

SHIFT IN GENDER ROLES AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIAN COUPLES IN AMERICA

INTRODUCTION

Moving from Nigeria to the United States of America involves a huge cultural change that is bound to impact the totality of the immigrant's life. Immigrants, especially the married couples, struggle with acculturation conflicts when the values and world views of their place of residence clash with those of their homeland. For many Igbo couples in America, cultural conflicts usually develop around changes in traditional gender roles. Given the unprecedented opportunities, privileges and protections that women enjoy in America compared to their disadvantaged position in Igbo Land, Igbo women tend to acculturate faster than their husbands (Hernandez, 1996) thereby making their husbands feel threatened. Most of them (Igbo men) become upset by their wives' ready acceptance of their new gender roles and by the consequent challenges to their patriarchal authority (Espin, 1987). The more women get involved in out of home employment, the more independent they become, thereby making men less powerful economically and otherwise. Hence, when men feel less powerful or powerless, they resort to domestic violence in an attempt to win back power. Unfortunately most of the men who mistake abuse for discipline misconstrue their abusive behaviors against their wives as patriotism. In other words, they feel that by getting their wives to submit to their authority unconditionally, they are fulfilling their traditional role and cultural expectations as the heads of their families. Achebe (1959), while bemoaning the decline of Igbo cultural values as a result of colonization, notes that "no matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children he was not really

a man” (p 45). Shifts in the traditional gender roles that made the Igbo women who were originally confined in their husbands’ homes to start socializing with other people in the market places, and to engage in different activities that were solely men’s such as harvest of yam – “a man’s crop” (Achebe, 1959, p.22) , and so many other cultural changes occasioned by the European colonialists , were the reasons Achebe declared that; “the white man has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart” (pp124-125)

There is no doubt that Igbo people have a great deal of respect for Igbo cultural values and would love to pass them on to their next generation. They love to keep in touch with their places of birth and to connect with their kinsmen and women wherever they may be. Hence, when an Igbo person leaves the shores of Nigeria in search of greener pastures elsewhere, s/he carries along with him/her the Igbo cultural heritage. This explains why some of them, especially the males, do have problems adjusting to opposing cultural values inherent in their places of residence.

The Nigerian civil war of 1965-1967, fought basically in the Igbo territory (that is Biafra), placed the Igbos in a position much like second class citizens in their own country. Though the war ended in the spirit of no victors, no vanquished, many Igbos were rendered homeless and jobless therefore leading to mass exodus to foreign countries. Those who came to America immediately after the war did so with the “big” hope that America being the world’s largest economy would provide them with an opportunity for a better life.

After some years of sojourn in America some of the Igbos went back to Nigeria while others stayed behind to raise families. The apparent success of these Nigerian Americans encouraged more Igbos to migrate to America. Thus, with the amendment of the USA’s immigration Act of 1990, which helped bring about the Diversity Visa program (aka Green Card Lottery), a system

where 55,000 immigrants visas are granted annually to immigrants from developing countries on a lottery basis, many Nigerians were able to realize their dreams of settling in America.

Most of the married ones among the lucky winners of the American Lottery came to the United States with their spouses and children, whereas the single women and the bachelors later got married more often than not to their fellow Nigerians. According to Igbo customs and tradition, every adult man is expected to build his own house in his place of birth, get married and raise his own children, his economic situation notwithstanding. The rituals and celebrations involved with Igbo marriage are so expensive that some people go to the extent of borrowing money or selling their properties to fulfill the requirements.

The strong ties the Igbos have with their traditions coupled with pressures coming from home would always compel most young men in America to marry from Nigeria despite the expensive implications of that choice. Hence, life after marriage becomes tougher for these folk because most of them are below average income earners.

The great recession of 2009 worsened their situation. There were greater needs for women of all classes to become co-breadwinners with their husbands. To do this, women have had to work longer hours outside their homes, which implies fewer hours with their children. This calls for corresponding adjustments to the traditional parenting system and gender roles to which many Igbo men are not culturally nor psychologically attuned. Usually when women get more education and/or make more money than their husbands, it generates some inferiority complexes among some African men. Consequently most of the men will start acting out, and if unchecked, the situation might gradually degenerate into domestic violence and divorce in some cases.

The patrilineal culture that extols men as lords and masters over women seems to be the root cause of domestic violence and resentment among Igbo couples in America. Male chauvinism deeply rooted in African culture has little or no support from American culture which discourages gender inequality, which is the likely reason many Igbo couples in America are having serious marital issues.

My interaction with Igbo couples in the tri-Boroughs of New York City, where I serve as a coordinator of an Igbo Catholic community, was an eye opener. I found that most of the Igbo men who depend on their wives for their financial needs struggle with serious personality and identity issues. For the Igbos, personality and identity are tied up with their gender roles. Ironically, gender role defines distribution of authority in the family. Hence, because gender determines authority in Igbo culture, Igbo men usually feel “socially powerless” (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005, p.173) when roles shift in the family. Authority without power (economic power) leaves the man at the mercy of his wife who has assumed the role of breadwinner. In order to properly adjust to their new socio- cultural environment, these men will most likely need some counseling services. Moving all the way from Nigeria to the United States is such a huge cultural change.

Hence, I proposed 12 sessions of group dynamics with some of these men struggling with acculturation crises. The sessions will focus on proper blending of American and Igbo cultural values to help stop or at least reduce gender-related conflicts among Igbo couples in America. For instance, to expect a woman who is abused by her spouse to keep quiet because women are not expected to express their anger, or to expect a woman who works full time to come home and cook food and serve the husband who is unemployed because it is traditional, should be reconsidered for the safety of Igbo women. Separated couples should be given all the supports

they need and should not be perceived or treated as outcasts. A review of Igbo traditional marriage rites and other practices that seem to financially deplete Igbo people is long overdue. Thus, marriage rituals, traditional gender roles, respect for elders, child-adult relationship and other regulations on parenting style and general family dynamics among the Igbos etc. should form the basis of our group discussion.

This project will be organized into five chapters. Chapter one will cover the background of the problem we are addressing in this project which centers on the shift in roles and acculturation crises and how Igbo couples in America are impacted. Chapter two will focus on Religious and Clinical principles inherent in the situation we are discussing, and on relevant literatures that clarify and support these principles. In Chapter three, I will discuss the actual activities we will engage in when our project begins and the methods we will use for assessing outcomes. Chapter four will take care of result analysis. Apart from the description of outcomes assessed according to the methods we specified in our proposal, this chapter will also address developments not anticipated in our original proposal but figured prominently into the shape of our execution and final outcome. Finally, Chapter five will be devoted to discussion. Issues to be discussed here include; the implications of results, both anticipated and non anticipated developments, the contributions of our project to clarifying and expanding the religious and clinical principles discussed in chapter two, the contributions of this project to ministry in a wider context, and the implication for future ministry.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Igbo people (*ndi Igbo*), an ethnic group of Southeastern Nigeria in West Africa, are endowed with a unique and rich cultural heritage. They are called Igbo people because their common language is Igbo. They are one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, in addition to the Hausa and Yoruba. The word Igbo refers to three different things; Territory – we can speak of Igbo land (*ala Igbo*), Domestic speakers of the language/ethnicity – The Igbo people (*ndi Igbo*), and the Language itself – Igbo Language (*asusu Igbo*) (Shaw, 1970 & Afigbo, 1981). Hence, one can use the same term, “Igbo”, to convey three different meanings based on the context in which the word is used. For instance, one could say, I am speaking Igbo (*ana m asu Igbo*), implying Igbo Language or I am an Igbo (*abu m onye Igbo*) which signifies the person’s ethnicity.

Igbos are very unique in their political and social system. The slogan *Igbo enwe eze* (Igbo has no king) depicts an ethnic group that is politically fragmented in nature. In the pre-colonial era, Igbo people were not united under a common kingdom like we have in other parts of Nigeria. They were socially organized in subgroups of clans, kindred, towns, etc. Each sub group was autonomous and as such was not responsible to any higher authority. Men were also their own authorities within their households. Sir Frederick Lord Lugard, the governor general and the colonial administrator in Nigeria during the British colonial leadership, from 1912 to 1919, introduced kingship system into Igbo land thereby bringing several clans and villages under warrant Chiefs. Prior to colonialism there were few established kingdoms in the entire Igbo land,

such as the Nri Kingdom. Hence, the introduction of warrant Chiefs, that is kings (the *Ezes*), and the advent of Christian religion into Igbo land, their entire religious and socio-political system assumed a new dimension. Their language, cultural values, such as the marriage system, their food, their dress code, etc. were all affected. This, however, did not rescind their ethnic identity.

The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates into one entity called Nigeria by the British colonialist, Sir Fredrick Lord Lugard in 1914 gave birth to a “modern Nigeria” with a more centralized administrative system. Amalgamation may have served the British interest of indirect rule but is also blamed by many for all the socio-political problems rocking Nigeria since her independence in 1960. Thus, Adeyemi (2013) observes that;

The problems we have today in Nigeria are caused by the British, who forcefully joined different nations together as one single entity called Nigeria. In the beginning, God created each ethnic nationality found in Nigeria today separately. Each nationality is unique in its traditions, culture, religion and language. Hence, nobody can suppress or kill national identities.... Nigeria should be restructured into four or five republics. The country’s amalgamation of Nigeria will sooner or later expire. We should not pretend that all is well with Nigeria. (p.18)

The tension between various ethnic groups in Nigeria became so enormous that Igbos attempted to secede from Nigeria to become an independent state of Biafra. This move, led to the three year civil war (July 6, 1967 – January 15, 1970) that left most parts of the Igbo land impoverished. The Igbos lost the war and became reabsorbed into Nigeria. Many Igbo men left the country at the end of the war in search of a better life, which accounts for why many Igbos are found in different parts of the world, including America.

Igbos in America, like other immigrants in different parts of the globe, contend with cultural conflicts. Women’s liberation and the American government’s motivations for equal rights of all individuals irrespective of race, gender or sex, created opportunities for Igbo women to attain

social and economic status that is very uncommon in their homeland. Conversely, some of the Igbo men who are unemployed or under-employed and who struggle with acculturation crises and who apparently are no longer able to fulfill their primary duties as sole breadwinners gradually lose their headship positions in their families. Consequently, some of the women who work and probably earn more income than their husbands, thanks to the American economic system, assume new roles as co-breadwinners or sole breadwinners to their families. Hence, some men developed identity crises and a chronic sense of loss which in turn, led them to “power struggle, domestic violence, and other forms of marital oppression of women” (Carter and McGoldrick, 2005, p. 173) in an attempt to reclaim their lost positions of status. Elshtain, (1993, as cited in Borrelli, 2002) therefore argues that “when women cross into the public sphere, or blur the boundaries between the private and the public spheres, their actions challenge both the gender roles and the underlying gender ideology” (p.5). Feeling threatened, some Igbo men would employ any means including violence to reclaim their gender entitlement.

