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**Widowhood in Two Igbo Communities of Nigeria: A Contextual Manipulation of
Patriarchy**

A Dissertation Presented

by

Jerome Madumelu

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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Abstract of the Dissertation

Widowhood Practice in Two Igbo Communities of Nigeria: A Contextual Manipulation of
Patriarchy

by

Jerome Madumelu

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in

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This grounded theory research sought to understand the conditions under which widows of the same Igbo ethnic group who live in two different communities in the Eastern region of Nigeria are treated dramatically differently. The main question of the study was why in one community, widows were subject to extremely oppressive traditional treatment while in the other, widows experienced very mild widowhood traditional treatment. Thirty widows' experience was triangulated with the perspectives of two focus groups, face-to-face interviews with ten men and twelve self-reports from the adult children of the participant widows. The research approach was qualitative, exploratory, and inductive. Central to the study were in-depth interviews with residents of Abaofia-Izzi and Enugwu-Ukwu conducted in Igboland of Nigeria. A purposive quota selection of the study respondents was made from each community.

The analysis led to the discovery of emergent themes that served as building blocks that helped in explaining the women's experience. The results of the analysis led to the following discovery about the two Igbo communities: Variation in the patriarchal practice in the two communities is paradoxical and is based on a number of factors, including: cultural heritage, geographical locations, historical contacts, and the level of identification of people to their community. The paradox can be summed up in this way: Superficially, Enugwu-Ukwu appears progressive, but in reality it treats its widows conservatively. Paradoxically, Abaofia-Izzi appears conservative in outlook, but in reality is casually progressive in approach to its widows. Thus, the difference in adherence to this potentially devastating tradition of oppressing widows can be understood as a contextual manipulation of patriarchy. Contextually, Enugwu-Ukwu kept manipulating the power of rituals as an inherited cultural legacy to disinherit, oppress and impoverish their widows to the advantage of men and patriarchal women. Conversely, despite the fact that Abaofia-Izzi widows are condemned to a life of abject poverty right from their girlhood due to the poor decisions of their parents, especially their fathers, the poor economic condition and cosmological perception of Abaofia-Izzi people seem to serve, among other factors, as the *raison d'être* for a less oppressive attitude towards their widows.

Dedication

First, this work is dedicated to all the participants from Abaofia-Izzi and Enugwu-Ukwu, who provided me with the data that made this work possible. Second, to my family members who endured my long absence from the family, especially my mother, Paulina Madumelu, my sisters, Uju, Ify, and my brothers, John and his wife, Anastasia, Nduka and his wife, Ginika, Uche, Theresa and her family.

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Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

According to Hess (1990),

Although the distinction between rationality and emotion, and the assumption that these qualities are sex linked, has a long intellectual history, the crucial figure for modern science is Rene Descartes. The great philosopher's struggle with the central dilemma of the Enlightenment – the relationship of the inner life to outward reality – is mirrored in his own writings; the deeply personal *Meditation* filled with private anguish and separation anxieties, in contrast to the technical *Philosophical Work*, where Descartes rejects the all-embracing organicism of the Pre-Enlightenment in favor of an extreme objectivism, Bordo... refers to the outcome of this struggle as the “extreme masculinization of thought” reflecting his era's preoccupation with themes of individuation and separation – a generalized “flight from the feminine,” a drama of parturition in which knowledge and the world are reborn in the image of men of intellect. In separating the knower from the known, knowledge becomes masculinized in the sense of being removed from the feminized context of relationships and feelings (p. 80).

A six year pastoral experience and the compassionate feelings I had for the widows regarding the treatment they were given during my apostolate at Enugwu-Ukwu evoked the desire to do this research. This research project is gender-specific (Carmichael, Angel, Koon-Witt, & Inabnit, 2005) and is about Igbo women who happen to be widows and the treatment they receive due to the death of their husbands. Specifically, the scope of this research is narrowed to include only participants from the two communities, Enugwu-Ukwu and Abaofia-Izzi, both of which are found in the Southern region of Nigeria. It is note-worthy to know that *Abaofia* is one of the constituent communities in *Izzi*. *Izzi* is a clan made up of three local governments with many autonomous communities. Each autonomous community is headed by a traditional ruler. *Amagu* is the oldest of the autonomous communities and the traditional ruler of *Amagu* with the council of elders (*Isi-Ukes*) is the custodian of *Izzi* culture and tradition. *Abaofia* is one of the autonomous communities of *Izzi*. The researcher would like to designate *Abaofia* as *Abaofia-Izzi* throughout this paper. This strategy shows a better picture for the scope of the research and the close connection between *Izzi* and *Abaofia*.



Figure 1. This is a map of Nigeria with the 36 states. The participants were selected from two of the southern states: Anambra and Ebonyi. (Source: www.myondostate.com)

This study tries to identify some indicators that could help us understand why one community keeps a strong conservative attitude towards its widowhood practices while the other is more progressive. Comparably, the researcher wants to understand the conditions under which widows of the above-mentioned rural communities are differently treated and how their cosmology, social institutions, and historical contacts with contiguous and foreign communities inform the attitudes that are brought to bear on those widows. In other words, the researcher believe that knowledge of how these towns spin off meanings based on their communal, historical, symbolic and experiential constructs will provide a window that will highlight the rationale for maintaining by one town or the other, a progressive or conservative approach to its widows (Jasper, 1997). In this way, the readiness of one town to accept change or resist it will define it as an open or a closed community respectively. Conservative attitude, as used here, is defined as the tendency to use traditionally institutionalized customs and rituals to keep the widows as the marginalized of the society thereby making them take the back seat when issues

regarding their wellbeing are at stake. On the other hand, progressive attitude implies the upsetting of those widow-limiting institutions and rituals taking cognizance of time and context advancing the wellbeing of widows thereby making them the drivers of their own interests. The choice of the two communities is not without criticisms. Some of the educated ‘opinion leaders’¹ that I consulted about my purpose of research discounted the idea of choosing two communities within the same ethnic group. Based on the fact that the selected communities belong to the same ethnic group and share the same culture and presumably speak the same language, most of the critics believed that their choice, in this research, would not result in any significant difference. It was presumed that the communities are more likely to have a lot in common regarding widowhood practices than any remarkable differences. Despite the strong presumption, the result of the inquiry stated otherwise. There was a presumption of cultural homogeneity within the communities of the same ethnic group, the neglect of its local specificity and the historical context of it on the part of those opinion leaders.

Report Plan

This dissertation is composed of seven chapters. Chapter I is the summary of the research report which includes the introductory section, the background of the study, the settings, the statement of the problem, the rationale for the study and the purpose of the study. Chapter II is a review of relevant literature on existing scholarship regarding widowhood practices. Chapter III is the methodology applied in the research. It touches also on the data collection methods, data management and the ethics of the study among others. Chapter IV is the review of the relevant theories emerging from the data. Chapter V is the results and interpretational analysis all

¹ Opinion leaders are men and women considered to have a good knowledge of their community and were able to explain things in ways that many other participants would not. The researcher, interchangeably, used the opinion leaders for resource persons.

combined. Chapter VI is the analytic framework described as the contextual manipulation of patriarchy. Chapter VII deals with the conclusions, limitations and implications of the study for social work education, practitioners, and policy.

The Background of the Study

According to Korieh (1996, p. 1), serious investigations regarding women's issues are relatively new and, as such, there is paucity of information about them. The varied past with the different periods and the dearth of research about women are traceable not only to the Roman world (27 BC – 393 AD) and mid-Victorian era (1851 – 1867) but also to the present (Korieh, 1996b). There has been a historic consistency in the way women were marginalized throughout the western history. In those worlds till date, women have been relegated to the background in matters public and are best qualified as invisible (Korieh, 1996). As said in the introductory quotation, it was a time "... in which knowledge and the world are reborn in the image of men of intellect" which is best qualified as an "extreme masculinization of thought" (Hess, 1996, p. 80).

During the quasi-globalization that witnessed the era of the colonial conquest, evangelization by the Christian and Muslim missionaries and engagement in the international trade especially with African countries, the British who colonized Nigeria were "so firmly entrenched in their attitude that they were unable to see or understand the roles women played in Nigerian political life"(Korieh, 1996, p. 2). Despite the "invisibility of African women in any serious study of history and society; in spite of the fact that anthropology has not been an exclusive male preserve", the most neglected aspect of women's life is the widowhood practices (Korieh, 1996, p. 1). Korieh (1996) summarized the widow's condition thus:

Although widows constitute a large proportion of the adult female population in many African communities, Betty Potash confirms that systematic investigation is missing... The result is that much of the scanty information we have on widowhood practices is what may be described as raw or unprocessed information. Attempt has not been made to explain the practice in their sociological and cosmological context... For the same reason of lack of analytical approach, comparative studies of widowhood practices appear to be conspicuous by their total absence. The great fact of the bewildering plurality of cultures in Africa suggests that we are entitled to expect a wide variety of widowhood practices not only as whether a local group is patrilineal, matrilineal, verilocal or exorilocal and so on. In Igboland...for example, which will be the focus of this study, we are bound to find significant differences between the different sub-cultures that are found within the ethnic group. These are likely to be the result of various influences ranging from historical contacts with their neighbours as well as western influence (p. 1).

It is not easy to access a firsthand knowledge of what widowhood practices looked like in Africa because African cultures and traditions were more of oral tradition and those who documented them first were limited in their knowledge of the culture. Strongly entrenched in extreme sexism and bias, the western authors of African cultures often misrepresented facts about African social structures (Hafkin & Bay, 1976). Again, some of the pioneer African researchers on African studies did not question their stand enough regarding the prejudice of the Euro-American ideologies because they (African born writers) kept uncritically applying those foreign concepts that misrepresent African worldviews (Oyewumi, 2002). This research among other things takes up these challenges as it focuses on two different sub-cultures within the Igbo ethnic group as an effort to discover the varied conditions leading to the differential treatment of their widowhoods.

Presently, there is a resurgence of African women scholars correcting the misrepresentations of Euro-American biases of epistemology as applied to African studies in their critical writings (Amadiume, 1997; Hafkin & Bay, 1976; Nzegwu, 2001,

2006; Oyewumi, 2002). Following the thinking of Glaser and Strauss (1967,) these women want to avoid the consequences of received theories which often involve “a forcing of data, as well as a neglect of relevant concepts and hypothesis that may emerge” (p. 34). They want to create substantive theories that are applicable to substantive areas of the lives of African women. Oyewumi (2002) rejects the idea of imposing received theories on foreign contexts without critical analysis.

Based on this, Oyewumi (2002) opined:

A hallmark of the modern era is the expansion of Europe and the establishment of Euro/American cultural hegemony throughout the world. Nowhere is this more profound than in the production of knowledge about human behavior, history, societies, and cultures. As a result, interests, concern, predilections, neuroses, prejudices, social institutions and social categories of Euro/American have dominated the writing of human history. One effect of this Eurocentricism is the racialization of knowledge: Europe is represented as the source of knowledge and Europeans as knowers. Indeed, male gender privilege as an essential part of European ethos is enshrined in the culture of modernity. This global context for knowledge production must be taken into account in our quest to comprehend African realities and indeed the human condition (p. 1).

In line with the above quotation, Oyewumi (2002) believes that interrogating Western terminologies ensures that “...African research can be better informed by local concerns and interpretations and at the same time, concurrently, for African experiences to be taken into account in general theory building, the structural racism of the global system notwithstanding” (p. 1).

Present Research Project

This research project is a comparative study using emergent cosmological, sociological and psychological theories grounded in the data to give a systematic explanation of the conditions of widows of two communities of Igboland. An overarching substantive theory of ‘contextual manipulation of patriarchy’ was applied to interpret the

attitudinal differences between each community and its widows. The theory of the contextual manipulation of patriarchy emerged from the systematic analysis of the data and is well explained in chapter six. The use of qualitative approach is driven by the nature of the research. According to Korieh (1996), the use of multi-methods is also particularly appropriate because of the “plurality of cultures” even among people of the same ethnic group (p. 1). Following are the research settings which demonstrate the worldviews of the people that this study addresses and the nature of their historical contacts. The Igbo worldviews which determine the two communities’ attitudes toward their widows will be emphasized in the interpretation section.

Research Settings

The Igboland is located in Nigeria’s southeast. The Igbo speaking people are found in latitude 5 and 7 degrees West and 6 and 8 degrees East, occupying 5 out of 36 states of Nigeria (Fasoranti & Aruna, 2006). Currently, the five states are Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The Igbo people occupy an expansive space of about 15, 899 square miles. Eastbound, they are surrounded by the Ibibio and Yako, southbound, by the Ijaw and Ogoni; westbound, by Bini, Warri and Igala and northbound, the Tiv people are their neighbors (Nwagbara, 2007). According to Fosaranti et al. (2006) the Igbo people make up 10 to 15 percent of the total population of Nigeria estimated at over 140 million people. The bureau of statistics (Akinyosoye, 2001 - 2006) shows that Nigerian population consisted of 49% women and 51% men. Of this population, 1.8 percent is widows and about 0.5 percent are widowers.

The term Igbo has a tripartite meaning. First, it connotes the tribe; hence people speak of Igbo tribe. Second, it could refer to the people, and third, it could apply to the language of

the people. The Igbo tribe refers to the geographical location in the southeast of Nigeria with an estimated population of 27 million people (Dike, 2007).

Igbo Worldview

Sharing in Animalu's idea, Nwoye (2011) holds that a worldview or cosmological framework orders people's way of life as it explains the how and why of their everyday experience. Accordingly, the worldviews as determined by experience are "so pregnant with drama that such experiences give rise to symbols or totems of some sort. The symbols give rise to thought or creative intelligence (*ako-na-uche*) and creative intelligence, in turn, to the customs and codes of the society, which are so internalized, from childhood onwards, that they go unquestioned as a way of life" (p. 306).

For the Igbo people, there is no clear distinction between the world of the spirits and that inhabited by human beings. According to Nwoye (2011), it is understood among the Igbo "...that spiritual beings and cosmic forces are highly intermingled" and that peoples' life experiences are constantly changing with circumstance (p. 306). There is a three dimensional categorization of Igbo religious worldview. According to Nwoye (2011), those are "...the sky; the earth, intricately woven with water; and the spirit/ancestral world.

The three dimensions are...contiguous and continuous in a non-hierarchical manner" (p.

307). Figure 2 below shows the three dimensions.

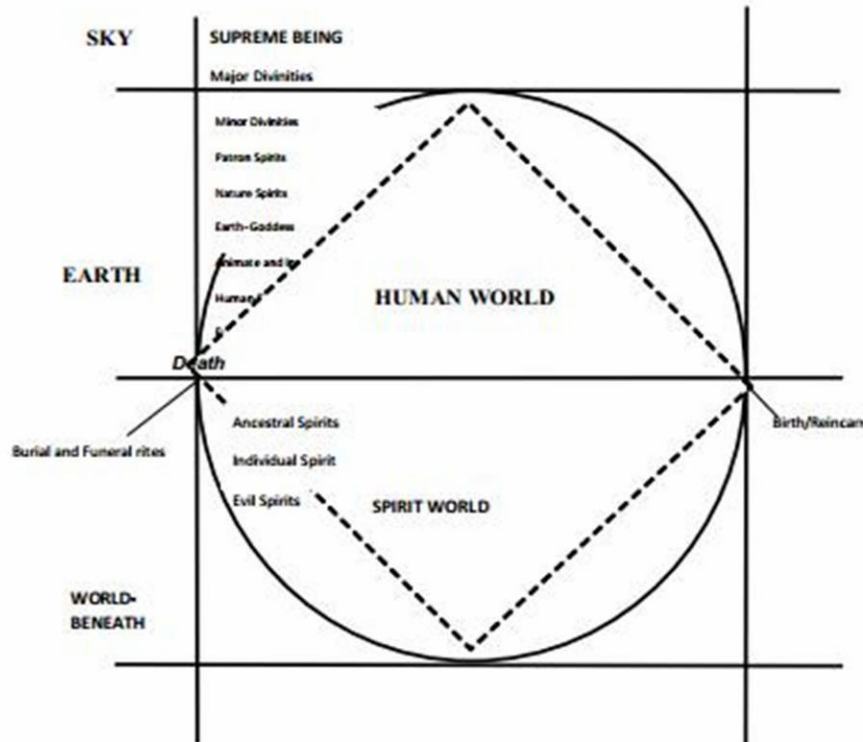


Figure 2. Diagrammatic representation of Igbo cosmology adapted from Animalu (1990: 9)

Hence, Nwoye (2011) said that the Supreme Being, though believed to live in the sky, is not superior to the ancestors. The two arrows by the left and right hand sides of the chart show how cyclic life is. People die and move to the land of the ancestors. And the dead reincarnate to populate the earth. Igbo worldview is anthropocentric and is taken as a mirror of the spirit world. The Igbo religious worldview perceive their deities as “arranged spatially in four levels as follows: (1) Sky – male (2) Earth – female (3) Water – female (4) Ancestral – male” (Nwoye, 2011). The arrangement suggests that the male deities are the ‘alphas’ and ‘omegas’, whereas the female deities rule in-between (p. 307).

Morally, among the Igbo people, the hope of joining the ancestors in the ancestral world is the reason for living a good and meaningful life. According to Nwoye (2011),

the ancestors are those who “lived well-spent lives, die in socially approved ways, and are given correct burial rites, live in one of those worlds of the dead, which mirror the world of the living” (2011). Hence, Ejizu, quoted by Nwoye (2011) said of the Igbo people that “...the successful life here on earth is understood by them as a sure passport to gain one a good place among the ancestors” (p. 309). According to Igbo tradition (Nwoye, 2010), children continue:

The ancestral line in order to retain the family’s ownership of whatever property belongs to it. The reality of family extinction cannot be ducked where children are not forthcoming. Such a situation is socially abominable. On the part of any Igbo parents, having children wards off the anxiety of growing old and fear of loss of property to undeserving fellows (p. 41).

Igbo religious worldviews hold that the relationship between man and the spiritual world is maintained through many channels. Some of those channels are obedience to the codes of behavior and the customs (*Omenani*). Those codes of behavior are believed to have been approved by the ancestors and enforced by the earth goddess through priests and titled elders. The most important of all the channels are the heads of various extended families.

To the Ibo (Author’s spelling) therefore, the spiritual world is real and intimate. Hence, the belief in the existence of spirits in all aspects of nature and its various phenomena” is also real (Ilogu, 1974). According to Ilogu (1974), it is difficult for the Igbo people to accept death as a natural or biological end. The resistance in accepting the biological termination of earthly life is based on Igbo belief that life is “eternal” and that man should also live eternally. The theology behind this is that man shares “in the Supreme God, *Chineke*, through the *Chi* particle in him,” and is therefore expected to be immortal. Man is more of the spiritual essence rather than biological, and although man lives in the world of nature, he is not quite a part of it” (Ilogu, 1974, p. 41).

At this point, it is important to zero in contextually to the two communities, *Enugwu-Ukwu* and *Abaofia-Izzi* from which the participants were selected.



Figure 3. Map of Anambra State with 26 local governments.
(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anambra_State)

Enugwu-Ukwu

Enugwu-Ukwu is located in *Njikoka* Local Government Area of Anambra State found in latitude 6 and 10 degrees north and 7 and 01 degrees east and is one of the satellite towns within the capital territory of Anambra State. Its temperature range is between 27-28 degrees Celsius and can get to the maximum of 35 degree Celsius between the months of February and April which is the hottest period. The coolest periods begin mid-July through December to early January which coincides with the rainy and harmattan seasons. The Harmattan is a “hot, dry wind that blows from the northeast in the Western Sahara and is strongest in late fall and winter (late

November to mid-March). It usually carries large amounts of dust, which is transported hundreds of kilometers out over the Atlantic Ocean; the dust often interferes with aircraft operations and settles on the deck of ships” (Harmattan, 2013). High humidity and high rainfalls are typical of this region. The vegetation is that of a mixed savanna and the dense rainforest (Falade, p. 20) is supported by "wetter river valleys.” According to Falade (2009), the “rain forest of evergreen vegetation abounds along streams” (p. 20) Enugwu Ukwu with the surrounding towns is about 300 meters above sea level.

The ancestral father of *Enugwu-Ukwu* is called *Okpalanakana* who is the eldest son of *Nri*. *Enugwu-Ukwu* is said to have a common ancestor with *Enugwu Agidi*, *Nawfia* and *Agu-ukwu*. Igbo tradition entitles every first son with some special privileges in matters regarding his father’s possessions and entitlements, and *Engwu-Ukwu* is not short changed on such privileges (Mmuo, 1998). This is why the April 2008 *Constitution Of Enugwu-Ukwu, Part 1*, decreed that “the perpetuated natural status of *Enugwu-Ukwu* as *Okpala Nri* in *Umunri* clan and any traditional ruler or traditional authority of *Enugwu-Ukwu* shall continue to adopt the kingship title of *Eze Enugwu-Ukwu* and *Igwe Umunri*.” The picture below testifies to the name borne by the Eze.

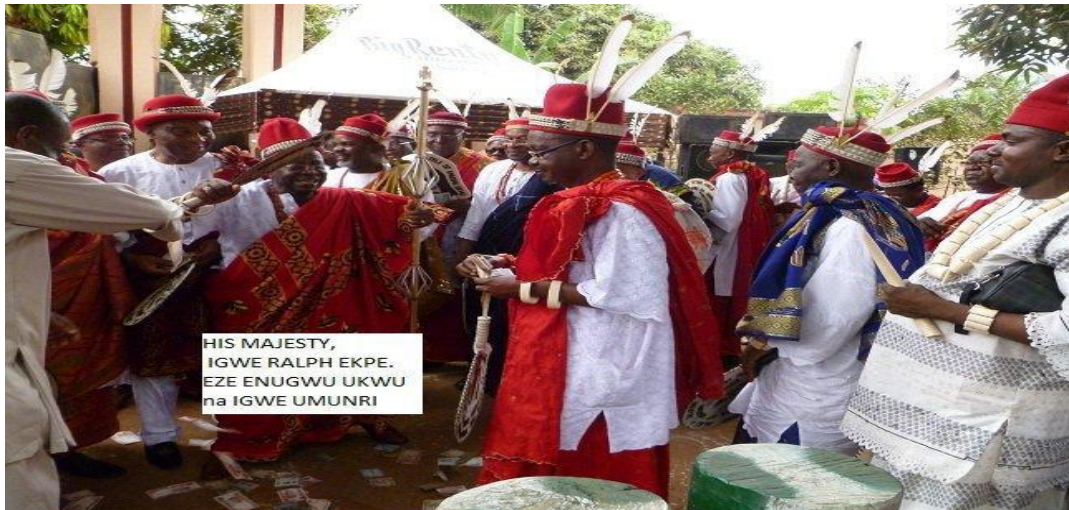


Figure 4. Ofala Enugwu-Ukwu, 2011 (This picture was lifted with the permission of Onyinye Omalu from her Facebook.)

The Nri cult was a religio-political institution which, by making use of religious ritual ideas and ceremonies, exercised religious and political control over the territories of Igbo culture where it formed a theocratic hegemony probably matured by 900 A. D. The Nri king asserted his authority by claiming to have the mystical powers of controlling the gods of agriculture. According to Professor Onwujeogwu, “formerly, Nri men were itinerant ritualists and diplomats until 1911 when their activities were proscribed by the British administrators (Mmuo, 1998, pp.68-69).

Towns of *Nri* ancestry, of which Enugwu-Ukwu claims to be first among equals (Neaher, 1979) are believed to have some special insignia or authority from *Nri* which permits some select individuals among them like priests and titled men to traverse all Igbo land “maintaining ties of loyalty with *Nri* by cleansing grave social infractions or abominations and by conferring rights of leadership in tributary settlements” (pp. 352-366). This special and free right of safe passage to places paralleled what the *Aro* people did who are said to be “effective in fusing religious authority with mercantile talents” as they move from one Igboland to another (Neaher, 1979). Prior to the incursion of the colonial masters, the roving priests and other distinctive itinerant persons as those who bear scarification marks or those who are cicatrized (*Igbu Ichi*) used this travelling as (Neaher, 1979) the “fundamental mechanism for extension and maintenance of

control in Igbo pre-colonial culture, ensuring the continued vitality of political, religious and economic institutions of clearly demonstrated importance” (p. 346).

The people of Enugwu-Ukwu have a special pride for their town and are nostalgic about it. This is well expressed in a one page article by one of their sons (Nworah, 2004) thus:

We still enjoy your different feasts and festivals, how can we not? We still try to keep the tradition, our feasting masquerade stick fights (*Ipia agba*) at *nkwo* market as well as in the other village squares are still carried on, and so are *onwa asato*, *Ngene*, *Nimkpa*, *Ana Enugwu* and the other traditional festivals. We try very much not to let the torch burn out in our generation. We cannot fail, we dare not fail, our fate is tied to the fate of all Igbos, this is because we (Nri Kingdom) are the ancestral home of all Ndigbo. Our success is their success; our failure is their failure (para: 10).

Furthermore, their nostalgia is captured well by the keynote address delivered by the president general of Enugwu-Ukwu Community Development Union (ECDU) delivered at the 2010 New Jersey Convention (Ekwunife, 2010) thus:

News about your interest in the growth of Enugwu Ukwu gets to us regularly. That you could form and sustain a noble body like AEI in a far land is a source of pride to us. It demonstrates that you have not allowed the glamour of America to numb your attachment to our ancestral roots. Nothing can change this. Time and distance rather than quelling your patriotism, strengthen it. I was told that this think-home philosophy is the bedrock of the AEI. *Agbusi kpaghalisia obaa n'onu ya. "Agwo nagba ona aghalilu ogwulugwu."* You, the AEI members have the unique privilege of witnessing what is happening in some of the cities of America. You have discovered the clues behind their amazing development. We can emulate or stand on the revolutionary shoulders of civilization-giants to accelerate our growth” (p. 2).

The above quotation as addressed to Association of Enugwu Ukwu Indigenes (AEI) resident in the United States of America shows that the people of Enugwu Ukwu, even in the U.S, have a strong solidarity to their home town. This is why they form a corporate body wherever they find themselves. Through such a body they share “each other’s intimate concerns as immigrants, noting that immigrant group itself is a means by which

immigrant concern abroad is made preeminent and a purposive expression” of Enugwu Ukwu transnational identity (Reynolds, 2004).

Abaofia-Izzi

Since *Abaofia* shares in the culture and tradition of Izzi, what can be said of Izzi could equally be applied to *Abaofia*. According to Steensel (2009),

Most Izhi live in the North-Eastern part of what is now called Ebonyi State in Nigeria. They are mainly spread out over two local government areas, Izhi local Government Area and Abakaliki Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, but others are living in Ado and Oju Local Government Area of Benue State and some in the Yala Local Government Area of Cross River State. The Izhi are a sub-tribe of the Igbo people. However, their language and customs are considerably different from the other Igbo outside the Abakaliki area, probably caused by their isolated position and contact with other non-Igbo tribes through which the tribe has developed its own patterns. The Izhi are a part of the Igbo who are called “Wawa people” by the other Igbo (p. 5).

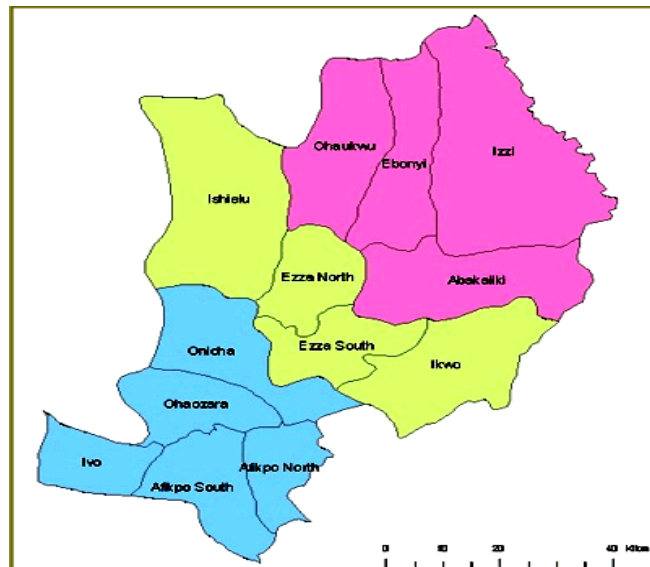


Figure 5. Map of Ebonyi State
(Source: www.ebonyionline.com)

The Izzi has a special trajectory of expansion right from “the colonial demarcation of the boundaries to the present situation in the Nigerian creation of states context” (Echiegu, 1999, p. 26). The *Izzi* and *Ezza* were, during the colonial administration, “major component part of

Abakaliki Division, and Igbo administrative minority portion of *Ogoja* Province,” (p. 26) and it was easy for them to infiltrate contiguously into non-Igbo territory. Echiegu (2009) states:

The Izzi took the advantage of being in the same province to infiltrate peacefully into any apparently empty parcel of land. Then the inhabitants of the boundary flanks did not mind being administratively cut off from their kit and kin and becoming a minority tribe in another administrative division. All they wanted was a fertile territory for their yam and pepper. With the creation of states in Nigeria, they (the border *Izzi*) found themselves being shared out between non-Igbo states: Benue State in the North-West and Cross River State in the North East, in several local government areas, where they are at the moment in the minority. But they are content to remain there and farm since it has become more sensitive and dangerous to attempt expanding by war, because of statism and ethnic feelings (p. 26).

Above quote presents Izzi people as agro-based community interested more in farmland than any other project. They spread across four local government areas – *Izzi*, *Abakaliki*, *Ado* and *Oju* (Steensel, 2009). The *Izzi* people are also found in non-Igbo speaking areas of Benue and Cross River states (Steensel, 2009). According to Echiegu (1998, p.7), they are surrounded by the following non-Igbo tribes: “*Oshopong* and *Intrigum* (*Mbembe* tribe), (Eastern flank), *Awkum-Ukelle* (North-eastern); *Egede* (Northern), *Ijigbam-Otobolo*, (North-western).” There has been a scholarly debate regarding their ‘Igboness.’ This may not be unconnected to the fact that they are isolated geographically, and linguistically, their dialect is considerably different from the rest of the Igbo (Steensel, 2009).

Some people have argued that Izzi has nine vowels while the rest of the Igbo have eight. That is why people argue that Izzi is not really Igbo; some others say that it is a dialect badly influenced by the surrounding or neighboring non-Igbo groups (Echiegu, 1998).

There is no common agreement as to the number of local governments covered by the *Izzi* people. Echiegu (1998) gave up to four local governments; Steensil (2009) gave two as where they are found predominantly.

The 1991 census shows that the Izzi population is 166,239 within the Izzi local government area, and 225,752 within the Abakaliki local government area. They cover about 2264 square kilometers. The density of the area is said to be minimal, 175 people per square km. The rainfall is about 1800 – 2000 mm every year and their average temperature is 27 degrees Celsius. According to Steensel (1999), their natural vegetation is fit for farming but due to many centuries of deforestation, their weather has turned from being the forest of the south to the “Savannah in the north” (p. 5). The major occupation of the *Izzi* people is farming.

Izzi has a common ancestor with the *Ikwo* and the *Ezza*. The ancestor’s name is *Enyi*. According to Steensel (1999):

These sister tribes supply his full name: Enyi Nwegu. He has three sons, who became founders of the *Ezza*, *Izi* and *Ikwo* tribes. These facts are agreed upon by the oral traditions of each of the three tribes. About the details however is much difference of opinion. Even the traditions of two main mother towns of *Izhi* itself differ: *Anmegu* and *Ebya* give a different story...The elders of *Anmegu*, the mothertown of *Izhi*, say that *Ekuma Enyi* is the father of *Izhi*. His tomb can be found in *Anmegu*. Where his father *Enyi* came from they do not know. His tomb is not located. None of the three sister tribes dared to claim him.

Elsewhere was told that the first *Izhi*² people came from heaven at *Anmegu*. By then heaven and earth were very close and *Enyi* came from heaven along a rope. But when the man did something bad, the rope fell down and man could not climb up to heaven again. That is how the first *Izhi* people came to live in *Anmegu* (p. 6).

Statement of the problem

There has been a growing interest in women’s issues in the recent past due to their invisibility and centuries of marginalization. According to a newspaper report:

Women are more than fifty percent of the world’s population. They perform two-third of the world’s work, yet receive one-tenth of the world’s income and own one-hundredth of the world’s property. They represent a staggering seventy

² *Izhi* is another acceptable way of writing *Izzi*. Even some authors write *Izi* in some literatures.

percent of the world's one billion poorest people. This is a stark development reality for our world. My country-Nigeria has the highest population of any African country. With a population of over 162 million, Nigeria is ranked the world's seventh most populated country. Of this magnitude, forty-nine percent are female; some 80.2 million girls and women. Comparatively, thirty-eight percent of women in Nigeria lack formal education as against twenty-five for men and only four percent of women have higher education against the seven percent of their male counterpart. Nigeria ranks 118 of 134 countries in the Gender Equality Index...We live in a world where majority of girls and women face real-time poverty, gross inequality, molestation and injustice, which could run through from birth to death (Elegbede, 2012).

Among the Igbo people of Nigeria, the widowhood practice is one of the ways of subjecting women to inhuman conditions as enumerated in the above quotation. Quoting Babalola, Owasanoye and Ahonsi (1977) said:

Widowhood is, in the best of circumstances, a very traumatic experience. The rites to which widows are made to go through in many African societies are dehumanizing and further compound the agonizing experience which widowhood entails for most women. Indeed, most widowhood rites have serious implications for the physical, psychological and financial well-being of the widows (p. 77).

Among the Igbo people of Nigeria, widows are subjected to inhuman conditions. The victimization of widows is based on the cosmological perception of each community. For example, in Nigerian society, because of the value people attached to old age, it is difficult for them to understand somebody dying before the age of 70. In situations where this happens to be the case, it is believed that somebody must be responsible, directly or indirectly. Owasanoye et al. (1997) referenced Babalola as saying: "More often than not, the wife is the prime suspect and she is treated accordingly by her in-laws" (p. 78).

One of the most atrocious widowhood rituals to which widows were frequently subjected to, in those days, was the ritual of drinking the water used to wash their husbands' corpses (Owasanoye & Ahonsi, 1997). This ritual, today, is infrequent, and often, when applied serves as

a vindictive measure. Utomi, quoted by Owasanoye et al. (1997) captures such practice well when he said:

These widowhood practices range from the patently objectionable to the indecent. Among the more objectionable practices is the ritual of requesting of the widow that she drink of the water in which the husband's corpse is washed. The ostensible reason for this ritual is to prove that the wife is not responsible for her husband's death. If she were free of guilt, it was presumed, she would survive the ordeal. If she was guilty, she would reap what she sowed. An extreme recorded consequence is that of a woman who drank the water used to wash her husband who had died of the highly infectious disease of Lassa fever. The woman died as should have been anticipated if the people were knowledgeable about the nature of Lassa fever (pp. 113- 114).

The abuse of the dignity of women especially the widows in the name of undistinguished social phenomenon as stated above is only one of the ways of subjugating women to men in order to keep them away from the center of economic power. Such religio-social phenomena as performance of *Ajana*³ ritual, restrictions from social life or a kind of ostracism are not only dehumanizing but also subject the widows to emotional and psychological trauma. They involve also disinheriting and dispossessing women of material property.

The researcher's attention was captured by these multiple problems affecting the widows regarding the treatment they receive due to the death of their husbands in my parish located at Enugwu-Ukwu. The researcher empathized with the poor conditions of those widows and wanted to find out if such subjugating traditional rituals are elsewhere observed differently or in the same way among the Igbo sub-ethnic groups. Hence the choice of Abaofia-Izzi community as a way of having a comparative approach to Enugwu-Ukwu regarding their widowhood practices.

Rationale for the study

³ *Ajana* is a ritual cleansing required to be performed by a widow of Nri dynasty at the end of her husband's funeral rites and a complete performance of which integrates the widow back to normal community life.

There are several reasons for undertaking this research. First, Korieh (1996, p. 1) observed that “systematic investigation” on widowhood practices is missing.” Second, comparative studies of widowhood practices between two communities/subcultures within the same ethnic group are lacking. The knowledge of widowhood as practiced among the Igbo people is described as “raw and unprocessed” (Korieh, 1974, p. 1). Thirdly, this research will draw the attention of social scientists to the following key facts as they impact each community’s attitude towards its widows. They are the impact of historical contacts, geographic position, cultural heritage and its “functional autonomy,” the extent of attachment/identification of each community to its social values and other contextual extenuating circumstances regarding widowhood practices. Fourth, this research will highlight some significant differences in the practices of widowhood as obtained between *Enugwu-Ukwu* and *Abaofia-Izzi*. In this way, it will correct the assumption that people within the same ethnic group are less likely to have any significant differences.

However, perhaps the singular most important rationale for this study is to shed light on socio-religious phenomena that have critical implications for the quality of life for women who become widowed not only in these two communities but throughout the world. The widespread disenfranchisement and marginalization of women results in devastating impoverishment. This cross-cultural pattern derives from cultures that exclude women from property ownership, inheritance, and economic independence.

Purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to understand two communities relative to their traditions regarding widowhood practices, how the widows, widowers, and children of the widows of each community experience the treatment meted out to them according to the way the community

frames meaning thus shaping their world in relation to how women who have lost their husbands should be treated.

By understanding the importance of historical and contextual elements in pre-disposing a community to moving beyond the traditional punitive treatment of widows versus those that predispose a community to retain such misogynistic cultural traditions, policy makers can potentially use this knowledge to foster pre-conditions that result in more humane treatment of widows.

Finally, the knowledge gained from this research will be directed toward awakening the sensitivity of men and women to the “truth claims”(Schatzki, 2003) of widows – thus enabling growing freedom from the use of cultural status quo to oppress or marginalize widows.

The following chapter is a reconnaissance of the existing literature reviews on widowhood practices. The goal was to explore previous studies in existing scholarly journals and understand the methods and techniques that were used. It is also aimed at discovering the findings of such studies with the empirical generalizations and possible theories.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELEVANT WIDOWHOOD LITERATURE

In this chapter, the researcher highlights as an overview, the contrasting perceptions of widowhood practice around the world, the research that has been done about the problems widows encounter and the efforts made at mitigating the negative impacts of widowhood traditional practices. This chapter also focuses on the researches done in Nigeria, especially, in the Igbo region as it details the problems the widows encounter such as the unhygienic ritual practices, the consequences of disinheritance, and the mental or psychological implications of the practice and negative health outcomes.

Throughout the world, women had been unlucky with history and historians. In a most recent study of the French Revolution, however, an exception is revealed (Davidson & Verjus, 2013). Davidson et al. (2013) discovered that in the Old Regime France, widows had been privileged to have “considerable power and control over their destinies” (p. 407). In that era, women had full legal rights and control over their own property (Davidson & Verjus, 2013). According to Davidson et al.; “Starting in 1789 with both the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, which granted equality to all citizens before the law, and the August 4 abolition of privilege, which ended the legal significance of titles of nobility, the French Revolution ushered in the age of the individual in Europe and beyond” (p. 399). It was the French Revolution with its political upheaval that made the language of rights the most important at that era and women immensely benefitted from these changes (Davidson & Verjus, 2013). History, at that point, was fair to women. Nevertheless, the above surge of empowerment was only an exception to the rule.

Euro/American perspectives

Several scholars have shown that “colonial eras reworked gender relations in African societies largely to the detriment of women” (Amadiume, 1997; Nzegwu, 2006; Okonjo, 1976; Oyewumi, 1997). Quoting Oyewumi, Scully (2009) said: “Colonists and agents of the colonial

state largely misunderstood the complexity of gender relations in the societies they encountered, yet those colonial interpretations or misrepresentations, ultimately rendered the position of African women ‘legible’ to the rest of the world” (p. 36). The legibility denotes that the African woman is a “beast of burden” rendered so by her subjection to hard labor such as farming responsibilities, humiliating presence of polygamy, and of bride price (p. 36).

In the words of Martin, Scully (2009) also holds:

The early colonial era reshaped women’s role in agriculture, their political power, and even their access to the colonial state to their disadvantage. Men took over the growing and marketing of crops which were formerly understood as women’s crops, but then became lucrative on the market. In the early twentieth century, in regions where the slave trade had dominated the export economy for so long, but was then outlawed, increasing numbers of women were put to work in agricultural labor as slaves, although often also married to their owners (p. 35).

The above quotation suggests that there had been in existence some structures that were grounded in the African environment which were constructed to meet the needs of African people that were tampered with by the intruding dominant power of colonialism. For example, a strong family system, kinship and village systems and the representative system at the town level were known among the Igbo people before the incursion of the colonists. The institution of the local, state and federal government systems by the colonists was the beginning of ‘toxic infection’ on the body polity of Igbo systems that has never found a cure. Those superimposed systems are really a mismatch. In the light of this, Scully (2009) believed that transitional justice sought in terms of state and its laws with respect to securing women’s’ right is not realistic. She said: “This is particularly important in Sub-Saharan Africa where the state has so long been illegitimate. The state in Africa since the colonial times has been rooted in patterns of looting and extraction very far from a nurturing welfare state that underpins many of the proposed solutions in transitional justice deliberations (p. 36).

It is noted that the upsetting of the African system was the function of Euro-American colonists for whom women are inferior. Based on the fact that no person or group of persons intentionally makes a law that short-changes them, the restructuring of the Igbo system was skewed to the advantage of men and invariably to the disadvantage of women and the widows received the brunt of the charade. For example, the traditional customary law was simply made to reflect the ideologies of the colonial state, which was crafted in the image and likeness of men (Nzegwu, 2009). The women-marginalizing system is a direct imposition of Euro-American male privileged systems on the African heretofore more egalitarian system.

Fanon (1967) is quoted to have criticized not only the colonial era but also pilloried the idea of granting the colonized independence (Scully, 2009). He believed, and rightly so, that the “post-colonial state would be independent in name only, ruled by individuals who had been tutored in European schools to cleave to the ideologies of Europe and to reject the solutions offered by indigenous African models of social and political organization” (Scully, 2009, p. 37). Presently, this is the bane of African nations and Nigeria in particular. The youth, widows and children are the most negatively affected by the imposed foreign systems.

The African Perspective

In the language of Okonjo (1976) Africans practiced, prior to colonial incursion, what she described as dual-sex political system, which was very pronounced among the Igbo people who live west of the Niger. Thus, Okonjo (1976) said:

In both types of systems the units were small, and political authority was widely disposed along the following lines: between the sexes; among lineage and kinship institutions; by age grades; among secret and title societies; and among oracles, diviners, and other professional groups. There was no clear separation between judicial, executives, and legislative functions, and no distinction between the political and religious in the governmental process. Both systems were characterized earlier as dual-sex systems: each sex generally managed its own

affairs and had its own kinship institutions, age grades, and secret and title societies (p. 47).

The researcher wants to emphasize the fact that the above quotation contradicts the western perspective, which stresses the dominance of men over women. To understand the widowhood practice is to comprehend the operating ideology behind it. This ideology is well stated in the contrasting assertions of some Nigerian feminists who believe that African culture and tradition fell apart with the invasion of Western ideas (Amadiume, 1998; Nzegwu, 2001; Oyewumi, 2002). According to Amadiume (1998),

The fact that biological sex did not always correspond to ideological gender meant that women could play roles usually monopolized by men, or be classified as 'males' in terms of power and authority over others. As such roles were not rigidly masculinized or feminized; no stigma was attached to breaking gender rules. Furthermore the presence of an all-embracing goddess-focused religion favoured the acceptance of women in statuses and roles of authority and power (p. 185)

The above quotation states the condition of women before the advent of colonialism and Christian culture. Nzegwu (2001) shared with Okonjo (1987) the idea of 'dual sex political system' among the Igbo people of Nigeria. The dual sex political system suggests that among the Igbo people of Nigeria, women are not slaves (Okonjo, 1976). With the Western interaction, however, the center could no longer hold in the words of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Contact with the West led to a changed dynamics that pushed women outside the periphery of power and hierarchy. Amadiume (1998) articulated the change thus:

In contrast, Western culture and the Christian religion, brought by colonialism, carried rigid gender ideologies, which aided and supported the exclusion of women from the power hierarchy, whether in government or the church in the modern society. This rigid gender system meant that roles are strictly masculinized or feminized; breaking gender rules therefore carries a stigma (p. 185).

A stigma as suggested by the above quotation touches on every aspect of human endeavor as far as the male-female relationship is concerned. Women bore the brunt aspect of the unequal and unjust relationships. Widowhood practice was a nightmare for women who lost their spouse because it became extremely socially and culturally stigmatized.

Research on Widowhood Practices

Widowhood is an institution. According to Ezejiolor (2011),

This institution is interpreted and understood in the context of the culture and traditions of the people, which regulates its operations. To this end, every woman whose husband dies is expected to adhere strictly to the unwritten ordinances and rituals of widowhood, which are argued to be imposed by the culture and tradition. Women in Africa and Nigeria in particular, dread to be widows. They are subjected to inhuman treatments like rejection, abuse, denial, oppression, subjugation and defilement and to them; it is best described as a nightmare (p. 140).

Widows dread more “the numerous dehumanizing rituals and practices associated with widowhood” than the loss of their spouses. Ezejiolor (2011) used the methods of analysis and description to identify the fact that institutions of patriarchy and marriage constitute the foundational framework for understanding widowhood practices. Those two institutions offer a satisfactory explanation for the way the widows are treated (Ezejiolor, 2011).

Widowhood Challenges

Exploring the above documented researches conducted in France, India, Kenya and Nigeria with Igboland as the special area of focus, the challenges of widowhood practices are overwhelming. It is important to articulate some of the challenges that widows are subjected to in Igboland. It is also important to note that most writers’ impressions about widowhood practices are negative. And the reason for such negativity is attributed to the Western bias about Africa and the inability of Africans and Igbo writers to question critically the Euro-American perspectives on Africa

(Amadiume, 1998; Nzegwu, 2006; Oyewumi, 1997). The following are a select number of challenges that widows confront in some Igbo communities of Nigeria.

Unhygienic Rituals

Pertaining to widowhood practice, a ritual is a customary activity carried out during the mourning period which has some religious significations for the communities where they are performed. Nevertheless, the following are the examples of the unhygienic rituals that widows are forced to perform. Some scholars perceive them as negative and inhuman practices that are disguised in the name of culture and tradition to perpetuate different forms of oppression and subjugation of widows (Jonathan & Inedu, 2013). These degrading actions are not practiced in the same way in every area of Igboland. Depending on a situation, however, some of the rituals, taken as anachronistic, could be evoked to satisfy the need of the moment. The resilience of these rituals seems to be generational. Here are some of those rituals documented by Jonathan & Inedu (2013). One, “a widow is forced to sleep on the bare floor throughout the day, taking no siesta and sleeping on a mat at night.” Two, “all the hairy parts of her body are shaved using a piece of broken bottle or any other sharp objects” (pp. 167 – 168). Three, she eats with her left hand from a broken plate or calabash that will never be washed throughout the mourning period. Four, she could be forced to drink of the water in which her husband’s corpse is washed. The symbolic meaning attached to the idea of water drinking and the inherent life threat are well captured in chapter one in the quote referencing Utomi (1997).

Dispossession of inheritance

Presently, in a small number of communities of Igboland, the concept of inheritance is not limited to material possession but also includes the wife of the deceased man. This is called the levirate practice or widow inheritance (Ahonsi, 1997). According to Ahonsi, the levirate practice

is a way of providing a social security for the woman and children. It is also a reaffirmation of the permanence of marriage between the two families. The hidden intention for this practice is to satisfy the sexual and reproductive interests of the men in the deceased man's family. Its consequence is that it denies a woman the right to choose a marriage or sex partner and dehumanizes the woman (Ahonsi, 1997). Confirming the idea of levirate marriage, Jonathan et al. (2013) held that under strict customary law, the death of spouses does not necessarily dissolve a marriage, whereas in many cultures, death terminates the marriage. Though, the following criticism was originally directed against the levirate practice in Kenya, what it says captures well what is happening among the Igbo people of Nigeria. Gwako (1998) criticized the practice of levirate marriage in the following words,

The practice may have been customarily well intentioned, with the aim of ensuring that all bereaved women were well taken care of while adapting to the new circumstances brought about by the deaths of their husbands, but the insensitivity of some clansmen to the changing needs and the unique circumstances specific to each contemporary widow's situation is very irritating to some widows. This situation is exemplified by some clansmen's efforts physically to coerce some widows into accepting inheritance, in spite of the fact that widowers are left free to marry any women of their choice at any time they choose (p. 194).

Regarding the material inheritance, it is reported that at the death of a man, the relations drive the woman out of the house and confiscate all the material possessions which they believed was acquired by the man alone. Sometimes, the woman is left with nothing to take care of her children. Some women are disinherited based on the fact that they have no male children as if the sex of a child is determined by a woman (Jonathan & Inedu, 2013). For Ahonsi (1997), the idea of disinheriting a widow states the affirmation of the supremacy of the lineage and the latent function is to exploit and impoverish the widow. It is a way of rendering her economically powerless. According to Jonathan et al. (2013), the idea of confiscating all the properties that a

widow is entitled to, under normal circumstances, is like “freezing the account of a company or an organization” (p. 176).

Using a video film as an important and persuasive medium of expression in African context, Samuel (2009) made conclusions that favor only the projection of positive aspects of African cultures. Applying video film as means of cultural projection, the writer considered the plight of widows among the Igbo people. She stated that widows are disinherited and humiliated to deter them from killing their husbands. In Igbo culture, widows are considered the prime suspects at the death of their husbands (Samuel, 2009).

In a newspaper report, a writer narrated about some preceding incidences that led to several kinds of widow torture including disinheritance. The torture she described was masterminded by *Umu Ada Nwanyi* in the *Nkpa* community of Bende local government area of Abia State. The writer stated that the widow punishment is severe if the husband died young or that both did not live well as husband and wife. The punishment for not living well together could involve extortion of cocks, goats, yams or even money and includes other punishments such as being forced to sleep with the corpse (Nwachi, 2011).

Psychological effects of widowhood

Women suffer two phases of psychological effects based on widowhood practice. One is from within and the other is from without. According to Saba (1997), the emotional reaction that comes from the outburst of cries and grief are from within whereas the cultural tradition or the burial rites masterminded by social forces are from without. Scholars such as Jonathan et al. (2013) believe that women dread more the outside forces than those from within. The psychological effects of widowhood do not have independent existence of their own (Saba, 1997). According to Saba (1997),

Every society has its own rites for the dead, which affect the wife of the deceased and in some cases, the offsprings. This includes shaving of hair, wearing of black clothes and being indoors for weeks. All these have psychological effects on the widow. In addition to these rites, the family of the deceased man may alleviate or worsen the widow's grief by the support or harassment they give the widow. There are many instances where widows have been deprived of the husband's resources and therefore have to start life all over again; such widows are left to struggle and cater for themselves and their children (p. 55).

According to Cattell (2003), the special concerns of widows that could add to their psychological problems are as follows: "the status loss, economic security, their children's welfare, male domination, remarriage, gender violence, including beatings, rape... AIDS and other STDS..." (p. 58). The widows are hit the most by the psychological problems of bias, stigma and discrimination that tend to isolate them from the society (Cattell, 2003). Widowhood is associated with trauma, grief and pain and the widows more than widowers are subjected to more humiliating experiences. Widows are discriminated against, and discredited via stigmatization and often denied their basic rights (Chenube & Omumu, 2011).

A study that investigated the socio-economic status in the grief experience and coping strategies employed by widows was conducted using a randomly selected sample of two hundred people from four local government areas of Lagos state of Nigeria. The use of Widows Status Inventory was applied in data collection. The results obtained showed significant differences in the grief experienced by the widows based on their socio-economic status. The study's recommendations were that girl children should be empowered educationally and economically (Chenube & Omumu, 2011). The level of psychological pain is dependent on factors such as coercion and tyranny to forcibly constrain of widows, exploitation, unequal and inferior treatment, hardship and deprivation among others (Chenube & Omumu, 2011).

In another quantitative study, a single self-report measure of adjustment was developed (Carey, 1977). The instrument is capable of measuring the degree of adjustment and to identify correlates

of adjustment that would help physicians and counselors predict which spouses will have the greatest difficulty during bereavement. One of the constituents of difficulty during bereavement is the widow's economic status. According to Carey's (1977) report, "women with more income and education are hit the hardest by widowhood, but also have more resources to build a satisfying new life" (p.125).

Health Problems of Widowhood

The health risks of Luo women in the Slaya District of Kenya with regard to performing the traditional ritual cleansing is much the same as those of the widows of Igbo communities of Nigeria. The Igbo people of Nigeria share the same belief with the Luo people of Kenya. The common belief is that the death of a husband places a taboo on his widow. A sexual cleansing is required of a widow in order to neutralize the taboo and to avoid a possible contamination of the family and the community with her impurity (Shisanya, 2007). It is also good to note that this ritual cleansing involving sexual activities is not common today. When it was practiced, the widow usually observed the ritual with a brother in-law or a cousin of the dead man (Shisanya, 2007). This societal requirement is a basic violation of the fundamental rights of women.

A new spin was added to the whole study on widowhood by a paper presentation given in India, the conclusion of which is similar to what happens in Igboland. This paper weaves its argument around two topics that ultimately focus on safeguarding widowhood rights and inheritance. One, it suggests that economic freedom for widows depends on their command over property. Second, it holds that widows should not be seen as "category in themselves" but should be seen as an integral stage in most women's "life cycle." Poignantly, it says: "Effective economic security during widowhood would therefore need securing women's property rights prior to the event, not only after it, namely securing their claims as daughters in addition to their claims as widows"

(Agarwal, 1998; p. 1). The result of this research finds that, dependence on male kin makes women more vulnerable to abuse (Agarwal, 1998). In the following quotations, the cost of widow's dependence on the male kin for survival was mentioned by Agarwal (1998).

Dependence on male kin, in any case, tends to prove socially costly for women in terms of the treatment they receive as dependants, especially, but not only, as widows or divorced women. And it appears necessary to question the longstanding view that as long as women have some male relative to support them they have no need for independent incomes. ...independent command over land would reduce rural women's economic and social vulnerability and increase livelihood choices, both as widows and as daughters (p. 41).

In support of the above quote, another study demonstrated that women's dependency on kinsmen has led to disastrous outcomes like expelling the widows from their matrimonial home by their husbands' kinsmen (Gwako, 1998).

In a mixed method study, an anthropologist writing on widow inheritance among the Maragoli of Western Kenya, observed that the continued practice of widowhood is benefiting and serving the interest of some groups. Moreover, he observed that, lived experience of Maragoli widows was not homogeneous. On the strength of this observation, it cannot be said that the practice of widowhood has a single and "invariant preference". This study further observed that the dominating patriarchal structure in Kenya demonstrates the conflict between tradition and modernity. African societies have been on the forefront of controlling women. Patriarchal ideology denies some women adequate access to their husbands' properties and control over productive resources, including land, cattle, and other basic commodities (Entwisle, 1990; Gwako, 1998). The author wrote that the widows in Kenya are taking advantage of the changing world to re-create their condition by resisting subordination through their personal and collective activities. Many are now renouncing the institutions and cultural prescriptions that subordinate

them. There is a growing consciousness among widows in Kenya today that drive them to challenge the constraints imposed on them from participating effectively and maximally in the social world (Gwako, 1998).

Nigeria-Igbo Perspective on Widowhood Research

Not much research exists on widowhood in the Eastern region of Nigeria (Korieh, 1996). Many research results, especially those quoted below, have shown that the loss of a beloved one, in particular, a husband, constitutes an intense emotional stress for the bereaved. People process their grieving differently. Grieving may stretch from a week to a year among the Igbos of Nigeria for both men and women but always longer for the widows than the widowers with all the consequent psychological effects (Fosoranti et al. 2006).

Of the few studies done, a comparative study relating to widowhood and widow inheritance was conducted among the Igbo and Yoruba tribes in Nigeria (Fasoranti & Aruna, 2006). A purposive and systematic approach was used for data collection and about one hundred respondents were interviewed. This study touched issues that dealt with death reporting, the rites and sacrifices involved, the care of the properties of the dead man involving the children and wife of the deceased. The result of this research found that widows abound more among the Igbo than among the Yoruba. The reason for this disparity was traced to the civil war (1967- 1970) between Nigeria and Biafra, wherein lots of people including mainly Igbo men numbering over one million were exterminated. The study expresses the optimistic attitude that dehumanization of widowhood will soon be a thing of the past. It recognized the fact that, education, religion, modernization, ownership of personal properties, and gainful employment are key driving forces in changes observable in the way widows are treated (Fasoranti & Aruna, 2006).

In another study, an in-depth interview, group discussions, participant observations and membership records were used to gather data on widowhood practices in Ozubulu to see if the findings and conclusions could lead to the elimination of gender-based violence against women (Ilika & Ilika, 2005). This study made mention of the fact that gender-based violence has received an increased international attention. This study was made possible by the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo held in 1994 and at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. A concerted effort made by the Widowhood Practices Elimination Initiative of a Women Organization in *Ozubulu*, Anambra State of Nigeria, strove to deal with the prevalent gender-based practices that subjected the widows to untold social, psychological and economic stress among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria. The research employed what it described as “the community action cycle framework model for community mobilization” as its primary methodology. The women’s group not only identified the problems, they also took action that did eliminate some of the burdens imposed on widows. It is also interesting to note this discovery:

Though women were the victims of violence, they were surprisingly also the perpetrators and astute enforcers of the practice, as well as those who vehemently opposed any form of change. Superstitious beliefs and associated fears were major reasons for opposition to change. Women can play key and effective roles in eliminating gender-based violence and in initiating and implementing programmes that guarantee... human rights. They should, therefore, be strengthened to champion issues that affect their well-being (Ilika & Ilika, 2005).

