Nigerian diaspora have only a slightly higher median annual income than the general U.S. population: \$52,000 versus \$50,000 (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). The educational attainment of Nigerian immigrants in the United States includes 37% of those age 25 years and older having a bachelor's degree as their highest educational credential, compared to 20% of the general U.S. population (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Furthermore, 29% of Nigerian immigrants age 25 years and older hold a master's degree, doctoral degree, or advanced professional degree, compared to 11% of the U.S. population (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). The same report also illustrated that households from the Nigerian diaspora and U.S. households were equally likely to be in higher income brackets. Twenty-five percent of households in both groups reported an annual income greater than \$90,000, and 10% reported annual income exceeding \$140,000 (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Nigerian immigrants worked in professional or managerial

occupations at a higher rate than the general U.S. labor force: 46% versus 31% (Migration Policy Institute, 2015).

### **Research Questions**

This study included the following questions to explore the experiences, challenges, and successes encountered by immigrant Nigerian women in leadership positions in California:

1. What experiences (identity, relationship style, drive and motivation, and adaptive) shaped the life course of these women that impacted their leadership experiences?
2. How do sociodemographic variables (education, age, ethnicity, family composition, profession, marital status, spouse education, and profession) influence their decisions to aspire toward leadership positions?
3. What are the relationships between influencers (family background, mentoring, and faith) and career goals that affect their leadership decisions and styles?

### **Significance of Study**

Research has shown that, despite efforts by government leaders and feminist groups, and despite cooperation to increase the number of women in leadership positions in the United States, women remain underrepresented. In 2004, women comprised only 9% of chief financial officers, 4% of chief operating officers, and 2% of chief executive officers (CEOs) in Fortune 500 companies (Cook & Glass, 2011). Cook and Glass (2011) further indicated that the cumulative odds of a woman being represented at the highest levels of management are approximately 6%, which indicates that women remain well beneath the so-called glass ceiling. These statistics show the need to study how women leaders, especially minority women leaders, can be encouraged, trained, and supported to aspire toward leadership positions. Alire (2001) reported that one out of every four people in the United States in the mid-1990s was a minority.

Around the year 2000, one out of every three people in the United States was a minority (Alire, 2001). The role and the increased population of minority women in the United States necessitate attention to their low rates of representation at top corporate levels. The importance of promoting more women into leadership roles is greater than just fulfilling the promise of equal opportunity and making businesses, institutions, and governments more representative. Evidence is clear that fostering full participation for women is important for promoting a prosperous and civil society (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). The significance of studying immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California is their contribution to society, as evidenced by research on women leaders. The hope is that Nigerian and non-Nigerian immigrant women leaders will be able to extract some useful information from this study that will help them to become successful leaders at work. It is also the desire of this researcher that future immigrant Nigerian women or members of other minority immigrant women groups who are aspiring to leadership positions in the United States will benefit from the result of this study.

Figure 1 depicts the experiences and encounters immigrant Nigerian women experience at work as female leaders. Each issue has a common denominator, which is that they all contribute, either positively or negatively, to the work experiences, challenges, and successes of immigrant Nigerian females in the work environment. Their leadership experiences as female immigrant leaders are shaped by each of the factors noted in the figure.



*Figure 1.* Lived experiences of immigrant Nigerian women as leaders in the workplace.

### **Key Definitions**

This section includes some key words used to relay a common understanding within this study.

*Affirmative action* is an outcome of the 1960s civil rights movement intended to provide equal opportunity to members of minority groups, including women, in education and employment (“Affirmative Action: Overview,” 2014).

Bias is a reaction to people from other groups on the basis of perceived membership in a single human category while ignoring other personal attributes or individuated impressions formed from personal details (Chung-Herrera & Lankau, 2005).

Challenge is something needing great mental or physical effort to do it successfully or the situation of facing this kind of effort. A challenge also refers to questioning or expressing doubt about the truth or purpose of something or the right of a person to have or do something (“Challenge,” 2017).

Culture refers to the learned beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols, and traditions that are common to a group of people (Snaebjornsson, Edvardsson, Zydziunate, & Vaiman, 2015).

Discrimination refers to the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex (“Employment Discrimination,” 2001).

Ethnicity refers to differences in cultural markers, such as language, values, traditions, and national origin (Atewologun & Singh, 2010).

Glass ceiling is a subtle, transparent barrier that prevents the advancement of women and people of color to the upper echelons of power and authority in the workplace (Jackson, O’Callaghan, & Adserias, 2014).

Identities are personal but also social, shaped by the groups within which people classify themselves (such as sex or race/ethnicity) and are classified by others as insiders or outsiders (Atewologun & Singh, 2010).

Immigrants (also known as the foreign born) are people residing in a country who were not citizens of that country at birth. The population includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, certain legal nonimmigrants (e.g., persons on student or work visas), those admitted under refugee or asylum status, and persons illegally residing in a country (Migration Policy Institute, 2015).

Leadership is a process whereby a leader influences other to reach a common goal. The influence dimension of leadership requires a leader to have an impact on the lives of those being led (Northouse, 2013).

Mentoring is a form of social support in which individuals with more advanced experience and knowledge (mentors) are matched with less experienced and less knowledgeable

individuals (mentees or protégés) for the purpose of advancing the protégés' development and career (Sosik & Lee, 2002).

Motivation refers to the need for affiliation, as distinct from the need for achievement and characterized as a need for vicarious, as distinct from direct, achievement that is realized through others (Giele, 2008).

Organization is a social unit of people structured and managed to meet a need or to pursue collective goals. All organizations have a management structure that determines relationships between the different activities and the members and that subdivides and assigns roles, responsibilities, and authority to carry out different tasks ("Organizations," 2017).

Organizational culture is shaped by the main culture of a society, albeit with greater emphasis on a particular part of it. Cultures are dynamic, and they shift incrementally and constantly in response to external and internal changes (Watkins, 2013).

Power resources refer to "control over persons, information, and organizational resources, which also involve[s] the development of authority, credibility, and perceived expertise" (Chung-Herrera & Lankau, 2005, p. 2030).

Stereotypes are specific types of schema in which knowledge or perceptions about people fall into clear categories related to race, gender, age, or other categories (Berry & Bell, 2012).

Work-life balance refers to an individual's ability to meet work and family commitments, as well as other none-work responsibilities and activities (Delecta, 2011).

### **Assumptions**

As she comes from the country of Nigeria, the researcher believes that the immigrant Nigerian women leaders who participated in this study have adapted to their new environment.

The assumption is that the participants provided an accurate historical recounting of the experiences and challenges they have faced or are facing as immigrant Nigerian female leaders in organizations and companies in California. According to Creswell (2013), a phenomenological study includes a common meaning for several individuals regarding their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. The phenomenological inquiry in this study included the collective experiences and challenges faced by the participants. The researcher believed the women were open and sincere in sharing their stories and life experiences with the researcher. The researcher had no control or influence over how the participants responded to the research questions and interviews, although she believed that these women were sincere, provided candid information to the researcher, and responded to the questions honestly and to the best of their abilities and recollections.

### **Research Limitations**

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) indicated that limitations of a study are factors not under the control of the researcher. Limitations are factors that may have an effect on the interpretation of the findings or on the generalizability of the result. Limitations may arise from the methodology, data, or analysis (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The potential limitations of this study were as follows: (a) the limited number of immigrant Nigerian women leaders in organizations in California, (b) the participants were limited to 24 immigrant Nigerian women in leadership positions in organizations in California, (c) the inability to reach all individuals in California who were qualified to participate, (d) the issue of privacy and secrecy that is common among this group might have affected their willingness to participate in this study, and (e) the result is not generalizable because this study did not include all qualified participants in California.



## **Study Timeline**

The preliminary defense was in April 2018. After passing the preliminary defense, the researcher submitted an application to Pepperdine University Graduate and Professional School's Institutional Review Board to obtain approval to conduct interviews with the participants. After approval, the researcher started the data collection process by first sending the letter of invitation (Appendix A), the informed consent form (Appendix B), a sociodemographic data sheet (Appendix C), and a copy of the interview questions (Appendix D) to all the participants. Interviews and data collection were scheduled with the participants after they have agreed to participate in this study. Data collection lasted 10- 12 weeks because of the availability of the participants. After all the interviews were completed and the data gathered, the researcher analyzed the data, formed conclusions from the data, and made recommendations, which marked the end of this study.

## **Summary**

In summation, there is a need to study the experiences, challenges, and successes women leaders have encountered at work as leaders. Though the population of this study was immigrant Nigerian women leaders, women in general face the same issues of the glass ceiling, stereotypes, and low wages compared to their male counterparts. The increased number of women entering the workforce and the increased number of women in leadership positions require more research regarding their experiences and the way they can be supported by organizations and companies to be successful as leaders. Research on the impact of stereotypy, discrimination, and the glass ceiling on the career trajectory of immigrant Nigerian female leaders in California is essential to their success as leaders as well as to the success of other minority females and even American-born females. The 24 immigrant Nigerian women involved

in this study were enthusiastic, engaged, and eager to share their stories. Some of the participants indicated they were surprised that they were included in this study, and they felt that sharing their stories would assist future generations of women leaders to have better opportunities and experiences than the participants did. Chapter 2 will include a literature review of the issues and difficulties minority females and nonminority females face at work. Chapter 2 will also include a discussion on the historical data of women in the workplace and leadership styles common among female leaders.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter includes a review of articles and other publications on the challenges and issues faced by women leaders in organizations on their quest to a leadership position. This chapter also addresses the issues faced by immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California.

Nigeria is located in the western region of African and borders the Gulf of Guinea between Benin and Cameroon. It has three major ethnic tribes: the Hausas (occupying the North), the Yoruba (occupying the west), and the Ibos (occupying the east; Ejimabo, 2013). Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa, with more than 160 million people. Nigeria's population is diverse, with over 250 ethnic groups, although some have less than 20,000 people. The country was under British colonial rule from the second half of the 19th century to the first decade of the 20th century, and English is the official and common language in Nigeria (Ejimabo, 2013). In Nigeria, 50% of the population are associated with Islamic worship, 40% are Christians, and 10% hold traditional African practices and beliefs (Ejimabo, 2013).

There is limited research on the experiences of immigrant Nigerian women leaders in the United States, even though Nigerian immigrants are the largest population of African immigrants in the United States. Several website searches and search engines were used to look for publications pertaining to this topic. The only publications found were two research articles. The first was conducted in Texas and the second in New York. The pipeline of women leaders is expanding because of the increasing participation of women in undergraduate and graduate programs, where women represent 60% of the enrollment (Price & Howard, 2012). Research has shown that Nigerian immigrants are the most educated immigrant group in the United States (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Immigrant Nigerian women are part of this highly educated population, but research on this group is limited. Women migrate to other countries with

aspirations for better opportunities than are available in their native country. Most immigrants go through significant struggles in an attempt to adapt to their host country environment (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). Immigrant Nigerian women leaders living in California are part of the growing population of professional females who have migrated to a foreign country seeking a better life for themselves and their immediate and extended family members.

### **Nigerian Immigrant Data in the United States**

Nigerian immigrants are part of the growing immigrant population in the United States, and women are a part of the Nigerian immigrant population. Approximately 376,000 Nigerian immigrants and their children live in the United States (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Nigeria is the largest source of African immigration to the United States. The size of the Nigerian-born population in the United States has grown from a small base in 1980, when an estimated 25,000 Nigerian immigrants were U.S. residents (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). The largest population of Nigerian immigrants is in Texas, comprising 40,000 people. Other places in the United States where Nigerian immigrants relocated are New York and Maryland, each with 25,000 immigrants (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). The majority of immigrant Nigerians are college educated with a professional job. Although more immigrant Nigerians have a college education when compared to the average American, Nigerians' salaries are the same or only slightly higher than their American counterparts (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Despite their educational and professional advantages, households headed by members of the Nigerian diaspora have only a slightly higher median annual income than the general U.S. population (\$52,000 versus \$50,000; Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Thirty-seven percent of Nigerian immigrants in the United States age 25 and older have a bachelor's degree as their highest educational credential, compared to 20% of the general U.S. population of the same age

(Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Furthermore, 29% of Nigerian immigrants age 25 and older hold a master's degree, doctoral degree, or an advanced professional degree, compared to 11% of the U.S. population (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Nigerian diaspora households and U.S. households are equally likely to be in the higher income brackets: 25% of households in both groups reported an annual income greater than \$90,000, and 10% reported an annual income exceeding \$140,000 (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Nigerian immigrants also work in professional or managerial occupations at a higher rate (46%) than the general U.S. labor force (31%; Migration Policy Institute, 2015).

### **Current Research**

A search of the literature revealed only two research publications on the experiences of immigrant Nigerian women leaders in America: an article by Nwabah and Heitner published in the *Journal of Leadership Studies* in 2009 and a doctoral dissertation by Osinachi Muoka of Walden University published in 2016. The findings from the two research studies are discussed at length in this chapter.

Nwabah and Heitner (2009) discussed their research findings from a study with female Nigerian immigrant leaders living and working in Texas. The research was a “phenomenological hermeneutical research design to explore the immigration and leadership experiences of 22 female Nigerian immigrants in Texas through analysis and interpretation of narrative data from one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews” (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009, p. 26). The participants were born and raised in Nigeria, and they had attained leadership positions in their current or prior positions. Four participants initially met the criteria for the study, and they recommended the rest of the participants to the researchers. Their ages ranged from 28 to 52 years, with 44.6 years being the mean, 46 years the median, and 50 years the mode. The

educational levels of the participants were as follows: eight had high school diplomas, four had associate's degrees, seven had bachelor's degrees, one had a master's degree, and one had a doctorate (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009).

Several common themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews with participants (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). The first theme was America land of opportunity. The participants indicated that there are many opportunities for immigrant females to achieve their career goals that were not available to them in their native country. They also attributed their successes as leaders to affirmative action, participation in job shadowing, mentoring, internship, self-employment, and women's leadership organizations. The second theme was educational enhancement. The participants described their educational achievements and hard work as essential to their advancement at their different places of employment. The third theme was cultural differences and accents. The participants in Nwabah and Heitner's (2009) study indicated that, because of their accents and cultural differences with their subordinates, some of the staff found it difficult to be loyal, to be obedient, or to follow directives from an immigrant Nigerian female leader. With regard to the fourth theme, family responsibilities, some of the participants cited the double responsibilities of working outside the home and dealing with family issues without much assistance from their husbands as a deterrent to attaining a leadership position. According to Nwabah and Heitner (2009), participants who had supportive husbands said their husbands were key to their success at work and noted they made the combination of work and family responsibilities easier.

The fifth theme was assimilation to the American work culture (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). The participants indicated that new Nigerian female immigrants should understand how the work environment in the United States is different from that in Nigeria. The seventh theme

was the leadership experience, as participants found the leadership experience in the United States different from that in Nigeria. The participants indicated that almost all the leaders in the United States practice servant leadership, which is not the same in Nigeria. The participants also believed that it is easier to advance in leadership positions and careers in the United States than in Nigeria because, in Nigeria, in most cases, people have to know someone to be employed or to advance in their career. Although the majority of participants believed that job opportunities and career advancements are easier in the United States, a few believed the Nigerian work environment offers more opportunity for women than the United States because work environments in the United States are less chaotic, relationships among workers are easier, and there is more respect for the people in authority than in the United States. The final theme was working hard. The participants noted that immigrant Nigerian females need to work hard to have access to leadership opportunities and that they must work harder than nonimmigrant females to attain leadership positions and good-paying jobs. In addition to the factors mentioned above, the participants noted that immigrant Nigerian female leaders need to be aware of the following factors to enhance their leadership skills and attain career goals: (a) good interpersonal relationships, (b) mixing with the natives, (c) getting a good education, (d) joining professional organizations, (e) having patience, (f) being respectful, (g) having good work experience, and (h) being a hard worker.

The second research study on immigrant Nigerian women was a doctoral dissertation by Muoka (2016). The study took place in New York City and included interviews with 12 female Nigerian immigrants living in New York City at the time of the research. Some of the inclusive criteria were that they must have lived in New York City for about 10 years and they had faced obstacles in their quest to attain leadership positions. Other criteria for inclusion were that the

participants were employed in a leadership position at the time of the study with a minimum of 1 year of experience and five direct-report employees. As in Nwabah and Heitner's (2009) study, the participants were born and raised in Nigeria before migrating to the United States. Muoka recruited participants using fliers posted throughout New York City and through snowball sampling. Muoka also visited many Nigerian events, meetings, and churches to recruit potential participants. Participants' educational qualifications were as follows: six had a bachelor's degree, three had a master's degree, two had a doctoral degree, and one had a medical degree. They worked in the following professional fields: four in health care, two in nonprofits, three in education, and two in the private sector. Many respondents reported that they needed to change career paths because organizations in New York City did not recognize the equivalency of their careers, work experiences, and education from their home country (Muoka, 2016).

Several themes emerged from Muoka's (2016) study. The first theme was unrecognized leadership. Some of the participants reported during their interviews that they did not feel that their employees or coworkers recognized their leadership abilities and achievements because they are immigrants. They felt that some information was shared at work without them being included. Some felt disrespected when issues occurred or situations happened in their departments, and they felt they would be the last to hear about an issue because their employees did not follow the chain of command, bypassed them, and went to their supervisors instead of coming to them first. The second theme was preferential treatment. The participants were displeased that employers and hiring agencies did not recognize their experience and education in Nigeria, and because of this, some of them went back to school to further their education or to study something else that led them to a different profession. The third theme was immigrant challenges: the participants felt that their experiences in Nigeria had exposed them to feeling



inferior to their peers at work. Some expressed that they found it difficult to speak up in meetings. Some also felt ignored when their supervisors did not include them in decision making or did not seek their opinion.