Cases of abuse and violation of women due to gender bias abound all over the world. The report of the United Nations’ on the world conference on women held in New York, United States, June 2000, reveals that;

Girls and women worldwide, across lines of income, class and culture, are subject to physical, sexual and psychological abuse...at least one in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some other way- most often by someone she knows, including her husband or another male family member...As many as 5, 000 women and girls are killed annually in so-called “honor killings, many of them for the dishonor of having been raped. (United Nations, 2000a)

Similarly, the National Institute of Justice and Center for Disease control and Prevention in the US found a significant gender difference in the prevalence of domestic violence in the United States of America from their joint survey on violence against women. The result shows that twenty-five percent (25%) of surveyed women compared to eight percent of their women counterpart are more likely to be assaulted by an intimate partner. The same survey estimates that approximately 1.5 million women compared to 834,700 men were physically and or sexually assaulted by their intimate partners annually and that about thirty percent (30%) of all the murder cases in the US were committed by intimate friends or husbands of the victims (Jjaden & Thoennes, 1998).

In his apostolic letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem* – Dignity and Vocation of Women issued on the occasion of the Marian year, August 15 1988, His holiness Pope John Paul II observes that;

The challenge presented by the ‘ethos’ of the redemption is clear and definitive. All the reasons in favor of the ‘subjection’ of women to man in marriage must be understood in the sense of a ‘mutual subjection’ of both ‘out of reverence for Christ’. (No. 24)

In line with St Paul who believes that “there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female because we are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28), the Roman Pontiff joins millions of other people to condemn discrimination against people of the female gender. These epistles, written in two different eras; St Paul’s being thousands of years before Pope John Paul’s *Mulieris Dignitatem*, indicate that gender discrimination has always been an issue among people of different ages and time.

Fadiman (1997) vividly describes Hmong’s culture in Laos (a landlocked country in Southeast Asia), that discriminates against female gender from the moment of birth in the following words;

Soon after the birth, while the mother and the baby were still lying together next to the fire pit, the father dug a hole at least two feet deep in the dirt floor and buried the placenta. If it was a girl, her placenta was buried under her parents' bed; if it was a boy, the placenta was buried in a place of greater honor, near the base of the house's central wooden pillar, in which a male spirit, domestic guardian who held up the roof of the house and watched over its residents, made its home. (p.5)

The situation is not any different among Igbo people in Nigeria. Birth of a male child is always celebrated differently in Igbo land creating an impression that female children are less valued. This negative impression about female children which seems to be internalized by many Igbo men unconsciously motivates violent behaviors against women and girls. Despite poor documentation regarding the prevalence of domestic violence against women and girls (Effah-Chukwuma & Osaremen, 2001) and high volume of unreported cases of such incidents in Nigerian Igbo communities studies show that several women are maimed or killed on daily basis by those they have trusted as intimate partners.

However, there are some nuances in the use of the word, "abuse", for some Igbos. Spanking an errant child, for instance, is perceived among Igbos as discipline rather than abuse as is commonly understood in American culture. In other words spanking is a normal and acceptable parenting method among the Igbos while it is considered non-normative in the United States.

The same understanding applies to spousal abuse in some Nigerian communities especially among the Northerners. Section 55 (1d) of the 1999 penal code (i.e. portion of laws of the federation of Nigeria governing the Northern part of Nigeria) empowers Northern Nigerian men to chastise their wives provided grievous harm is not inflicted on them from the chastisement. (Penal code cap 345). Section 241 of the same code describes grievous harm in the following terms:

emasculaton permanent deprivation of the right eye, of the hearing of an ear or the power of speech, destruction or impairing of the power of any member or joint, permanent disfigurement of the head or face, fracture or dislocation of a bone or tooth, any hurt which endanger life or which causes the sufferer to be in bed during a space of 20 days in severe bodily pain or unable to follow her ordinary pursuit.

This means that injuries such as facial swelling or marks from bite or whip are not considered serious injuries among this group in Nigeria and therefore does not constitute a domestic violence or abuse.

Though this penal code governs the Northern part of Nigeria, it somehow influences and encourages violation against women in the East, which is under the domain of the Igbos. Again, though it is true that physically assaulting one's wife is not something laudable in Igbo culture, when it happens, women are most often blamed for talking back to their husbands and for getting them angry. This however, is an indirect encouragement for spousal abuse. Unfortunately, the patrilineal Igbo culture perceives such mistreatment as a positive measure to keep women under check.

A female lay-reader in my church in Nigeria showed up with a bruised face during one of our regular morning masses probably because she was assigned to read that day. When I inquired about her discolored face at the end of the mass, she lied that she had a minor home accident. I told her that I was sorry to hear that and asked her to tell me more about the accident. While she was struggling to explain, I noticed a disconnection between her vocalization and verbalization and a huge twist in her emotional expressions. I then called her attention to my observations. She apologized for lying and then told me what actually happened. She shared that her husband accused her of being disrespectful because she was talking back to him. He was yelling and

calling her names because she told him that she was too tired and could not come to bed with him. When she tried to explain further, he started hitting her, the reason she sustained bruises. She told me that she blamed herself for talking back to her husband. She said he would not have beaten her if she had stopped when he asked her to. I asked for her permission to speak with the husband. She reluctantly granted the permission. When I met the man the following weekend after Sunday mass, he agreed to speak with me. When I told him the reason for our meeting he got angry at me and said; “Father, I have the right to beat my wife and I will beat her any day any time until she learns to stop talking back to me”. He left the office with a stern warning that I should keep away from his family.

Though this case does not represent the totality of Igbo men’s attitude towards female gender, it gives us a glimpse of Igbo people’s attitude to spousal abuse and issue of power in a household setting. The man believes he is the boss and the wife should not question his stand on any issue, whereas the wife feels it is disrespectful to express her anger and feelings towards the husband let alone report her husband to anybody. Many Igbo women will not likely report physical or sexual abuse from their husbands or intimate partners because “no disciplinary action will be taken against the offender” (Umwani, uwadiae, & Agbontaen-Eghafona, 2004) and the woman will be victimized for exposing the family to public shame. This is so because Igbo men and women are socialized to believe it is the standard way of keeping a family intact. The man is the boss, first and foremost, because he is a male and secondly, because he is the breadwinner and therefore should be worshiped by his wife or wives as the case may be. The wife is the husband’s subordinate because she is a female and therefore should not argue with the husband on any matter or expose him to public shame. Her responsibilities are to obey her husband unconditionally, take care of domestic affairs and bear and raise children.

The issue I want to address in this project is what happens when roles change. How do Igbo couples adjust to such change especially in the midst of acculturation challenges in a foreign land?

Among the Igbos of Nigeria, power is pre-assigned by gender. One's gender determines what one can and can't do. In this way one's personality and identity are tied to gender roles in such a way that any shift in the traditional gender roles would impinge on an individual's identity. Studies found that domestic violence is more frequent in places where masculinity is tied to dominance or toughness (Counts, Campbell, & Brown, 1998) and in situations where gender roles are rigidly defined and enforced (Heise, 1998) by different agencies in the community. This explains why many Igbo men find it difficult to adjust when roles shift in the family because of a series of intrinsic meanings attached to gender roles. Hence, shift in traditional gender roles remains the leading cause of most marriage problems among Igbo couples in America. In line with this understanding Carter and McGoldrick (2005) observe that;

Both employment and family income have a direct impact on family structure, functioning and development. Unemployment of former breadwinner may challenge the family's hierarchy and create tension in the marriage or parental system. (p. 172)

Change is generally regarded as the only thing that is constant, yet a lot of people have difficulties adjusting to it. Most Igbo men in America were born and nurtured in a culture that defines "manhood in terms of traditional aspects of the male role, including the importance of being a provider, aggressive, competitive, and ambitious..." (Wade C.J., & Rochlen B.A, 2013, p.2) as a result, they tend to reject any contrary orientation. Some Igbo men feel uncomfortable with some domestic work such as cooking, and feel intensely nervous when women take up more responsible out-of-home jobs. Pleck, J. H., Sonenstein, F.L., & Ku, L.C. (1993) deliberate on

‘traditional masculinity ideology’ which refers to man’s internalization of a culture’s definition of masculinity and beliefs about adherence to culturally standards of male roles and behavior.

Men particularly are resentful in accepting more home care responsibilities and feel threatened as more women undertake the breadwinning responsibility, a position they believe that is traditionally designed for men alone.

Achebe (1959) prefigures the true qualities of a real Igbo man in Okonkwo, the protagonist of his award winning book, *Things Fall Apart*. Okonkwo’s braveness (which includes arrogant and conceited attitudes), his family size, traditional titles he held in the community, the size of his bans and most importantly his ability to provide food and sustenance for his family, were the attributes that made Okonkwo an ideal man. Conversely, Unoka, another character in this book, was described as not being man enough, because of his physical weakness and inability to provide enough food for his family. The average Igbo man believes that breadwinning is the man’s responsibility while care-giving is for the woman. Hence, a shift in these roles generates feelings of inadequacy and shame in some Igbo men.

Similarly some women also tend to stick to their traditional roles in their families, even in stressful conditions. Hence, Wilson and Smith (1993) from their study which investigated how the roles of women are perceived by their respondents (a cross-sectional sample of 654 families) found that although Caribbean men are much more traditional in their gender role orientations compared to women, slightly more than half of the women are also traditional in their gender role orientation.

Caribbean people share a lot in common with the Igbos due to their common ancestry. Some Igbo women, especially uneducated ones, still hold that care-giving such as cooking, house

cleaning, feeding and toilet training of babies define a good woman. How busy she is with her out-of – the home job or whether the family depends on her income for sustenance is not important.

A female member of the Igbo community in Brooklyn where I serve as a coordinator of Igbo mass, a counselee of mine, shared with me how she juggles the demands of a tough job and housekeeping while her husband spends hours on phone conversation and watching football games on TV. She is a nurse and works night shifts most often. She comes back in the morning exhausted yet she has to make food for the family and clean the house, wash dishes, wash and iron every body's clothes including her husband's. She says that her mother in Nigeria keeps encouraging her not to stop, that she is proud of her as an ideal Igbo woman. The mother told her that if she quarrels or breaks up with her husband because he is not able to provide food or care giving to his family, she would be labeled as a wicked woman and that will bring big shame to their family. Now, she wants me to help her navigate through her twisted family situation. Part of her agrees with her mother but, another part believes that if her husband who is now unemployed could not help with domestic works such as cleaning and preparing food, simply because he is a man, then they should separate.

The question then becomes, why would some men feel so reluctant to switch roles with their wives? Is it just because they are men or is there more to it? These and more became the questions confronting me after my session with the above named counselee. I recall a shocking incident of an Igbo man who shot his wife five times because she would not allow him to dictate how she spends her salary. According to the story, as reported online, she survived the gun shots and the man has been confined in Fulton County jail in Atlanta, charged with two counts of

aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and possession of firearms while committing felony (<http://www.nairaland.com/612355>).