Applying a theory of psychological resilience (hardiness), another researcher studied the psychological resilience and well-being of widows (Rourke, 2004). This was a quantitative study of women whose sample size was 232 and whose criterion for inclusion into the study was abstention from re-marriage after the death of one’s husband. The average age of those widows was 61 years and all of them had been married on average for about 25 years and had been

widowed for 8.59 years. This study also estimated that women over 64 years of age will experience the death of their husbands. It also estimated that three-quarters of married women will be widowed and remain unmarried for 18 years on average (Rourke, 2004).

The result of this study shows that enduring relationships lead many elderly women to contend with the loss of their husbands. Some of the widows overcome the psychological stress with time and some never do. This study found that this experience may manifest itself in hallucinations for those who cannot overcome the stress. The results also showed that psychological resilience is positively associated with satisfactions with life and negatively associated with psychiatric distress. Of the three factors that assure psychological resilience, the most important is commitment to living. Others are the ability to face challenges and to be self-directed or the ability to have control over what happens in one's life (Rourke, 2004).

Official and Activist Reactions to Widowhood Practices in Nigeria

In light of the discriminatory nature of some of widowhood practices, a legal practitioner Ikpeazu (SAN) has condemned, in absolute terms, such practices as primitive, and against the Nigerian Constitution and international community. The lawyer observed that “the equal protection guaranteed by Section 42 of the 1999 constitution” was meant to free women from this embarrassment. This, he argued, the Supreme court could do by assuming jurisdiction by virtue of section 22 of the Supreme Court Act.” Some of the customary laws were also condemned as obsolete and (Okoli, 2007) “the lawyer noted that laws should not be made by the dead for the living.”

In furtherance of women's rights, female lawyers condemned the continued practice of the oppressive system against women. The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) called on the legislative and executive arm of the government to come up with policies that will

protect the interest of these widows (Onah, 2009). It is asserted that in almost all of the cases of women's victimization, discrimination and abuse of any sort, there is the need for advocacy, a concerted action, better education, and health, in the civil and religious sectors of the society in order to evolve sustainable structures that will empower women and provide support to enable them to react appropriately to violence (Ilika, 2005).

Remedial Efforts

1. Globalization of Fundamental Human Rights

Increased intercultural and cross-cultural communication has greatly enhanced intercultural exchange and learning (Omar & Ahmed, 2010). Through globalization, there has been “a significant transformation in almost all life aspects of millions around the world” (p. 311). One of such life aspects is the treatment the widows receive around the world. However the persistence of violence against women, children and other vulnerable has led to efforts towards the universal application of the fundamental human rights to protect those who are marginalized (Omar & Ahmed, 2010).

2. The United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO) and other Groups

It is argued that World War II was the result of the lawlessness characterizing the activities of some oppressive regimes. The lesson gotten from such a chaotic situation of the past led to the formulation of international human rights and its adoption in 1948 (Regassa, 2009). The UN declared the freedom and equality of all in dignity and rights, endorsing the rights to the absence of torture, inhuman treatment and promoting free and full consent to marriage and right to ownership of property (Ezejiolor, 2011). It is one thing to make these declarations; and another thing to implement them especially in the developing countries. The WHO reports that in

Nigeria, family law permits certain widowhood practices against women, especially against those who marry according to the customary rather than the statutory law (Ezejiiofor, 2011).

According to Ilika (2005), at the Fourth World Conference on Women, “violence against women was one of the twelve critical areas of concern identified to be tackled in order to improve the well being of women. Government and civil society organizations were called upon to focus action on those areas” (p. 66). Ilika (2005) asserts that a lack of courage abounds among organized women groups, civil societies and even among the church and religious leaders because of the fear of possible reprisals, conflicts and obstacles associated with breaking through such age-long and deep rooted cultural structures. The case of widowhood is made more complex by its association with death, burial, myths and superstitious beliefs (Ilika, 2005).

3. Individual Efforts at Solution

Complementing the international and local efforts at eliminating gender-based inequality and abuse of individual rights are pockets of individual women. In the results section of this paper, the effrontery of individual women at challenging the social and cultural pressures brought to bear against them is presented.

In a study where literary-textual exegesis was used to discuss the vice upon which the sanctity of humanity and fundamental human rights of widows were violated and the inherent injustice in widow maltreatment in Nigeria was highlighted (Jonathan & Inedu, 2013). A woman called Mama Yabo, a character in Rose Mary Asen’s *The Woman in Black* took a bold step to fight against what she perceived as the violation of the fundamental human rights of widows. Mama Yabo risked and ignored all the threats brought against her life as she advocated for other widows who were assaulted in the name of culture and tradition (Jonathan & Inedu, 2013). She mobilized the women to fight collectively against their marginalization. Mama Yabo rendered

her personal experience in a poetic way thus: “Abandoned like a sinking boat, I have to struggle alone. Yet when my husband was alive, we did not lack relations and friends...Have you not seen my gains since my husband died? Ashes for beauty, dishonor for respect, insult from younger males...My life’s wounds are open for dogs to lick” (p. 173). To have the effrontery to challenge the cult of widowhood in some communities is like one declaring oneself “a personae non grata”

Finally, seeking for ways of reducing gendered inequality in the society, Aikman and Rao (2012) conducted a study that drew on qualitative educational research across a diversity of low-income countries and found “the gendered inequalities in education as complex, multi-faceted and situated rather than a series of barriers to be overcome through linear input-output processes focused on isolated dimensions of quality” (p. 211). This research broadened its framework for thinking about educational quality to include: teacher supply and community participation, and develops understanding of how education is experienced by learners and teachers in their gendered lives and their teaching practices” (p.211). By applying the theory of human development, this article discovered the power dynamics underpinning gender inequalities in literature. Taking contexts into account, this article stated also that the gendered inequalities are a function of social, cultural and historical contexts (Aikman & Rao, 2012). The findings of this study would lead to a great reduction in gendered inequality if proper “recognition and understanding of the ways in which inequalities intersect and interrelate in order to seek out multi-faceted strategies that address not only different dimensions of girls’ and women’s lives, but understand gendered relationships and structurally entrenched inequalities between women and men, girls and boys” (p. 211).

In summary, this chapter contrasted the Euro/American and African perspectives on widowhood practice. It examined the previous studies on widowhood focusing particularly on the Nigeria perspective. The methods and techniques applied by the previous researchers were examined. The challenges that widows encounter together with the global and individual efforts at remedying the dehumanizing condition of widows were also reviewed. The generalizable theories utilized in some of the previous researches were examined together with the policy implications of those studies for social work. The next chapter will focus on the steps and instruments used in data gathering.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter presents a description of the steps used by the researcher in exploring the research problem. The research problem under examination, in this study, involves discovering the conditions of widows relative to their treatment in two comparable Igbo speaking communities, Enugwu-Ukwu in Anambra State and Abaofia Izzi in Ebonyi State in Nigeria. In order to understand the treatment received by the widows, the researcher has sought to identify specific indicators that could help us understand why a community maintains a strong conservative attitude toward its widows while the other is more progressive. The indicators were derived from the local research contexts. The factors to be considered as indicators of conservative and progressive outlooks relate to the extent to which the communities adhere to traditional customs regarding the treatment of widows. Knowledge of how the people of these communities attach meanings based on communal, historical, symbolic, cultural and experiential constructs provides a window of insight into the rationales used in maintaining or challenging the status quo as it occurs in each community (Jasper, 1997). In this way, the researcher hopes to understand the dynamics of how one community has accepted change while the other has resisted it.

The research approach used in this study was qualitative, exploratory and inductive (Riley, 2009). Grounded theory was applied in analyzing the stories of the participants. The researcher, driven to discover what is culturally salient and meaningful to the lived experience of the widows, used semi-structured, open-ended, face-to-face, in-depth interviews to give voice to the participants in this research. Focus group interviews and self-reports by the widows' adult children were other strategic measures used in gathering the data needed to achieve this qualitative inquiry.

The researcher sought to “capture the lived experience of participants in order to understand their meaning perspectives” and acted as a “choreographer, who creates a dance to make a statement” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 218). By means of exploring the lived experience of the widows, the researcher inductively extracted facts grounded in the widows’ lives that helped in constructing an original story based on the lived experience of the widows whom the researcher describes, in the words of Diether (1980), as “experiential experts” in the phenomenon of widowhood. This research method provided an excellent tool for capturing the participants’ subjective perspective on events that impact their lives (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

The exploratory nature of this research makes qualitative methods most apt for this study because of the serendipitous and iterative character of qualitative methodology. In addition, a qualitative approach allows greater latitude for expandability and modifiability in the process of pursuing exploratory research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The approach, is therefore, not pre-set in stone like that of a quantitative approach. The structure of this theory is made visible when we uncover what is hidden in the data.

Rationale for the Use of Grounded Theory

Previous research on Igbo culture and tradition is replete with foreign ideologies (Korieh, 1996). In this study, ideas were generated based on the nature of the data collected. Piloting this study, as explained below, was one of the strategies of rooting our facts in the data. In contrast to the ideological terms injected into African culture by Euro/American scholars (Njoku, 1990; Oyewumi, 1997), the grounding of the analysis in the self-reports of the people themselves helped to avoid the imposition of non-indigenous interpretations. Thus, when such foreign ideology, as for example, ‘gender’ is applied, its use will be clarified. By utilizing grounded

approach to analyzing the collected data, the researcher is not applying already defined theories foreign to the collected data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). By using grounded theory methodology the researcher assumed that the theory is concealed in the data for him to discover. Through coding, the researcher made visible some aspects of the theory and through memoing, the relationship that linked categories to each other was made manifest. This approach enhanced the capturing and condensing of meanings and actions through the constructive and interpretive process (Charmaz, 2006). The generation of substantive grounded theory, according to Glaser and Strauss (2009), specific to this research, helped the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of the conditions of widows of different communities of interest. Furthermore, the rejection of those ideologies that have misrepresented the cultural practices of the Igbo people which have been taken for granted for decades by researchers of Igbo culture, testifies to the appropriateness of the use of grounded theory methodology (Oyewumi, 1997).

The Legitimacy of Qualitative Methodology

Attacks on the legitimacy of qualitative methodology in the name of ‘true science’ were unleashed on qualitative methods from the turn of the 20th century. For positivists who rely on quantitative methods in order to arrive at objective knowledge, a qualitative approach to science lacks “the trinity of psychometrica”- reliability, validity and generalizability (Denzin & Lincoln, p.217). According to this view, ‘true science’ depends on this tripod (Kerlinger, 1986) as it generates its basic theory with predictive power, subjecting its opinions to the “courts of empirical inquiry and test as it minimizes biases, values, attitude and emotions” (p. 11). Positivists claim that there is no other path to the mountain except theirs (Kerlinger, 1986). More recently, the quality of qualitative research has been criticized because of the quest by an international movement for evidence based policy and practice (Torrance, 2008). Ironically and

to the credit of social work scholars, some members of social work academia have criticized some social work researchers as being too positivistic by evaluating their criteria against that of positivists (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). This criticism is in line with other noteworthy statements of critique of such a narrow view of “true science.” In his notion of paradigm shift, Kuhn (1962) holds that scientific research is more than “...a strenuous and devoted attempt to force nature into the conceptual boxes supplied by professional education” (p. 5). Supporting Kuhn’s assertion, French (2007), suggests that limiting science to such narrow parameters is “...to sound the death knell of science itself” (p.11). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state that it is an open secret that “the academic and disciplinary resistances to qualitative research illustrate the politics embedded in this field of discourse” (p. 4). The dismissive attitude towards qualitative methods can be seen as a subtle way of legislating (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) “one version of truth over another.” Furthermore, according to postmodern sensibilities, “positivist methods are but one way of telling a story about society or the social world. They may be no better or no worse than any other method; they just tell a different kind of story” (p. 5). Accepting one approach to knowledge acquisition against others is all too narrow in the search for truth (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011).

Having established the importance of expanding our assumptions about what constitutes “good science,” it is important to note that the qualitative researchers do not overlook the critical value of ensuring the integrity of their method. Some scholars (Agunwa, 1997; Barusch, et al., 2011; Denzin, 1978) agree that one of the ways to ensure that qualitative research is rigorous is by making “data and explanatory schemes as public and replicable as possible,” (pp. 20; 11; 7). Furthermore, Anfara et al. (2002) asserts that by utilizing the “compilation of data collection techniques all used within a variety of traditions, it is entirely possible to think about validity in

qualitative research from a variety of different perspectives” (p. 30). This is why qualitative methodology is described as choreography. The beauty of each dance lies in its uniqueness. So too, the beauty of qualitative research manifests itself when the researcher begins to appreciate the localness of the research and the subjectivity it entails without being overly rigid about objectivity and the means for seeking it. It generates confidence in the truth value of its findings, as it reminds all that all texts are local and that qualitative research is as good as the researcher (Barusch, et al., 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) added a nuance to the argument about objectivity of qualitative research when they said:

...all research methods are at the bottom qualitative and are, for that matter, equally objective; the use of qualitative data or mathematical procedures does not eliminate the intersubjective element that underlies social research. Objectivity resides not in a method, per se, but in the framing of the research problem and the willingness of the researchers to pursue that problem wherever the data and their hunches may lead (p. 24).

Barush et al. (2011) have argued that we can strengthen the credibility or objectivity of qualitative research by way of “prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member-checking” (p. 11). The multi-method nature of qualitative research makes it possible for the researcher to apply all these strategies to boost the credibility or trustworthiness of the research. The relationship of the researcher and the subject matter as he/she tries to make meaning through analytic processes of coordinated data is best described by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) as bricoleur and bricolage thus:

The multiple methodologies of qualitative research may be viewed as a bricolage, and the researcher as brocoleur...A bricoleur is a “Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself person.”...The bricoleur produces a bricolage, that is, a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation. “The solution (bricolage) which is the result of the bricoleur’s method is an [emergent] construction”...that changes and takes new forms as different tools, methods, and techniques are added to the puzzle...Its choice of practice, that is, is pragmatic, strategic and self-reflective”...This understanding can be applied equally to qualitative research.

The qualitative researcher – as bricoleur uses the tools of his or her methodological trade, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials as are at hand...If new tools have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this. This choice of which tools to use, which research practice to employ is not set in advance. The choice of research practice depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on the context... what is available in the context, and what the researcher can do in that setting (pp. 2-3).

The above quotation implies that a researcher (bricoleur) who methodically deploys his or her knowledge and other creative strategies as made available within a context of his/her interest would create a piece of credible research. Credibility is parallel to internal validity and provides assurances of the fit between participants' views of their experiences and the researcher's (bricoleur's) reconstructions and representation of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Quoting Lincoln et al. (1985), Barusch et al. stated that qualitative validity entails “credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable” characteristics (p. 11). These criteria were based on “the positivists' concepts of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity” as noted by Barusch et al. (2011, p. 11).

Validity in Qualitative Research

Validity in qualitative or naturalistic study refers to the trustworthiness of a piece of research and its findings. According to Guba & Lincoln (2001), it is “an effort to produce criteria more or less parallel to those conventionally used, i.e., internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity” (p. 6). Shenton (2004) states:

Although many critics are reluctant to accept the trustworthiness of qualitative research, frameworks for ensuring rigour in this form of work have been in existence for many years. Guba's constructs, in particular, have won considerable favour and form ... Here researchers seek to satisfy four criteria. In addressing credibility, investigators attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented. To allow transferability, they provide sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting. The meeting of the dependability criterion is difficult in

qualitative work, although researchers should at least strive to enable a future investigator to repeat the study. Finally, to achieve confirmability, researchers must take steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions (p. 63).

Guba is credited with creating parallel parameters in qualitative research that compare to the concept of valid and objective knowledge in natural science. Credibility corresponds to internal validity, transferability to external validity or generalizability whereas dependability and confirmability refer to reliability and objectivity, respectively (Shenton, 2004).

Credibility Strategies of the Present Study

In this research, the researcher ensured credibility by quoting generously from the participants' responses. This strategy validates the fact that true picture of those who have gone unheard for decades is painted faithfully. Furthermore, the credibility of this study is boosted by the fact that the researcher is a native of Igboland and had lived and worked in one of the subcultures under study, specifically, Enugwu-Ukwu. Within the limits of personal bias, the researcher applied a critical approach in examining the conditions of widows and the direct impressions he had of their conditions when he worked in that community. In addition, the researcher's external investigator, who is introduced later in this chapter, is also a native of Izzi and an expert in Abaofia-Izzi culture where the second wave of widows under study lives. A disciplined check of the researcher's and external investigator's biases provided a solid ground for a credible piece of research. The researcher was constantly vigilant to be aware of his internalized ideas about the communities and sought to attend closely and carefully to the expressed narrations of the participants. The researcher deployed several strategies of improving the trustworthiness of this research including prolonging his engagement at the site, being involved in peer debriefing and persistently making and recording observations. Another key

tactic was the use of a pilot study, which served as the foundation strategy deployed by the researcher as he sought for a way of creating a credible qualitative piece of research.

Pilot Study

The researcher engaged in the pilot study to capture the reality of the widows' true context as he prepared and fine tuned his research instruments. At the beginning, the researcher conducted three general interviews over the phone with three widows from Igboland. Though they live in the United States, they had experience of widowhood including the funeral ceremonies of their late husbands back home in Nigeria. After the pilot interviews that were conducted over the phone, the researcher requested that the widows document their experiences in written form for him. The rationale for this request was to check the reliability of the over the phone interviews with their documentation making sure that the voice of the widows was accurately heard. The analysis of the pilot study provided a clearer roadmap for drafting the interview guide. The pilot study helped to focus and sharpen the different sections of the research interview guide. Above all, it was intended to reflect the lived realities of the participating widows.

From the analysis of the pilot data, three key points guided the formulation of the interview guide. The first point that emerged was the ritual aspect of widowhood practice and the second was the inheritance aspect of the practice. The third point is the fact that patriarchal domination is alive and well in those communities but is contextually practiced in a heterogeneous way. In order words, the practice of widowhood in the two Igbo subcultures is locality specific just as the study is also gender specific. The use of these three emergent points from the pilot study formed the basis for the construction of the interview guide by the researcher.

Prior to the use of the interview guide, informed by the pilot study, in data collection, the researcher pre-tested it with widows from Enugwu-Ukwu and some students from Ebonyi State who were resident in the U.S at that time. Pre-testing, according to Berg (2007) is aimed at discovering “poorly worded questions, questions with offensive or emotional-laden wording, or questions revealing the researcher’s biases, personal values or blind spots, how effectively the interview will work and whether the type of information being sought will actually be obtained” (p. 105). This strategy was a way of cutting a picture that depicts the realities under investigation. Pre-testing led to fine-tuning and restructuring of the question content of the interview guide for a smooth interview process. The pilot study is meant to enrich the later phases of the research study. Piloting this study, therefore, was a key effort to ground the data in the lived experience of the participating widows. In the next section, the choice and rationale for the use focus group, in-depth interviews, self reports and field notes is explained.

Choice of the Focus Group Interview, In-depth Interview, Self-Reports and Field Notes

Having identified the key themes in the pilot process, the researcher chose to utilize a variety of means to further explore these themes with the members of the communities. The methodological tactics used by the researcher included focus group interviews, in-depth interviews, self-reports and field notes.

These interview structures served as scanning instruments that explored the lived experiences of widows in two Igbo communities of Nigeria- Enugwu-Ukwu and Abaofia Izzi, navigating through their life events. The navigation sought to discover the variance in the way the widows are treated relative to certain factors that help to form the tradition of the communities. The researcher was able to triangulate the same subject matter with men’s perspectives, their adult children perspectives and focus groups.

The focus group interview was not part of the original design for this research. However, there were so many willing participants that the researcher decided to add focus group interviews as one of the sources of data collection. The huge turnout of willing participants reminded the researcher of the flexible nature of qualitative approach. The researcher, as a creative *bricoleur* deployed the strategy of having a focus group added to the original proposal to enhance the reliability and validity of the research by appropriating what the setting and context made available. The original proposal consisted only of semi-structured in-depth interviews meant for widows and some men with self-report from the adult children of the participating widows and field notes. Based on the time constraints, the researcher interviewed the participants in the focus group using every section of the interview guide except the section dealing with demographic profiles because of the logistical obstacles related to gathering such data individually. The proposal and all that it entails were explained to the focus group participants and their consent was received as a group. One focus group was conducted at Abaofia Izzi and another at Enugwu-Ukwu.

Regarding individual interviews, the main instrument of collection was face-to-face in-depth interviews. This instrument was applied in interviewing the widows, the male widowers and married men. The instrument was specifically drafted for each group; thus, there were three different interview guides. There were two male interview guides— one was customized to the widowers and the other for men whose wives were still alive. The third was meant for the widows alone. The rationale for drafting two interview guides for men was to avoid asking the male participants whose wives are alive the same questions reserved for the widowers. The strategy was to avoid eliciting the fear of death thereby making the process a stressful one for them. However, as it turned out during the interview process, the researcher's concern was not

warranted. As a result, the researcher collapsed the two male interview guides into one, keeping only the relevant questions.

The use of the interview was also chosen because the educational level of the participants in the rural area is taken into consideration. Some were illiterate, did not understand English and/or could write only in their own language. The choice of direct interview was preferred so that the participants could answer for themselves rather than having someone answer for them. The interviews were conducted mainly in Igbo and a few in English. The translation of the Igbo into English was certified by an expert in both languages as this ensured that the translation was reliable and valid. It also reduced language bias and maximized the clarification of idiomatic effusions as well as their appropriate interpretational analysis. All interview questions were cast in simple language, at an eighth grade level, which Kreuger (2003) has suggested is sufficient for adult comprehension even among those with less education. This is one of the ways of improving reliability and validity of measures.

In addition, the researcher asked adult sons and daughters of the widows to write a one page self-report that was based on the following requests: *Please, put in writing a one page personal account of what happened to your mother when your father died. Evaluate the whole process in the light of custom and tradition, property ownership, and your perception of how your mother was treated as a widow.* The respondents provided self-report accounts of what happened to their mothers and their feelings toward that experience. The self-report was going on simultaneously as the face-to-face in-depth interviews of the widows and men were in process.

The researcher jotted down in his field notes observations of the body language and the environmental contexts that he felt were important in the analysis of the project. The strategy for

diversification of participants' selection and the idea of seeking for cues in body language and environmental contexts were meant to obtain a more holistic perspective on the widowhood practice in the communities of choice. Having perspectives from the different groups of participants and other environmental and body cues further enriched the data quality. Many of these approaches were chosen to enrich the data by way of triangulation. Miles and Huberman (1984) state: "...triangulation is a state of mind. If you self-consciously set out to collect and double-check findings, using multiple sources and modes of evidence, the verification process will largely be built into the data-gathering process, and little more need be done than to report on one's procedures" (p. 235).

The diversification of perspectives from both the participants and the environment was indicative of the creativity and flexibility required in the use of qualitative methods of approach.

Interview Guide Sequencing Rationale

The sequence of the interview guide began with non-threatening questions to make it less stressful for the participants to describe their experiences (Berg, 2007). The guide was divided into six different sections for women and five sections for men. The interview guide for men was one section short of the women's because the evaluation section was not included. The researcher wanted only the widows who 'wear the shoe' of widowhood who could say where it pinched the most. The researcher's tactics were designed to produce an accurate representation of the widowhood experience, thereby improving on the reliability and validity of the research process.

The sequential ordering of the whole interview structure into six different sections for women and five sections for men was modeled after the key information resulting from the analysis of the pilot study. Keeping the flow of continuity from the pilot stage through the research process

was a way for the researcher to keep the logical connectivity unbroken. The first section was framed around the wife/husband relationship. The researcher sought to find out the relational conditions that exist/existed between the husband and the wife. Is/was it a living condition (Adams, 2005) created from the “veil of ignorance” which according to John Rawls is where equity, justice and fairness reign or a world where might is power (Peter, 2006)? The second section was framed to allow the widows, widowers, or married men to express how the social institutions affected the widows in their various communities. This section was designed to find out how “structures of relationship, roles, and obligations” (O. B. Jenkins, 2001) churches, legal institutions, *umuada* (daughters of the soil) and *umunna* (kindred or cognate group) and others affect the widows. This tactic is to give ear to the expressed feelings of the widows as triangulated through other sources.

The third section dealt with tradition and customs. Tradition as that which is handed down from the past and maintained in the present tells how open or closed a society is (Smith, 2005). The researcher, in this section, gave voice to the widows as he explored the associated relation between ancestral tradition or religious myth with customs and tradition (Smith, 2005) and how such association “permits or limits open discussion in the face of challenges of evolution or clamor for change” (pp. 30 – 31). Listening to the expressed life events of widows helped to highlight the specific mechanism of widowhood traditions as practiced in a conservative and a progressive community and explore the ways traditions are maintained enforced and challenged.

The fourth section touched on property ownership. Some questions asked included: a) tell me about how property ownership is dealt with in the family, and b) who controls the property especially when a husband is dead? Taking a cue from the documented pilot study, the researcher

expected to see how the widows reacted to the fact that material possessions served as an instrument of control.

The fifth section dealt with the widows' personal evaluation of widowhood practice. The researcher expected to see how the widows felt about the practice of widowhood in their communities. The sixth and last section was designed to gather the demographic profiles of the respondent widows, widowers and married men. The researcher used the descriptive profile as proffered by the widows to see the common basis for their marriages, the psychological developmental consequences of child marriage and how these elements affected the lives of women as widows.

At the end of every interview process, the interviewee was asked two questions: First, "is there any other thing you think important that I should know about our discussion that we did not discuss?" The strategy assured that the semi-structured, open-ended nature of the interview guide was true to its name. It did not limit the voice of the interviewee and more salient fragments of information were gleaned that might have been missed in the structure of the interview. Second, "can you please summarize our discussion in one statement? This strategy helped to ground the title of the dissertation in the data and assisted the investigator to ensure that the pieces of the puzzle of the research fitted in well within the theoretical framework which served as the spider's web that weaved the stories of the widows into a unified whole. The following section describes the roles of the men and women who helped the researcher transform the content of interview guides into a data form ready for analysis.

The Resource Persons, Opinion Leaders and the Research Assistants

Three categories of people were of special help during the data collection process. The three categories of people were men and women who played different roles to make the

actualization of the researcher's ideas for conducting the research possible included the resource persons, opinion leaders and the research assistants. Of the three categories of people, the resource persons were required to undergo some training.

To be involved with human subjects in research process requires special training. The training that was supervised by the Stony Brook Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a required strategy meant to protect the human subjects from the mistakes of the past when the rights and the dignity of individuals or groups of people were grossly abused in the name of research.

To avoid the mistakes of the past, two resource persons underwent the training before they were involved in the research process. The major role played by the resource persons was the facilitation of the interaction between the researcher and the participants as they (resource persons) linked the researcher with the best informants who had solid knowledge about widowhood practice in both communities. The best informants were designated as the opinion leaders. The opinion leaders were two in number, one from each community.

Resource Person and Opinion Leader from Enugwu-Ukwu

The researcher interacted with the resource person from Enugwu-Ukwu for over six years having lived and worked in that community. The resource person from Enugwu-Ukwu is a woman who was specifically chosen because she is a widow and she has experience working among women who had experienced similar social prejudices against women. Also she is well educated and a leader of women's organizations both in the Church and in her community. She knew a lot about the subject matter of the researcher's interest. While the researcher was in the United States planning the research, he was at the same time consulting with this resource person from Enugwu-Ukwu in Nigeria over the phone regarding the procedure for the interview protocols. Communication between the researcher and the resource person from Enugwu-Ukwu

specifically regarding this study lasted approximately one year. The resource person collected the names of those who met the criteria of inclusion with their phone numbers for the in-depth interview process. The criteria of inclusion are enumerated in a latter section of this chapter, especially with regard to participant recruitment.

The opinion leader from *Enugwu-Ukwu* is a Catholic priest who serves the predominantly Catholic Community. He has written extensively on *Nri* Culture and tradition. He not only explained the history of *Enugwu-Ukwu*, he also gave the researcher an insightful explanation about the nature of Igbo marriage and interpreted some of the ritual symbolisms involved in marriage and widowhood. He made a clear distinction between Igbo concepts of marriage and that of the western world. Every distinction was geared toward explaining why Igbo people are involved in the widowhood practice.

Resource person and opinion leader from *Abaofia-Izzi*

The resource person from *Abaofia Izzi* played four major roles. First, she linked up the researcher with the research assistants, second, she was the one that suggested *Abaofia-Izzi* as a community that met the criteria for this study, third, she linked up the researcher with the opinion leader, and fourth, she was herself one of the interviewers at *Abaofia-Izzi*. She did not accept payment for her services. She is an experienced researcher and a lecturer at Ebonyi State University, and eventually became the external investigator to the researcher. The researcher consulted with the *Abaofia-Izzi* resource person utilizing several means, including telephone, e-mail, and Skype as part of the strategies necessary to meet the demands of the project in a long distance relationship.

The opinion leader from *Abaofia Izzi* is also a Catholic priest who has written extensively on the communities that share in *Izzi* culture to which *Abaofia* belongs. He is a professor at

Ebonyi State University. It was a happy re-union between the researcher and the professor because the professor had been the researcher's lecturer in the senior seminary, *Owerri*, for more than four years. He gave revealing insightful narratives about the *Abaofia Izzi* people and their culture. His books are also quoted extensively in this work.

The resource person from *Abaofia Izzi* gathered the research assistants together to meet with the researcher on the evening of his arrival to discuss the strategies necessary in conducting a quality interview. Weeks before that evening, the resource person gave the research assistants copies of the interview guide that the researcher had e-mailed to her soon after the protocol approval.

Unexpected Augmentation of the Research Team

Initially, the researcher had not anticipated that a sub-Igbo dialect, described as the *Izzi* dialect, spoken in *Abaofia*, would be difficult for him to comprehend. The fact that the dialect was so difficult for the researcher necessitated the choice of hiring three extra paid assistants, all of whom had mastery of the *Izzi* dialect. The research assistants helped to conduct the research process in both communities because much time had been lost due to other unforeseen circumstances. The research assistants were members of research cohorts attached to the resource person for *Abaofia-Izzi* who is an experienced researcher and a lecturer at *Ebonyi* State University. The research assistants had conducted interviews for many international organizations, such as the United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA). Knowing that research assistants were already experienced in conducting interviews, the researcher wanted them to know more about the uniqueness of this research. Under the facilitation of the researcher, the interview process in general was discussed. At first, we discussed about self-comportment/attitude to gaining the trust and confidence of the participants. The researcher

emphasized the need for neatness of appearance, maintaining eye contact and being articulate in asking the questions. Efforts were made to help the interviewers establish good rapport with the interviewees, thereby disposing them to feel at ease at discussing issues that could have been otherwise stressful. The researcher urged the interviewers to use the interview guide as a roadmap to gathering the required pieces of information. We also familiarized ourselves with the operations of the three audio recording machines.

One of the interviewers was an undergraduate student while the other two were graduate students. The research assistants were very familiar with the interview process. We made a decision as to which one would do the interview and who would manipulate the recording machine. The strategy assured that the reality voiced by the participants is captured with minimal error, and that the reliability and validity of the research process were vigorous. Each interviewer was involved in the transcription and translation of the collected data as well, which were handed over to the researcher for proper scrutiny.

Participants' Recruitment at Abaofia Izzi and Enugwu-Ukwu

With the help of resource persons, the researcher identified Abaofia-Izzi and Enugwu-Ukwu as potential communities whose purposefully recruited participants might answer the research question posed by this study. *Abaofia-Izzi* is a community within *Izzi*. The land mass of *Izzi* is larger than Enugu State. As many communities as there are within *Izzi*, so too are the numerous dialects spoken by the people who reside there. There is a huge difference between the dialect spoken in *Abaofia-Izzi* and that spoken at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. The study population involved only participants from the two rural communities of *Abaofia-Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu* in Ebonyi and Anambra states, respectively. In other words, one of the criteria of inclusion is that the participants must be indigenes of *Abaofia-Izzi* or *Engwu-Ukwu*. The choice of the two

communities was informed by two major reasons. One was to discover why in two comparable communities, one town is progressive in the treatment of her widows while the other is conservative. Second was to assure manageability and feasibility of the study and to give depth to the study.

Widow Recruitment into the Focus Group in *Abaofia-Izzi*

As described earlier in this chapter, the first wave of interviews conducted in *Abaofia Izzi* was done through a focus group. Three strategic processes led to the recruitment of participants into the focus group interview in *Abaofia Izzi*. The first was the church announcement on Ash Wednesday, March 9, 2011. The widows who were present in the church were informed by the researcher after the Mass about the criteria of inclusion into the study. Second, using a snowballing approach, the researcher asked the widows to spread information about the criteria of inclusion into the research to their respective villages, which attracted many more interested widows. And third, the researcher purposefully selected those who met the criteria of the study from a large crowd who expressed their interest to participate in the research process. The large crowd came from those villages where the announcement was made about the research by those who previously attended morning mass.

Key Community Leaders who Enabled Entrée to the Communities

However, access to the participants would not have been possible without the leading roles played by two gentlemen. With the permission of the Monsignor charged with the care of the local parish, and the subsequent visit with the king of Izzi, (to whom a donation of a customary bottle of wine was given) the researcher was given access to the participants. The king of Izzi was married to four wives and has many children. He was visited based on the fact that he is the custodian of the tradition of Izzi to which *Abaofia* belongs and would authoritatively offer

answers to questions regarding the practices of widowhood in his community. The parish was used as the most convenient place where the researcher had easy access with those who supplied him with the necessary information for the research project.

Sample Size of *Abaofia-Izzi* Focus Group

Ten widows were chosen for the focus group interview from *Abaofia-Izzi* while eight widows were chosen from the community of *Enugwu - Ukwu*. The reason for the unequal number of participants was based on political perception of the widows from *Abaofia-Izzi*. Many willing participants volunteered for the research process because they thought that there was something political about the interview. The period of the interview coincided with the presidential campaign. Politicians were giving monetary incentives to the local people as they scouted for their votes. Coincidentally, the widows thought we must belong to one of those political parties canvassing for votes. The coincidence was very challenging to the researcher. The only assuring reason the researcher gave to convince the volunteering participants was that the research would only require a representation from each village and nothing more. Above all, the researcher stressed the fact that the research had nothing to do with the on-going presidential campaign, yet many of them were doubtful of the reasons. Eventually, only ten participants were chosen based on the representative reasons given above. Those ten participants consisted of widows of varied ages who had experienced widowhood practice for different number of years and are members of *Abaofia Izzi*. A majority of them were affiliated with the Catholic Church, while others were with the Protestants and others still were members of the Traditional African religion.

Widow Recruitment for Face-to-Face In-depth Interviews in *Abaofia Izzi*

The recruited widows for the face-to-face in-depth interviews in *Abaofia-Izzi*, as well as in *Enugwu-Ukwu*, are the center of attention in this study. Every other participant in this study was chosen relative to a better understanding of the participant widows selected for the face-to-face in-depth interviews.

Fifteen widows were recruited to participate in the face-to-face in-depth interviews at *Abaofia-Izzi*. The researcher deemed this number appropriate, since he had no intention of generalizing beyond the participating widows. A proportionate quota sampling approach was used in selecting widow and male participants into the face-to-face in-depth interviews in both communities whereas a non-proportionate quota sampling was applied in the selection of the participant widows into the focus groups in both communities. Through the permission of the parish Monsignor and the king of the community, as stated before, the researcher gained access to the participants. Through an announcement made in the church after the morning mass, those widows who attended the mass took the information to the villages and the next day, another huge crowd gathered. Through this strategic chain connection, a snowball approach was used in the gathering of the widow participants at *Abaofia Izzi*. From this crowd, the researcher, with the help of the resource person, selected those who met the criteria of inclusion. The strategy of categorizing the widows into different age groups was applied in both communities.

Added to the criteria of inclusion is the number of years of widowhood experience of the participants selected for the face-to-face interview process. A study shows that the average life expectancy of widows after the death of their husband is eighteen years. In line with this finding, the researcher decided to make three categories of widows out of this average number of years. Each category is made up of five widows. The first group comprised of widows of any age with experience of widowhood ≤ 5 years. The researcher expected to elicit a more vivid and fresh

experience from among the widows of this group. The second group encompasses those who have experienced widowhood for > 5 and ≤ 10 years and the third category covers those who are > 10 years. In the second category, the researcher expected to see a more moderate attitude to the experience of widowhood and still more from the third category. The researcher presumed that those with many more years of widowhood experience could provide a better understanding of what widowhood is about. Through these three categories, the researcher entered the world of the informants, attempting to gain their trust by interacting with them, making inquiries “and formulating emergent hypotheses and theories that are then inductively subjected to scrutiny and reformulation” (p. 881).

Furthermore, remarriage was made an issue in the act of selection of participants. At Abaofia-Izzi, as well as in Enugwu-Ukwu, willing volunteers who wanted to participate in this research process and who were re-married were excluded from the study to avoid giving mixed experience. Throughout the research process, the researcher took some precautionary measures that protected not only the rights and dignity of the participants, but also secured his own integrity. The researcher always conducted the widow interviews in both communities in the presence of at least one woman. The presence of a woman during the interviews was a way of increasing the comfort level of the interviewees and also forestalling allegations of abuse. Moreover, most of the interviews were conducted in the open.

Recruitment of men into face-to-face in-depth interview in *Abaofia Izzi*

After due consultation with the resource person from *Abaofia-Izzi*, the researcher purposefully chose five men based on three criteria. One of the three criteria is that two of the five men must be widowers, and the second criterion is that the rest of the three must be married. The third criterion is that all five men must be indigenous to *Abaofia-Izzi*. The rationale behind

the choice of married men was to engage in a bit of action research that fosters social change. It was aimed at raising the awareness of the participating married men to be more pro-active in safeguarding their wives from demeaning social and cultural practices. Men were chosen, too, because they are mainly the policy makers in most African countries. The researcher believed that justice and fairness in the treatment of women will be easier to foster if a good number of men with political clout join forces with the women in the fight against women marginalization. The struggle against women's marginalization could be positively affected by having more women representatives in policy making in the three tiers of government - local, state and federal government levels and more so at the grass-root indigenous structures like the town unions and kindred meetings. Coincidentally, one of the five selected men played the role of an opinion leader. He is a professor and a Catholic priest. He is the most resourceful of all the participants in terms of knowledge of the history of *Abaofia-Izzi* and had greatly influenced the culture of the place by his works on enculturation. In matters of *Abaofia-Izzi* tradition, most people consult with him. His father was taken by the *Abaofia Izzi* people as a purveyor of their tradition for he was a onetime most resourceful *Igwe* (royal leader) in every respect. People went to his *Obi* (Palace) as a resource place. The researcher consulted with the professor for more than three times and interviewed him for nearly two hours. Frequent visits with the professor were because of his tight schedule. The interview with the opinion leader who is also a professor was truncated because of his busy schedule. The opinion leader, as well as the professor is the only person in *Abaofia Izzi* who was interviewed in English.

Abaofia-Izzi is one of the communities under the territory of Izzi king (*Ezeh*). The king, as the custodian of the Izzi culture, was chosen to participate in the study based on the reasons given above and three other men were chosen to represent a 'local man's' experience of widow

treatment in the community. The Ezech is married to four wives. The researcher interviewed *Ezeh* in the company of the resource woman who helped to bridge the gap in occasional differences in the use of *Abaofia-Izzi* dialect. The choice of men was not only to triangulate our perspectives on widowhood practice, but also to raise awareness as to what men could do to ensure that equity and justice are applicable in women treatment.

Self report recruitment of adult children of the participating widows at *Abaofia-Izzi*.

The researcher chose the young adults in both communities to obtain their perspectives on the practice of widowhood, especially as the practice related to the treatment their mothers had received. At *Abaofia-Izzi*, three adult daughters and sons of the participating widows were selected. The choice of the daughters and sons was based on literacy. Only those sons and daughters who were able to write up their feelings regarding the treatment their mothers received as widow were selected. Their choice was another way of triangulating the research process.

Widow recruitment into focus group interview at *Enugwu-Ukwu*

In comparison to the selected participants from *Abaofia-Izzi*, only eight widows were selected for the focus group interview at *Enugwu-Ukwu* in respect of the basic standard required for such a group process. This was the second and last wave of focus group interviews conducted. At the explanation of the objectives, the requirements and obligations of the research interviews, the benefits and risks involved in the research process, *Enugwu-Ukwu* widows seemed to show a better understanding of the research process than those from *Abaofia-Izzi*. All participants in both communities were given a token of fifteen hundred Naira (N1500) which is an equivalent of \$10 at the end of the interview process except the adult children who wrote the self-reports. At *Enugwu-Ukwu*, just as in *Abaofia Izzi*, the widows participating in the face-to-face interviews did not participate in the focus group.

Widow recruitment into face-to- face in-depth interview at *Enugwu-Ukwu*

The procedure for recruiting for the one-on-one interviews at *Enugwu-Ukwu* was in many respects similar and in some ways different from that conducted at *Abaofia-Izzi*. An equal number of widows were purposefully chosen and categorized into three groups according to years of widowhood experience similar to the selection process of the other research group of widows involved in the face-to-face in-depth interviews at *Abaofia-Izzi*. As the selection process at *Abaofia-Izzi* followed three processes of announcement, snowballing and selection by the researcher, the selection at *Enugwu-Ukwu* depended heavily on the resource person who did the selection based on the criteria given to her by the researcher. The criteria were based on two processes, one is fitness into the criteria and the other was selection by village representation. A non-probabilistic approach was used in selecting the participants according to the number of villages in *Enugwu-Ukwu*. The resource person, after due consultation with the researcher regarding the criteria of inclusion, collected the names of the participants who met the necessary requirements for inclusion. Also collected, were the villages each participant was a member of and/or represented, as well as their contact information. The main source of contact for each participant was by telephone. Another key criterion for selection required that the participants must be indigenous to *Enugwu-Ukwu* or *Abaofia-Izzi* and must not have been re-married to avoid giving mixed experience. The research consent form was individually read to them and the content thereof explained. Those who participated signed the consent before the interview process began.

Recruitment of men into face-to-face in-depth interview at *Enugwu-Ukwu*

The male interviews at *Enugwu-Ukwu* followed the same process as in *Abaofia-Izzi* with some exceptions. Three steps (announcement, snowballing and sampling) were taken in selecting

the male participants at *Abaofia-Izzi*, whereas the male participants from *Enugwu-Ukwu* were personally approached by the resource person who based her selection process on the agreed criteria reached with the researcher.

At *Enugwu-Ukwu*, five men were also selected in accord with the selecting criteria used in *Abaofia Izzi*. Coincidentally, one of the chosen male participants is a Catholic priest who served as the resource person for *Enugwu-Ukwu*. He has written volumes on the traditions of *Enugwu-Ukwu* and *Nri* clan and was never married. Three other titled and married men as well as a widower were purposefully selected. Titled men are people of proven integrity, specially recognized by their various communities for their contributions to the welfare and common good of the people. For the researcher, the five men were chosen because they wield political influence essential in policy making. The researcher sought their perspectives to deepen his understanding of the widow treatment in the communities of choice. One of the titled men from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, married three wives, one of whom hails from *Abaofia-Izzi*. This is indicative of the inter-marital relation between the two communities.

The researcher interviewed three of the five men in English, and the other two were interviewed in Igbo. The participants who responded to the research questions in English were the Catholic priest and civil servants while the majority of those who responded to the question in Igbo were predominantly farmers and petty traders.

The researcher desired to understand the communal attitudes of *Abaofia-Izzi* people and those of *Enugwu-Ukwu* toward the widows in their community by exploring the life events of the participant widows. The researcher's understanding of the life events of the participant widows was widened and deepened through the triangulating effects of the different sub-groups mentioned above.

Self report recruitment of adult children of the participating widows at Enugwu-Ukwu

The researcher chose the young adults in both communities to obtain their perspectives on the practice of widowhood, especially as the practice related to the treatment their mothers had received. At *Enugwu-Ukwu*, three adult daughters and sons of the participating widows were selected. The choice of the daughters and sons was based on literacy. Only those sons and daughters who were able to write up their feelings regarding the treatment their mothers received as widows were selected. Their choice was another way of triangulating the research process.

Summary of Data Sources

Figure 7 below shows the researcher's data sources. The figure shows five major sources used in analyzing the lived experience of thirty widows, who are at the center of this research. The four circling sources of information triangulate what we know about the lived experience of thirty widows in two communities of Igboland – *Enugwu-Ukwu* and *Abaofia-Izzi*. Thirty widows were interviewed, fifteen from each community. Ten men were also interviewed, five from each community. In *Abaofia-Izzi*, ten widows participated in the focus group interview process, while eight widows participated at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. Twelve adult children of some of the participating widows, eighteen years and older, were selected. Six adult children were selected from each community, comprising of three adult males and three adult females.

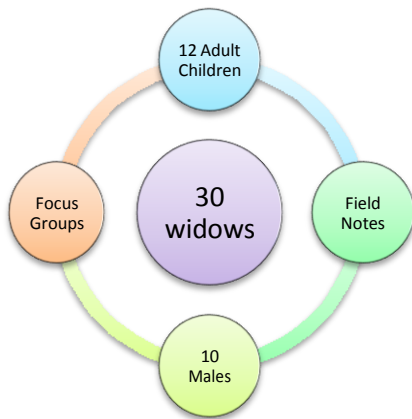


Figure 6. Data sources

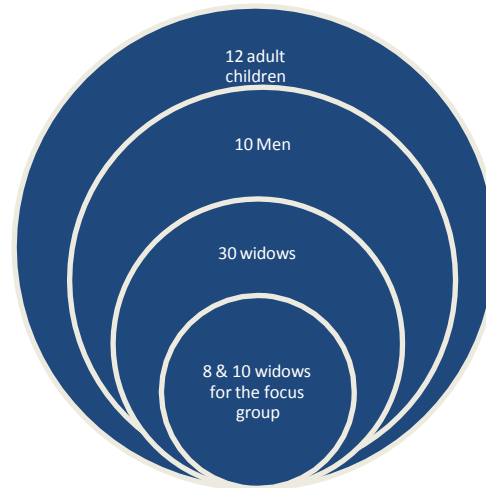


Figure 7. Sample sizes of data sources

Figure 8 is the sample size involved in this study. Moving from bottom up, eight widows participated in the focus group at *Enugwu-Ukwu* while ten widows participated at *Abaofia-Izzi* as stated above. In general, there were two waves of focus group interviews conducted, one in each community. A total of forty persons, comprising thirty widows and ten men participated in the face-to-face-in-depth interviews. The twelve adult children only gave reports on their feelings on widowhood treatment of their mothers. In all, seventy individuals participated in this research process.

Description of the Process

In this section, the researcher describes the process used to conduct the research, how the consent form was presented by the researcher/resource persons/research assistants and how the participants received it. Plans for the process involved the consideration of the context of the interviews, and the cultural protocols/engagement, the actual conducting of the interviews and the post interview measures taken at different stages of the research process as the researcher strived to ensure that the pieces of the puzzles fitted together. Other areas of focus are the research ethics section, data management section, data analysis, study limitations, and the winding road to data collection.

Permission to Study with Human Subjects

The authority to conduct research dealing with human subjects presupposed some requirements. The researcher, according to Stony Brook University requirement, was certified by the CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative taken online. This certification qualifies a researcher to submit his/her proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval.

As this research is internationally based, the researcher secured permission from the National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) in Nigeria, after due application was submitted to the Department of Health Planning and Research located at Abuja, Nigeria. The researcher submitted the approval to Stony Brook Institutional Review Board called the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (CORIHS). A uniform Research Consent Form specifying the purpose of the research, the procedures, and the risks involved in the process and the benefits thereof, confidentiality and the rights of the participants, was developed for all the adults involved in the interview process. When all the requirements for the approval were met, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the protocol (See both approval copies in the Appendix).

Consent Form

In meeting with the *Abaofia-Izzi* participants, the resource person, in the presence of the researcher read out the content of the consent form interjecting the Igbo version of the dialect typical to *Abaofia-Izzi* people. The resource person was selected to read the consent form, because of the difficulty the researcher had with the *Abaofia-Izzi* dialect. Each participant signed the consent form during the one-on-one interview process, and/or signed, under supervision during the focus group process. Due to the anonymous nature of the research, an agreement was reached to de-identify the participants' data in order to avoid exposing them to 'harm' and, above all, to protect their confidentiality.

At *Enugwu-Ukwu*, the researcher read out the content of the consent form since he was a capable speaker of the language. Each participant was informed of the benefits and risks accruable in the study. Consequently, those who agreed to participate in the research process signed the consent form before the interview began. For the focus group at *Enugwu-Ukwu*, the consent form was signed at the same time by all the participants under the supervision of the researcher before the group interview process began.

Cultural Protocol/Engagement

The researcher sought to tap into the tradition of salutation among the adults of *Igbo* extraction to establish the rapport necessary for the interaction. Salutations among the *Igbo*, especially when dealing with married people, do not stop short of asking about the individual alone as westerners do: “How are you?” Among the *Igbo*, greeting is about the person but not limited to the person alone. It includes the health condition and wellbeing of the family members. Hence, “How are you?” is most often followed immediately by “How about your family?” (*Kedu ka I melu, Ndi be gi kwanu?*) Gaining the trust of the interviewee through such initial and elaborate salutations provided a secure ground for more serious questions such as: “Can you describe the life you shared with your husband/wife?”

Conducting Interviews in Both Communities

Before any interview began, there was always an explanation of the proposed study, with its purpose and research problems explained to all the participants in their local dialect by the researcher and/or resource person according to the place of the interview. In the ethics section, their right to participate or not to participate and other entitlements were expressed. During the beginning of each face-to-face interview, the interviewee signed the research consent form,

which was read and explained to each of them before the interview began. Three interviews were carried out simultaneously using three digitized recording machines.

Beginning with the focus group interview at *Abaofia-Izzi*, the resource person conducted the focus group interview in the presence of the researcher who had a problem with the community's dialect. She engaged the participants in a free flowing discussion in Igbo intermixed with *Abaofia-Izzi* dialect. The interviews were conversational and three participants dominated the interview process. The researcher, observing the domineering tendencies of some of the participants in the *Abaofia-Izzi* focus group, requested, that all participants must have an opportunity to express their experiences. The focus group interview took place in an uncompleted church building in *Abaofia-Izzi* village. The interviews lasted for one hour.

From the beginning of the interaction, it was clear that some of the more elderly widows from *Abaofia-Izzi* were not comfortable with some of the primary questions posited by the interviewers who were much younger than all of them. Ironically, the commentary was more common in the interviews conducted by female interviewers than in those conducted by male interviewers. It seemed that the gap between the ages of the interviewer and those of the interviewees had some impact on the nature of the reactions of the interviewees. There was a manifest discomfort among the most elderly participant widows who kept commenting on some of the questions saying: "what a silly question!" Two of the elderly widows, according to the researcher's observation, were uncomfortable with some of the questions posed to them. Some of the participants appeared to lack confidence. Their body language, from my field notes, indicated that they were withdrawn. For example, the interviewer had to keep requesting the interviewees, raise their speaking voice, in order for the recording device to capture an audible sound. Many of the participants could not tell the exact number of years they were married and could not tell the

difference between living as a spinster or as a married person. In most of the knowledge questions at *Abaofia-Izzi*, about 95% of the participants admitted their ignorance of knowledge questions. Knowledge questions in social sciences pertain to those questions that seek to understand facts concerning one's date of birth, how old one is, one's level of education and so on. When asked some knowledge questions regarding marriage, one of the participants said: "If I had gone to school, I would have given you the answers to your questions." In fact, when answering, many of them gave monosyllabic responses to which the interviewer responded by repeating the same question in many different ways to help them to elaborate. There was more to their reticence than was captured by mere visual observation. The analytic chapter will address some of the dynamics and questions pertaining to their reticence and body language.

The interview was simplified because many of them did not have access to formal western education while growing up in a rural village. However, they were all educated in the tradition and culture of their villages and were very much aware of what was happening in their communities. In contrast, at *Enugwu-Ukwu*, the focus group interview which began at exactly 7:30 A.M. in front of the Church's rectory, took a different direction altogether. The participants were verbose, active and were not in any way shy, irrespective of their level of education. The rectory is a place where Catholic priests live. The researcher chose the rectory as a place to meet the participants because it was more convenient to have those who attended morning Mass to converge there. Those who were not affiliated with the Catholic Church were persuaded to gather in the Church compound and they expressed gladness to do so.

Most of the research process that took place in *Abaofia-Izzi* was also repeated at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. Nevertheless, when widows from both communities were compared, a remarkable difference was noted. Widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu* were more generous with information. The

least educated among them, were approximately three widows, who had access only to a primary level education. Even that was not a limiting factor in eliciting information needed from them. Unlike in *Abaofia-Izzi*, there were only two incidences of child marriage among *Enugwu-Ukwu* participants. They were not ignorant of the knowledge questions as was the case in *Abaofia-Izzi*. Ironically, widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu* appeared to be more oppressed than those from *Abaofia-Izzi*. Incidentally too, they put up a stronger sentiment of opposition to the practice of widowhood than those from *Abaofia-Izzi*.

Furthermore, the interview process at *Enugwu-Ukwu*, was more lively and faster because the participants were actively enthusiastic. The interview process in *Abaofia-Izzi*, as well as in *Enugwu-Ukwu*, was emotion-laden, since it was reminding the widows of the loss, suffering, and challenging responsibilities they had to face without their husbands. The focus group interview took almost an hour and a half at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. Four people dominated the interview process at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. Unlike the *Abaofia-Izzi* widows who were laconic, the widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu* were verbose. The researcher, as a facilitator, intervened on several occasions to ensure that all the widows had the opportunity to share their experiences.

The responses of the participants from *Enugwu-Ukwu* were very revealing. They were bold and confident. The researcher did not know how much his presence as a Catholic priest who had worked in the area added to the openness and confidence they had in revealing what they did. However, some of the information the researcher obtained that day, he had been unable to elicit from the participants during the course of the six years he had previously worked there. The dynamics of group process were really powerful in this group.

Self-reports in Both Communities

With regard to self-reports from both communities, the reported feelings were written as the interviews were going on. Twelve adult children of the participating widows were expected to write up the reports. There were six adult males and six adult females. The questions they responded to were given to them by the researcher after brief instruction on the purpose of the reports. Ten of them turned in their responses. They were selected as children of the several of the widows who the researcher interviewed.

Interview Contexts in Both Communities

The initial arrangement of conducting the interview in the public halls at *Abaofia-Izzi* was discontinued because the participants misconstrued the purpose of the research project. As mentioned earlier, most of them took the research as something political and therefore as a means of making money. To minimize their biased assumptions, the researcher took the venue to their local places to help them understand the purpose of the project. Some of the interviews were conducted in their local churches, some in their gardens and still others in their houses depending on the participants' availability and convenience. The researcher made the interview site as local as possible to get the depth of the participants' experience and minimize their biases.

At *Enugwu-Ukwu*, the interviews were conducted in public places, because, at the explanation of the aims and objectives of the research by the researcher, the selected participants demonstrated a better understanding of what the research was about. A presidential election was also going on in the state, but they could tell the difference. That Enugwu-Ukwu community had a better grasp of the situation might be attributed to the fact that I had lived and worked in their place. However, the researcher's insight into the participants' lives tells him that more is involved. This is not to say that *Abaofia-Izzi* people do not necessarily understand what was going on, but they seemed to perceive the situation from their vantage point.

Below are three different scenes where some of the interviews took place in both communities.



Figure 8. Abaofia-Izzi



Figure 9. Enugwu-Ukwu



Figure 10. Igwe's Barn

Figure 8 is a house belonging to one of the participant widows at *Abaofia-Izzi* and Figure 9 is a public hall at *Enugwu-Ukwu* where some of the individual interviews took place. The hall belongs to a village called *Urunnebo*. Figure 10 is a yam-barn belonging to the King (*Igwe*) of *Izzi*, where he was interviewed. As mentioned before, *Abaofia-Izzi* is a community under *Izzi* and this means that *Abaofia-Izzi* falls within the territory of *Izzi* king. None of the figures depicts the best or the worst scene in any of the communities. The pictures are presented to show that the research was grass-rooted (made as local as possible) and is not meant to compare and contrast the scenes as such.

Post Interview Measures

One of the measures taken by the researcher regarding the research process was to have a discussion about the conduct of the days' interview process with the resource persons and the research assistants at the end of each day's interviews. The purpose was to check the direction the research process was taking, with regard to the problem the research was investigating, and to widen the researcher's knowledge of the process. Furthermore, these daily discussions enabled the researcher to ensure that the interviews complied with the ethical guidelines for the protection of the research participants.

Each interviewer conducted only two interviews daily. This was to ensure that the interviewer retained a vivid impression of all that transpired during the interview process as the interviewer transcribed and translated the interviews into English. Discussing the dynamics of the interview process helped the researcher to see the direction in which the process was being taken. This was a strategy the researcher employed to ensure that all the interviewers were working towards the same goal, and for the researcher to get a fuller grasp of what was going on in the process as seen from the perspectives of other interviewers.