The fourth theme was higher expectations (Muoka, 2016). The participants felt they had to work harder than everyone else to prove that they could do the job. Some stated that they stayed late at work to prove that they could do the job that their U.S.-born Caucasian female coworkers were not doing. The fifth theme was prejudice. The women noted that they had witnessed situations at work where they were viewed as incompetent to lead meetings or projects or to present during a seminar because of their skin color. The sixth theme was accents. Like the women in Nwabah and Heitner's (2009) study, the participants in Muoka's (2016) study felt ridiculed and discriminated against because of their accent. The final theme was discrimination. The participants said they had experienced discrimination at work because of their immigration status. They noted that foreign-born Black women encountered twice as much discrimination at work as native-born African American women did.

In addition to the challenges and obstacles encountered by the women participants, Muoka (2016) also asked questions regarding their advice or recommendations to future female immigrants from Nigeria who aspire to a leadership position in the United States. The participants recommended the following: (a) learn how to adapt, (b) seek help, (c) overcome obstacles, (d) endure challenges, (e) choose positive social circles, (f) stay positive, (g) have clear goals, (h) be motivated, (i) seek mentors, and (j) get educated.

The findings from the two studies by Nwabah and Heitner (2009) and Muoka (2016) were similar, with common themes reported differently. The findings showed that immigrant Nigerian females encounter discrimination, racism, prejudice, and stereotypes at work. Through

their studies, they found that, despite such laws as affirmative action, equal pay, and equal employment laws, problems remain because the laws are not enforced, and the government has no process in place to monitor compliance to these laws by employers. The authors of the two studies concluded that, despite all the obstacles faced by their participants, the participants still found ways to succeed in their professions. The women did not shy away from leadership positions, but found ways to better themselves by associating with the natives, joining professional organizations, networking with their coworkers, looking for mentors, and going back to school and obtaining degrees that helped them to succeed as leaders. In addition to the findings from these two studies regarding the experiences and challenges faced by immigrant Nigerian women leaders in the United State, other issues relate to the origin and culture of Nigerian women that influence their behaviors and reactions to situations encountered at work.

### **Clash of Two Cultures**

According to Clark, Glick, and Bures (2009), “Family patterns and social networks among immigrants are influenced by both the selectivity of migration and the experiences that migrants have at their destination” (p. 852). Immigration affects the lives of family members who migrate, as well as those who remain behind, and has important consequences for family formation, kinship ties, living arrangements, and children’s outcomes (Clark et al., 2009). A number of factors, including the conditions of immigration, opportunities at their destination, social context of the receiving country, and life course stage of the immigrants and their families, shape immigrant experiences (Clark et al., 2009). Regardless of the proximity or distance of the new location to the old, some of the issues new immigrants must cope with are cultural conflicts, culture shock, and intergenerational contestation (Obiakor & Afoláyan, 2007). Obiakor and Afoláyan (2007) further noted that a typical African immigrant family, for example, faces

pressure in ensuring its economic survival and maintaining its cultural pride at the same time. An individual's age at migration, as well as the conditions of migration, can affect life course timing and transitions. Family roles may change over time (Clark et al., 2009). According to Nwabah and Heitner (2009), Nigerian women are the product of a culture controlled by men. The Nigerian culture is male dominated, with rigid sex roles and an emphasis on gender differences. This culture knowingly or unknowingly affects the reaction and interaction of some immigrant women in the workplace. They were raised to believe that they are under men and that the male figures in their lives (father, uncle, brother, or husbands) are head of the household and are superior to them. A common belief in the Nigerian culture is that women belong in the kitchen, and women should have children, raise the children, and care for the whole family (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). In Nigeria, discrimination against women in education is often justified both socially and culturally. The general belief is that women are inferior to men and are expected to perform a secondary role in the home and at work (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). This belief led to a lack of education for women in Nigeria in the precolonial and colonial days, which began in 1500 and lasted until 1960. Although more Nigerian women are now educated, they do not earn salaries, have job opportunities, or receive promotions commensurate with their male counterparts (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). Nigerian men believe that they are superior to women, and men employ religious and cultural reasons to defend their belief (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). Even with educational initiatives such as affirmative action programs and gender mainstreaming, education does not lead to equitable positions for women in the labor market (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004). Women in Nigeria are taught not to speak when the male figures in their lives are speaking, their elders, or people in authority are speaking. Therefore, in Nigerian culture, the women are submissive to males not only at home but also in the work

environment and throughout society. Faced with little ability to earn and to protect the income and investments they need to maintain their households, professional women who are able to enter into global migration regimes (i.e., the brain drain) often opt to gain control of their household obligations by shifting to a new environment in places such as Great Britain, Canada, or the United States (Reynolds, 2006). The migration of women in search of greener pastures to provide for their household has led to the immigration of many educated Nigerian women to the United States, including California. Migration to the United States, Great Britain, or Canada has given some of these women the opportunity to make financial decisions and to gain the independence and freedom to manage their money and affairs that they did not have in their home country.

The level of education and participation in the decision making of the family of a Nigerian woman depends on where in the country a woman is born. Women's role in society and the community also relates to her ethnicity. Some ethnic groups are more lenient in allowing their females to be active participants in the family and community, whereas others are not as open. The social structures of the three major Nigerian ethnic groups, which are Ibo, Yoruba, and Housa, differ, and each structure includes different expectations regarding women's employment and participation in leadership (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). Ethnicity influences Nigerian women's employment and involvement in the community. Nwabah and Heitner (2009) contended that the scope of freedom or the autonomy of involvement and participation of Nigerian women in productive economic activities depends on the ethnic, religious, and cultural groups with which they are associated. In some cultures, women are allowed to work outside the house, be involved in politics, and have some kinds of freedom. Education and socioeconomic class also have an influence on women's freedom. Onyeizugbo (2003) noted that sex roles are

strict in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. Onyeizugbo (2003) further stressed that gender differences are emphasized. Men are expected to be assertive (even aggressive), ambitious, and strong, whereas women are expected to be submissive, passive, and gentle (Onyeizugbo, 2003). Nigerian immigrant women therefore struggle to have their voices heard and to be assertive in the workplace, which sometimes gives them a label of being aggressive, getting upset, and yelling when speaking. In the Igbo tribe, a man is expected to verbally express love to a woman; accordingly, women should not take such initiative (Onyeizugbo, 2003). The belief in Igbo tribe that men are expected to verbally express love first to women affects the women when they migrate to the United States or other developed countries. Some immigrant women are not assertive initially and have low self-esteem, although they eventually become more familiar with the American culture and society where women have equal rights with men.

Despite progress in obtaining jobs, studies on the employment status of immigrant women have revealed that they are less likely than male immigrants to secure a job in a former occupation (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). A typical working Nigerian female immigrant fits the above description. Census data indicate that Black women's dual status as Black and female creates a unique negative third status that negatively affects them in the labor market (McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017). Some immigrant Nigerian women leaders believe they work harder than males and their female American counterparts in the workplace. Recent data indicate that African American women's identity may not be advantageous for their careers (McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017), as they earn less than others doing the same work. Nwabah and Heitner (2009) indicated, "Immigrants in the United States have a higher unemployment rate than native-born workers, especially female immigrants" (p. 28). Cordano et al. (2002) noted that researchers suspect the attitudes of host nationals can affect women's opportunities for global assignments,

the acceptance of expatriate women managers by host country managers, and the cross-culture adjustment of women managers on global assignments.

According to Nwabah and Heitner (2009), immigrants sometimes experience discrimination in the workplace. Studying the association between work discrimination and health conditions among Filipinos in the United States revealed that Filipino immigrants experienced discrimination (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). Female Nigerian immigrants, like Filipinos, experience discrimination, stereotypes, and pay inequality in the workplace. They struggle and work harder to prove that they can perform their job duties and be effective leaders. According to Umolu (2014), a wage gap exists that places Black women at the lower end of the earning scale when compared to Black men and members of the White community. Nwabah and Heitner (2009) explained that the barriers immigrants face are related to human capital deficiencies, none-recognition of credentials, insufficient language skills, and ethnic and racial discrimination. These factors place immigrant Nigerian women at a disadvantage in the workplace. The educational system in Nigeria is different from the system in the United States. Also, the United States is technologically more advanced than Nigeria. The culture in the workplace in the United States is also different from that in Nigeria. In the United States, women have equal rights with men and can speak up in the workplace without fear of repercussion, while the same is not true for Nigerian women working in Nigeria. In Nigeria, women are still expected to be submissive to men and respect them in the workplace. There is an atmosphere in the workplace that men are superior to women and make all the decisions. Barriers facing African American women in business include negative race-based stereotypes, more frequent questioning of their credibility and authority, and a lack of institutional support. African American women have a double outsider status, unlike White women or African American men

who share gender or race with most colleagues or managers (Catalyst, 2016). Nigerian immigrant females, unlike their American counterparts, are criticized regarding their dress, personal appearance, speech, and reactions to situations in the workplace.

### **Barriers Affecting Women Leaders**

As the numbers of women working have changed, so have their roles. Women were once thought of as transient employees who worked only to purchase luxuries, to supplement household income, or to earn spending money; however, women's incomes are now relied upon in most two-earner families (Wentling, 1996). Although more minorities and women have gained entry into managerial positions in recent years, they continue to experience more restricted career advancement compared to their majority-member counterparts (Chung-Herrera & Lankau, 2005). Women are underrepresented in management positions in comparison to men around the world, and the rate of upward movement is low for women within managerial ranks (Tai & Sims, 2005). Female managers perceive that the challenges preventing them from reaching top management positions were ranked as follows: relationships at work, gender stereotyping, culture conflict, gender discrimination, and work–family conflict (Kattara, 2005). Women in leadership roles are less likely than their male counterparts to face social and economic penalties when they exercise or express their authority (Vial et al., 2016). Although the percentage of employed women is increasing in most countries, the number in management remains disproportionately low compared to men, and the number holding executive positions remains negligible almost everywhere (Adler, 1993). Adler (1993) further explained that this pattern holds across cultures; across communist, socialist, and capitalist systems; and among both economically developed and developing countries. For Nigerian women leaders in the United States, the issues they experience are twofold, as they face discrimination in their home country,

where there are still beliefs that women have no place in the corporate world, and in the United States. Nigerian women who immigrated to the United States might not expect to face discrimination or learn that their degrees earned from Nigerian universities may not lead them to their dream job. Some immigrant Nigerian women must return to school to study a different subject from what they studied in Nigeria to secure employment. Some enter the health care industry, especially nursing, to ensure job security.

Corporations face an alarming gap in leadership. Although women comprise more than 45% of the U.S. workforce, they led only seven Fortune 500 companies and only 10 Fortune 501–1000 companies in 2005 (Catalyst, 2005). According to Atewologun and Singh (2010), the intersection of gender and ethnicity adds a degree of complexity. Individuals and structural factors (e.g., ethnic identity, acculturation, family support, and socioeconomic status) combine to both hinder and enable the career progression of professional and managerial women who are ethnic minorities. Nigerian immigrant women leaders in California face all these barriers in their attempt to prove that they are qualified and can be good leaders. According to Adler (1993), evidence indicates that the underrepresentation, underutilization, and skewed distribution of women managers are neither coincidental nor random, but a function of systemic culture sanctions, educational barriers, legal restrictions, and corporate practices. Women are not oblivious to the difficulties they face in legitimizing their authority. Research has shown that women are sensitive to the possibility that subordinates may not accept them, and this anticipation leads them to expect a lower level of influence and to evaluate potential leadership positions more negatively, whereas for men there is no such link (Vial et al., 2016). Other barriers women face in the workplace that affect advancement in their career are lack of mentorship and no inclusion in the organizational succession plan.



## **Cultural Sanctions**

Although African women generally see work as a duty and an essential element of their lives, ethnic or cultural groups tend to differ in the extent to which women have the autonomy to engage in productive economic activities (Oladimeji, 1999). Almost all cultures differentiate between female and male roles, with implicit definitions of the expected behaviors of each. In most cultures, the traditional female roles comprise attitudes and behaviors that contradict, or at least fail to support, those of traditional managers (Adler, 1993). In Nigerian culture, women are expected to be at home, be homemakers, raise children, and take care of the homes while the men work in corporations. There is a general belief that women are not qualified and do not have the same strengths and traits as males to be good leaders. Women are expected to be submissive to men and to depend on men to make decisions in the family. In Nigeria, men have, by tradition, been regarded as better suited than women to executive positions. The qualities associated with being a successful manager are those associated with masculinity, such as drive, objectivity, and an authoritative manner (Omar & Ogenyi, 2004). Despite a lack of discriminatory intent, subtle second-generation forms of workplace gender bias can obstruct the leadership identity development of a company's entire population of women (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013).

## **Educational Barriers**

Despite great educational advances for women in recent decades, gender bias continues to be an obstacle to the advancement of female candidates to leadership roles (Vial et al., 2016). Research findings have confirmed that many women rejected for upper management positions are as intelligent or competent as the men applying for the same positions. Even though women are graduating from educational institutions in higher numbers than men, the poor representation of women at the senior management level continues (Tai & Sims, 2005). Nigerian women are

disadvantaged by their culture, which makes them vulnerable when they join the workforce. They are denied access to education because traditional men and women believe that education will make women proud, arrogant, independent, and disobedient to their husbands (Ifedili & Ifedili, 2009). Adler (1993) contended that a significant problem remains, as educational achievement has not been effective in advancing women into lower and middle-level management and has not helped women to attain executive positions. According to Paustian-Underdahl, Slattery Walker, and Woehr. (2014), one explanation for women's underrepresentation in elite leadership positions is the undervaluation of women's effectiveness as leaders.

### **Legal Sanctions**

Nations' legal structures have rarely supported the equality of women at work. In 1957, the European Community enacted laws prohibiting pay discrimination based on gender but left each country free to write its own legislation (Adler, 1993). In the United States, the Equal Pay Act of 1963 requires that men and women in the same workplace receive equal pay for equal work. The jobs need not be identical, but they must be substantially equal (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016). The law ensures women earn equal pay with men when they are performing the same job and eliminated pay discrimination against women in the workplace in the United States. However, the situation is different for women in other countries, especially in Africa, including Nigeria. For decades, California's Equal Pay Act has prohibited employers from paying employees less than they pay employees of the opposite sex for equal work. On October 6, 2015, Governor Brown signed the California Fair Pay Act (SB358), which strengthens the California Equal Pay Act ("California Equal Pay Act: Frequently Asked Questions," 2016). On September 30, 2016, Governor Brown amended the California Equal Pay

Act by signing two major bills into law: SB1063, which added race and ethnicity as protected categories, and AB1676, which prohibited employers from justifying sex, race, or ethnicity-based pay differences solely on the grounds of prior salary. These laws grant equal pay to all employees in the state of California who perform the same job functions, irrespective of the fact that they work in different companies. However, this has not always been the experience of Nigerian immigrant female leaders in California, especially those working in private sectors. These laws have also eliminated the loopholes used by employers to practice pay inequality in the state. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 offered the promise of equal employment opportunity by prohibiting job discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. Employers could no longer discriminate in hiring, firing, promotions, pay, and other types of employment discrimination (“Employment Discrimination,” 2001). Immigrant Nigerian women will typically not report their employers for pay or employment discrimination because they want to keep their jobs. These women may be the primary income earner in their family, both in the United States and in Nigeria. Nigerian women often put the needs of their family before themselves, and their family’s current and future situation may influence any professional and personal decisions they make. The civil rights struggle of woman in the United States is doubled for Nigerian immigrant women leaders in California.

### **Corporate Practices**

According to Tomkiewicz, Frankel, Adeyemi-Bello, and Sagan (2004), there are no societies where women’s publicly recognized power exceeds men’s, but the degree to which this power inequity exists varies across cultures. Recognition of power generally creates a higher status. Their educational attainment and experience in Nigeria before migration to the United States are not traditionally appreciated by corporate America or society, which puts immigrant

women leaders in a constant state of trying to prove themselves by working extra and taking extra work to prove they have the skills to perform the duties. This situation leads to them not reporting racial discrimination and to isolation in the workplace. The women's movement has treated all women, including Black and White women, as having similar goals and suffering similar inequities; the civil rights movement has likewise treated Black Americans as a monolithic group (Marshall & Wingfield, 2016). However, immigrant Nigerian women do not experience the same level of inequity or have similar goals as White females or as Black females born in the United States. In addition to facing the same discriminations faced by all females in the United States, regardless of race, immigrant Nigerian women face more types of discrimination in the workplace based on their origin or place of birth, accent, and different culture. Nigeria is a male-dominated society in which males enact the policies and laws in corporations and in government, which has greatly influenced the number of women in government, corporate, and community leadership. The suppression of women in their own culture influences immigrant Nigerian women's reaction to U.S. corporate culture and the treatment of women in leadership roles. According to Catalyst (2015), within S&P 500 companies, women held 4.2% of CEO positions, 9.5% of top earner positions, 25.1% of executive- and senior-level official and manager positions, and 36.4% of first or mid-level officials and managers positions; furthermore, 44.3% of all employees were women.