This calls for serious attention because Igbo people value human life greatly. Igbo men do not kill their wives in Nigeria but here in America they do. Between 2012 and 2013 there have been over 30 cases of spousal abuse among Igbos in the US and over 50% of these cases involved physical abuse. It is obvious that greater cases of such incidents were never reported for reasons ranging from the need to protect family names to the fear of being killed or abandoned by the abusive husband. Some women who depend on their husbands for livelihood and for the procurement of residential permits constitute over 90% of those unreported spousal abuse cases in America. Most of these perpetrators capitalize on this to mistreat and lord it over their spouses. For whatever reason, anybody, including the victim of violence who fails to report or speak out against domestic violence, is an accomplice and could face charges “even though he or she resists it and tries to stop it...” (Collins, 2007 in Cooper-White, 2011, p.834)

Again, this leaves one wondering why an Igbo man, with his value for life, would develop so much hatred for his wife, to the extent of desiring to physically hurt her. From the pieces of information I gathered, 99% of these cases are directly or indirectly connected with issues of power and shifts in gender roles in relation to stereotypical categorization/gender role socialization, and other factors such as low self-esteem, ignorance and the lack of self-awareness.

Gender stereotypes- sets of shared beliefs and expectations about the perceived and prescribed characteristics of men and women- tend to justify and perpetuate the disadvantaged position of women in society. While women are categorized with warmth/communion-related traits, men are believed to be innately endowed with competence/agency traits. Thus, many men grew up

believing that they are smarter than and superior to women, and that nurturing babies and kitchen are example feminine work, while office jobs and the making of money are examples of male works. Consequently, any attempt to minimize this polarization inherent in traditional gender differentiation provokes negative emotions in some men. When these negative emotions are not handled properly, they often lead to domestic violence and marriage break up.

Jost and Kay (2005) observe that, women who were socialized to embrace stereotypical gender categorization as valid, find it difficult to challenge patriarch-centric practices that discriminate against female gender as inferior. Nonetheless, there are some possibilities that such women can stand up against their stereotypic disadvantages (Becker & Wright, 2011) and save women from undue marginalization. In line with this thought, an interesting study was recently carried out by Lemus, Spears, Bukowski, Moya, and Lupianez (2013), in which they investigated the influence of exposure to traditional gender roles on the activation of gender stereotypes in Spanish women. By exposing participants to stereotypical vs. counter-stereotypical gender roles, using a word categorization task with stereotypically feminine communal/warmth and stereotypically masculine agency/competence trait words, they measured their participants' automatic responses. Their findings were striking. The result of the study shows that when exposed to stereotypical gender roles, participants reversed the traditional gender stereotype activation pattern. This indicates that gender discrimination and unequal distribution of roles are unacceptable and displeasing to women irrespective of how they were originally socialized.

Women, therefore, need more protection and encouragement to speak out against any philosophy or policies that misrepresent or under-estimate their potential. There are also great needs for enlightenment especially on the importance of therapy at moments of crises for both men and women. Unfortunately, many men would not go to therapy for so many reasons. Some

are in denial/pre-contemplation (completely unaware that they have problems), while others consider therapy as *infradig* (an insult to man's dignity). Little wonder, Vogel, Wester, Hammer, and Downing-Matibag (2013) found that traditional male gender roles that encourage men to fix problems without help, deny psychological issues, and withhold emotional expression, may discourage men from referring others who may be struggling with mental health issues.

Reilly, Rochlen, and Award, G.H. (2013) recently investigated how different traits that are associated with adherence to preconceived masculinity norms and gender inequality interact with one another, and found that trait-shame was negatively correlated with self-esteem, indicating that the greater the trait shame, the lower the level of self-esteem. Age, race, and income were not significantly related to any of the variables (i.e. trait-shame, self-esteem, self-compassion), but level of education significantly correlated with conformity to masculine norms ($p < .05$), indicating that people with a higher level of education are more likely to manifest lesser conformity to masculine norms and therefore will be more flexible with gender roles in their family life cycle.

This is true of the population under study. Most of the Igbos compared to other tribes in Nigeria are not educated as such. Consequently over 90% of the perpetrators of domestic violence among the Igbos are uneducated. As a result, they tend to be close-minded and unrealistic in the way they process their cultural and religious beliefs.

I recall a parishioner of mine who was reported by his 9 year old daughter for being hostile and abusive to the entire family, especially to their mother. He initially tried to deny it but later acknowledged that his wife drives him crazy and makes him feel like a nanny because he had been out of job. Going further, he claimed that women should be submissive to their husbands

unconditionally and that God made women to be helpmates, not equal partners with their husbands, even when they are the ones making the money. He felt he had the right to control his wife's salary and even supported himself with a bible verse that reads; "I will greatly multiply your sorrow in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis3:16). In response, I acknowledged his interest in the scriptures. However, I suggested that he should also read the next verse of the same chapter which reads; "cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life" (Genesis 3:17). The same scripture that empowers men to rule over their wives also mandates men to toil and provide food for the family.

Gender inequality is systemically encouraged among the Igbos in favor of male folk. Men and women are socialized from birth to acknowledge that the male gender is superior to the female gender. It is not the same in most American and European countries. Gender discrimination is considered an offense in American society where equal right for all human persons irrespective of race or gender is seriously encouraged and legally enforced.

Gender discrimination among the Igbos starts from the moment of birth. When an Igbo woman gives birth to a male child she takes a deep sigh of relief because a birth of male child consummates her marriage. She feels that she is now welcomed in her husband's home. It is more so in a polygamous setting where the man has more than one wife. The wife and mother of a male child receives special treatment from the husband and her in-laws, while other wives and mothers who have not yet gotten a male child become objects of ridicule and mistreatment. Many women have been divorced by their husbands because they could not have male children even though the men determine gender. These men always enjoyed the support of their kinsmen and women because they believe that male children are necessary to immortalize one's name and

identity. In most Igbo communities, a male child is considered a major prerequisite for admittance into certain positions such as *ozo* title. Up till now, in order to head a community or a town as a king in Igbo Land, having a male child is a *conditio sine qua non*. Hence, male children are favored over female children for so many reasons among the Igbos. Just as a woman becomes a ‘complete’ wife after having a male child so is a man perceived as a ‘full-fledged’ man in Igbo land when he has a male child.

Gender discrimination continues among children of the same Igbo parents as they journey through the life cycle. The roles are assigned according to gender. Boys are expected to be stronger and smatter than girls. Girls are expected to stay in the kitchen with their mothers, clean the house watch the dishes, prepare meals and serve the boys. What do the boys do then? As ‘little lords’ they play around with peers then come home to relax with their fathers waiting to be served by the female members of the family.

Male children are also favored in terms of education. Some Igbo parents consider education of their female children as a waste of money. They argue that soon they would be given away to other people in marriage, and why waste their money training them for other people. It is also a shared belief among Igbos that when a woman becomes highly educated, she scares away possible suitors. So, because of these unfounded reasons many women are denied equal opportunity for education with their male counterpart.

My mother’s education, for instance, was compromised for the purpose of marriage. She was married away at the age 15 against her will. She wanted to continue with her education but she was deceived into believing that she would complete her education in her husband’s house.

When she got married to my father, nobody mentioned the issue of education again. Perhaps they meant that the best education for her was to have and raise children.

As these children of Igbo parents grow into teenagers and young adults, gender discrimination becomes stronger. Boys enjoy more freedom whereas girls suffer more restrictions than when they were younger. They believe that girls need more protection than boys especially when they move into puberty. Boys can go out and come in at will but girls are locked up and can go out only in the company of their mother or other older female relation. Teenage boys and girls usually attend different high schools and sit separately in the church during services, and other community gatherings. At a point during adolescence, young girls in some Igbo communities go into a preparatory house where they stay until they are given away in marriage. This practice is known as *irungbede*. Although no longer common, *irungbede* is still practiced indirectly by many Igbo parents through undue restriction of their daughters' social life, especially when they get to adolescence. In America and other parts of Europe, a girl is considered mature at the age of 18 and can legally move out of the parents' house to reside with whomever she chooses. But the contrary is the case among the Igbos. Girls become more restricted as they get older until they are duly married according to the Igbo rites and traditions.

It is interesting that there is no version of *irungbede* for young adult males except for some rites that initiate them into adulthood such as *iwa akwa*. It is believed that women are at the risk of public shame and ridicule if their marriages fail to work out. Therefore *irungbede* was initiated as a way of training female adolescents who are physically mature for marriage on how to be a good wife. Basically they are taught how to be good wives and mothers. In other words, they learn how to prepare different meals, how to respect or serve their husbands and make them happy, and how to run a home.

While they are in the preparatory house, their parents will arrange suitors for their marriage. Though *irungbede* has become outdated for the most part, marriage by arrangement is still common in many parts of Igbo Land. Many parents still choose marriage partners for their children, especially for their daughters. In a situation where the choice of partners is made by the children, their parents still have to give their approval before the marriage can take place. Onunkwor and Okoye (2009) found that 47% of marriages conducted between 2005 and 2008 in Awka North Local government area of Anambra state were arranged by the couple's parents. 39 out of the 47% of the marriages were prearranged without the consent of the brides while 8% were arranged without the grooms' consent.

Nonetheless, marriage among the Igbos, whether arranged by the parents or initiated by the young couples, is more or less a community affair. It is never conceived as a "matter for the individuals but it also concerns the whole community..." (Bujo, 2009, p, 102). The entire community both the living and the dead form the integral part of any single marriage contracted in the community. The Divine (Chukwu) and the spirits of the ancestors are invoked to participate in the process of all marriage rituals. It usually takes four principal stages; enquiry (Iju ajuju), introduction (Iku aka), paying of dowry (ime ego nwanyi), and traditional wine carry (igba nkwu or ibu mmanya nwanyi) – the main marriage celebration. Each of these stages involves enormous amount of time, energy, money and rituals which are part of the reason why Igbo couples generally resist divorce, domestic violence notwithstanding. For clarity sake, we will look at these various stages of Igbo marriage in detail.

Iju ajuju: When parents feel that their son or daughter has come of age and is mature enough to marry, they take the first step of getting him/her a partner or, as the case may be, encourage him/her to get married. A male child is considered an adult when he successfully completes the

rites of passage from childhood to adulthood. Such rites include *ima mmanwu* -initiation into the masquerade cults, *Iwa akwa*- official investiture with a piece of cloth around the waist, *iputa ogbo*- age grade outing etc. To be initiated into the masquerade cult one usually camp with peers in the bush for a period of 4 days representing the 4 market days. While in the bush they go through rigorous exercises ranging from wood chopping, hunting dangerous animals, climbing tall trees etc. On the fourth day when the boys are very hungry they would be asked to eat yam porridge from a boiling pot with their bare hands as a way of testing their masculinity. Those who passed the tests are taken to the masquerade house where they take turns to be in a locked up room with a masquerade. The ability to be in a room alone with a masquerade without being scared, wraps up the initiation ceremony.