At the end of the day's discussion of the dynamics of the interview process, the researcher, at *Abaofia-Izzi*, felt the need to make some changes because the pieces of the puzzle were not fitting together. The researcher observed during the interview process that there were some excesses and unnecessary fragments of information in the male interview guides that were irrelevant to the process. Hence, the words of Janice M. Morse made much sense as quoted by Denzin & Lincoln (1994b) thus:

The analysis of data begins shortly after the data collection commences and continues during data collections and beyond. The concurrent processes of data collection and analysis allow the analysis to guide data collection in a process of theoretical sampling, so that excess and unnecessary data are not collected. Thus research costs are kept to a minimum and researcher confusion is reduced. The

outcome is that the researcher maintains control rather than “drowning in data” (p. 229).

The analysis of the first three male interviews helped in restructuring the interview guides by striking out some excesses and avoiding unnecessary data collection thereby speeding up to the theoretical saturation. After merging together the two interview guides, only twenty questions were eventually considered relevant to capture the quality of data needed for this research. However, the demographic profiles were not altered. Only two corrections were made in the widows’ interview guide as a result of constant comparative analysis, and the concurrent processing of collected data. The first correction was the negation of the assumption that the term *ajadu*, (which translates widow or widowhood practice) was common to all Igbo speaking people. The people of *Abaofia-Izzi* have a different term for widow and that is *nwanyi no n’ulo*. The Igbo communities have different terms to describe widow or widowhood practice. In some communities, more than one description is used to designate the widow or widowhood practice. *Nwanyi isi mkpe* is another popular term used among many Igbo speaking people to designate widowhood.

Data Management

Questions were asked in Igbo or English depending on the literacy level of the respondents. Three digital recording machines were used that allowed the researcher to create folders that were serially numbered and dated. This tactic made it possible to de-identify the participants keeping them as anonymous as possible. The digitized recording machines had different numbering systems. The researcher harmonized the different numbering systems for a systematic analysis. Furthermore, the numbering system of the digitized recorders was completely changed to a different form of numbering by the *Atlas.ti* software used in the analysis when data were uploaded into it. The difference lies in the fact that those tools were differently

configured. This strategy of concealing the identity of the participants through number manipulation further secured the confidentiality of participants.

The researcher attempted to use *Dragon Naturally-Speaker* transcription software. However, the program did not have the tool that captures foreign language and it could not even adapt itself well to the voice production of those who were interviewed in English.

Data Analysis

All the transcribed and translated data were proofread by the researcher with the help of one research assistant before saving them in the computer and in other multiple devices as backups. Thereafter, the researcher took control of the whole data by reading them over and over before uploading them into Atlas.ti Software for analysis. In order to systematically analyze the data, the researcher chose *Atlas.ti* Software. *Atlas.ti* Software is a useful tool for analyzing texts, video, and graphic data. As a “powerful workbench for qualitative analysis of large body of texts,” it helped the researcher to arrange and categorize the data into groups that allowed easy flow of analysis (Friese, 2003-2010). According to Friese (203 – 2010), Atlas.ti provides the researcher with a variety of tools to organize “unstructured data.” In this study, the researcher was faced with structuring data that included fifty-five primary documents, one thousand, eight hundred and seventy-four codes, a hundred and seventeen memoes, eight primary document families, one memo family and ten network viewers. The categorized elements of the data were structured by the hermeneutic unit of Atlas.ti, which serves as a container for the working tools that were used by the researcher.

More specifically, *Atlas.ti* software provided the researcher with simple tools described as “open coding, coding in vivo and code by list.” The coding provisions helped in breaking down the data and *Atlas.ti* software has a facility that permits the use of words that are grounded in the data or

words that are imported from outside. Expressed in another way, *Atlas.ti Software* makes provisions for flexibility in coding. Breaking down the data into component words would be meaningless, if there were no other way of organizing the words into meaningful structures.

At this stage, based on reading and re-reading the data, the researcher became very intimate with the data with the aim of identifying emergent themes. Having identified emergent themes, he organized them according to their levels of universality as he assessed which of the component words had more universal character. Then, the researcher arranged the codes of less universal characters that were suggestive of common themes under more universal ones creating overall categories or themes. The thematic emergence of constructs leading to theoretical constructs was based on constant verification between interview data and the researcher's knowledge of social and psychological theories. In this way, the researcher sought to reveal in an organized and logical way the realities of the widows as they live in their various communities.

Proper manipulation of *Atlas.ti Software* revealed the hidden phenomena for the researcher to extract, manage, and compare as he iterated the coding process through the data. Through creative, flexible and systematic analysis, the researcher was able to fit the bits and pieces of the puzzle together. *Atlas.ti* enabled the researcher to make qualitative analysis more organized while offering the possibility of classifying data at different levels of abstraction in order to create unifying concepts that make comparison easy. Such a categorization made it possible for meaningful theoretical constructs to emerge through constant verification by the researcher.

Research Ethics

A brief description of the proposed study with its purpose and research problems was given to the participants. In addition to the approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB),

a letter of approval from the National Health Research Ethics, Nigeria, in compliance with the Code of Conduct in respect of research on human subjects was also obtained.

A signed written consent form was obtained from all participants by the researcher prior to their participation in the research process. The researcher kept the participants' identity anonymous and all other information about them confidential and the consent form informs respondents of this fact. In the case of recorded identifiers, special care was taken by the researcher to keep the files in a secure, limited access location. Only the principal investigator and the study coordinator had access to the data. It was made clear to the participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time in the process. The participants were notified of the possible risks that they were about to undertake and also of possible good and/or benefit that might accrue from the interview.

Since the participants were expressing painful experiences of loss and undeserved victimization, strong emotions resurfaced during the interview process. In view of those manifested emotions, the researcher referred the affected participants whose reactions were particularly painful to their local pastors for counseling and support. In this way, the researcher provided a 'sacred space,' a referral opportunity and a conducive environment for them to process their feelings.

In sum, the integrity of this research process was assured by being discrete and sensitive to the participants' concerns about possible exposure. The researcher protected the confidentiality of the participants involved and made sure that the honesty of the research process was kept (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003).

Study Limitations

No true science can afford to limit the possibility of further researches from other vantage points because no one research approach has the whole picture of reality. No matter how

objective one wants to be, objectivity is not tied to one method alone. No one research, no matter how well conducted, can lay claim to the whole truth of knowledge (Kuhn, 1962). Knowledge is expandable.

In this research project, several limitations became apparent. For example, linguistic barriers, in terms of the *Abaofia-Izzi* dialect posed a problem that barred the researcher from entering fully into the world of the participants in the context of the actual interviews in that community. It is, therefore, not out of place to say that the depth of understanding and probing of the data were deeper at Enugwu-Ukwu than at *Abaofia-Izzi*. Those limitations detracted from the validity and reliability of the data. The question is: how could the researcher be sure that he was representing the truth of the life situation of the widows who were not well understood or who were understood through secondary media? Thanks to the research assistants who helped in the process, spoke and understood the dialect of the *Abaofia-Izzi* participants, the obstacle was, to some degree, minimized.

The research scope is also limited because it is not generalizable to all the widows of *Abaofia-Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu* due to the method of recruitment. Its transferability beyond the participating widows is limited. In addition, because of the anonymous approach to the identity of the participants, the researcher could not get back to verify issues that emerged much later in the analysis to validate beyond the collected data the interpretational power of the researcher using the emerging theoretical constructs.

Comparatively, many of the participating widows from *Abaofia-Izzi* did not seem to understand the particular interests of the researcher and were not able to facilitate the inquiry by offering much needed information as those from *Enugwu-Ukwu*. Nevertheless, their body

language, environment, withdrawn nature, and their frugality with pieces of information spoke volumes about what their voices could not utter.

In brief, these limitations do not negate all the positive contributions of this research. It served as an exploratory study, hopefully spurring other researchers to carry on further research to expand human knowledge about the conditions of widows in different cultures of the world. In addition, it highlights important ongoing patterns of oppression, which may serve to assist in policy and community organizing efforts to improve the wellbeing of those women who happen to be widows. This research will hopefully stimulate ideas among the policy makers not only in the communities of choice, but also in the states and the federation in Nigeria, in particular, to improve the lots of widows, respecting the locality of human conditions. This could be possible when the truthful claims of the widows are critically examined, presenting, in particular, how much men in these communities contribute to the overall injustice, unfairness, exploitation and oppression of their widows. Ultimately, the resolution of the problem may begin when women become stakeholders at the table of discourse with regard to issues that concern them.

The Winding Road to Data Collection

The journey to data collection was not without its difficulties. The first interview began a week later than was originally scheduled due to four delaying circumstances beyond the researcher's control. In hindsight, however, the researcher discovered that one of the disappointments turned out to be a blessing in disguise, later in the interview process.

First, while working with the resource person, the researcher finalized the procedure for the interviews through frequent phone calls, e-mailings and online 'chatting.' The researcher was determined to conduct the interview soon after the protocol was approved. On getting to Lagos in Nigeria, he contacted the resource person for *Enugwu-Ukwu* to confirm plans but got

discouraging news. The woman assured the researcher that all the names and phone numbers of those to be interviewed at *Enugwu-Ukwu* were ready but that she might not be present during the interviews. She needed to look after her grandchildren while her daughter went for a job interview. The researcher was dismayed, although such lapses were anticipated, but not so early in the research. Her presence was important to smoothly facilitate the interview process. Immediately, the researcher switched to 'plan B.'

The researcher contacted the resource person for *Abaofia-Izzi* community to see the possibility of switching the schedule for the interviews. She heard the desperation in the researcher's voice and offered an emergency rescue as she promptly agreed to the request, though it was a rescue that never came to pass. A day after, the resource person for *Abaofia-Izzi* community informed the researcher that the interviews could not be held because she forgot to mention that national presidential campaign was going on during the same week in their state which, would have made arrangements for scheduling with the participants impossible

Third, when the campaign was over, a car break-down and further scheduling challenges of the resource persons added additional delays. The logistical problems then turned into a blessing as the process continued. In addition to the logistical challenges, the researcher also discovered that the Igbo dialect spoken by the *Abaofia-Izzi* people was difficult for him to comprehend which became one of the biggest presumptions made in this research. Thankfully, the research assistants were patient enough to instruct the researcher on some rudiments of the *Abaofia-Izzi* dialect, demystifying the strangeness of the dialect for him. Consulting with the resource person in *Abaofia-Izzi* and with her crew of research assistants, the researcher had no problem understanding them, for they are educated and had interacted more with the people from other Igbo speaking areas. But when the researcher began speaking with the people who visited and/or

lived in the rectory where the researcher was staying, he discovered that the people understood him, despite his difficulty and inability to understand them. As days went by during the interview process, the dialect came more easily to the researcher. Nevertheless, the dialect barrier caused some detraction from the research, thereby, potentially affecting the validity and reliability of the study. Ideally, the researcher who crafted the interview guide and who knew the direction of the whole interview process should have been the primary person conducting the interviews with the *Abaofia-Izzi*. Without the assistance of the research assistants who come from *Ebonyi* State, and who speak and understand the *Abaofia-Izzi* dialect, the interview process would have hit a wall. Thus, the original disappointment turned out to be a real blessing. The choice of interview crew (research assistants) turned out to be the disguised blessing.

Summary

Objectivity is possible with qualitative research. This is a demonstration that one hat does not fit all and that there are many paths to the mountain. It is a confirmation that every research is fundamentally qualitative at the center. As stated above, objectivity does not reside in the method, but in the framing of the research question and in the willingness of the researcher to pursue the investigation to its logical conclusion. Making the research as public as possible by showing that the research is credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable justifies the fact that there are more than one path to reality.

Naturalistic/qualitative study is very descriptive and gives the researcher latitude of applying as many methods as possible to arrive at what is meaningful to the people under investigation. Human beings are symbolic beings and through their interaction and contexts, they create different scenarios that call for different ways of understanding while applying different interpretive methods.

In this study, a qualitative method of approach was applied; utilizing theories that emerged from the data otherwise called grounded theory. Since the method used is the function of the nature of the question asked and the question asked is determined by the context, the researcher therefore, used a semi-structured open-ended interview guide as instrument for data collection. The measure of data collection therefore is determined by the nature of the research question, which respects the contexts of the participants as explained above. The interview guides for men that were modified in the process of the interviews were effectively used to gather triangulated pieces of information from men. Self-reports and field notes were used to obtain other possible perspectives about the widows who were at the center of the study.

Three waves of interviews were conducted in each of the two communities - focus groups, face-to-face in-depth interviews for women, and other face-to-face in-depth interviews for men. In addition, self-reports from the adult children of the widows and field notes were other measures used in acquiring data.

Study protocols necessary for carrying out the study were obtained and the codes of conduct required in conducting the research were observed. Data analysis was made possible by the application of *Atlas.ti software* which is a device that helped in analyzing huge data making use of qualitative methods. Limitations of the study were mentioned, as were the possible positive contributions of the study by way of potential future policy making ensuring social justice.

In the next chapter, the researcher presents the relevant theories that emerged from the analysis and interpretation of the data.

CHAPTER IV: REVIEW OF RELEVANT THEORIES

Charmaz (2006) described qualitative research as a “short trip through data collection, which follows a lengthy trail, through analysis of qualitative data” (p.1). She believes that a theoretical construct is needed in order to give explanatory power to the analytic and writing process. The application of grounded theory methods gets the researcher started and helps him or her stay involved through the research process. According to Charmaz (2006) “grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories “grounded” in the data themselves” (p. 4). In this project, data forms the base of the researcher’s theory and the analysis of the data generates the concepts that the researcher will use in constructing the widows’ story. Engaging with the data and the scene of the study (Schostak, 2008) “sparks ideas” and, often times, the researcher is surprised at the huge amount of information hidden in the data that calls for the researcher’s analytic skills (Charmaz, 2006). The application of this process directs and streamlines this project in constructing an original analysis typical of the data collected. With respect to Charmaz’s (2006) way of reasoning with regard to the present study, the ordering principle called theory emerges from what the researcher “saw, heard and sensed during the data collection process” (p. 4). The use of emergent format involved the suspension of the researcher’s judgment (Schostak, 2008) and subsequent critical reflection on the data. In this patient interactive process, five theories that coalesced from the researcher’s observations and analysis of the lived experience of the widows were discovered to be relevant. They are: Patriarchal theory, System Justification Theory, Dissonance Theory, Relative Deprivation and Rising Expectation Hypotheses. The researcher will use these theories to weave together the stories of the selected participants. Thus, in this

literature review chapter, the researcher will explore these theories, presenting the key elements that will be foundational to his analysis of the data.

Patriarchal Theory

The data from this study was replete with references to male domination especially regarding property control as an indirect way of controlling the widows and such references were frequent throughout the interviews. From the report of most of the widows, they felt that their subjugation is the goal of such a domineering tendency.

According to German (1981), “the most persistent and widespread theory [from] the Women’s Movement... is patriarchy” (p. 1). The term patriarchy is understood in many senses. Though it takes many forms, the underlying idea is male domination and women’s subjugation. It is also perceived as male conspiracy meant to continue class society in every part of the world (Musanga & Mutekwa, 2011). In the peasant and/or artisan era, which is culturally consistent with the communities in this study a patriarch is one who has the wealth and owns the land (Ravari, 2010). Based on these possessions, he can rule both women and younger men in the family, making most of the major decisions (Hartmann, 2006; Ravari, 2010).

For German (1981), the most prevalent usage of this theory takes two forms – the “economic mode of capitalism and the ideological mode of patriarchy” (p.2). German (1981) pointed out Marx’s opposition to defining patriarchy from the point of view of ideology only when he opined, “...if you see history as just the result of the dominance of ideas or of a succession of ideas, then you cannot explain anything about the development of society. For why do some ideas dominate? And why do dominating ideas change?” (p. 2). Based on this logic, Marx, German (1981) continued, believed that we have to look for material conditions to explain why people act in a certain way relating to the world and to each other (German, 1981).

Nevertheless, to hold the ideological approach would suggest that ideas sustain themselves. Since ideas do not sustain themselves, the liberation of women implies a struggle against the material exploitation of women and social change is possible when attention is focused on changing the material basis that feeds people's ideas. Hence, what Marx and Engel said in 1845, according to German (1981) suggests a meaningful fight back against mere ideological understanding of patriarchy. They (Marx and Engel) said:

We do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development: but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse alter, along with their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life (p.2).

According to Hartman (2006), the economic mode is not a figment of the mind; but has a real foundation in everyday life events of the people. Control over women's labor power forms the fulcrum around which patriarchy revolves. The denial of access to important productive resources and restriction of women's sexuality are two major ways by which men sustain the exclusive control of productive resources. Hartman (2006) holds that controlling women's access to resources and their sexuality allows men to control women's labor power. The manipulation of women of any social status – single, married or divorced is based on the fact that patriarchy has a material base. The material base of patriarchy rests “on the social structures that enable men to control women's labor” (Hartman, 2006, p.180). Identifying those aspects of social structures that perpetuate the material dominance of men, Gayle Rubin, quoted by Hartman (2006) suggests that the “sex/gender system” is the set of arrangements by which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied” (p. 181).

Expanding more on the issue of sex differentiation, Hartman (2006) observes that strict division of labor by sex, which is a social construction known in almost all societies, creates two very separate genders and a need for men and women to come together for economic reasons. He maintains that labor division by sex should not imply inequality but in most societies of the world, the contrary is the case. Division of labor by sex assigns a lower status to women. Sexual division of labor underpins the different experiences of men and women. For example, housework is relegated to the domain of women; men secure superior employment and are psychologically oriented differently to think that they are superior to women.

According to Means (2011), patriarchy which has lasted over 6000 years has been “a convenient lie” (p. 515). In the early 1960s through late 1970s, however, American feminists noted that the pursuit of theoretical correctness and changing of men’s ideas does not help their aspirations (German, 1981). In lieu of their observations, the American feminists’ change of roles in society gave them entrance into the workforce and they became more aware of their careers and aspirations (German, 1981). German (1981) further observed that women’s aspirations: “...were fed upon and developed by a massive expansion of higher education, which, although it discriminated against women in many areas, meant that for the first time women were able to enter relatively well paid, professional jobs with at least nominally equal pay. For most women this was a huge advance on the lives of their mothers and grandmothers” (p. 11).

Predominant in the 1960s was a strong practical approach to securing women’s liberation from male domination though the momentum was not sustained beyond the 1970s. However, to fight the root cause of male domination, the focus on the economic mode of capitalism must never be abandoned. Hence, according to Hartman (2006), the suitability of this definition of

patriarchy is supported since it identifies areas that need to be dismantled to achieve social change benefiting women. He quotes thus:

We can usefully define patriarchy as a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men and enable them to dominate women. Though patriarchy is hierarchical and men of different classes, races, or ethnic groups have different places in the patriarchy, they also are united in their shared relationship of domination. Hierarchies “work” at least in part because they create vested interests in the status quo. Those at the higher levels can “buy off” those at the lower levels by offering them power over those still lower. In the hierarchy of patriarchy, all men, whatever their rank in the patriarchy, are bought off by being able to control at least some women. There is some evidence to suggest that when patriarchy was first institutionalized in state societies, the ascending rulers literally made men the heads of their families...The material base upon which patriarchy rests lies most fundamentally in men’s control over women’s labor power (Hartman, 2006, p. 179).

For patriarchal dominated societies, the benchmarks for such a domination are obvious in males’ unimaginably higher representations in positions of authority like politics, religion, economics, education, military, legal and in the making of domestic decision among so many other structures (Johnson, 2005). Scholars who opt for economic mode of capitalism suggest, in their analysis of patriarchy, that the economy and the emergent ideas arising from men’s manipulation of it should be the area of focus for any possible and effective social change to happen in favor of the marginalized women (Hartmann, 2006; A. G. Johnson, 2009; Means, 2011).

Patriarchy as Practiced.

For the purposes of this study, however, it is necessary to investigate how the patriarchal system plays out in the lives of women so as to help us understand its implications in the lived experiences of the widows in the analytic section. Some scholars see the patriarchal system as a social system whereby the structural and economic forces, legal and political institutions are used by men to lord it over women as the ‘underdogs’ of the society (Omwami, 2011; G. Peter & Fiske, 1996; Sultana, 2010). The practice of the patriarchal system manifests itself in two ways.

One is hostile sexism and the other is benevolent sexism, both of which are said to “have their roots in the biological and social conditions that are common to human groups”(Peter and Fiske, 1996, p. 3). Ideologically, Virginia Woolf as quoted by Glick & Fiske (1996) speculated thus: “If woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of utmost importance, very various; heroic and mean, splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme” (p. 3). Thus the ideology of women is affected by patriarchal ideology (Omwami, 2011, p. 15). Men’s ideology thrives in a hierarchically structured social system creating the complex of superiority-inferiority superstructure. The superior structure constrains the inferior structure (Jackman, 1994; Omwami, 2011; Oyewumi, 1997). The researcher will explore, at this point, how sexism plays out in the lives of the women and how it constrains or short-changes them as they struggle for their rights.

Benevolent sexism (BS)

When the word sexism is mentioned, some sort of hostility towards women comes to mind. But that is not all. According to Glick and Fiske (1977), “a positively subjective good feeling toward women often goes hand in hand with the ‘sexist antipathy” (p. 3). Sexism is perceived as a “multidimensional construct” since it entails two sets of sexist attitudes – benevolent and hostile (p. 3). Benevolent sexism stresses the issues of power, gender differentiation and sexuality. Subjectively, it could be perceived as a positive attitude toward women when understood from the traditional perspective that presents men as offering protective paternalism, idealizing women and desiring to be in intimate relations with them (Glick & Fiske, 1977). Peter and Fiske (1996) defined benevolent sexism thus:

...a set of interrelated attitudes toward women that are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically and in restricted roles but that are subjectively positive in feeling tone (for the perceiver) and also tend to elicit behaviors typically categorized as prosocial (e.g helping) or intimacy-seeking (e.g self-disclosure).

We do not consider benevolent sexism a good thing, for despite the positive feelings it may indicate for the perceiver, its underpinnings lie in traditional stereotyping and masculine dominance (e.g; the man as the provider and woman as his dependent), and its consequences are often damaging. Benevolent sexism is not necessarily experienced as benevolent by the recipient. For example, a man's comment to a female coworker on how "cute" she looks, however well-intentioned, may undermine her feelings of being taken seriously as a professional. Nevertheless, the subjectively positive nature of the perceiver's feelings, the prosocial behaviors, and the attempts to achieve intimacy that benevolent sexism generates do not fit standard notions of prejudice (p. 3).

Not all women agree on the insidious nature of benevolent sexism as such. For example, Jenny McCartney, a columnist for *Sunday Telegraph*, made it clear that benevolent sexism should be one of the last things women should be worried about, especially when she considered the point made by Becker and Swim (2011), in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. In this journal, the two women underscore "the need for effective interventions to reduce sexism" (pp. 227 – 228), especially as it appears in every day life. They conducted research in the U.S and Germany, assessing if men and women are unaware of the prevalence of varied types of sexism in their personal lives. They criticized other writers for pointing out the existence of sexist tendencies but not making enough effort to find solutions to end the discrimination which presents women as weaker, relative to men, and incompetent, needing men's help and protection (Becker & Wright, 2011). McCartney (2011) reacted to the above concern as follows:

It is a curious mélange of complaints. I, for one, have no objection to being cherished and protected, within reason, by anybody: if mild cherishing is an offer, you can generally count me in, unless you're a dead ringer for Lenny from *Of Mice and Men*. I would be equally keen to get not only some masculine help with my laptop, but also that abiding trouble with my BT broadband connection set-up, if you've got a few minutes to spare. But we can agree that there is the germ of a point buried deep within Becker and Swim's largely impenetrable prose. If a man comes to dinner and says to a woman: "You're a great cook" it's a welcome compliment. If he says: "You're a great cook, and thank God you're right where any little lady should properly be, working away at the stove" it's going to sound weirdly antiquated. Most of us can understand that, thanks, without an academic article analysing (author's word) and amplifying the bejaysus out of it (p. 1).

Regarding male-female relationships, the researcher finds it strange for anybody or group of people to assume always that every act of benevolence must have some strings attached to it. It is not reasonable to read every benevolent act as sexist; for the researcher believes that virtue stands in the middle. This is why in Act 1 Scene 4 of Macbeth, Duncan, one of the characters stated: “There’s no art to find the mind’s construction in the face” (Shakespeare, 1564 -1616). It would be an obsession to think that there is no well-intended act by men devoid of explicit or implicit tendency to exploit women. This is why the phrase, “I, for one, have no objection to being cherished and protected, within reason, by anybody: if mild cherishing is on offer,” makes sense as cited above.

Nevertheless, there are traces of facts in my data that are not simply of ‘mild cherishing.’ In the result and analysis section, it appears that men from the town of *Abaofia Izzi* are more likely than men from *Enugwu-Ukwu* to apply benevolent sexism ideology in their relations with their widows. The reasons for this differential ideological approach are given in the results and analysis sections.

Hostile sexism (HS)

On the other hand, hostile sexism, at face value, seems to be the opposite of benevolent sexism. In reality, they are not strictly opposed to each other; yet it would seem that women who are nonetheless marginalized may tend to tolerate benevolent sexism more than the latter. For Glick and Fiske (1997): “Hostile sexism encompasses the negative equivalents on each dimension: dominative paternalism, derogatory beliefs, and heterosexual hostility. Both forms of sexism serve to justify and maintain patriarchy and traditional gender roles” (p. 119). However, there is a blatant distinction between benevolent and hostile sexism. While the former generates subjective positive feeling toward a perceiver and tends to project pro-social behaviors as it

attempts to achieve intimacy, the latter is said to fit standard notions of prejudice as specified by the famous Harvard psychologist, Gordon Allport (Calogero & Jost, 2011, Glick & Fiske, March 1977). According to Allport (1954), “prejudice is an antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It is directed toward a group or an individual of that group” (p. 9).

Sexism and Inequality

Past research has shown strong correlation between sexism and inequality in the society (Brandt, 2011). However, recent longitudinal research collecting data from 57 societies has demonstrated that individuals’ sexism serves to exacerbate the society’s gender hierarchical inequalities (Brandt, 2011). In other words, sexist ideologies are hierarchy-enhancing as they legitimize myths that “justify the creation of inequality”(p. 187). These sexist ideologies are used to decimate support for female representations in any viable political office, educational and occupational domains. It provides support that keeps alive forces that oppose more positive female representations in any “public policies designed to attenuate male dominance” (Brandt, 2011 p.187).

According to theorists (Becker & Wright, 2011; Glick & Fiske, 1977; Hoarse & Smith, 1999), resentment and resistance are engendered by hostile regimes. This could cause intergroup conflicts and collective attempts to change the status quo by those who would challenge the oppressive forces. However, those who benefit from the status quo have a subtle way of sustaining unequal intergroup relations through “subtle ideological means” that legitimizes their hold on domination. Becker and Wright (2011) state: “The creation of legitimizing ideologies that win the consent of the vast majority of the population leads members of low-status groups to voluntarily accept rather than act against group-based inequality”(p. 62). Citing Elizabeth Staton,

Ulrich (2007) observed that when most people seem happy with their circumstances, the discontent of a minority can easily be dismissed. "...the history of the world shows the vast majority, in every generation, passively accept the conditions into which they are born, while those who demand larger liberties are ever a small, ostracized minority whose claims are ridiculed and ignored." (p. 30).

Sexism and sense of belongingness

Sexism, be it benevolent (BS) or hostile (HS) thrives on the belief that some people are superior to others (Glick & Fiske, 1977). The maintenance of a prejudiced idea whereby a superior group is pitched over against the inferior group, weakens the strong bond of attachment that makes for "stable interpersonal relationships" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p.497). Lack of this bond has been linked to a variety of problematic outcomes in health, adjustment, well-being, satiation, and other behavioral consequences (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The belongingness hypothesis states that people have "a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships." At the heart of these relationships are "affectively pleasant interactions with a few other people, and, "these interactions that take place in the context of temporarily stable and enduring framework of affective concern for each other's welfare" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497).

The maintenance of superordinate – subordinate attitudes in male-female relationships creates an unhealthy environment inimical to harmonious relationships between men and women in any society. In patriarchal society, such as is characterized in the two communities in the present study, though practiced at different levels in each of the two towns, men's dominating tendency over women, especially the widows, is the cause of unhealthy relations between men and women as will be made clear in the analysis.

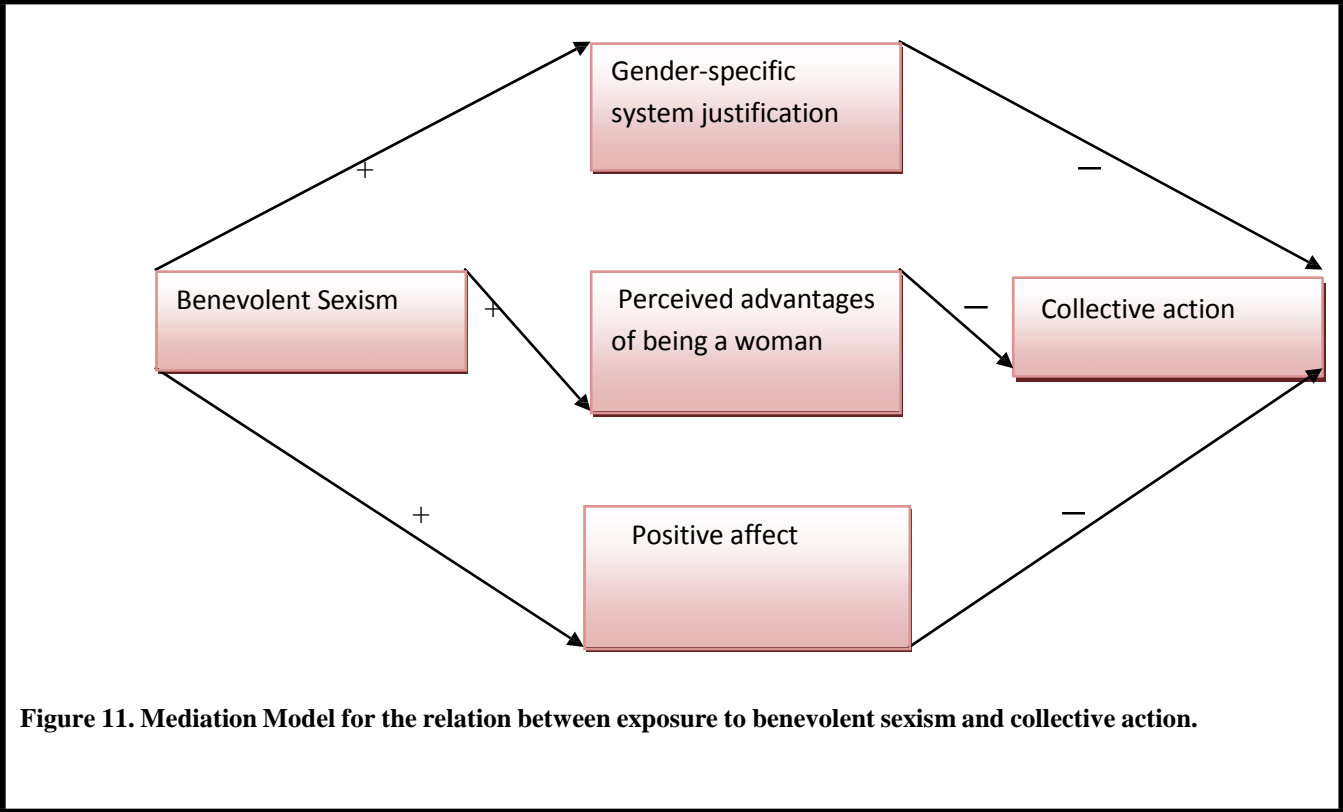
Women's Collaboration in Patriarchal Dominance

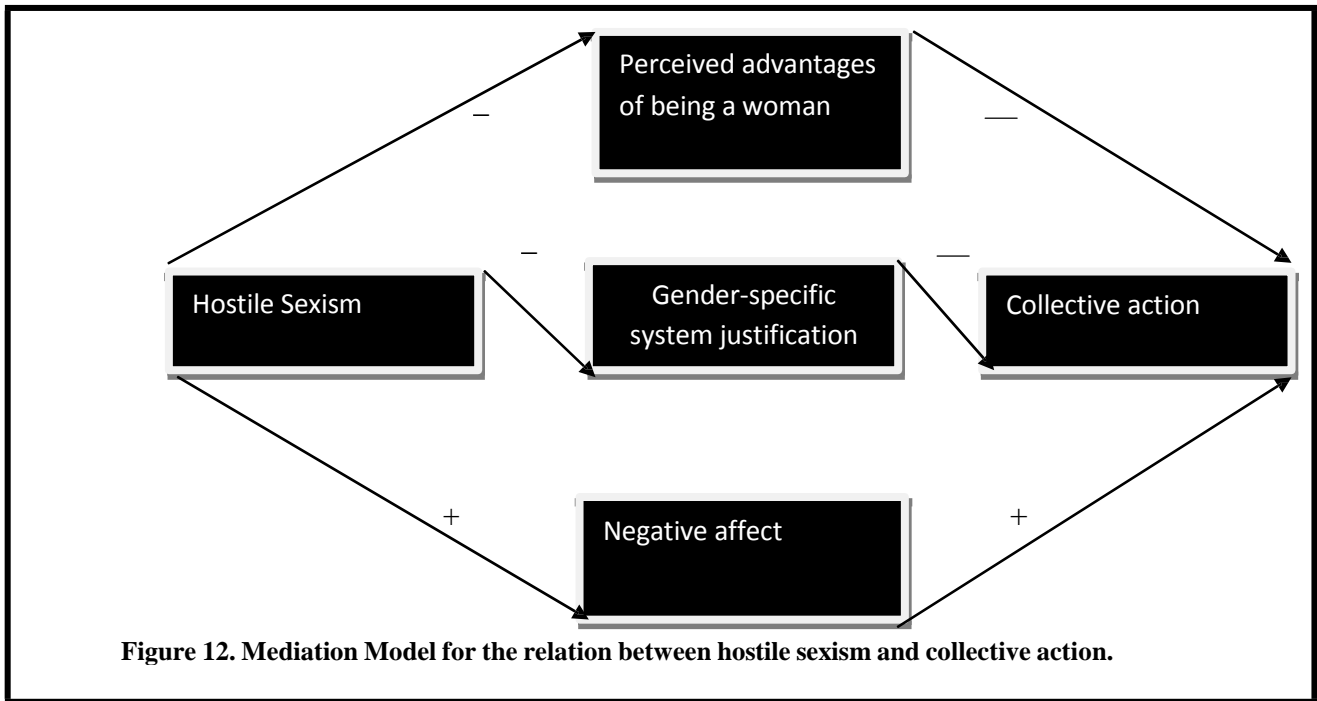
Patriarchal domination is not just about the male privileged position over women, but also, includes women's involvement in the whole patriarchal domination process (Johnson, 2005; Ravari, 2010, p.5). A general statement indicting women and men as involved and even colluding in the dominance ideology is well captured by the Freire (1970) statements: "The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized" (p. 48). In this sense, Calogero and Jost (2011) observed, "...many women unwittingly participate in the perpetuation of benevolent sexism by striving to attain traditionally feminine qualities – thereby collaborating in the maintenance of the current system of gender relations" (p. 4). The perpetuation is not just limited to the benevolent aspect of patriarchalism but it involves also hostile sexism (Ravari, 2010). At this point we consider the impact of sexism which entails sets of benevolence and hostility.

Sexism and Collective Action

A recently conducted study tests a model for understanding how benevolent sexism undermines, whereas hostile sexism promotes social change. The study demonstrates that women exposed to benevolent sexism are less likely to engage in a collective action than those exposed to hostile sexism. Accordingly: "Both effects were mediated by a gender-specific system of justification and perceived advantage of being a woman" (Becker & Wright, 2011, p. 62). A gender-specific system of justification, with perceived advantages of being a woman diminishes the likelihood of engaging in collective action (Becker & Wright, July 2011). The diagrams below illustrate the consequences of benevolent and hostile sexism with regard to engaging in a

collective action. Figure 11 is the expected “mediation model” for the relation between exposure to benevolent sexism and collective action as adapted from Becker and Wright (2011) the content of which the researcher modified for the purposes of this paper. Figure 12 is the expected mediation model for the relation between exposure to hostile sexism and collective action.





The above illustrations are efforts at integration and expansion of previous research which has predicted that system justification, perceived advantage of being a woman and positive affect mediate the negative relation between exposure to benevolent sexism and collective action on behalf of women. This model posits that engagement in collective action is determined by the differential effects of exposing women to benevolent and hostile sexism (Becker & Swim, 2011). Looking at figure 11, it is obvious that system justification increases at the instance of exposure to benevolent sexism (Jost & Kay, 2005). By this, it is argued that increased system justification will inhibit collective action because one would be unlikely to act against a system that one perceives as just. An African saying expresses the above fact well when it says that one does not bite the finger that feeds one. System justification, therefore, obstructs the relationship between benevolent sexism and collective action.

Hence, exposure to benevolent sexism is taken as rewarding and eliciting positive affect which militates against collective action. Positive affect is the third mediator of the effect of exposure to

benevolent sexism on collective action. Some scholars (Blau & Abramovitz, 2010) properly described collective action as:

...the effort of people joining forces to create a better life for themselves and others – is central to the development of modern societies. Most of the time, however, individuals pursue their goals or seek relief from hardship on their own. We try to solve our problems by following the rules and not challenging the authorities. At certain moments in history, however, as some people link their private problems to wider public issues, they find it necessary to join forces with others to meet unfilled needs and to change social conditions. The benefits of such collective behavior, whether the addition of a stop sign on the corner of a neighborhood street, outlawing racial discrimination, or fighting to end a war, extends beyond the needs of the immediate participants to large members of other people in similar circumstances. Indeed the world as we know it is, in part, the product of the effort of people working together to transform old social orders into new ones (p. 189).

On the other hand, a ‘kiss’ with hostile sexism generates negative feeling, leads one to perceive the system as unfair, and has the potential to inspire increased collective action as illustrated in figure 12. Gender-specific system justification and perceived advantage of being a woman were found to mediate between exposure to benevolent or hostile sexism and collective action. Research has shown that activation of stereotypes can be sufficient to impact judgments and behavior even when these stereotypes are not personally endorsed (Becker & Wright, 2011; Wheeler & Petty, 2001). Jay and Kay (2005) demonstrated that stereotype activation through incidental exposure can be as effective as an opportunity for personal endorsement in increasing system justification.

Despite the varied subtle and not so subtle ways patriarchal ideology manifests itself in society, most literature tends to interpret it from the point of view of traditional ideology, whereby it is about male dominance over women. In this light, patriarchy, seen as a system in traditional cultures, limits educational opportunity to women and girls, projects and maintains male dominance in decision taking and blocks social space for women (Agarwal, 1998; Becker

& Wright, 2011; Brandt, 2011; Calogero & Jost, 2011; Fischer, 2006; Glick & Fiske, 1977). From an African perspective, some authors would suggest that patriarchy keeps alive male dominated structures like kinship, kindred village head, family heads and the double legal system. In particular reference to Igbo people, the application of a double legal system means appealing to the Igbo African customary law and that of the western civil legal system when issues concerning widows or any other person are being considered (Umeogu, 2012).

In summary, the dominating tendency of patriarchal practice is that women have some propensity to accept and suffer the consequences of some social status quo that are not to their best interest (Liviatan & Jost, 2011). This is what the system justification is all about. In the next section, the researcher will discuss theories of system justification under the following headings: overview of the theory, assumptions behind system justification, passive and active system justification, the attitude of those who are advantaged or disadvantaged by the system justification, the relationship between the individual, the group and system justification and the reasons for system justification.

System Justification Theory

Overview

Many arguments have been advanced as to why people “do and do not rebel” against perceived unjust situations in their lives (Jost et al., 2012, p. 197). Eckstein (1980/2004), a political scientist, is cited by Jost et al. (2012) to be concerned with “the question of what motivates individuals and groups to participate in protest and collective action.” Also citing Gurr’s (1970) influential book *Why Men Rebel*, Jost (2012) expressed the fact that Gurr drew extensively on social psychological theories of frustration-aggression and relative deprivation to argue that “if men are exposed to noxious stimuli that they cannot avoid or overcome, they have

an innate disposition to strike out at their sources” (p. 198). Conversely, citing a social historian, Zinn (1968/2002), Jost (2013) states: “Rebellion is only an occasional reaction to suffering in human history; we have infinitely more instances of forbearance to exploitation and submission to authority, than we have examples of revolt” (p. 198). The bone of contention in the theory of system justification is why do most people engage most of the time in practices that are not to their best interest, whereas a limited minority express their protest?

According to Jost (1995), there is a scholarly agreement among social scientists which states that:

...in the postcognitive revolution world, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and organizational theorists all accept the fundamental assumption that social systems are maintained at least in part through attitudes and beliefs that support them. In the language of social cognition, researchers would say that conscious and unconscious thought processes play a pivotal role in the acceptance or rejection of particular social and political forms (p. 89).

The theory of system justification is attributed to Jost and Banaji (1994). System justification is notably concerned with the unraveling of the dilemma of “...participation by disadvantaged individuals and groups in negative stereotypes of themselves, and the consensual nature of stereotypic beliefs despite differences in social relations within and between social groups” (Jost & Banaji, 1994, p.1). The unexplained phenomenon relates to the limitations of social theories of ego-justification and group justification. Ego-justification and group-justification evaluated in the light of stereotypes by the writings of earlier scholars did not account for the issues of injustice and exploitation embedded in social systems or structures which Jost (1994) and colleague called system justification. System justification, therefore, broadens the spectrum of the two theories to include a better understanding of the social arrangements. Some research that showed how stereotyping leads to the production of false consciousness were reviewed by Jost

and colleagues and the implications of false consciousness noted for system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994)

Jost (2010) explained how he and his colleagues constructed the concept of system justification. He alluded to a poem which captures a social psychological insight about human behavior and motivation as written by W. H. Auden (1939) as his source of the concept system justification. Their understanding of the term “merciful mechanism in human mind” led them to create the phrase ‘system justification.’ Thus, they quoted: “There is a merciful mechanism in the human mind that prevents one from knowing how unhappy one is. One only realizes it if the unhappiness passes, and then one wonders how on earth one was ever able to stand it. If the factory workers once got out of the factory life for six months, there would be a revolution such as the world has never seen” (Jost, 2007).

Explaining further the ironic attitude of human beings toward injustice and exploitation in the world, Jost (2007) asserts that the term merciful mechanism describes the reason why people rationalize the existing status quo and why we do not witness or experience revolutions as often as we imagine they should occur given the history of widespread inequality and oppression. System justification, therefore, serves the palliative function of helping people cope and adapt to the unfavorable social conditions. With this mind set, Jost and colleagues predict that such an attitude would undermine the motivation to press for progress and social change. They therefore opined that people defend, bolster, and rationalize the social system that affects them seeing it as good, legitimate, fair and desirable (Jost, 2007; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Kay, 2005).

Assumptions of system justification.

The underlying assumption of system justification is that people are naturally predisposed to believe that the social system that affects them is orderly and just even in the face of an

apparent contradiction. This is why both individuals and groups strive to maintain the status quo as they imbibe the false consciousness of their oppressors. It is an apparent contradiction that those marginalized by the social system are the very people who legitimize it as good and fair. This is what the Marxist scholars regard as the false consciousness of the exploited.

Passive and active system justification

System justification helps us to understand why people passively and actively engage in bolstering the status quo despite the obvious contradiction that it does not work to their best interest. According to Liviatan et al. (2011) the marginalized, as women, the poor, the elderly, among others are less likely than those who benefit from the system to speak up against a system that does not work to their interest. People do not want to believe that the system to which they are part of is not fair and just. They want to be identified with a stable structure. They do this in two ways, one passively and the other actively.

Systems give structure. The human mind abhors randomness, unpredictability and chaos. Living in a social space with a haunting unpredictability, unimaginable randomness and chaos is like living in a world where there is no security. Through structured systems, ideological categorizations and devised cultural worldviews, people create an assurance of control of their world or medium of social interaction with a defined ways of living (Stapel & Noordewier, 2011). System justification describes a dynamic that effectively gives legitimizing structure to everyday life, regardless of how oppressive it is.

Implications for the Advantaged and Disadvantaged in System Justification

According to Blasi and Jost (2006) the advantaged and disadvantaged follow different pathways in system justifying as they also manage their distress differently. The powerful may feel some guilt over their advantaged position only if they believe it is undeserved. For instance, “men who

are reminded of their gender privilege experience increased guilt and decreased well-being. To assuage their guilt, ease their consciences, and reduce dissonance arising from inequality in the system, people rationalize their own state of advantage, and derogate those who are disadvantaged” (Blasi & Jost, 2006, p.1141).

On the other hand, the powerless may feel frustrated and angry regarding their position in the society. Because there are so many obstacles on their way to upward mobility, much resentment and anger are generated. Based on a such seeming uphill task, many choose to reduce their aspirations and “adapt to the status quo” (Blasi et al. 2006, p. 1141). The system justification serves as a: “...coping mechanism for members of both the advantaged and disadvantaged groups, reducing anxiety, uncertainty and distress and promoting positive rather than negative affect. Survey research shows, for example, that the poor people who blame themselves for their own poverty report feeling more positive emotion, less guilt, and greater satisfaction than poor people who blame the system” (Blasi & Jost, 2006, p. 1141).

In a study that applied system justification theory that used structural equation modeling revealed two effects: 1) African Americans and all people low in social economic status (SES) are more likely to justify the socioeconomic differences as fair and necessary. Probably, that is one of the surest ways of “restoring positive affect” and reducing dissonance. 2) Those who believe that hard work pays endorse meritocratic ideology which is positively associated with satisfaction in one’s job, financial situation and overall assessment. For Marx and Engel, “...system-justifying ideologies operate like the “opiate of the masses” which makes people “more content with their current situation and therefore less likely to rebel against the status quo”(Blasi & Jost, 2006, p. 1142).

The Dance Among Ego, Group and System Justification Motives



Figure 13. Advantaged Group

Figure 13 is adapted and modified from the works of Jost, Burgess & Mosso as used by Jost (2010) to illustrate the relations of the systems.

The tripod terms ego, group and system justification motives have interesting dynamics among them when comparing the advantaged to the disadvantaged social groups. For the members of the advantaged groups, ego, group and system justification motives are complementary and mutually reinforcing (Jost, 2007). System justification theory holds that “both advantaged and disadvantaged members of the social order will participate in system-justifying behaviours, although their behaviors might take different forms” (Blasi & Jost, 2006, p. 1129). Making a distinction between the experiences found between the constituting members of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups, Jost and Banaji (1994) distinguished among the three “justification tendencies” which are ego-justification, group-justification and system justification motives. First, the ego-justification motive is a way of boosting or bolstering one’s self-esteem with the mind-set that the social world works to one’s best interest. Second is the group-justification motive - which is a way of favoring one’s own group (in-group) more as against an out-group. Third is the system-justification motive which defends and rationalizes the legitimacy and interest of social systems like dyads, families, institutions and other organizations (Blasi et al.,

2006, Jost, 2010). This is well represented in the figure 13 above where the three groups are connected by three positively marked arrows showing that all the tendencies are geared toward positively defending and justifying the self-interest, group-interest and the system's interest in maintaining the status quo. Advantaged groups are consistent as far as perceiving their systems as fair and just and mutually endorse complementary stereotypes that are positively and negatively balanced (Blasi et al. 2006, Jost, 2010; Laurin, Kay & Shepherd, 2011).

For the advantaged group, system justification manifests itself positively in the sense that it does not allow the cognitive dissonance derived from their sense of deservedness to dilute the motive of system defense. People in this group perceive the system as the best of all systems and pride themselves with the idea that the system is legitimate, fair and rewarding of hard workers. People who share this tendency see the poor as lazy, "pitied but not entitled" and that they are responsible for their condition (Gordon, 1994). In this way, the advantaged group feels that they have preserved the system and "satisfied the system justification motive" (Blasi & Jost, 2006, p. 1130).

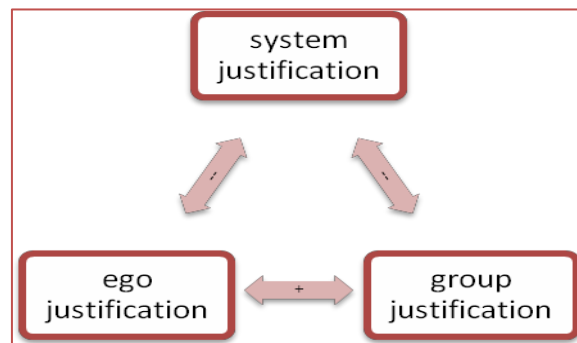


Figure 14. Disadvantaged group

Figure 14 is also adapted from the same source - Burgess & Mosso as used by Jost (2010) in figure 13 above. For the members of the disadvantaged groups, on the other hand, ego, group and system justification motives are in conflict and contradict each other. For example, according to Jost (2010), African Americans who believe that inequality in society is fair and necessary will continue to suffer low-self esteem, and will be in ambivalent relations with members of their in-group. In other words, they are in a horizontal conflict with one another (Jost, 2007). Figure 14 above shows that two of the arrows are marked with negative signs and the horizontal one with positive sign. They signify that different people make different choices in resolving their dissonance. They are bound to conflict and contradict each other in their approach to dissonance resolution. To some people, the system is fair and to some others, it is unfair. Unlike the advantaged groups, the disadvantaged are not consistent. People who belong to a disadvantaged group are considered the 'losers,' the unintelligent and the undeserving. They are more likely to "face greater psychological challenges, because dissonance arises from the conflict among ego, group, and system justification motives" (Blasi et al. 2006, p. 1130). In their ambivalent type of relation with the members of their in-group, those who are from the disadvantaged group are more likely to prefer people who are members of the dominant group thereby supporting the system that is enslaving them (Blasi & Jost, 2006; Jost, 2007; Liviatan & Jost, 2011). Blasi et al. (2006) further states: "If individuals had no system justification motives, then anyone who was disadvantaged on either an individual or group basis would, given the slightest opportunity, challenge the system and reject it as unfair and exploitative: "I am deserving . My group is deserving. If we are suffering then it must be the fault of others or the system in which we are trapped" (p. 1130). This hardly happens because people are always

rationalizing their actions, their interests, the actions of groups they are part of, and even systems they did not choose or know much about (Blasi & Jost. 2006).

Reasons for Stereotyping

People use stereotypes to justify social systems for many reasons. They are most likely to stereotype when the mind is busy. Hence, from a series of experimental studies, it is said that “cognitive busyness may decrease the likelihood that a particular stereotype will be activated but increase the likelihood that an activated stereotype will be applied”. Stereotypes can be activated when one’s ego is depleted and when one’s self concept is threatened. Studied from the contexts of motivational, socio-cultural, and cognitive perspectives, stereotyping and prejudice can be said to be a common means of maintaining self image. In system justification theory, stereotypes are applied as rationales to justify “beliefs in a just world” (Stapel & Noordewier, 2011, p. 239) and to rationalize the status quo (Jost & Banaji, 1994). According to Allport (1954), we have the tendency: “... to solve problems easily. We can do so best if we can fit them rapidly into a satisfactory category and use this category as a means of prejudging the solution.... So long as we can get away with coarse overgeneralizations we tend to do so. Why? Well, it takes less effort, and effort, except in the area of our most intense interests, is disagreeable” (pp. 20- 21). We simply lump issues into some kind of mental category and only give serious attention in processing and analyzing the issues when we have some vested interest. Otherwise, we simply categorize and tag them one way or another, stereotypically.

The salient point about system justification is not that people always believe in every aspect of social structure as legitimate and desirable in absolute terms. Rather, what is important is that “they hold more favorable attitudes toward the given structure than is warranted, given a dispassionate look at the system”(Stapel & Noordewier, 2011, p. 240).

Based on the fact that one is told that he or she is created equal and at the same time is treated as inferior and the fact that the very system that ‘manufactures’ the tools used in oppressing him or her is being justified is what leads to some mental dissonance.

The Dissonance Theory

Since according to Geschwender (1964), relative deprivation and rising expectation hypotheses are subsumed under the theory of Cognitive Dissonance, which is a social psychological theory that seeks to explain what disposes people to social movement or revolution. It would be appropriate to discuss what cognitive dissonance entails to understand better the relative deprivation and rising expectation hypotheses.

The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

The term dissonance implies the existence of conflicting relations among cognitions. Cognition, on the other hand, implies one’s knowledge, opinion, and belief about one’s environment, about oneself, and about one’s behavior (Lewin, 1954). The life style of a smoker will be used as an example to explain what cognitive dissonance means. Citing Aronson (1969), Kneer et al. (2012) asserts: “Healthy human beings have the need to perceive themselves as intelligent, reasonable, and decent people. Therefore, we strive to maintain a positive concept of ourselves even when we exhibit behavior or an attitude that contradicts this rosy self-image” (p. 81). Kneer et al. (2012) demonstrated the meaning of cognitive dissonance using the example of smokers. He opined that smokers are aware of the health-risks associated with their smoking habit (Kneer, Glock, & Rieger, 2012). Smokers know that smoking “contributes to many different diseases, for instance, lung cancer or circulatory disorders” (p. 81). He presents, therefore, the dilemma of smoking despite knowledge of its negative consequences when he asserts:

But smokers, too, do not want to harm their health on purpose or assume a negative self-concept due to unreasonable behavior. Therefore, smoking behavior and a health-related self concept are inconsistent with each other. Because the self is threatened when confronted with [one's] own unhealthy behavior, this conflict between attitude and behavior results in a negative drive state... Festinger (1957) defines such negative drive states as cognitive dissonance. The theory of cognitive dissonance is one of the most important and influential theories in social psychology... It describes how counter-attitudinal behavior results in cognitive dissonance. Such a state of mind is disturbing and motivates people to reduce their cognitive dissonance. Some theories of cognitive dissonance assume that the involvement of the self is crucial in dissonance processes. The smoker's dilemma is ideal for investigating cognitive dissonance processes because smokers are highly involved with their health-damaging behavior and the resulting negative consequences. Negative smoking-related information constantly reminds smokers of a discrepancy (Kneer, Glock, & Rieger, 2012, p. 81).

However, in the present study, more elements other than the self such as the environments and psycho-social structures are involved.

Elements of cognition and the state of dissonance

Elements of cognition are determined by reality. In other words, reality triggers cognition. Reality could be physical, social or psychological and elements of cognition are responsive to reality. Cognition mirrors or maps reality, which is a human construct (Schachter, 1994). Dissonance theory offers reasons for the temporal changes individuals make in mental attitude or in their environment. The simultaneous possession of three cognitions provides a fertile ground for the state of dissonance. The three cognitions are well expressed by Geschwender (1964) thus: "Changes in objective conditions produce a state of mind in which individuals believe that they are unjustly deprived of a better way of life. First, they develop the image of a state of affairs, which is possible of attainment. Second, they develop the belief that they are entitled to that state of affairs. Third, they know that they are not enjoying that state of affairs" (p.133). The simultaneous possession of these three cognitions, as said above, ensures a state of dissonance.

Festinger (1957) developed a set of ideas best known in psychology as the theory of cognitive dissonance. His work on the ideas of dissonance is an improvement on his “thinking about the social determinants of the evaluation of beliefs and abilities” (Schachter, 1994, p. 102). Time and again, Festinger (1957) emphasized the fact that pressures are needed to reduce discrepancies of opinion or ability among members of a group.

Reasons for dissonance theory

Dissonance theory was an effort to determine at a “purely cognitive level, the origin of such pressures,” that is, the pressures caused by holding two non-fitting cognitions. And the key hypothesis is that when incompatibilities exist between two or more ideas or cognitions, pressures will arise to reduce the discrepancy” (Schachter, 1994, pp. 102 – 103). Cognitive dissonance is an antecedent condition which could lead to activity oriented toward dissonance reduction just as hunger leads to activity oriented toward hunger reduction (Schachter, 1994). All dissonance relations are not of equal magnitude. If two elements are dissonant with one another, the magnitude of dissonance will be a function of the importance of the elements. The more these elements are important to, or valued by the person, the greater will be the magnitude of dissonant relations between them (Festinger, 1957). Two elements are said to be in a dissonant relation if, considering these two elements alone, the obverse of one element would follow from the other. For example, if a person knew that only friends live in his/her vicinity, yet he/she is afraid to live there, there would be a dissonant relation between these two cognitive elements – knowing that friends are not enemies and fearing to live in their midst. Motivations and desired consequences may also be very important factors in determining if two elements are dissonant (Lewin, 1954). For example, a woman may be motivated to work hard so that if anything should happen to her husband, she expects to be independent and be treated with respect just like any

human person. But if the second desire for fair and respectful treatment does not follow from the hard work when her husband dies, then, elements of her cognition are dissonant. She would probably seek for a way to reduce the dissonance because consonance is preferred to dissonance. According to Berkowitz (1969), the theory of cognitive dissonance as originated by Festinger (1957) is quite primitive because it lacks elegance and precision as associated with more recent scientific theorizing. However, its impact has been unqualifiedly great. It is widely applied in the field of social psychology (Berkowitz, 1969). The core of the theory is extremely simple: “Dissonance is a negative drive state which occurs whenever an individual simultaneously holds two cognitions (ideas, beliefs, opinions) which are psychologically inconsistent” (Berkowitz, 1969, p. 2).