### **Lack of Mentorship**

Mentoring plays an important role in employee growth and advancement and has been especially significant in the advancement of managerial women in international research (Arifeen, 2010). Having trusted mentors inside and outside an organization is critical to the long-term success of women. Mentors within an organization give mentees key assignments that raise

their visibility and exposure to people and projects to which they would not necessarily have access (Price & Howard, 2012). Mentors outside the organization provides insights into organizational dynamics from a distance and can guide and critique mentees' performance (Price & Howard, 2012). The need for mentoring as a necessary tool for development in all spheres of human endeavor has been supported by several studies conducted mainly in the West (Okurame, 2008). In an organizational context, mentoring is often viewed as a method of training and as a development program that can be used to increase groups' or individuals' potential to carry out particular duties and responsibilities, help them become familiar with new techniques, and care for all aspects of mentees professional growth (Ismail, Khian Jui, & Abdullah, 2009). Mentoring in organizations may result in increased self-esteem at work, increased job satisfaction, decreased work alienation, effective socialization of young employees, more promotions, increased compensation, increased career mobility and advancement, increased career satisfaction, increased career commitment, and reduced job stress (Sosik & Lee, 2002). Mentoring is frequently proposed as a means to enhance various personal outcomes, especially those related to career success (Gibson, 2004). A mentor is often an older, experienced individual who helps a younger employee cope with the dynamics of the workplace. Mentoring is a developmental relationship that increases an employee's growth and advancement (Arifeen, 2010). Since ancient times, mentors have been described as socially capable and knowledgeable individuals who develop protégés by sharing their wisdom (Sosik & Lee, 2002). Mentoring relationships evolve through phases of initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition (Sosik & Lee, 2002). Mentors provide two types of functions: career development and psychological support. Psychological support functions include counseling, friendship, acceptance and confirmation, and role modeling (Sosik & Lee, 2002). Career development functions include

sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and providing challenging assignments (Sosik & Lee, 2002).

An often-touted outcome is the assistance that mentors can provide to help women and minorities gain access to the personal networks needed to navigate the organization environment (Gibson, 2004). Having a mentor has been linked to career advancement, higher pay, and greater career satisfaction. Moreover, the mentoring relationship may be critical to the advancement of women in organizations (Burke, McKeen, & McKenna, 1993). Burke et al. (1993) further noted that organizations also benefit from mentor programs, as future leaders are prepared, and employees who are mentored may be more satisfied and committed than those who are not. Mentoring is among the factors identified as contributing to the success of female professionals and managers. In particular, mentoring speeds up women's corporate success and advances the careers of outstanding professionals (Arifeen, 2010).

One of the key functions of mentors is that they assist their mentees to build self-confidence and professional identity. These functions are critical for women (Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). In an interview conducted by Ragins et al. (1998) on their research regarding the gender gap in the executive suite, the female executives interviewed reported that lack of support and isolation depleted their self-esteem and self-confidence. Recent studies in this area revealed that the effect of formal mentoring on individuals' psychosocial behavior has not been consistent if gender type played an active role in organizations (Ismail et al., 2009).

Existing research indicates that although women are as likely as men to obtain a mentor, women need to overcome greater barriers to getting a mentor than men do, including mentors' reluctance to assume a mentoring role for fear that the relationship would be misconstrued as romantic (Ragins et al., 1998). Burke et al. (1993) noted gender issues might become

increasingly important as the instrumental role of mentoring in career development is recognized. Most mentors are men because most senior positions in organizations are occupied by men. Mentors have long been identified as an important factor in the career success of men but may be even more critical to the career success of women. Women, however, may have a more difficult time finding mentors (Burke et al., 1993). The presence of gender role stereotypes in the Nigerian work culture affects the mentoring experience and preferences of males and females differently, as empirical evidence of the relevance of gender role ideology in a workplace relationship, such as mentoring, is robust (Okurame, 2008).

The importance of mentoring has been documented in other studies. Individuals with mentors receive more promotions, have more career mobility, and advance at a faster rate than those lacking mentors (Ragins et al., 1998). Ragins et al. (1998) further noted that although mentors are important for everyone, they are particularly critical for women seeking to break through the glass ceiling. Influential male mentors with pre-established networks and credibility can sponsor their female protégés into senior management circles and provide inside information usually obtained in the old boys' network. Thus, the need exists for organizations to have mentoring programs for their female leaders or those aspiring to leadership positions that will accord them the opportunity to be exposed to executive leaders and to the decision makers in these organizations, as well as the opportunity to be successful in their jobs. If exposed to mentors and mentoring programs, Nigerian women leaders may benefit greatly. Mentors will readily recommend mentees for special projects that will expose them and their work to the decision makers of an organization. Mentors also serve as role models, confidants, and someone the mentees can trust. Mentors provide their protégés with coaching and visible assignments that

improve their job performance and place their protégés on the fast track to advancement (Ragins et al., 1998).

### **Women in Leadership**

Males have traditionally held the vast majority of top leadership positions in both the United States and the world. Even though more women are entering the workforce and obtaining managerial positions, women's access to leadership positions remains limited (Weyer, 2007). Women remain underrepresented in the upper echelons of corporations and political systems. The importance of promoting more women into leadership roles is greater than just fulfilling the promise of equal opportunity and making businesses, institutions, and government more representative (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Leadership has been predominantly a male prerogative in corporate, political, military, and other sectors of society. Although women have gained increased access to supervisory and middle management positions, they remain rare as elite leaders and top executives (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Issues around women's labor force participation and the cultural constraints they face have been recurring subjects in policy and research agenda (Oladayo & Leah, 2014). Evidence indicates continuing difficulties for women to reach the top of major companies in both the United Kingdom and the United States (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004). Many explanations have been offered regarding why women experience difficulty in reaching top positions, and chief among them is the stereotype-based lack of fit between women's characteristics, skills, and aspirations and those deemed necessary for effective leadership (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).

In Africa, the proportion of both unmarried and married women in the labor force has also increased tremendously. Despite this accomplishment, women are still combining their careers with traditionally prescribed household chores assigned to them as a result of gender



stratification (Oladayo & Leah, 2014). The Nigerian work culture still reflects traditional gender role biases. For instance, it is common for work roles to be assigned along gender role stereotypes and for men and women to verbally attribute traits to themselves based on gender role stereotypes (Okurame, 2008). The pressures of being a woman of color include added burdens and additional scrutiny that others do not face. For example, African American women indicate having encounters with social inequity despite possessing advanced levels of education and high-ranking positions (Tran, 2014). As organizational leaders seek greater diversity to be competitive in a global marketplace, gender researchers have provided valuable information regarding workplace inequalities and recommendations for change (Hite, 2004). For example, researchers of gender-based management development studies have identified the importance of mentoring relationships and challenging assignments to career progress at the managerial and executive levels (Hite, 2004). As the presence of women in the workplace has increased, the motivation for understanding factors that contribute to their success has intensified (Key et al., 2012). Some researchers have explicitly made a business case for improving gender diversity in leadership roles and have argued that female leaders have unique characteristics that create additional value to organizations (Kalysh, Kulik, & Perera, 2016).

Women and men leaders are different in terms of how they make decisions, gather and dispense information, delegate tasks, structure their organizations, and motivate their employees (Aladejana & Aladejana, 2005). According to Aladejana and Aladejana (2005), women leaders place more emphasis on relationships, sharing, and process while men leaders focus on completing tasks, achieving goals, hoarding information, and winning. Studies on leadership style have found that women employ more participative leader behaviors and are more people oriented than their male peers (Key et al., 2012).

Although gender issues remain worthy of attention, a common assumption in many studies is that women within an organization have similar concerns and experiences, regardless of their racial and ethnic differences (Hite, 2004). Research indicates that White women have often perpetuated this view by assuming that all women face similar barriers and have similar experiences at work (Hite, 2004). Key et al. (2012) contended that a significant body of research indicates women of color are treated differently from their White peers. It was estimated that, in 2004, Black women earned 86% of what White women earned, and Latinas earned 72% of what White women earned. According to Key et al. (2012) the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that White women are more likely to hold executive, managerial, or administrative positions than are women of color. Increasingly, however, researchers are recognizing the potential of both sexism and racism to affect the careers of women of color and are acknowledging that the career progress of women of color may be affected by either or both factors (Hite, 2004). Women of color may experience multiple areas of marginality that result in isolation and exclusion, often view themselves as outsiders and not fitting into the institution, and are less likely to gain access to supportive networks and organizational resources (Tran, 2014).

All these factors drastically affect Nigerian women leaders' ability to climb the leadership ladder. Their challenges are double those White female leaders face, as Nigerian immigrant women leaders face stereotypes based on culture, place of origin, and skin color. These factors make it more difficult for Nigerian immigrant women leaders and require them to work harder to prove themselves in the workplace. Working class Black women are more likely to espouse a feminist perspective than their White counterparts are because of their longer history in the workplace and their experiences with racism (Key et al., 2012). Immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California are trying to assimilate to their new culture in the United

States while battling the cultural beliefs and practices in their native country, where the general belief is that women are the weaker sex and that their roles are child bearing, keeping a home, and cooking (Aladejana & Aladejana, 2005). The family life of married women typically revolves around child bearing, child-care roles and socialization, caregiving to husbands, and maintaining the household (Oladayo & Leah, 2014). Immigrant Nigerian women leaders living in California are trying to overcome the limitations imposed on them in their home country and adjusting to the new country where women have more control of their lives and environments. Nigerian society is male dominated, and women are usually marginalized and generally excluded from playing any traditional leadership roles. Their avenues for self-expression and self-realization are limited by tradition and cultural practices (Aladejana & Aladejana, 2005).

In the contemporary culture of the United States, women are lauded as having the right combination of skills for leadership and as yielding superior leadership styles and outstanding effectiveness (Eagly, 2007). Eagly (2007) further noted that there also appears to be widespread recognition that women often come in second to men in competitions to attain leadership positions. Women still suffer disadvantages in attaining access to leadership positions, as well as prejudice and resistance when they occupy these roles. Social relations, access to leadership positions, and the activities of women and men are governed and constrained by patriarchal systems of socialization and cultural practices favoring men above women (Oladayo & Leah, 2014). The underrepresentation of women at top management-level jobs is the result of a number of barriers, ranging from those that prevent them from either moving up the corporate hierarchy (often referred to as the glass ceiling phenomenon) or persisting in the top leadership positions even after they have broken through the glass ceiling (Hurley & Choudhary, 2016). According to Hurley and Choudhary (2016), other factors that impede women's progress in management

include motherhood, which results in a career interruption; a lack of a role model or a mentor; and a conscious decision to avoid the stress of balancing work and life. In addition to the above-mentioned barriers, researchers have also attributed the following factors as having an impact on the upward mobility of women leaders: lower self-efficacy and self-esteem than men, lack of family support, organizational culture, gender stereotyping of managerial positions, and lack of organizational support (Ng & Sears, 2017).

### **Glass Ceiling**

Although society in general has made great gains in women's participation in social, political, and employment spheres, women's representation in positions of power and influence has been notably less impressive (Ryan, Haslam, Morgenroth, & Rink, Stoker, & Peters, 2016). Ryan et al. (2016) further expressed that, nevertheless, increasing numbers of women manage to break through the glass ceiling and occupy top-level leadership positions. The glass ceiling effect in organizations has received a great deal of popular and scholarly attention, owing to its persistence over time (Pichler, Simpson, & Stroh, 2008). Results indicate that the glass ceiling is considered a myth by men but is real and nurtured by organizational culture, policies, and strategies other than women's inadequacies (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Only the most decentralized organizations characterized by a culture that supports women in top positions, along with women's own efforts to grow, develop, and empower themselves through academics and career development, will help break down the glass ceiling (Mathur-Helm, 2006). The glass ceiling is costly, not only in terms of lost productivity among workers who feel blocked in their careers, but also in terms of turnover costs estimated to average 150% of managers' annual salaries (Ragins et al., 1998). In recent years, there has been an increased concern that gender bias has

prevented women from advancing as rapidly and as frequently as men into management positions (Tai & Sims, 2005).

The business case for gender diversity in senior and executive positions is compelling. Studies show that companies that have the best record for promoting women outperform their competition on every measure of profitability, yet women are disproportionately failing to attain high-level positions (Johns, 2013). According to Weyer (2007), some of the factors that contribute to the presence of a glass ceiling in organizations are biological explanations, socialization explanations, and structural and cultural explanations. Although women have made considerable inroads in the workplace as a result of equity programs, rising education levels, and progressive work–life policies, they continue to experience the glass ceiling with respect to advancing into management ranks (Ng & Sears, 2017).

The market is still showing signs of a glass ceiling for women. In the United States, women comprise 46% of all workers and 45% of those in executive, administrative, and managerial occupations; women possess 51% of all bachelor's degrees and 45% of all advanced degrees. In contrast, statistics pertaining to major leadership roles consistently show inequality (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In all fields, including politics and business, it is more difficult for a woman to be a leader than it is for a man (Toor & Ofori, 2011). Toor and Ofori (2011) further contended that despite increased participation by women in business organizations, obtaining leadership positions in leading organizations is still not common among women. In 2002, women constituted 4% of the five highest earning officers in Fortune 500 companies, 0.4% of CEOs, 13% of senators, 15% of congressional representatives, 10% of state governors, and 2% of military officers at the level of brigadier general and rear admiral or higher (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Data have shown that women are clearly underrepresented in the higher echelons of

organizational leadership. Reducing the gender gap has far-reaching positive outcomes in countries facing the challenges of an aging population and mounting pension burdens (Toor & Ofori, 2011). Some of the more traditional forms of discrimination associated with a glass ceiling include disparities in job position, salary, promotion potentials, and level of responsibility as expressed through budgetary discretion and control (Jackson et al., 2014).

One sign that the glass ceiling exists is that, despite having similar credentials, women face barriers in career advancement. The existence of the glass ceiling is also confirmed when, due to limited promotional prospects, women become discouraged from applying to the promotional jobs available, which therefore increases the number of men at the top levels. Furthermore, although organizational leaders may be willing to pay high salaries to women, they still hesitate to place them in positions where they can make an impact on organizations' profitability (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Another barrier that women encounter in their quest to break the glass ceiling is the queen bee syndrome. The queen bee syndrome or phenomenon occurs specifically when a woman who has made it to the top finds a reason not to help other women aspiring to break through the glass ceiling (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010). Some women who experience difficulty breaking through the glass ceiling turn to successful women in management for support, only to find out that such women do not exist (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010).

The glass ceiling is a term that was first introduced in the 1980s and serves as a metaphor for the invisible barriers that block women and minorities from advancing up the corporate ladder to management and executive positions (Johns, 2013). The glass ceiling metaphor suggests that women can advance to high positions within leadership but cannot break through the final barrier to reach the top ("Metaphors of Women," 2017). The failure to advance to the highest levels is due to an invisible barrier not seen previously throughout their career

progression (“Metaphors of Women,” 2017). In 1991, U.S. Congress found that, despite a dramatically growing presence in the workplace, women and minorities remained underrepresented in management positions in business and that these invisible barriers were inhibiting their advancement (Johns, 2013). In Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1991, Congress enacted the Glass Ceiling Act that established the Glass Ceiling Commission (Johns, 2013). Despite substantial barriers, however, a number of women have attained top leadership positions in a variety of fields (Cook & Glass, 2014). Cook and Glass (2014) reported that *Fortune* magazine declared 2006 as the year of powerful women CEOs, citing PepsiCo, Xerox, eBay, ADM, and Kraft Foods, among others, as corporate examples of the leadership capabilities of women CEOs. Ragins et al. (1998) noted individuals in many organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of shattering the glass ceiling and removing barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential.

### **Stereotypes**

Considerable evidence indicates that gender stereotypes can contribute to substantial differences between men and women in business settings worldwide (Gupta, Turban, & Pareek, 2013). Notwithstanding the large numbers of women entering the workplace in recent decades, men continue to hold leadership positions in most business organizations (Gupta et al., 2013). Leadership has been constructed as a primarily masculine enterprise, and many theories of leadership have focused on the desirability of stereotypically masculine qualities in leaders (Toor & Ofori, 2011). When evaluated as genetically deficient, women are perceived as not possessing enough agentic characteristics to be leaders. In other words, agentic deficiency is frequently associated with the evaluation of women’s leadership potential (Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Rosette et al. (2016) further contended that the mismatch between the leader

role and the gender role occurs because the communal stereotypes affiliated with the female gender role are perceived as inadequate when paired with the agentic characteristics ascribed to typical leaders. Members of marginalized social groups are often acutely aware of the stereotypes associated with their social group, and they are aware that others may respond to them based on these stereotypes (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Gender stereotype-based expectations not only affect who people see as fitting the preconceived notion of a leader, but also affect women themselves (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Members of minority groups in the United States have historically held less social, economic, and political power than their majority counterparts. Power differences between groups in society influence the development of power resources within organizations (Chung-Herrera & Lankau, 2005). Statistical evidence indicates that females occupy a disproportionately small number of leadership positions compared to their male counterparts (Toor & Ofori, 2011). Despite their increasing numbers in management roles, women are underrepresented in higher level management positions (Kalysh et al., 2016). Women have an outside status in most high-level leadership roles because few women have held these roles. Women are expected to manifest feminine, communal values through behaviors that are affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, and sensitive (Price & Howard, 2012). One factor that may play a critical role in the perpetuation of gender differences in society is the dissemination of stereotypical images. Researchers have noted that mass media, which includes television, films, newspapers, and magazines, often convey gender-stereotypical information, which makes stereotypes salient and can influence individual choices and decisions (Gupta et al., 2013). Female leaders often find themselves in a double bind: highly communal women are criticized for being deficient leaders, and highly agentic women experience backlash for not being female enough (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Thus, women in leadership situations often experience social



identity contingencies, which are judgments, stereotypes, opportunities, restrictions, and treatments tied to social identity in a given setting (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Stereotypes can cause biases in expectations and attributions about performance, perceptions of suitability for promotion, and likelihood of receiving training and other developmental opportunities and can reinforce inequality (Chung-Herrera & Lankau, 2005). Women are not expected to manifest characteristics generally associated with men's behaviors, which include being assertive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, self-sufficient, and self-confident (Price & Howard, 2012). Women may experience stereotype threats, defined as "the concrete, real-time threat of being judged and treated poorly in settings where a negative stereotype about one's group applies" (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016, p. 389). Black female leaders are described as confident, assertive, ambitious, and willing to stand up for what they believe. Having the same characteristics that confident male leaders have will not open the door for Black women (Hewlett & Wingfield, 2015). The situation worsens for immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California, as they are passionate and dedicated to their jobs. Sometimes people misunderstand their passion and dedication as being abrasive, being rude, yelling, and being difficult to associate with. Women are associated with communal characteristics that highlight a concern for others, whereas men are viewed as possessing rationality and agentic characteristics that emphasize confidence, self-reliance, and dominance (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Women receive negative reviews from superiors, peers, and subordinates when evaluators succumb to gender norms and determine that certain work values, such as competitiveness and assertiveness, are reserved for men (Price & Howard, 2012).