Another popular rite of initiation into manhood among the Igbos is “*iwa akwa*” traditional investiture of male children with a piece of cloth round the waist. *Iwa akwa* rites start with dancing and dressing with a piece of cloth around the waist, and ends with the parading of a live cow in the market place. At some point, the boys are expected to cut off the tail of the cow with one stroke of a machete, showing their bravery and ability to protect their families from any kind of danger.

So when the boy’s maturity is ascertained and a suitable bride is found, two or three members of the family will accompany him to the prospective bride’s house to announce their intention to the bride’s parents. This is known as *iku aka* - formal introduction. On the part of the bride, inquiry starts after the *iku aka*. When the girl’s parents and extended family perceive the young man as a possible suitor for their daughter they tell their prospective in-laws that they will get back to them as soon as possible. They will take time to make their own inquiry. Both parties usually do

extensive inquiries on a variety of issues such as; family background, the emotional, physical and mental stability of their prospective son/daughter-in-law.

Iku aka: *Iku aka*, or introduction rites, is the first official visit of the young man to his prospective bride. He goes with three or more of his family members usually with 7 pieces of kola nuts and a cage of palm wine (or recently with a bottle of wine). Upon arriving there the father of the girl will welcome them by presenting a kola nut which he blesses, breaks and distributes to all. In his prayers he invites God and their ancestors to be part of their gathering. Afterwards, the official spokesperson (*onye mbe*) for the prospective groom will announce the intention of their visit, and offer their gifts of kola nuts and cage of palm wine to the girl's father or uncle if the father is late. The *onye mbe* usually makes his speech in riddles. For instance, instead of saying; "we have come to ask your daughter's hand in marriage", he would say, "we saw a beautiful flower in your garden and we have come to ask for your permission to pluck it". If the girl's parents and family members accept their request they will invite their daughter to declare her intention to their prospective in-laws. In the past, and in the case of an arranged marriage, the girl only says what the parents asked her to say. Parents usually prepare their daughter well ahead of time to either accept or decline the offer before she is invited to talk. However, if it works out well, the two parties will drink the palm wine presented by the groom's party and then schedule for the next stage of marriage procedure known as *ime ego nwanyi* (paying of the dowry). Otherwise, the kola nut and the cage of palm wine initially presented by the groom's party would be given back to them as a sign of rejection of their proposal.

Ime ego nwanyi: Payment of the dowry is the third stage of the marriage procedure. In some Igbo communities, there are other intermediary rites before *ime ego* such as *mmanya umunna*,

mmanya nne na nna, mmanya isi ada, mmanya ikwu nne etc. These are the rites of seeking and obtaining the consent of all the immediate and extended family members of both parties. Their consent and good wishes must be obtained before marriage can be contracted.

In the past, the dowry payment rite takes the whole night, but in modern times people don't spend much time bargaining on the bride price. Usually the bride's party after a long litany of their daughter's quality and skills presents a bunch of brooms signifying the worth of their daughter. The groom's party leaves with the brooms to decide on what bride price amount they feel is appropriate. They return with a reduced size of the brooms as what they want to pay. Then the bride's party decides whether it is sufficient. Otherwise, they add more brooms to the bunch. They continue until an agreement is reached. Both parties are careful not to mention money so as to respect the fact that dowry settlement is, not only different from an ordinary buying and selling transaction, but also sacred. Once the dowry is paid, they schedule the main traditional marriage ceremony called *igba nkwu or ibu mmanya nwanyi*. In some Igbo communities the bride will go with her husband's people to stay for four market days. This visit is called *isenaga ite* (taking back the cage/pot). The bride literally carries the empty cage of palm wine brought by her husband's people for the occasion. The four day visit offers the bride the opportunity to become familiar with her husband's people. It is also a final opportunity for the groom's family and extended family members to probe the bride's character and determine if she is good enough for their son.

Igba nkwu or inu mmanya nwanyi: this is the final stage of Igbo traditional marriage ceremony. It is essentially celebrated the same way in most of the Igbo communities, with little variation. It takes place in the bride's house. There is usually no limit to the number of invitees. Both parties

take time to extend an official invitation to all their extended family members, friends and co-workers. Usually the bride's party provides different kinds of food such as *osipaka* (rice), *fufu*, *abacha* etc. The groom's party provides all kinds of assorted drinks such as Palm wine, raffia wine, beer, spirits and soft drinks/soda. In addition to these, the groom is also required in some communities to provide other additional items for the bride and her family prior to *igba nkwu* ceremony. Such lists usually include items like cloths, jewelry, kola nuts, heads of tobacco snuff, etc. In most cases *igba nkwu* ceremony is graced with live traditional music.

When all is set, a kola nut is blessed and shared. The representatives from both parties, usually the oldest and/or titled men, are given the chance to say a prayer over the kola. The prayers are always centered on the young couple's wellbeing and successful married life. Each party invites their ancestors during the kola nut breaking rite to grace the occasion with their presence. After the breaking of the kola nuts, the occasion continues with a range of other activities. However, before they eat or drink anything the main rite of the *igba nkwu* must be performed. This rite involves the bride, her father or if the father is late, her paternal uncle, and the groom. The bride is ushered in by her bridesmaids, consisting of young unmarried ladies. She walks around with them greeting and welcoming her in-laws after which they return to the bride's room waiting for the main rite. On the second entrance, she goes to the father or the family head. He then presents her with a cup of fresh palm wine and asks her to sip and give the rest to whomever she has chosen as her husband to drink. She takes the cup of wine from the father and starts to parade the arena with the pretense that she is searching for her husband. As she walks around, men will be begging her to give them the wine but she will ignore them. At last when she gets to the groom, she reverently, with her two knees on the ground, sips a little from the cup of the wine and offers the rest to him. The groom gracefully takes the cup from her, finishes the remaining, refills the

cup with some money notes, and courteously helps the bride to get up. Then amidst pomp and pageantry they go to the bride's father or representative and kneel down for a blessing. After the long prayers and many blessings, the floor becomes open for dancing, eating and drinking. Igbo marriage is considered consummated when the groom accepts and drinks a cup of palm wine from the bride.

Given these numerous rites and long ceremonies that go with Igbo marriage coupled with the fact that it is a "public affair" (Shooter 1998, p.194), many people would go the extra mile to be with their spouses. Many married couples especially women would not want to divorce their partners even if they are abusive to avoid being ridiculed by their immediate and extended family members. It is considered a big shame among the Igbos for a woman to be asked out of her husband's house for whatever reason. Men would not want to start all over again because the high cost of marriage ceremonies will take a huge toll on them. More importantly, to be rejected by one's wife for an inability to provide for the family is humiliating. No Igbo man would want that to happen. Hence, the patriarchal nature of Igbo systems and culture ensures that men are protected against such humiliation to the detriment of women. Thus enabling the situation where "some people use others for their own purposes, even institutionalizing such behavior" (Bujo, 2009, p.54).

The situation is quite different for Igbos in America. Though Igbo women in America still respect their husbands as their superiors, they are not constrained by any custom or pressure groups such as *umunna* or *umuada* to do so unconditionally. Gender equality is encouraged in American society which implies that men earn respect by playing their roles as head of the family and not simply by being a male. So, when roles change and Igbo men are no longer in

total control of their family finances, most of them feel powerless and distressed. When one feels powerless, there is always the tendency to try to take back power forcefully. The attempt to take back power by force remains one of the major reasons many Igbo men in America physically abuse their wives.

The psycho-social implication associated with a shift in gender roles in a situation where power is pre-assigned by gender is enormous. It includes: feeling of powerlessness, shame, inferiority complex, identity loss, low self-esteem, etc. These and other factors that provoke spousal conflicts and domestic violence among Igbo couples in America are the clinical issues we wish to address in this project.

The Igbos who inhabit Southeast Nigeria are endowed with rich cultural values visible in all aspects of their life. They celebrate their culture in everything they do. It comes alive at the birth of a new baby and at the funeral of their loved ones. Their dress, music, food etc. are very unique. The Igbos also have a unique marriage and family system. The man is conceived as the head and the breadwinner whereas the wife is the caregiver (*ori aku* i.e. one who enjoys the husband's wealth). So, the woman is expected to stay at home taking care of children, making meals, cleaning and enjoying the husband's wealth. She is not expected to work and earn money. In this way she will be totally dependent and submissive to the husband. This is one cultural aspect that cuts across most of the African countries and even beyond. There is little doubt that it may be beneficial, especially for children's wellbeing, where mothers stay at home for the purpose of care giving. But in a situation where they have to work, their husbands should take their own turn in taking care of children and other domestic tasks.

CHAPTER TWO

CLINICAL AND RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES

At this point, it will be necessary to examine different institutions and religious backgrounds that may have influenced or are still influencing the Igbos in their family life cycle. It will also be helpful to examine some theories and various models of the etiology of men's violence against women with special focus on gender role socialization and how it impacts Igbo men in America.

African Traditional Religion (ATR) is the original religion of the Igbos in Nigeria. The Igbos believe in God which they call *Chukwu*, *Orisa*, *Chineke*, *amadioha* or *Osebuluwa*. They also believe in other gods and deities such as personal gods which they call *chi*. *Chukwu* is the Almighty God the creator of heaven and the entire universe while *Chi* could be one's personal god such as angel, deity etc. or god charged with a specific role or responsibility. Hence they have god of thunder, sun god, god of the land, god of fertility, etc. The god of fertility, for instance, is in charge of procreation of children and agricultural productions. The Igbos celebrate the new yam festival each year to show appreciation to the god of fertility for the year's harvest and to ask for his continual blessing especially for the next planting season.

Every average Igbo person believes that all powers belong to God (*Ikechukwu*). To get married and have children are totally God's doing; we humans are simply participating in God's ultimate power. This explains why the Igbos hold marriage as something very sacred. At the celebration of marriage they call on *Chukwu*, their personal *chi* and their ancestors to be part of the ceremony. They believe that when a marriage is celebrated and ratified in this form and in full observance of all the traditional rites, it remains irreversible. This implies that divorce is unacceptable among the Igbos, except in a very extreme situation, which must be done through

some laid down rituals or else they will incur God's anger not only on the spouses involved but on the entire community.

Similarly, the Christian religions, especially the mainstream religions with which the greater percentage of the Igbos affiliate, attribute marriage and procreation of children to God. Most of these Christians perceive marriage contracts as sacred and therefore not a personal thing.