At this point, it is important to note how Festinger (1957) interchanged words for each other so as to understand their subsequent application in the current project. Inconsistency could be replaced with a less logical term dissonance, consistency with a neutral word consonance and incongruity meaning the same thing as dissonance. Again, as said before, state of consonance is preferred to the state of dissonance.

Seeking for a consonant state

When one seeks for a balance or a harmonious state in one’s pursuit of need satisfaction, one is looking for a state characterized by multiple relations which mesh together (Berkowitz, 1969; Festinger, 1957). In a situation where “...no balanced state exists, then forces toward the (balanced) state will arise. Either there will be a tendency to change the sentiments involved or the unit of relations will be changed through action or cognitive reorganization. If a change is not possible, the state of imbalance will produce tension, and the balanced state will be preferred over the state of imbalance” (Festinger, 1957, pp. 8-9).

Citing Osgood and Tannenbaum, Festinger (1957) spoke about the “principle of congruity” (p. 9). The principle states that “changes in evaluation are always in the direction of increased congruity with the existing frame of reference” (p. 9). Frame of reference refers to the society in which one lives as well as its system of values. Evaluation has to do with assessing the way individuals make their achievements within a society and how the society rewards them. Festinger (1957) cited Osgood and Tannenbaum as saying that incongruity or cognitive dissonance “is produced by the knowledge that a person or other source of information which a subject regards positively (or negatively) supports an opinion which the subject regards negatively (or positively)” (p. 9). In a situation like this, there is “a marked tendency to change either the evaluation of the opinion involved or the evaluation of the source in a direction which would reduce dissonance” (Festinger, 1957, p. 9). Festinger (1957) also holds that the direction of change and the amount of change in evaluation of dissonance reduction are the direct function of the measurement of attitudes toward the sources and toward the opinions together with measurement of how resistant each of these is to change. Of importance is the fact that there is a pressure to produce consonant relations among cognitions, and to avoid and to reduce dissonance.

The condition of the nonwhites relative to the whites in the United States of America in the 60's, captures well the nature of antecedating dissonance reflected in the struggle the nonwhites went through, mentally and otherwise, to resolve their dissonance. With the insights derived from the theory of cognitive dissonance, I will now examine relative deprivation and rising expectation hypotheses, using the relation of nonwhites to the whites in America as a living example of the theory. Most movements in the 60s, were the result of efforts by individuals or groups of individuals to resolve conflicting and frustrating dissonance arising from

the way they were treated. The explication of these hypotheses will highlight our understanding of the lived experience of the widows under study.

Relative Deprivation, Rising Expectation and Status Inconsistency in Social Movements

James C. Davis was acclaimed to be the first to formulate a “theory of societal conditions” leading to revolutions (Geschwender, 1964a). His formulations, however, had two major weaknesses. First, he was overly concerned with the description of revolutions instead of providing grounds for understanding the pre-conditions that lead to such revolutions. Second, his inability to detect “two separate but related problems” which entails, first, finding out “those factors which dispose specific individuals or types of individuals to take part in revolutionary activity,” and second, attempting “to ascertain those factors which produce a revolution at a particular time and place” (p. 127). Those two problems require different types of information as explained below.

The former requires a theory of motivation which predicts that individual experiencing certain specified conditions will manifest the behavioral response of revolutionary activity. It would further require the ability to document the existence of instantiations or examples of the classes of preconditions called for in the motivational theory. The second problem requires an explanation in terms of conditions which disrupt the normal societal or institutional processes operating at a given time. (Geschwender, 1964a, p.127). The two problems can be elucidated further by “assuming that revolutions occurring at a particular time and place are the final product of intra-and-inter-individual expressions of revolutionary activity of sufficient intensity

Relative deprivation, rising expectations and status inconsistency, among other hypotheses, were used in theories of social movements as explanatory vehicles. Their use fell into “disfavor and disrepute” in the 1980s because of the devastating review by some scholars Those scholars

pointed out the three phases necessary for understanding revolutions as gatherings, demonstrations and riots. The three phases begin with assemblings and end with a dispersal phase. And the three events are marked by different “forms and content of individual and collective behaviors that occur in the interim phase when a number of people are in the same locale at the same time”(McPhail & Wohlstein, 1983).

Subsequent social movement research relied on resource mobilization theory which explained when and why people engage in collective behavior by focusing on the fact that people within problematic situations band together to find a way to solve their problems by minimizing failure and maximizing success. (McPhail & Wohlstein, 1983). In the 1990s, a rediscovery of relative deprivation was made and integrated into theories of collective behavior such as social identity theory, social comparison theory and distributive justice theory. The number of pre-conditions necessary for one to be experiencing relative deprivation is limited to two which reads: “wanting what one does not have, and feeling that one deserves whatever it is one wants, but does not have”(Geschwender, 1964).

The Irony of Social Movement

Toqueville and Brinton were quoted by Taylor (1982) as saying: “Common sense suggests that if people are happy when times are good, they should be happier when times are better” (p. 24). Yet social movements appear to defy this logic. It is observed that “political unrest often follows a period of improving conditions...suggesting that objective increment must somehow create subjective decrement” (Taylor, 1982, p. 24). This illustrates that peoples’ expectations or what is called the subjective standards far exceed what is real or objective when there has been relative improvement in conditions. There is a gap between what is real and what one is desiring, aspiring to or expecting. And this is the basis for discontentment (Taylor, 1982).

The discontentment, therefore, is due to the non-linear association of one's subjective expectation with what is objective. That feeling of discontentment when collectively experienced, fuels social tensions. According to Blau and Abramovitz (2010), the tensions are often caused by unmet needs and they "accumulate until they bring about change in social policy" that addresses those social problems (pp. 12 -13).

Sources of expectations

According to Taylor (1982, p. 24) the subjective standards of comparison variously described as "aspirations, expectations or feelings of deserveness are said to derive from two sources" which are (1) reference groups and (2) "one's own past experience" (p.24). Economists and social psychologists studying aspirations and expectations both in general or in laboratory settings know that individuals and groups are objectively comparing their positions to others in a similar condition (Fuchs & Landsberger, 1971). For example, a union leader may be comparing his group aspirations with reference to those groups of union leaders in the same geographical zone, those in a similar industry and of the same sized plant. We presume that wages will differ according to geographical zones and as such wage aspirations will differ. Subjective frames of reference using the union leader example, when taking into account the three different ways that determine aspirations, will discover that the union leader's aspirations will be more like "those of his colleagues and different from the aspirations of union leaders in other zones, other industries, and other plants of a different sizes" (p. 217). A sense of dissonance arises when one compares a subjective situation to objective one. There are bound to be some incongruities since companies are not the same and are of varied sizes and may have different profit situations. This is where the idea of relative deprivation sets in (Geschwender, 1964).

Relative Deprivation(RD) and the Widening Gap in Social Space

There is no scholarly agreement regarding the origin of the idea of relative deprivation in the United States of America. For some people, it goes back to the time of slavery. For some others, it began with Rosa Park on December 1, 1955 when it was reported that she refused to concede her seat on a bus to a white person in the state of Alabama (Geschwender, 1964a).

Though the origin of relative deprivation is shrouded in the dark, efforts were made to understand how it operates. Some longitudinal measures of financial experience, financial expectations and satisfaction were used to test a key “proposition of past/present relative deprivation theories” (Taylor, 1982, p.24). The effort was to find supporting evidence for the relative deprivation predictions. None of the tests yielded credible evidence in support of how relative deprivation operates. The gap between expectations and actual outcome did not result in the anticipated satisfaction due to the fact that expectations grow more rapidly than what was real (Taylor, 1982). In other words, peoples’ elevated expectations, based on their past experience, are not always satisfied by what is actually the case in real life situation. According to Taylor (1982), Davies’ (1969) best known attempt in explaining “the association of improving conditions and social discontent”, using what he described as “J-curve hypothesis,” involves some psychological mechanisms which suggests that: “expectations represent extrapolation from earlier experience; when past successes have promoted elevated expectations but “actual need satisfaction drops, the gap between them may become intolerable and result in revolutionary activity” (p. 24). Geschwender’s (1964) rising expectation hypothesis proposes according to Taylor (1982) that “improvement in material situation will be accompanied by exponential growth in expectations, and thus by dissatisfaction” (p. 24). Using the events of the 1960s in the U.S., the researcher will summarize in the latter section of this chapter the most recent investigations, which have improved on the previous ones regarding what motivates

individuals/groups to collective action., The events of the 1960s provide an excellent example for seeing human experience, expectations and feelings of deservingness enact the relative deprivation and rising expectation hypotheses. Moreover, the analyses of those events assist in explaining the situation of participant widows in the present study.

In the United States of America, in the 60s, the study of the condition of African Americans and the objective structural conditions of the time were examined to provide a sociological interpretation of relative deprivation. In doing this, five structural hypotheses were derived from the study of sociological literature. The derived hypotheses suggest that the position of the non-whites regarding their level of education, the type of occupations they could access and the amount of income they earn were improving. The non-whites are defined as Blacks, Hispanics and Asians. Relative to whites, the nonwhites were found to be improving their positions with regard to the three factors mentioned above (Geschwender, 1964a).

As these improvements were obvious, the nonwhites felt that their feelings of deservingness were not in direct relation with their improved conditions, relative to the whites. The nonwhites were found relative to the whites to be holding middle status occupations but not upper status occupations. Despite the improvement, ironically, the Blacks fell much behind the whites in income (Geschwender, 1964a; M. C. Taylor, 1982). Investigating this anomaly, it was discovered that the “blockages of social mobility” are the bases for relative deprivation predisposing people toward joining in collective action (Geschwender, 1964 p.30). People’s subjective expectations do not rhyme with the objective reality.

In a similar but different context, western anthropologists and economists interested in developing countries stunned the world with their presentation of a diametrically opposed understanding of how the mass population of African laborers reacts to the rising expectation or

traditional life ways (Fuchs & Landsberger, 1973). Contrary to expectations, it was hypothesized that people in developing countries aspire to no more than a traditionally fixed standard of living. They further stated that some African tribal situations have actually reached that fixed standard traditionally (Fuchs & Landsberger, 1973). The above idea is well captured by the following quotation by Berg (1961) in the following words:

Few discussions of labor supply in underdeveloped countries fail to bring up the backward-sloping labor supply function. Wage earners in newly developing countries are alleged to have relatively low want schedules or high preference for leisure as against income, so that they work less at higher wage rates and more at lower ones. In the underdeveloped world, and notably in Africa, this has been the almost universal opinion of foreign employers of native labor, an opinion shared by outside observers. It was no less common a view in eighteenth century England, where a typical complaint was that “If a person can get sufficient in four days to support himself for seven days, he will keep holiday the other three; that is, he will live in riot and debauchery”(p. 468).

Berg (1961), criticizing the backward-sloping labor theory, argued that if an increased incentive makes people lazy, and reduced incentive makes them industrious, then it all means that in the developing world, labor is inversely associated with the rate of wages – meaning that “labor supply functions are backward-sloping” (Berg, 1961 p. 469). On the other hand, Berg (1961) strongly went against this thought line when he stated that the theory was not systematically analyzed. He found two faults with the proponents of this backward-sloping theory. First, he argued that those anthropologists and economists did not make a clear-cut distinction between the past and the present. As such, they mistake “contemporary nonindustrial societies as ideal types of pre-industrial societies untouched by contact with the market economy” (Berg, 1961, pp. 469 – 470). He further stated that irrespective of how sporadic or tangential the contact these societies had with the outside world, the reason for the transitions they have is traceable to two or three generational contacts with outside world. Berg (1961) believes that people of the developing world “have consequently undergone changes which have made them responsive to

the money economy outside the villages” (p. 470). Second, the confusion inherent in this theory is that the concept of labor supply was not properly defined. As noted in the book, the labor supply concept is described as fussy because nobody knows whether the labor supply was that of aggregate or individual persons (Berg, 1961, p. 470). The fussiness is compounded when one compares the labor supply in the industrial world with that in the nonindustrial world. The industrial world involves a mass of people whereas for most African workers “the quantity of wage labor offered by the individual African tends to be inversely related to changes in village income and changes in wage rates in the exchange sector” (Berg, 1961, p. 491). At last, it was obvious that the search for job mobility and higher pay led most Africans to abandon the “traditional standard of living” which the initial researchers said had a fixed standard of living Berg (1961) correctly observed that the idea of a fixed standard of living for non-industrial Africans is unimaginable. Otherwise, the truism that human beings have insatiable needs would be true for every other people except Africans who prefer leisure to having more gain. Seeing the dissonance arising from relative deprivation and rising expectation hypotheses that follow improved conditions, scholars came up with some explanatory hypotheses

Explanatory hypotheses

Five sociological hypotheses were deployed to examine the empirical evidence pertaining to the living conditions of African Americans in the 1960s. The import of the findings can also be extended to developing countries since it has been proved that there is nothing like a fixed standard of traditional way of life beyond which people in the developing countries reject (Fuchs & Landsberger, 1973, p. 212). Of these five hypotheses, three were harmonized to form the theories of Relative Deprivation and Rising Expectations. These three were found to be

consistent with the data because they have a common theme running through them. The other two were found to be inconsistent with the data (Geschwender, 1964a).

For relevance purposes, I will state and elaborate on only three hypotheses that led to relative deprivation and rising expectation hypotheses.

The ordering sequence of the hypotheses does not imply any special hierarchy and, as such, the first in order of arrangement is not more important than the last. Three of the five hypotheses are harmonized or reconciled in the sense that a common theme running through them provides better rationale for understanding what predisposes/motivates individuals/groups toward collective action or revolution. Precisely, the one single common denominator states that: “Changes in objective conditions cause feelings of relative deprivation, which, in turn, produce a tendency toward protest and rebellion” (Geschwender, 1964b, p. 248).

The first of the harmonized hypotheses is called “The Rising Expectations Hypothesis” and it states: “*As a group experiences an improvement in its conditions of life it will also experience a rise in its level of desire. The latter will rise more rapidly than the former, leading to dissatisfaction and rebellion*” (Geschwender, 1964, p.128). According to Geschwender (1964) individuals who engage in protest and agitation do so based on the perceived “intolerable gap between a state of affairs believed possible and desirable and a state of affairs actually existing.” As mentioned by Geschwender (1964), Davies gave a brilliant example of this phenomenon with Dorr’s Rebellion where women revolted in 1842 demanding for their suffrage. The protest was as a result of a decline that followed a manifest improvement in the socio-economic conditions of women at the time. In fact (Geschwender, 1964), “the mere decline in the rate of improvement in the level of need satisfaction was sufficient to produce a gap between expectations and experience great enough to be considered intolerable by some” (p. 128). In a similar situation,

the study of the commonalities underlying Puritan, Russian, French and American revolutions (Geschwender, 1964 p.129) suggests that “experiencing of a period of improvement yields the expectation of, and desire for, further improvements. When these come too slowly, rebellion follows.”

The third American Revolution – the 'Negro' Revolution, when the growing reign of protest erupted in the United States, is a typical example of the rising expectation tendency. It was reminiscent of French Revolution of 1789 and England in the 1830s of Chartist movement. Those were the eras when “submerged social groups” (King, 1963) driven by the burning need for justice moved with a “majestic scorn for risk and danger, created an uprising so powerful that it shook a huge society from its comfortable base” (p. 2). The early 60s Civil Rights movement was when over 300 years of humiliation, abuse and deprivation could no longer find “voice in a whisper” (King, 1963, p. 2). Deprivation of social mobility within the social space of American society due to the tall barrier of discrimination elicited strong opposition from the African Americans of the time. King (1963) brilliantly illustrated the reason for the Negro protest when he wrote about the desegregation of schools thus:

The Negro had been deeply disappointed over the slow pace of school desegregation. He knew that in 1954 the highest court in the land had handed down a decree calling for desegregation of schools “with all deliberate speed.” He knew that this edict from the Supreme Court had been heeded with all deliberate delay. At the beginning of 1963, nine years after the historic decision, approximately 9 per cent of southern Negro students were attending integrated schools. If this pace were maintained, it would be the year 2054 before integration in southern schools would be a reality (p. 4).

The content of the above quotation illustrates well the frustration of the Negro as a result of “the pendulum swing between the elation that arose when the edict was handed down and the despair that followed the failure to bring it to life” (King, 1963, p. 5). This is why the African Americans

could no longer wait because their oppressors were not ready to set the oppressed free, and as such, the oppressed has to wrestle for their rights (King, 1963).

The second of the harmonized hypotheses is: “The Sophisticated Marxist Hypothesis” otherwise called “The Relative Deprivation Hypothesis” which is worded thus: “*As a group experiences an improvement in its conditions of life and simultaneously observes a second group experiencing a more rapid rate of improvement, it will become dissatisfied with its rate of improvement and rebel*” (Geschwender, 1964, p.129).

Marx suggested that workers compare their material improvement to the objective improvement in the society. He stated that when workers become restless due to the discrepancy between the improvement of material conditions of their lives and the poor or slow satisfaction of their desired expectations they are likely to revolt. This is to say that workers are comparing the subjective standards of their living conditions with objective standards which had been established through class-consciousness. Revolutions result from a set of changes in the objective conditions of people like alienation of labor and development of class-consciousness as Marx would say (Geschwender, 1964a, 1964b). When there is a gap between what the workers feels they should receive and “what they actually receive,” and as the discrepancy mounts, there is a possibility of revolution (Geschwender, 1964a, p. 129).

Deprivation hypothesis shows that tendency to favor “structural explanations of inequalities correlates with lower social status. Being female, having a low income or experiencing long spells of unemployment might thus result in choosing structural explanations over individualistic ones” (Kreidl, 2000, p. 156). On the other hand, individuals with higher social status are less likely to be concerned with issues of inequalities because the structure benefits them (Kreidl, 2000). A number of studies have shown that “economic insecurity, uncertainty of job,

unemployment, low wages...increase “class consciousness,” and militant attitude of workers and affect political attitudes and behavior” (Kreidl, 2000, p. 153).

The third of the hypothesis of the harmonized theory which has a special significance is called “The Status Inconsistency Hypothesis,” and is stated thus: *A group which possesses a number of status attributes which are differently ranked on the various status hierarchies will be dissatisfied and prone toward rebellion* (Geschwender, 1964, p. 131). The simple way of saying this is that a person’s social positions may have positive and negative influence on his or her social status. For example, in some communities all over the world, a woman may be very intelligent and demonstrates all leadership qualities to run a community, but when it comes to electing people to positions, people will admire all the qualities but will never elect her because she is a woman. Again, a young white man may be in love with a beautiful and good mannered young Black woman, the boy’s parents may admire the beauty and decency of the girl but will try to obstruct the relationship because she is Black.

The idea of status inconsistency as developed by Lenski, gave rise to a possibility of analyzing “a nontemporal source of this discrepancy” (1964, p. 131). The other two hypotheses have elements of temporal change as their essential part. They did tell us how change in the status positions of people over time could “give rise to a belief in the possibility and justice of an improvement in circumstances” (Geschwender, 1964b, p. 131). On the other hand, status inconsistency has nothing temporal about it. It is more of a discrediting attribute/stigma given to a sub-group of people that can lead to some dissatisfaction producing revolution or protest. The attitude given to women often times as illustrated above is a good example. There is bound to be tension in an unequally structured society. The generation of an unequal structured society “...is based on the assumption that an erratic profile will reflect areas of blockage of mobility

opportunities” (Geschenwender, 1964, p. 131). Another good example illustrating status inconsistent is the fact of being a woman when it comes to the sharing of landed property among the Igbo people of Nigeria. The fact that one is a woman disqualifies her from inheriting any landed property. This discrediting attribute of being a woman, and the consequent denial of inheriting landed properties creates discrepancy. Such discrepant mental conflicts are the source of protest and revolution in many Igbo families today. On the other hand, “if a group’s mobility were strictly determined by the abilities and initiatives of its individual members, it would be expected to move up in all status hierachies at corresponding rates. If their mobility in one dimension lags behind others it indicates the existence of impediments to free mobility. These impediments tend to create tensions which could produce protest activity” (Geschwender, 1964, p. 131). Advocates of these concepts believe that it has consequences for social action that may not be determined easily from the “vertical” dimension of the status as such. This suggests that any real determination of people’s reaction in their varied social conditions has to go beyond the parallel ranking nature of the series of status to some possible interactional effects by other probable influencing factors. The concept as introduced by Gerhard Lenski in the 1950s has remained controversial because of its weak empirical verifiability. Lenski (1954) predicted that people who consider themselves as suffering from status inconsistency are more likely to fight the system that oppress them. He further holds that status inconsistency can be used to explain why status groups made up of wealthy minorites will tend to be liberals or progressives as understood in this research. A classic example is the condition of the Jews in the 1950s and 1960s, whereby the American Jews who had better education and were more affluent than average, were subjected to discrimination in so many ways (Lenski,1954). They needed to be more progressive to free themselves from the tyranny of the majority. The degrading treatment of

the Jews does not follow from their status as well educated and wealthy group of people. The created dissonance will lead to tension and consequent efforts to reduce or resolve the degree of dissonance.

Sorokin, quoted by Geschwender (1964a) used a term called “moribonded stratification” to establish the relation between status inconsistency and revolutionary activity. Stratification according to him can be described in two ways – the affine and disaffine strata. Affine strata are those people whose multiple bonds lead them to think alike and embody same type of behavior or mindset. The disaffine strata are those whose bonds are “innerly contradictory”(Geschwender, 1964, p. 131). Such innerly contradictory bonds would entail people who are high in occupation but racially or ethnically low or racially high but as far as economic status goes, low. Geschwender (1964) asserts that “the simultaneous appearance in a population of two double disaffine groups is a symptom which portends revolutionary change” (Geschwender, 1994, pp. 131- 132). The French Revolution was used as an example of this double disaffine. According to Geschwender (1964a), the nobility was politically powerful but had little economic wealth, whereas the third estate was a wealthy group with little or no political power. The French Revolution is the result of the decomposition of these two double disaffine strata and the foundation for two new affine strata (Geschwender, 1964).

The disparate nature of these hypotheses necessitated the introduction of social theories such as identity social theory and Homan’s distributive theory of justice to soften the differences and to expand our understanding of the process of social movements.

Expanded theory

Expanded theory is an effort at reconciling the apparent contradictions that there are in the human society. Using the subject matter of this project as an example, it would be a resolved

contradiction, in the Igbo society, to allow a woman as a person to take care of her family in the event of her husband's death by inheriting whatever is due to her husband. This example is one among many inconsistencies in the human society.

Nevertheless, one cannot always explain away or successfully rationalize to oneself all inconsistencies (Festinger, 1957). For example, one might hold that all African Americans are as good as the white people yet at the back of one's mind is the strongly rooted watch word "NIMBY" (not in my back yard). In other words, one would not like any of Black persons to live in one's neighbourhood even though one thinks of them as good as white people. Again, one might say that all peoples are created equal but would go out of one's way to subjugate and deprive a widow what is due to her in the name of tradition. For instance, the discrepancy in rationalization of inconsistency is well captured by Festinger's (1957) classical example of how people explain away their inconsistent lives with the idea of smoking as mentioned before.

Congruent series of expectations suggest the development of satisfying patterns of social interaction and incongruent sets of expectations thwart this development (Geschwender, 1964, 1967; Homans, 1961). The reconciliation of the opposites has led to expanded theory.

Assumptions from the expanded theory

There are seven derived assumptions offered by Geschwender (1964a) from the expanded theory which results from the resolution and analysis of the consistent status and inconsistent status through the integration of other social theories that will highlight the social psychology of collective action theory. I will summarize them into three aspects as Geschwender describes them emphasizing what is most important to this project.

First, cognition maps reality. Perception of one's status in the educational, occupational, income, and ethnic hierarchies constitute "reality-based cognitions" (Geschwender, 1964, p.132).

Definitional cognition is seen from the ethnicity perspective as an ascribed investment, education is understood as an achieved investment, occupation as a social reward, and income as a material reward. Furthermore, the normative cognitions involve the belief that rewards given are commensurate to investment made (Geschwender, 1964a). Second, because dissonance is upsetting, people seek for ways to reduce it either by altering their cognitions by adding new ones or removing old ones. Efforts to change these cognitions might imply changing the society or the world. And third, status inconsistency leads to protest or revolutions when people feel short-changed in that the rewards they receive from their investment are less than what they desired to get (Geschwender, 1964a).

Predictions from the expanded theory

Furthermore, these derived assumptions help in making some specific behavioral predictions regarding some status inconsistency. It may also help determine how the social changes in the socioeconomic conditions may contribute to the origin of social movements. Below are some of the predictions derived from the assumptions as recorded by Geschwender (1967).

1. Perceptions of the present socioeconomic circumstances, past socioeconomic circumstances and the time lapsed between the two constitute the reality-based cognitions. Preferable to the lower level of socioeconomic standard will be a higher level of socioeconomic circumstances.
2. People whose present socioeconomic circumstances are higher than their past conditions are conscious of the fact of improvement they have made. This awareness of improved condition will make them see another improvement as possible and desirable. The discrepancy between anticipated future circumstances and present circumstances will produce dissonance.

3. There will be comparative tendencies between the self and the relevant reference groups. The reality-based cognitions will focus on the perceptions of present and past socioeconomic statuses of relevant reference groups. Any perceived discrepancies in the rates of progress is bound to produce dissonance.
4. When the present socioeconomic circumstances are in a 'ditch' compared to the past circumstances, one feels the worsening conditions of the present and becomes afraid of further deterioration. A comparison of the present and the past socioeconomic circumstances will produce dissonance.
5. When sufficient power is mustered, an individual's effort is directed at changing the society as an attempt to reduce dissonance. A rightist direction may be taken when present circumstances are worse than the past circumstances and a leftist direction is taken when the present circumstances are at higher level than the past conditions.
6. The intensity of dissonance experienced, has an obverse relation to the time span when the discrepancies developed and will have a linear relation to the size of the discrepancies. This means that the time span during which the discrepancy developed, will be inversely proportional to the intensity of dissonance experienced and the intensity of dissonance experienced will be "proportional to the size of the discrepancies." Furthermore, the intensity of change will be directly proportional to the intensity of the dissonance (Geschwender, 1964a, p. 133).
7. "Change-oriented, dissonance-reducing attempts on the part of status inconsistencies will take a rightist orientation when high ethnic status is combined with lower levels of occupation or income: they will take a leftist orientation when high educational status is combined with a lower level of occupation or income" (Geschwender, 1964, pp. 132-133).

One of the major weaknesses of the status consistency theory is “its use of structural characteristic predicting behavioral consequences without an explicitly stated social-psychological theory of motivation to account for these predictions (Geschwender, 1967). This is one of the reasons why other social theories were introduced to account for the social psychology. The theory of distributive justice considers the fact that participants in relationship are cognizant of the justice involved in such relationships and will “engage in behavior to ensure continued justice” (Schafer & Klonglan, 1974, p. 199). This adds a new explanatory dimensions to theories of human interaction such that equity in human relations is evaluated by the actors. (Schafer & Klonglan, 1974).

Paradigmatic Shift

According to Geschwender (1964a), some prominent scholars in the 1960s showed that when people feel deprived of some entitlements, they become discontented. The feeling of discontent is made real when they compare themselves to others and discover that they have less than what they expect they should have. Relative deprivation is used in social sciences to describe economic, political and social deprivation that are not absolute. It is temporal in that people in time and place will never be equally rich or powerful among other social values. However, when comparing oneself to others, one may perceive injustice upon detecting disparity. The feeling of inequality has important consequences for behavior and attitudes especially when it comes to engaging in collective action or social movements

However, later, some other critical scholars were dissatisfied with the theoretical approach applied in the study of dissonance created from individual discontent with their position comparing tendencies in the social structure of the time. Some of the opponents went as

far as describing the social psychology applied in the study of social protest as “stultifying” and a “straightjacket” (Gamson, 1992, p. 53).

Social Movement theory as a focus

Social movement theory wore a new face in the 1970s in the United States of America because of the emergence of what is known as resource mobilization (RM) perspective (Ferree, 1992). In this period, three fold efforts were made regarding an explosion of interest in the theoretical and empirical study of social movements and collective action (Morris & Herring, 1984). The resurgence of this interest generated new energy which was systematically channelled to three areas of concern. Efforts were directed at 1) reviewing and evaluating theories and research on social movements and collective actions among so many other areas. 2) examining whether a fundamental shift was made in the understanding of the theories of these research areas. 3) finding ways to resolve some theoretical problems and setting a sure foundation for future investigation in these areas (Morris & Herring, 1984).

The availability of scholarly review articles in these areas gave credence to the fact that something new was taking place in these fields. Review articles on collective behaviors (Marx & Wood, 1975) and deprivation articles (Rummel, 1977) with heightened national and international awareness of increased social movements, riots and protest in this generation (Marx & Wood, 1975) addressed the issue of paradigm shift in social movements or collective action theories.

A conscious and deliberate criticism was made against the collective behavior studies of the previous decades by proponents of resource mobilization. Those who championed the cause of resource mobilization theory relied much on organizational theories as they resisted traditional social psychological explanations for individuals participating in social movements. They believe that the spontaneity of social movement activities, its disorganized nature and the

irrationality of the participants are not true benchmarks for understanding or studying social movements (Ferree, 1992). Attention was focused on the material resources the individuals command instead of the social psychology of the participants. And the absence of values, grievances, and ideology in the classical traditional model of collective actions was perceived as problematic (Ferree, 1992). Microeconomic theory of rational choice was introduced into the study of collective action. It suggests that individuals are always maximizing their benefits while at the same time reducing costs. Critics of microeconomic theory of rational choice described the introduction as a “Trojan Horse” that needs to be taken with a caveat. Klandermans (1988a) and Gamson (1979), as mentioned by Ferree (1992), observed that the application of the theory of microeconomic rational choice raised some sentiments of opposition. Basically, its lack of ideology in its “basic model,” “plausible account of values” and “grievances” constitutes problems that are even recognized by those “working within that approach” (Ferree, 1992, p. 29). Caution is needed in appropriating the microeconomic theory of rational choice because its definition of rationality is simplistic and misleading (Ferree, 1992). The fact that the individuals’ motivation for participating in any social movement has to deal, on a broader bases, with intra and interpersonal considerations as stated by the proponents of classical relative deprivation theory projects microeconomic theory of rational choice as presenting only half truth. (Ferree, 1992). It offers “no rule for measuring preferences independent of choices made” (Taylor, 1998, p.30). Sociologically, according to Taylor (1988), rationality theory succeeded in impoverishing human nature in its dehumanizing assumptions. Spontaneity, unpredictability, selflessness, plurality of values and reciprocal influences among many other constituting traits of individuals were not taken into consideration by microeconomic theory. Rational choice supporters made human nature a coin with one side. In Aristotlean terms, they divorced form from the matter.

Based on these facts, critics rejected the microeconomic theory of rational choice for trivializing human nature.

Time and again, those who romanticized the idea of a shift from the classical collective action theory, presented a decontextualized view of the individuals insofar as they excluded power structure, social stratification, personality traits and attitudes as domains that belong to other disciplines (Ferree, 1992). Rational theory has many consequences that have led to, first, "...a neglect of value differences and conflicts, second, a misplaced emphasis on the free-rider problem, and third, a presupposition of a pseudo-universal human actor without either a personal history or a gender, race, or class position within a societal history" (Ferree, 1992, p. 31). In addition, neoclassical economists tend to act with colonial mentality by insisting that other disciplines continue to use the microeconomic analysis of self-interest. However, their perception of a decontextualized person without history is not realistic (Hirschman, 1986).

Cracks in the two theories

When the theories of social psychology, as understood by classical collective action and resource mobilization were compared, it was discovered that both have to seal up some 'cracks' in their systems. Regarding social psychology, for instance, it was noted that social problems are not always objective phenomena and cannot always inevitably generate a social movement (Ferree, 1992). Resource mobilization theory acknowledged this when it asserted that resources play an important role in generation of social movements. However, the resource mobilization theory did not take into account the "mediating processes through which people attribute meaning to events and interpret situations" (Klandermans, 1992, p. 77). On the other hand, scholars of social movements are increasingly accepting the fact that reality is a map of one's perception. The study of social movement from the social constructionist's perspective is the

scholarly way to go (Klandermans, 1992). The understanding of the concept of relative deprivation, basically, goes beyond mental cognition to the environmental context and evaluation (Frank, 2007). By the inclusion of the environmental context to mental cognition, Festinger's (1957) criticism of the relative deprivation as 'fussy' is better understood.

Theory Reconciliation

According to Janz (2004), the gap between the concept of collective action theory and resource mobilization theory can be likened to that between the realist and anti-realist. (The realists denote the resource mobilization theorists while anti-realists denote the collective action theorists). The realist "undertakes a defence of rationality based on some version of realism's most essential corollary, the correspondence theory of truth. The anti-realist or idealist undertakes a defence of rationality based on some version of anti-realism's most essential corollary, the coherence theory of truth or what is now often called a "holist theory of truth" (p. 59). Janz (2004) refers to an anti-realist as an 'internalist' because it makes "the interpretation of reality perceiver-dependent and thus in some way is "internal' to perception." In addition, he also refers to realism as 'externalist' in disposition because it allows for existence independent of perception ('external' to perception). Correspondence theory states that a statement "is true if it 'matches' or corresponds accurately to some picked-out feature of reality or the world, where the world is understood as existing independently of and externally to any perception of it or belief about it" (Janz, 2004, p. 61). On the other hand, coherence or holist theory is said to be true if it 'fits' or 'coheres' within a given system of established beliefs or within a given cognitive picture" (Janz, 2004). Analogically, Janz (2004) synthesized the two ideas using the words of Hilary Putnam thus:

I shall advance a view in which the mind does not simply 'copy' a world which admits of description by One True Theory. But my view is not a view in which

the mind makes up the world either...If one must use metaphorical language, then let the metaphor be this: the mind and the world jointly make up the mind and the world...Vision [for example] does not give us direct access to ready made world but gives us a description of objects which are partly structured and constituted by vision itself...Vision is 'good' when it enables us to see the world 'as it is' – that is, the human, functional world which is partly created by vision itself (p. 61).

The metaphorical assertion in the above quotation is a brilliant effort to capture the simultaneously existing duality of external and internal realities; that the mind and the world jointly make up the mind and the world. Perception is not only dependent on the perceiver, but is greatly influenced by the environment of the perceiver, or what is implied by the world as used in the quotation. The connection is so close that one cannot make any meaningful impact in the social world without taking into account what both realist and anti-realist have to offer. Both can still be distinguished in that the mind is not the world, and neither is the world the mind. Despite the fact that none is completely entrapped in the other, the level of cooperation between the two, when it comes to knowledge production is very complex. The fluidity of social science is not exempted from the complexity of how we know and what we know. One does not try to solidify what is in solution or try to tabulate what is constantly shifting as far as social science is concerned (Leith-Ross, 1965). Hence, social construction is non-prescriptive. As the case may be, it is obvious that "...different practices can be judged as more or less congruent with social constructionist ideas, no particular collection of method or techniques is social constructionist practice" (Witkin, 2012 p. 1). This does not detract from its systematic nature.

Furthermore, within the last decade, the resource based view (RBV) (Davis, McAdam, Scott, & Zald, 2005) became the latest effort at explaining how to strategize in social movements or collective action. This theory draws much from the organizational strategy as it emphasizes the role of resources and capabilities in shaping the organizational strategy and performance (Barney, 1991). Barney (1991) gave a powerful illustration whereby organizations sustain their

resources and at the same time engage in environmentally competitive advantage. The sustenance and competition are made possible by the organizations tapping into their inner resources seeking to know their strengths and weaknesses and at the same time maximizing the opportunities within the environment as they suppress external threats to their survival (Barney, 1991). Those who engage in collective action strategize in a similar way to be relevant and achieve their goals. The illustrations below are adapted from Jay Barney's (1991) work.

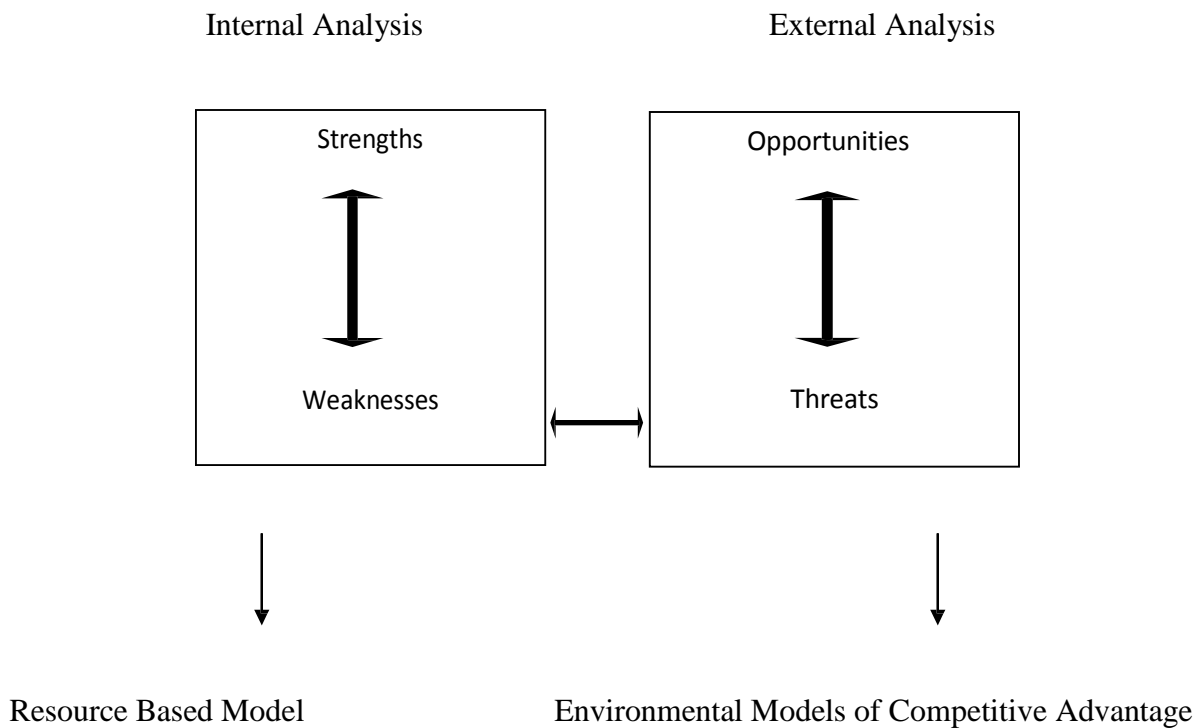


Figure 15.

The reconciliation of both the theories of collective action and resource mobilization does not mean that the resultant theory might capture all the significant elements of understanding social protest. Just as out of a set of three primary colors -- red, green and blue (RGB) one can make a range of other colors, in the same way, one can address well a particular problem of study with a few emerging theories adducing other auxiliary theories insightfully according to the special circumstances of the problems.

In this particular study, the emergence of relative deprivation and rising expectation hypotheses, using social psychology as lens of perception led to the introduction of the theory of rationality arising from microeconomic theory of choice as a way to help explain better the special areas that were not properly explained by social psychology.

Present Understanding of Collective Action Theory, Relative Deprivation and Rising Expectation Hypotheses

Earlier scholars laid a solid foundation which made possible the treatment of the above mentioned theories from multiple perspectives. According to Kawakami et al. (1993), social evaluation theories were treated from different perspectives as the theory of social comparison by Festinger (1954), reference group theories by Hyman (1960), equity theory by Homans (1961), and relative deprivation theory by Runciman (1966) among others. Present researchers utilized the works of earlier scholars, as those mentioned, to articulate clear and distinct definitions of terms applicable in the study of social movements or collective action. The earlier works were far from perfect. However, their limitations challenged the later researchers to devise improved methods for a better understanding of the theories of social movements

Limitations of the Earlier Researchers

Recent researchers such as Diener et al. (2013) applied improved methods in their efforts to have a better understanding of how social movements operate. While exploring the question of “whether rising income in nations is associated with increasing subjective well-being (SWB),” Diener et al. (2013) came to some useful conclusions regarding the shortcomings of their predecessors using a quantitative approach (p.267). They asserted:

A possible reason for the past disparate findings is that researchers have had to contend with challenging methodological issues. The measures of SWB often have not been identical across years, and therefore differences in scores might be due to changes in wording or to the order of questions in the surveys. Another shortcoming with past research is that the surveys of

respondents have not always been based on representative samples of nations but on selected groups such as those in major urban areas that might differ across surveys. Third, there might have been inadequate statistical power to pinpoint effects because small homogeneous groups of nations have sometimes been analyzed. Finally, the entire debate has focused on life evaluations, and the effects of income could potentially be quite different for affect – for positive and negative feelings (p. 268).

Definition of collective action

The new wave of definitions of the collective action are nicely based on the foundations set by the different theoretical accounts of the pioneer scholars on social movements (Wright, 2009). The different conceptions of collective action are the function of various theoretical accounts of the past which gave rise to “a broader array of antecedents and mediators of collective action” (Wright, 2009, p. 860). With improved methods, a better clarity is given to the understanding of what collective action is and what motivates individuals or groups to act for a common interest. According to Wright (2009), collective action is about the reduction of inequalities and increasing social justice. Thus he said: “...reducing the negative thoughts (stereotypes), attitudes (prejudice), and actions (discrimination) of individuals represents only one potential route to reduced group inequality and increasing social justice. A second approach focuses on collective action and social protest as a means of improving the status or treatment of disadvantaged groups” (p. 859). Based on the fact that many discussions on collective action failed to give a clear definition, “... numerous social psychological investigations have settled on a definition that locates collective action in the psychology of the individual” (Wright, 2009, p. 860). Tajfel, (1982) is cited by Wright (2009) as suggesting that human behavior can be intergroup as well as interpersonal. With further explication of terms, Wright (2009) arrived at the following definition of collective action:

Intergroup behavior emerges when the self and others are perceived in terms of the collective identities (in terms of their memberships in different groups), and when thoughts and actions are guided by group interests and in-group norms. In

contrast, interpersonal behavior emerges when personal identities are the salient self/other-representation. Thus, by this definition collective action is a specific case of intergroup behavior that is strategic in its intent to improve the position of the in-group, and can be contrasted with individual action designed to improve one's personal position" (p. 861).

Currently, the above definition is overtaken by the fact that one who is outside an in-group and who belongs to an advantaged group can also work to improve the status of the disadvantaged group. For example, in the 60's some white people belonging to the advantaged class joined the Black Americans in fighting for their liberation from oppressive social structure. In just the same way, there are men who belong to an advantaged group who fight for policies and practices that would increase social justice for women. If members of an advantaged group could work for the good of the members of the disadvantaged group, it means that the above traditional definition needs to be revisited. This idea of re-defining the traditional perception of collective action to accommodate the present understanding suggests that definitions evolve (Wright, 2009). Hence, most traditional definitions of collective action as held by scholars such as Zomeran and Iyer (2009), Sturmer and Simion (2009) and many others need to be presently re-evaluated. It is important to note that "social psychology's focus on the mutual influences of the social context and individual psychological processes has provided important insights into the processes that fuel or undermine participation in collective action" (Wright, 2009, pp. 859 – 860).

What produces/prevents collective action

According to Wright (2009), the conception of collective action is basically psychological. Collective action is not about the number of participants or about the outcome of the action. An individual can engage in collective action as long as he/she is acting as a representative of a group. Collective action does not require "physical or temporal proximity of members" (p. 861). What matters is that the group identity be the salient self-categorization and

that group concerns motivate the action” (Wright, 2009, p. 861). As a follow-up to the preceding statement, it is logical that “some joint actions by a large group would not qualify as collective action, if the individual actors are motivated by personal self-interests” (p. 861).

In another research, where two studies were conducted, a questionnaire field study was applied to examine the level of anger feelings about perceived collective injustice with regard to participating in collective action. The result suggests that the feeling of anger is not strong enough to cause an individual to participate in collective action. This is because the willingness to participate in collective action by an individual can easily be diffused through other less effortful and less costly means. Social pressure or force is often so overwhelming that the individual feels that the best option is to find a less stressful way to evade the collective action. This is one of the reasons why only very few people from among the disadvantaged group participate in collective action because their individual-based anger is easily diffused by some other less difficult means. On the other hand, the second study which used a laboratory experiment to study the underpinnings of group-based anger and willingness to participate in collective action, suggests “that group-based anger may indeed exert a unique or direct effect on group members’ willingness to participate in social movement activities” (Sturmer & Simon, 2009, p. 703). Sturmer and Simon (2009) summarized the two waves of experiments by examining the effects of feelings of anger on individual/groups in social movement participation. By doing this, they proposed what they called dual-pathway model of collective action. The dual-pathway model consists of “cost-benefit calculations and “collective identification” (Sturmer & Simon, 2009, p. 681). An identification with a disadvantaged group “increases people’s willingness to participate in social movements ...only to the extent that it was transformed into a more politicized form of identification” (Sturmer & Simon, 2009, pp. 683 –

684). A politicized form of identification implies creating a convincing argument for individuals to key into the group goals for the collective action and desist from calculating personal gains in forms of material things, consideration for social criticisms or praise or other psychological torture one can possibly undergo in joining in a collection action.

Relative Deprivation Theory and Salience in Social Movement

There is a close connection between Relative Deprivation, and the concept of Salience in Collective Action or Social Movements. Relative Deprivation “examines the relationship between unfavorable outcomes from social comparisons and subsequent emotions and behaviors” (Kawakami & Dion, 1993, p. 526). As mentioned before, Relative Deprivation could be considered from the point of view of intragroup or intergroup feelings. Cited by Kawakami et al. (1993), Runciman made a distinction between two types of Relative Deprivation – personal and group. Runciman as cited by Kawakami et al. (1993) defines the dual distinction thus:

Personal RD concerns feelings of discontent related to one’s own position relative to other members within a group. People who feel deprived as individuals are likely to feel more socially isolated and personally stressed. They are more likely to prefer individually oriented strategies to achieve change...Group RD concerns feelings of discontent related to one’s ingroup status compared to other relevant comparison groups in society. People who believe their membership group is relatively deprived are more likely to participate in social movements and actively attempt to change the social system using group strategy (p. 526).

The concept of salience in relation to RD and action intention.

The concept of salience is derived from Self-Categorization theory (SCT). Self-Categorization theory “examines the interaction between the intragroup and intergroup levels of analysis and provides a theoretical link between personal and group identity”. According to Self-Categorization theory, “...social self-perceptions can be perceived as a continuum ranging from perception of self as an individual to perception of self as an ingroup member. A person’s self-categorization at any given moment depends on the salience of personal or group identity in the

social situation. Salience refers to the condition under which one or the other type of identity becomes cognitively emphasized to act as the immediate influence on perception and behavior” (Kawakami & Dion, 1993, p. 526).

The personal identity is said to be salient when the “perceptual accentuation of differences between one’s self and the ingroup and consistencies within one’s self” are emphasized (Kawakami & Dion, 1993, p. 527). And when our personal identity is salient, we think and act as individual. On the other hand, group self-categorization is said to be salient when the “perceptual accentuation of similarities between oneself and the ingroup and differences between the ingroup and an outgroup” are emphasized (p. 527). And when this is the case, we think and act as group members.

Relative Deprivation is enriched by the concept of salience because the linking of the “specific-identities to the distinction between the levels of social comparison” tells us when perceptual accentuation is individual-based or group-based (i.e intragroup or intergroup) (Kawakami & Dion, 1993, p.527). In other words, the type of RD one experiences depends on the level of the self compared. Salient personal self-identities reminds us of intragroup comparisons while salient group self-identities implies intergroup comparisons.

Relative to action intention, a study showed that “salience influenced group RD, positive collective action intentions and negative individual action intentions” (Kawakami & Dion, 1993, p. 538). This finding is consistent with previous research and has above all stressed the impact of salience on Relative Deprivation theory. According to Kawakami et al., (1993), those who feel most deprived are not objectively the most destitute. Based on this, feelings of relative deprivation rather than absolute deprivation are expected to be more directly related to action intentions.

The action intention of individuals or groups who feel deprived is to reduce the source of inequality and promote social justice. But, experience has shown that the desire (love) of having, increases by having. Human needs, as economists say, are insatiable. As such, there will always be tendency in human beings to be ambitious, to outdo others, to have more than others and to subdue others. In line with this, Easterlin (1974), as cited by Diener et al. (2013) made a widespread proposition that undelines how Rising Expectation operates. With improved methods, Diener et al.(2013) were able to offset some of the limitations of earlier researchers by stating why the rich gets richer and the average or middle class people oftentimes are not satisfied with the effects of increase in income of their nations' gross domestic product (GDP).

Paradox of rising expectations

Today more than ever, governments and individuals emphasize economic growth. Individuals spend more time working than in any other waking activity. Yet, the age old question relative to the idea of working more hours is still asked. And the question is whether economic growth will improve people's subjective well-being (SWB)? Again, are people happy when times are good but not happier when times get better? Examining the credibility of this assertion, Diener et al. (2013) used improved methods to give a better understanding of the past conclusions of researchers who based their analyses on Easterlin hypothesis which states that "economic growth of nations does not produce rising happiness in them"(Diener, et al., 2013, p. 267). They hold that:

In the analyses of the Easterlin hypothesis, researchers have relied on gross domestic product (GDP) per capita to assess income, but this measure does not directly reflect the material prosperity of the average household. GDP has a number of blind spots and shortcomings...Not only can GDP miss barter goods, the black market, and household production, but it does not directly reflect how the average household is faring economically because it gauges the overall economic growth of the entire nation but does not index how this is apportioned. Furthermore, poor nations can find it difficult to devote the resources needed to

accurately compute GDP, and more of their economies are likely to be in the barter and grey-market areas. Thus, in our study we assess the changes in income in nations not only by using GDP per capita but also by the mean incomes of households. The measure of household income may provide a measure that more directly reflects the material well-being of average households within nations than does GDP (Diener et al., 2013, p. 268).

Based on the above findings, it was discovered that GDP is a less certain index for the association of income increase and subjective well-being because of its blind spots. A good example of such a blind spot is corruption. There is bound to be a discrepancy when the rising income in GDP goes to inefficient governments or to the rich alone. If the rich is gaining in the rising GDP income alone or corrupt governments are misappropriating the increasing GDP income, inequality ensures and therefore the subjective well-being of the average person will be neglected. When improved methods were applied, Diener et al. (2013) discovered that apart from material effect on subjective well-being (SWB), psychological variables might also mediate or obscure the association of income and SWB. It is believed in this research that the overall subjective well-being of the people of any nation is boosted when people are optimistic about their future.

In summary, referencing the limitations of the previous researches on Rising Expectations and considering the effects of the improved methods, Diener et al. (2013) came to the following distinct and clear conclusions:

1. Household income increases were associated with increases in life evaluations and positive feelings and with lower negative feelings
2. GDP per capita did not strongly correspond to changing household incomes over time and tended to show weaker associations with subjective well-being. Changes in it were associated with changes in life evaluations but not in feelings. GDP's association with life evaluation was weaker than that for household income.

3. Life evaluation was not only associated with income, but was influenced by changes in income. Across time, both measures of income predicted future life evaluation beyond previous life evaluation.
4. Three factors – increasing material possessions, financial satisfaction, and optimism – mediated the association of income and SWB. In addition, each of the mediators predicted life evaluations above and beyond income changes. Thus, rising income primarily leads to changes in SWB, if it leads to more individual purchasing power, optimism, and financial satisfaction.
5. The effects of income comparison within a person’s own nation did not predict SWB beyond the absolute effects of income. Furthermore, there was a steep and linear relation of income and SWB across the nations of the world. Taken together, these facts suggest a worldwide standard for income.
6. We found virtually no curvilinear effects of income on well-being, and rising income had about the same effects on SWB in poor and wealthy nations.
7. The effects of income on SWB did not cause a temporary rise in SWB but led to changes that endured over the period of the study (p. 274).

Going by the Easterlin debate of whether rising income leads to subjective well-being of people, it is found that “rising household income is significantly associated with all three forms of subjective well-being” (Diener et al., 2013, p. 274).

In the analysis section of the present study, the researcher examines the attitudes of the widows in the two communities regarding their feelings toward inequity of treatment and social injustice based on the concept of Relative Deprivation and Rising Expectation hypotheses. The social contexts of each community will underline the varied attitudes of the widows from each

community. Based on the above hypotheses, the researcher agrees to the fact that collective action is not happening as often as we expect because of what Jost (2010) said about “mercy mechanism” in the human mind and other extenuating social pressures.

Through data analysis, the researcher identified patterns that reflect social phenomena, which these five theories help to illuminate. Beyond and including the insights afforded by these theories, the researcher proposes an analytic framework that he describes as a ‘spider’s web’ which pulls together the different aspects of the research work. The researcher describes the analytic framework as a contextual manipulation of patriarchy and chapter six will highlight more on the overarching nature of this analytic framework with regard to the rest of emergent theories. Through this process, a readable structure that depicts the living experience of the widows under consideration can meaningfully be handled through the grounded theory interpretive process. Obvious in the whole work, is the fact that “humans are active in the construction of their own worlds” (Musolf, 2008, p.113).

The following chapter treats the results and analysis of the research work using the direct words of the participants as evidence based facts regarding the treatments women receive as widows. The chapter combined not only the direct reports of the participants, but also considered the geographical locations, historical contacts, cultural legacy and degree of identification of the participants to their communities of origin. The analysis of the direct reports and the mentioned factors helped the researcher to arrive at the paradoxical discovery of the conditions of widows’ treatment in their communities.

CHAPTER V: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the results and analysis are presented simultaneously. The presentation and discussion of the results that answer the research question are given in the context of the emergent theories. The emergent theories are outlined and elaborated on in the review of relevant theories in chapter four. They are as follows: patriarchal theory, justification theory, cognitive dissonance theory, relative deprivation, rising expectation theory and collective action or social movement theory. The researcher uses the words of the participants interviewed in this research as guidance to understanding their lives in the contexts of their customs and traditions. The results and analysis follow this pattern; first, what is typical to *Enugwu-Ukwu* will be focused on in this sequence; exposing the two components to widowhood practice as revealed in the words of the participants, various degrees of manifestation of widowhood practice driven by patriarchal ideology, validation of the fact of women's involvement in maintaining the patriarchal system, material possession as the basis of the widowhood practice and the factors that predispose *Enugwu-Ukwu* to conservative attitude towards its widows. The results will highlight two key factors regarding widowhood practice, the elaborate widows' voice regarding the unjust deprivations and humiliations in the name of widowhood practice and secondly, the effort to have a deeper understanding of the meaning underlying the practice.

The second phase of the results highlights the practice of widowhood as it obtains at *Abaofia-Izzi*. Only one component of the widowhood practice is casually emphasized at *Abaofia-Izzi*. The pattern of analysis in this phase follows this sequence: An exposition of how the worldview of the people of *Abaofia-Izzi* conditioned the living experience of their widows, the determinant effect of context in meaning making, widowhood practice and dominant male ideology in *Abaofia-Izzi*, and the factors that predispose *Abaofia-Izzi* progressively towards its widows.

The third phase of the results and analysis will be more comparative in nature. The comparison will use the geographical locations and contexts, historical contacts, cultural legacy and the combined explanatory power of the demographic profiles and indices of comparison to widen our understanding of the conditions that make for the differential treatment of widows in the two communities. The voice of the participants is presented within the context of their geographic location/description of the participant widow's environment, contrasting of the mind-sets operative in the two communities in which the widows' live, participant men's impression of women, and the consideration of factors pre-disposing each community to behave in a certain way towards its widows, concludes the chapter.

The grounded nature of the theoretical formulations in the data is demonstrated in this chapter. The researcher followed Lofland's (1974) idea of devoting approximately 60% of the report to conceptualization, and 40% to data presentation. The researcher chose to display the intimate interplay between the data and the concepts by combining the results and the analytical interpretation together. This combining strategy is meant to create, in the words of Lofland (1974):

...a frame that grows out of immersion in direct observation and/or open-ended interview material...Frame and qualitative materials coexist as one whole, each depending upon the other for the "interest" a reader has in the frame or in the qualitative material. Indeed, taken separately, each is likely to be viewed as having little socio-logical interest or merit...The frame taken separately is dull because the reader has little conception of the concrete empirical reality to which the frame might refer. The "data" alone are dull because the reader has no notion of what sort of social structure or progress might be involved. But interpenetrated through minute and continual alteration between data and frame-elements, the whole is more than the parts, says geneticists (pp. 108 – 109).

This brief introductory section shows how the researcher analyzed and interpreted the results of the research utilizing the emergent sociological and psychological theories that helped to explain the different contextual manipulation of the patriarchal theory in the two communities under

study. In the next section, the researcher presents an overview of the demographics of the sample.

Demographic Profiles.