Stereotyped conceptions of women and sex typing of jobs can detrimentally affect women's acceptance, perception, and advancement in organizations through perceived

incongruity or lack of fit with the perceived requirement of a job (Chung-Herrera & Lankau, 2005). The more confidently a woman conveys these values, the less effective she may become, because she is challenging traditional gender norms and overturning the expected gender hierarchy (Price & Howard, 2012). According to Kattara (2005), the experience of many women striving for the top level positions in business varies, and accompanied by the fact that they must work harder and often struggle with extraordinary demands on their personal lives to earn the same recognition or success as men. Such stereotype-based expectations of inferiority can be threatening to women and can contribute to the shortage of female leaders across diverse occupations (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).

Although women have gained access to every line of work and many have advanced to certain levels in organizations, their access to senior positions remains limited (Wentling, 1996). Women as leaders have made great strides, but still face many challenges, as they still do not have equality with men (“Metaphors for Women,” 2017). Foreign-born African Americans face an added pressure because they have to adjust to a new environment and face racism as well as discriminatory generalizations that African Americans have faced for many generations (Obiakor & Afoláyan, 2007). Women of color in executive positions are unaccounted for in most available data; thus, the experiences and challenges that stem from being female and being from a racial/ethnic minority group in a field where leadership is dominated by White males are overlooked (Lantz & Maryland, 2008). This is the same issue experienced by immigrant women leaders in California. There are no existing studies on their challenges, experiences, and successes in the workplace. The degree to which African American women identify and attribute their personal and professional outcomes and attitudes with race, gender, or an integrated identity

as a Black woman is influenced by personal and contextual factors (McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017).

The aim of this study was to shed light on the challenges, experiences, and successes of immigrant Nigerian women leaders and the reasons that studying them is essential to organizations. Immigrant Nigerian women leaders are influential in the lives of their children born in the United States. Obiakor and Afoláyan (2007) indicated that although immigrants are often subjected to all kinds of racism or discrimination, they are able to overcome obstacles and become successful because of their perseverance, hard work, education, dedication, self-awareness, self-responsibility, family values, and faith. According to Hewlett and Wingfield (2015), Black women are twice as likely as White women to be leaders in their communities, which can include running a school board, leading a youth initiative, or heading up a charity or community organization; however, their experience outside of work falls off the radar of management at work. The implications of women's dual career in homemaking and labor market participation led to a demand for changes in the traditional norms and practices of the workplace, including demand for equal pay, antidiscrimination legislation involving equal rights, and opportunities for women workers (Oladayo & Leah, 2014). Studies have also shown that some of the obstacles to the development of women's careers include lack of opportunity to undertake work-based training, output-based wage systems, informal methods of recruitment, and lack of proactive implementation of equal opportunity policies (Toor & Ofori, 2011). Women are still underrepresented in leadership roles, are perceived as having characteristics incompatible with leadership roles, are promoted less than men, and are offered riskier promotions with a higher chance of failure than men ("Metaphors of Women," 2017).

## **Work–Life Balance**

Increasing numbers of women entering the workforce have increased the number of dual-earner couples and have led to the need to juggle work and home responsibilities in many cultures worldwide (Munn & Chaughuri, 2015). Work–life balance has gained the attention of both researchers and executives. This subject interests almost everyone with a professional career (Delecta, 2011). Such widespread interest is partly due to its reflection on all aspects of life (Delecta, 2011). Work–life balance is a broad concept that involves the need to prioritize between work, such as career and ambition, and life, such as health, pleasure, leisure, family, and spiritual development (Vyas, Sajjan, & Hanji, 2015). The expression work–life balance was first used in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s (Vyas et al., 2015). Vyas et al. (2015) further noted that in the United States, the phrase work–life balance was first used in 1986. The term refers to a balance between the number of hours for various work and personal activities. The question of work–life balance is attracting increasing attention at both national and international levels, which is a consequence of the increase in the employment of women, particularly mothers (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006). Work–life balance is frequently suggested as a strategy for improving women’s representation in management. Improved work–life balance practices might increase the proportion of women in management, but the impact of these practices would be most evident when the workforce gender composition makes gender stereotypes less salient (Kalysh et al., 2016). Work–life balance is an umbrella term encompassing a wide array of practices intended to help employees balance their work and none work responsibilities. Some of these practices are the provision of child or elder care and relieving women of some family responsibilities (Kalysh et al., 2016). Employees and employers are both affected when

individuals must choose between having to perform their job duties and needing to support their families at the same time (Jones & Taylor, 2013).

Work–life balance refers to individuals’ ability to meet their work and family commitments, as well as other none work responsibilities and activities (Delecta, 2011). Work–life balance involves a daily effort to make time for family, friends, community participation, spirituality, personal growth, self-care, and other personal activities, in addition to the demands of the workplace (Vyas et al., 2015). Work–life balance also refers to any employer-sponsored benefits or working conditions that help employees balance work and none work demands (Darcy, McCarthy, Hill, & Grady, 2012). Immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California are responsible not only for their nuclear family but also for their extended family in the church and the Nigerian community. Although work–family conflict is focused on care for family dependents and tensions resulting from incompatible demands of work intruding on family responsibilities, work–life balance addresses nonearning activity and personal life needs for all employees (Wu, Rusyidi, Claiborne, & McCarthy, 2013). Work–life initiatives improve employee performance by reducing absenteeism, lateness, health care expenses, and sick leave and hence reduce their related costs (Vyas et al., 2015).

As the population continues to age, roles are expanding to include the responsibilities of taking care of not only children, but also elderly parents. The dual roles of main caregiver and professional employee create an identity conflict (Jones & Taylor, 2013). Jones and Taylor (2013) further contended that women struggle to find balance, which leads to possible workplace conflicts. A need exists to focus on developing policies and understanding the impact of balancing work and life on these women. Immigrant Nigerian women leaders who have their family as a support system struggle to achieve a work–life balance and to excel in their career,

which sometimes leads to stress and emotional struggles regarding whether to choose career over family. The women need the income from work to provide and support their family. The combination of career and family roles is often associated with conflicts, overload, and stress (Oladayo & Leah, 2014). Many women leaders suspend or interrupt their career by choice to focus their time and attention on raising their children and on family life (Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers, & Wentworth, 2007). High-achieving women who are married continue to carry the larger share of domestic responsibilities. Among the husbands of high-achieving women, only 9% assume primary responsibility for meal preparations, 10% assume primary responsibility for the laundry, and 5% assume primary responsibility for cleaning the house (Hewlett, 2002). Hewlett (2002) further indicated that professional women who want both a family and a career know that conventional benefit packages are insufficient. These women need reduced hours on their schedules and they need jobs and careers that can be interrupted, neither of which is readily available yet.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The aim of qualitative life course research is to reconstruct biographies with a focus on decisions and actions in the life spheres of education, work, family, and retirement from narrative interviews (Heinz, 2016). During all phases of the life course, people must make decisions with the possibility of reappraising their experience and social status in view of new options, alternative pathways and relationships, and declining guarantees for biographical continuity (Heinz, 2016). In the growing field of life course studies, many pieces of evidence indicate connections between childhood background, the larger social context, and adult outcomes (Giele, 2002). Life course analysis, with its emphasis on self-defined transitions, trajectories, and turning points, offers important advantages for qualitative life history research in

the varied cultural settings of developing countries, where existing expectations and experiences of life stages often change rapidly (Locke & Lloyd-Sherlock, 2011). Whereas the life cycle is used in demography and population studies to refer to established and even biologically determined pathways, the life course has a more personal and individual connotation even more closely linked to aspects of agency and reflexivity in the development of a person's life path (Verd & Lopez, 2011). Life course theory, more commonly termed the life course perspective, refers to a multidisciplinary paradigm for the study of people's lives, structural contexts, and social change (Giele & Elder, 1998). Giele and Elder (1998) further explained that the approach encompasses ideas and observations from an array of disciplines, notably history, sociology, demography, developmental psychology, biology, and economics. A life course is defined as a sequence of socially defined events and roles that an individual enacts over time (Giele & Elder, 1998). These events and roles do not necessarily proceed in a given sequence, but rather constitute the sum of a person's actual experience (Giele & Elder, 1998). Individuals also select pathways and act and appraise the consequences of their actions in terms of their self in reference to social contexts embedded in institutions and markets (Heinz, 2016). The survival of a species depends on effective adaptation to the environment and to changing circumstances (Giele & Holst, 2004). Life course research is distinctive in its weaving of a fabric of methodological pluralism from social sciences and humanities (Black, Holditch-Davis, & Miles, 2009). Continuity and change, social structures, and the relationships among time, place, and lives as contexts for developmental processes are the foci of life course research (Black et al., 2009). The life course perspective elaborates the importance of time, context, process, and meaning on human development and family life (Giele & Elder, 1998), which supported the choice of the theoretical framework in this study of immigrant female leaders who migrated to the United

States from Nigeria. The use of a life course framework allowed for in-depth interviews and exploring the effects of events in their lives from being children in Nigeria to their early experiences in United States to their current lives.

A life course perspective indicates that women who are in many ways similar in terms of age, education, economic position, and race may have different values, attitudes, or personal characteristics that make them more likely either to seek a career or to become a homemaker (Giele, 2008). Thus, life course theory was suitable for this study. The childhood experiences and lived experiences of immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California may have a profound effect on their response to leadership issues at work and challenges associated with being a female and an immigrant female leader in the United States. Childhood experiences also have an essential influence on the way these women respond to the demands of family life and work. Since the late 1980s, life course researchers have recognized the significance of the physical body and noted that the mind and body are inseparable (Black et al., 2009). Black et al. (2009) further stated that a fundamental assumption of life course theory is that lives are lived in a reasonably ordered manner in patterns shaped by age, social structures, and historical change. According to Giele and Holst (2004), the survival of a species depends on effective adaptation to the environment and to changing circumstances. Giele and Holst (2004) further noted that, in social sciences, there is broad agreement that societies are able to survive over the long term only if they continue to meet basic needs of food production, procreation, internal coordination, and protection from enemies.

Several principles characterize the life course approach. The first principle is social-historical and geographical location, in which an individual's own developmental path is embedded in and transformed by conditions and events occurring during historical periods and



geographical locations in which the person lives. For immigrant Nigerian female leaders in California, examples of the principle include political and tribal discord in Nigeria, as well as the Nigerian civil war. The second principle is timing of life. The three types of time that affects individuals' life course are individual time, generational time, and historical time. Individual time refers to chronological age. The events that occurred during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood influence decisions as adults, careers, social activism, and affiliations. Generational time refers to the age range or group into which an individual was born. The immigrant Nigerian female leaders under study were born in different generational times. Historical time addresses events and incidents that occur within a society that affect individuals, families, and societies. Such events may be economics, war, or social trends. Other principles that characterize the life course approach are heterogeneity or variability, linked lives and social ties to others, human agency and personal control, and ways the past shapes the future (Giele & Elder, 1998). Each of these principles have profound effect on how immigrant Nigerian female leaders in California responded to their new environment in America and how they continue to adapt to their environment.

### **Summary**

This chapter included a statistical review of Nigerian immigrant data in the United States. The discussion included Nigerian culture and the difficulties encountered by immigrant Nigerian women trying to hold onto their native culture while adjusting to a new life in the United States. This chapter also included a review of the issues and situations that prevent female leaders, especially minorities, from advancing their careers. Issues such as a lack of mentorship, corporate practices, the glass ceiling, stereotypes, discrimination, and a lack of work-life balance hinder the advancement of females, especially minority women, in their quest to climb the

corporate ladder. The theoretical framework for this study was the life course theory by Giele (2008), which was used during the interviews with the participants. This theoretical framework gave the participants the opportunity to tell their life stories and experiences through the interview questions. The aim of life course theory is to reconstruct from narrative interviews the biographies of participants with a focus on decisions and actions in the life sphere of education, work, family, and retirement (Heinz, 2016). Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the research methodology, as well as an overview of the research design, targeted population, and inclusion criteria.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Overview of the Research Design**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of immigrant Nigerian women leaders in organizations in California. Qualitative studies are usually none experimental and have no dependent variables. Researchers of qualitative studies do not aim to make group comparisons in advance and instead tend to be holistic and strive to understand phenomena as a whole (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). In a phenomenological research design, researchers focus on clarifying the specifics and recognizing phenomena through the eyes of the participants (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Thus, qualitative research is a way of knowing and learning about different experiences from the perspective of the individual (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). This study included 24 immigrant Nigerian women who were in leadership positions in organizations in California and had overcome obstacles and barriers in their quest to attain to leadership positions in these organizations. Despite the challenges or barriers experienced by these women, they continued to excel in their leadership positions in their respective field. Qualitative research follows a naturalistic paradigm based on the notion that reality is not predetermined but constructed by research participants (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). Qualitative methods, which include a focus on the investigation of human experiences from a holistic, in-depth perspective (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004), are well suited to exploring the barriers and challenges encountered by immigrant female leaders. This chapter includes a discussion on the qualifications of the researcher, the research methodology and design, the research questions, the data collection tool, the data collection process, the identification of the research population, the protection of human subjects, and data analysis. The chapter closes with a summary.

## **Qualifications of the Researcher**

Qualitative researchers gather subjective data that include their thoughts and perceptions as well as those of the participants. Their aim is to create a rich description of the phenomenon of interest (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). According to Creswell (2014), qualitative researchers explicitly and reflexively identify their biases, values, and personal backgrounds, such as gender, history, cultures, and socioeconomic status, which shape their interpretations.

The researcher in this study was a female Nigerian immigrant who immigrated to the United States over 25 years ago. She lived in California at the time of the study and was a leader in her current job. She had firsthand experience in, and knowledge about, the challenges and barriers faced by female immigrant Nigerian leaders in California because she lived through some of the experiences in her climb to leadership positions. The researcher had a similar background as the participants, which accorded her the ability to understand them.

Maintaining a trusting relationship with, and the privacy of, the participants was essential to the success of this study. The researcher was aware that honesty and trustworthy relationships are vital because they enable participants to be honest, be open, and freely share their experiences with the researcher. During the interviews, the researcher was aware and mindful of her response to some expressions and experiences of the participants that may have differed from her own experience. She was observant and gave the participants their personal space when appropriate.

## **Research Methodology**

Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. Thus, qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings to attempt to make sense of, or

interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Creswell, 2013). The researcher applied the qualitative approach during the interviews and data collection with the participants. Qualitative research takes place in the field or in natural settings and requires ongoing data collection (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). A qualitative coding technique was used to analyze all the data collected from interviews. Data collection in phenomenological studies often consists of in-depth and multiple interviews with participants (Creswell, 2013).

In simple terms, qualitative research is a “way of knowing” and learning about different experiences from the perspective of the individual. Qualitative research follows a naturalistic paradigm based on the notion that reality is not predetermined, but constructed by research participants (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). The most common qualitative designs are phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). The approach that was most suitable for this study was the phenomenological inquiry.

The two approaches to phenomenological inquiry are hermeneutic phenomenology and empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) further noted that phenomenological inquiry ends with a descriptive passage that discusses the essence of the experience for individuals and incorporates what they have experienced and how they experienced it. A phenomenological inquiry was most suited for this study, as it gave the researcher the opportunity to develop interview questions that helped the participants tell their stories well and in depth. It also accorded the participants the opportunity and independence to share their experiences freely with the researcher. In phenomenological inquiry, researchers believe people’s lived experiences determine their subjective reality and that these experiences contribute significantly to their understanding of specific events (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004).

The four other inquiries were studied and considered, but none of them was more relevant to this study than the phenomenological approach. Phenomenological studies involve describing the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Hence, the phenomenological approach was best suited for this study, as the study was about the lived experiences of immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California. The focus of phenomenological research is the meanings of human experiences in situations as they spontaneously occur in the course of daily life. A phenomenon can be an emotion, a relationship, or an entity such as a program, organization, or culture (Lin, 2013). The researcher used the phenomenological approach to address common phenomena among the participants in their quest to attain and maintain leadership positions in their respective professions and jobs.