ATR shares a lot in common with Christian religion. In this generation, over 90% of the Igbos affiliate with Christianity. Only very few Igbo people practice ATR (aka pagan religion). Both Christianity and ATR seem to encourage gender discrimination in a variety of ways. During the traditional marriage celebration, the wife to be is expected to kneel before the prospective husband to give him a cup of wine which signifies her acceptance of the man not only as her husband but also as her lord and master. This explains why in many Igbo lands and some other African countries, women actually address their husbands as lords or masters. In Igbo tradition, women do not call their husband by their personal names. They either call them *nna anyi* (our father) which actually means my lord, or *oga mu*, which means my master.

In the original Igbo religion, that is the African traditional religion, women usually do not have direct access to God (*Chukwu*). The men pray and offer sacrifices to God on behalf of their wives and children. They are the ones who are the priests and the diviners. However, in some communities, they do have female spiritualists called *Agbala nwanyi* but never a female priest. Priests and the diviners are either chosen by a particular deity or inherited their status from their priestly lineage. They are the ones who are empowered by the gods to carry the *ofo*. *Ofo* is the symbol of authority, justice and truth. Hence the priests or the diviners are the mouth piece of the gods. They act as intermediaries between the gods and the people by interpreting the minds of

God to the people and by offering sacrifices to the gods on behalf of the people. They proclaim God's blessings and punishments to the people as the case may be. So, it is not surprising that most of the laws especially dietary laws favor the men. Women were then forbidden from eating some parts of chicken meat such as the gizzard, and some parts of goat/cow meat such as the eye etc. There were also some restrictions from different kinds of food for women. In those days it was believed that the god of *ala* and *amadioha* would punish anybody who violated the slightest aspect of the laws with great misfortune such as a strange illness, ill-luck or with a sudden death. As a result, people were very meticulous in observing these rituals and customs to avoid incurring god's anger and punishment. This made the women observe all the laws and to encourage their daughters to do same.

Igbos believe in a hierarchy of gods and deities: *Chukwu* or *Chineke* – supreme God (*amadioha*), the creator of heaven (*enu*) and the earth (*ala*), the gods, the goddesses, personal chi and the spirits, for instance, the water spirit, the forest spirit etc. The water spirit is a female spirit that inhabits all the oceans, rivers, lakes and streams. Usually female spiritualists (*agbala nwanyi*) coordinate the affairs of the waters and thus collaborate with the water spirits on behalf of the community. Women with deviant behaviors and/or who suffer from certain type of illnesses such as seizure or epilepsy were usually misconstrued to be possessed by the water spirit (*ogbanje mmiri*) requiring some sacrifices and rituals to free them. Following the spirits in the order of hierarchy are the ancestors (men who lived their lives well, died honorably in their old age and were accorded proper burial rites). It is important to note that women are never recognized as ancestors no matter how well they lived or how old they were before they died.

In the same vein, many scriptural passages directly or indirectly present the male gender as superior to the female gender. Some bible versions are still male gendered in their terminologies.

They use words like ‘brothers’ when they are referring to a community or a congregation, and use some pronouns such as he or him to represent the faithful. For instance, the Gospel of St John Chapter 6 verse 44, from King James’ version reads; “no one can come to me unless the Father draws him. To make it genderless or all inclusive it should read; “no one can come to me unless the father draws the person, or “no one can come to me unless the father draws him/her. Throughout the bible, especially in the Old Testament biblical passages, with few exceptions, women were voiceless and did not hold public offices. In fact, they had little or no opinion of their own. This was probably the tradition of the original Jewish people and/or those of the Ancient near eastern community. The second creation account as recorded in the book of Genesis which gives the impression that God created man first and then while he was asleep he (God) took one of his ribs and made the first woman out of it (Gen 2: 21-22: 3:16), seems to support gender discrimination. The account holds that when God created the first man- Adam, He breathed unto him the spirit of life but nothing was said after the creation of the first woman- Eve. Going by this account, could it be that the woman derives her spirit from the man and perhaps the reason she is seen as “the weaker sex” (1 Peter 3:7) or that she has no spirit at all? Again, in Ephesians 5:22 and Colossians 3:18 we read, “Women submit yourselves to your husband’s as to the Lord”, indicating serious gender inequality between men and women. Men are elevated as gods and their wives are expected to honor them as such. Many Christian men refer to these passages to justify their gender entitlement mentality and their hostile behaviors towards their wives.

However, the exceptional roles played by some women in the bible, such as Deborah, Esther, Mary the mother of Jesus, etc. can serve as encouragement for women to always fight against any act of social injustice against women. Deborah for instance, took up the challenge to lead the

Israelites in the war against the Canaanites, when Barak, the army commander of Israel and his men had given up, due to fear. She took the lead and brought victory to Israel (cf the book of Judges, Chapters 4-5). It is also interesting to note that women played the central role in the fall of the human race as well as in its redemption. Eve was the first to eat the forbidden fruit and got Adam to do the same, the reason they were driven out of the Garden of Eden (cf the book of Genesis, Chapter 3). Similarly, by accepting to conceive and give birth to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World, Mary, who is referred to as the Second Eve by some Theologians, became the first person to participate in the redemption mission of Christ (cf the gospel of St Luke, Chapter 1).

In addition to these religious insights, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychoanalysts and many other clinicians and theorists have explored the rationale behind men's violent behaviors against women in a variety of ways. Psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud, Margaret Mahler, Bowlby, etc. wrote volumes on identity formation and development. There is no doubt that detailed examination of these theories will help to shed light on intimate partner violence and how it impacts Igbo marriages in America. Exploring these theories is important, not only because they offer different explanations for the phenomenon of domestic abuse, but because each approach has clear implications for responses and interventions by practitioners and policy-makers. If there is no common understanding of a problem, responses will not be consistent, and are likely to conflict. This can undermine quality of service provision, safety and initiatives for social change.

Hence, gender development researchers focus on "basic processes underlying the origins and transmission of gender-role attitudes and structure" (Zosuls, Miller, Ruble, Martin & Fabes, 2011). They want to know how and when do children begin to identify themselves and others as

male or female, the pros and cons in learning to identify and label gender during the early developmental stages and later in life, at what point do they develop a sense of male privileged status and negative attitude toward the female gender. Huesmann and Guerra (1997) argue that “characteristic patterns of social behavior, and in particular aggressive behavior, emerge early in life” (p.1) and consequently found a significant correlation between children’s normative beliefs (i.e., shared social values within the children’s families or communities) with their actual aggressive behavior, even among first graders. Many other researchers also found that as early as 8 years old, aggressive behavior has become a stable personality trait in some kids (Lober & Dishion, 1983; Farrington, 1990; Eron & Huesmann, 1990). Similarly, using data from 6 sites and three countries (cross-country), Broidy, Tremblay, Brame, Horwood, Laird, Moffitt, Nagin, Bates, Dodge, Loeber, Lynam, Pettit, & Vitaro (2003) examined the developmental course of physical aggression in childhood. When they analyzed its linkage to violent and nonviolent delinquency during adolescence, they found continuity in problem behavior from childhood to adolescence among boys but not in girls. The fact that physical aggression is a distinct risk factor for later violent delinquency for boys and not for the girls according to Broidy, et al (2003), calls for a particular attention to the reasons for this gender difference and how it plays out in the entire human life cycle.

Testosterone- the male sex hormone, which influences the brain mechanism responsible for maleness or male gender identity, has been linked to male aggressive behaviors (Stephen, 1994; Spolsky, 1997 & Ellis, 2004). Scientific findings have been consistent with the fact that testosterone is the reason “men are generally more aggressive than women” (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974 as cited in Carlson, 1988, p.357). Studies and laboratory experiments with animals indicate that androgens affect human behavior by altering the development of the brain just the

same way it influences sexual orientation in the prenatal stage. A laboratory experiment with rats, for instance, showed that male rats generally attack each other but if they are castrated before they mature, they will not attack other male rats even when androgens are injected into them. Similarly a comparative study with some groups of girls- androgenized girls and the control groups (normal girls whose fetus were not exposed to androgens at prenatal stage) found that the study group (androgenized girls) were more aggressive suggesting that the androgens had a significant effect on their brain mechanism and consequently on their social behaviors. Scientists have also tried to explain men's violent behavior from the difference in the size of the individual's orbitofrontal cortex (OFC) which is found to be generally smaller in men than in women. OFC is the part of the brain that regulates emotion. It provides "executive control over action, stopping us from doing what could lead to punishment" (Baron-Cohen, 2011, p. 81). Consequently, most of the men who exhibit an increased rate of antisocial behavior have been found to have even smaller OFC (Baron-Cohen, 2011). Nonetheless, socialization could reverse the effect of androgens and all these biological components as well as reinforce them in humans. So people with lower volumes of OFC may not necessarily be antisocial or domestic violence perpetrators.

Nature versus nurture debate in relation to aggression and power has dragged on for several years. Some people such as social learning theorists believe that environment is the principal or, as the case may be, the sole determinant of our social behaviors while others argue that we are pre-conditioned by nature to behave the way we do. Thus Cooper (2007) writes;

If anything seems apparent in the scope of human history, it is that we human beings are quite capable of hating... Some argue that we come into the world with a biological inclination toward hatred. Others argue that we have to be taught to hate and that it is not inherent within our nature. Some believe that we hate only when we feel threatened. Others believe we hate when our desire for love has been frustrated. Some believe the

goal of life is to eliminate our hatred...others believe that it is impossible to love if we do not also have the capacity to hate. Some believe that our implications toward hatred can never be eradicated, but merely curbed. Still others believe that the goal of life is to hate the appropriate things such as injustice and anything that dehumanizes us. (pp. 138-139)

Nonetheless, whichever way we look at it, hostile or aggressive behaviors could be caused by either nature or nurture, or both. Freud (1920), the father of psychoanalysis, holds that “the goal of all life is death” given the fact that people unconsciously desire to die. He called this unconscious desire to end one’s life, death instincts. Unlike the life instincts/sexual instincts which facilitate life’s sustenance and the continuation of the species, death instincts according to him, are responsible for self-destructive behavior (when directed inwards) and aggression or violence (when the energy is directed outwards). Following this line of thought one may conclude that violent behavior is part of human nature. Augsburger (as cited in Cooper 2007) observes that human beings are “biologically wired to hate...hating is an essential part of our humanness. Hostility is a built-in necessary aspect of our evolutionary survival”. (p. 164)

Freud (as cited in Storr, 1989) more succinctly argues that;

Hate, in a relation to objects, is older than love. It derives from the narcissistic ego’s primordial repudiation of the external world with its outpouring of stimuli. As an expression of the reaction evoked by objects, it always remains in an intimate relation with the self-preservative instincts... (pp. 44-45).

In other words every organism from the moment of birth, according to Freud, continuously struggles to get rid of all the stimuli that cause tension to it whether from the external world or from within because it wants to get to the “state of tranquility by completely discharging all tensions” (Storr, 1989, p.45). Hence, many individuals unconsciously use force or violent acts to discharge tension and achieve desired tranquility. For instance, in order to satisfy its desire for food and thus eliminate tension, the child instinctively uses the only power it has- crying.