As part of the analytic and interpretive elements of the data, the demographic profiles of only the thirty participating widows drawn from the two communities were focused upon. The choice of the demographic profiles of only the thirty widows, of all the participants, is based on the fact that the study is about them. Relevant facts about other participants, as ascertained from the chosen thirty participant widows were included to deepen and widen our understanding of the thirty chosen widows. Also, what the researcher describes as indices of comparison are displayed in the later section of this chapter. The indices help the reader have a grasp of the perspective/attitude of each community towards its widows. The indices of comparison analysis is the result of a systematic breakdown of the data into different components which eventually coalesced into comparable themes with further analysis.

Following is a table of the demographic profiles as revealed by the thirty widows who participated in the in-depth face-to-face interviews and disclosed facts about their husbands and children. The facts about their husbands and children, as ascertained from the thirty participant widows, helped to expand the researcher’s knowledge base about them (the thirty participating widows). The combined explanatory power of the demographic elements and the indices of comparison are distributed throughout the analytic and interpretive section.

Table 152.1. Demographic Profiles of Thirty Participant Widows

Characteristics	Abofia-Izzi	Enugwu-Ukwu
Participants from polygeneous families	10	2

Widows average mean age at marriage (<i>in years</i>)	8	20
Educational Level	Three had first school leaving certificate & 12 others claim no knowledge of their educational level	4 College Graduates 8 Secondary Graduates 3 had first school leaving certificate
Occupation	4 Farmers 2 Petty Traders 9 Laborers	6 Civil Servants 8 Petty Traders 1 Laborer
Religious Affiliation	10 Catholic 2 Anglican 1 Pentecostal 2 Traditional believers	13 Catholic 2 Anglican
Husband's average mean age or range in marriage (<i>in years</i>)	37 – 70 Many were guessing and the researcher approximated using a range	44
Husbands average mean age at death (<i>in years</i>)	45- 70 Many were guessing and the researcher approximated using a range	58
First son's average mean age at husband's death (<i>in years</i>)	Most knowledge questions were difficult for them to answer	15
Widow's annual income	10 – 17 thousand Naira	40 – 350 thousand Naira
Husband's annual income	No widow knew answer	35- 300 thousand Naira

Mean average years of widowhood of the participants (in years)	14- 33 Many were guessing and the researcher approximated using a range	10 years
Average number of children left behind by the dead husband	Tradition, according to their King, forbade them from mentioning the number of children they have.	4

Table 152.1. Demographic Profiles of Thirty Participant Widows

Rituals and Inheritance at Enugwu-Ukwu

At *Enugwu-Ukwu*, the structural inequality between women and men is more stringently poignant. As asserted before, there are two components of widowhood practice at Enugwu-Ukwu, the ritual and the inheritance.

Rituals

The ritual aspect of the widowhood tradition includes the performance of some body of ceremonies, which are believed to have some religious dimensions. These rituals are performed for the safety of the widow, the family and the community. The completions of these rituals offer some mental/psychological closures and serve as pathways for the re-integration of widows back to the community. Here are detailed examples of rituals performed at the death of *Onuigbo Okeke*⁴ of *Enugwu-Ukwu*. The following ceremonies were predominant in the late 1970s and late 1980s. The name of his widow is Ocheze Okeke. *Ocheze* is one of the two women participants from *Enugwu-Ukwu* who was given out in marriage as a child. She was thirteen years old and her husband, *Onuigbo*, was almost sixty years when they got married. Unfortunately, *Onuigbo* died after twelve years of marriage when *Ocheze* was only twenty-five years old. Luckily for her, a

⁴ The name *Onuigbo Okeke* and the subsequent names of the study participants who are mentioned throughout this chapter are pseudonyms.

teacher friend of the family sponsored her to teachers' training college after the death of her husband. Furthering her education was the best thing that happened after the death of her husband. With the training, she secured a teaching position in elementary school and struggled to train her five children. Of all the participants' widows, she gave the most detailed story of the rituals that were performed during the funeral ceremony of her husband. In her own words, here are some of the events that took place during the funeral of her husband. It is important to note that most of these burial rituals were carried out in the 1970s through 1980s. Some of them are still in use and even the most abhorrent of them could still be evoked depending on the relationship of the widow to the deceased husbands, family members and even some members of the kindred. The various stages of the ritual ceremonies are divided into five stages.

In 1982, my husband died after a brief illness. I was twenty-five years old by then. I didn't know what to do with my children. I cried day and night. *Igba-Obi* and *Uhe* music were the first events that took place during the burial. The first son should dance the *Igba-Obi* music before other people could dance. When it was exactly 12 noon, the dead person was buried. *Nwada* or *Nwaokpu* who was a widow also gave me a haircut. I was given a black wrapper to wear for the mourning period. The *Nwada* told me to keep my hair in a safe place until the final ceremony was performed. The *Nwada* was paid with uncooked food like rice, yam, and cocoyam by the family. Then all the *Umu-nwada* stayed in our house until twelve days (*Izu na ato*). They were fed three times a day. During their stay, they watched me to see if I entertained myself by laughing, engaged in a conversation, or slept while people were still visiting.

On the thirteenth day, all the *Umu-nwada* left for their various houses and came back one month later. I bought fish, meat, oil, salt, pepper, *egwusi*, crawfish, *ogili*, yam, *abacha*, and *ede*. If the ingredients were not plentiful, they were rejected. This is called *itu arị umuokpu*, literally meaning feeding the daughters of the soil. After they have finished eating and drinking, they gave me rules and regulations that will guide me.

They are:

1. Stay home for three months before you go back to work.
2. Don't go to *Nkwọ* market or *Nweke Odenigbo* to buy anything unless you send someone.

3. If you want to purchase things by yourself, you can go to *Eke Awka, Oyeagu Abagana, Afor Nawfia*, etc.
4. No shaking of hands with men.
5. Don't be outside after 6 pm.
6. No make-up.
7. Don't eat publicly.
8. If you become pregnant, then you will be in for a serious case.

At the second stage of the funeral ceremony, the *Nwada* gave me a list of things to get ready for the final ceremony.

The things to collect are:

1. Bread fruit firewood (Nkụ ụkwa)
2. Back of Para-tree (Azụ okwe)
3. Kitchen Knife (Mma ekwu)
4. Small Pot (Obele ite mmiri)
5. Mat (Ute)
6. Bottle of oil (Onono Mmanụ)
7. Bottle of salt (Onono Nnụ)
8. Dry Fish & Meat (Azụ nkpọ na anu)
9. Hen and Yam (Nwunye ọkụkụ na Ji)
10. Money (Ego)

The *Nwada* was given oil, salt, meat, fish, hen, yam, and money.

The third stage of the ceremony went as follows: The ceremony started on Tuesday morning. All the in-laws, friends, and well-wishers featured dances to the village square. *Igba-Obi* music, *Uhie* music, and *Okekwe* will also be there. At night I was told to make my bed in the kitchen with the mat. I placed the pieces of para-tree on the kitchen floor, then the mat on top of it. I made fire with *Nkụ ụkwa*. I held the kitchen knife in hand. She told me not to let the fire quench or allow the knife to drop. She told me that I would be in trouble if I didn't do it. I was very scared. Although my mother and my sisters were in my room watching me, I did not sleep. People were outside enjoying with food, drink, and *Igba-Obi* music.

At about three o'clock in the morning, when the first cock began to crow, one of the *Umu-nwada* came out and told me to collect all the things I used for mourning such as:

1. Any piece of cloth that I touched.
2. All my hair that had been cut.
3. A small pot containing some water.
4. The mat, knife, ashes, *nkụ ụkwa*, and *azụ okwe*.

I joined all of them together and carried it to *Mgboko Owele Ukulu* where I threw them away. I was totally naked. That place was at least one mile away from my house. On our way back, the *Nwada* shouted out many times *Ogbondu Apatakwana* which means “Let Nobody Come Out.” When we reached home, I took a bath with a clay bowl (*Oku*) of cold water.

The fourth stage is called *Ize Ihe Ajana* (the ritual cleansing): The ritual man called *Eze Ajana* told me to repeat after him the following sentences:

1. You have done things according to our tradition and custom.
2. No enemies shall attack you and your children.
3. Anyone that owes you will pay you back.
4. Long life and prosperity.

He drew a line, and I jumped over it. The family paid the man with yam, cock, and money. Then I entered the compound and dressed up with a new cloth. I entered my room. In the morning people from different villages started coming to congratulate me. Some people were giving money saying that it is not easy to go through all these things, shaking hands and hugging me.

The fifth and final stage was *Izu Ahia Nkwọ*. The *Nwada* went home with the food and money collected. She told me that she would come back on *Nkwọ* day to take me to the market to buy one item. She said that I shouldn't talk to anyone on the way, not even to the seller at the market. On *Nkwọ* day, by 6:30 a.m., the *Nwada* came and we took off. When we reached the market, I just picked up *igba* worth of 10 Naira, and left. The seller was greeting me but I simply left without a word. I didn't talk to anyone until we got back home. The *Nwada* told me that I was now permitted to buy and sell in the *Nkwọ* market. I mourned my husband for three years.

When the researcher asked the *Ocheze* about the meaning of those rituals, she answered in the negative. The researcher asked her if she was not told why she was commanded to do what she was doing, she answered also in the negative. It appears that people do things just because it was done by their forefathers and nothing more. Some of the more elderly men and women participants gave some clues regarding the symbolism of some of the rituals. The researcher learnt from the elders, especially the resource person that the music called *Uhie* or *Igba Obi* is played when a great man dies and it symbolizes the acceptance of the dead man into the company of the ancestors.

Shaving the Head Bald as Initiation into Widowhood

The shaving of the head to be bald and dressing in black cloth are signs of mourning and initiation into widowhood. One of the adult daughters of the participant widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu* made this specific in her self-report. Her name is *Chekwube*. *Chekwube* was quite aware of the crisis that shook her family when her father died. She reported: “While the funeral ceremonies of my father lasts, my mother was not allowed to eat any food whether raw or cooked prepared for the purposes of entertaining those paying their condolence visits. Her food was bought separately from the market and I personally prepared her meals...Basically, according to our custom and tradition...the shaving of the head bald is an initiation into widowhood. This shaving of the head follows the burial ceremony.”

As part of the ritual ceremony, holding a kitchen knife in the hand and brandishing it at times in the air is a symbolic sign scaring the evil spirits from attacking the widow. The chain of regulations the widow is subjected to are horrendous. The funeral ceremony is expensive and poor families get poorer after funeral expenditure. This is most applicable to those who had the ceremony conducted according to the traditional rite. Some of the participant widows attested to the fact that Christian burial ceremony is less expensive. These rituals have resilience qualities. Often times, any aspect of these rituals could be brought to bear on the present. The nature of the relationship among the widow, her deceased husband and the rest of the family members determines the type of ritual the widow is subjected to. In widowhood practice, those rituals serve as vehicle of male domination. They are meant to negatively impact the self-esteem of women so that women would easily submit to men’s domination. All things being equal, widows who do not put up resistance against those practices are taken as conformists. Being a conformist depicts a widow who does not challenge the tradition of the community. When a widow fails to

resist that practice in question, that does not mean that the widow likes what is happening. Most of those widows submit to those practices because they fear victimization. Some of their worst fears are social stigmatization and being discriminated against. The literature review was clear on how patriarchal sexism manifests itself either as benevolent or hostile sexism.

Here is another story of an educated and well-exposed woman named, *Omenuko*, from *Enugwu-Ukwu* with regard to widowhood practice. Omenuko and her husband were educated and worked in Nigeria for so many years. Later, they worked overseas for so many years and came home to help in community development. But Omenuko's in-laws were suspicious of her. They assumed that Omenuko tricked her husband into developing her place and thereby neglecting his siblings and his community. This was the general impression within the family of Omenuko's husband and among the members of the kindred. As a result of this suspicion, Omenuko was held as a prime suspect when her husband died. People believe that women of that caliber kill their husbands to appropriate their wealth. The brothers and sisters in-law of Omenuko expressed their impression of her to the members of the kindred. *Omenuko's* story was chosen to buttress the generated conflicts and the stress that a woman is subjected to during widowhood period and how an empowered widow responds to such victimizing cultural practices at *Enugwu-Ukwu*.

Hence, Omenuko reports: "...the news among my in laws was that I had killed my husband in order to inherit his wealth. The so-called in- laws were, therefore, well prepared to wage a war against me... my in-laws made effort to prohibit me from pouring sand into my husband's grave. But they knew they were talking to a deaf ear because I did pour sand into my husband's grave." Accusing a woman of having killed her husband to inherit his wealth and

subjecting her to and/or prohibiting her from certain actions are simple tactics of breaking her personality and then dispossessing her of her husband's wealth.

However, being an *Igbo* man, the researcher knows that there are some widowhood rituals that are symbols of mourning for both men and women. One example is that of shaving the head of a widow or a widower during mourning period. The act of shaving the head bald, in some cases, among the *Igbo* people, signifies that the person is bereaved and calls for respectful and compassionate attitudes from other people towards the bereaved. Nevertheless, where there has been misunderstanding, some of those cultural symbols could be twisted to mean anything other than what they normally signify. It is not out of place to say that such cultural rituals have been abused and are still being abused in different places among the *Igbo* people. They could become vendetta instruments among warring families. Omenuko's story is filled with her suspicion of this shaving ritual when she asserted:

The controversy over my husband's death is centered on shaving my head. The so called sister in-laws and elderly daughters from my husband's village couldn't wait to shave my head... The main purpose was to humiliate, dehumanize, torture, and if possible brutally injure me in the process... I refused to abide by their rules. I told my sister-in-law that; if they don't leave my compound in the next hour I was going to call the police to arrest every one of them. They all left my compound before the police arrived. However, they did threaten to ostracize me. I couldn't careless... I did ask my sister-in-law if shaving my head was going to bring my husband back. I did put my feet down because the practice of shaving my head bald should be my choice. It is devastating enough losing my husband for thirty years; I didn't need to be subjected to inhuman treatment by anybody in the name of cultural mourning practices.

Omenuko's reaction not only revealed her suspicion of the widowhood rituals, but also manifested a clear determination to avoid the abuse of her person and to deter anybody or group of people from dispossessing her of what belongs to her by virtue of marriage. Omenuko has gained much experience from her sojourn in the Western world. Based on her connection, for example, she was eventually given the latitude by the king of *Enugwu-Ukwu* to do with her hair

what she wanted. She gave herself a beautiful Afro-style against what the custom demands. If Omenuko were illiterate, poor and not connected to those in power in the community, she would have faced a very different fate.

***Ajana* Ritual Cleansing**

The performance of *Ajana* ritual appears to be the high point of ritual cleansing at Enugwu-Ukwu. In the story of Agbala from Enugwu-Ukwu, we saw how impatient she was in explaining the details of the widowhood practice and how quick at disclosing her oppositions to the practice. She appears to be inhibited by her detests for such widow limiting practices. Agbala is a retired civil servant who has only girl children and adopted two boys after the death of her husband. Her act of adoption did not go down well with her brothers and sisters in-laws because adoption contravenes their customs and tradition. The community of *Enugwu-Ukwu* does not believe in the inheritance right of an adopted male child based on the fact that the child cannot trace his patrilineage. Agbala, who dared the consequences of challenging the widowhood ritual regimen, still laid claim to her husband's property just like Omenuko did. Agbala is perceived as a non-conformist in the community of *Enugwu-Ukwu* and to the surprise of many, her boldness served as a pace-setter for other courageous women to follow. When a woman resists the controlling effect of ritual activity, a woman can boldly refuse those dehumanizing widowhood practices and lay claim to her husband's property. Agbala was well prepared to fight every inch all the widowhood customs that enslave women for male domination. In the instance of *Ajana* ritual, Agbala reports: "Another customary and traditional practice is that of performing the *Ajana* rite at the evil forest. According to the story of *Ajana* practice, the widow in question normally appears naked at mid-night while performing the ritual. My father- in-law, knows well

that I will not adhere to such a practice.” Agbala was systematically opposing those traditional practices that she felt were against the welfare of widows.

To neglect performing the Ajana ritual has social consequences. Ajana ritual is all involving. It demands the presence of a diviner, or an *nwada* and the collection of all the materials used during the mourning period as Ocheze reported above. These include the mourning cloths, the shaven hair, a special type of pot and other ceremonial items. The demands of *umuada* during the funeral constitute part of communal dictations. This manifests when *Umuada*, acting in the name of the community, dictates to the widows what to do and what not to do. A select *nwada*, (a member of *umuada*) or a diviner determines when a widow will have to carry out the Ajana ritual at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. The widow is expected to observe those instructions without question. Thus, *Nwaigbaka*, a widow from a polygeneous family at *Enugwu-Ukwu* narrated how she and co-wives were ordered to actions with little regard for their interests. *Nwaigbaka* is a petty trader who was the fourth of six wives. She has five children who were not fully independent at the death of her husband. *Nwaigbaka* asserts:

Thereafter, they (*Umuada*) asked us to stay for seven days before we go to the market. On that seventh day, the *Umuada* took us to the market. We were told to go around and pick one item, only one good. After that they informed us that we should not go to any market again until one year from that day. Another strange, fearful practice expected from us was going to the evil forest. That day, we assembled pots which contained unidentified elements that were set on fire. After a while, every one of us was given a wrapper to carry her own prepared pot. Each of us carried the pot as a man asked us to follow him. We walked a very long distance to that evil land at mid-night. Throughout the long walk, we met no one on the way. When we reached there, the man asked us to throw the pots into the evil forest. We all did and walked back home.

The ritual purification of Ajana is believed to authorize the widow to live her normal social life. It reintegrates the widow back into the community. It has also implications if one fails to perform the ritual.

Ajana ritual and Social Stigma

The reports of eight participant widows, in a focus group at Enugwu-Ukwu, describe the nature of social stigma applied at *Enugwu-Ukwu* as a way to bring dissenting widows to conformity and to forestall other widows disengaging from observing their traditional customs. When asked to tell about the community's expectations of widows at the death of their husbands, Enuma, one of the widow participants in the focus group at *Enugwu-Ukwu* whose husband died young when she was pregnant said:

The community expects no widow to be outside her house by 6 pm because she is prohibited from having a normal social life. She is in *nso* (to be in *nso* is considered as defiled as long as one has not performed the *Ajadu* ritual). Once it's five o'clock, widows start finding their ways home to avoid being seen by other people. If a woman did not perform the *Ajadu* ritual, people will discriminate against her saying that she has *Orakwu*. Those that performed the dust to dust ritual at the burial of their husbands by way of pouring sand into the grave of their husbands are termed *Orakwu*. Widows are prohibited by tradition not to eat the food used to serve other people at the burial of their husbands. If one fails to perform any of those rituals, the community's titled men in redcap (*ndi nze na ozo*) will discriminate against one in any social function or gathering. If you are termed *orakwu*, you are treated like an outcast, ostracized from the community...When my husband died, I performed the dust-to-dust ritual and for that I was considered as *Orakwu*... They insisted that I must perform the widowhood rituals; they brought so many native doctors (*dibia*) to perform the widowhood rituals and said if I did not do it they will ostracize me and my children.

The above quote suggests that the widow is socially ostracized if she refuses to perform the traditional ritual of *Ajana*. Even though some of the widows are Christians, the society is so deep in traditional practice that fear of social pressure makes many of the Christian widows succumb to the traditional demands. A Catholic priest may condemn such dehumanizing rituals during funeral ceremonies but eventually the priest leaves and the woman still lives in the midst of those people threatening to harm her. It is no longer the time when Christians according to Achebe (1959) constructed a Christian village in

the “Evil Forest” where believers would lead their lives according to the tenets of their faith (p. 149). A widow had to live with her family members who could be traditionalists or Christians. It is therefore logical for a widow to stave off the wave of mental dissonance brought to bear on her by the community in which she lives. Not so many widows had such a strong will to withstand the heat of social pressure. The literature review suggests that the mind always strives to resolve the crisis of mental dissonance by creating some equilibrium. When those vulnerable widows had no other option, the only way out of the quagmire is to play into the hands of the traditionalists. This does not imply that they love the dehumanizing rituals. As said before, these ritual activities are ways to make women have low self-esteem so that men will always dominate.

Patriarchal Manipulation of Widowhood Practice at Enugwu-Ukwu

In widowhood practice, patriarchal manipulation manifests at various levels. The treatment of women as little less than men with regard to social structuring of the family among *Igbo* people is well depicted by the responses of the widows from both communities. There is a range of degree in the domination of the women from traditional relationship norms to patterns of devastating violence related to widowhood. For example, at the level of domination using material possession as vehicle of control, *Anyadike Uru*, a brother in-law to Agbala’s husband commandeered Agbala to abandon an uncompleted building that once belonged to her husband. *Anyadike Uru* wanted the uncompleted building for one of his sons to live in. It was easy for Anyadike to give that order because of the privilege *Igbo* men have to inherit the material belongings of their dead brothers. According to Agbala, when asked the question, “what happened at the death of your husband,” she asserted:

After the death of my husband, many problems came up. It was not up to two months, one of the brothers-in-law, sent somebody to inform me to desist from completing the house which my husband began before he passed on. The brother-in-law never wanted to come by himself. He said that he wanted to finish the roofing himself because he wanted one of his sons to live there. But I replied him immediately through the same person he sent, that I will not condone any maltreatment from anybody because when my husband was alive, he willingly gave up his own property right to my brothers-in-law to share. That is *Obi Nna*.⁵ They are fourteen in number, seven boys and seven girls... So, I refused, because gone are the days when they say that women cannot inherit their fathers' property... To compound their problems, I went shopping in our local market, of which a widow is prohibited not to shop for a certain number of months. I went against such stupid prohibitions. I was reported to the *Ndi Nze* and the *Ndi Ozo* but I did not listen to any of their gibberish.

The above quote is indicative of a forcible taking away of what belongs to a widow under the pretext of patriarchal ideology. The content of the above quote also demonstrates, in the words of Ulrich (2007), that “well-behaved women seldom make history” (p. xii). According to the community's standard, Agbala is not a well-behaved woman because she contravenes the customs and tradition. In the understanding of Ulrich (2007), Agbala is making history since she is not conforming to the dictates of the tradition and custom.

Male domination at the level of inheritance

There was a serious altercation between a widow, *Mgbama* and her brother in-law, *Nonyelu*, over the management of what the widow's husband left behind. *Mgbama* is a young lady from *Enugwu-Ukwu* who is in her mid-forties. She works in the local government as a secretary to one of the departments. Her husband died suddenly in a ghastly motor accident. *Nonyelu*, the husband's brother was claiming all the assets belonging to his brother. *Mgbama* was so intimidated that she threatened to sue the brother-in-law. Fortunately but unknown to *Mgbama*, her husband made a will before he died. As the family was fighting over her husband's

⁵ *Obi Nna* is a house which is taken as a property right that devolves from the father to the first son among the Igbo people of Nigeria. It is not negotiable among the children of any Igbo man. Any of the man's properties could be shared among other siblings but not the house taken as the *Obi Nna*.

property, the deceased man's lawyer came up from nowhere and served a legal order to the family to appear in court for an official presentation of the dead brother's will. This unanticipated appearance of the lawyer and the action taken by the dead man saved everyone from a difficult situation. The situation is best presented in *Mgbama's* words while she responded to the question, how did your brother-in-law/sister-in-law... treat you after the death of your husband?

After the burial, his elder brother emphasized the fact that he is the head of the family and that nobody should dare to challenge him. He said, unequivocally, that what belonged to my husband are now in his care and that whatever he says stands. He started sharing all the things my husband had, claiming ownership of this and that. I resisted his autocratic assertions and insisted that we must settle the case in court. In less than three days, before we could agree on how to solve the problem, my husband's lawyer served the whole family with a court order. When we got to the court, we discovered that my husband had a will and the lawyer read the will. In that will, my husband gave me the right of collecting rents from the tenants in one of his houses. Prior to the summons, my brother in-law made it his prerogative to be collecting the rent. But for my husband's thoughtfulness, I would have been impoverished and our family feud would have been enormous. My husband's action saved me and reduced the family problems.

The above quotation is a clear case of male domination. But this sort of undue domination is not only limited to brothers-in-law alone, sisters'-in-law also constitute problems to their brothers' wives or widows. Women's inhumanity to women will be presented in the later section of this chapter. Men can always provide some protecting measures for their widows. The combined action of *Omenuko* and her husband *Ogbuebune*, is a classical use of the legal system to safeguard the rights and dignity of a widow in the absence of a husband.

Safeguarding Widow's Rights

Omenuko's mental determination to fight for her rights was strengthened by her privileged economic power. It appears that to effect a change, one relies not only on inner capabilities, but also on external resources which is consistent with Barney's (1991) idea of organizational strategy as informative to those engaging in social action. Omenuko is not only

educated and experienced; but also wealthy in all its ramifications; for what belonged to her husband, belonged to her, as a matter of law, thanks to the foresight and culturally unusual egalitarian attitude of her husband and herself. Regarding the right of inheritance, Omenuko said:

My husband and I have always had a joint tenancy and/or a form of co-ownership where each one of us owns an undivided interest in all the estates in our names. The distinguishing feature in joint tenancy or co-ownership is the right of survivorship, which means that upon the death of my husband (or myself) the surviving spouse or tenant owns the whole of the property and nothing passes to the heirs or the descendants. My husband and I have always had joint tenancy on all our estate except his... and... practices which was a medical corporation... We both created this joint ownership by deed or will, and never by descent. At the creation of the joint tenancy or ownership, both interests were vested at the same time. There is unity of title, unity of interest, and unity of possession. Therefore, my-in-laws are out of luck and can't claim any right to any of our estate. End of story.

In Omenuko's story, the sources of her strengths are made apparent. She is educated and has been exposed to other ways of being. Above all, she enjoyed the power of connection with those who have the political clout in the community. Some educated women are very proactive as far as dissenting against the marginalizing practice of widowhood at Enugwu-Ukwu. They are telling the stories to their young girls and the fruits of the story telling are tremendous. As evidence, the self-reports from the young girls from *Enugwu-Ukwu* are indicative that the younger generation of women are very much aware of the oppressive nature of some aspects of widowhood and are doing something about it. A report from one girl, *Erimarima*, a college graduate from *Enugwu-Ukwu* tells how she safeguarded the monetary proceeds from the funeral of her father from the hands of her uncles, for her mother. The following is an account of crafty maneuvering by *Erimarima* who saved her mother from the impending impoverishment orchestrated by her uncles. The brothers' in-law underhanded machination was to dispossess *Erimarima's* mother of her rights. *Erimarima* reports:

I am the first daughter among eight girls of my parents. I am cut to the spirit for the negligence and lack of support we received from my dad's family. The major work of planning the funeral was left to us as girls. Being only girls in the family, we were not consulted when major decisions were taken especially when it comes to how to manage the funeral donations that people gave to our family. It belongs to the girls to plan the funeral and my dad's siblings to dish out orders regarding what to do and what not to do. We were instructed not to receive any visitors and should not accept any condolence gifts and should not by any means approach the table where the condolence donations are made. Documentation is solely taken away from us.

The master plan of the brothers' in-law was designed to dispossess the girls and their mother from their inheritance, but the first daughter of the deceased beat them at their own game.

Erimarima reports:

One evening while everybody was busy watching a dance display from one of the in-laws, I went into the room where the whole money was kept and packed the whole money into the base of a big cooler and on top of packed money, I placed another cooling container and filled it to the brim with a very hot *onugbu* soup. On my way to the parish house with the container, one of my uncles asked me about the content of the cooler and I quickly opened it up with the hot vapors oozing out and I told him that it is meant for the parish priest. Immediately he ordered somebody to help me take the food to the parish priest. Under the direction of my mother's best friend (who is also a widow), I carried the whole money to the parish priest. I got the parish priest in the know of what was happening and he kept the whole money until the funeral was over. It caused a lot of commotion in the house when they began to look for the money. I never behaved as if I knew what happened to the money. I was even busy accusing the man who instructed us not to come near the money as knowing what happened to the money. That was how I saved the whole funeral money for my mother; otherwise, they would have dispossessed her and us of the money.

The above quote highlights the creative resistance to nefarious familial/traditional repression that short-changes women. Despite the changing times, women are victims of injustice as a result of the enforcement of old traditions in the community of Enugwu-Ukwu. The oppressive customs and traditions are kept sustained by those who benefit from them.

Wasteful Funeral Spending

The traditional funeral among the Igbo people is expensive. It is one of the ways whereby the widows are impoverished in the name of widowhood practice. The idea of expecting a widow to indulge in an expensive funeral is common among the Igbo people. The funeral rites of *Ndi Nze na Ndi Ozo* among the Igbo people are the most expensive. Many of the titled men take such titles without reserving a dime for their funeral expenses. The wives and children of such men bear the brunt of such reckless decisions of taking family impoverishing titles. The social pressure forces the family to take loans and even sell their landed properties for the funeral. The financial condition of the family and other needs such as the training of the children are completely disregarded. A self-report from one of the adult young men captures similar experiences of other participants. Okereke, one of the adult sons of the participant widows hails from Enugwu-Ukwu. Okereke graduated six years ago from Nnamdi Azikiwe University and had no job. Having witnessed the funeral ‘wastage of resources’ at the death of his father, despite the fact that most of his siblings were not educated because of a lack of funds, Okereke reports, My father died when I was 14 years old. He was a traditionalist but my mother was an Anglican. When my father died, the traditionalists made lists of what should be used at the funeral. It was running up to two million [Naira] according to what my mother told me. By then my brothers were not yet independent enough to have such a whooping sum of money. They requested goats, cows and even donkeys and so on and so forth. Because of the seeming impossible demands, my father’s funeral ceremony was postponed for three years, for he was a titled man. My elder brothers made some contributions, borrowed a lot from outsiders and sold some portion of our land to meet up with the demands.

‘Patriarchal Women’

Patriarchal women are those who have been socialized in the consciousness of the patriarchs. They can rise up against fellow women or are biased against women in a misogynistic way. As noted in the theoretical literature review chapter, patriarchy is not only a male issue, but also a social issue where both men and women are socialized into the dominant ideological culture. A narrative of a widow, *Ogoma*, from *Enugwu-Ukwu* shows that often, women who have been so inculcated are also a problem to women, especially the widows.

Ogoma is a secondary school graduate who lived in the University town with her family. Her husband was sick for many years. The meagre amount of money they had was used for his healthcare. Her problem began when her husband’s brother, *Ogene*, visited them in the university village and made, in her words, ‘unholy approaches’ to her. *Ogoma* rejected the approach. *Ogene* felt insulted by the rejection and began to make things difficult for *Ogoma*. *Ogene* antagonized *Ogoma* with his sister, *Nwamaka*. *Ogene* told *Nwamaka* that *Ogoma*’s attitude suggests that she knows about their mother’s sickness. *Nwamaka* had not been in good terms with *Ogoma*. Based on that unfounded suspicion, *Nwamaka* began to bear false accusation against *Ogoma* and connived with their kinsmen against her sister-in-law. Thus, *Ogoma* said this about her sister’s in-law, *Nwamaka*,

Prior to the death of my husband, we had a problem in the family. On the day my husband would be laid in state, my sister-in-law reported me to their kinsmen requesting them to extract a fine of eighteen thousand Naira (N18, 000.00) from me. *Nwamaka*, my sister-in-law, reported to her kinsmen claiming that she was not at peace with my husband before he died. I wanted to know from her why she failed to make peace with her brother before he died. I said to *Nwamaka* that her problems with her brother are none of my business. I told her that I will use the little money that is left with me to feed my children because, at that time, I was nursing a baby. She allied with their kinsmen and they insisted on my paying the eighteen thousand Naira for no justifiable reason.

In another instance, at *Enugwu-Ukwu*, a sister-in-law, *Nwogbo*, victimized her brothers' widow *Chinyere*, to the extent that they had a life threatening physical fight. *Nwogbo* was married but was childless. She had been interfering in the affairs of *Chinyere* and her husband. *Chinyere* is a middle-aged woman who was attending adult education at the time of the interviews. *Nwogbo* accused *Chinyere*, her husband and their ten year old son of killing her (Nwogbo) mother-in-law. This accusation was a strategy to get *Chinyere's* family to drink the water used to bathe the corpse of her mother-in-law as a proof of their innocence. *Chinyere* reported thus:

My husband died on October 10th, 2005 in the morning at 4:30 a.m. Before his death, his sister...refused us entrance to their compound because she held us suspects with regard to my mother-in-law's sickness... In 1999, during Christmas, one of my brothers-in-law brought me, my sick husband and my children home. I did not know that he and her sister had some hidden agenda. We stayed home until their mother died. They forced me and my children to drink the water they used in washing their mother's corpse even my husband that was on the sick bed.

This type of treatment worsened the relationship between *Chinyere* and *Nwogbo* to the extent of engaging in physical fighting. Hence, *Chinyere*, after some preceding incidences, reported: "...Nwogbo hit me on my hand and wounded me on my mouth and entered the room, bolted the door, ...out of anger, I collected the plank that was beside me, hit her and the plank cut-off her nose completely, broke her mouth, knocked-off two of her teeth just that once..." The above instances suggest that patriarchy is not only a function of male domination but also receive a proactive support from women. An association of women called *Umuada* among the *Igbo* people are known for upholding patriarchal mindsets.

Otu Umuada and their Customs among the Igbo People

According to Korieh (1996), "umuada, otherwise called umuokpu consists of married, unmarried, divorced or widowed women who belong to the village by descent, as against *Ndi alu- alu* who belong to it by marriage" (p. 71). *Otu Umuada* is a women's organization believed

to exist, practically, among *Igbo* communities. Confirming the above assertion, a study (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2011) suggests: “In practically all *Igbo* communities, women in their natal villages – addressed as “*umuada*” or “*umungboto*” – wielded legal, decisional rights comparable to those of a modern supreme court. The “*umuada*” were last arbiters; they equally had right to intervene, even uninvited, when they believed that there had been a miscarriage of justice” (p. 89). Against the above assertion that *umuada* is existent among all *Igbo* communities, this research discovers that *umuada* does not exist in all *Igbo* communities. Extra efforts were made to discover if the *otu umuada* is called by a different name at *Abaofia-Izzi*; and almost all the participants in this research asserted to the negative that there is nothing like *umuada* in *Abaofia-Izzi*. However, *umuada* organization exists at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. There are divided opinions regarding the patriarchal nature of *Igbo* nation. As mentioned earlier some scholars are of the opinion that patriarchy is the consequence of colonial incursion and was not existent in the pre-colonial era. Others assert the idea that the *Igbo* nation has always operated on dual sex political system.

According to the findings of this research, elements of a patriarchal mindset sometimes color the activities of *umuada* and at some other times their independence or autonomy from patriarchal influence is evident. The two aspects are obvious in the narrations of *Agbala* and *Omenuko*, who were mentioned previously in this chapter as fighting against the oppressive practice of widowhood. While some women were supportive of *Agbala* as a person of right, free to make decisions that affect her life, others were against her and formed an alliance with men in curtailing her freedom. The same is applicable in the story of *Omenuko*. The importance of *umuada* in this section, as it relates to widowhood practices, underlines the fact that it is one of the traditional structures that indicates whether a community has a collectivist orientation or an

individualistic inclination. The *Enugwu-Ukwu* community leans towards collectivism while *Abaofia-Izzi* leans towards individualism. Collectivism suggests treating the widows conservatively while individualism is associated with progressive treatment.

Restriction of Widows at Enugwu-Ukwu

At *Enugwu-Ukwu* widows are kept within limits of action irrespective of their social status. A good number of them felt deprived of so many things such as the ability to make decisions regarding what is in their best interest, how to dispense of material belongings of their husbands, and/or to be treated like a widower in their community. Most participant widows were capable of making their choices and gave their consent to marital union as the demographic profile shows. Most participating widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu* have no problem with knowledge questions. By implication their power of memory is well developed and, as such, they were able to apply it effectively to their own good. They were privileged to be educated and had some pace-setting role model widows empowering those who have fewer opportunities. Often, the empowerment of the less privileged women is done by storytelling. Most widows, who had rough times during widowhood period, tell their daughters about their ordeal and atimes such empowering stories are told to women collectively at town hall meetings.

The power of a story

Agbala is a primary school teacher who told the stories of suffering as narrated by her mother. This story became for *Agbala* a driving force that well prepared her for life and empowered her to resist the type of unjust treatment meted out to her mother as a widow. It is said that “stories matter, many stories matter, and that stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity” (Adichie, 2009). According to

Adichie, (2009), stories can be double edged swords and the dual power of stories is seen in those stories told to the participant widows in both *Abaofia-Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu*. In both communities, the impression of the stories told had enormous effect on the way the widows perceived their conditions.

Origin of custom and tradition

When asked to tell about the reasons or the origins of the customs and tradition of widowhood, Agbala asserted while remembering the story of her mother that had a profound impact on her:

Maybe from their forefathers, I don't know and I don't want to know. My mom told me about her humiliation and suffering from these cultural practices. (Looking livid) My mother said that as a widow, before she could eat, she had to sell *akpukpo* and that she dare not sell the goods in our community's market. She had to go all the way to the neighboring community's market to sell those goods because she was a widow. It was a terrible situation. (She snapped her finger in rejection after circling her head with her right hand uttering in *Igbo – Uchu gba kwa* – a symbolic expression signifying the rejection of a bad omen).

We can understand from the above story the power of *Agbala's* 'productive anger' and why she armed herself with the power of education to sharpen the 'bullet story' of her mother and to fight back, at the proper time, those who used the instrument of culture to marginalize widows in her community. Below is *Agbala's* story which became a model for many widows after her. When asked, "If there are customary or traditional practices expected of a widow in her community?" *Agbala* answered thus: "Yes, we have, but I think I was a stumbling block over that practice. For example, at that time, our people vehemently opposed some Catholic practices that permit a woman/widow to perform a dust to dust ritual of bidding her dead husband a final farewell... I am the first woman to have performed that act in this *Enugwu-Ukwu*."

Agbala was well prepared to fight every inch all the widowhood customs that enslave women for male domination. In another instance, *Agbala* reports: "Another customary and

traditional practice is that of performing the *Ajana* rite at the evil forest. According to the story of *Ajana* practice, the widow in question normally appears naked at mid-night while performing the ritual. My father-in-law, knows well that I will not adhere to such a practice.” Agbala was systematically opposing those traditional practices that she felt were against the welfare of widows. This is why she decided to act individually yet collectively because she had posterity in mind while resisting those traditional customs. The action of Agbala reminds us of the theory of collective action as not requiring always the gathering of a group of individuals to act as discussed in the literature review (Wright, 2009). The action of an individual, therefore, can have a collective effect as long as such a collective effect is intended. On the other hand, as quoted also in the literature review, the action of a group of individuals may not qualify as a collective action as long as the actions undertaken were meant for selfish purposes. The following quotes, broken into sections below, illustrate *Agbala*’s experiences of widowhood at *Enugwu-Ukwu*, which became a model for other widows after her. *Agbala* asserted thus:

A widow, at *Enugwu-Ukwu* stays restricted as long as she wears her mourning white cloth. She is prohibited from buying things from Nkwo Enugwu-Ukwu. However, she is permitted to buy things from markets other than her community’s. After the burial of my husband, I did not mind their stupid practice. I always go to our market and buy anything I like, any time, while returning from the school. There is one particular woman that I used to drop my bag with while entering the market who opened wide her mouth and shouted at me to stop going to the market for it is a taboo for me. When she shouted at me, I shouted back at her, twice louder, and she closed her mouth.

In the above narrative, we see that women are part and parcel of the structure that enforces patriarchal system in the society. The following report demonstrates the fact that men and women complement each other in sustaining patriarchal activities. It is surprising that the marginalized participate in maintaining structures that oppress them (Freire, 1970). Hence *Agbala* continued: “After the interaction with the shouting woman, some men ganged up against

me and reported that I offended the land and incurred the wrath of gods to my parents requiring them to warn me and to call me to order because I am desecrating the market while still in mourning cloths.”

After reporting *Agbala* to her parents, those men employed the services of a select number of elderly women to trail her. The elderly women were probably chosen to show the seriousness of *Agbala*'s continued violation of the community's tradition. One day as *Agbala* was coming back from school a woman friend of hers informed her of some elderly women's plot to stop her from buying things from the *Nkwo* market. The woman informant told *Agbala* that those women were furious as they kept emphasizing the traditional custom which states that a widow should not buy things from our *Nkwo* market while she is still wearing the mourning cloth. The following statements represent *Agbala*'s reaction to the informant's piece of information:

I told her (my informant) that as long as I get into this market and the traders are ready to sell things to me, I will continue to buy things. After all, I use my money to buy commodities, and as long as they keep accepting my money, I will continue to buy goods in this market. After my comment, the woman replied and said that if I could withstand them (social pressures from men and women) that many widows will likely emulate me. So after the whole scenario, it was not up to six months, three top educationists died. After their burial, their wives started to buy things from *Nkwo* market. People started saying that it is *Agbala* who taught them. Do you know what those widows' responses were? 'It is good and welcome development, we should emulate her.' What type of traditional slavery is this? I cannot go to *Nkwo* market because I am a widow. So from that time on, widows in this *Enugwu-Ukwu* started going to *Nkwo* while they are still wearing their mourning cloths. However, the after effect of the women's' imitation of me is not without repercussion. The elderly men in the community especially the so-called titled men insult and discriminate against them in social activities. But I kept telling the women never to give up for we shall wear them out if only we persevere.

The reader should keep in mind that it is the power of recollecting the story of a mother to her daughter that energized *Agbala* to be fighting tirelessly against women's restricting social

forces. The full force and indelible impression of the story her mother told her is made known when *Agbala* symbolically circled her head with her right hand and snapped her finger into the air and uttered in *Igbo – Uchu gba kwa* (literally meaning that what was done to her mother is intolerable). With that defiant and determined mindset, *Agbala* was ready to oppose every oppressive treatment to which she was exposed. She became not only a pace-setter, but also a model to the generation of widows after her. The mental dissonance those women had, led them to seek for a way of resolving their mental conflicts. Hence, they decided to resist and withstand such social forces as stigmatization in imitation of *Agbala* who kept giving them moral support.

Resilience of Custom and Tradition

Having witnessed great changes in the living condition of *Enugwu-Ukwu* people, the researcher wanted to know why the customs and tradition of the past keep springing up again in the present. When the researcher asked about the origin of all these widowhood rituals, none could provide an answer. Many of them mentioned the ancestors as the originators, while some others traced the origin to the gods. Once the traditional practices are mixed with the idea of religion, the complexity of why people do what they do becomes impossible to unravel. In a study by Hamamura (2011), it is noted that "...the influence of distal factors continues into the contemporary environments" (p. 19) because of subjective representation in continuing culture, even when such original factors are no longer present. Cohen D (2011) is referenced by Hamamura (2011) to have introduced the idea of "functional autonomy" as "mechanism in which culture, once evoked, can have a life of its own." (p. 19) In the light of this study, regarding *Enugwu-Ukwu*, the persistence of the culture of widowhood in the contemporary *Enugwu-Ukwu*, despite the fact that Christian ideology has been trying to suppress it for over a century, indicates the fact that functional autonomy of some distal cultures can co-exist along

with any modern ideas. This idea of functional autonomy helps to illuminate the confusing practice of why people do what they do with no knowledge of the origin of their practice (Hamamura, 2011).

Suppression of Women's Identity

The practice of widowhood keeps reemerging because some people are benefitting from it. The practice is sustained because men are privileged. According to the report of Ocheze, women unlike men are restricted in so many ways. A widower is never subjected to any serious monitoring and he can eat and drink and get re-married sooner than a widow could. The practice entails the suppression of women's identity to keep them invisible. The suppression is done in many ways and at different levels.

Suppression at the level of Individual's identity among Igbo Communities

A gender specific word 'man,' is used to identify the position of an individual among the *Igbo* communities of Nigeria to the negligence of women. According to Okere (1996),

Among the *Igbo* people: "the individual is always and in the first place, a member of his community, first of the extended family, then of kindred, the village, the town, enlarging conceptually to clan, tribe and nation. Though the *Igbo* is an extremely republican society, having no feudal-type rulers, and though direct democracy reigned in *Igbo* hamlets for centuries before white colonial rule, the *Igbo* is a man defined by his community. He understands his identity in and through his community and finds therein his fulfillment. Reciprocally, the community regards the individual as its own; it does not leave him alone: his successes and failures are its (p. 127).

Okere (1996) did not factor in the concept 'woman' in defining the individual's position in the *Igbo* community. Thus he said: "...the *Igbo* is a man defined by his community." Though some people might argue that the word 'man' includes both the concepts of men and women, in reality, it does not seem to stand as such in *Igbo*land. It appears as if man is the world, and the world is man. The concept of man as representative of both sexes is only conceptually and

verbally easy to present on paper, while in truth, it can be described, analogically, as having a “functional autonomy” (Hamamura, 2011).

Explaining the resilience of women’s suppression

As a matter of emphasis, functional autonomy is a process whereby a culture that operated in the distant past, under certain enabling factors, still influences what is happening in the “contemporary environments, where at times these original factors are no longer present” (2011, p. 19). By implication, such a culture has its independent life once evoked irrespective of what scholars say about it and it continues its way of operation parallel to any changes in the present (2011, p.19). Therefore, some traditions will continue perpetuating the idea of male dominance even when the enabling factors of the past are no longer present. For example, in those days, women were known as housewives, which suggest that their major roles centered on childbearing, housekeeping and cooking whereas it belongs to men then to provide for the house as the heads and breadwinners of their families. In a positive way, time has changed, as women are seen playing important roles not only in the families, but also in the fields of education, politics and specialized occupations. Some anachronistic cultures, such as the aspects of patriarchy, that promotes injustice against women, are still resistant to the present changes. This is why women are not well-represented in different fields of life and those that are represented are not equally treated like men. Even in cases where they are equally treated like men, they are in many other ways treated as if unequal and/or inferior. For example, a widower is not subjected to the same manner of ill-treatment as a widow. One of the participant widows at *Enugwu-Ukwu, Chikamso*, said that there are people who will continue to preserve the old traditions despite the changes in the present. Chikamso is a young widow who participated in the focus group at Enugwu-Ukwu. She is one of the three dominant participants at the focus group. She has four

children and her husband died of a cardiac disease. Thus, Chikamso, when asked to tell why people play double standard when it comes to cultural practices said: "... you know there is no town or village that does not have a culture, and once a culture is being preserved and transmitted from generation to generation, it cannot die easily." In the preceding quote, Chikamso identified that strong resilient cultural indices are hard to die. In this study, the researcher identifies the fact that some negative aspects of patriarchy are kept transmitted from one generation to the other despite changes among *Igbo* people of Nigeria.

Implications of suppressing women's identity

One major resilient cultural index that militates against women is the patriarchal tendency that suppresses women's identity in the community. If women's identity is suppressed in any society, the implication is enormous. It could mean that only male attributes will be used in the construction of realities that affect the society and in that case women's identity is lost. Hence, both psychological and social attitudes will be informed mainly by male attributes and the introduction of female attributes at any point will be met with a serious challenge. Therefore, it is not surprising to know that things that have male connotation are more appreciated in *Igbo* culture than those with female connotation. For example, presently among some *Igbo* people, to have a male child as the first baby is preferable to having a female child. It does not matter if the male child turns out a criminal kidnapper or an 'O biri dike aka n'ala.'⁶ Among the *Igbo* people, it is a better omen to have all male children, than to have all female children. Some aspects of patriarchy rank high among many other social practices that oppress women. A continued

⁶ 'O biri dike aka n'ala' is an *Igbo* slang used to describe young and old men among *Igbo* families who are experts in wasting the wealth of their parents or siblings. They are not good in making wealth but experts in dispensing them for nothing gainful. They want money and help at all times from everybody but are not ready to make any gainful investment.

existence of such practices is indicative of a functional autonomy, which has different effects in the two communities.

Understanding communal attitudes through Fredrik Barth's perspective

Understanding the words of Fredrik Barth (1969), a Norwegian as referenced by Duling (2008) will help to highlight the differences in the manner of attitude of each community towards its widows. Barth used structural functionalism to criticize the “static nature of dominant theoretical approach of the previous generation” (p. 801). The dominant theoretical approach suggests that ethnic identity has a fixed, compelling a priori and involuntary quality (Duling, 2008, p. 801). Barth negates this perspective believing that:

“...the key to ethnicity is not a catalogue of objective racial or cultural traits (...), but rather persons and groups that define and construct their own identity as they go. Ethnic self-description therefore changes. As people ascribe and identify themselves with respect to their origins and backgrounds,” it is obvious that an element of choice in constructing their world is invoked. Geography and ecology play important role as communities set boundaries between them and others (p. 801).

Barth holds that “cultural similarities and differences are important only in so far as members of ethnic groups make them so; some are played down or denied; others are highlighted and exaggerated” (p. 801). In the present comparative study of Abaofia-Izzi and Enugwu-Ukwu, the emphasis is placed differently on the ways each community treats its widows based on how they ascribe and identify themselves with their origins and backgrounds. Some of those factors that make for the differences in the ways each community understands itself relative to the way their widows are treated are geography and ecology, historical contacts, cultural legacy and economic status among others.

***Enugwu-Ukwu* social identity is dynamic**

Unlike Abaofia-Izzi people, the social identity of *Enugwu-Ukwu* people could be said to be collective. The understanding of Hogg et al. (2000) is applicable to the dynamic relation between the individual persons from *Enugwu-Ukwu* and their social identity. For Hogg et al. (2000), social identity could be said to be non-reductionistic as long as it accounts for the existing relationship between the “collective self and social group” (p. 81). The dynamic social identity of the people of *Enugwu-Ukwu* can also be perceived properly in the words of Turner (1985) when he said: “...Social categorization transforms the basis of social perception, so that people are perceived not in terms of their unique individual properties but in terms of shared in-group or shared out-group category...The individual self is replaced by a collective membership based self (i.e.; social identity) that is defined by, and acts according to, the in-group prototype” (p. 6). The act of representing the collective selves by individual self makes collective action possible at *Enugwu-Ukwu* (Turner, 1985).

Going through the demographic profiles and the indices of comparison, one sees why the people of *Enugwu-Ukwu* are more collectivistic in inclination than people of Abaofia-Izzi. First, they are landlocked and as such are forced to act collectively to expand their frontiers by engaging more in forcible expansion of their territory as a means of survival. The need to survive made them embrace both the local and international communities as far as such relational contacts would improve the quality of their lives. Against the common understanding of the time, *Enugwu-Ukwu* community sent their girl children to train in Western education, which, among other factors, will become the destructive germ that will challenge the hold of male dominancy over women. The demographic profile testifies to the fact that in this sample, *Enugwu-Ukwu* has four graduates, eight secondary school graduates and three first school leaving certificate holders

and six of them are working as civil servants. Above all, about five of the participating widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu* have knowledge of their annual income and from the previous reports, about two of the participant widows; Agbala and Ogechi are even richer and more educated than their husbands. The perception of the need to act collectively for survival strengthened the bond of unity existing between individual persons from *Enugwu-Ukwu* and their community. Based on the fact that the people of *Enugwu-Ukwu* perceive themselves more from the point of view of their collective self membership of their community than from their individual personal properties relative to the observation of the widowhood practices, any infraction of the practice of widowhood will meet with serious repressive social pressure. Since men have taken it upon themselves as the custodian of those cultures, they also arrogated to themselves the right to uphold the tradition of the ancestors. This is why when the researcher asked some clarifying questions regarding the way *Enugwu-Ukwu* and even *Abaofia-Izzi* treat their widows there was always a quick retort to the question: “Go and ask the gods and the ancestors.”

In-group suppressing out-group tendencies

In-group and out-group tendency refers to the intergroup bias which leads to a paradoxical relationship whereby in-group members favor each other while derogating out-group members (M. K. Johnson, Rowatt, & LaBouff, 2012). All efforts at suppressing women’s identity, both individually and socially, are ways of creating in-groups and out-groups that support the anachronistic social dominant theory, which justifies hierarchical social structures. From the previous definition of individual identity relative to social identity, definitions are done with men in mind. In other words, the lenses of perception are those of men and not women. When social identity is defined, it is most often done in relation to men among the *Igbo* people, though, oftentimes, it is not explicit in theory but very practical in reality. This attitude of

justifying what is no longer in sync with present understanding validates the fact that functional autonomy is very active in the present. Referencing the words of William James (1890) regarding the way possessions are defined as self-extensions, it is unfortunate that men perceive women as part of their extended selves (Belk, 1988). Belk et al. (1988) assert:

A man's Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands, and yacht and bank-account. All these things give him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down, - not necessarily in the same degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all (p. 139).

If possessions involve self-extension, then to deny women possessions is to deny them extension of themselves. And to count any of them as one of the possessions implies enlarging men's extension at the expense of women's inviolable unique identity. This practice of depriving women their extended-selves is very much reflected in the tradition of inheritance as practiced among the *Igbo* people. Hence, Iloka, from Enugwu-Ukwu, said when asked: Are there problems associated with the inheritance of the man's properties when he dies?

Yes, I suppose I have to say something concerning the entire Igboland. If the man has a son, he should inherit his father's property including the land. But quite often, if the man doesn't have a son, it's not a widow that is going to inherit it, and rather, the brother can inherit what the man had. Here the widow is not qualified to inherit what the husband left behind unless if the man has a son. If it's a girl, she can't inherit because the girl will marry someday, women do not inherit properties.

More than ninety-five percent of participant men share the same opinion with Iloka as expressed above. All the participant women testified to the fact that women are dispossessed of all properties at the death of their husbands. However, at Enugwu-Ukwu, more than thirty-five percent of the participant widows vehemently protested against this idea of property deprivation of women especially at their place of marriage. The above quotation suggesting that women do not inherit their husband's/father's property was strongly opposed by *Agbala*, among many other

widows from Enugwu-Ukwu, on the occasion of answering the question, what happened when your husband died. Among many other answers, *Agbala* strongly asserted as quoted above: “Gone are the days when they say that women do not inherit their fathers’ property. I have two daughters and if any of them could not get married, she has every right to come back to her father’s house and have a shelter over her head.” *Agbala* refuted *Iloka*’s quotation which presumed that every woman must get married. By implication, *Agbala* suggests that no woman should be homeless or driven away from her father’s compound because she did not get married. At *Enugwu-Ukwu*, among those widows who participated, there were more than five instances of physical fighting over material possessions and about three court cases over the same material properties left behind by deceased men. In the words of William James, women, like men, feel “cast-down” too when they are deprived of their right over material possessions. In the next section, the researcher will describe the patterns of widowhood practices among the people of *Abaofia-Izzi*. Thereafter, the researcher will evaluate why women from *Enugwu-Ukwu* protested against the relative deprivation of what is felt as their right and why such was not the case with the participant widows at *Abaofia-Izzi*.

Abaofia-Izzi worldview and the condition of their widows

Abaofia-Izzi community is a part of the *Igbo* nation that has a different worldview regarding widowhood practices when compared to *Enugwu-Ukwu*. Factors such as geographical locations and historical contacts among others are considered in this section as they impact *Abaofia-Izzi*’s outlook on the world differently.

Rituals and Inheritance at Abaofia-Izzi

Abaofia-Izzi people are not rich in the use of ritual symbols and are casual in material manipulation with regard to the practice of widowhood. Though some participating widows gave

the impression that there are minor widow restricting rituals, in reality, widow restricting rituals, among the Abaofia-Izzi people are rare. From the reports of the participant widows, one can say that they firmly believe in superstition. For instance, it is not realistic to believe that every man that dies in Abaofia-Izzi is killed by evil people. Death is real and it could come in any form and manner. Most participant widows believed that their husbands were killed by evil people in Abaofia-Izzi. This statement could be true but cannot be true for all men that die in Abaofia-Izzi. It is superstitious not to believe that people could die of diseases. Ignorance, mostly, is the reason why people think in strange ways regarding what they do not understand. Superstitions will be demystified when the government and private individuals are ready to confront human problems with the fruits of modern technology.

A widow participant, *Nwigo*, whose view is shared by many, spoke about the exploitation of widows when traditional burial is done. *Nwigo* is a third wife of a traditional believer and a Catholic who was not happy with the high cost of traditional funeral service in *Abaofia-Izzi*. She has five children and sustains her family by working in a quarry. The quarry work is a hard job. The researcher visited the place of work and found the environment unhealthy and the women unprotected in the quarry company. It was a troubling sight. *Nwigo*, a forty year old woman, said that it is less expensive to have a Christian burial than to do a traditional one. Her husband's funeral was done in a traditional way. When asked if the traditional believers help the widows at the death of their husbands in the community of *Abaofia-Izzi*, she asserted:

No one came to my aid. Rather, much demand was made from me. I was told to offer money for sacrifices for the protection of my children and family. Many people, both traditional diviners and ordinary people were advising me to offer money for one type of protective sacrifice or the other. Native diviners and fortune-tellers predicted horrible things that would happen if the sacrifices were not offered. They kept manipulating your psyche.

In the light of the above, a widow participant, *Nguru*, a fifty-five year old woman, who participated in a focus group at *Abaofia-Izzi*, affirmed the fact that widows do not receive much help from the community and even from close relatives. Many participant widows shared her view. When she was asked about the treatment she received from her husband's kindred, she asserted: "*Okwaa etehu!*" only good morning from the one who may wish to greet you." It is all about suffering for the *Abaofia-Izzi* widows who had many children to raise in mostly polygeneous families. The family situation is that of the survival of the fittest.