Although the other four inquiries were considered for this study, they would not have been suitable. For example, the narrative inquiry involves participants telling narrative stories of their individual experiences, and they may shed light on the identities of the individuals and how they see themselves (Creswell, 2013). Though the narrative inquiry involves participants sharing their stories, its application would be limited in this study.

The focus of grounded theory inquiry is developing new theories. As its name implies, grounded theory aims to develop theory generated from or grounded in data (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). According to Creswell (2013), the intent of a grounded theory study is to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory or a unified theoretical explanation for a process or an action. Applying this inquiry in this study would not have worked because the

aim was not to form a theory but to explore the experiences of immigrant Nigerian women at work while climbing the corporate ladder.

Ethnographic inquiry was originally developed by anthropologists as a mechanism for examining cultural knowledge; in this case, a culture refers to a group of people who share common meanings, customs, experiences, and so forth (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). Although this inquiry involved researching culture and ethnic groups, it was not the most appropriate research design. The women in this study migrated to the United States from Nigeria, but in most cases they did not share the same culture and language. The region of Nigeria in which each of these women were born and raised played a vital role in their perception of their experiences at work and on women's position and role in society. Based on these factors, ethnographic inquiry was not the most suitable design for this study.

Case study inquiry involves identifying a specific case. The case may be an individual, a small group, an organization, or a partnership. It also may be related to a community, a relationship, a decision process, or a specific project (Creswell, 2013). Case study inquiry, like other inquiries, was also not suitable for this study, as it would not accord the participants the opportunity to tell their story to the researcher individually.

Although there are numerous types of qualitative methods, each retains certain characteristics that make it intrinsically qualitative in nature (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). Vishnevsky and Beanlands (2004) further explained that qualitative studies are usually nonexperimental and have no dependent or independent variables. They do not aim to make group comparisons in advance and instead tend to be holistic and involve an attempt to understand phenomena as a whole (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004).

### **Restatement of the Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following questions suitable for exploring the successes, experiences, and challenges encountered by immigrant Nigerian women in leadership positions in California:

1. What experiences (identity, relationship style, drive and motivation, and adaptive) shaped the life course of these women that impacted their leadership experiences?
2. How do sociodemographic variables (education, age, ethnicity, family composition, profession, marital status, spouse education, and profession) influence their decisions to aspire toward leadership positions?
3. What are the relationships between influencers (family background, mentoring, and faith) and career goals that affect their leadership decisions and styles?

### **Targeted Population and Sample Size**

Qualitative researchers aim to create a rich description of the phenomenon of interest (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). Rather than choosing a sample that is representative of a given population, as in quantitative research, qualitative researchers are concerned with including only those participants with rich experiences of the phenomenon under study (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). The targeted population for this phenomenological study was Nigerian-born women who immigrated to the United States and were living in California and were in leadership positions in their job at the time of the study. The researcher used many avenues and networks to reach as many qualified participants as possible. Some of the networks used by the researcher in reaching out to potential participants who met the inclusion criteria were personal referrals from family and friends obtained through snowball sampling. Initially, the researcher started the data collection and interviews with four participants who suggested eight other participants. Through



this process of snowball sampling, the researcher was able to interview the 24 participants. The participants were born in Nigerian and attained some education in Nigeria before relocating to the United States.

A sample size is rarely predetermined in qualitative research. Instead, researchers aim to include as many participants as necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). The sample size for this research was 24 participants. The sample number was chosen based on the population of immigrant Nigerian women living in California who met the inclusion criteria. The researcher reached out to 28 potential participants, and 24 agreed to participate. At the time of the study, the participants were in a leadership position in their respective field and had a minimum of 2 years of experience in a leadership position.

### **Inclusion Criteria for the Participants**

The targeted group for this study was women born in Nigeria who immigrated to the United States after attaining some education in Nigeria. At the time of the study, they were employed in organizations and companies in California and were in leadership positions. The leadership positions ranged from an entry-level supervisor to an executive-level position.

### **Recruitment Procedure**

The researcher sent a formal letter through e-mail to potential participants seeking their permission to participate in this study. The researcher also reached out to the potential participants through phone calls and in face-to-face meetings with those who were available to meet with the researcher at a location that was convenient for the participants. Snowball sampling was used to recruit more participants. During introductions and interviews, the researcher asked the participants if they knew any potential candidates the researcher could reach

out to and ask to participate in this study. To avoid bias, family members of the researcher were not qualified to participate in the study. Participants agreed to participate on their own, and no money was paid or incentives offered for their participation.

### **Data Collection**

Although no one can obtain a whole life history in a single interview, it is possible to elicit a story about key events and turning points that conveys social context and distinctive themes in an individual's life (Giele, 2008). Giele (2008) further explained that such themes reveal what is special about an individual's biography and can be used in a comparative way to indicate which precursors lead to which outcomes. Data collection and methodology are typically elastic and allow for modifications throughout the research process. Qualitative researchers gather subjective data that include their thoughts and perceptions, as well as the thoughts and perceptions of the participants (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). The researcher conducted a one-on-one interview with each participant. The researcher used the framework of life course theory to develop interview questions that probed into the participants' life experiences from their early childhood in Nigeria, their experiences in the United States, and their current stage in life, as well as the future (Giele, 2008). In qualitative research, however, the types of data to be collected are much more diverse. While, generally, most qualitative studies tend to depend on the assimilation of data in the form of words (interview transcripts, diary entries, observational notes), qualitative design is quite flexible in terms of the variety of data types applicable (Gray, 2009).

The interview questions the researcher used were suitable for exploring the effects of family upbringing, early childhood, and family relationships on their success as immigrant women leaders. Additionally, the interview questions addressed the influence of their culture,

religious, and personal beliefs on their professional success. Through these questions, the researcher learned about the main factors that influenced these women and led to their career success. Furthermore, the researcher was able to gain insight into their future career plans, advice for future immigrant Nigerian women who may be interested in leadership roles, and suggestions regarding who will help future immigrant women leaders to succeed in their careers.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

Qualitative studies require researchers to develop a different relationship with the participants than in quantitative studies (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). Vishnevsky and Beanlands (2004) explained that, in qualitative studies, researchers must approach participants as collaborators and equals in the research process, as the support and confidence of these individuals make it possible to complete the research. In qualitative research, the data collecting procedure is vital to the validity of the research. Data collection in qualitative research not only addresses the actual data collection, but also addresses the sample size, the process of obtaining consent from the participants, and any ethical issues that may arise. The researcher respected participants' privacy and conducted an ethical study. The researcher felt privileged that the participants trusted her, were willing to participate in this study, and shared their personal and professional experiences with the researcher. Creswell (2014) noted, "Data collection means gaining permissions, conducting a good qualitative sampling strategy, developing means for recording information both digitally and on paper, storing the data, and anticipating ethical issues that may arise" (p. 222).

The researcher sent solicitation letters through e-mail to potential participants requesting their participation in this study. The researcher also made a personal phone call to all potential participants as a follow-up to the solicitation letter e-mailed to them. The solicitation

letter contained a full explanation of the study and the reasons the participants were chosen to be part of this research. The researcher's contact information, as well as possible dates and times for interviews, were included in the letter.

The researcher conducted a one-to-one interview with all the participants. In situations where face-to-face interviews were not possible due to schedule and location conflicts, the researcher conducted a one-to-one telephone interview.

The researcher adhered to all ethical standards during the interviews and made the participants as comfortable as possible. The researcher also established a trusting relationship with the participants that helped them to build trust with the researcher and answered the interview questions truthfully to the best of their ability. The researcher shared the interview outline and the consent form with the participants before the interviews. The interview took place at the participant's pace, and the researcher stopped the interview briefly whenever a participant became uncomfortable and continued when the participant was ready.

The researcher documented all interviews and observed all silent communication and the countenance of the participants during the interview sessions. Although consent for audio and video recording was included in the consent form signed by the participants, the researcher did not use these methods. The researcher was able to ask clarifying questions and to ensure validation with the participants during the interviews because of the relationship between the researcher and the participants; as a result, audio or video recording was not necessary.

The data collection activities as described by Creswell (2013) starts with locating individuals who will be participants in a study; gaining access, developing a rapport, and building a trusting relationship with the participants; purposeful sampling; collecting data, which is vital as it affects the outcome of the research; recording information accurately, which makes

the interpretation of the information easier; resolving field issues; and storing data (Creswell, 2013).

### **Protection of Human Participants**

The criteria for institutional review board approval of research include protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the participants and the data they share (protection), obtaining informed consent (respect), and maximizing the benefits and minimizing the risk for human subjects (beneficence; Leisey, 2008). The participants in this study were volunteer adult immigrant Nigerian women leaders living in California who agreed on their own accord to participate. The researcher ensured that this research was conducted in an ethical manner that protected the privacy and rights of the participants. For this research, no harm to the participants was anticipated, although the researcher was prepared to handle any unexpected harm that might happen to the participants during the research by following established protocol. The interviews were conducted in a professional manner, and the participants had the right not to answer any question they were not comfortable answering and could withdraw from the research at any time. The participants were aware of the full details of this study and the benefit of their participation.

The researcher maintained the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants throughout the study. The researcher e-mailed the participants the consent form to read and sign before the interview or on the day of interview. The consent form contained information on the confidentiality of the information they would share and indicated how their data would be handled and stored. Information obtained from the participants was protected electronically with a password known only to the researcher. The signed consent forms, notes taken by the researcher during the interviews, and bibliographical data of the participants are locked in a safe

place where the researcher is the only person with access. Appendix B includes the confidentiality notification to the participants and informed consent.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability are key aspects of all research. Paying meticulous attention to those two aspects can make a difference between good research and poor research and can help to ensure fellow scientists accept findings as credible and trustworthy (Brink, 1993). Reliability refers to the consistency, stability, and repeatability of the informant's accounts, as well as the researcher's ability to collect and record information accurately (Brink, 1993). Brink (1993) further noted that validity in research refers to the accuracy and truthfulness of scientific findings. For the purpose of transparency and to ensure participants' consent, the researcher obtained their approval before starting the interviews. Good qualitative research contains comments by the researcher about how his or her interpretation of the findings is shaped by his or her background, such as gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origin (Creswell, 2014). For the purpose of transparency and the avoidance of bias, the researcher has revealed that she is an immigrant Nigerian woman leader living in California who has had her own experiences and challenges as a female leader.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis involves organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the data collected from the interviews of the participants, coding and organizing themes, presenting the data, and forming an interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2014). The researcher sought the assistance of other students as coders during coding and analysis of the collected data. The researcher carefully organized all the data collected to improve the ease of coding and analysis.

Phenomenological analysis is informed by intuition and reflection based on intensive and repetitive reading of the collected narratives. Introspection leads to the eidetic reduction process (Lin, 2013). The researcher used the eidetic reduction method by conducting a careful and repetitive read-through of each interview transcript (Lin, 2013). The researcher also used the open-coding technique to analyze the interview transcripts. Coding is the process of organizing data by bracketing chunks and writing a word that represents a category in the margins (Creswell, 2014). Using the coding process, it enabled the isolation and identification of common phenomena among the women leaders.

Open coding refers to the process of identifying concepts and categories by segmenting data (e.g., interview transcriptions) into smaller units and labeling and describing their conceptual properties (Lin, 2013). This can be done by word, by line, by paragraphs, or by perusing an entire document (Lin, 2013). The open-coding process fit well with the researcher's attempt to identify the issues that immigrant Nigerian women leaders faced or are facing in the workplace using the participants' own works and experiences. Creswell (2014) indicated that the initial steps in coding are reading the interview transcripts and organizing the data based on the emergent themes from the transcripts.

After coding all the interview transcripts of the participants, the researcher, with the assistance of the coders, grouped the data based on emerging common themes in the data collected and the research questions. The researcher had no preconceived themes but allowed the themes to emerge from the data to avoid her opinion influencing the research outcome.

After the coding and data analysis of the interview transcripts were complete, the researcher composed both the structural and the textural components of the qualitative phenomenological study based on interview data collected from the participants during

interviews. The analysis of the data shed more light on the experiences of the women leaders and new information emerged that was not discovered in the two previous studies on the experiences of immigrant Nigerian females in the United States.

### **Summary**

This chapter included a discussion on the methodology the researcher used in the study of immigrant Nigerian female leaders in California regarding their successes, challenges, and experiences encountered at work and how they were able to succeed despite these challenges. The interviews of the participants were conducted using Giele's (2002) life course theory as the theoretical framework to collect data regarding their experiences and the effect their early childhood in Nigeria had on their current state and future plans.



## Chapter 4: Research Results

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research inquiry was to explore the lived experiences, challenges, and successes of immigrant Nigerian women leaders who are in leadership positions in organizations and companies in California. The study explored the effects of early childhood experiences, family upbringing, the presence of siblings, and the education of the participants' parents on the educational attainment and professional success of these women leaders. The women shared their childhood experiences, as well as their early experiences as immigrant women working in the United States. The current resistance to women leaders in top positions can be attributed to conflicting values, roles, and power dynamics consciously or unconsciously perpetuated by ingrained stereotypical reactions (Nanton, 2015). The women in this study expressed their concerns regarding the conflict between their take-charge role at work and their submissive role expectations in the home. They expressed the impact that family values and dynamics, upbringing, and cultural expectations had on their eagerness to aspire to leadership positions. Some of the women expressed that coming from a culture where women are not heard but seen sometimes affects the way they address issues at work. According to Nwabah and Heitner (2009), the Nigerian culture is male dominated with rigid sex roles and an emphasis on gender differences. Women are marginalized and generally excluded from any traditional leadership roles.

The researcher's goal is that information obtained from the interviews with the participants will help shed light on the struggles and challenges these women encountered as immigrants from Nigeria living in the United States. The data also revealed the participants' successes and determination that kept them going despite the challenges they faced. To achieve her goal, the researcher conducted a semi structured interview of the participants using the four

set of questions from Giele (2008). The researcher also collected sociodemographic information of the participants and added two questions to supplement Giele's questions, which focused on (a) the participants' drive and motivation to continue in their quest to attain leadership positions despite the challenges faced and (b) the participants' advice for immigrant Nigerian women who currently, or may in the future, aspire to leadership positions. Qualitative interview can be used as either the main instrument of data collection or in conjunction with observation, document analysis, or some other type of data-gathering technique (Gray, 2009).

The research questions for this qualitative study were as follows:

1. What experiences (identity, relationship style, drive and motivation, and adaptive) shaped the life course of these women that impacted their leadership experiences?
2. How do sociodemographic variables (education, age, ethnicity, family composition, profession, marital status, spouse education, and profession) influence their decisions to aspire toward leadership positions?
3. What are the relationships between influencers (family background, mentoring, and faith) and career goals that affect their leadership decisions and styles?

In addition to the above research questions, the participants answered two additional question that focused on why they remained in a leadership position despite the challenges and any advice for future immigrant Nigerian women who aspire to leadership positions. The participants also provided sociodemographic information about themselves. Appendix C is a sample copy of the demographic data sheet the participants completed. The demographic information collected from the participants is shared, as well as their responses to the interview questions.

The four sets of question from Giele's (2008) life course theoretical framework were used to interview the participants. The key building block elements of the new life course paradigm are events combined in event histories or trajectories that are compared across persons or groups by noting differences in timing, duration, and rate of change (Verd & Lopez, 2011). The questions enabled the participants to share their experiences from early childhood, adolescence, adulthood, their currently states, and as well as their thoughts on their future plans. The topics of the questions included the family upbringing of the participants, the effect of their parent's education (or lack of education), and the presence of siblings. The questions also enabled the participants to share their experiences as new immigrants in the United States and their adjustments to the new environment. Their future plans were also addressed through these questions.

### **Demographics of the Participants**

The 24 immigrant Nigerian women who participated in this study were all born in Nigeria and attained some level of education in Nigeria before migrating to the United States. Two participants were from the Yoruba tribe, and the rest were from the Ibo tribe. Three participants were widows, one was single, one was divorced, and the rest were married. Ten participants had three generations living in their household. Twenty participants identified their religion as Catholic, one was Protestant, and three identified their religion as Christianity. Their education attainment ranged from bachelor's to doctoral degrees. Five participants had earned a doctorate, two were medical doctors, 12 had master's degrees, and five had a bachelor's degree. One participant was in the process of earning a master's degree, one was pursuing a doctoral degree, and another was in the process of starting a doctoral program. The participants were all in leadership positions at their jobs. Their positions ranged from a supervisor to middle managers

to an assistant superintendent in a public school district. Of the 24 participants, two lived in Northern California, and the rest lived in Southern California. They came from a wide range of professions and were employed in government as well as in private, education, food industry, and health care sectors. The sociodemographic data contained information regarding their religion, highest degree earned, current occupation, husband's education, number and age of children, and number of generations living in the household. The participants were also asked to provide data on their husband's education and occupation.