Therefore, “the infant’s use of crying for survival shows how powerful he is because its existential need is triggered by an inborn instinct, the drive to execute the power” (Yuksel-Sokmen, 2013).

Most of the perpetrators of violence against women seem to be stuck in their childhood self-centeredness. They seem to be quite incapable of “intersubjective relatedness” (Stern, 1985, p.27) especially with women whom they consider inferior and unequal, typically regressing to the state of primary narcissism (Freud, 1914) and normal autism (Mahler et al 1975). Hence, as the child thinks only for its own needs and commands others to respond to those needs by crying, so do perpetrators of violence against women selfishly think only for what benefits them and try to have them by all means. Hence, sense of self importance and the desire to be validated, generally referred to as ego personality by psychoanalysts, becloud their social lives.

For a typical Igbo man, loss of his traditional position as the breadwinner of the family is loss of his ego and thus loss of his self-esteem. According to Freud, “people who react to loss of an object by loss of self-esteem are people who base their choice of objects on identification with the object (Storr, 1989, p.56). In other words such people have a narcissistic attachment to male entitlement and traditional gendered roles. They perceive these entitlements as an integral part of their being. It means the whole world to them. As the child commands the attention of its care-givers by crying, so do perpetrators of domestic violence employ aggressive behavior to subdue their victims.

This explains why some clinicians link male domineering attitude and violence against their intimate partners to insecure attachment to their primary care-giver at childhood (Dutton, 1995b), arguing that “violence in relationship may be seen as an exaggerated response of a disorganized

attachment system” (Fonagy, 1999, P.1). Some researchers also found some connections between violent behaviors in men with history of childhood abuse and neglect (Kalmuss, 1984; Van der Kolk & Fislser, 1994).

Similarly, other Clinicians blame male violence against women on the social environment arguing that such men may have been raised by parents with violent attitudes (Holtzworth-Munroe et al 1997). Hence, social learning theory construes violence against women as a learned response to stress. Dutton (1995a) identifies some immediate rewards that seem to go with violence such as feelings of agency and control, the cathartic expression of anger, termination of argument etc., as motivating factors for violence against women.

Cognitive behavioral therapists focus on “the role of the thinking process” (Cooper, 2007). What the perpetrators of violence against women process in their minds both during and after their violent acts may likely be a motivating factor. We can imagine what a typical Igbo man thinks as he abuses his wife physically or otherwise. Some of the Igbo men I counsel say things like; she is my wife, I paid the dowry on her head, I have the right to do with her as it pleases me, my father beat my mother so there is nothing wrong in beating my wife if she misbehaves, and so on.

Thus, Zoccolillo, (1993) conceptualizes the possibility of fundamental difference in the etiology of delinquency across sex and culture. Considering this very understanding, the scope of this project and the fact that psychologists/psychiatrists have difficulties even with the help of the diagnostic and statistical manual for mental health (DSM), pinpointing “what differentiates the state of abnormal functioning from the state of normal functioning” (Ingram & Price, 2001),

extra caution is necessary to avoid mistaking episodic and cultural behaviors of Igbo men for real pathology.

Among the Igbo population cultural and social expectations may most likely influence the behavioral outcome of children. Carlson (1988) rightly observes that “social factors influence a person’s sense of his or her own maleness or femaleness... individuals acquire gender-appropriate behaviors through the process of gender-typing” (p. 174). Similarly O’Neil and Nadeau (1977) hypothesize that gender role socialization, distorted gender role schemas, defense mechanisms, and self-protection strategies predispose men to violence toward women and that threat to gender role identity among other things is a risk factor for male’s intimate partner violence. For the Igbos, boys and girls are expected to behave differently at each given age, time and place. Aggression may be tolerated for female children but not during adolescence. Conversely, an aggressive tendency is more or less considered normative traits for Igbo males throughout life. Therefore, aggressive female children may not engage in violent behaviors later in life because “the socialization patterns and interpersonal networks of female adolescence may work to inhibit delinquency among girls with a history of disruptive behavior” (Broidy, et al, 2003, p.237). However, the consequences of such cultural manipulations for the female population are recorded. When aggressive tendencies are suppressed in girls with a history of disruptive behavior by certain cultural and social norms, it may lead to other deviant behaviors such as eating disorders, substance abuse, etc. This is not surprising because exposure to undue pressure for the purpose of grooming girls in a predetermined life style is in itself a form of aggression against women. Researchers have also found some links between violence and major depressive disorders in women. For instance, Cavanaugh, Petras, Messing, Fowler, Flair, Kub, Agnew, Fitzgerald, Bolyard, & Campbell, (2012) investigated distinct patterns of violence

against women and associated proximal and distal health outcomes, and found that childhood sexual abuse and intimate partner abuse (physical, psychological and sexual) were associated with depression in the past week and posttraumatic stress disorder in the past month and at the six month follow-up assessment among this population after controlling for the influence of demographic characteristics.

Hence, violence against women is now being studied as a major problem (World Health Organization 2011) for women all over the world. Women are at greater risk of spousal or intimate partner abuse than men (Black & Breiding, 2008; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). In fact, being a woman seems to be the main risk factor for intimate partner violence (Horley, 2008) thereby making intervention almost impossible. Violence against women is both endemic and systemic. Cultural assumptions and male entitlement among the Igbos, for instance, empower the perpetrators (the men) and worsen the plights of the victims (the women). Nutt (as cited in Bennett, 2000), establishing a link between women's gender roles and their victimization by men, argues that "the gender role messages women incorporate throughout their lives predispose them to being victims of men and remaining with them after they are victimized" (p. 4). In fact, the whole dynamic looks like a calculated manipulation against women and girls by the male perpetrators who, especially in the patriarchal societies, are the makers and interpreters of the law and customs. Fonagy (1999) therefore argues that violence against women is rooted in the tacit approval that society gives to abusive males. Dobash & Dobash (as cited in Fonagy, 1999) further elaborates that "men who assault their wives are actually living up to cultural prescriptions that are cherished... in aggressiveness, male dominance and female subordination...and they are using physical force as a means to enforce that dominance" (p.2).

Herman (1997) describes these dynamics thus;

“In order to escape accountability for his crimes, the perpetrator does everything in his power to promote forgetting. Secrecy and silence are the perpetrator’s first line of defense. If secrecy fails, the perpetrator attacks the credulity of his victim. If he cannot silence her absolutely, he tries to make sure that no one listens... the more powerful the perpetrator, the greater is his prerogative to name and define reality, and the more completely his arguments prevail. (Herman, 1997, p. 8)

Sexist ideology stating that men are likely to be hostile to their intimate partners who refuse to submit to their authority or fail to stick to their traditional gender roles, but will be benevolent to those who respect and do not question their authority, is another theoretical insight into male’s abusive character towards women. In line with this thought, Herrera, Exposito, and Moya (2011) conducted a research in order to ascertain the extent to which men could feel threatened when their female friends or intimate partners fail to accept their decisions and how they respond to this threat or perceived loss of power. Consistent with earlier studies, they found that the men’s reactions were more negative when their decisions were rejected by the women.

Freud (as cited in Tyson & Tyson, 1990) distinguished between male and female perception of morality in the following words;

for women the level of what is ethically normal is different from what it is in men. Their superego is never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men... they show less sense of justice than men... they are more less ready to submit to the great exigencies of life... they are more often influenced in their judgments by feelings of affection or hostility- all these would be amply accounted for the modification in the formation of their super-ego (pp. 228-229)

Based on this, Freud seems to argue that from the point of view of super-ego formation, women are bound to see things differently from men. He reasoned that the voice of conscience (the

super-ego) is a male voice originating from the identification with one's father. So because the castration complex impels boys to give up their oedipal wishes (of killing their father to marry their mother) and leads them to identify with their father (identification with aggressor), while the girls' acceptance of castration (out of penis envy) leads them to oedipal progression, Freud therefore assumed that men have a superior super-ego organization. Hence, one may conclude that there will always be a tension between men and their women partners and for them to enjoy an uninterrupted and nonviolent relationship one party must always give up his/her rights and privileges. Among the Igbos, women are expected to give up their rights and preferences in submission to their husbands' opinion.

Though the empirical evidence for a link between gender role issues and men's violence is generally weak, however, among the Igbos it seems very strong given their cultural orientation and gender role socialization. Distinguishing between dominance and aggression may also throw some light in the Igbo marital dynamic. Aggression goes with intent to hurt while dominance is motivated by the desire to be in control. A typical Igbo man, who physically abuses the wife, does so to ensure that the victim remains submissive, not with the intent to punish or inflict injuries. This makes intervention very difficult among this population. Getting them to perceive the emotional and psychological implications of their violent behaviors on their victims is as tough as providing adequate healing to those victims.

Mitchell (2002) hypothetically wraps our speculations of the rationale behind intimate partner violence in his litany of why romance fades;

Romance fades because time and success are its enemies. Romance thrives on novelty, mystery, and danger; it is dispersed by familiarity. Enduring romance is therefore a contradiction in terms. Romance fades because it is driven by sexuality, and sexuality is

primitive in its very nature. In its raw form, lust is not a pretty thing and is difficult to reconcile with other features of romantic love, such as respect and admiration. So romance tends to degrade into either dispassionate friendship or purely sexual encounters. Romance fades because it is inspired by idealization, and idealization is, by definition, illusory. We fell in love under the spell of fantasy; time is the enemy of romance because it brings reality inevitable disillusionment. So romance tends to degrade into either sober, passionless respect or bitter disappointment. Romance fades because it turns easily into hatred. There is a dark side to human psychology, and the delicacy of romance cannot long sustain itself against the power of innate aggression... Romance fades because nothing stays the same, especially people (p. 27-28).

It is true that nothing is permanent, but this does not explain destructiveness of intimate partner violence. It is also necessary to remark at this point that none of the theoretical assumptions we discussed earlier offered adequate explanation concerning why men abuse their intimate partners. If men are naturally wired to be aggressive, as some theorists assume, then why are some men non-violent? If romance actually fades as Mitchell (2002) argues; why do we have enduring marriages and friendship completely devoid of domestic violence and abuse of any kind? To narrow it down to the focus of this project; why do some Igbo men in spite of their patriarchal cultural backgrounds and low income status, still respect and honor their wives while others abuse and mistreat theirs? These and many other questions still begging for answers will be discussed in details during our group dynamics which as a matter of fact, constitutes the actual project.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Considering the main focus of this project, which is helping the male congregants of the Igbo Catholic community where I serve as the coordinator to come to the conscious awareness of the huge cultural change involved in moving from Nigeria to the United States and the corresponding need for proper adjustment especially when traditional gender roles shift in the family, I am proposing a heterogeneous, time limited, theme focused group experience. The participants in the group dynamics are expected to share their experiences and thoughts with peers. It is also expected that by freely reflecting on the feedback received from the peers, the participants may come to deeper self-awareness.