Ideologically, *Abaofia-Izzi* men strongly assert their privileged superiority over women. In reality, however, the strength of their ideas does not have a comparable practical effect in the life of their women. Poverty of material wealth is perceived as the cause of their inability to translate their ideas into reality. One could be wrongly perceived to say that *Abaofia-Izzi* people are materially poor since they have lots of landed properties and could make lots of money out of their cash crops. However, the inability of *Abaofia-Izzi* people to 'turn crops into cash and cash into crops,' seems to be a part of their poverty. In addition, it could be said that the inability of the *Abaofia-Izzi* people to key into the principles of cash economy appears to be one of the reasons for their poverty. The use of land and agro-based products by *Abaofia-Izzi* people is symptomatic of people who lived in the era of trade by barter. Unlike the men from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, for whom material wealth serves as an instrument of control, the lack of such material wealth not only impoverishes the men of *Abaofia-Izzi* but also deprives them of the power to control. Unlike the people of *Abaofia-Izzi*, *Enugwu-Ukwu* people understood, effectively, the balance between the accumulation of landed properties and agro based crops and the current economic operational system. The reports of the participant widows testify to the preceding assertions in the later section of this chapter. Comparable to *Enugwu-Ukwu*, *Abaofia-Izzi*

community has no serious ritual tradition and is not as strict as the people of Enugwu-Ukwu regarding the right to inherit. In general, Abaofia-Izzi men made life decisions that not only impoverished them but also mortgaged their girl children to lives of poverty.

However, there is another dimension to comparing the two towns – Enugwu-Ukwu and Abaofia-Izzi. Abaofia-Izzi people have massive land and their major business is farming. The farm land produces lucrative agro-based products, such as yam, cassava, and rice. Ironically, based on what the participants reported, the people of Abaofia-Izzi, with regard to these landed properties and agro products are not ‘putting their money where their mouth is.’ The people of Abaofia-Izzi, according to their king, are monetarily poor but rich in agro-based products. They do not sell land and agro based products easily, especially yam. As a result of this, they do not have ‘liquid cash’ to improve on their condition. It is only in an extreme situation that they can sell land and their agro products. Using himself as an example to demonstrate the fact that Abaofia-Izzi people are not into cash economy, the king of Abaofia-Izzi asserted: “even if you raise me up and fling me to the ground, you will not extract a dime from me in terms of money and so it is with many people in this community.” Analogically, the people of Abaofia-Izzi could be described as a group of homeless people who have millions in the bank. It is really ironic and one needs to explore the perspectives that inform the Abaofia-Izzi people regarding their attitude towards appreciating landed properties and agro products more relative to cash economy.

Abaofia-Izzi ritual tradition

The ritual tradition regarding widowhood practice centers on what they call *Uta Utara*. *Uta Utara* is associated with New Yam Festival in *Abaofia-Izzi*. Among other things, the celebration of *Uta Utara* signifies the completion of the funeral rites and frees the woman from the taboo placed on her by the death of her husband. When asked about the requirements of this

Uta Utara, the resource person for Abaofia-Izzi linked it to the New Yam Festival. Relative to *Ajana* ritual performed at Enugwu-Ukwu, the *Uta Utara* celebration does not demand much from the widows. Comparatively, performing *Ajana* is all-involving in Enugwu-Ukwu. It demands the presence of a diviner, or an *nwada* and the collection of all the materials used during the mourning period. Often in the celebration of *Uta Utara*, a diviner is also involved to predict if the spirit of the deceased person has joined the ancestor or needs more appeasing sacrifices to join the throng of ancestors. A widow is not allowed to live her normal life unless the feast of *Uta Utara* is celebrated. More than 90 % of the participant widows from *Abaofia-Izzi* complained about the restriction placed on them as they wait for the performance of this festival to free themselves. This feast is normally celebrated once in a year around the month of September. If one's husband dies in January or December, one has to be restricted for the whole year before she falls back to her normal life. A resource person for Abaofia-Izzi, however, reported that the idea of ritual restriction of a widow is more of a personal assumption on the part of the widow than a general rule of the community. This assertion is debatable. Until the feast is celebrated, a widow is taken as defiled. This celebration of *Uta Utara* is one of those social tools the community uses to restrict women from managing their lives. It appears that the community manages the running of the women's day to day activities until such a time when the final stage of the burial rite is completed. It has to be noted that observance of burial rites is not as limiting in Abaofia-Izzi as it is at Enugwu-Ukwu. Going by the communal attitudes towards the widows, it seems that widows regain their sense of selves at the completion of the funeral rites. The regaining moment is achieved by compliance to the dictates of the community regarding the *Uta Utara*. Since Abaofia-Izzi has no institutionalized guide directing what to do or what not to do during widowhood practice, according to the resource person, Achebe, the researcher, therefore,

faced challenges in discovering that which is unique to Abaofia-Izzi regarding the widowhood practice. Most of the findings in Abaofia-Izzi will be compared to what happens at *Enugwu-Ukwu* in the subsequent sections.

Widow restriction as the major issue during Uta Utara Festival

At Abaofia-Izzi, the major problem widows encounter, is the restriction from showing concern for friends and neighbors who lost their significant others. A widow is forbidden from commiserating with others as long as her husband's funeral rite has not been completed. In line with the above, *Nwiboko*, one of the widows from Abaofia-Izzi who has a strong desire for changes in some of the widow-limiting customs and tradition said: "Widows' restriction is the only treatment of our cultural practice that is not acceptable to me. The restriction from attending and commiserating with a friend whose husband died is annoying. It makes you look like a sadist. The communal sanction stipulates that unless the second burial or remembrance of one's husband is completed, no widow is allowed to socialize and even to show sympathy to friends who lost their husbands."

'Second burial' frees the widow from restriction

The 'second burial' or the performance of the final stage of the burial rite is determined by the financial capacity of the family or at times by a diviner. A diviner is one who determines if the spirit of the dead man is still hanging around. The hanging around of the spirit of the dead man is a sign that he, the dead man, is not happy and needs to be sent 'home' through the performance of those final rituals. The performance is a way of sending the man home finally to be with the ancestors. It is very frustrating for the widows who are poor. They have to remain segregated for a long time until their families perform the last stage of the burial rite. Otherwise, according to Achebe, the widow is restricted from socializing - from getting re-married and

having sexual relations. This period of time could be as short as six months or as long as one year or even four years. *Enugwu-Ukwu* participants reported stricter restrictions such as not being allowed outside the house after six o'clock in the evening, not shaking hands with men, not attending the community's market and not partaking of food served during your husband's funeral.

Abaofia-Izzi inheritance tradition

Inheritance in Abaofia-Izzi is more of landed property, limited agro-based products than pecuniary assets or any other investments. The demographic profiles show that the average mean income of participant widows from Abaofia-Izzi is between the ranges of ten to fifteen thousand Naira. Most of those participant widows have at least three to five dependants. This implies that such widows live from 'hand to mouth.' Over and above this impoverished condition of women in Abaofia-Izzi, male domination is also noted at different levels.

Domination at the level of Relationship

The treatment of women as worth less than men with regard to social structuring of the family among *Igbo* people is well depicted by the responses of the widows from both communities. There is a range of degree in the domination of the women from traditional relationship norms to patterns of devastating violence to widowhood. For example, at the level of relationship norms in Abaofia-Izzi one of the participant widows, *Nwagbaga*, a sixty-two year old widow who happens to be the first of five wives of her husband lamented over the loss she had to endure being married when she said: "Many changes came to my life because I am no more living the life of a girl again. When I married I observed that a woman after marriage should be loyal (*ga-nakwado di ya n' ihe nile*) and under a man so that they could both nurture their children in a Christian way." The words "loyal" and "under" implicitly express the

patriarchal nature of Abaofia-Izzi community. Some of the participating widows commented that a functional marriage presupposes a steadfast submission of the wife to the husband. It is believed that without the wife's submission, it would be hard for the couple to raise their children together.

The logic of the above argument suggests that human reality is known in interaction. In marital interaction, according to *Nwagbaga*, the ideas of loyalty and submissiveness as prerequisites for functional marriage were emphasized. This suggests that submissiveness and loyalty are expected of a woman, but not of a man. This is a case of men's privilege over women as far as family structure is concerned within Abaofia-Izzi community and in most human families of the world. *Nwibo*, the third of four wives from Abaofia-Izzi expressed a kind of mental dissonance when men exhibit their superiority tendencies towards her. *Nwibo* has two children who have psychological problems that she has to take care of and two of her children died soon after the death of her husband. She asserted when asked about attitude of men towards widows: "I hate men especially when they show their rugged superiority tendency." *Nwibo* said this to emphasize the exploitative tendencies of men over vulnerable widows. Focusing on herself, she stressed the fact that she has lots of familial problems and does not want anybody to subjugate her by taking advantage of her problems.

Patriarchy as a show of *nkari* (male superiority)

At the other end of the spectrum of domination among the *Igbo* people, once the husband is dead, some men in the community would begin to terrorize the widow in both communities. In the following reports from the widow participants in Abaofia-Izzi, when asked what happened when their husbands died, the women testified to these impressions about some men in the community of Abaofia-Izzi. *Nwikuka*, a widow participant from Abaofia-Izzi has been married

for forty years. *Nwikuka* said: “A young man walked into my compound and set my house ablaze without any just cause in less than three months of my husband’s demise.” Such violence thoroughly conveyed the disdain that existed towards the widow. However, the frequency of such a disdain is uncommon in Abaofia-Izzi.

Patriarchy at the level of decision making

Nwampa, a forty-nine year old lady, hails from Abaofia-Izzi. She was admired the most by all the participants in the focus group. There was something irresistible about her that no one could afford to neglect. Her sense of humor was so powerful that she made light of even the gravest of situations during the interviews. Nwampa’s responses suggests that women are not factored into family matters as when sharing family inheritance and/or even making decisions that concern girls in the family. She said: “Our kindred denied us of several inheritances including a bride price of one of my daughters.” A bride price is an amount of money paid by the groom to the parents or kindred of the bridegroom as a symbolic gesture that he is committed to have the woman as a wife.

Along the same line of male domination as a way of showing male superiority among the *Igbo* people in the social structuring of the family system, *Delinebe*, who was one of the three women from monogamous family in Abaofia-Izzi complained bitterly against the unjust domination of men. *Delinebe* asserted: “It is evident enough that the moment the husband is no more, the evil men will occupy the wrong position and start dealing with you for the wrong reasons.” The following reports by *Nne* also reveal the suffering situation of widows when men, who are taken as the primary breadwinners of the household die. In most polygeneous families, co-wives struggle after limited resources. Those who suffer the most are those widows who never worked outside the home and had children to take care of. A lot of widows from Abaofia-

Izzi fell into this category as their demographic profiles showed. Hence, *Nne*, the oldest of all the participant widows from *Abaofia-Izzi*, asserted when asked what happened when her husband died: “My daughter, I was terrorized by hunger soon after the death of my husband. I have two children. I lost my only son during the Nigeria-Biafran war and my daughter died in her first pregnancy. I practically had nobody when my husband died. To be honest, I lost hope in life.”

Evaluation of both communities’ widowhood practices

The evaluation of the above report and other instances found in the data indicated that money and other material possessions are the reasons for the struggles among daughters-in-law, the brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, especially at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. Close examination of the whole reports in both communities regarding widowhood practices suggests that the institution of family and introduction of patriarchal system are the reasons behind the victimization of widows (Korieh, 1996). At *Abaofia-Izzi*, there were not many instances of concrete struggles after material things because of their peculiar situation. Except for their massive land, they are materially poor. Their men claim superiority but they have nothing to show in the material world to exert their power of superiority in contrast to *Enugwu-Ukwu* where material possession served as an instrument of control. At *Enugwu-Ukwu*, material possession served as a vehicle through which the claims of male superiority are demonstrated in the material world, whereas at *Abaofia-Izzi*, such superiority claims by men, go to the wind because there is no bridge where the claims and the real world mesh. At this point, the researcher considers other areas where men’s superior tendencies are used as justifying evidence to free them from the dehumanizing and limiting widowhood practices. Considering the condition of the widows in *Abaofia-Izzi*, it is discovered that the worldview of *Abaofia-Izzi* community determines the life experiences of their widows especially in their permitting the idea of child marriage.

Poverty Enhancing Decisions of Abaofia-Izzi Men

According to the reports from *Abaofia-Izzi* participants, *Abaofia-Izzi* men engage in actions that impoverished them early in life. They engaged in polygamy and resource wasting titles, such as ‘the Chimpanzee’ titles and others. They seem to be myopic in refusing to diversify their approach to life especially when they delayed in accepting the western system of education.

There is an inherent paradox in the study of the two communities, *Enugwu-Ukwu* and *Abaofia-Izzi*. Emergent from the data is the fact that *Enugwu-Ukwu* is collectivistic in orientation, whereas *Abaofia-Izzi* is individualistic. *Enugwu-Ukwu* people are collectivistic in their action. This doesn’t mean that these individuals must gather together to take a collective action. It is enough that one individual acts with the intention of representing others. In the words of Okere (1996):

It is characteristic of people in collectivist society to regard the individual as a differentiated part of society...In Asia and Africa man as an individual finds his meaning and identity rather as a member of a group than as an individual. In collectivist societies the life of the individual is so inseparably bound up with that of society as a whole that it has little claim to independent validity. Thought and conduct are to a large extent determined by the community, by laws and customs. A man tends to be guided by the collective conscience of his group (p.128).

The above quote is a reflection of what happens at *Enugwu-Ukwu*, whereas the reverse is the case at *Abaofia-Izzi*. An action taken by an individual man from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, relative to widowhood practice, is understood as taken on behalf of the people of *Enugwu-Ukwu* in compliance with their customs and traditions. As a result, if a man decrees that no widow in his family should use farmland, it is given a tacit support by the family members and the village members as a demand of the custom and tradition of the community. A woman is expected to comply without question. Unquestionable obedience is expected of a woman. Since, *Enugwu-*

Ukwu has a stronger patriarchal identification with their community; their widows experience a harsher treatment than those of *Abaofia-Izzi*. In reference to the *Igbo* people, men and women have parallel patterned cultural interactions. The men and women operate separately. However, important decisions that affect the community's customs and traditions seem to be the sole prerogatives of men.

Polygeneous Family vs. Large Family

There is a common connection running through the concepts of polygny, having a large family, child marriage and acquiring wealth of people. Polygny is “a union of one man with several women,” and the goal is to have a large family (Okolo, 1991). On the other hand, child marriage denotes wealth of people. According to Echiegu (1998), a native resource person and an expert in *Izzi* culture, having a wealth of people demands polygny, large network of kindred, in-laws, and extended relationships. A phenomenological and hermeneutical analysis of traditional *Igbo* family reveals that: “The nature of *Igbo* family is an interconnectedness of beings, visible and invisible, that mutually coexist. It is an integral whole comprising of the living, the dead and the unborn” (Ufearoh, 2010). The above citation captures the interest that drives the *Igbo* people to compete for a large family by engaging in polygenous relationships. The visible aspect of the family constitutes a status symbol, while the invisible target is to join in happy reunion with the ancestors. According to many *Igbo* scholars (Achebe, 1959; Njoku, 1990; Nwoye, 2010), being with the ancestors is the ultimate drive for building large families. Every temporal activity, among the *Igbo* people is undertaken in consideration of its impact in promoting or inhibiting one's chances of joining the ancestors. In line with this, Uchendu (1965) captures the dual dimensions for the quest for large families among the *Igbo* people when he said: “An *Igbo*

without *umunna* – a patrilineage, is an Igbo without citizenship both in the world of man and in the world of the ancestors” (pp. 54 – 55).

According to Echiegu (1998), “a wide network of kins and affins are a status symbol...” for the Igbo people (p. 34). The common proverbial parlance among the *Ezza* and *Izzi* people (Echiegu, 1998) depicts the principle behind the *Igbo* concept of wealth of the people. *Enweru Madzu (Nemadzu, Izzi) ka Enweru-Iphe. Uba Madzu ka Uba Eku:* (having people is greater than having property; [that is] wealth of people” (p. 34). Continuing further, Echiegu (1998) remarked that...the consequence of *Enweru-Onye, Enwere Madzu is Enwere Iphe* (having people implies having material wealth) especially as displayed at funerals. Citing Talbot, Echiegu (1998) said that “a person who has no brother or near relatives to give a second burial, will, it is thought, be a poor man among the ghosts” (p. 34). Such a person can never make it to the land of the ancestors and cannot re-incarnate.

Given the above background behind the worldview of the *Igbo* people, we can understand approximately why up to 70% of the participant widows in Abaofia-Izzi came from a polygeneous family. Over and above coming from large families, one has to focus on the assumed superior manipulative privileges men exercise in such polygeneous families. Mostly in those marriages, men are reported by the widow participants as having given them out so early in life to un-consented marriages. Hence, *Uloma* from *Abaofia-Izzi* reported thus: “Giving out daughters in marriage was the pride and desire of every family in *Abakaliki*, in general. My father wasn’t different from the men of his time and he gave me out to Mr. Dike in a fruitful marriage.” Based on the demographic chart, it is reported that ten out of the fifteen participant widows at Abaofia-Izzi came from a polygeneous family. And in the indices of comparison, under *Abaofia-Izzi*, polygny is indicated with two asterisks suggesting that the people of *Abaofia-*

Izzi engage more in polygeneous marriage than those of *Enugwu-Ukwu*. Though, at *Enugwu-Ukwu* only two widow participants came from polygeneous families, of note is the fact that one of the widow participants from *Enugwu-Ukwu* is the twelfth wife of her husband. This twelfth wife reported that her husband has the intention of marrying fourteen wives, but death cut two short of his intention. *Abaofia-Izzi* has more frequency of engaging in polygenous marriage than *Engwu-Ukwu* and the largest polygeneous family among the participants from *Abaofia-Izzi* has five women. In a polygeneous culture, women are more likely than men to be treated with less dignity (Jessop & Palmer, 2007). According to the demographic profile, the relative age of men to their wives is not known, especially at *Abaofia-Izzi*. But one thing that is obvious is that those men look so old that talking about their age is irrelevant. *Mgboli*, one of the participant widows from *Abaofia-Izzi* deals with *Ogili* business. For the *Igbo* people *ogili* is one of the most distinguishing spices for *Onugbu* soup and other delicacies. When asked about what attracted her to her husband, she said: “Nothing. The man was too old and I did not want to marry him but for the persuasion of my father, I accepted to marry him.” Common sense suggests that anybody who wants to marry has to marry somebody with whom he or she can have a relationship. It seems irrational for a twenty-year-old girl to get married to a seventy year old man.

Child Marriage vs. Wealth of People

Child marriage among the *Igbo* people of Nigeria, especially in one of the two communities under study is closely associated with the *Igbo* peoples’ worldview regarding the size of a family as stated above. Child marriage is valued as the shortest conduit to acquiring wealth of people. Focusing on the child marriage according to research sponsored by the United Nations Children Fund in 2005, the following observations were made.

Marriage before the age of 18 is a reality for so many young women. In many parts of the world, parents encourage the marriage of their daughters, while they

are still children in the hopes that the marriage will benefit them both financially and socially, while also relieving financial burdens on the family. In actuality, child marriage is a violation of human rights, compromising the development of girls and often resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation, with little education and poor vocational training reinforcing the gendered nature of poverty.

It is stated that marriage contracted at any age between birth and puberty is child marriage. The global assessment of a child marriage as stated above reflects the conditions of more participants in their early childhood at *Abaofia-Izzi* than at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. According to the demographic profile, the average mean age of those widow participants as girl children at marriage is eight and twenty for *Abaofia-Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu*, respectively. This data reveals that the widow participants from *Abaofia-Izzi* had difficulty remembering the year they married or their age at marriage. It was also an uphill task for them to tell why they got married to their husbands whereas the contrary was the case at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. When asked, “What year did you get married? Some of the widow participants from *Abaofia-Izzi* responded in the following manner: *Akueyinwa*, a lively participant who was so enthused about the process shouted (while shrugging her shoulders) “I can’t remember again.” *Nwaorie*, who is a house cleaner in their state hospital, repeated the first speaker’s answer while adding, *ime maa*, meaning ‘donkey years’ (a long time ago). The third speaker, *Obiageli*, who is the best-spoken among them, having heard the previous speakers’ difficulties at remembering, assumed the responsibility of speaking for all others when she asserted: “None of us can remember it; after all, I don’t even know when I married my husband.” And the fourth person, *Ebere*, said, while smiling, “I don’t know oh.” In general, five of the widow participants from *Abaofia-Izzi* responded categorically that they do not know the year they got married, while seven of them were uncertain as they ended up guessing. These submissions from *Abaofia-Izzi* widow participants reveal their laconic and monosyllabic approach to question answering. Again, when the participants were asked to tell their age at

marriage, the researcher found them struggling just as they did when asked to tell the year they got married. However, the researcher had to probe their responses to extract some answers. The probing led some of them to approximate. From those approximations, it was easy to deduce that their mean age at marriage was eight, and a good number of them revealed that they were only five years when they were given out in marriage by their fathers. Continuing with the knowledge questions, they were asked what attracted them to their husbands. Six of the eight widow participants who responded to the question claimed that they had no attraction and reported that their fathers arranged the marriage. In other words, it was the consent of their father and not theirs that made the marriage. While six of them were saying individually, “my father” did this or that in the choice of my husband, only two of the respondents used the personal pronoun ‘I’ in a way that expresses the fact that their consent was involved in the choice of their husband. Hence the following are some of the answers some of the participants from *Abaofia-Izzi* offered. *Onyeama* asserted: “I do not know why I married him, because it was my father who gave me out in marriage in those years. Female children in *Abaofia Izzi* don’t choose husband by themselves. It was the exclusive right and the duties of responsible fathers to choose who would be the right marriage candidates for their beloved daughters in the good olden days of ours in *Izzi* land.” Over and above the inability of the widow participants from *Abaofia-Izzi* to tell when they got married or their ages at marriage, the researcher would like the reader to focus her/his attention on the widow participants’ justification of their fathers in selecting the assumed ‘right marriage candidates’ for their daughters as contained in the above quotation. This is a typical example of ‘merciful mechanism’ operative in human mind as used by Jost (2010) in his concept of justification theory. Here are some of the examples of other participant widows expressing the fact that their fathers were the ones giving and accepting their consents on behalf of their girl

children. This is an only instance where a participant widow from *Abaofia-Izzi* expressed her dissatisfaction at the intervention of her father. *Okenne*, a forty year old widow, who was visibly angry while narrating her experience nearly broke down during the interview. In anger she said: “The marriage did not receive my blessing, it was an arrangement between my father and his friend...I was deceived that I was going as a house help. Suddenly, I became a cow tender and used to have my meals in the field with the cows, and subsequently before I could know what was happening, it turned into a marriage” (She was bitter and crying during the narration).

Of all participants from *Abaofia-Izzi*, *Okenne* was the only one who was still angry at her father. This interview was the most emotional for both the interviewer and the researcher, for at some point during the interview, we were crying together. It was this interview that brought together the enormity of what the individual participant widows were narrating to the researcher. The emotionally charged body language of *Okenne*, kept the researcher wondering why others were not as angry as *Okenne*, at their fathers, while telling their stories. Eventually, Jost’s (2010) concept of ‘mercy mechanism’ regarding how enduring the human spirit could be when it comes to suffering made more sense to the researcher.

Parental Influence in marriage arrangement

Continuing in the normal way of expressing their impression of how they got married without showing any sign of anger, *Anayo*, (a participant widow from *Abaofia-Izzi*) said that she was attracted to her husband because her father said he was an “energetic young man.” Responding to the same question, *Njide* who appears to be the most withdrawn of all the participants said in response to the question of attraction to one’s husband: “Because he was a wealthy farmer, my father handed me over to him as a wife.” The other respondents, *Amaka*, *Ifenkiri*, and *Odili* who were among the dominant members in the group answered respectively:

“I don’t see anything in him.” “My own father told me that their family has longevity and I got interested,” and finally the last person said: “My parents arranged the marriage, there was no attraction therein.”

Echezona, a decent and pensive lady from *Abaofia-Izzi* said when asked about what attracted her to her husband: “If I had known then what I know today, I would not have married so early.” Her husband was very sickly and had those sickly symptoms before she married him. She expressed the fact that she was more of a nurse than a wife to her husband. *Echezona* was very vocal when she said she never liked her husband. It was the parental influence that pushed her into the relationship. She observed that her daughters are more likely to elope today with the love of their hearts, rather than marrying somebody they do not like. She asserted further that “In those days, there was nothing like eloping with a man and you dare not even think of it.” It appears that the present generation of girls understands that denying or robbing one’s right to choose is as unfair and unjust as losing one’s personality in the name of tradition and customs. The widow participants from *Abaofia-Izzi* showed ignorance in many knowledge questions due to the fact that more than seventy percent of them were given out in marriage as girl children. From the demographic profile, it is known that their average mean age at marriage was eight. None of the participants interviewed went beyond primary school level. In fact only three of the fifteen participants had first school leaving certificates.

Decision making in both communities

On the other hand, the widow participants from *Enugwu-Ukwu* were of age, and it was easy for them to give their age, year of marriage and the reason for their choice of husbands. *Tobechukwu*, from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, was twenty-four years old before she consented to marriage. When asked, “What year did you get married?” she responded, “I married in the year 1973 and

did the white wedding in 1975.” Again when *Tobechukwu* was asked, “What in particular attracted you to your husband?” She answered: “Among many aspiring suitors, I liked him the most because of the vicinity of his house to my village. I am from *Nimo*, but my husband is from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, while others were from outside my community. Again, I liked him too because he is well-behaved. He neither smoked nor was given to alcohol. In fact, he was a decent man.”

The widow participant, *Tobechukwu*, from Engwu-Ukwu, was twenty-eight years when she got married. She was born in 1945 and got married in 1973 and her level of education at the time of the interview was NCE (National Certificate in Education). *Agbala*, one of the widow participants from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, gave the following answers when asked about her age of marriage and the attraction she had for her husband, “I got married on the 15th April, 1974.”

Revealing her attractions to her husband, she said: “He was a responsible and a pretty young man. In fact, when I met him, he was of age to marry, and me too because I had finished my TCII (Teachers Training College) education and he was already a teacher.” *Agbala* was born in 1948 and got married in 1974. She was twenty-six years at marriage and had NCE (the highest level of education) at the time of the interview. In fact, according to the demographic chart, there were four graduate widow participants, eight secondary school graduates and three elementary school leaving certificate holders at Enugwu-Ukwu.

Having seen why child marriage was encouraged in some parts of the world today and what the participants in the two communities said about their involvement or non-involvement in the decision making process that led to their marriages; let us consider the reasons for child marriage among the *Igbo* people and the *Abaofia-Izzi* people. It is undeniable that the ripple effects of childhood marriage last for a lifetime. Such effects will be evaluated when a comparison is made

between girl children marriage and adult marriage as obtained at *Abaofia-Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu*.

Intended reasons for child marriage

When child marriage is viewed from the prism of the contextual manipulation of patriarchy as the overarching framework, it portrays human understanding from the perspective of Blumer's symbolic interactionism (1969). Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings those things have for them and meanings arise out of human interaction and interpretive process in such a way that the 'stamp' of the environment is undeniable on the whole process. The local specific nature of this study is important (Blumer, 1969).

Brief history of early marriage

Historically, individuals were permitted to contract marriage at the early ages of twelve and fourteen for girls and boys respectively in ancient Rome. This practice lasted for so many centuries and was maintained by many powerful institutions such as the Catholic Church and British government. At the turn of the twentieth century, researchers and policymakers according to Dahl (2010), "questioned the advisability of such early unions" (p. 689). They recognized that teens may not be well prepared to take up the responsibilities and pressures associated with familial financial provision (Dahl, 2010). Of the two communities under study, the participants from *Abaofia-Izzi*, at the time of their marriages, were given out as children.

Three reasons for child marriage

They were given out in marriage for various reasons. First, a man could maintain a bond of friendship with another man by giving out his daughter in marriage. This is a way of solidifying the friendly relations between two families. Evidence is supported by the previous quotations by participant widows in relation to the question of why they got married. Beyond the

bond of friendship, the *Igbo* people believe that *ogo onye bu chi ya* or *Ogo bu chi onye* (meaning that one's in-law is like a god to him and/or serves as one's security in time of need). Second, child marriage serves as a status symbol for parents. Parents' social status is boosted by the number of in-laws they have. Such a wealth of people is a sign of the family's social popularity. Third, it is a way of maintaining the cult of virginity, which is socially valued as against prostitution (UNICEF, 2005). Again, the bid to increase the work force in their farms, among agrarian societies, leads men into engaging in polygeneous unions that involve girl children. This is a strategy men use to boost their egos because the wealth of a man is judged by the size of his barn. To have a large family is to provide many hands to cultivate the land and invariably displace hired laborers. It is one of the economic strategies for families in those days. It is also bait for attracting many in-laws since the size of a man's barn serves as a yardstick for measuring his wealth.

Unintended reasons for child marriage:

According to Dahl (2010), one of the unheeded consequences for giving out girl children in marriage "includes higher poverty rate throughout life" (p. 689). Using an instrumental variable (IV) approach, Dahl (2010) estimates that a woman who marries young is 31% more likely to be poor at old age and that a woman who drops out of school is 11 % more likely to be poor too. There is also a higher possibility of forced sexual relations leading to trauma and denial of freedom to enjoy one's childhood through normal developmental processes. Child pregnancy and related health issues such as fistula with high postnatal mortality and morbidity are likely to besiege the innocent girl child. They are more likely to be subjected to responsibilities typical of adults (Zhang, 2007). Zhang's findings and the researcher's discovery coincide. The result of this research shows that young teenagers are given out in marriage to men who are old enough to be

their great grandfathers. When there is a gap in age disparity between couples, one of them risks the possibility of being widowed at a much younger age. The indices of comparison indicate that the age range of widows after the demise of their husbands is between seventeen to thirty-three years. In our situation, especially at *Abaofia-Izzi* community, the women are the victims of such disparate unions and are not given opportunities to develop capabilities necessary to improve on their condition as the demographic profiles show. Many widow participants from *Abaofia-Izzi* did not perform well in knowledge questions. They seem to have memory problems.

The Power of Memory

The ability to recollect or remember denotes the power of memory. Most participant widows from *Abaofia-Izzi* lacked the mental power to remember their life history as girl children because they were given out in marriage so early in life. The lack of emotional and psychological capabilities necessary to face life challenges renders the widows from *Abaofia-Izzi* vulnerable in most situations especially when they become widows so early in life. For example, *Udeozo*, a new convert to Catholicism from *Abaofia-Izzi*, when asked “What year did you get married?” replied, “Ha, I cannot remember when I got married, you know am not educated but it has lasted for about twenty-five years.” *Udoka*, an *Abaofia-Izzi* participant and a Pentecostal by religious affiliation responded in a similar way when asked the same question, she said, “I don’t know.” Up to 60% of them answered in the negative when asked a seemingly a simple question that any normal child could answer.

Consequences of Parental intervention in child marriage

At *Abaofia-Izzi*, the parents, especially the fathers, were mainly at the center of major life decisions that affect their girl children and as such they ‘steal’ their daughter’s marital consent in the name of tradition or custom of their time. Such a parental intervention has serious

consequences in the later lives of their girl children especially when they become widows. They were uprooted from parental attachment thereby denied the opportunity of developing challenge withstanding capabilities (Bowlby, 1988). It is almost like robbing the girl children of their future. To lack memory is to lose track of history. With memory on the other hand, one can recall both the pleasant and not so pleasant experiences of the past. The ability to remember the events of the past helps in shaping the present for future challenges. To have memory is to relish the different moments in one's life journey, especially, the different strategic coping mechanisms that one applies to get through tough moments of the past. To call to mind the good memories of the past can be a panacea to calm the tsunami of the present life situation. It could be a driving force to realizing one's life dream despite the concomitant difficulties. The lack of the power of memory was manifested in the life stories of the participating widows from Abaofia-Izzi. They appeared to be helpless and complained bitterly about the suffering they were subjected to because of the death of their husbands. While analyzing the data, suffering is discovered as a common theme running in both communities. However, it appears to be excessive at Abaofia-Izzi. Their suffering may be due to the reckless decisions and actions of their fathers, for whom wisdom consists in following the traditions of the ancestors and utter disregard for common sense regarding the changing of time. The sourced data from Abaofia-Izzi participants is replete with assumptions testifying that men are superior to women. It is only borne out in ideas and not in reality. Being borne out in ideas implies that men dramatize verbally their feigned superiority but do not substantiate their claims in reality. It is highly likely that their mental ideas are impotent due to the fact that there is no material basis to them. The men do not have the economic power of translating their ideas into reality as found in Enugwu-Ukwu. When the men deny the widows the opportunity to develop emotionally, psychologically and educationally,

there is nothing worse they can do again to frustrate the lives of the participating widows. When these basic and fundamental rights are denied as a result of their culture, the fathers rob the participating widows of everything.

A presentation of facts drawn from the data demonstrates the credibility of the above findings regarding Abaofia-Izzi participating widows. At Abaofia-Izzi, patriarchal system manifests itself as a benevolent sexism. The widows of this community were denied the basic capabilities to put up any resistance against any type of manipulation. For example, the lack of education is the reason for the preponderance of superstitious beliefs at *Abaofia-Izzi* and men use this to their own selfish end. A man was approached by a widow, *Ogechi*, who was having trouble in dreams and by the memory of her dead husband. He immediately told her that the way to get out of the nightmare was to sleep with other men. She accepted this without question. When asked about the harmful customs and tradition in her community, *Ogechi* said, “When my husband died, he kept troubling me in dreams and when I inquired about this, a man suggested that I sleep with other men.” The researcher asked her whether she accepted the suggestion, she responded, “Do you want me to die?” *Ogechi*, when asked to state what she would like to see changed in the traditional practices of her community stated: “I would like the practice of sleeping with another man to continue so that widows will live and take care of their children.”

Poor emotional and psychological development might be the reason for the high presence of superstitions and poverty in the community of Abaofia-Izzi. When asked about the cause of their husbands’ death during the focus group, more than ninety percent of them believed that they were killed. One of the widow participants from *Abaofia-Izzi*, *Nkenke*, was exceptional in her responses to some of the knowledge questions. While many others superstitiously believed that their husbands were killed and that nobody cared about them, she stated: “My husband died

of malaria. I do not believe that somebody killed him and moreover, I do not see why people expect others to help them, after all, who is better off than the other in this community?" The researcher suspects that most of them were providing their responses based on what the previous speakers said. It may be the dynamism of a group process manifesting itself, as this attitude was common during the focus group at Abaofia-Izzi as compared to the one-on-one interviews.

The power of memory in both communities

The memory capability of widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu* stands in contradistinction to that of widows from Abaofia-Izzi. At Enugwu-Ukwu most of the participant widows were capable of making their choices and gave their consent to marital union. *Enugwu-Ukwu* widows were privileged to develop capabilities necessary to face life challenges. Most participating widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu* have no problem with knowledge questions. By implication, their power of memory is well developed and they were able to apply it effectively to their own good. They were privileged to be educated and had some pace-setting role model widows empowering those who have fewer opportunities.

Familial and Communal Suspicion at Abaofia-Izzi

The interviews with the widows revealed that there is a high level of suspicion in both the polygeneous families and in the community. On a family level many participant widows from Abaofia-Izzi reported the infighting among co-wives as they struggle over limited resources. Evidence regarding the high level of suspicion in *Abaofia-Izzi* was occasioned by the question: Tell me how your husband died? One participant, *Azuka*, who is the last of three wives and had been angrily sad with the community said: "My husband did not die; he was rather killed by the evil people from his immediate family." *Kosisochukwu*, another participant in the focus group shared the same opinion with *Azuka*. *Kosisochukwu* and *Azuka*'s husbands died almost the

same week and they had been friends before the unfortunate death of their husbands. Their friendship became stronger after the death of their husbands. Other participants shared the same experience. Responding to the question, *Azuka* said: “The wicked ones in my family set him up with a motorcycle accident through which he died after protracted pains in *Ibee Nwajibia* native hospital. It was not a natural death.” Chichi also responded in the same manner like others when she stated: “My husband was poisoned and he died. Men don’t die here in *Abaofia-Izzi* village; they’re killed by fellow men. Finally, *Ogechi*, who married a very old man nicknamed *Osingo-Osingo*, also supported the fact that men do not die naturally in *Abaofia-Izzi* when she asserted in response to the question of how her husband died: “Nobody can say that her husband died naturally in this village. I knew how early my husband left me with seven children to care for, and this wasn’t God’s plan for us.”

Suspicion weakens the bond both individuals and groups have for their community just as the lack of political will does. Once there is no common bond in a community, it will be difficult to enforce any binding rules on any community members or any group. The lack of political will by both local and state governments and the inability of the community of *Abaofia-Izzi* people to engage in collective action fuel the poverty and suspicion in their community. What is happening at *Abaofia-Izzi*, politically speaking, is a reflection of the state of affairs in the nation of Nigeria at this time in history. There is endemic corruption ranging from rigging of elections to the embezzlement of public funds without qualms. The legal system is also corrupt and serves as a tool in the hands of the powerful in perpetuating the status quo.

Comparing both Communities

Having seen the mildness of *Abaofia-Izzi* people and the tenacity of *Enugwu-Ukwu* people in enforcing the widowhood practice, it is pertinent to explore other key areas where the

patriarchal stronghold is manifested in order to understand the differences between the two towns. Focusing on the varying opposition from women in the two communities, relative to widowhood observance, our attention is turned to the show of power of superiority by men and how such male show of power is vested in the superstition they have about the power of gods and idols, the structural order of nature (cosmology), and how money and other possessions (including women and children) are seen as extensions of male power.

Women Solidification of Patriarchal Strongholds in the two Communities

In *Igbo* nation, men are considered the first among equals relative to women. This is a way of saying that men are considered more important than women in *Igbo* land. Based on the two communities under study, data show that some women speak of their husbands as the reason for their existence. For example, at *Enugwu-Ukwu*, a widow, *Adaoma*, symbolically described her husband as ‘her thumb.’ On further probing of what is meant by describing her husband as her thumb, *Adaoma* analogically explained that in the configuration of human fingers, the position of the thumb is so strategic that without it, the rest of the fingers are at a disadvantage, not functioning as effectively as they should, especially in picking up any item.

At *Abaofia-Izzi*, there are endearing terms, which on the surface are used to idolize men but in reality such terms perpetuate the inequality between men and women. The *Abaofia-Izzi* women address their husbands with such petty names as *O luu ree*, which is a pet name for a hardworking husband who provides and takes care of his family. Addressing men in such a way suggests that women cannot take care of themselves without their husband.

In contrast, independent acknowledgements of the excellent qualities of women are often lacking. In *Igboland*, women’s qualities are spoken of in relation to some aspect of their husbands. For instance, wives are sometimes addressed as *Ori aku di ya* (the one who consumes

their husbands' wealth), *Nwanyi ma obi di ya* (the woman who understands her husband's mind), *Di bu ugwu nwanyi* (the glory of a woman is her husband). These colloquial expressions are understood in a symbolic way and they are equally used by women to fan and enkindle their husbands' egos and to squeeze favors out of them with ease. Such praises serve as relational lubricants. The researcher understood these expressions to be terms of endearment. Women and men, under normal circumstances, use them to express the bond of love between husband and wife. However, it is noteworthy that women's praises are generally in relation to men while men's focus on the men's qualities themselves and not in relation to their wives.

Women's Perpetuation of Patriarchy and its Implications

Oftentimes then, these expressions seem to work negatively to the disadvantage of women. Men generally seem to interpret these expressions literally without thinking about their symbolic signification and tend to act as if they are really superior to women. In contrast, the results from the interviews and focus groups in *Enugwu-Ukwu* shows that women can and do excel in those areas regarded as specialties typically reserved for men. For example, financially, Agbala and Ogechi, from *Enugwu-Ukwu* are socially rewarded more than their husbands in terms of salaries earned. They achieved higher educational levels than their husbands.

The theory of relative expectation is applicable to *Enugwu-Ukwu* widows who compare their relative achievements to those of their community widowers. Widows from Abaofia-Izzi may have no ground to make a comparison, as they have practically nothing left to live on when their husbands die. Typically, they have been completely dispossessed and impoverished by the fact of being married as children. Their situation is made worse by the fact that their community, relative to the time of the participants' marriage, practiced polygyny without restriction. The validity of these assertions can be seen in the demographic profiles of the widows in the sample.

Widow Protest at *Enugwu-Ukwu* in Contrast to the Lack of Widow Protest at *Abaofia-Izzi*

The systemic suppression of women's identity and the deprivation of the right to inherit their husbands' properties at *Abaofia-Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu* are a matter of degree. The demographic profiles and the indices of comparison testify to the degrees of suppression and deprivation in the two communities. While a benevolent or non-violent approach is applied at *Abaofia-Izzi*, a rather hostile and forceful approach is often used at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. Enforcing compliance with widowhood rituals is strong at *Enugwu-Ukwu* because men felt that their identities as extended in their material possessions were at risk whereas it is mild at *Abaofia-Izzi* because the men do not feel that their identity is threatened. The data reveals that *Abaofia-Izzi* men do not have much in the way of material possessions and are not bothered over possible challenges by their women who are also impoverished. Material possession as an instrument of control manifests its power more at *Enugwu-Ukwu* than at *Abaofia-Izzi*. *Enugwu-Ukwu* men are rich and a good number of their women also share in their riches. Compared to *Abaofia-Izzi*, *Enugwu-Ukwu* people enjoy better education and their socio-economic status is much higher than those of *Abaofia-Izzi* based on what the participants reported. A critical survey of the profiles and the indices of comparison support this assertion. At *Enugwu-Ukwu*, there is a 'cat and dog' relationship between the participant widows and those enforcing compliance to widowhood observance. It is never an easy encounter. For instance, Titi, one of the widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, when she was asked if she has ever been harassed because she is a widow, her response was as follows: "Yes they threatened my life and wanted to take over my inherited piece of land but I did overcome them. They even wanted to kill me but by the special grace of God, I am alive." Titi felt her life threatened over a piece of land but she did not surrender to the power of her aggressors. Similarly, another widow, Chika, from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, gave a report

about the fight between her and one of her brother in-laws who wanted to snatch the portion of land belonging to her husband after he died. Chika asserted the following:

It was a season for planting yam seedlings. I was working in the portion of the land belonging to my deceased husband. Suddenly his elder brother appeared from nowhere and forcefully snatched the hoe from me because he felt that I have no right to keep utilizing the land without permission from him. By God's grace, I raised him up and threw him to the ground and filled his mouth with sand. This incidence became the talk of the town. Many people blamed my brother in-law for his actions but some hypocrites in the community, even among the so-called Church goers, were blaming me.

There are many instances of fighting in self-defense as seen in the cases of *Agbala* and *Omenuko* at Enugwu-Ukwu. The defense is typically about undue incursion into their husbands' properties and the humiliating subjugation to dehumanizing rituals. The forceful subjugation of women in coercing them to observe the widowhood ritual is a strategy to de-personalize the widow and subject her to conformity with the customs and traditions of the community. Coercion of the women to observe widowhood rituals is an instrument of subjugation that results in the women having low self-esteem. As a result, women feel powerless to put up resistance against marginalization. It is important to note that forcing widowhood observance presupposes that widows are beginning to question the rationale for such practices in their community, especially at Enugwu-Ukwu. A few decades ago, it would be unimaginable for any widow to resist conformity to the custom and tradition of the community. It is also noteworthy to mention that the majority of the widows do not like the widowhood practices, but for the humiliating social stigma, they had to succumb.

Sexual harassment in both communities

Once a husband dies, the men in the community take advantage of the widow's vulnerability. The following example represents how a brother in-law can manipulate his brother's widow by depriving her of property and by sexual abuse and physical harassment.

Odiuko, a widow from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, reported the following experience that occurred with her brother-in-law and the men in the community. Regarding her brother-in-law, she said: “My husband’s brother was and still is my problem; he took away my entire husband’s belongings and sold all our piece of land.” When asked if ever she had been harassed sexually she made this assertion: “Yes, in the middle of the night or early in the morning, I used to hear footsteps coming into my house. I often shout when I hear the unusual steps, but they always hush me up with the words, *shuuu* (Shut-up), so that other people might not hear my shouting. As they hush me, they also interpolate into their hushing: “Don’t you want to bear another child for your late husband again?” “With their intimidation, I have often fallen victim to undesired sex.”

At *Abaofia-Izzi*, men pester women but do so gently. *Chiugo* whose husband died when she was twenty-seven said that sexual harassment is not much of a serious thing for her. She maintains that the feeding and training of her children are the most important. *Chiugo* answered when asked if she was sexually harassed. “Yes, but to me I did not take that as a serious case.” *Ogoma*, a petty trader, and a twin, made the following statement when asked the question of sexual harassment. “I don’t have any negative story to tell, except that I rejected those who asked for my friendship for fear of STDs (sexually transmitted diseases). The above quote by *Odiuko* mentioned a specific period in the day when those who harass widows operate. Many widows who reported similar experiences always referenced those ‘ungodly hours.’

One of the widows, *Nkemdilim*, told the researcher how her neighbors wanted to check the activities of a man called *Ogwomagana* who disturbs their neighborhood at midnight.

Nkemdilim said:

Ogwomagana is a known womanizer in the community. He is a rich man who lived licentiously. Everybody knows him for that. He is known too for colonizing widows in the community. *Ukwu adi aba ya ulo n’abali*. Literally means that *Ogwomagana* does not stay home at night. There is this widow who lives in our

neighborhood whose husband had just died about four months ago. *Ogwomagana* would not wait for the customary period of mourning to expire before he rushed for the woman. Unfortunately for *Ogwomagana*, his arch-enemy, *Akujachaa*, who lives close to the widow, could not stand his behavior. *Akujachaa* planned to embarrass ‘*Ogwo*’ as he is fondly called in the community. He bought a ‘talkative beagle dog’ and gave it rum, so that the dog would bark without control during the night upon sensing any trespasser at that ungodly hour. Purposefully, he let the dog loose in the night having drugged it with rum. And the dog did its job well. Neighbors came out, and lo and behold, *Ogwomagana* was standing helplessly before a beagle dog barking madly under the influence of alcohol. *Akujachaa* came out to humiliate *Ogwomagana* and that led to their reconciliation few days after.

The above quote also supports the fact that womanizers operate more at particular periods during the night. The action taken by *Akujachaa* to embarrass his enemy indicates that people can always be creative in averting an unwanted relationship to their advantage. If the widow in question was not courageous enough to ward off the intrusion of *Ogwomagana*, *Akujachaa*’s action suggests that she could equally buy a ‘scaring dog’ to complement her weakness. This is not a way of blaming the widows as being responsible for what they endure. Research has shown that the enormity of what they go through is so overwhelming that alternative options are not open for many in their condition. For example, those who could take flight from their place of victimization, do not always have the financial ability to do so (Lieberman, 2002). According to Lieberman (2002): “Flight requires, among other things, financial and other resources, some degree of physical and emotional health, assistance from others and opportunities” (p.9).

Mean age at marriage in both communities

Comparatively the demographic profiles report that the average age of marriage at *Enugwu-Ukwu* is twenty whereas that of *Abaofia-Izzi* is eight. Before marriage, girls from *Enugwu-Ukwu* have attained the age of reason and are able to make informed decisions about the type of marital relationship they want. Paradoxically, they are more likely to be seriously sexually harassed as widows. *Enugwu-Ukwu* girls have more university and secondary school

graduates than those from Abaofia-Izzi. It is not surprising that the widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu* are more likely to defend their rights and personal identities as people who have the right to have possessions. Education empowers them to stand their ground while challenging the rationale behind and resisting compliance with the practice of dehumanizing widowhood rituals. Agbala confronted a woman who was yelling at her to stop going to their community's market while still wearing the mourning gown. Agbala said to the 'conformist yeller' that she (Agbala) will never stop buying things in their market as long as the marketers take her means of exchange. Agbala also emphasized the fact that the money belongs to her and that nobody can deny her the right of using her money the way she wants. Again, education made it possible for the participant widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu* to explore other avenues of self-defense such as the legal system and civil institutions such as the police force. Abaofia-Izzi participant widows did not have the privileges that *Enugwu-Ukwu* widows have. Widows from Abaofia-Izzi could not do much in defense of themselves because their personality had been stolen at childhood in the so-called girl-child-marriages. They appear to have low self esteem and never had material possessions which they could lay claim as their self-extensions. The fact that none of them have savings indicated that those widows from Abaofia-Izzi lived from hand to mouth. They could not think of litigation because they are poor. The participant widows from Abaofia-Izzi did not have the mental capacity which those participant widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu* enjoyed. Mental capacity, bolstered by education, helps individuals to tap into their inner resources and be confident enough to explore the external resources to support self-defense. Research has shown that the intelligence of children is partly dependent on parental occupation. For instance, lawyers are more likely to have children with higher intelligence quotient than those of farmers (Haggerty & Nash, 1924). It is apparent that the educational qualification of those women from *Enugwu-*

Ukwu boosted their confidence in challenging the status quo of widowhood practice in their community.

Reaction to social restrictions

Reacting to these social restrictions, women participants from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, tapped into their inner resources and also laid claims to their ‘self-extensions’ (possessions) by courageously resisting the oppressive cultural tradition of their community in the name of widowhood practice. Participant widows from *Abaofia-Izzi* could not resist much because they did not have much social pressure brought against them. *Abaofia-Izzi* men are impoverished because of the unreasoned decisions they made such as engaging in polygamy despite their limited resources. The lack of resource made it difficult for them to exercise a meaningful control over their women. In just the same way, the women are also impoverished by the fact that they were given out in child marriage and could hardly protest even if a mild social force is brought to bear on them.

Self-report from *Abaofia-Izzi* on poverty

The bane of *Abaofia-Izzi* has been that of extreme poverty. One of the adult female children from *Abaofia-Izzi*, *Orieji*, was a graduate who had no job. She was interested in our research and she made the following heart-breaking reports about their poverty:

My father married four wives and my mother is the third of the four. My brothers and sisters are nineteen in number and we are four from my mother’s side. It was always a survival of the fittest among the wives, even when my father was alive. With my father’s death, the situation in the family got worse. We were all subjected to hard labor right from our childhood. We worked as food vendors in the market. Often, we do not go to school. We were hawkers as a way to support the family. The worst-case scenario is that three of our half brothers were mentally deranged. When our father died, there was a kind of festival of deaths in the family. The first wife died and two of our half brothers got accidents and died. The whole family was thrown into confusion. The suspicion that has been suppressed by our father came out in the open. There were accusations and counter accusations. My mother became too afraid protecting us. She was always

worried that the co-wives might kill or poison us. In our prayers, she always asks God thus: “that my co-wives may allow my children and I to live peacefully in my husband’s house.

At Abaofia-Izzi, poverty reigned among the participant widows. Their adult children were not immune to their mothers’ conditions. The preceding quote spoke about the father marrying four wives, having many children and dying off before most of the children came of age. The responsibility of training falls on the mothers. The limited resources led to the abuse of children and unfounded suspicions. The children were denied education and normal emotional and psychological development. There was no long term planning in the running of the family and emergency situations are not taken care of. For example, the family has four children with mental problems. If those who are healthy were denied opportunities, what could possibly be the fate of those who happen to be insane?

Widowhood compliance in both Communities

Men from *Enugwu-Ukwu* are more likely to use force to coerce widows to comply. The widows resist this as they have education and material possessions. Being strongly identified to the cause of their community, *Enugwu-Ukwu* people are more likely to invoke the power of collective action against the widows. Collective action is less likely to happen at *Abaofia-Izzi* because of their individualistic tendency. *Abaofia-Izzi* men are less likely to push their women to such a reactionary state leading to a formation of social movement. The simple reason is that *Abaofia-Izzi* men lack the controlling power of material wealth. The *Abaofia-Izzi* widows do not have a feeling of mental dissonance. They have this mentality because they were not deprived material possessions to form an agitating group.

Social Context

In this section, the researcher presents an analysis of the structuring of the family and its values, the practice of polygny, the consequences of having large families in the name of acquiring wealth of people, the consequences of spending a lot of money in the burial ceremonies of titled men, and the neglect of responsibility to educate girl children, especially by the people of Abaofia-Izzi in the name of custom and tradition. The social context calls attention to the fact of the special privileges men have over women and how such privileges are entrenched in almost all aspects of the social life of each community, and to the disadvantage of women.

Family Structure and Values

Before the advent of Christianity, the family as a social structure was valued as sacred. The term ‘value’ means a thing of worth. Marriage, as a union, between a man and a woman or a union between a man with several other women was socially accepted among the *Igbo* people of Nigeria and Africa in general (Okolo, 1991). In the two communities under study, polygny is currently more prevalent in Abaofia-Izzi than at *Enugwu-Ukwu* as defined by the indices of comparison and as shown in the demographic profiles of the widows in question. The essence of the family institution is to beget children for generational continuity among other purposes mentioned in the later part of this chapter.

Structural superiority of men over women

Among the *Igbo* people as in many cultures of the world, a man is taken as the head of his family. According to the stories of origin given by Achebe and Iloka regarding the histories of the two communities, the impressions painted by their stories suggest that the two communities are more of a man’s world. Achebe, one of the resource persons from Abaofia-Izzi,

while answering a question regarding why women are barred from social interaction and subjected to socially-limiting rituals more than men during the observance of the widowhood rites said: “You know this is more a patriarchal society. The men are not usually bound to stay the way women are bound to stay, that is, having limited movement while observing the widowhood rituals. There is no traditional law binding them...It is a little bit a man’s world. The woman is bound to the man, while the man is not necessarily bound to the woman. A man can have many wives at the same time, but women are bound to one man.” Though Achebe is referring to Abaofia-Izzi, the above assertion is indicative of men’s privilege over women as far as the family structure in the two communities is concerned. The fact that a man is entitled to be customarily in legal union with more than one woman, while a woman is not permitted to do the same, is indicative of a family structure meant to privilege men over women in the two communities. Most of these stories about man-woman relationship are based on myths of origin (Achebe, 1959)

According to Adichie (2009), all these traditions depend on the story told, who told the story, what the story is meant to achieve and how such a story is connected to the principle of *Igbo* concept, *nkari*, which is a show of power. The following story shows that the story told and whoever tells it has some aim to achieve. It appears that this story is told to show that men do not have absolute power over women and that women have special place in the families of birth. Thus, Iloka, from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, captures this idea in his response when he spoke about the *Igbo* marriage:

Marriage is mysterious (*anum di na nwunye di omimi*) in Igboland because whoever wants to get married goes first to his in-laws and performs all the marital rites before he takes his wife home. The in-laws stress the fact that a woman who is given out in marriage is not exchanged for monetary purpose or sold out for some monetary gains. The woman is still a member of her paternal family. The mystery about this marital bond is that whenever the woman dies, she is brought

back and buried in the father's compound and this is what the Igbo tradition and that of Nri (the hypothesized ancestral home of all Igbo) stipulate.

However complicated the *Igbo* concept of marriage is, there are ways of resolving the dilemma through some symbolic expressions. Regarding the idea of burying a married woman in her father's compound, the Igbo people solve the enigma through some symbolic expressions. For example, in some cases the children of the woman from her marital home are expected to bring some animals like fowl, goat or cow, according to their financial ability to the woman's natal place as a symbolic exchange. That symbolic expression permits the children or the husband to bury the woman in her marital home.

A great number of men, and unfortunately many educated and uneducated youths still think that male children are superior to female children among the Igbo people. This is most exemplified in marriages where only female children are born. Such families are looked upon as though bad omens have befallen them. When women are treated as inferior the status in a family is well captured by the following assertion.

An Abaofia-Izzi man's anachronistic impression about women

A man from Abaofia-Izzi, *Udunni*, who participated in the face-to-face in-depth interviews, when asked if his wife knew about his business, reported: "Customarily a woman is a property and everything she owns is a property owned by the same husband who owns her... Am I stupid, madam, to tell my wife about all my business? A living man shouldn't allow a woman to know about all his secrets." Only one man, of all male participants, expressed such a strong impression that a woman counts as a property. The man who made this assertion looked very haggard and hungry. There was nothing suggesting that he has any business at all, and yet, he claimed not to afford telling his wife about "all his business." Though vocalized by one man alone during the interview process, the idea of men's superiority over women is still strong

among the Igbo people. The feeling of superiority is evident in the responses the widows gave. However, there is a great difference in the way this idea of male superiority manifests itself in the two communities.

For a greater number of participating Abaofia-Izzi men, the idea of male superiority is mentally and strongly enshrined and is existent in a yet to be defined men's imagined society. For Abaofia-Izzi women that participated, the idea of male superiority only exists in the mind of men but has no basis in reality except in relation to inheritance alone. This is testified by the complete denial of the existence of widowhood ritual practice in the Abaofia-Izzi community by almost all the participant widows when asked to tell about the widowhood practice as it obtains in Abaofia-Izzi. The usual response is, "There is nothing like widowhood practice here." The practice of a widowhood tradition is weak among the people of Abaofia-Izzi because they lack a strong institution of mediating rituals of widowhood practice. The empirical evidence of non-strict practice of widowhood in Abaofia-Izzi will be given in the later section of this chapter.