Table 1

*Sociodemographic Data of the Participants*

Descriptors	Age	Marital status	Number of children	Number of generations	Religion	Highest education	Job sector
P01	44	Widow	Three	Three	Catholic	Masters	Health care
P02	56	Married	Four	Two	Catholic	Masters	Education
P03	64	Married	Five	Three	Protestant	Masters	Education
P04	46	Married	Four	Three	Catholic	Doctorate	Health care
P05	59	Married	Four	Three	Christian	Bachelors	Financial
P06	55	Married	Two	Two	Catholic	Doctorate	Education
P07	53	Married	Three	Two	Catholic	Bachelors	Health care
P08	61	Married	Four	Two	Catholic	Masters	Health care
P09	33	Single	None	One	Christian	Bachelors	Restaurant
P10	50	Married	Two	Two	Catholic	Bachelors	Health care
P11	45	Married	Three	Three	Christian	Medical doctor	Health care
P12	48	Married	Four	Two	Catholic	Masters	Health care
P13	49	Married	Two	Two	Catholic	Doctorate	Financial
P14	53	Married	Three	Two	Catholic	Masters	Health care
P15	38	Divorced	Four	Three	Catholic	Doctorate	Health care
P16	66	Married	Four	Two	Catholic	Masters	Education
P17	62	Widowed	Two	Two	Catholic	Doctorate	Education
P18	49	Married	Three	Three	Catholic	Bachelors	Health care
P19	55	Widowed	Three	Three	Catholic	Masters	Health care
P20	48	Married	Five	Three	Catholic	Masters	Health care
P21	57	Single	One	Three	Catholic	Masters	Restaurant
P22	48	Married	Four	Three	Catholic	Medical doctor	Health care
P23	56	Married	Three	Two	Catholic	Masters	Education
P24	49	Married	Three	Two	Catholic	Masters	Health care

The age of the participants ranged from 33 years to 66 years. Ten participants had three generations of family members living in their household, which means they are either caring for their parents or parents-in-law, and also grandchildren in some cases which is not uncommon in the Nigerian community.

### **Research Questions**

1. What experiences (identity, relationship style, drive and motivation, and adaptive) shaped the life course of these women that impacted their leadership experiences?
2. How do sociodemographic variables (education, age, ethnicity, family composition, profession, marital status, spouse education, and profession) influence their decisions to aspire toward leadership positions?
3. What are the relationships between influencers (family background, mentoring, and faith) and career goals that affect their leadership decisions and styles?

As noted earlier in this chapter, the interview data were reported to addressing the research questions. Because the responses by the participants to the interview questions were interwoven or crisscrossed over the three research questions, the major themes that emerged from the data analysis are reported. The participants answered the questions truthfully and expressed how their experiences both personally and professionally had influenced their decision to aspire to leadership positions and their leadership styles. The four main themes that emerged from the data analysis were family, faith, education, and discrimination.

### **Family**

All the participants expressed the value of family in their lives and how their family upbringing influenced their lives both personally and professionally. Some of the participants also emphasized how their career paths were changed or influenced by their parents. They also

discussed how valuable family relationships and ties are to their success as adults. They expressed that family does not mean only their immediate family, but includes extended family, which is common in Nigerian culture. Some talked about how their husbands, parents, and parents-in-law in some cases were helping to manage the household while the participants pursued their educational and career goals. They were quick to point out that the assistance others provide does not mean that they do not do their own share in the house, but they noted their appreciation of the role and encouragement from their husbands, parents, parents-in-law, and extended family members. Throughout the interview of some of the participants, their responses regarding family and faith questions were interwoven and crisscrossed to answer the three research questions.

Participants 15 said:

My parents were both college graduates and had the goal of me being a lawyer. They had high expectations for us. Growing up, I was made to understand that the good name of my family was very important, and that I cannot do anything that will tarnish the image of the family. There was a fear and respect for family. My family was all to me and I still maintain that upbringing and raise children same way now. My mom was a teacher for 35 years. As a teacher's child, you were expected to be the best and that was a motivation for me. The Catholic high school I attended made me more matured, they told us that "a lady is not heard but seen."

Participant 15 continued to express the influence of family when she discussed her mother's education. She said,

My mom attended teacher training in 1970s and that was when women education were frowned at. My grandfather had the goal and trained all his girls to secondary education

and those who wanted to further their education continued. Even at my mom's generation, education was important to my family. My grandparents did not allow the society to influence them. They trained all their female children to the highest level of education they wanted to attain. Not only for the females but everyone as long as you want to go.

Participant 16 also discussed family values and the influence family has on her as a woman leader. Participant 16 said,

My dad was a polygamous man; however, the way my dad put the family together, you will not know that he had more than one wife. Some people are born leaders. I do not see myself as a president; however, I had to make myself seen by my leadership abilities.

Going to high school, I was always nominated as the class prefect. Each time, I strived to better myself and aspire higher. I was the senior prefect in high school. The confidence I had in me made me aspire higher and shine. In our culture, women are not supposed to be heard but seen. However, I was vocal from young age. I speak up and that molded me to where I am now. My family, especially my dad, was encouraging and supportive in all we did growing up. He provided for all his children and encouraged us to work hard. He also instilled in us that family is all we have that friends may leave us but family will not.

My dad instilled confidence and pride in all of us.

Participant 16 described her family's attitude regarding women's education:

My family's attitude towards women education was positive. My dad made us, all his daughters, to understand that we must go to college and be educated. Even when people were advising him to have the girls marry early and not go to school, he said no and sent all of us to college. The sex didn't matter to my dad. He encouraged and sent all his kids to college.

Participant 17 discussed her family's influence of her career:

My family's goal was for me to be highly educated. My dad would say, "I have no inheritance or wealth" but would train us to the highest level of education. My parents supported us growing up. Coming from a Catholic family, we have always been close. Our parents taught us the value of family and faith. They told us that we cannot mess with our family and faith.

She also said that her family believed in education for all:

We were 10 siblings in my family: seven girls and three boys. All were college graduates. My dad died when I was 16 years old. I just turned 17 when my dad passed, and my family just picked up my education because I was just finishing secondary school. We knew that the only way to be successful is through education. Education was very important to my family.

Continuing the discussion about family, Participant 20 said,

My mom is my greatest mentor. She was supportive and stayed with us to help me with the children when I was in school. She left her business and my younger siblings in Nigeria and came over to assist me with the children and household so that I can focus on my education when I was in school. She helped me and advised me that I can even list the advice she gave to me for you. Family is everything to me. The support of my family helped me to be successful. My husband has been more than supportive throughout this journey. He is my biggest mentor. He supported and coached me on how to navigate the American system when I newly came over to the United States of America. He was always there encouraging me to be the best I can be. Being an ardent supporter of education and a PhD holder himself, and having attained a supervisory position in his field that is dominated by other races, he has been there for me every step of the way. Not only is he my coach and mentor, he is also my confidant and friend. That is what



family members do for each other. We stay together and support each other no matter the situation or how tough or difficult the things may be.

### **Faith**

The participants also expressed the value of faith to their success and how their faith has sustained them through their journey as leaders and as Nigerian immigrants living in the United States. Participant 19 said,

My parents were strong Catholics. There was love in the family. Spirituality and trusting God in all we do was instilled in us by our parents. We didn't have abundant money, but we trusted in God that he will bring us through and he did. The love of family and our faith made us focus on our education. We believed in our parents and wanted to attain higher goals than they did. We tried not to bring shame to the family since our parents were practicing Catholics and community leaders.

Also discussing faith, Participant 10 stated,

My family is a strong Catholic family. My dad advised us to put God first in all we do. Without God you cannot succeed. Any success you made is from God. Treat people good and God will give you kindness. When you have faith, you will be able to see things with a broader mind. Even when things did not go the way you expected, with faith you can overcome.

Participant 20 said,

My involvement in my faith community [Catholic faith] helped me to remain focused. I could not disappoint my church and family. Back home, the school and church had some ties. People knew me as a smart lady and I always took first position so everyone was

supportive. Going to church, being a member of the young girls' group and youth choir helped me. My faith and involvement in my church helped me to remain focused.

Participant 21 said,

We are Catholics and raised Catholics. We were very active in our church community growing up. Our parents made sure that we went to church on Sundays and other days of obligations. My faith teaching helped me to survive when things were difficult. I have always prayed and trusted God in all I do. Before embarking on any project, I pray and seek God's face and opinion on how to handle the project and he has not failed me for once. The morale I learnt from my church and family as a young child is still leading me today. There are things I cannot do now even at my age because of the fear of God which was instilled in me by my faith and parents when I was younger. My family expectations helped me to remain focused on my education, career, and be successful.

Participant 1 said the following about faith:

My parents taught me that without God we cannot do anything but with God all things are possible. As a Catholic, my faith and participation in my church activities when I was growing up and belonging to several organizations in my church helped me to stay focused in my education and career. My faith and trust in God has always seen me through when things are tough.

One of Participant 5's family members had a major illness few years ago that was not expected. It was sudden, and the family member remained sick and disabled because of the illness and requires around-the-clock care.

Participant 5 stated,

My faith was shaken when one of my family members got sick. It was sudden and unexpected. I gave God my life. I trust in him. I am a good Christian. Initially I asked God why this came to me if I am a good Christian. However, now I ask God why not me because God used my family's situation to show others that no one is perfect. During that time, my faith was shaken, but I know that God used me to show others that it can be done. He made me stronger and lent a helping hand to me. He is the one who is leading me and gave me strength to continue.

Whenever I want to give up, he lifts me up.

### **Education**

The participants expressed how their parents valued education and encouraged them to pursue their education to the highest level possible. Some of the participants discussed how their parents sent them to college against the common practice during that period in their communities. From the 1950s to the early 1970s in some parts of Nigeria, women were rarely educated or sent to college by their parents because they were expected to get married at an early age. Many parents believed that providing their daughters with a college education would not be beneficial to the family because the women will marry and use their skills at their husband's house and not assist their own family. The participants expressed their thankfulness that their parents were not influenced by the common practice of not sending the girls to school and to have them get married early. Some of the participants discussed how their mother's education, and in some cases their mother's lack of education, motivated them to aspire to a higher education. Some participants also explained that because their parents were not educated, not going to college and succeeding was not an option for them. They wanted to make their parents proud. Their parents wanted their daughters to go to college so that they would have better

opportunities and be more successful than their parents. Below are some of the responses by the participants that formed the education theme.

Participant 3 said,

My father told me that the sky is my limit, which was why I aspired as high as I did. My family was supportive of women's education. My mom was a teacher and a matron. My dad had Higher National Diploma (HND); my grandparents were all educated. All my sisters are college graduates and educated. My family is known in my town for education and especially for educating women when it was not a common practice in the society when I grew up to send women to college. Much were expected from us. My parents were educated and expected us to be more educated than them. They set a high goal for us academically. They believed that we can achieve any goal we set for ourselves. As the oldest child, I had to lead the way and make sure that I completed my education and led a good foundation and goals for my siblings to follow. Education, and especially women's education, was [so] important to my family that my mom went back to college to further her education after we were all grown. They expected the best from us. During the time I was growing up, it took a village to raise a child. I will never do anything that will damage the name and image of my family. I had fear of God and parents. My parents led early childhood Christian foundation for us. We need to teach our children (current generation) to respect self and others.

Participant 22 said the following regarding education:

My dad was educated. He was a pharmacist and my mom was a teacher. She went through a lot of hurdles to go to college. She got her bachelor's after she had all of us. My parents supported and sacrificed to make sure that all my siblings and I had good

education. They trained both males and females equally. The sex did not matter to them. The females were sent to school the same way males were. My parent's education, especially my mom, motivated me to continue and be focused. Our parent's bedroom had a library in it. My mom will open it and tell us to read the books. Instead of my mom buying wrappers and shoes, she bought books for us and converted her closet into a library for us. She told us that wrapper and shoes will come later. This home library helped us to study, and we loved going to school. Growing up when my mom travels, she will buy books as present for us instead of toys or clothes. My parents were very much involved in the church. Our day starts with a Rosary at 5 a.m. every day. That was how they prayed for us throughout our lives. Their prayers helped us to succeed. My parents expected me to be focused at school and finish my education. We went to Catholic schools and federal government colleges. They spent all they had to give us good education.

Participant 1 said,

My parents never went to school but they loved education and made sure that they sent my siblings and me to college. All my older siblings went to college, so I had no option but to follow their footsteps by attending to college like they did. Early in life, our parents told us that education is the key to success—it will open doors for us, way out of poverty and way to have a successful future. Though my parents didn't have that much money, however they had enough to send us to college and provided for us.

Participant 4 said the following about education:

My family supported women's education. My mom was a nurse and a senior matron. Women were encouraged to go to school. My mom told me of how her brother was asked

not to send her to school because she was a girl and will soon marry, but her brother refused and sent her to college to study nursing. Because of her experience, she made sure that all my siblings, both girls and boys, all went to college. My parent's education helped me because both went to college and are educated. They had high expectations for us and believed that we will achieve our goals if we stay focused. Both of my parents have their master degrees so they wanted all their children to have higher degree than they did. That's why I have my doctorate degree. My parents supported us emotionally and provided the financial support for me and my siblings during our early education. Being Catholic, my faith helped me so much in staying focused. I was also involved in my church and some organizations in my church.

Participant 6 stated,

It was truly a blessing that my parents were blessed. Having a doctorate degree or being an MD in my family is not uncommon. My grandmother was a teacher and my mom was a nurse and my dad was a librarian. Having grandparents who were teachers, it was expected that we must go to school. They had higher expectations for us. I was never street smart because of the way I was raised. My family supported women education with my grandma and my mother all educated. With that you will see that my family supported women education from early before I was born. My dad felt that we can be all we want to be if we are educated. He supported women education and sent all his children, including girls, to college. Being a female in my family was never a limitation to education. I remember as a young girl that my dad gave me a newspaper article to read that talked about a girl who got her Ph.D. at 16. Growing up, we were encouraged to read newspapers and several books and novels. My dad didn't see our sex as females as a

limitation to education. He believed that we can be all we wanted to be. Having family members who were educated made me know that I have to be educated. I have all the resources around me to be successful—several educated aunties and uncles to look up to and reach out to for questions and encouragements. It made my education easier, and my dad was my first teacher. We got up at 5 a.m. every day to say our prayers and review our homework before going to school. When I went to the boarding school was when I depended on my classmates. Even when I was doing my doctorate, my auntie was helping me. There was always someone there to encourage you to look ahead and strive for better. Education is a social capital. Not really having physical money but you can move around/up in the social ladder and society.

Participant 6 continued,

Both of my parents were educated so that encouraged me to continue and do better than they did. My parents were able to provide for all our needs, though the first five kids got the best than the last five. We are Catholics and were raised Catholic. We were very active in the church, belonged to several organizations in the church, and volunteered. My Catholic upbringing and education has helped me throughout my life. We visited the sick in the hospital and at home. We worked with the nuns to help the sick, poor, and less privileged. My family expected me to be successful with my education. Failure was never an option for me because there were people who did it before me to look up to.

Participant 6 also stated,

I have ten siblings. The younger ones didn't get the same help and training from my dad like I did. We the first five got the best of it. The opportunity to travel abroad for school was easier for the first five than the last five. But we all went to college.

Still on education, Participant 8 said,

My parents valued education but finances was very difficult for them. My dad thought that if I went to teacher training college that I will be OK. Education they appreciated, but did not have the money to train us. He wanted me to be a teacher because he was a teacher. They thought then that women are other people's property when they get married and the new husband may not allow them to help their family. There was no need spending money to train girls. My family expected us to be successful wherever we found ourselves, educated or not. My dad talked about how I pushed my way through life despite all the discouragements. Little did I know that God was trying to bring the family to another level through my determination and struggles. My dad always said that I was God-sent to the family.

### **Discrimination**

The experiences the participants had with job discrimination varied. A majority of the participants shared stories about their experiences with discrimination, while some claimed that they never experienced discrimination or refused to acknowledge it. One of the participants refused to share her experiences with discrimination; rather, she said that she was "pleading the 5th" because of her current situation at work and the pain she feels whenever she remembers what happened to her.

In sharing her experience with discrimination, Participant 7 stated,



I experienced job discrimination when I wanted to get into leadership position. It was not easy. I had several oppositions and was passed for the position I applied for. I thought that with my experiences and participations in several committees and projects at the hospital where I work that moving up will not be difficult for me. But it was difficult. I had to apply for several positions before I was given the opportunity. I guess people were afraid of me because I am vocal and says the truth always.

Participant 10, in describing her experience with discrimination, stated,

Yes, I face discrimination all the time from both the staff and management. Because I have some Nigerians in my unit, sometimes management blames me for their behaviors, and because of it they stopped involving me in job interviews and new-hire process.

Participant 13 stated,

The discrimination I experienced was from coworkers and not from leadership, so I don't pay attention to it. In Nigeria where I came from, there is discrimination, so I never pay attention to it and it has not affected me.

Participant 17 said,

I don't see it as so much as a job discrimination. I have been in cabinet—I understand the game. When you reach our level of leadership, you want to hand select your own people, so I don't want to call it discrimination. I have worked closely with four superintendents in the last 10 years, before then as a principal, I have worked with five at a time.

Participant 18 made the following comments regarding discrimination:

For job discrimination, they pick people they want at my job for promotions. I have not personally experienced one. I do not let people run me over when it comes to my job. I fight for my right. I don't let people push me around. I don't let people walk over me. If

you allow them, they will make you a target. Because you are vocal, it holds you down from being promoted.

Participant 20 responded,

So many job discriminations. One was when I applied for a supervisor position. There is job discrimination every day at my job with job assignments are made. One of the managers even told me that I was not allowed to supervise Nigerians. When I applied for the manager positions also, they choose less qualified people before me. They know that as Nigerians we are very strong, so they play games with us. That's why I am trying my best to help the ones coming up and fighting for them.

Participant 16 reacted to the question about discrimination, saying, "I believe I have experienced job discriminations but I do not pay attention to them. God has been faithful to me and I have excelled at work." Participant 22 stated,

Job discrimination is possible, but I don't know if it's my own practice situation. Coming from Nigeria, I was not able to discern what discrimination was. I thought it was a blessing in disguise because if things didn't go well, I will feel it more.