More than 60% of the men in our Igbo community are either unemployed or underemployed. Over 90% of this group has issues adjusting to this development which has resulted in a series of domestic violence, substance dependence, depression and other antisocial behaviors. One of my congregants told me that he got a ticket for traffic violation three times within a month. He shared that it was quite unusual of him. For the past 11 years he has been driving here in New York he did not get a single ticket. So when he started getting tickets he immediately knew that something was troubling him. This is the reason he decided to seek counseling. Unlike this person, many members of the congregation have never considered counseling or therapy. As a matter of fact, in the past three years, only about 5% have sought counseling assistance. The reasons are not farfetched; social stigma (Komiya, Good, & Sherrod, 2000), fear of self-disclosure (Hinson & Swanson, 1993), fear of the unknown risks and circumstances (Vogel, Wester, Wei, & Boysen, 2005), fear of emotion (Komiya et al., 2000), to mention few, are some

of the factors mitigating against help seeking among Igbo men who struggle with acculturation conflicts and low self-esteem due to power loss. The Open, Time limited, theme focused group dynamic counseling, appears to fit best for this population and the aims of this project. Unlike other group dynamics such as the leader directed group dynamics, where participants follow the instruction of the leader or laid down procedures as in the case with the 12 steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), I modeled this group dynamics to suit the participants' cultural background and socio-political systems. Igbos have a well established group forum known as *umunna* system, which works solely with the consensus opinion (*oha*), rather than self-conceived views of an individual leader. The reason, the Igbo people abhors monarchy or authoritarian system of government (*Igbo enweze*). Hence, I call this Ohazurizi dynamics- group directed dynamics, in the sense that the participants will likely benefit more from the group (*oha*), than when directed by a leader.

Hopefully the participants, who need counseling but shy away from it for whatever reason, may benefit from the *Ohazurizi* dynamics as well as constitute meaningful assets to fellow participants through effective sharing and active listening.

Consequently, I designed a questionnaire as shown below, to evaluate the participants' mind set on issues of power and gender among Igbo couples. At the end of the project which will consist of 12 sessions of group dynamics, the same questionnaire will be administered to the same population to test the impact of the project on them.

Hence, my methods and approach for the project will be a time limited, theme focused, group counseling model focused on facilitating discussion. Raw data will be sourced through oral interview and questionnaires from Igbo men living in Staten Island, New York where I serve as

the coordinator of Igbo Catholic community. The oral interview will have the same content as the questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed to measure how Igbo married men in America view power, traditional gender roles and violence against women and the effect of the intervention we are proposing, which is 12 sessions of group discussion.

Oral interview will be granted in Igbo language to those not proficient in English Language, while the questionnaire will be basically for people who can read and understand English and those who may wish to maintain anonymity.

Pair-wise t-test with the p value set at .05 significance level ($p < .05$) will be used to test the results of the study because I will be testing the same population twice.

I plan to use a one directional hypothesis because I am assuming that the proposed group dynamics will have some impact on the way Igbo men in America view traditional gender roles, violence against women and use of power in marriage, .

Research Hypothesis: Igbo men who participated in the Group dynamics will be more open-minded and have more positive attitudes towards women after Group dynamics.

Participants in this project must be; Igbos who have a reasonable knowledge of Igbo and American cultures, 18 years or above and willing to participate in all the sessions of the group experience. Prior to the initial recruitment, prospective participant would be told to feel free to skip any question they are not comfortable with. The same applies to those who will opt for oral interview. They will be told to feel free not to respond to any question they are not comfortable with.

I intend to publicize the project proposal through oral announcements during our weekend masses and other periodic events. The questionnaire will be shared through the same means and period. Oral interview will be granted to willing participants at a suitable time and at appropriate locations either within the Church premises or at my office.

When I complete the first interviews and the questionnaires, I will select the participants based on how the questionnaires were filled out and based on their scores. People who did not complete their questionnaires will be screened out. Concerning scores, the questionnaire as seen below consists of 1-5 point scales, indicating that men who perpetrate intimate partner violence against their female partners, and/or struggle with acculturation conflicts and low self-esteem due to power loss may likely score low on the scale prior to the group dynamic experience. I will concentrate on these people who score low to assess how much impact the project will have on them. The questionnaire has a total of 13 constructs measuring basically the same issues bordering on males' attitude toward gender, use of power in the family, traditional gender roles and intimate partner violence against women. Each construct has 1-5 point's scale: 1- strongly disagree; 2- disagree; 3- not sure; 4- agree; 5 – strongly agree. The highest score will be (5×13) 65, while the lowest will be (1×13) 13. The lower one scores in the scale the more chances that one will be selected for the program because it is an indication that he is struggling with one or more of the issues we raised above concerning power loss and violence against women. Those who score well above the average may not be selected because they seem to be more positive on these issues (i.e. they have the desired responses we are seeking to gain through the project), which implies that they may not be in need of the program as such. I intend to work with a small group of about 12 participants. Once we have started the group dynamics, no new intakes will be admitted but any of the recruited participants may drop out whenever they wish.

Hence, the group dynamics experience as I mentioned earlier is exclusively for male congregants who indicated interest and willingness to participate in all the sessions and who have successfully completed the oral interview or the questionnaire with below average scores. Our language of communication during the group discussion will be Igbo and English. English language is necessary because some technical words may not have corresponding Igbo translations. We will be meeting twice every week for about an hour and may break midway to assess the participants' feelings. Each session will begin with an opening prayer, praises, scriptural readings and meditation. Participants will take turns to lead in the opening prayers and other spiritual exercises on a volunteer basis. I plan to participate in all the sessions.

Below is the questionnaire for the pre and post sessions testing.

Questionnaire

To all the questions below check the number that corresponds to your answer in the following order: Strongly agree-5; agree- 4; not sure- 3; disagree- 2; strongly disagree-1.

1) Men may not always have the last word

1. strongly disagree

2. disagree

3. not sure

4. agree

5. strongly agree

2) Men and women are equal in all respects

1. strongly disagree

2. disagree

3. not sure

4. agree

5. strongly agree

3) women could be co-breadwinners with their husband or sole breadwinners for the family.

1. strongly disagree

2. disagree

3. not sure

4. agree

5. strongly agree

4) Women with children may take up high demanding and out of home jobs

1. strongly disagree

2. disagree

3. not sure

4. agree

5. strongly agree

5) Men who work fewer hours than their wives should spend more time with the children at home.

1. strongly disagree

2. disagree

3. not sure

4. agree

5. strongly agree

6) Unemployed men should cook food, clean the house and take care of the children as a support to their working wives.

1. strongy disagree

2. disagree

3. not sure

4. agree

5. strongly agree

7 Women should report their abusive husbands to the police

1. strongly disagree

2. disagree

3. not sure

4. agree

5. strongly agree

8 Respect should be based on one's character and not on age or gender

1. strongly disagree

2. disagree

3. not sure

4. agree

5. strongly agree

9) Women who are working should control their earnings and determine how they are spent.

1. strongly disagree

2. disagree

3. not sure

4. agree

5. strongly agree

10) It is appropriate for women to have social relationship with people other than immediate family members.

1. strongly disagree

2. disagree

3. not sure

4. agree

5. strongly agree

11) It is okay for a woman to initiate a divorce if she is being abused by the husband

1. strongly disagree

2. disagree

3. not sure

4. agree

5. strongly agree

12) Men who physically abuse their wives should seek counseling.

1. strongly disagree

2. disagree

3. not sure

4. agree

5. strongly agree

13) Men should seek their wives' opinion in all matters concerning their family.

1. strongly disagree

2. disagree

3. not sure

4. agree

5. strongly agree

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Table 1

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	<i>Before Group dynamics</i>	<i>After Group dynamics</i>
Mean	25.27	38.73
SD	2.79	2
N	11	11
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	10	
T test Stat	-11.494	
One-tail test	0.000000219	
t Critical one-tail	1.812461	
Two-tail Test	0.000000438	
t Critical two-tail	2.228139	

I did a statistical analysis on the questionnaires and found some significant difference between the before and after group dynamics, since I used the t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means for the group tested. The Before Group dynamics had (M= 25.27, SD= 2.72, N=11) and the After Group dynamics had (M= 38. 7, SD =2, N= 11). The result of the t –Test: Paired Two Sample for Means for the group tested as shown in the table above ($t=-11.494$, $p = 0.000002$) indicates a significant positive effect of the time limited group dynamics on the participants since our critical value 1.812 is less than the absolute value of our t – Test value ($t = -11.494$). Again, comparing the p value of the t Test value ($p =0.000002$) with the level of significant of 5 % (0.05), it shows that the p value of the t –Test statistics is less than the level of significant of 5

% ($p < 0.05$), therefore we would conclude that Igbo men who participated in the Group dynamics may likely be more open minded towards women in general and may also have more positive attitude towards their spouses after Group dynamics.

Feedback from the community actually reveal that after the Group dynamics there was an indication of more open dialogue between participants and their wives which did not exist prior to the Group Dynamics implying the possibility of less violent behavior towards their spouses.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The *Ohazurizi* dynamics was successfully completed. I recruited 12 participants based on how and when the questionnaire was filled out and returned or how they responded to the oral interview for those who did an oral interview. First of all I did an announcement in the church explaining the program I was planning to run, and how the questionnaire was to be completed. I told them that oral interview will be given to those who could not read or understand the English language. I repeated the same explanations the day I gave out the questionnaire. They were either to take it home, complete and return it the following weekend, or fill it in and hand it over to me the same day since it takes a few minutes to complete. I was also available the same day for people who wanted to have the oral interview.

Out of 32 questionnaires that were given out only 17 were returned. Five people presented for an interview that same day. Of the 17 questionnaires that were returned, five were not filled out completely, hence I discarded them, therefore leaving me with 12. The five people that presented for an interview answered the questions appropriately. In all I had 17 prospective participants but because I needed to work with a fewer number, I screened out those who scored above average, since this program is actually intended for men who are struggling with power loss due to shifts in traditional gender roles. Those who are doing okay financially and/or do not have a narcissistic attachment to male gender entitlement, are more likely to score high in the pre group dynamics test. I assumed that these men therefore may not need this program as much as those who scored low showing that they needed some help to become more open minded towards

women. So with this screening I came down to 12 participants who were actually recruited in the program.

The group met once every weekend for 12 weeks. I participated in all the meetings. 11 out of the 12 participants attended all the meetings. The participant who could not complete the program left after the eighth session due to ill-health. I therefore canceled him out in the pre-group statistical analysis to have an even number with the post group dynamics sample.