***Enugwu-Ukwu* men's bias against women**

60% of men interviewed at *Enugwu-Ukwu* suggest that widowhood practice is no longer in existence; almost 90% of women participants vehemently deny the men's assertion. On a superficial level, *Enugwu-Ukwu* men have a more diplomatic way of expressing their biases against women. However, when reading in-between the lines, one knows that they are more conservative in their treatment of widows than *Abaofia-Izzi* people. *Okeke*, one of the opinion leaders from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, expressed in a poetic way his biases against women when answering questions regarding the traditional and customary treatment of widows in *Enugwu-Ukwu*. *Okeke* is a learned man who took one of the highest traditional titles in the community, but feels strongly about the tradition. *Okeke* does not believe that widowhood practice still exists

at Enugwu-Ukwu, yet his assertion contradicts his belief when he stated: “A woman is both good and evil. Oh woman, oh woman, whatever she is, but too complicated to understand. Angel went losing but the devil went bad. A woman will make you both happy and sad, so we don’t take it for granted that husband and wife are all in the happy mood. Some women are hopeless and the question of widowhood depends on the women’s relationship with the husband.” To say that the “question of widowhood depends on the women’s relationship with the husbands,” is to make men the determinants of the relationship. In so doing, women are left at the mercy of their husbands. The taboo placed on the one who loses one’s significant other is all heaped on widows and not on the widowers. Widows are not given equal treatment at the death of their significant other. According to Ozo, women are subjected to such widowhood practice because “death has placed a taboo on them.” Asked, why such a taboo is not placed on men when their wives die, Ozo kept repeating himself more emphatically that death has placed a taboo on the women. When the researcher pressed further to ascertain the reason behind the placement of a taboo on a widow by death, Ozo evaded the question by introducing the customs and ancestral tradition as ‘deus ex machine.’ Appealing to the cult of the ancestors and traditional customs constitutes a device of justifying such a practice without any reasonable solution to a haunting question: Why the placement of a taboo only on widows and not on widowers? This implies that in the social structure women are clearly not of equal status with men.

Patriarchal Identification with the Community of Origin in Both Communities

A key area that might help to explain the core differences in the widow treatment as obtained in the two communities of Abaofia-Izzi and Enugwu-Ukwu relates to the degree of patriarchal identification. From the indices of comparison, the fact that the people of *Enugwu-Ukwu* have a stronger patriarchal identification with their community than those of Abaofia-Izzi

is indicated. Three red asterisks marked the fact that Enugwu-Ukwu is more strongly identified with its community than *Abaofia-Izzi*, especially when the fact of sustaining its inherited cultural legacy is considered. It can be said that patriarchy wields a stronger hold on *Enugwu-Ukwu* than *Abaofia-Izzi*. Both communities operate under a patriarchal system, but the levels of operation are strikingly different. A critical evaluation of both the demographic profiles and the indices of comparison suggest, according to Achebe, that “there is no institutionalized guide on what widows are permitted to do and what they are not permitted to do at *Abaofia-Izzi*.” For example, Achebe said: “There are no particular garments the widow will be asked to put on to show people that her husband is dead.” Comparably, however, what happens at *Abaofia-Izzi* could be described as just a fraction of widowhood practice relative to widowhood as practiced at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. At *Abaofia-Izzi*, Achebe continued,

The woman must stay in the late husband’s house until after the so-called second burial. (The white man called it second burial but we call it the completion of burial because burial comes in stages. It is a process of taking the person to the other world, so it is not supposed to be called a second burial). She shaves her head and does not shave it again...she is not supposed to re-marry or have sexual relationships until after the process which could be as short as six months, one year or as late as three years or four years as the case maybe. There is no special guide.

Though there were cases of terrible treatment such as burning down the house of a widow, sexual harassment and other related issues at *Abaofia-Izzi*, the frequency of such abuses is nothing compared to what happens at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. The researcher is not suggesting that *Enugwu-Ukwu* is a jungle where no law operates. However, cases of manhandling of widows are more serious compared to what happens at *Abaofia-Izzi*. Nevertheless, more than 50% of widows from *Abaofia-Izzi* reported that men pester them, but not to the point of abuse or using force. Some of the participant widows did say that men were gentle and mindful of the changing times. *Echebiri*, a widow from *Abaofia-Izzi*, reported that a man who was attracted to her was at the

same time telling her gently that it is no longer a time when men have it all. In other words, he was respecting her freedom of choice, instead of taking advantage of being a man.

Some men that were interviewed, when asked about sexual harassment in *Abaofia-Izzi*, rebuffed the idea saying that their community is not a jungle. When asked about his opinion on the way widows are treated, *Echetebi* responded: “My stand is very clear on this issue; I don’t like it (*tu fuu akwaa*). It’s a very hateful and condemnable act anywhere in the world.” Men’s response in *Abaofia-Izzi* could depict a kind of ‘merciful mechanism’ operating in the human mind whereby nobody would like to believe that the society, to which he or she belongs, is really unfair and inconsiderate. Benevolent sexism, a mild branch of patriarchal system, might be said to be operational in *Abaofia-Izzi*. The fact still remains that the similar widowhood experiences are taking place every day in many, if not most communities throughout the world.

Benevolent sexism in Abaofia-Izzi

Abaofia-Izzi people are influenced by their neighbors who are known for having an easy life. According to Achebe, a good number of the cultural activities found in *Abaofia-Izzi* are acculturated from the cultures of their surrounding neighbors. Their neighbors are known for living an easy life which, implies that they do not take themselves too seriously. This is why Ozo described the *Abaofia-Izzi* people as a “go-lucky people with hedonistic tendency.” They are not interested in institutionalizing laws and other individually restricting systems. According to Achebe, the people of *Abaofia-Izzi* count their blessings as long as they have enough farmland. They live very far away from each other in quest for huge massive land for farming. They feel self-sufficient with their farm produce. They do not care much about forming networks of kin’s or clans, which suggests that they do not have a strong bond driving them to collective action for their common good. This lack of collective action in *Abaofia-Izzi* has serious implications for the

common good of the *Abaofia-Izzi* people. For example, the security of the community is at risk because they do not have a united front to fight a common enemy. Infrastructural development is impoverished because there is a limit to what an individual can do. Achebe continued, even when they engage in a common collective action for a common good, such as learning a new dance, the sustainability is always short-lived. Ultimately, they are more individualistic in their approach to life compared to *Enugwu-Ukwu*.

Abaofia-Izzi desires a functional government

Exploring other possible factors that seem to predispose the people of *Abaofia-Izzi* towards treating their widows differently from the people of *Enugwu-Ukwu*, the researcher encountered a big dilemma. In looking at the external environment of the *Abaofia-Izzi*, one is confronted with the poverty of infrastructural development. Poverty of infrastructural development is indicative of a non-functional system of government. It could be that those in political office find it hard to structure a system that works to the common good of all. Yet among those men interviewed at *Abaofia-Izzi*, there is a belief that the government is powerful. A participant widower, *Achu*, when asked if it is better for those with traditional authority to handle the problem of widowhood in the community or the government, rhetorically retorted: *Onye ka mbeke ike?* (Who is mightier than the government?) “I actually wanted the government to be upfront in handling the problems of widowhood practice in this community.” The participant men and women in *Abaofia-Izzi* during the interview shared the same opinion with *Achu*. They desired strong government intervention in their poor condition, but their individualistic approach to life and suspicion of others are a stumbling block to their progress.

Lack of Political Will

Political will, as the ability to use some political authority to enforce an act that befits common good, is seriously lacking in *Abaofia-Izzi*. The participants at the interview knew the implications of the lack of political will and its impact on their lives. One no longer wonders why the participants from *Abaofia-Izzi* kept requesting the researcher to offer them and their children jobs during the interviews despite all explanation to the contrary that the interviews have nothing to do with the government. It seems that the politicians lack the will to execute any common good to the advantage of their people. Not only do they lack political will, they are also corrupt.

For over a decade, it is known that the GDP of Nigeria is very high. The observable economic growth in the income of the nation does not reflect in the lives of the people. Corruption seems to be endemic in the Nation and worse still in states such as Ebonyi where the people are so deprived that they cannot stand up for their rights as citizens. This national corrupt tendency is summarized in the book review summary by Dele Olojede who commented on the book written by Adeniyi. Dele said "...our government is so pathetically dysfunctional that, at bottom, institutions of government matter little, only individual do" (Adeniyi, 2012). The weak identification of the people of *Abaofia-Izzi*, individually and collectively, could be remedied through proper exercise of political power. *Abaofia-Izzi* politicians are exploiting the practice of inter-communal suspicions to impoverish their community. If the politicians deploy the money they get from the Federal allocation and provide basic amenities for the common good, a sense of belonging among the people will be created (Adeniyi, 2012).

Suppression of Women's Identity in Historical Accounts of Both Communities

One of the key areas where the suppression of women's identity is obvious is in historical accounts. In most historical accounts of communities, towns or nations, only the names of men

are mentioned, to the oblivion of women, as if only men constitute the whole members of the communities/nations. When a genealogy of a particular community is recounted, men's names are mentioned in quick succession while women are not named. When asked to give a short history of *Abaofia-Izzi*, Achebe, began by mentioning names that are typically males such as Ekumaenyi who is taken as the “mythical of the three founding fathers of Ezaa, Ikwo and Izzi” (Echiegu, 1998). This idea of male superiority trivializes the identity of women ideologically and existentially.

In a similar way, when asked to give a brief history of *Enugwu-Ukwu, Iloka*, did begin with a male name, *Okparannaka* and kept mentioning in succession only male names. Given the above ideology of non-inclusion of female identity in historical accounts, one will not be surprised that women are treated in almost all aspects of human endeavor as inferior to their male counter parts.

In the following section, six indices of comparison are itemized in the table and are subsequently discussed.

Indices of Comparison

Within the limits of selective biases and other limiting factors, the following comparable indices as revealed in the data were selected and are structured in the table below. The analytic and interpretive process are based on facts drawn from the demographic profile, emergent themes, interview data, field notes and relevant literature. The asterisk signs marked under the name of each community indicates the extent to which the ascribed empirical evidence is present. One asterisk indicates a weak presence, double asterisks denote a strong presence, serated lines imply absence of empirical evidence and three asterisks in red indicate the strongest identification of the people

within the culture of their community. Identification of the people is the key area that determines the relative attitude of each community to its widows. The relative attitude of each community to its customs and traditions determines the extent to which the widows are treated either progressively or conservatively.

Table 228.1: Six Indices of Comparison

Indices	<i>Enugwu-Ukwu</i>	Abaofia-Izzi
Geographical location/local specific determinations		
Contiguous communities and influence	*	**
Interaction with/encounter with Western ideology	**	*
Land dispute with surrounding communities	**	*
Language		
Igbo language	**	*
Abaofia-Izzi dialect	*	**
Family structure and values		
Polygny	*	**
Child marriage	*	**
Intermarriage	**	*
Large Family	*	**
Wealth of people	*	**
Identification with the communities of origin		
Strong patriarchal collective identification	***	---

Individual identification	---	**
In-group suppressing out-group/male superiority tendency		
Views on gods, ancestors and deities	**	**
Agrarian	*	**
Title taking	**	*
Cosmological order	**	*
Indices	<i>Enugwu-Ukwu</i>	<i>Abaofia-Izzi</i>
Material wealth	**	*
Elements of Widowhood Practice		
<i>Itu Utara</i>	---	**
Limitation of widow movement	**	*
Limit on socialization	**	*
Performance of rituals	**	*
The <i>ajana</i> ritual	**	---
Dispossession of widows' inheritance	**	*
Power struggle between the elders and Catholic Priests	**	---
<i>Umuada</i> cult	**	---

* = weak presence ** = strong presence --- = absence *** = Strong patriarchal identification as the key concept explaining the differences in attitude.

Table 228.1 (Continue).

Going by the indices of the comparability chart above and based on the in-depth interpretation and understanding of the data content, one can say that *Enugwu Ukwu* people appear to be superficially progressive, but in reality are conservative as far as widow treatment is concerned. In addition, *Abaofia-Izzi* people appear superficially conservative, but in reality, they

are casually progressive with regard to widow treatment. *Abaofia-Izzi* is described as being laid-back, because they do not have a systematic way of ordering its widowhood practice unlike *Enugwu-Ukwu*, which has a very elaborate way of performing or carrying out the widowhood rituals.

Geographical Locations and Patriarchal Manifestation

Relevant to the localness of this study, Thomas C. David is referenced by Panda et al. (2004) to have said, “We must remember that differences of the magnitude observed between any two countries might also be found between selected subcultures within a country. Within any country, cultural differences that are not obvious to the outside observer are often much more apparent to local nationals” (p. 33). The cultural differences between *Enugwu-Ukwu* and *Abaofia-Izzi* regarding the contextual manipulation of patriarchal system tend to be, among other mentioned factors, a function of the different levels of identification with the patriarchal systems of the two communities. The geographical locations of the communities in question determine much about the communities’ level of identification, which bears out the argument that Panda et al. (2004) make that different cultural contexts are locality-sensitive and depend on historical and cultural legacy inherited by a location. In just the same way, subcultures within an ethnic group are not only locally unique in their history but also in their cultural legacy. Consistent with Panda et al. (2004), the researcher identifies those cultural characteristics peculiar to *Enugwu-Ukwu* and *Abaofia-Izzi* that are local-region-specific and the manner in which those traits appear to modify the patriarchal practice that affects the widows resident in the two communities.

Contiguous Communities and Influence

One of the resource persons called Achebe, who is a Catholic priest and a professor lecturing in Ebonyi State University, when asked to give a brief history of *Abaofia-Izzi* people

and how they are different from the rest of the *Igbo* people, especially, the people of *Enugwu-Ukwu* said:

The *Abaofia-Izzi* people are living at the extreme North-East boundary of the *Igbo* race. This extreme North-East has many non-*Igbo* from Oturukpo and Cross-River areas. Because of this nearness to the *non-Igbo*, the culture of *Abaofia-Izzi* is experiencing a lot of acculturation. There are things that you find in the heart of *Igbo* culture that you don't find here and there are some things that are in *Abaofia-Izzi* culture which are not in the rest of *Igbo* culture. For example, *Igbo* people have four market days, but the *Abaofia-Izzi* with the rest of *Izzi* have five market days. Those surrounding neighbors of ours, the non-*Igbo* speaking groups have five market days.

Achebe's noting the location of the people of *Abaofia-Izzi* to the extreme North-East surrounded by *non-Igbo* speaking communities and the fact of their experiencing acculturation with those other cultures offers a remarkable difference between the *Abaofia-Izzi* people and those of *Enugwu-Ukwu*, in terms of their geographical positions. There are traits of social life found here that are not found in the 'heart' of *Igbo* culture. The word 'heart' symbolically implies the source and center of *Igbo* cultural activities. This is considered as such because the cultural legacy bequeathed to *Enugwu-Ukwu* as the first son of Nri embodies the plenitude of *Igbo* culture, which by implication does not embody in fullness in *Abaofia-Izzi* as the quotation above suggests. In a further elaboration, Achebe and many other participants also mentioned the similarity between *Abaofia-Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu* when he traced their line of origin using the word 'off-shoot' as he asserted:

However, it is believed that *Abaofia-Izzi* people are an offshoot of the *Igbo* race just like the rest of *Izzi* people. Some suggest that *Izzi* comes from Ohafia. Afikpo axis and we share quite a lot in common with Afikpo especially our names and tradition. There is also the hypothesis that *Izzi* people come from Enugu axis. But what is not disputed is that *Izzi* is an offshoot of *Igbo* race and they proudly settled there around sixteenth century.

Corroborating Achebe's description of *Abaofia-Izzi* is a man named Nsofor. Nsofor, a farmer by profession, participated in the face-to-face in-depth interview. He dropped out of school when he

was seventeen. As one of the male participants from *Abaofia-Izzi*, he offered the following opinion:

You know that *Abaofia-Izzi* people have their own dialect, which they share with the rest of *Izzi* people. Every community has its own dialect. *Abaofia-Izzi* people share a common border with *Cross River*, *Benue* and *Ogoja*. They also intermingle with one another and through such interaction; they adopt certain foreign cultures that tend to modify theirs both in language and behavior. So, sharing borders with *Ogoja*, you can understand why they absorb cultures typical of *Ogoja* people, even in names. For instance, *Iboko* is a name of a market place in *Ogoja*, just as it is the name of a big market in *Izzi*. The *Igbo* usually have four market days, but *Izzi* has five market days which are *Nkwegu*, *Azua*, *Iboko*, *Ogbaga* and *Ohphoke*. Despite the bordering influence, *Nri* still serves as the main stream of their traditional rituals.

In comparison, the resource person from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, *Iloka*, a Catholic priest who has written volumes on *Enugwu-Ukwu* customs and tradition, described the people of *Enugwu-Ukwu* thus:

The *Nri* people, which comprise of *Enugwu-Ukwu* among others, live in the midst of all other *Igbo* people and retained the sole authority of performing the traditional ritual which has its headquarter at *Nri*. The *Nri* people keep migrating to other *Igbo* areas and intermingle with the indigenous people of those communities to the extent that one would think that every *Igbo* town is of *Nri* origin. *Nri* culture is wide spread among the *Igbo* people. Just as the *Aro* people, the *Nri* people were all over the *Igbo* communities like *Uzu Awka*.

In the corroborating quotes, using an emic approach, the researcher emphasizes the use of the words ‘extreme North-East’ and ‘the heart of *Igbo* culture’ in describing the relative geographical positions of *Abaofia-Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu* within *Igbo* ethnic group. These positions have modified the way each community speaks, behaves, order their lives and model their market days. *Achebe* and *Iloka* share the view that *Abaofia-Izzi* people absorb some identities that are typical of those non-*Igbo* groups living in close vicinity with them. *Enugwu-Ukwu* remains literally the same because it shares a lot in common with its neighbor’s language, social structures and behavior.

Sharing common boundaries with non-Igbo communities leads to what the researcher describes as a kind of ‘osmotic-internalization’⁷ of non-Igbo identities and a systematic, but non-conscious shedding of Igbo identity. Since every encounter changes the situation, the people of *Abaofia-Izzi* seem to have a mixed identity that raises doubts in the minds of some scholars as to their real Igboness (Echiegu, 1998). It seems that geography matters much in how people cultivate their identities, their behavior, and how they treat one another and their overall perception of the world.

Again, to describe *Abaofia-Izzi* people as living in the extreme North-East of Igbo nation is to say that they live on the borderline or at the periphery of the Igbo nation. Such a description suggests that the *Abaofia-Izzi* people are a hybrid of Igbo and other surrounding communities and that *Abaofia-Izzi* people acculturated their ways. The fact that *Abaofia-Izzi* people live on the border between the Igbo people and Cross-River or Ogoja people, creates a kind of distance between the *Abaofia-Izzi* people and the rest of the Igbo people, particularly Enugwu-Ukwu. The distance is also reflected in the variation of spoken dialects and their different general outlooks on the world. The previous table showing the indices of comparison indicates that Izzi dialect is spoken more in *Abaofia-Izzi* than at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. In contrast, the table shows that Igbo language is spoken more at *Enugwu-Ukwu*.

Etic approach to understanding Enugwu-Ukwu

Taking an etic approach to understanding the relative positions of the two communities in question, the use of the terms ‘extreme’ and ‘heart’ of Igbo is a reference to the geographical positions of the two communities relative to their different levels of identification to Igbo

⁷ Osmotic internalization is a tendency to absorb in a one directional way from the cultures of surrounding neighbors without impacting them. It is a situation where one loses some traits of one’s identity as one acculturates foreign identities.

identity. When the rest of the Igbo speaking people, including *Enugwu-Ukwu* are described as the ‘heart’ of the Igbo people, relative to their geographical positions, what is implied is that, *Enugwu-Ukwu*, and the rest of the Igbo people, strongly embody those identities that make Igbo people Igbo. Analogically, the heart can be described as the engine because of its function in supplying life sustaining substance to the rest of the body. In just the same way, *Enugwu-Ukwu* can be seen, according to a hypothesis propounded by Iloka, as a central location where the plenitude of Igbo cultural traditions are realized and transmitted to other parts of the Igbo land, Iloka reported that *Nri* is the mainstream of the traditional rituals for other parts of Igboland. Those rituals were transmitted through the activities of the roving priests and some select people from *Nri* that traverse other Igboland for the purpose of maintaining the *Nri* culture and also engaging in ritual purification when there is any kind of social infraction as mentioned in the literature review. According to Iloka, presenting *Nri* as the mainstream of Igbo culture is a way of solidifying the fact that *Abaofia-Izzi* came from the *Nri* axis and is therefore of Igbo extraction.

Three accounts of the origin of Abofia-Izzi

Based on the narrative accounts given by Achebe and Iloka, one discovers that there are three accounts of the origin of the people of *Izzi* to which *Abaofia* belongs. The analysis of the three possible narratives of the origin of the *Izzi* people raises two lines of arguments. If one believes that the *Izzi* people migrated from *Nri*, then one could argue that the surrounding non-Igbo speaking nations influenced and modified *Izzi* language and their worldviews differently. The same argument could be made if they come from the *Enugu* axis but with some modifications. There are varieties of dialects from communities in *Enugu* State. For example, the people of *Nsukka* speak a different Igbo dialect from those of the *Udi* community. The *Udi*

dialect is closer to the dialect spoken by the Igbo people who live in the heart of Igbo nation such as *Enugwu-Ukwu*. If this argument holds, then the surrounding nations of *Abaofia-Izzi* may not be completely responsible for the *Izzi* dialect. In the same vein, if *Abaofia-Izzi* people migrated from the *Afikpo* axis, it could be argued that the surrounding neighbors of *Izzi* are not completely responsible for the modification of their Igbo dialect. The *Afikpo* dialect is also different from that spoken by the rest of the Igbo people who live at the heart of the Igbo nation. In lieu of this seeming confusion as to the origin of *Izzi* to which *Abaofia* belongs, it is impossible to know which memory to trust as the accurate account. Nevertheless, the researcher leans more toward the application of lexicostratigraphy by Nkamigbo (2012) in determining the original settlers of *Izzi*. Lexicostratigraphy, according to Nkamigbo (2012), “is an aspect of historical linguistics that makes use of interlingual borrowings in determining the original settlers of a given speech environment” (p. 16). Using this framework, Nkamigbo attempted to establish the original inhabitants of Ebonyi State to which *Abaofia-Izzi* belongs. She hypothesized that the original inhabitants of Ebonyi State are the Oring who adjusted linguistically and socially to the language of the dominant Igbo group.

Evaluating the relative geographical positions of the *Abaofia-Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu*, the possible migration/settlement histories and the differences in their dialects suggest that the two communities are different. The exploration of the differences in the life events of the people, which do not have independent existence of their own, is a strategy the researcher is using to determine the general perspectives of the participants regarding the attitude of the two communities towards their widows. The next section considers the attitudes of the two communities toward Western ideology and what is the possible symbolic interpretation of each community’s attitude relative to their interaction to Western influence.

Interaction with Western Thought/Ideology

One of the resource persons, Ozo, expressed the fact that *Abaofia-Izzi* preferred interacting with the local people to any Western relations. *Abaofia-Izzi* valued their massive and fertile land more than any other international relations. They are contented with their agrarian jobs as far as their daily bread is provided for by such means. As a result, they generally sought solutions locally to their problems. On the other hand, *Enugwu-Ukwu* people are landlocked and their land is densely populated. Since they lack farming land, it appears that any other avenues to eke out their living would be welcomed. One such avenue of earning their daily bread was to migrate in great numbers to *Ebonyi* State where they used their economic power to become successful farmers. They discovered ways to engage in rewarding economic relationships with *Abaofia-Izzi*. Also, they integrated and embraced Western thought even to the extent of permitting their girl children to be educated. Each community seems to be making meaningful decisions based on the needs they have. Hence, it can be understood why *Enugwu-Ukwu* threw open their doors to both international and local influences. Validating the above assertions, a participant, Ozo, from *Enugwu-Ukwu* gave an insight into the existing relationship between *Enugwu-Ukwu* and *Abaofia Izzi* when he asserts:

We (*Enugwu-Ukwu* people) went gently with them(*Abaofia-Izzi* people) trying to bring them home at times to go to our shrine, that is, our deity – *Ngene Nneboaka*. They had minor complaints, (sometimes major) like their yam crops were not doing well, that their children were dying and so on and so forth. We will prepare potions and give to them; prayerfully believing that what we gave them has power given to them by God. Luckily, in many cases they were cured. They had leprosy, which we took care of, poxes, all types of poxes. Some of their women wanted fruits of the womb. We prepared potions and administered to them. In 90% of cases, they were cured and in connection with that they paid whatever fee that was agreeable on the subjects. Those who obtained fruits of the womb through our medication named their male children *Igwe*; the girls were named *Nne ochie*. *Igwe* means *Igwe Ngene*, which is our deity.

It is important to note that the above quotation validates the penchant *Abaofia-Izzi* people have for inter-cultural relationship. *Abaofia-Izzi* people would happily share in the cultures that are within the same ethnic group to the disregard of foreign or Western ideas. This notion of local preference for relationship by *Abaofia-Izzi* people becomes clearer when one compares the following quotation with the previous one. In the following quotation, it is clear that *Abaofia-Izzi* people loathe interacting with foreigners when it comes to seeking for a solution or solutions to their problems. Hence, Ozo asserted:

At one time, the English priests who came here tried to sabotage us and called them (Izzi people to which *Abaofia* belongs) together in their town square at *Ishieke Izzi*. He told them that they were doing foolish things by consulting us (*Urunnebo* people of *Enugwu-Ukwu*). In response to this accusation, the oldest man there stood up and shouted: '*Igwe, Igwe, Igwe.*' There was a response, *Eh!! Eh!! Eh!!* The oldest man asked them to stand up and they all stood up. He asked them to sit down. He then called again, *Nne Ochie!! Nne Ochie!! Nne Ochie!!* And the response was *Eh!! Eh!! Eh!!* He asked them to stand up and they stood up. He turned to the white man and said: Look, we were not having children before as we would like until we went to *Urunnebo* and consulted their deities. And, as a result, these children were conceived and born. Facing the white missionary, the elderly man asked, if you were in our condition, what would you do? Wouldn't you thank the person who gave you those? Let it be known to you that it is through the mediations of *Igwe* and *Nne Ochie* that these children came. Those are the gods we see and we were obliged to make them obeisance and adore them.

The reporter of the above quotation called the white priest a saboteur because the priest was trying to block one of their means of livelihood. *Enugwu-Ukwu* people, especially the *Urunnebo* group of villages, pride themselves in the power of their deity – *Ngene Nneboaka*. The participant, Ozo, reported that *Enugwu-Ukwu* makes a huge income from their mediation. This confirms what Neaher (1979) said previously about *Enugwu-Ukwu* people. He said that *Enugwu-Ukwu* people have authority to “maintaining ties of loyalty with *Nri* by cleansing grave social infractions or abominations and by conferring the rights of leadership in tributary settlements” (pp 352- 366). In line with this, Ozo, asserted:

...where there is a big trouble, our people will call them (Abaofia-Izzi people) and they Abaofia-Izzi people tell them (*Enugwu-Ukwu* people) what mishaps they have had in the past, what atrocities their people were committing. Then, they (Enugwu-Ukwu people) will levy a collective charge on them ranging from goats to cows to offer sacrifices. They call that trip, *ije oha, because oha be ha ka ana-ataxi together*. That means that when they are levied together, it yields more money.

Some of the quotations above highlight the fact that *Abaofia-Izzi* has a great penchant for local relations relative to *Enugwu-Ukwu* based on the factors identified above. By way of extrapolation, it appears that having enough land (Abaofia-Izzi) and not having enough (Enugwu-Ukwu) creates a paradox as far as engaging in local and foreign relations are concerned. For instance, the possession of enough land and plenitude of agro-based food prevented the Abaofia-Izzi people from opening up other possibilities of improving their lives, such as receiving education and forming a solid identification with one another to fend off a common enemy in times of war. In contradistinction to *Abaofia-Izzi*, *Enugwu-Ukwu* was motivated by their lack of land to diversify their perspectives on life and sought other means of self-sustenance. *Enugwu-Ukwu* people according to Ozo, travel out and copy good things/ideas from other people and appropriated them thereby improving their living conditions. It seems that a common problem, when perceived as such, motivates people to act collectively for a common good. This is well expressed when Achebe used the relationship between Izzi and Ezza to explain, analogically, the relationship between *Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu*. Achebe observed that Ezza⁸ people are a very large population squeezed into a small landmass where their farmland,

⁸ *Ezza* people share a common origin with *Izzi* people to which *Abaofia* belongs. According to Echiegu (1998), the *Izzi* version of origin (as there is more than one version) is based on a "scanty documented history" which claims that *Ezza* and *Izzi* are brothers. *Abaofia* is one of the communities making up *Izzi*. So, most of what can be said of *Izzi* can also apply to *Abaofia* since, analogically, it is a part of *Izzi*. According to one of the resource persons, *Izzi* is a major clan made up of three local governments with many autonomous communities, each headed by a traditional ruler. *Amagu* is the oldest of the autonomous communities. Overall, the traditional ruler of *Amagu* with the council of elders (*Isi-Ukes*) is the custodian of *Izzi* culture and tradition. *Abaofia* is one of the autonomous communities in *Izzi*.

having been overused, does not bear fruit anymore. They had to survive by fighting war. Their spirit of solidarity remains no matter how far they have gone from home; their spirit of oneness remains. The *Izzi* people do not have the problem of surviving, because they have enough land and food. The *Ezza* people have a way of scattering themselves around the world. There are large populations of *Ezza*'s in Ogoja, Benue, Cross River and other places. If not for the creation of states, the *Ezza* would have continued to spread out. *Enugwu-Ukwu*, like *Ezza*, engaged in land disputes with all their neighbors like *Abagana*, *Nawfia*, *Nibo*, and *Nimo* and even with their ancestral father, *Nri*.

Factors that pre-dispose *Enugwu-Ukwu* to conservative attitudes towards its widows

A number of key factors predispose *Enugwu-Ukwu* people to act conservatively towards their widows. One of these behaviors is collective tendency. As a result of their strong patriarchal identification with their community, the indices of comparison show that individuals from *Enugwu-Ukwu* are more likely to think and conduct themselves in a collectivistic manner. The laws and customs of their community determine their actions, whether they act individually or collectively. Strong patriarchal ideology dominates *Enugwu-Ukwu* and its socio-cultural institutions such as *umuada* and *umunna*. Members that belong to such socio-cultural institutions are also guided by the collective conscience of the community. As a result of their collective tendency *Enugwu-Ukwu* participants identify strongly with their community and are more likely to act conservatively towards whatever they appreciate as a common value. In this instance, the widowhood practice at *Enugwu-Ukwu* is traditionally considered important. Even though the factors that led to the communal appreciation of widowhood are no longer present, widowhood practice still evokes strong emotions today.

Clash of Authority in the name of tradition

The question of tradition often brings a divide among people of different religious affiliations and even of people of the same faith. To buttress this point, a widow named *Mgbokwa* who was the village headmistress of one elementary school at *Enugwu-Ukwu* reported her struggles with some men who called themselves Christians. According to her, those men do not observe the tenets of Christianity when it came to the burial rites of the Catholic Church. *Mgbokwa* reported that some Catholics fight against the tenets of Catholic teaching. She asserts:

My husband was a practicing Catholic. When he died, he was buried according to Catholic burial rites. A Catholic priest celebrated the funeral Mass. However, when the priest left, some elders in the community approached me saying that they have to perform the traditional rites for my husband. I objected to that idea claiming that I am a Christian and that the priest has done everything necessary for my husband as a Catholic. They told me that a priest does not know what he is doing. They claimed that they know what it means to conduct the spirit of the dead to the land of the ancestors.

This is an instance of power struggle between a Catholic priest and some group of men at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. Most often the Catholic priests are posted to work in communities other than their own. Often times, the priests are young men compared to the elders in the communities where they are posted to work. Most of the elders at *Enugwu-Ukwu* are retired civil servants and farmers and are more likely to look down on the young priests as ignorant of tradition and customs. Many of the elders reside in the village or community and are still seeking for ways of being relevant to the community. They like to dictate what happens at the funerals and they see themselves as the authorized custodians of the traditions of their ancestors. And because of the age-old tradition of their ancestors, and the fact that Christianity, for them (A good number of those elders), does not seem to supersede the promise of their traditional religion, they force most

widows to succumb to performing double rituals. Again, they see the Catholic priest as a foreigner who does not know the tradition of their ancestors. Even though most of them are Catholics, they do not observe the tenets of what they profess. Those hybrids, 'Christo-traditional elders,' often use the jobless young men in the community to cause confusion during Catholic funerals. The presumption that the Catholic priests cannot effectively appease the ancestors by Christian tradition is the reason why the widow is harassed by the youths on the command of the elders. The harassment is to get the widow submit to the traditional rituals. It is also important to stress that many of the elders do not have any good reason as to why those widowhood practices are observed. During the interviews, the researcher tried to get a common idea as to why they do what they do. But in all, there were as many opinions as the people asked. However, in chapter five, paragraph two, an anthropologist gave a helpful insight into the possible meanings of widowhood practices. He asserted:

Widowhood practices among the Igbo are closely tied to traditional beliefs about death, inheritance and feminine roles, family structure and family relationships. Of significance is the ritual aspect of the practices. These rituals consist of agreed practices derived from the belief that death brings corruption and the dead still have contact with the living, especially their closest partners in life. These rituals also arose from the strong sense of community between the living and the dead, which formed a basic ingredient of the cosmology of the Igbo people. This situation has to be remedied before the widow is free to return to a new life. The people rationalize these practices arguing that they perform important functions: They give the widow protection from her deceased husband whom the people believe would still attempt to make contact with his wife. Practices and rituals were to sever this bond between the man and his wife. They also acted as a means of ensuring that the deceased was accepted into the congregation of his ancestors who had died before him (Korieh, 1996a).

In furtherance of the reasons for continued practice of widowhood among the Igbo people, Korieh (1996), in chapter five, paragraph thirteen, made the following remarks:

To a large extent, both Christianity and Western education, two major factors that have influenced the Igbo since early nineteenth century, has been helpless in the face of the continued existence of these traditional burial forms. Trimmingham (1959:116) has shown that instead of abolishing the irrational and superstitious fears connected with witchcraft, ghost haunting, sorcery and the like, converts feel themselves more exposed than hitherto because they have given up the charms which traditional society consider adequate protection and without acquiring substitutes. It is this apparent impotence of Western religion in the face of superstitions that explains why traditional funeral rites and forms survive in Igbo society. This was apparent while I was doing field work. I witnessed a widow holding crucifix instead of a broom stick or knife (which were the traditional instruments used to protect the widow from the spirits). Irrespective of her Christian faith, this widow still clings to the old rule. In other words, we are faced with a problem which is purely cosmological. I think that many widows would not view the rituals as oppressive and subjugation. For many of them, this is only way to express ones love for a deceased husband, and to protect oneself(Korieh, 1996a).

The content of the above quote is explained more by a recent research that investigated the reasons for parallel existence of some cultural practices that were expected to have been supplanted by changing events and the introduction of Western “enlightened” ideology.

Resilience of Widowhood Practice explained

Interestingly enough, a recent study, as reviewed below, has given some highlights with regard to the resilience of some cultural practices over a long period of time. The findings of Hamamura’s (2012) study will help to explain some of the paradoxes in this present research.

Hamamura (2012) conducted research, which sought to discover whether cultures are becoming individualistic or collectivistic. In this study, he applied a cross-temporal comparison of individualism-collectivism syndrome comparing the United States and Japan as units of analysis. He applied the modernization theory in an effort to discover the directional flow of cultures, whether individualistic or collectivistic oriented. Modernization theory “predicts the rise of individualism as a consequence of economic growth” (p.3). This means that there is a positive correlation between individualism and social economic status. Research findings (Ball,

2001) are consistent with modernization theory but some other confounding factors that reveal the limitations of this theory were also discovered. One of the confounding factors is the shaping effects of cultural legacy on modernization theory. In America, modernization theory is validated more than in Japan. In both countries, economic growth is a reality, but as America is becoming more individualistic, Japan is going more collectivistic indicating that there are “multiple pathways for societal modernization” (p. 6). In Japan, factors correlated to individualism such as Western ideas, values and styles of living were found co-existing with traditional cultural practices that support collectivistic orientation (Hamamura, 2012). Explaining the divergence in the outcome of modernization theory in the two nations, Hamamura (2012) referenced Tweed and Lehman (2002) saying:

...although the Western approach to learning is influenced by the Socratic method characterized by habits of questioning, expressing personal hypotheses, and esteeming self-directed learning, the East Asian approach to learning is influenced by the Confucian tradition characterized by habits of hard work, self-improvement, and pragmatic orientation to learning. Hence, even though greater accessibility of education is one of the consequences of modernization, societies’ educational philosophy is profoundly influenced by their cultural heritage, and schooling actually serves to reinforce cultural heritage (p. 17).

Enugwu-Ukwu, compared to *Abaofia-Izzi* is economically more buoyant even though its economy does not compare to that of Japan. However, as quoted above, it is good to observe what happens in a much bigger country that could be happening in subcultures such as *Enugwu-Ukwu* and *Abaofia-Izzi*. *Enugwu-Ukwu* correlates with Japan on the basis of its collectivistic orientation despite its economic growth. The strong cultural heritage of Japan correlates with that of *Enugwu-Ukwu*, which is taken to be the community of the first son of *Nri*. *Nri*, as mentioned before, is a known dynasty among the *Igbo* nation and is known for its powerful religious role in the whole of *Igbo*land just as Confucius was among the Japanese. The functional autonomy of the cultural heritage from the *Nri* dynasty is so powerful that it still co-exists side by side today.

Regardless of all the modern changes, there are individuals who practice the culture even though they have no insight about the origin and symbolism of their actions. The multiplicity of factors such as the economy, historical contacts, ecology, and education among others has contributed to the relative changes in the practice of widowhood among the people of *Enugwu-Ukwu*. Relative to *Enugwu-Ukwu's* attitude to its widows, strong patriarchal identification with its cultural heritage, historical contacts and economic buoyancy with Western ideology played an important role. According to Iloka, the cosmological view of *Enugwu-Ukwu* people regarding marriage is another reason pre-disposing them towards conservatism. For Iloka, *Enugwu-Ukwu* people have this belief about marriage:

Marriage is mysterious (*anum di na nwunye di omimi*) in Igboland. The woman is still a member of her paternal family. The mystery about this marital bond is that whenever the woman dies, she is brought back and buried in the father's compound and this is what the Igbo tradition and that of Nri (the hypothesized ancestral home of all Igbo) stipulates. But there is a way out of this complicated tradition. If the woman has male children in her marital home, the children will go to their mother's place and beg that their mother be buried in her husband's home. This exception is highly negotiated with other powerful symbolic rituals. The symbolic rituals involve some concrete material exchanges, which have to be taken care of by the children of the dead woman. So the bond between the married couple is mysterious for those who understand the complexities involved. The widow needs to be set free to be free.

Even though the above quote says that marriage is mysterious among the Igbo people, *Enugwu-Ukwu* people mystify it more than the Abaofia-Izzi people. The paradox in this cosmological perception of marriage lies in the strong and complicated ritual 'symbolification' of Nri people of which *Enugwu-Ukwu* is the first among equals. In Nri culture, women unlike men have complicated burial rituals surrounding them. Women are treated like citizens of two worlds at death. Among the Igbo people, symbolic consultations are carried out in both her natal and marital places. Failure to do a proper consultation could generate a serious misunderstanding among the in-laws. Moreover, death for the Igbo people does not sever relationships until some

symbolic rituals are performed, whereas for Christians, death deals a final severance to relationships. The Igbo worldview colors their perception of human condition, but the intensity of such perception is not observed in the same manner in all Igbo communities. *Enugwu-Ukwu* people are obsessed with customs and tradition unlike *Abaofia-Izzi*. *Enugwu-Ukwu's* conservative tendencies predispose them toward harsher treatment of their widows relative to *Abaofia-Izzi*.

These factors explain the patriarchal paradoxes involved at *Enugwu-Ukwu* when compared to *Abaofia-Izzi*. The paradox involved is that the people of *Enugwu-Ukwu* became more collectivistic or conservative in their attitude towards their widows despite the fact that their economy is better than *Abaofia-Izzi* and despite their integration of several important aspects of Western culture. *Abaofia-Izzi* people became individualistic or progressive in their attitude towards their widows in spite of their economic woes. This is the paradoxical crux of the contextual manipulation of patriarchy.

Factors that pre-dispose *Abaofia-Izzi* progressively towards its widows

Abaofia-Izzi, compared to *Enugwu-Ukwu*, developed a progressive attitude towards its widows. Their historical contacts with the contiguous neighbors who are *non-Igbo* influenced their attitude towards their widows. *Abaofia-Izzi* never took itself seriously to the extent of formulating laws and customs binding one and all regarding their attitude towards their widows. The abuse of girl children is found mostly in *Abaofia-Izzi*. Based on their perception of the world and the fact that they are an agro-based community, they exploited their children in many ways. *Abaofia-Izzi* people make a paltry sum of money annually. For example, the reports by *Okenne*, *Amaka* and *Ifenkiri* point to the fact that the parents, especially the fathers, mortgaged the lives of their children by giving them out in marriages they did not choose. They denied them socio-

psychological development and education. The greatest disservice to any girl child is to permit her engagement in an early marriage. The words of Sossou et al. (2008) capture the nature of the harm done to a child given out in early marriage: “Childhood is a period of evolving capabilities, which should lead to the nurturing of bio-psychosocial, emotional and mental development of children and should not become a period of abuse, neglect and exploitation” (p. 1232).

Again, the community, in its characteristic way of perceiving the world, made decisions that impoverished both men and women alike. Unlike *Enugwu-Ukwu*, *Abaofia-Izzi* people have no rich cultural heritage that called for their strong identification. They did not appreciate the enriching interaction with foreign ideas. As a result, they became involved with poverty enhancing cultures such as polygamy and girl-child marriages. The effect on the community was more individualistically oriented and evolved a paradoxical progressive attitude towards the widows. In short, *Abaofia-Izzi* community stifled the potentials of their girl children to the point that normal development was denied, individual achievement made impossible and the societal reward was unrealizable. As widows, they suffered tremendously and were over-burdened with the care of their children. The extreme poverty of the *Abaofia-Izzi* community must not be isolated from their extreme individualism. It will be difficult for individuals to fund research for prevention of diseases, decrease child mortality and to provide basic amenities for the structural development of the community.

Summary

As revealed by the participants in this study, *Enugwu-Ukwu* is rich in both ritual and inheritance traditions. Ritual as a body of ceremony is believed to be symbolic. For traditional believers and those who benefit from the sustained ritual widowhood practice, the positive aspects of the practice are emphasized. Ritual performance protects the widows, the family and

the community in general from the ire of the ancestors. It provides also a mental/psychological closure to the bereaved. However, the participant widows from Enugwu-Ukwu, their adult children and some of the participant men report that the negative effect of ritual practice is more than the positive values. At Enugwu-Ukwu, ritual is a symbolic instrument in the hands of the powerful. The powerful could be men or women especially those women described in a section of this chapter as 'patriarchal women.' Patriarchally, ritual is an instrument of control in the domination of women. Through ritual manipulation, at *Enugwu-Ukwu*, women, especially the widows, are made to have low self-esteem. Ritual performance is therefore, a strategy whereby women are subjugated to feel inferior to men. Ritual as an instrument of subjugation is used to suppress, disinherit and limit women's rights in the community. At *Enugwu-Ukwu*, the high point of ritual practice is the performance of *Ajana*. *Ajana* is one of the dehumanizing rituals detested by most women participants at Enugwu-Ukwu.

Comparatively, Abaofia-Izzi has a mild widow-limiting ritual called *Uta Utara*. *Uta Utara* is associated with new yam festival. The mediating power of rituals is lacking in *Abaofia-Izzi*. Conceptually, male domination is high in the perceptions of the men, but does not translate effectively in reality. It appears that the poverty of the people vitiates a possible pragmatic actuation of their concept. Causally, male domination manifests itself at the levels of relationship, decision-making and in the show of *nkari* (Male superiority). The poverty enhancing decision-making of *Abaofia-Izzi* men, paints a different picture of widowhood practice. At *Abaofia-Izzi*, women are condemned to life of poverty right from their childhood. Child marriage, at *Abaofia-Izzi* community deprives women of developing emotionally, psychologically and socially. The girl children at *Abaofia-Izzi* are pushed into taking responsibilities typical of adults of which, they were never prepared to assume. Many of the

participant widows from *Abaofia-Izzi* are in a polygeneous union and complain about suffering due to scanty resources.

Unlike *Abaofia-Izzi* women, *Enugwu-Ukwu* women had opportunity to be educated and they shared also in the economic power of their community. They were mature at marriage and consented to it. Ironically, despite their empowerment, they are treated worse than the widows of *Abaofia-Izzi*. It appears that the poverty enhancing decisions of *Abaofia-Izzi* men impoverished not only the women but also the men. The lack of economic power weakened the *Abaofia-Izzi* men's hold on control over their women. Paradoxically, *Enugwu-Ukwu* men have economic power just as some of their widows do. However, *Enugwu-Ukwu* men are taking advantage of the privileges accorded to them as men to disinherit their widows. But the men are facing challenges in the resilient resistance of their domination by their women. It appears that the women know their rights and have what it takes to defend them. It is possible for women to engage in a collective action at *Enugwu-Ukwu* because of their economic power and educational empowerment. The women from *Enugwu-Ukwu* feel a sense of deprivation, which they strongly want to resolve in their expectation to be treated as equals. Men of *Abaofia-Izzi* do not feel a threat from their women because none is better than the other. It is unlikely that *Abaofia-Izzi* women will resist widowhood ritual practices because their community is not serious about ritual practices and dismal life experience is merely a continuation of the status quo. In addition, widow treatment has evolved as a function of certain key factors such as the geographical location, historical contacts, cultural legacy, and the level of identification of the people to their community. In the next chapter, the analytic framework is fully elaborated. The analytic framework details the paradoxical crux of the contextual manipulation of patriarchy.

CHAPTER VI: ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

The analytic framework applicable in this research emerged from the participants' narratives. The researcher describes the analytic framework as a contextual manipulation of patriarchy which serves as a 'spider's web' that pulls together the stories of the participants as they appear in the lens of the researcher.

In this chapter, the researcher proposes an analytic framework of contextual manipulation of patriarchy that expresses how patriarchy has a strong hold on material domination and manipulation of social institutions. Cultural heritage is practiced differently in the two communities in this study. The paradoxes are apparent in the way each community treats its widows either progressively or conservatively. Five major factors emerged from the data. The factors are: 1) the geographical location of each community, 2) the historical contacts each community has with either local or foreign communities, 3) the attitude of each community towards its cultural legacy, 4) the economic status of each community and 5) the level of identification of each people within their community either as collectivists or as individualists which the researcher asserts is the most important factor. These factors were best explained with evidence from the data in the results and analysis chapter.

Contextual Manipulation of Patriarchal theory

The researcher describes the analytic framework as the 'contextual manipulation of patriarchy.' Close intimacy with the data shows that patriarchy is alive and well and manifests itself in the two communities in varied ways. Patriarchy as practiced by the two communities under study is locality specific and contextual. It varies differently in the lives of the women who happen to be widows in *Enugwu-Ukwu* and *Abaofia-Izzi* communities. For example, the practice of widowhood, which is one of the social institutions used to dominate women by men is variously or differently exercised in the two communities. Ritual and inheritance are the two

components to the practice of widowhood. A ritual is supra-sensible reality which is mentally constructed and is rooted in concrete reality (George, 1956). It is applicable in every human endeavor. Most often, religious rituals come to mind but life, in general, according to George (1956) is full of rituals. Ritual custom in widowhood practices is a strong tool in the hands of men to intimidate women. This results in women feeling unworthy and inferior relative to men when it comes to material possessions and control of their sexual rights. Conversely, inheritance, especially as used in this study, has to do with the material possessions and assets of a dead married man. Customarily, it is about who is entitled to inherit or not inherit the properties and possessions of the dead man. Among the *Igbo* people when a man dies, it is his first son that has the right to inherit his father's possessions and not the wife. Inheritance is bequeathed patrilineally. The communities under study operate a heterogeneous patriarchal system as the data revealed. Regarding widowhood practice, *Enugwu-Ukwu* emphasized the two constituent aspects of widowhood practice, whereas *Abaofia-Izzi* is mildly interested only in the inheritance aspect. *Enugwu-Ukwu* social tradition applies the ritual component as a subjugation mechanism to dominate women in order to disinherit them whereas *Abaofia-Izzi* social tradition showed little or no interest in the ritual aspect as it claims ideological supremacy of men over women.

Through a careful analysis of the data, the researcher observed that the claim of male superiority over women by *Abaofia-Izzi* men does not have a strong root in reality. *Abaofia-Izzi* is mildly interested in the inheritance aspect of widowhood and the ritual component of the practice means very little to the community. It appears that the socio-economic condition of each community has a strong influence on the attitude of each community toward its widows. Conceptually, in both communities, men see themselves as superior to women, but in reality a

great margin exists regarding the way each community's concepts or ideas are related to the widows.

In a more affluent community like *Enugwu-Ukwu*, the ideological concept of male superiority has a strong foundation in reality via the manipulation of social institutions and material wealth. Material wealth and social institutions serve as instruments of control in the hands of men. However in a less affluent community like *Abaofia-Izzi*, the ideology of male superiority appears to be strong conceptually among men but has a very weak foundation in reality as indicated by the indices of comparison in chapter five. The researcher suggests that this differentiation is likely due to the paucity of social institutions and material wealth in *Abaofia-Izzi*. In this instance, there appears to be some correlation between material wealth, social institutions, ideological conceptions and the actual enactment of patriarchal traditions. Critical evaluation of the data suggests, all things being equal, (where there is no corruption and leaders are capable), that those who have material wealth seem to translate their ideas into practical experience whereas those who do not have the material wealth live more in the world of ideas than in reality. Social institutions serve as tools in the hands of the privileged over the disadvantaged. The privileged utilize their economic advantage to institute social norms like widowhood practice thereby creating favored in-groups and marginalized out-groups but are actually more likely to do so if they are economically stable. As demonstrated in the Results and Analysis chapter, in both communities, marginalization of women, especially the widows, is carried out in different ways due to the varied contexts, historical contacts with contiguous and Western ideologies and other social structures operative in the two communities. However, context mediates the actual enactment of traditions of domination.

The 'contextual manipulation of patriarchy' as an overarching substantive theory is based on the explanatory power it provides for the differences that emerged from the data. The intricate social dynamics in which the widows of the chosen communities operate called for a multifaceted framework. Intimacy with the data led to the 'mid-wifing' of the contextual manipulation of patriarchy as a fitting framework to explain, within its limits, the experiences of widows in the various geographical settings with different historical extra-community contacts and other social forces that impact the widows. One of the male participants, when asked to summarize his interview process, described it as talking about the vagaries of culture. The findings of this study underscore the heterogeneity of patriarchal cultural practice of widowhood in the chosen communities. The multiplicity of perspectives is accounted for by the different geographical locations of the widows and the different economic and social contexts of each of the communities.

Reasons for Variation in Communal Perspectives

Relative to the two communities under study, the contextual manipulation of patriarchy creates a paradox that oftentimes leads to contradiction, irony and occasional surprises especially when one observes the variation in the responses of most of the participants in the two communities. Referencing Mannheim, Cooms' (1966) assertion regarding the localness of human thought paints a good image to help us to understand the differences in attitude toward widowhood practice in the two communities. Cooms (1966) asserts,

Since the early beginning, the sociology of knowledge has brought lively debate concerning the epistemological relevance of some of its assertions. Especially have the controversial writings of Karl Mannheim provoked discussion. His thesis is that human thought arises and operates not in a social vacuum but in a definite social milieu, and that each man's intellectual outlook is only a collection of unconscious elements acquired from his social setting. Thus each person proceeds from what appears to him to be self-evident truths but which are not so obvious to those with different social backgrounds (p. 31).

Mannheim is correct to state that human thought does not arise and operate in a vacuum but rather happens in a definite social setting. Situationally, human thought is relative and socially constructed. (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) On account of the relative nature of human thought, ideas are rooted, (Bolender, 1998-2006) in “the differential locations in historical time and social structure of their proponents so that thought is inevitably perspectivistic” (p.1). Farberman (2009; 2010) has criticized Mannheim’s idea that “man’s intellectual outlook is only a collection of unconscious elements acquired in his setting” (Coombs, 1966, p. 31). Farberman (1970) appealed to the theory of symbolic interactionism in order to “...close the gap on the social-psychological mechanism which Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge obviously needs” (p. 6). He (Farberman) stated that human beings are considered as discrete because they operate as inter-personal agents, indicating to themselves what is meaningful and of value and not simply mere reflectors of collectivistic agency as Mannheim’s ideas suggest (Farberman, 1970). Close reading of the collected data of the present study showed that human beings are actively involved in constructing how the world impacts them as they consciously create in-group and out-group systems as ways of sorting themselves out before undertaking actions (R. Jenkins, 2008). This sorting out refers to the way human beings identify with each other as they form distinct groups that at times compete against each other. Specifically in this study the identification of men to each other as superior, along the line of gender, seems to be conceived in the same manner in both communities, but in reality, the conceptualization manifests itself in a remarkably different way.

The Nature of Emergent Themes

Through data exploration and analysis, the researcher discovered some relevant emergent theories with sociological and psychological bases that spoke to the data. The theories are

considered relevant because they helped to make the dynamics of the data content sensible with their explanatory power. The researcher used the emergent themes to reflect on the stories of the widows in order to understand the conditions under which the widows of the two communities are treated differently. In the review of relevant theories, in chapter four, the researcher presented the foundational theories that he found useful in informing his analysis of the data and forming the basis of his subsequent proposed theoretical framework: the theory of the contextual manipulation of patriarchy.

Constraining Factors of Patriarchy

Widowhood practices differ in the two communities as a function of differential manipulation of patriarchy. The participants shared a common world but their differing geographic locations, historical contacts with contiguous and foreign communities, and varied social contexts mold their conditions differently. For instance, it was reported during the interview process that the two communities speak *Igbo* but listening to them speak suggests a world of difference in dialect. The observed variation in dialect among the *Abaofia-Izzi* people owed its root to the influence of the surrounding communities who are not of the *Igbo* nation. One of the prominent paradoxes found in this study was provided by the diversity of interacting factors as showcased in the encounters each community had with the contiguous and foreign communities. It is paradoxical that *Enugwu-Ukwu* keeps an open mind in acculturating others' perspectives, local and foreign, and *Abaofia Izzi* closes all avenues of possible penetration by the foreign community while it 'over-acculturates' the cultures of the immediate contiguous communities. As elaborated in Chapters I and V, the different geographic and economic resources of the communities translates into different worldviews.

In addition to the influence of the contiguous and foreign communities, the collective identification of the two communities under study plays another important role in understanding the differences in widowhood treatment. These varied factors serve as modifiers to the attitude of each community toward the widows who live there. Strong or mild attachment to social institutions or symbols of the institutions defines a community as either conservative or progressive. According to Jenkins (2008), the idea of identification of people to others or to some common purpose is a “cognitive mechanism that humans use to sort out themselves and their fellows, individually and collectively” (p. 10). It is a ‘baseline’ of sorting that is fundamental to the organization of the human world: it is how we know “who’s who, and what’s what. We couldn’t do whatever we do as humans, without being able to do this” (p. 10). Furthermore, the paradoxical nature of the contextual manipulation of patriarchy in the group identification of the members of each community is made complex by the fact that groups are formed with different objectives and values as each group competes with other groups. The objectives and values are always subject to change, based on the situationality of objectives and values. Jenkins (2008) asserted,

...identification doesn’t determine behaviour, and patterns of identification don’t allow us to predict who will do what. This is so for a number of reasons: people work with various ‘maps’ or hierarchies of identification, these hierarchies of identification are never clear cut, unambiguous or inconsistent agreement with each other, and the relationship between interests and identification is too complex for individual behavior to be predictable in these terms (p. 10).

The paradox in the contextual manipulation of patriarchal theory obtains from the indeterminate nature of what people are capable of doing and the mere impossibility of obtaining a regular pattern of how people will react or act according to circumstances. Identification, on the other hand, is strongly related to collective action especially when connected to the power of symbols

and rituals as people experience them (Jenkins, 2008). Experiencing the power of symbols and rituals valorized by the accentuation of identification to the world mapped by people is always colored by the context of the people. *Enugwu-Ukwu*, as a community of its own, when compared to *Abaofia Izzi* tended to be collectivistic in their attitude, whereas *Abaofia Izzi* people are more inclined to lead an individualistic life.

Enugwu-Ukwu people have a strong identification with their community and this is manifested in their deep appreciation of their history as the descendants of Nri dynasty. They are very proud of their cultural heritage and privileges as the first son of Nri; called to maintain and enforce the upkeep of moral rectitude in *Igbo*land. *Abaofia-Izzi* does not seem to have this strong identification with their community. They seem to live more individualistic lives as long as each of them has enough land to cultivate his crops. Strong ties to one another and appreciation of what binds them together are secondary to *Abaofia-Izzi* people. Their one strong desire is to have enough arable land.

The different perceptions arising from the encounters each community had with other communities are significant in understanding how the widows of the two communities are treated. Considering the social aspect of the women's life, the thinking of Schatzki (2003) captured well the fluidity that is needed in understanding the conditions of the widows under study. Schatzki (2003) asserted that "the social world is not governed singularly by a set of invariant deterministic laws, such as Newton's motion, but rather by forces that emerge from the diversity of interacting factors that change over time"(Schatzki, 2003).