Participant 23 responded,

Job discrimination, of course I have experienced job discrimination, but no one will tell you that. I saw it, I felt it, but there is no way to prove it, but there is nothing you can say. I was turned down over and over and over several times when I applied for manager position.

Participant 24 had some issues currently going on at her work and it affected her response to this question. She said, "I plead the 5th about this one [accompanied by a long laugh].

Then she said, "Only by the grace of God we are surviving." Participant 4 said,

I have experienced job discrimination big time. I don't know if it happened because I am a female or black. I have been on my current job as a program director for more than 3 years but was never paid the program director stipend for more than 3 years. I had to file a complaint and fight the system to get paid those years I was not paid.

Participant 5 said, "Yes, I have experienced job discriminations, but through it all, God sustained me."

In addition to Giele's (2008) life course interview questions, the researcher asked the participants two more questions. With the two additional questions, the research wanted to know how the participants were able to succeed as leaders despite the challenges they encountered along the way. The researcher also asked them to provide advice to immigrant Nigerian women and women in general who are aspiring to leadership positions. Some of their responses were as follows.

### **What Kept You Going Despite All the Challenges?**

Participant 2 said, "My faith, trusting in God and praying. Not allowing people's opinion of me affect me. Staying focused on my goals and knowing that the end result is me achieving set goals." Participant 1 responded,

My God and my faith. Not giving up. Showing my daughter that you can do everything you put your mind to. No one can prevent me from reaching my goals, which my parents told us at an early age, and that was why they made sure that we all went to college.

Participant 3 said,

My faith, praying and trusting in God. Setting goals and focusing on those goals no matter what happens. Knowing what I wanted and where I want to go. Following my dreams and working hard. Being educated and going to seminars to improve my

knowledge and skills. Having good mentor and associating myself with people who are like minds with me. Having trusted friends you can call on both in good and bad times for ideas. Above all, trusting in God and prayers kept me going. My family upbringing also played a big role. Growing up, my parents encouraged us to reach higher and never give up when the road gets tough and difficult.

Participant 16 said,

The determination, nothing could stop me except God. When I set my mind to do something, I do it. I am a strong-willed person that accomplishes all I set my mind to do. I want a better life for myself and family. It was not easy to start teaching here after coming to America, but I was determined to succeed as a teacher, which I did and more.

Participant 15 said,

I am very resilient. I strongly believe that I was born for what I am doing now. I don't take no for an answer. I don't allow people to put me in a box. I also encourage my children not to give up. Every time I have been told I can't, I have proven that I can. President Obama motivates me. Martin Luther King motivates me. I do not take no from anyone. Any challenges I have went through has strengthened me. My ring tone on my phone is "I Am Every Woman" by Whitney Houston. Yes, I am every woman and it's all I am.

**What Advice Do You Have for Immigrant Nigerian Women and Women in General Who Are Aspiring for Leadership Positions?**

Participant 2 stated, "Doing what you like. Setting goals and focusing on your goals. Carry self with respect and dignity. Maintain a high self-esteem. Get a mentor and be open minded to receive constructive criticisms and corrections." Participant 1 said,

Don't give up. Don't conform to people's opinion of you or what they want you to be. Be real, authentic and be you. As Nigerians, we have reputation of being loud. Mind how you speak and present yourself at work. Go to school, know your job duties and more. Be helpful to others and fair. Walk to talk. Avoid office gossip and cliques. Mind what you say at work.

Participant 3 advised,

Stay focused on your goals. Stay current on your profession. Attend conferences and workshops even if your company will not pay for them. Pay on your own and attend because what you will gain will be more than the money you paid to attend. You will have obstacles along the way but do not be discouraged. Obstacles are speed bumps—they make you to stop and reflect. Set goals and every 3 months reassess the goals. Have a planner and calendar. Celebrate each goal that is achieved no matter how small. Take time for yourself, care for yourself. Eat healthy, exercise and no rush in life. Do self-affirmation daily. We are uniquely different, so you cannot be someone else. Only be you and real. Don't let anything define you. Take control of your destiny. Put a price on yourself or people will take you to the clearance rack. You will give people permission to give you an underserving name. You do not compete with anyone, but you.

Participant 16 responded,

Be determined. Do not give up. Do not let someone discourage you. If one person can do this, I can do it too. Don't stop. Show them that you are smart as they are. Some people think that coming from Africa, we cannot do anything. Show them that you are better and smarter than them. Start letting people know that you are intelligent like they are, if not smarter. Don't give up. Keep pushing and knocking on doors until they open.

## Research Questions

Research Question 1 was as follows: What experiences (identity, relationship style, drive and motivation, and adaptive) shaped the life course of these women that impacted their leadership experiences? Most of the participants during the interview shared with the researcher how their parents laid the foundation in their early childhood growing up in Nigeria. They explained that, as children, their parents instilled a good work ethic in them. They also shared that their parents told them about the value of honesty and hard work. They said their parents told them that with hard work they can achieve all the dreams they have, and no one can stop them. They continue to say that they are motivated by their parents and the foundation that was laid for them growing up. Some of the participants described themselves as servant leaders because growing up they saw how their parents led and were told that, as a leader, they are to serve the people and not for the people to serve them.

Research Question 2 was as follows: How do sociodemographic variables (education, age, ethnicity, family composition, profession, marital status, spouse education, and profession) influence their decisions to aspire toward leadership positions? Many of the participants came from middle class families and had the opportunity of better education than the rest of the participants. In each case, the participants valued education and shared several stories about the value of education their parents shared with them. Growing up, they were told that, with an education, they will go places, and bearing this in mind motivated them to stay in school when they were in Nigeria and to further their education in the United States. Some of the women shared stories of how their dad sent them to school instead of allowing them to marry early, which was the common practice then. All the participants valued education because they know that, with education, they can open any closed door and overcome barriers in the workplace. The

participants valued their family relationships and traditions and cited them as things that give them strength. Some of the participants who are the oldest and first in the family shared how they are expected to behave and maintain good grades to serve as a role models for their younger siblings. The ones who are married talked about how the support they received from their husbands helped them to overcome obstacles at work. Their husband's education and profession had no influence on their decision to aspire to leadership positions. Most of them see their race and age as a hindrance to leadership positions because companies would like to hire younger candidates. All the participants stated that they are happy with the career and profession choices they made and feel accomplished.

Research Question 3 was as follows: What are the relationships between influencers (family background, mentoring, and faith) and career goals that affect their leadership decisions and styles? The participants talked about family upbringing and how it has shaped who they have become. They were held accountable for their actions as children and knew the expectations. Some shared stories of how their parents told them to treat people with respect and be fair to everyone. The strong foundation laid by their parents influenced their leadership style and practice.

Some of the participants who had mentors talked about the value of the mentor in their professional growth. A few of them narrated how their mentors helped them prepare for promotion interviews. The participants advised that new and future immigrant Nigerian women leaders look for mentors.

All the women in this study described their faith as the main catalyst for their survival at work and for overcoming all the obstacles they encountered. They claimed to have strong faith and noted they could not have survived if they did not have faith in God. The participants said

their parents got them involved in the church and church activities and that they grew up with it and it became part of them.

### **Summary**

This research study involved investigating the lived experiences, challenges, and successes of 24 immigrant Nigerian women leaders living and working in California. The interviews with these women involved using Giele's (2008) life course framework to ascertain their experiences from early childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, and as well their thoughts about their future . The participants varied in age from 33 to 66 years old. They came from diverse professional backgrounds. Some were in the health care industry, whereas others were in public school systems and the food services industry. In addition to the set of questions from Giele, the researcher asked two more questions to the participants. The participants attributed their success to their faith, belief in God, family upbringing, parents' influence, and determination.



## Chapter 5: Summary of the Study

The main purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to investigate and explore the lived experiences of immigrant Nigerian women leaders living and working in California. This research also investigated why these women remained in and aspired to higher leadership positions, despite the challenges they encounter at work. The researcher also solicited advice from the participants for new immigrant Nigerian women and women in general who are or will be aspiring to leadership positions. The participants were born in Nigeria and attained some level of education in Nigeria before migrating to the United States. They were employed in companies and organizations in California at the time of the study. Some of the companies and organizations were government organizations, and some were not government organizations. Their positions ranged from frontline supervisor to senior leader in a school district.

Data were collected from the participants through one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Twenty-four participants were interviewed for this study. Some were recruited by the researcher, while others were recruited by the snowball method. Participants were interviewed after agreeing to participate and signing the informed consent form. The interview instrument was e-mailed to the participants prior to conducting the interviews. The participants worked in different sectors, including education, health care, and food and nutrition services. The individual interviews were conducted using Giele's (2008) questions and a set of sociodemographic questions. Appendix D includes a copy of Giele's interview instrument used. The researcher also included two additional questions asking the participants about their strength, what kept them going despite the challenges they experienced at work, and the advice they would offer to future immigrant Nigerian women and women in general who aspire to leadership positions.

A common theme that emerged from the participants' responses was that some believed they were not compensated well in comparison with the work they do and with their White female and male counterparts. Participants' responses and impact will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Immigrants experience more stress than the native population, especially during the early transition from their original country to the new host country (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). The women interviewed for this study expressed they felt stressed trying to adjust to their new environment, both in the workplace and at home. The stress in turn affected their responses to situations and issues at work. Nwabah and Heitner (2009) explained that, to adjust to a new culture and a new environment, immigrants undergo the stress of acculturation. Immigrants face a dilemma in maintaining their cultural and ethnic identity and acclimatizing to the new environment. Some of the immigrant Nigerian women who participated in this study talked about the conflict they experienced adjusting to the freedom of speech and free will in American society. In the United States, unlike in Nigeria, women have more control of their lives, finances, and career. In Nigeria, one's family has influence and control over the life and career choices of women. Nigerian society encourages women to be passive, submissive, and silent, especially with regard to family decision making, because in Nigeria men are considered to own women (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). Understanding the experiences and challenges of these women as leaders may help employers to know how best to leverage their talents and energy. Furthermore, studying their success stories, their adaption mechanisms, and the factors that influenced them to aspire to leadership positions is crucial to the success of additional immigrant Nigeria women leaders and women in general in the workplace. Owing to the increase in the number of

immigrant Nigerians in the United States in recent years, it is vital that researchers study and understand these women. According to researchers at the Immigration Policy Institute (2015), approximately 376,000 Nigerians and their children live in the United States, and they comprise the largest immigrant population in the United States from Africa.

Various factors have served as barriers to women's advancement in school administration. One major barrier is the male dominance that keeps women from advancing into positions of power and prestige (Aladejana & Aladejana, 2005). The Immigrant Nigerian women participants in this study described men's sometimes aggressive and intimidating behaviors as a hindrance to the women's ability to advance toward their career goals. Some described the behaviors as a reminder of their experience in Nigeria. Gender equality means that men and women enjoy the same rights and opportunities and does not require that girls and boys or women and men be the same (Okonkwo, 2013). The immigrant Nigerian women had experienced gender inequality in the workplace. They had experienced situations in which men were assigned to the presumably more difficult and expensive projects.

Immigrants sometimes experience discrimination in the workplace. A study of the association between work discrimination and health conditions among Filipinos in the United States revealed that Filipino immigrants experienced discrimination (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). Immigrants sometimes accept jobs, wages, and benefits below what U.S workers are willing to accept (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). In an attempt to provide for their families both in the United States and in Nigeria, the immigrant Nigerian women were willing to work more and accept less pay than their American counterparts. Some of the discriminating practices the participants experienced at work included pay, job assignments, promotions, training, and vacation time that were unequal.

Giele (2008) noted structural changes in the economy had created a new division of labor between paid work and reproductive work in the family, and the consequences were especially felt in the marital relationship. This situation applied to the immigrant Nigerian women living and working in the United States. The new life experience of women (more education, fewer children, and longer participation in the paid labor force) has changed the power balance between husbands and wives, as well as their goals and values Giele (2008). The implications of women's dual career in homemaking and the labor market led to an increased demand for changes in the traditional norms and practices of the workplace, including demand for equal pay and antidiscrimination legislation involving equal rights and opportunities for women workers (Oladayo & Leah, 2014). Despite the barriers to higher paying employment, many immigrant workers seem to be highly motivated and productive (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). This characterization applies to immigrant Nigerian women leaders in the workplace. As they gain more confidence through increased work experience and advancements in education, they demand an increase and equal pay as their counterparts, they become more assertive, and they challenge the status quo. They aspire to higher leadership positions, and as a result, they begin to experience positive career trajectories and increased self-confidence.

### **Research Questions**

This study included the following questions designed to explore the experiences, challenges, and successes encountered by immigrant Nigerian women in leadership positions in California:

1. What experiences (identity, relationship style, drive and motivation, and adaptive) shaped the life course of these women that impacted their leadership experiences?

2. How do sociodemographic variables (education, age, ethnicity, family composition, profession, marital status, spouse education, and profession) influence their decisions to aspire toward leadership positions?
3. What are the relationships between influencers (family background, mentoring, and faith) and career goals that affect their leadership decisions and styles?

### **Design Overview**

Human lives are shaped by questions of when and where in a sociohistorical sense; thus, the principle of time and place is foundational to life course research (Black et al., 2009). This qualitative phenomenological research involved studying the lived experiences of 24 immigrant Nigerian women leaders living and working in California and exploring their experiences, challenges, and successes as immigrant women leaders working in companies and organizations in California. The women were excited and open to share with the researcher during the interview sessions. Some explained that participating in this research study helped them to remember buried and forgotten experiences. They were happy that the researcher included them in this study. Some indicated that they had never stopped to recount their achievements until they were asked to do so for this study.

The women shared their experiences and suggestions for future immigrant Nigerian women who want to aspire to, or are currently aspiring to, a leadership position. They attributed their success to family upbringing and expectations. They also indicate that the high expectations set for them when they were growing up were the same expectations they set for their own children. One of the participants who was a teacher described how she persuaded one of her daughters to go into medical school and become a physician. The participants attributed their success to family background and upbringing. They also attributed their success to their

education and self-confidence. A majority of the participants believed that encountering roadblocks on their journey had not discouraged them, as they see roadblocks as tools to improve themselves for the next challenge. The 24 women interviewed also shared ideas and suggestions they felt are necessary for the next generation of immigrant Nigerian women leaders.

The life course theoretical framework by Geile (2008) used in this research enabled the participants to share their life experiences from childhood. According to Black et al. (2009), a fundamental assumption of life course theory is that lives are lived in a reasonably ordered manner in patterns shaped by age, social structures, and historical change. Thus, the participants' experiences growing up in Nigeria and when they migrated to the United States had shaped their perception of things and their experiences, challenges, and successes at work as leaders. They were hopeful that, in the future, immigrant Nigerian women leaders would have easier experiences breaking into the work environment in the United States. The participants believed that sharing their experiences and suggestions with the researcher would help. They noted the need to research immigrant women in other states in the United States. The participants were excited to share with the researcher that many immigrant Nigeria women working with them are making themselves known at work by leading major projects and are aspiring to leadership positions.

### **Discussions of the Findings Related to Research**

The findings in this research showed that, despite the challenges the participants face in the workplace, they are able to adapt to situations and aspire to higher positions. Immigrants migrate to other countries to make a new and better start in life. Individuals from poor countries often immigrate to rich countries to improve their economic conditions or to escape violence (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). The women in this study expressed their gratitude that they had the

opportunity to immigrate to the United States. They believed that they had more opportunity to advance their education and a more promising career trajectory than they would have in Nigeria. Despite facing barriers to higher paying employment, many immigrant workers seem highly motivated and productive (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009).

The analysis of the interview data revealed the following major findings: family, faith, education, and discrimination. In addition to the major findings, the following also emerged from data analysis: unequal pay, preferential treatment, ascent, and working hard.

**Family.** The participants noted their families had been a source of inspiration and courage. Some also stated that their upbringing when they were growing up in Nigeria helped them to remain strong and aspire to leadership positions. The morals instilled in them as young children by their families helped them to succeed at work. Some expressed they felt guilty about combining work, school, and family, as they sometimes felt like they neglected their family. Some also cited the Nigerian cultural expectation that woman to do all the household chores as a hindrance. Some participants whose husbands helped with household chores or who had grandparents helping in the house expressed how much easier it was for them to combine the activities. This finding was similar to a finding by Nwabah and Heitner (2009) that participants identified the difficulty in separating job and family responsibilities and said family responsibilities stand in the way of immigrant Nigerian woman's leadership attainment and success. Nwabah and Heitner further noted that one of the reasons cited by the participants in their study was a lack of help with household duties from their spouses or relatives. Participants who felt that their husbands did not help expressed how difficult it was to attain leadership positions, whereas the participants who reported that their spouses were helpful indicated how much easier it was to combine family and employment responsibilities. Most of the participants

in this study noted that leadership achievement for immigrant women depends on the level of family support, which is similar to the finding in Nwabah and Heitner's (2009) study. Family is important in the lives of female Nigerian immigrants seeking leadership outside the home.

**Faith.** All the participants in this research alluded to their faith and religious upbringing. They gave credit to their faith and prayer life for giving them the strength to withstand all the pressures, discrimination, and rude behaviors of some of their coworkers. Some also shared stories of how their parents advised them to put God first in everything they do and that God will not disappoint them. Most of the participants also shared that their parents sent them to Christian, usually Catholic, schools not only to get a good education but also to build strong moral and faith foundation as children. The participants attributed some of their success to this upbringing and training. They explained that when things get tough, they pray, hold strong to their faith, and seek resolution to the problem from God.