The first day of the session was remarkable in the sense that none of the participants have participated in group dynamics before. They were wondering what the meeting would look like since there was no agenda for the meetings. They were all used to regular social and spiritual meetings. So I spent the first few minutes clarifying the purpose of the meeting. So when I mentioned that it would last for 12 weeks, one of the participants responded; “you mean we will be coming here for 12 weeks just to sit down and talk to one another?” I explained further that our meeting is much more than gathering to talk to one another, that it is an opportunity for them to openly share their experiences and learn from one another’s general and personal family life experiences. These and other explanations were consistent with Garland’s (2010) understanding of group process as possessing;

a single task, which is ultimately to understand its own functioning. It is inward-looking: it has no wood to chop, house to build, or political problems to solve. It also has permission to examine its own functioning out loud, something that is implicitly proscribed in everyday social life. People can say to each other what is ordinarily unsayable, and it can be revelatory, for the sayers, for the said to, as well as for the listeners. Moreover, there is the nature of the group itself. Members become extremely sensitive to each others’ states of mind and increasingly capable of speaking helpfully about such matters. (P56)

Furthermore, I reiterated that the group process would be an open and group directed (Ohazurizi), meaning that participants are free to withdraw at any given time and also that they are free to bring in any issue of personal interest especially those that relate to power sharing and gender roles to the table. Jokingly another participant said; “Are we going to be provided with food?” The joke caused a lot of laughter in the house. With that we had the opening prayers and we had a formal introduction though they knew each other prior to this meeting. I then read a passage from the book entitled Encountering the Sacred in Psychotherapy and asked them to have some quiet meditations. The most inspiring line of the passage as the participants kept referring back to it goes thus; “Whenever we listen to one another with open hearts, the spiritual is within that connection” (Griffith & Griffith, 2002, p, VIII).

The second session began with some praises and an opening prayer lead by one of the participants as we agreed initially that they will take turns in leading the opening prayers. After the prayers there were some seconds of silence as if they were waiting for me to say or do something. I broke the silence by asking how they spent their past week. This question sparked conversation among the group. One of the participants said that his wife was curious about the essence of the group dynamics and was wondering how important it is to their family. In response another member asked him; “So what did you tell her?” He said; “Don’t mind our women, they always like to nose around. *Ojuta isi nkita ojiri agba ya mee gini?*” (That is, why should she ask me that? She has no right to know what I do). The issue of women’s rights to information about their husband’s dealings dominated the conversation during this session. Some of the participants argued that women have the right to know what their husbands are doing while some felt that it is inappropriate for women to seek such information. Yet some argued that it is either a sign of weakness on the part of the man or lack of trust on the part of the woman

when a woman seeks for and/or are given information about her husband's dealings. The understanding of sharing information with women as a weakness falls in line with Cooper's theory of thinking process, as cited earlier. However, what sounded like a take home message to all the participants was when a participant said;

Look, the problem we African men have is thinking that we can treat these women the same way we do in our home land and to think that women have nothing good to offer. As far as I am concerned, I discuss everything with my wife because two heads are better than one.

"Two good heads Oooo!" a voice from the group echoed. At that juncture I asked a participant to read to the group a portion of Ladinsky's poem where she observes that;

Wisdom is so kind and wise that wherever you may look you can learn something about God. Why would not the omnipresent teach that way? ...It is your destiny to see as God sees, to know as God knows, to feel as God feels. How is this possible? How? Because Divine love cannot defy its very self. Divine love will be eternally true to its own being, and its being is giving all it can, at the perfect moment. (Ladinsky, 2002, p. 191)

Our third session was also very interactive. We started with an opening prayer and some choruses, followed by the following passage from St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians;

Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew to win over Jews; to those under the law I became like one under the law—though I myself am not under the law—to win over those under the law. To those outside the law I became like one outside the law—though I am not outside God's law but within the law of Christ—to win over those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some. All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it. Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:19-26).

A few minutes of meditation followed the reading, and then the usual discussion followed.

Varied issues were discussed ranging from differences in worshiping styles among churches to comparing the Catholic Church in America with the Catholic Church in Nigeria. For some reasons the group didn't dwell much on family matters or gender related issues during this session.

To the contrary, our fourth session was dominated by a discussion on traditional gender roles. A participant was a few minutes late, so when he tried to explain that he had to prepare food for the family since it was his wife's weekend to work, another participant teased him by saying; "so you and your wife is taking turn in cooking?" He responded very appropriately by asking him to tell the group what is wrong for a man to cook for the family. This generated a lot of argument. Some argued from the point of Igbo tradition that cooking and taking care of the children are women's jobs. In support of this a participant, with a big laugh adds "once you begin to share house hold chores with your wife you are creating room for disrespect. Other members of the group however, understood it differently. One of them argued that "no sane woman would look down on her husband just because he is helping out in housekeeping; rather she will love him the most". This last statement seemed to have made some impression on all the participants. Consequently, a participant, in a very low voice added; "Can anyone tell me what our Igbo tradition says men's jobs would be in a situation where women become co-breadwinners or sole breadwinners? Or, let me put it straight, is it our tradition that women should work and earn money for the family?" when he got no response, he continued;

I love Igbo tradition and wish that we all keep to it, but we must admit that marriage and raising children in America is quite different from what it is in Nigeria. We know that women do all the house jobs in Nigeria, cleaning, sweeping, cooking, feeding the kids

etc., because the men are the sole breadwinners for most families but the situation is quite different here in America. Personally I know I can't pay all the bills without my wife's assistance with my little income. I am thankful to God and to my wife. We really need to accept the situations the way they are and learn to assist in cooking food, bathing and feeding the children, *makana akugharia egw, azogharia ukwu*" (that is, when the tune of the music changes, the dancing step also changes).

Male entitlement mentality and gender role socialization seem to be the problem most of the participants struggle with. Thanks to the last speaker and some others in the group, who have contributed to the positive growth of their fellow participants through their heartwarming sharing.

Subsequent sessions were quite similar with the previous ones except that one of the participants dropped out after the 8th session due to health reasons thereby bringing the number of participants down to 11. An incident worth mentioning took place during the 6th session. It centered on management of family resources. The argument caused serious tension among the group. While half of the group was in favor of women keeping and managing their own earnings, the other half held on to the view that women should be accountable to their husbands who in turn make the final decision on how the money should be expended. A proponent of the view that women should surrender their earnings to their husbands argued that;

There are no better ways of ensuring peace and order in the family than having somebody as in charge. We all read the bible and we are from the same culture. Our religion and our culture support the fact that men are the head of every family and should make decisions for their households. Women are subordinates to their husbands. That is what the scripture says, so I don't understand what we are arguing here.

A member of the opposing group asked the last speaker; "Have you finished?" The last speaker then responded; "Yes, do you have any questions?" He then cleared his voice and said; "I feel we

are going round and round. I am not a woman...” “But Mark, at times you talk like a woman;” A voice from an opposing group interrupted. “Please allow me to talk, I think I have the audience now and you should respect that please” “I am sorry” the interrupter apologizes. “You better be” Mark sarcastically responded, paused a while and continued;

So as I was saying before I was interrupted, I am not a woman, I am a man, so I don’t have any reason to defend the women if it does not make sense to do so. I am not a pagan I am a Christian and I know the bible very well. I have not read where it is said in the bible that when a woman works and makes money that the husband should take the money from her and spend at will. Look I believe in dialogue. What I do with my wife is that at the end of each month when we get our pay, we sit down and discuss our needs and come to agreement on how to spend our earnings based on priority of our needs. It doesn’t make me less a man rather it makes me and my wife happy. Our family system in Nigeria where the man is all in all may not fit properly here just as we have discussed several times since we started this program, because we are not in Igbo land. Besides, how many women are employed in our home land? So if you are in Rome do like the Romans.

“Good talk my brother” a supporter of his opinion shouted. This tension gradually resulted in a polarization between the two groups. I allowed them to argue it out among themselves with the understanding that; “therapy group is a peer group. The network of relations that begins to develop is truly egalitarian, whatever the tensions and rivalries that will also exist” (Garland, 2010, p38).

However by the time we convened for the tenth session the participants seemed to be less varied in their opinions, thus confirming Jakob and Jonasson’s, (2010) argument that;

When individuals identify with members of a group, they are more likely to view their group and its members more positively than other groups. Hence, group members are generally perceived as being more loyal, trustworthy, skilled and cooperative than outsiders. (P.42)

I also noticed, when we advanced in the process that almost all the participants seemed to appreciate that the group dynamics were really quite different from any other type of meetings or

program they have participated in. I recall the group's reactions when one of the participants said; "Wow! This meeting is so valuable and should be open for all the Nigerian men in America". Spontaneously most of them responded; "oh that would be wonderful." A voice then added; "It will also be nice to organize this kind of meeting for the women because they also have issues that could be resolved through this same process."

Then came the 12th and the final session which was also very remarkable. I noticed that some of them had mixed feelings that we were meeting for the last time. Though they were happy that the program was to end that weekend, (meaning that they didn't have to be driving to the church every weekend), however, most of them wished that we would go on for more sessions given the joy and encouragement they gained from one another.

So based on the 11 participants who successfully completed the program, I computed the statistical analysis to see how the program impacted on them. As already stated in the previous chapter, the Before Group dynamics had ($M = 25.27$, $SD = 2.72$, $N = 11$) and the After Group dynamics had ($M = 38.7$, $SD = 2$, $N = 11$). The result of the t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means for the group tested ($t = -11.494$, $p = 0.000002$) indicates a significant positive effect of the time limited group dynamics on the participants since our critical value 1.812 is less than the absolute value of our t-Test value ($t = -11.494$). Again, comparing the p value of the t-Test value ($p = 0.000002$) with the level of significant of 5 % (0.05), it shows that the p value of the t-Test statistics is less than the level of significant of 5 % ($p < 0.05$), therefore we would conclude that Igbo men who participated in the Group dynamics may likely be more open minded towards women and have more positive attitude after Group dynamics.

A few weeks after the group dynamics, feedback from some of the participants' wives confirmed the positive effect of the time limited group dynamics. One of these women shared with me that since her husband completed the program he has been more open minded and more reasonable in dialogue. "I can't remember when my husband sought my opinion last concerning our family matters, I hope he continues this way" she said. A youth member said a similar thing to me expressing his joy and appreciation. He said that for the first time in 7 years he saw his parents dialoguing like mature adults. "I was surprised that my father did not raise his voice nor threaten my mother when she suggested that he should postpone his planned trip to Nigeria till they could find a nanny for my baby sister since I and my younger brother are both in college," he said.

Limitations and Suggestions:

As I mentioned earlier, everything went well with the group process except that one of the participants dropped out due to ill-health. Though the statistical analysis indicates a significant change in the attitude of the participants towards female gender and use of power in the family, however, it is not a guarantee that the same program will always have the same effect in all circumstances given our small sample size. Again, it is not certain how long the effects of the program will last on these participants. 12 sessions of group dynamics may not be enough for a lifelong effect on the participants. So, an ongoing counseling program or open and group lead process such as *Ohazurizi* dynamics may be necessary to sustain the impacts of the 12 sessions.

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