**Education.** The participants attributed their success in their current position to their educational attainment. They also shared the impact of their parents' encouragement that they continue with education and the importance of education to their success in life. Some also shared stories of how their parents sent them to school despite objections from some of their family members and society in Nigeria. In Nigerian, discrimination against women for educational opportunities is often justified socially, culturally, and economically. Culturally, the general belief is that women are inferior to men and are expected to perform a secondary role in the home and at work (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009), and families want their daughters married off at an early age. The participants therefore attributed their educational success to the foundation laid by their parents when they were growing up in Nigeria. The participants also believed that they were able to advance to their current position because they attained a higher level of



education than most of their counterparts and in some cases a higher level than their supervisors. This finding is similar to the findings by Nwabah and Heitner (2009) mentioned in Chapter 2. According to Nwabah and Heitner (2009), the participants reported that educational achievement helped Nigerian immigrant women to advance in their jobs.

**Discrimination.** Some of the participants in this study expressed their feelings about the discrimination they had experienced at work. The discrimination ranged from not being promoted when they were qualified and more educated than some of the people who were promoted to experiencing discrimination on job assignments and postings. This finding is similar to the findings in Nwabah and Heitner's (2009) and Muoka's (2016) studies. The participants described the main reasons for the differential treatment they received at work as accent, skin color, gender, and being an immigrant, which was similar to Nwabah and Heitner's (2009) findings. Nigerian female immigrants are subject to discrimination in the workplace. U.S. policies relating to the Equal Pay Act, Affirmative Action, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission all focus on stopping discrimination, but many employers do not adhere to the guidelines stipulated by the policies (Muoka, 2016).

In addition to the major themes discussed above, the participants also maintained the following as challenges they encountered at work: unequal pay, preferential treatment toward other employees, accent, and working harder and putting extra hours at work more than their co-workers. Some of the participants noted they were not paid the same rate that their male and native female counterparts were paid. The participants stated that they are paid less for the job they do. All participants attributed their success to working hard. They said and believe that, as a female and immigrant from Nigeria, they work harder and put in longer hours at work than their native counterparts to prove that they can do the job. Most of the participants also mentioned their

accent as a form of discrimination used against them at work. The participants noted that, because they speak differently, nonimmigrant colleagues did not respond well to their communication as noted by Nwabah and Heitner (2009). The participants attributed their success to hard work and knowing their job responsibilities.

Despite the challenges and discrimination these women experienced in the workplace, they believe that immigrant Nigerian women have the skills and qualifications to be successful leaders in the United States. The participants also stated their belief that the United States is the land of opportunity and has given them the opportunity to aspire to higher goals and to make decisions about their careers and finances by themselves, compared to the Nigerian environment. They remained grateful for the opportunity and privilege they had experienced in the United States.

## **Conclusions**

Immigrant Nigerian women leaders, like other immigrants in the United States, face challenges and difficulties in their quest to adjust to their host country and new home. They also face challenges in their attempt to attain leadership positions in the United States. This phenomenological study included interviews with 24 immigrant Nigerian women leaders living and working in California. The participants shared their challenges, experiences, and successes as immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California. They also shared their suggestions and ideas for future immigrant Nigerian women who would like to be in leadership positions. They advised that future immigrant Nigerian women leaders should not be discouraged because of the obstacles and challenges they will encounter at work as female leaders. The participants asked that the future leaders to see these as challenges that will help to sharpen their skills and assist them in advancing their careers. The participants were all very involved throughout the

interview process and freely shared their life and lived experiences with the researcher. Some mentioned that this interview had given them the opportunity to reflect on their lives and recognize their professional and academic achievements.

The women shared their experiences growing up in Nigeria and the shock they felt when they immigrated to the United States. They also noted that America is the land of the free. They were grateful for the opportunity that American society has accorded them. All of them noted that American society allows women a freedom to study whatever course they want and work in any industry they choose, provided they have the qualifications, which is not same in Nigerian society. Some of them expressed that they were prevented from studying their dream course in college because they are females and because, in Nigeria, some courses, jobs, and careers are deemed not suitable for women. But in the United States, the participants said they are able to study any course and to pursue any career they like.

This research has highlighted the challenges, experiences, and successes of immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California. Despite the challenges they faced and negative experiences at work, the participants were able to overcome the obstacles and emerge successful in their jobs. They did not give up when things became difficult for them. They never gave up when they were told no or doors closed on them. As women, they face the issues other women face as leaders in the corporate world, and their experiences were compounded by the fact that they are immigrants. Through the challenges and difficult experiences, the participants were proud of themselves for their career and academic achievements. Some of them also pointed out that they did all this while taking care of the family and household.

All the participants offered to share their experiences and were willing to mentor future immigrant Nigerian women who would like to go into leadership positions in the United States.

The researcher believes that the results of the research will be valuable not only to immigrant Nigerian women leaders in the United States but also to other immigrant women from other countries.

### **Recommendations**

The researcher recommends that immigrant Nigerian women currently living in the United States and those who aspire to a leadership position need to review the results of this study to gain insight on the struggles and successes of the participants. The researcher recommends that aspirants also study the research on immigrant Nigerian women mentioned in this study to understand the American system as reported by fellow Nigerians, as it will provide them with an idea of what it means to live and work in the American system for a Nigerian woman.

The researcher also recommends that employers, both in government and in nongovernment agencies, use the results of this study to understand how to help immigrant Nigerian women leaders to be successful in the workplace. The success of these women will help the employers. The researcher further recommends more research involving immigrant Nigerian women living in all 50 states to compare their experiences and challenges in the workplace.

### **Implications Related to the Findings**

The implications of the findings from the 24 participants interviewed in this study are vital to organizations and companies in the United States that will be employing immigrant Nigerian women and other immigrants. As stated in Chapter 2, Nigerian immigrants are among the highest number of immigrants to the United States. Awareness of these findings might assist leaders in organizations to understand the cultural, religious, and family practices of these immigrant women and how their experiences can contribute to the success of the companies.

Companies in the United States should include findings from this study as part of their diversity and inclusion training for managers and leaders to address diversity and to create a culturally sensitive work environment for their employees.

This study has shown that immigrant Nigerian women are hardworking people. The study has shown their resilience despite the obstacles and challenges they encounter at work; they are still successful, have not given up, and still aspire to higher positions in the workplace. They were able to overcome their difficulties and never allowed them to be hindrances to their progress. Some of the participants had prolonged and chronic illnesses in their families and some had children with special needs but they were able to perform above expectations at work and engage in social activities in the community. Some of them also were in school to further their education while aspiring to leadership positions. The women maintained a positive attitude and described themselves as being happy despite all they have gone through. They attributed their strength to family upbringing, faith, and religion. In an effort to show that she was happy with her achievements in the United States, one participant commented that it would have been worse if she was in Nigeria. She explained that, if she was in Nigeria, she may not have had the educational opportunity she had in the United States. She also talked about the pay and stated that, even though there is pay discrimination in the United States, the pay practices in Nigeria are worse. The participants were all thankful to their parents for the moral and family upbringing they received when they were growing up in Nigeria.

### **Limitations**

One of the limitations of this research was the sample size and the composition of the participants. The participants were immigrant Nigerian women leaders living in California. Two

participants were from Northern California, and 22 were from Southern California. Not all qualified candidates were reached, especially in Northern California.

There was another limitation with the ethnic composition of the participants. The participants were only from two tribes in Nigeria, which is not a good representation of all tribes in Nigeria. The tribes represented were Yoruba ( $n = 2$ ) and Ibo ( $n = 22$ ). There was a limitation in representation of all the tribes Nigerian in this research. Another limitation was that this study included a small sample of participants and their opinions about their experiences, and the findings do not represent the opinions of all immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California.

### **Summary**

Immigrant Nigerian women leaders living in California, like other immigrant groups, faced difficulties and challenges in their attempt to settle in their new host country. Before coming to the United States, some of them did not anticipate the level of difficulty they would encounter while trying to settle down. The cultural differences and culture shock were some of the obstacles they had to overcome. Some of the participants also experienced shock when their education qualifications from Nigeria were not accepted by the American system and when they learned that they had to go back to school. They recognized the importance of education to enhance leadership attainment, and they often continued their education after they arrived in the United States, which is a situation that is similar to the findings of Nwabah and Heitner (2009). Some also expressed frustrations about changing careers, which usually involved entering the medical field so they could get a job to take care of their families both in the United States and in Nigeria. Although female Nigerian immigrants experience success as leaders in their host country, family responsibilities are a deterrent for them, which is also similar to the findings of Nwabah and Heitner.

This study highlighted the challenges, experiences, and successes of the participants. The participants encountered several obstacles on their journey to leadership positions, which they overcame to become successful in their career. Most of the participants in this study believe that they are discriminated against at work at one time or the other because of their skin color, sex, national origin, and accent. They also cited unequal pay practices by some of their employers as some of the issues they encountered at work. The participants frequently referred to their early childhood, family upbringing, faith, and religion as sources of strength for them.

This research has shed some light on the experiences and challenges of immigrant Nigerian women leaders in the workplace. It has also shown that these women are strong, educated, and capable of leading in their respective careers. The findings showed that, when given the opportunity, immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California succeeded despite the obstacles they encountered on their journey to a leadership position.

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## APPENDIX A

### Invitation Letter to Participate

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study I am conducting at the Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Pepperdine University. The study is entitled "Immigrant Nigerian Women Leaders in California: their experiences, challenges, and successes".

This study will examine the lived experiences, challenges, failures or missteps, and successes of immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California who, despite all odds, managed to attain leadership positions in their current or past jobs. This study will also explore their perceptions on the challenges and discriminations they encountered in their journey to leadership positions.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences, challenges, and successes of immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California. The focus of this will be on (a) their experiences, (b) their challenges, (c) what influenced their decision to aspire to leadership positions, (d) what keeps them going and their source of strength, (e) their leadership styles, and (f) their coping skills and work–life balance. Understanding the factors that motivate them is vital because motivation affects their achievement of career satisfaction.

My research study follows the life story method. I will be conducting personal interviews with female participants who are immigrants from Nigeria in leadership positions in California. It is anticipated that the interview will require about 60 minutes of your time. Your name will be coded so that your responses will be confidential and anonymous. The anticipated timeframe for this study to begin is May-June, 2018. All individuals that participate in this study will receive a copy of the findings if interested.

I would like to invite you to participate in the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with any other entity.

## APPENDIX B

## Informed Consent

## The Pepperdine University Consent to Contribute

## Project Title:

IMMIGRANT NIGERIAN WOMEN LEADERS IN CALIFORNIA: THEIR EXPERIENCES,  
CHALLENGES, AND SUCCESSES

## Project Director:

Dr. Margaret J. Weber  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology  
Pepperdine University  
6100 Center Dr.  
Los Angeles, CA 90045  
310.568.5600

This is a consent form for contributing to the IMMIGRANT NIGERIAN WOMEN LEADERS

IN CALIFORNIA: THEIR EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES, and SUCCESSES

Contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to contribute. All contributions are voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to email Professor Margaret J. Weber (dwproject@pepperdine.edu) or write with questions (Professor Margaret j. Weber, Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Pepperdine University, 6100 Center Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90045) before making your decision whether or not to contribute. If you decide to contribute to this after reading this document, we assume you have agreed to the terms of this consent form.

## Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences, challenges, and successes of immigrant Nigerian women leaders in California. The focus of this will be on (a) their experiences, (b) their challenges, (c) what influenced their decision to aspire to leadership positions, (d) what keeps them going and their source of strength, (e) their leadership styles, and (f) their coping skills and work-life balance. Understanding the factors that motivate them is vital because motivation affects their achievement of career satisfaction

## Duration:

We estimate that responding to interview questions regarding your life history will take approximately one hour depending on how much time you choose to take. The amount of time you spend on your responses is entirely up to you.

## Risks and Benefits:

#### Incentives:

By contributing your life journey narrative to this study, your story will become part of a public archive that has great value to scholars and to the public as a historical, cultural, and educational record.

#### Contributors' Rights:

You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without it affecting your relationship with any entity.

You can choose whether to not to allow your personal contact information to be made public and associated with your story. You can also decide not to answer any questions regarding personal information that are presented on the study submission forms.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects at the Pepperdine University reviewed this project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of contributors.

#### Contacts and Questions:

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the project you may contact Dr. Margaret J. Weber, Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Pepperdine University, 6100 Center Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310.568.5600 or [dwproject@pepperdine.edu](mailto:dwproject@pepperdine.edu).

For questions about your rights as a contributor to this project or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Dr. Yuying Tsong, IRB Chairperson at the Graduate School of Education and Psychology ([yuying.tsong@pepperdine.edu](mailto:yuying.tsong@pepperdine.edu) or call at 310.568.5600).

#### Contributing to the study:

I affirm that I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to contribute to an archival project. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to contribute to this project.

#### Informed Consent (Samples 1 and 2)

In order to use the data from the study, I would like to ask your permission and if you would agree with the following arrangements. Please initial the appropriate line:

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to participate in this research and would allow appropriate quotes to be used in publications. These individual responses would not be associated with my name or workplace, and would be referred to only by a pseudonym.

OR

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to participate in this research but do not wish for any of my quotes to be used in publications.

In either case, you should be aware that the foreseeable risks or potential discomfort to you as a result of participating in this study are minimal. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without it affecting your relationship with any other entity. Upon your request, I will provide a copy of any published papers that take place as a result of this study.

The researcher plans to use the data collected in this project for subsequent analyses and would like to share the raw data with other researchers. Before doing so, all personally identifying information will be removed from your interview transcript.

\_\_\_\_\_ please initial if you consent to these plans. If not, please leave the line blank.

The researcher may like to contact you at a future point in time to invite you to participate in follow-up studies regarding the same topic as this study. Longitudinal studies can provide some important additional understandings to life histories.

\_\_\_\_\_ please initial if you consent to these plans. If not, please leave the line blank.

With your permission, interviews will be recorded electronically, and then stored on CD. The interview content will then be transcribed. All data collected will remain anonymous and confidential. We are asking you for your mother's maiden name and will code each interview with that name. A schematic will take ascribe a numeric code to each interview. This is to be able to associate the data from this interview with any future data collection. The schematic will not be associated with the interview; therefore all interviews will be anonymous. All relevant data collected within the jurisdiction of the investigator, including interview notes, recordings, transcriptions, and the CD will be placed in a locked cabinet and destroyed after all interviews are transcribed.

Please feel free to ask us to stop or resume taping this discussion at any point in our conversation. Please initial below if you are comfortable with the format of the interview session.

\_\_\_\_\_ May I record this interview? If no, please rest-assured that no one will be recording any portion of the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ May I take notes during the interview using a personal computer?

Please feel free to ask any questions about this study before we begin or during the course of the study by contacting the Graduate Research Assistant that is/did conduct the interview or by contacting me, Margaret Weber, Principal Investigator, at 310.568.5616 or by email at [margaret.weber@pepperdine.edu](mailto:margaret.weber@pepperdine.edu). For any general information regarding your rights pertaining to this study, please contact Dr. Yuying Tsong, IRB Chairperson at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology at 310.568.5600 or by email at [Yuying.Tsong@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Yuying.Tsong@pepperdine.edu).

At this point, I want to inquire if you fully understand these statements and if so, to sign this form.

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Signature

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Date

## APPENDIX C

## Sociodemographic Questions

Socio-demographic questions:

Birth date \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Country of residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Education level \_\_\_\_\_ Current Occupation

\_\_\_\_\_ Race/Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_ Year

Husband's (partner's) education and occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Children (gender and year of birth) \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's education and occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Father's education and occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Religious background \_\_\_\_\_

Number of people living in your household \_\_\_\_\_

Number of generations living in your household \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

### Instrument

## Instrument

The individual interview with the subject will be a semi-structured interview which will follow the general four questions from the Giele (2008) study, along with a socio-demographic set of questions.

### Question #1. [Early adulthood]

About the period in your life immediately after completing your education or your early twenties. What was the level of your education? Did it include college education or graduate education? What did you think you would like to become in terms of occupation and type of lifestyle or family life? ...What were you thinking then and how did things actually turn out?

### Question #2 [Childhood and adolescence]

Thinking of the period in your life before completing your education and the goals that you and your family held for you, what was your family's attitude toward women's education and what you would become? What was the effect of your parents' education, presence of brothers and sisters, family finances, involvement in a faith community, family expectations? How was your education different from or similar to that of your parents and brothers and sisters?

### Question #3 [Adulthood – current]

Since completing your education, what kinds of achievement and frustration have you experienced? What type of mentors have you had? What has happened that you didn't expect in employment, family, faith, further education? Has there been job discrimination, children, a separation or divorce, health problems of yourself or a family member? What about moves, membership in the community, faith community, housing problems, racial integration, job loss? And feelings about yourself? Have there been good things such as particular rewards, satisfaction, or recognition?

### Question #4 [Adulthood-future]

Looking back at your life from this vantage point, and ahead to the future, what are your main concerns? What are your goals, hopes and dreams for the next few years? What problems do you hope to solve? Looking further out, where do you hope to be a few years from now with respect to work or continuing schooling, family, faith, community, mentors, health, finances, etc.?



## APPENDIX E

## IRB Approval Letter

Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast  
Highway Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

**NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH**

Date: October 18, 2018

Protocol Investigator Name: Scholastica Ogomaka

Protocol #: 18-04-789

Project Title: IMMIGRANT NIGERIAN WOMEN LEADERS IN CALIFORNIA: THEIR EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES, AND SUCCESSES

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Scholastica Ogomaka:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require



clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research