The Paradox of Contextual Manipulation of Patriarchy

A paradox is defined in four different ways by Webster's Universal Unabridged Dictionary (2003). The first definition appears appropriate for this study. The definition captures

the dynamics of the study. It states that a paradox is “a statement or proposition that seems self-contradictory or absurd but in reality expresses a possible truth” (“Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary,” 2003). This research seeks to discover why two communities of the same ethnic group should relate differently to their widows despite sharing a common world. The attitudinal relations suggest some paradoxical tendencies in the worldviews of the communities. In summary, the following factors tend to manifest the paradoxes.

One, given the modernization theory (Hamamura, 2012) which states that economic growth correlates with individualistic orientation, the researcher expected to conclude that Enugwu-Ukwu people, based on their privileged socio-economic status, would be individualistic in orientation and, therefore, show a progressive attitude towards their widows compared to the people of *Abaofia-Izzi*. However, the expected results appear counterintuitive. The reversal of the direction of the expected result is paradoxical. It is paradoxical that *Abaofia-Izzi* people whose socio-economic status is below poverty level appear to be casually progressive relative to their widows when compared with *Enugwu-Ukwu*. The paradox between the two communities relative to the widowhood practice supports the evidence that modernization theory does not account for the differences despite the converging “evidence pointing to the robust relationship between societal modernization and individualism” (p. 16). This fact suggests that modernization theory is not uniform across cultures (Hamamura, 2012).

Secondly, it is observed that strong patriarchal collective identification with the cultural legacy of each community has the most influence on the attitude of each community to its widows. Enugwu-Ukwu people pride themselves with the idea that they are the first son of Nri, privileged to have the authority to traverse the whole Igboland performing traditional rituals. This aspect of their cultural heritage has such influence on them that no new societal changes affect their

attachment to their culture. According to Korieh (1996), understanding the Igbo cosmology and the symbolism of ritual enables one to understand the bond of unity between the living and the dead in the community. The understanding highlights the strong emotional attachment of Enugwu-Ukwu people to their culture and explains why such cultural heritage exists parallel to modern changes and understanding. Abaofia-Izzi people do not have such a strong attachment to their community's cultural legacy. In the language of Okere (1996), individuals in Abaofia-Izzi might be defined as distinct parts of the community whereas at Enugwu-Ukwu individuals could be defined as differentiated parts of the community. Therefore, one can say that *Enugwu-Ukwu* is more a collectivist community whereby individuals place the common good ahead of personal needs. On the contrary, *Abaofia-Izzi* can be said to be an individualist community whereby the individuals place their needs ahead of the common good. Other factors such as the historical contacts, geographical locations, and cosmology affect contextually each community's attitude to its widows.

Finally, it could be said that women, especially those who happen to be widows are affected negatively by both casual progressive and conservative attitudes of both communities. Women are the target of both the benevolent and hostile sexism practiced at *Abaofia-Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu*, respectively. The benevolent and hostile sexism as part of the emergent theories are explained in chapter four. When a girl child is given out in marriage, her potentials and capabilities are aborted and when a mature woman is prohibited from claiming her rights or self-extensions, it smacks of a blatant violation of her basic human rights. It is therefore paradoxical to know that *Abaofia-Izzi* subjects their girl children to a life of poverty and suffering as a result of their cosmological perception. In *Enugwu-Ukwu* the people forcibly do the same to the adult widows. Strong identification with their cultural heritage defines *Enugwu-Ukwu* as conservative

in attitude towards its widows while casual attachment to its cultural heritage and other confounding factors mentioned above defines Abaofia-Izzi as casually progressive.

In the next chapter, the implications and the conclusions of the study will be addressed. Lastly, recommendations will be presented for the future of social work education, practice, policy and research.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The specific research question of the present study was to discover why two communities within the same Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria treat their widows differently. Utilizing a grounded approach as a strategy, the voice of the participants served as the pathway to this understanding. The researcher was initially motivated to capture the multiple problems affecting the widows regarding the treatment they receive due to the death of their husbands in the researcher's place of pastoral ministry at *Enugwu-Ukwu* prior to coming to the United States. The researcher empathized with the poor conditions of those widows and wanted to find out if such subjugating traditional rituals are observed differently among the Igbo sub-ethnic groups. In pursuance of this interest, *Abaofia-Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu* communities were chosen to make a comparative analysis regarding their widowhood practices.

The research approach used in this study was qualitative, exploratory and inductive (Riley, 2009). A grounded theory approach was applied in analyzing the stories of the participants. The researcher, driven to discover what is culturally salient and meaningful to the lived experience of the widows, used semi-structured, open-ended, face-to-face, in-depth interviews to give voice to the participants in this research. Focus group interviews and self-reports by the widows' adult children were other strategic measures used in gathering the data needed to achieve this qualitative inquiry. The use of qualitative methods gave voice to seventy individuals comprising of thirty widows, ten men, twelve adult children of the widows and two focus groups one of which consisted of ten persons while the other had eight participants. The analysis of their experience gave insight into the relative attitude of each community towards its widows. Ultimately, the knowledge of these relative behaviors of each community offers opportunity to educate the communities regarding the implications of their behavior towards their widows.

The researcher used qualitative analysis software to identify the themes that emerged in the data. The following results were reached. The results of the research showed that people of the same ethnic group can have different cultural approaches to widow treatment even though they appear to share the same ethnic and cultural world. Based on the findings, the reason for the differences is attributed to factors such as geographical location, historical contacts, socio-economic status, cultural heritage and the level of patriarchal identification of the people to their community. It was also found that the communities of *Abaofia-Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu* are patriarchal in nature but the practice of their patriarchy manifests itself in a paradoxically different way. Whereas *Abaofia-Izzi*'s traditions result in impoverishing their girl children through child marriage, *Enugwu-Ukwu* empowers their girl children by education. Yet, given these facts, paradoxically, the widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu* are severely oppressed, marginalized and disinherited, while the widows from *Abaofia-Izzi* are only mildly oppressed but are nonetheless relatively helpless in affecting the quality of their lives. Examining the contents of the demographic profiles of the participating widows and the indices of comparison, it was found that *Enugwu-Ukwu* people are more patriarchal in their approach to widowhood practices than are the people from *Abaofia-Izzi*. Further examination of the communities and their cultural values reveals that *Enugwu-Ukwu* has a stronger identification with their cultural heritage than *Abaofia-Izzi*. The researcher also discovered that the geographical location and the historical contacts with other cultures of each community impact the behavior of each community towards its widows, for every encounter changes the situation. All things considered, it is observed that *Enugwu-Ukwu* looks superficially progressive, but is in reality, conservative, while *Abaofia-Izzi* appears superficially conservative but in reality is casually progressive. Of note is the fact that a different picture of widowhood practice at *Abaofia-Izzi* results in part, due to poverty. Women

are impoverished at *Abaofia-Izzi* long before they become widowed. Men's overarching decision of giving out their girl children in marriage is in large part the foundation of the community's widows' suffering. Conversely, at Enugwu-Ukwu, women are empowered at their childhood, respected as married but oppressed when widowed.

Thus, given the economic and educational empowerment of widows at *Enugwu-Ukwu*, they are more likely to engage in collective action and acts of resistance than those of *Abaofia-Izzi*. Based on the responses of the participants, one can assert that elements of hostile sexism are experienced at *Enugwu-Ukwu*. Nevertheless, benevolent sexism is practiced at *Abaofia-Izzi* and their widows are complacent about the practice.

Implications for Social Work Education

Sir Francis Bacon said that knowledge is power (Simpson, 2005). The power of knowledge is testified in its applicability in solving human problems. The body of knowledge articulated in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics (Sossou & Yogtiba, 2008) mandates the promotion of the principles of social justice, human rights and social change that empowers and liberates people to enhance their well-being. The Code of Ethics also calls on professional social workers to "utilize theories of human behavior and social systems to intervene at the points where people interact with their environments to bring about desired changes" (p. 1227). In addition, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) emphasized the complex nature of today's environment (Hare, 2009). The need to understand the forces of globalization – economic, ecological and social calls for networking with international colleagues and sharing information in international circle (Hare, 2009). This understanding of the concept of social work includes an "effective representation of the whole range of knowledge

and skills throughout the whole world... This will facilitate shared discourse derived from a shared conception that organizes social action and intervention..." (p. 408).

Regarding this research, the relative attitudes of the two communities in South-Eastern Nigeria towards their widows, call for the attention of social work educators. According to Sossou et al. (2008), Nigeria as a developing country is "impeded by a vicious circle linking poverty, insecurity and vulnerability in the context of growing inequalities according to social welfare related vices" (p. 239). In fact, there is a growing dimension of social problems without a corresponding increase in the number of qualified social workers to tackle the problems. There is a great need for qualified social work professionals in Nigeria to eradicate social problems and offer solutions to alleviate the suffering of the citizens as well as enhance their lives. Nigeria lacks jobs for qualified social workers and those who have jobs are poorly compensated. Qualified professional social workers are lacking because only two universities have social work departments in the whole nation (Ogundipe & Edewor, 2012). Social workers are trained in the Social Development Institutes such as the one located in *Iperu* in *Ogun* state where a one year certificate course and a two year diploma course are offered (Ogundipe & Edewor, 2012). Ogundipe et al. (2012) discovered that throughout Nigeria, "permanent insecurity is the condition of the poor, no public systems of social security in the event of unemployment, old age, sickness, or death of a wage-earner in the family may eventually close off the avenues of escape" (p. 239). Most non-governmental agencies are based in the big cities and yet the vulnerable, who reside in the sub-regions, are left to fate. There is a dearth of professional social workers in the whole country. The government needs to increase the number of universities that offer social work programs. Nigeria needs professional and competent social workers. There is need to allocate more resources in the areas of social work education.

According to the research findings of this study, there is gender inequality with regard to widow treatment within the same *Igbo* ethnic group. The living conditions of the participants from *Abaofia-Izzi* need urgent intervention from professional social workers. The participants in the *Abaofia-Izzi* community lagged behind in knowledge regarding their personal information (bio-data), their social institutions and cultural heritage. One of the participants from *Abaofia-Izzi* when asked the simple question, when did you get married and when were you born could not offer an answer. All she said was: “I did not go to school. If I had gone to school, I would have given an answer to your question.” And to the second question she responded in the same fashion. The level of ignorance among the *Abaofia-Izzi* people is enormous and that is why superstitious belief is high in the community. Above all, they deny their girl children the normal emotional, psychological and social development. The words of Sossou et al. (2008) are pertinent in the needs of the people of *Abaofia-Izzi* for social work interventions. They asserted: “Childhood is a period of evolving capabilities, which should lead to the nurturing of bio-psychosocial, emotional and mental development of children and should not become a period of abuse, neglect and exploitation.”

In the same way, men and women from *Enugwu-Ukwu* need special education regarding their prejudice against the widows. If men, both educated and illiterate from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, understood the level of psychological trauma they cause their women, especially the educated ones among them, perhaps they would soften their hostility against their widows. The researcher observed that in both communities, the level of suffering is high but different. At *Abaofia-Izzi*, the women are aware of their suffering but are helpless in the face of poverty. At *Enugwu-Ukwu*, the educated women who resist conformity to the customs and traditions of widowhood practice are victimized with such intensity that leaves them traumatized. The researcher observed that the

level of anger among the educated and non-conforming participant widows from *Enugwu-Ukwu* regarding the forceful subjugation to widowhood rituals and the unjust disinheritance of their husbands' properties is unbearable. Many of them have health issues resulting from this unjust treatment. For example, the prejudice, stigma and discrimination given to women who had no male children or those who are childless but want to adopt babies at *Enugwu-Ukwu* are unimaginable. The following assertion depicts how widows are characterized when they have only female children or are childless. One of the male participants from *Enugwu-Ukwu*, *Okito*, made the following assertions. *Okito*, specifically, was indirectly castigating his brother's widow, who was not conforming to the dictates of their culture. It is also surprising to know that *Okito*, who is well educated, should be nursing a serious prejudice against his brother's widow. *Okito* is angry at his brother's widow because he feels that the adoption of two boys is an expression of a sheer effrontery to their culture. *Okito* asserted:

Widow means evil. There was a case where a widow was bewitching the co-tenants to leave the place for their safety and the widow was associated with witchcraft. Women without issues (children) suffer after the death of their husbands in many cases. But today they are trying to get off that by adopting male children and because the adopted children have no inheritance right over the property of their adopters... Whose name will they bear/answer, unless the woman has no relatives from the husband's family?

To characterize a widow as evil, associated with witchcraft, is a show of ignorance and a way of giving her a bad name to make her unworthy to take possession of her husband's inheritance. The social problem about widowhood is reduced to greed that accompanies material possession. Based on the findings of the previous studies regarding the social problems in Nigeria, and the current findings in *Abaofia-Izzi* and *Enugwu-Ukwu*, in particular, there is a need for professional social workers to educate and enlighten the people on the social damages of greed and ignorance.

It seems apparent from the research that material possessions and the lack of them, causes problems.

Implications for practitioners

Social work practitioners need to go where there is a need. As mentioned above, most non-governmental agencies are located in the big cities. Social work practitioners need to identify the problems of the people by ‘smelling the people.’ In other words, social work professionals have to add to their formal education, some informal education in order to make their practice relevant to the people (Sossou, 2009). During the interviews at *Abaofia-Izzi*, most participants when asked about their knowledge of the non-governmental organizations answered negatively. They had no idea that such an organization existed and almost all expressed ignorance of having an option regarding their situation. In contrast, at *Enugwu-Ukwu*, about 35% of the widows were aware of the presence of the women lawyers advocating for widows in *Anambra* state. The participating widows reported that such groups often had a town hall meeting with them. One interesting thing about this group of women lawyers is that they take up any widow victimizer without implicating the reporter. All a widow needs to do is to report any one who victimizes her. At *Enugwu-Ukwu*, the participants know that litigation or seeking the protection of the police is an option for them. They also did mention about the intervention of the wife of the traditional ruler, *Igwe*, in some of their situations.

Social work practitioners can play an important role in ensuring that all widows are aware of non-governmental organizations that can assist them in resisting the oppression they face. Furthermore, social workers need to be aware of the deep-seated cultural heritage that has constituted an impediment to the implementation and enforcement of the universal right of equality of all human beings irrespective of the natural biological constitution. The two

communities need trained social work practitioners to challenge the stigma and subjugation of inhuman ritual practices and to promote the right to ownership of property by all.

Implications for Social Policy

According to Sossou et al. (2009), “African governments have been accused of ratifying international conventions without any concrete follow through on programmes or plans. For example, concerning women and gender issues... African governments have found it expedient to exploit the gender questions to receive economic aid in an international climate that has become increasingly sympathetic toward women’s demand for equality” (p. 1229).

This exploitation is not limited to the international agencies but also includes the Nigerian federal, state and local government diversion of budgets meant for Women’s studies. Corrupt government agencies are responsible for the intolerant level of poverty in the country (Smith, 2008). Nigeria boasts of an increased GDP without a corresponding positive effect in the lives of the vulnerable. The governments keep duplicating ministries and agencies as a way to deprive the Departments of Social Welfare where they are existent (Sossou, 2009).

Despite the corrupt nature of the government, the people still look up to the government as having the potential for effective intervention in assisting them in their lives. For example, during this investigation, one man from *Abaofia-Izzi* was asked about whether he would prefer the problems of widowhood to be handled by the traditional system or the government. He responded immediately: *onye ka mbeke ike* (who is mightier than the government?). The above expression states the profound desire people have for a functioning government. This was why the *Abaofia-Izzi* participants could not understand the fact that the researcher was not an agent of the government. At every point they kept

interrupting the interview asking the researcher to provide jobs for them. It is so disheartening to know that the government of Nigeria has the resources to generate jobs for the common people but for the greed of those in the government, joblessness has remained an insurmountable social problem.

There is an important role for social workers in formulating ethical social policy that could effectively ensure a more egalitarian distribution of resources. Furthermore, the inclusion of social workers into positions of policy making and implementation would increase the possibilities for advancing more progressive values that respect the human dignity of both men and women.

Implications for Social Work Research

Borrowing from the ideas of Sossou et al. (2009), the provision of a “scientific baseline data” in the area of women’s oppression at both federal and local levels is necessary. In this way, public enlightenment offers a way to diminish women’s oppression. Evidence based research provides a solid ground for policies that reflect the need for change in the living conditions of widows. For example, it was through listening to the life experiences of the participants in this study that the realities of the widows in the two communities were identified. By observing the participants from *Abaofia-Izzi* community, the researcher discovered how poverty colored and influenced their perceptions and attitudes towards their widows. In just the same way, the researcher discovered through the revelations of participants from *Enugwu-Ukwu* the effects of historical contacts, patriarchal identification with the community and the inheritance of strong cultural legacy and their attitude towards their widows.

None of the above implications and recommendations will be valuable unless the government supports them with resources and backs them up with sound policy. The need to identify the

relative conditions of widows within the sub-cultures of Igboland is important in order to improve their wellbeing. In order to achieve this, more funded research is needed. No government or nation will ever realize their potentials when a section of their citizens are marginalized.

Limitations of the Study

1. The findings are not generalizable beyond the participant members because of the method of sample selection.
2. The hiring of research assistants to help translate the Izzi language detracts from the credibility (validity) of the research since the researcher could not engage the participant members of *Abaofia-Izzi* directly.
3. By scheduling the interviews only in the morning hours, those who work for the government were not able to participate. Thus, broadening the timing of participants' possibilities for participation from *Abaofia-Izzi* people would have diversified the backgrounds of the participants who became part of the sample.
4. The researcher coded the whole transcript alone. Double coding would have served to evaluate intercoder reliability and contribute to the validity of the results.
5. Finally, the fact that the widow experience was written in English rather than the exact language of the participants also detracts from the validity of this research study. For example, there are some linguistic cues that make meaning only when made in the context and culture where the language is spoken; otherwise, the desired effect will not be realized.

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APPENDIX A: STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY CORIHS APPROVAL



STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
COMMITTEES ON RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
Established 1971

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Widowhood Practice In Two Igbo Communities Of Nigeria: A Contextual Manipulation of Patriarchy.

Principal Investigator: Carolyn Peabody, PhD.

Research Coordinator: Jerome Madumelu- Doctoral Student.

Department: School of Social welfare.

In this consent form, you are being requested to be a volunteer in a research study.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is:

- To understand two towns relative to their traditions regarding widowhood practices, how the widows, widowers, husbands and children of widows of each town experience the treatment meted out to them according to the way the town frames meaning thus shaping their world in relation to how women who have lost their husbands should be treated.
- To develop a substantive theory of the town's widowhood practices (Glaser& Strauss, 1999) that could lead to a formal theory that would predict widowhood practices of many more comparable towns.
- As a native, to give some meaningful recommendations on how to formulate policies that could help change or improve the lots of our mothers who happen to be widows.
- To help further the movement towards decolonization in the wake of surging African researchers who are trying to decolonize Euro/American imposed ideologies and misguided representation of African culture.

Procedures:

If you decide to be in this study, your role will involve:

- Participation in a face-to-face, in-depth interview that will take approximately one hour.
- Reception and reading with understanding (listening to a well translated version) of a consent form that will specify the purpose of the study prior to your participation.
- Answering questions that are subdivided into six sections: 1) deals with relationship of the wife to the husband or husband to the wife, 2) the treatment of widows, 3) customs and traditions, 4) property ownership, 5) personal evaluation and 6) demographic profile (basic descriptions like age, marital status etc).

Risks involved

- The risk anticipated in this research is only minimal in that it is not greater than those encountered in everyday living. The issues of loss of a dear husband, and talking about traditions or about the death of a loved one might be upsetting to you.

Benefits:

- Participation in this study does not provide you any direct benefit other than the ten dollars you will receive whenever the interview concludes.
- Although you may not have any direct benefit participating in this study, information may emerge that may eventually improve the lots of widows in this or other towns. Possible changes may therefore benefit the present widows and improve the wellbeing of our daughters who may become widows in the future.

Confidentiality

The researcher will keep all the participants' identity anonymous and all other information about them private as provided by the law. The researcher will do this by not writing down anything that will link the participant to the information s/he provided. All the study data the researcher gathers from the participants will be kept locked up.

Cost To You

You do not have to pay anything to be in this study except to offer only an hour of your time.

Alternatives

Your alternative to being in this study is simply not to participate.

Your Rights as a Research Subjects

- Participation is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study if you choose not to be.
- You have the right to change your mind and leave the study at any time without giving any reason, and withdrawal has no consequence.
- Any new information that will make you change your mind about being in this study will be given to you.
- You will get a copy of this consent form to keep.
- You do not lose any of your legal rights by signing this consent form.

Questions about the study or your rights as a research subject

- If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you may contact the study supervisor: Dr. Carolyn Peabody, PhD, at a foreign telephone (631) 444-3165, and her mailing address is:

Dr. Carolyn Peabody
School of Social Welfare,
Stony Brook University
HSC Level 2, Room 093
Stony Brook NY 11794 – 8231
cgpeabody@gmail.com

You can also contact the researcher – Jerome Madumelu at the number: 631 455 0086. His mailing address is:

Jerome Madumelu
School of Social Welfare,
Stony Brook University
HSC Level 2, Room 093
Stony Brook, NY 11794 – 8231
jmadumelu44@gmail.com

- If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may conveniently contact the National Health Research Ethics Committee Administrative Officer - Mr. Aminu Yakubu at his local number: 08065479926 and to contact Yakubu from the United States of America, you can place the call thus: 0112348065479926. His mailing address is:

Aminu A. Yakubu
 NHREC Administrative Officer
 Department of Health Planning and Research,
 Federal Ministry of Health
 PMB 083, Abuja
yaminads@yahoo.com
<http://nhrec.net>

You can also contact Judy Matuk who is the director of research compliance at Stony Brook University of New York, United States of America, at this address:

Judy Matuk
 The Director,
 Office of Research Compliance W5530
 Melville Library
 Stony Brook University, NY 11794- 3368
Judy.matuk@stonybrook.edu


If you sign below, it means that you have read (or have had read to you) the information given in this consent form, and you would like to be a participant in this research.

Subject Name (printed)	Subject Signature	Date
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Subject Name (printed)	Subject thumb print or	Witnessed consent	Date.
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Name of Person Obtaining the Consent (printed)	Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date
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APPENDIX B: National Health Research Ethics Committee of Nigeria (NHREC)

	National Health Research Ethics Committee of Nigeria (NHREC) Promoting Highest Ethical and Scientific Standards for Health Research in Nigeria	
NHREC Protocol Number NHREC/01/01/2007-05/10/2010 NHREC Approval Number NHREC/01/01/2007-03/12/2010 Date: December 12, 2010		
<u>Re: Widowhood Practice in two Igbo Communities of Nigeria: A case for social Justice.</u>		
Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) assigned number: NHREC/01/01/2007		
Name of Co-Principal Investigator: Jerome Madumelu		
Address of Co-Principal Investigator: Stony Brook University Stony Brook, NY 11794		
Date of receipt of valid application: 05-10-2010		
Date when final determination of research was made: 03-12-2010		
<u>Notice of Full Committee Approval</u>		
This is to inform you that the research described in the submitted protocol, the consent forms, advertisements and other participant information materials have been reviewed and <i>given full committee approval by the National Health Research Ethics Committee.</i>		
This approval dates from 03/12/2010 to 02/12/2011. If there is delay in starting the research, please inform the HREC so that the dates of approval can be adjusted accordingly. Note that no participant accrual or activity related to this research may be conducted outside of these dates. <i>All informed consent forms used in this study must carry the HREC assigned number and duration of HREC approval of the study.</i> In multiyear research, endeavor to submit your annual report to the HREC early in order to obtain renewal of your approval and avoid disruption of your research.		
<i>The National Code for Health Research Ethics requires you to comply with all institutional guidelines, rules and regulations and with the tenets of the Code including ensuring that all adverse events are reported promptly to the HREC. No changes are permitted in the research without prior approval by the HREC except in circumstances outlined in the Code. The HREC reserves the right to conduct compliance visit your research site without previous notification.</i>		
Signed		
		
Clement Adebamowo BMChB Hons (Jos), FWACS, FACS, DSc (Harvard) Honorary Consultant Surgeon, Director, West African Center for Bioethics and Chairman, National Health Research Ethics Committee of Nigeria (NHREC)		
Department of Health Planning, Research & Statistics Federal Ministry of Health 11 th Floor, Federal Secretariat Complex Phase III Ahmadu Bello Way, Abuja		Tel: +234 09 523 8367 E-mail: chairman@nhrec.net, secretary@nhrec.net, desk.officer@nhrec.net, URL: http://www.nhrec.net

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Male Interview Guide #1

(For those whose wives have passed)

Greetings and appreciation of the environment are the right place to begin the interview. Asking about the family conditions which is at the core of Igbo cultural way of greeting might be the right place to begin. For example: *Kedu ka unu melu* which in English translates to: How are you?

In this session, I' m going to be asking you some questions about your marriage and about your wife.

Relationship with Wife

How about your wife? (Which could translate in Igbo to: Is your wife still living or not? (If the wife is dead, express a sympathetic “Ahh, Ndo” in Igbo)

1a. *Kedu maka nwunye gi?*

What year did you get married?

2a. *Kedu n' aro I nulu nwanyi?*

What, in particular, attracted you to her?

3a. *Gini ka I ji nwe mmasi n' ebe nwunye gi no?*

What was your life like before you met your wife?

4a. *I nwere ike I koturu M maka ndu gi tupu I luo nwanyi?*

Tell me about the kind of person your wife was? (What did she like, can you give me an example?)

5a. *Mgbe nwunye gi no ndu, kedu udi mmadu O bu? (Keduga ihe na-amasi ya, nye m omuma atu?).*

Can you describe the life you shared together with your wife?

6a. *Kokenere M maka ndu unu biri dika di na nwunye mgbe nwunye gi no?*

How did your life change after you married your wife?

7a. *Kedu ka ndu gi si gbanwo ka I nusiri nwanyi?*

Would you marry her again, if you were to do this all over?

8a. A na- abia uwa ozo, I ga-anukwa nwunye gi a ozo?

(8i). If yes, why would you marry her again?

8ia. Kedu ihe I ga eji nukwa ya ozo?

8ii). If no, why would you not marry her again ?

8iia. Kedu ihe mere na I gaghi anukwa ya ozo?

How did you get married to your wife? (**If not clear, ask: was that an arranged marriage or one based on romantic love?**).

9a. Kedu ka I si nuo nwunye gi?

Did your wife work outside the home? (What did she do?)

10a. Nwunye gi O diri alu oru (olu oyibo?) I zu ahia) Kedu udi olu O na-aruru?)

What did your wife die of?

11a. Gini gburu nwunye gi?

Did you have any fears about dying before your wife? (What were they? And what are your fears/concerns now?)

12a. O diri eche gi uche ihe ga-eme ma asi na I buru nwunye gi uzo nwuo? (kedu ihe na-echi gi oge ahu?, Kedu ihe na-eche gi ugbua?)

How was your life impacted after the death of your wife?

13a. Kedu ka onwu nwunye gi siri metuta ndu gi?

(I am going to shift gears and ask about how widows are treated in your town)

Treatment of a Widow

If you had passed away before your wife, please, describe for me the way you would have liked your wife to be treated as a widow?

14a. A sina I bulu nwunye gi uzo nwuo, koroo m ka I ga-esicho ka ndi mmadu meso nwunye gi dika nwanyi ajadu?

Tell me about how your town treats widows? (Have there been any reports about difficult or traumatic experiences from any of your town widows? If yes, tell me more about the experiences.

[If not, go to next question].

15a. Koro M ka ndi obodo unu si akpaso umu-nwanyi ajadu agwa?(Onwego akuko gbasara umu-nwanyi ajadu E mesiri ike n'obodo unu?(ihe mgbawa obi, ihe akwa ariri?) Oburu na enwere, koro M maka ha?

What is your opinion about such treatments? (Do you approve of such treatments?)

16a. Kedu ihe bu echiche gi na udi mmeso ahu? (I kwadolu ha?).

In your own opinion, do these practices create a problem for the town?

17a. N' uche gi I chere na emereme ndia na-ebute nsogbu n' obodo?

(If yes, continue with all the sub-questions, but if no, skip sub-questions a through f, go to sub-question g and continue from next question).

B). In what way?

ba) Kedu uzo emereme ndia si ebute nsogbu ?

Have there been any efforts to address the problem?

ca). O nwere mbo agbagoro iji nebara okwu ndia anya?

Tell me about the efforts

da) Koro m maka agbam mbo ndia.

Did the efforts work successfully?

Ea. Agbam mbo ahu O mitara mkpuru?

By whom or through what institution was the effort made?

ea). Kedu onye ma obu ndi out dire gba mbo maka ihe ndia? (Onodu umu nwanyi ajadu)

Was there any particular effort you made regarding the possible widowhood of your wife while she was alive? (For example: Provision of will or legal protection)

fa). O nwere udi mbo puruiche gi onwe gi gbagoro gbasara I bu ajadu nwunye gi mgbe O no ndu? (Iji ma atu: Onwere ekpe I kere ma obu akwukwo ndi oka iwu dere gi maka nkea?)

There are some that say that protecting the widowhood practice in the traditional way is better than making some modification of the traditional widowhood practices, what is your opinion on these conflicting opinions?

18a. Ufodu na-ekwu na odighi mma I gbanwe omenala gbasara ime ajadu, ebe ndi ozo na-ekwu na O di mkpa mgbanwe, kedu ihe I chere?

Do you know of any state or federal laws that address/regulate the conditions of widows in general? a) If yes, tell me more about them, please. (If no, go to the next question)

19a. I mara ma enwere iwu steti ma obu nke Obodo Nigeria na-ahazi maka onodu umu nwanyi ajadu n' oyo?

Please, tell me how the roles played by 'Umuada' at the death of a husband impacts widows of this town?

20a. **Biko, Kokenere m ka emereme umuada si emetuta onodu umu nwanyi ajadu n'obodo a?**

Tell me in detail, please, how the members of your kindred relate to widows of their own?

21a. Kokenere M ofuma ka umunna gi si emeso ndi ajadu ha omume?

Tell me also how the members of the church community relate to widows? (Can you give me an example of such a relation?)

22a. Koturu M ka ndi uka si emoso ndi ajadu n'ogbe unu? (Nyekene m omuma atu?)

Tell me how the members of the village relate to the widows?

23a. Kotukenere M ka ndi ogbe gi si emeso ndi ajadu?

Please, describe for me the interest or concern of your town union in widowhood practices?

24a. Biko kowara M udi mmasi ndi na-achi O bodo unu nwere na mmeso ana emeso ndi ajadu,

Tell me about any regulations your town union has made regarding widowhood practices.

25a. Koturu m maka ntuzi aka obuna ndi na-ahazi obodo unu megoro gbasara igba ajadu?

What is your opinion about such interest or concern?

26a. Kedu ihe I chere maka udi ntuzi aka ahu?

[Thus far, thank you for your generosity and time. I will ask you questions now on traditions and customs of your town.]

Traditions and Customs

Tell me about the customary or traditional practices in the past regarding the treatment of widows in your town.

27a. Kokenere M otu omenala ma obu odibendi unu si emetu onodu ndi ajadu n' obodo unu mgbe gboo.

What is your opinion of these customs and traditions? (If the respondent objects, skip sub-question b and otherwise) (Repeat the main question before asking the sub-questions)

28a. Kedu ihe I chere gbasara omenala na odibendi ndia?

b). If you object to them, can you tell me why you do?

Ba. O buruna ikwado ghi ha, I nwere ike igwa M ihe ijighi kwado ha?

C). If you favor them, can you tell me why you do?

Ca. O buruna ikwadolu ha, I nwere ike igwa M ihe ijiri kwado ha?

Can you tell me about the reasons or origins of these customs and traditions?

29a. I nwere ike igwa M gbasara isi mbido ma obu ebum n'uche E ji hibe odibendi na omenala ndia?

Who are the people that enforce these customs and traditions?

30a. Kedu ndi n'ahu na ana edobe omenala na odibendi ndia?

What do you believe is the impact of these traditions on widows in the town?

31a. Kedu ihe I chere gbasara otu omenala ndia si emetuta umunwanyị ajadu no n' obodo a?

b). On families?

ba). Kedu ihe I chere gbasara otu omenala ndia si emetuta ezi-na-ulo di n' obodo a?

c) On men?

ca). Kedu ihe I chere gbasara otu omenala ndia si emetuta umunwoke no n' obodo a?

How would you feel if your wife was still living, knowing that somebody harassed/victimized your own widow in the name of customs and traditions?

32a. Kedu ka O ga adi Gi ma asi na nwunye gi ka di ndu inu na onye ozo na enye ya nsogbu ma obu na akpagbu ya maka ihi omenala?

What would be your feeling if your widowed daughter is harassed/victimized in the name of customs and traditions?

33a. Kedu ka oga adi gi masi na onye ozo ana-enye ada gi bu ajadu nsogbu ma obu na akpagbu ya make ihi omenala?

What would you like to see changed in the customs and traditions of your town with regard to widow treatment? And why?

34a. Kedu ihe I ga acho ka agbanwe n' omenala n' odibendi obodo gi gbasara etu esi emeso umu nwanyi ajadu? Kedu ihe I ji choo ka agbanwe ihe ndi a?

Can you tell me of any aspects you would like to see retained from these customs and traditions? Why?

35a. I nwere ike I gwa m otu ihe I choghi ka agbanwe n' omenala n' odibendi obodo unu gbasara etu esi emoso ndi ajadu ? Kedu ihe I jighi choo ka agbanwe ya?

Do you think every widow (rich and poor) in the town goes through the same experience?

36a. I chere na umu nwanyi ajadu nile na enweta mmeso nhata nha?

Are there some preferential treatments and, if so, why?

37a. O nwere ndi ana asoro anya, O buru na onwere, gini kpatara ya?

[At this point, I would like to learn more from you about ownership of Property in your culture.]

Property Ownership

Tell me about how

38a. Koturu m maka:

b. property ownership is dealt with in a family

ba. Otu esi enwe ihe aku-aku na ezi na ulo?

c. and who controls the property especially when the husband is dead?

ca. Kedu onye odiri ilekota ihe aku-aku ndia anya ma okacha mgbe di nwanyi nwugolu?

Did your wife know about the family's resources?

39a. Nwunye gi O diri mara maka aku na uba gi?

Did you make sure your wife knew everything about your resources?

40a. I gbara mbo ihu na nwunye gi mara ihe okwesili ima gbasara aku na uba gi nile?

b. If yes, how?

ba. O buru ee, kedu ka I si gbaka mbo?

c. If not, why not?

ca. Isi mba, kedu ihe I jiri kwuo otua?

d. When your wife was alive did you ever intend to leave/handover your property to your wife?

da. Mgbe nwunye gi di ndu, I nwenulu mmasi inyehie ya aku na uba gi?

E. Who would you like to take care of your property when you leave this world, should you die before your wife?

Ea. Kedu onye I ga-cho ka O na-enekota aku na uba gi anya mgbe I ga ahapu uwa, ma asi na I buru nwunye gi uzo nwuo?

f. Do you suspect that somebody will make undue claim over your property?

fa. I chere na O nwere onye nwere ike iji uzo aghugho zoro aku diri gi ma inwua?

g. How do you intend to forestall that?

ga. Kedu ka I ga esi ahu na ihe diri gi efughi?

h. If you had passed away before your wife, how much of your property would you have liked to go to your wife?

ha. O buru na I buru nwunye gi uzo laa muo, uzo ihe one diri gi ka I ga-ekwe ka O gara nwunye gi?

[Finally, I will ask some brief and descriptive questions regarding you and your family]

Demographic Profile

What is your date of birth -----

1a. Kedu mgbe a muru gi?-----

What was your educational level when you got married?-----

2a. Kedu ebe I gudebere akwukwo mgbe I lulu nwanyi?-----

What is your educational level now?-----

3a. kedu ebe I gudebere akwukwo ugbu a?-----

What was your wife's educational level when she died?-----

4a. Kedu ebe nwunye gi gudebere akwukwo tupe O hapu?-----

What is your religion?----- And your wife's religion?-----

5a. Kedu uka I na-eje?----- Kedukwanu nke nwunye gi na-eje?-----

What do you do for living, that is, your job or profession?

6a. Kedu ihe bu Oru gi?

How old were you when you got married?

7a. Afo one ka I di mgbe I lulu nwanyi?

How long were you married before your wife died?

8a. Afo ole ka unu lulu di na nwunye tupu nwunye gi ahapu?

How old was she when she died?

9a. Afo ole ka O di tupu O nwu o?

Did you have any children with your wife?

10a. Gi na nwunye gi a mutara nnwa?

If yes, how many?-----

11a. O buru ee, umu ole?-----

How many boys----- and girls-----

12a Umu nwoke ole ----- na umu nwanyi ole?-----

When your wife died, how old were the boys----- and girls-----

13a. Mgbe nwunye gi nwuru, afo ole ka umu gi ndi nwoke di?----- afo ole ka ndi nwanyi di?-----

What was your wife's annual income?

14a. Ego one ka nwunye gi na -enweta n'afu?

Did you remarry after your wife's death? (Skip questions 15 and 16, if the response is no)

15a. I nuru nwanyi ozo ka nwunye gi nwusiri?

Did you have children with your new wife?(how many boys----- and girls-----)

16a. Gi na nwanyi Ohuru gi amutara nnwa? (umu nwoke ole----- na umu nwanyi ole-----?)

How old are they now?-----

17a. Afo ole ka ha di ugbu a?-----

What is your current annual income?-----

18a. Ego ole ka I na-enweta n' afo?-----

Is there any other thing you think important that I should know about our discussion that we did not discuss?

19a. Onwere ihe ozo I chere di mkpa M kwesiri ima make nkata anyi M kwesiri I matakwu?

Please, can you give a title or summarize in one statement our discussion?

20a. Biko, kedu isi okwu I nwere ike igi chikota nkata mu na gi ugbu a, ma obu kowaa n'otu ahiri okwu nkata mu na gi?

How does it feel to talk about this topic?

21a. Kedu ka O si metuta gi iko maka ihe ndi a?

Male Interview Guide #2

[For those whose wives are alive]

Greetings and appreciation of the environment are the right place to begin the interview. Asking about the family conditions which is at the core of Igbo cultural way of greeting might be the right place to begin. For example: *Kedu ka unu melu* which in English translates to: How are you?

In this session, I' m going to be asking you some questions about your marriage and about your wife.

Relationship with Wife:

How about your wife? (Retain this questionnaire if the wife is alive).

1a. kedu maka nwunye gi?

What year did you get married?

2a. Kedu n' aro I nulu nwanyi?

What, in particular, attracted you to her?

3a. Gini ka I ji nwee mmasi n'ebe nwunye gi no?

What was your life like before you met your wife?

4a. I nwere ike I koturu m maka ndu gi tupu I luo nwanyi?

Tell me the kind of person your wife is? (What does she like, can you give me an example?)

5a. Kedu udi mmadu nwunye gi bu? (kedu ihe na-amasi ya?, nye m omuma atu)

Can you describe the life you share together with your wife?

6a. Kokenere M maka ndu unu biri dika di na nwunye?

How did your life change after you married your wife?

7a. Kedu ka ndu gi si gbanwo ka I nusiri nwanyi?

Would you marry her again, if you were to do this all over?

8a. A na-abia uwa ozo, I ga-anukwa nwunye gi a ozo?

b). If yes, why would you marry her again?

ba). kedu ihe I ga eji anukwa ya ozo?

If no, why would you not marry her again?

Ca. I si mba, kedu ihe mere I gaghi anukwa ya ozo?

How did you get married to your wife?

[If not clear, ask: Was that an arranged marriage or one based on romantic love?]

9a. Kedu ka I si nuo nwunye gi? If not clear, ask: O bu n'uche gi ka O si puta inu nwunye gi, ka onweturu ihe mmanyere di na ya?

Does your wife work outside home? (What does she do?)

10a. Nwunye gi O na-aruru (Oru oyibo, I zu ahia) Kedu Udi olu O na-aruru?

Do you have any fears about dying before your wife? (What are they?)

11a. Echiche O na-eche gi ma asi na I buru nwunye gi uzo nwuo? (Kedu ihe na-eche gi?).

How well prepared will your wife be if you were to die before her?

12a. Nwunye gi O ga idi njikere ma asina I bulu ya uzo laa muo?

[I am going to shift gears and ask about how widows are treated in your town]

Treatment of Widow:

Tell me about how your town treats widows? (Have there been any reports about difficult or traumatic experiences from any of your town widows? If yes, tell me more about the experience.

If no, go to next question.)

13a. Koro m ka ndi obodo unu si akpaso umu-nwanyi ajadu agwa? (Onwego akuko gbasara umu-nwanyi ajadu e mesiri ike n'obodo unu? (ihe mgbawa obi, ihe akwa ariri?) O buru na enwere, koro m maka ha?

What is your opinion about such treatments? (Prompt: do you approve of such treatment?)

14a. Kedu ihe bu uche gi na udi mmeso ahu? (I kwadolu ha?).

In your own opinion, do these practices create a problem for the town?

(If yes, continue with the sub-questions, but if no, skip sub-questions a through e, go to sub-question f and continue from the next question).

15a. N'uche gi I chere na emereme ndia na-ebute nsogbu n' obodo?

B. In what way?

ba). Kedu uzo emereme ndia si ebute nsogbu?

C. Have there been any effort to address the problem?

Ca. O nwere mbo a gbagoro iji nebara okwu ndia anya?

D. Tell me about the efforts.

Da. Koro m maka agbam mbo ndia

E. Did they work successfully?

Ea. Agbam mbo ahu O mitara mkpuru?

F. By whom or through what institution was the effort made?

fa. Kedu onye ma obu ndi otu gbara mbo ihe ndia? (Onodu umu nwanyi ajadu)

G. Is there any particular effort you have made regarding the possible widowhood of your wife?

(For example: Provision of will or legal protection)

Ga. Onwere mbo puruiche gi onwe gi gbagoro gbasara igba isi mkpe nke nwunye gi? (Omuma atu: O nwere ekpe I kere ma obu akwukwo ndi oka iwu dere gi maka nkea?).

There are some that say that protecting the widowhood practices in the traditional way is preferable to modified traditional widowhood practices, what is your opinion on this?

16a. Ufodu na-ekwu na odighi mma I gbanwe omenala gbasara ime ajadu, ebe ndi ozo na-ekwu na o di mkpa mgbanwe, kedu ihe I chere?

Do you know of any state or federal laws that address/regulate the conditions of widows in general?

17a. I mara ma enwere iwu steti ma obu nke obodo Nigeria na-ahazi maka onodu umu nwanyi ajadu n' oyo?

Please, tell me how the roles played by *umuada* at the death of a husband impacts the widows of this town?

18a. Biko kokenere m ka emereme umuada si emetuta onodu umu nwanyi ajadu n'obodo a?

Tell me, please, how the members of your kindred relate to their own widows?

19a. Kokenere M ofuma ka umunna gi si emeso ndi ajadu ha omume?

Tell me, please; how the members of the Church community relate to the widows (Can you give me an example of such a relation?)

20a. Koturu m ka ndi uka si emeso ndi ajadu n'ogbe unu (Nyekene M omuma atu)

Tell me how the members of the village relate to widows?

21a. Kotukenere M ka ndi ogbe gi si emeso ndi ajadu?

Please, describe for me the interest or concern of your town union in widowhood practices?

22a. Biko kowara m udi mmasi ndi na-achi obodo unu nwere na mmeso ana emeso ndi ajadu?

Tell me about the regulations your town union has made regarding widowhood practices

23a Koturu m maka ntuzi aka obuna ndi na-ahazi obodo unu megoro gbasara igba ajadu?

[Thank you for your generosity and time, thus far. I will ask you questions on traditions and customs of your town in this session].

Traditions and Customs:

Tell me about the customary or traditional practices, in the past, regarding the treatment of widows in your town? (**Probe:** How do you define traditions and customs?)

24a. Kokenere m otu omenala ma obu odibendi unu si emetu onodu ndi ajadu n'obodo unu mgbe gboo?

What is your opinion on these customs and traditions? (**If the respondent objects to the practices, skip sub-question c and if he favors the practices, then skip sub-question b. Make sure to repeat the main question while asking the sub-questions).**)

25a. Kedu ihe I chere gbasara omenala na odibendi ndi a?

If you object to them, can you tell me why you do?

Ba. Oburuna I kwadoghi omenala ndi a, I nwere ike igwa M ihe ijighi kwado ha?

If you favor them, can you tell me why you do?

Ca. Oburuna I kwadolu omenala ndia, I nwere ike igwa M ihe ijiri kwado ha?

Can you tell me about the reasons or origins of these customs and traditions?

26a. I nwere ike igwa m gbasara isi mbidio ma obu ebum n'uche eji hibe odibendi na omenala ndi a?

27. Who are the people that enforce these customs and traditions?

27a. Kedu ndi n'ahu na ana edobe omenala na odibendi ndi a?

What do you believe is the impact of these traditions and customs on: (**Repeat question 27 before you ask each sub-question).**)

28a. Kedu ihe I chere gbasara otu omenala ndi a si emetuta nke mbu?

B. Women in this town?

29b. Umu ajadu no n'obodo a?

On families?

30c. Nke abuo, kedu ihe I chere gbasara otu omenala ndi a si emetuta ezina-ulo no n' obodo a?

On men? (**Probe: who benefits from these traditions and customs?**)

Da. Nke ato, kedu ihe I chere gbasara otu omenala ndi a si emetuta umu nwoke no n' obodo a?

How would you feel if somebody harasses/victimizes your own widow in the name of traditions and customs?

29a. Kedu ka oga adi gi masi na onye ozo ana-enye nwanyi gi bu ajadu nsogbu ma obu na akpagbu ya make ihi omenala?

How would you feel if your widowed daughter is harassed/victimized in the name of customs and traditions?

30a. Kedu ka oga adi gi ma asi ma onye ozo ana enye ada gi nwanyi bu ajadu nsogbu ma obu na akpagbu ya maka ihi omenala?

What would you like to see changed in the customs and traditions of your town? And why?

31a. Kedu ihe I ga acho ka agbanwe n'omenala n'odibendi obodo gi gbasara etu esi emeso umu nwanyi ajadu? Kedu ihe I ji choo ka agbanwe ihe ndi a?

Can you tell me of any aspects you would like to see retained from these customs and traditions? Why?

32a. I nwere ike igwa M otu ihe I choro ka O diri agbanwe-agbanwe n' omenala n' odibendi obodo unu gbasara emume ajadu? Kedu ihe I jighi choo ka agbanwe ya?

Do you think every widow (rich and poor) in the town goes through the same experience?

33a. I chere na umu nwanyi ajadu nile na enweta mmeso nhata nha?

Are there some preferential treatments and, if so, why?

34a. O nwere ndi ajadu ana asoro anya, O buru na O nwere, gini kpatara eji asoro ha anya?

[At this point, I would like to learn more from you about ownership of property in your culture].

Property Ownership:

Tell me about how:

35a. Kotukenere m maka:

Property ownership is dealt with in a family

Ba. Otu esi enwe ihe aku aku n'ezi na ulo?

And who controls the property especially when the husband is dead?

Ca. Kedu onye na-enekota ihe aku-aku ndi a anya ma okacha mgbe di nwanyi nwugolu?

Does your wife know about the family's resources?

36a. Nwunye gi O mara maka aku na uba gi?

Are you making sure your wife knows everything about your resources?

37a. Kedu ka I si agba mbo ihu na nwunye gi mara ihe okwesiri ima gbasara aku na uba gi?

b. If yes, how?

Ba. O buru na I na eme nke a, kokenere M ka isi agba mbo?

If not, why not?

Ca. O buru na I naghi eme ka nwunye gi mara ihe ndia, gini mere I ji eme otua?

Do you hope to leave/handover your property to your wife as your heir?

38a. I nwere olile anya I hapuru nwunye gi aku na uba gi dika onye ga eri ekpe gi?

Who would you like to take care of your property when you leave this world?

39a. Kedu onye I choro ka O na-enekota aku na uba gi mgbe I ga ahapu uwa?

Do you suspect that somebody will make undue claim over your property?

40a. I chere na O nwere onye nwere ike iji uzo aghugho zoro aku diri gi ma I nwua?

How would you forestall that?

41a. Kedu ka I ga esi ahu na ihe diri efughi?

How much of your property would you like to go to your wife?

42a. Ihe dika aku na uba gi one ka I ga acho ka O gara nwunye gi?

[Finally, I will ask brief and descriptive questions regarding you and your family].

Demographic Profile:

What is your date of birth?-----

1a. Kedu mgbe a muru gi?-----

What was your educational level when you got married?-----

2a. Kedu ebe I gudebere akwukwo mgbe I lulu nwanyi?

What is your educational level now?-----

3a. Kedu ebe I gudebere akwukwo ugbo a?

What was your wife's educational level when you married her?-----

4a. Kedu ebe nwanyi gudebere akwukwo tupu I luo ya?

What is your wife's educational level now?-----

5a. Kedu ebe nwunye gi gudebere akwukwo ugbo a?

What is your religion?----- And your wife's religion?-----

6a. Kedu uka I na eje?----- Kedukwanu uka nwunye gi na-eje?

What do you do for living, that is, your job or occupation?

7a. Kedu ihe I na aru?

How old were you when you got married?-----

8a. Afo ole ka I di mgbe I lulu nwanyi?

How long have you been married?-----

9a. Afo ole ka O di I jiri luo nwunye gi?

How old was your wife when you married her?-----

10a. Afo ole ka nwunye gi di mgbe I lulu ya?

How old is she now?-----

11a. Afo ole ka O di ugbo a?

Do you have any children with your wife? Yes / No (If the answer is yes, continue from question 13 and if no, skip questions 13 – 15)

12a. Gi na nwunye gi amutara nnwa? Ee / Mba

If yes, how many?-----

13a. Umu one ka unu ji?-----

How many boys?----- and girls?-----

14a. Umu nwoke one?-----, Umu nwanyi one?

How old are the boys----- and girls-----

15a. Afo one ka umu nwoke di----- Umu nwanyi di afo one?-----?

What is your annual income?-----

16a. Ego one ka I na enweta n' afo?

What is your wife's annual income?-----

17a. Ego one ka nwunye gi na-enweta n' afo?

Is there any other thing you think is important that I should know about our discussion that we did not discuss?

18a. I chere na onwere ihe ozo di mkpa kwesiri ka M mata anyi akpaghi maka ya n' nkata anyi?

Please, can you give a title or summarize in one statement our discussion?

19a. Biko, kedu isi okwu I nwere ike iji chikota nkata mu na gi ugbu a, ma obu kowaa n'otu ahiri okwu nkata mu na gi?

How does it feel to talk about this topic?

20a. Kedu ka osi metuta gi iko maka nkata anyia?

WIDOW INTERVIEW GUIDE #3

Greetings and appreciation of the environment would be the best way to start the interview. Asking about the family members and their health condition which are at the core of Igbo cultural way of greeting might be helpful to dispose the respondents for subsequent questions. For example: *Kedu ka unu melu? Ndibegi kwanu?* Which translates in English to: How are you and how about your family?

In this session, I'll be asking about the relationship you had with your husband

Relationship with Husband

Good morning (evening), how are you feeling?

1a. Kedu ka I melu?

How about your family? (**Or other appropriate compliments about the environment**).

2a. Kedukwanu maka ndi be gi?

What year did you get married?

3a. Kedu afo I nulu di?

What, in particular, attracted you to your husband?

4a. Gini ka I ji nwee mmasi n' ebe di gi no?

What was your life like before you met your husband?

5a. I nwere ike ikoluru m maka ndu gi tupu I luo di?

Tell me what kind of person your husband was? (What did he like, can you give me an example?)

6a. Mgbe di gi no ndu, kedu udi mmadu O bu? (Kedu ihe na-amasi ya, nyekene m omuma atu?).

Can you please describe for me the life you shared with your husband?

7a. Kokenere m maka ndu unu biri dika di na nwunye?

Were there any observable changes in your life after you married your husband?

8a. O nwere ihe mgbanwo di na ndu gi ka I nusiri di?

If yes, explain please (**If no, go to the next question**)

Ba. I si ee, kokene ya ofuma?

Tell me please how your husband died? (What did he die from and was he sick for a longtime or did he die suddenly?)

9a. I nwere ike igwatu m ka di gi si nwu? (O yara oria, kaobu onwu ike?)

Did you have any fears at the time of his death? (**If no, skip question 11**)

10a. Uche O diri na-eche gi mgbe di gi na-anwu?

Can you tell me more about those fears? (Did they come true or not?)

11a. Keduga ihe egwu ji maka ya atu gi? (Ihe egwu ndi ahu omezuru ka omezughi?)

Was your husband supportive of you when he was alive? (Elaborate please)

12a. Mgbe di gi no ndu, O na-kwado gi ofuma? (kowakene ya ofuma?)

How did you get married to your husband? (Was that an arranged marriage or one based on romantic love?)

13a. Kedu ka I si nuo di gi? (Obu site na ihunanya I nwere ka iji nu ya ka onwereturu ihe mmanye di na ya?)

What happened when your husband died?

14a. Kedu ihe mere mgbe di gi nwuru? (O nwere nsogbu daputaranu?)

(I am going to shift gears and ask about how widows are treated in your town).

Treatment as a Widow

Tell me please how you were treated as a widow?

15a. Gwakene m ka esi meso gi o omume dika nwanyi ajadu?

What does it feel like in your town to be a widow? (Did you suffer a particularly difficult or traumatic experience when you became a widow?)

16a. Biko, kokenere M ka osi di ibu ajadu n' obodo unu? (O nwere ihe mgbawa obi I nwenugoro dika nwanyi ajadu?)

Have you ever wished to be a man and why?

17a. I nwenugo aguu ibu nwoke, gini ka I ji enwe udi agu a?

Can you describe for me please how the *Umuada* treated you?

18a. I nwere ike ikoro M ka umuada siri meso gi ommume dika nwanyi ajadu?

What treatment did you receive from your husband's kindred (*umunna*)

19a. Kedu ka ndi umunna di gi si meso gi?

Describe for me the treatment you received from the church community?

20a. Kokenere m udi agwa I natara n'aka ndi uka dika nwanyi ajadu?

Tell me about the treatment you received from your village community?

21a. Kotukenere m ka ndi ogbe gi si meso gi omume?

What story can you tell me about the way the community treated you?

22a. Kedu ihe I nwere ikwu maka otu ndi obodo si meso gi omume?

How did you feel about the general attitude of the groups that attended your husband's funeral?

23a. N' oyo, kedu ka osi metuta gi bu akpalamagwa ndi nile biara ulo onwu di gi?

How were you treated by your husband's brothers, sisters or members of the extended families? (Please be specific).

24a. Kedu ka umu nne di gi nwoke na nwanyi si emeso gi omume?

Were you ever harassed by men or women just because you are a widow?

25a. Onwenugo nwoke ma obu nwanyi nyere gi nsogbu maka ihi na ibu ajadu?

In what ways were you harassed?

26a. I nwere ike ikoro m uzo ha si enye gi nsogbu?

Thus far, I feel honored by your presence. Thank you so much. In the next session, I will like to ask about the customs and traditions of this town as they relate to the widowhood practices.

Customs and Traditions

Tell me about the customary or traditional practices regarding the treatment of widows in your town.

27a. Kokenere m otu omenala ma obu odibendi unu si emetu onodu ndi ajadu n' obodo unu

What is your opinion of those customs and traditions?

28a. Kedu ihe I chere gbasara omenala na odibendi ndia?

a). If you object to those customary practices, can you tell me why you do? **(Skip sub-question a if the respondent favors the customs or skip b if she objects to the customs).**

Ba. O buruna I kwadoghi omenala ndia, I nwere ike I gwam ihe I jighi kwado ya?

C. If you favor these customs and traditions, can you tell me why you do?

C a. O buruna ikwadolu ya, I nwere ike I gwa m ihe I ijiri kwado ya?

Who are the people who enforce these customs and traditions?

29a. Kedu ndi n' ahu na ana edobe omenala na odibendi ndia?

What would you like to see changed in the customs and traditions of your town with regard to widow treatment? And why?

30a. Kedu ihe I ga-acho ka agbanwe n' omenala n' odibendi obodo gi gbasara etu esi emeso umu nwanyi ajadu? Kedu ihe I ji choo ka agbanwe ihe ndi a?

Can you tell me about the reasons or origins of these customs and tradition?

31a. I nwere ike igwa m gbasara isi mbido ma obu ebum n' uche eji hibe odibendi na omenala ndia?

What do you believe is the impact of these traditions on widows in the town?

32a. Kedu ihe I chere gbasara otu omenala ndia si emetuta umunwanyị ajadu no n' obodo a?

On men?

Ba. Kedu ihe I chere gbasara otu omenala ndia si emetuta umunwoke no n' obodo a?

On family?

Ca. Kedu ihe I chere gbasara otu omenala ndia si emetuta ezi-na-ulo di n' obodo a?

Who benefits from these cultural and traditional practices?

33a. Kedu ndi na-erite ulu site na omenala ndia?

What would you like to see retained in those customs and traditions? And why?

34a. Kedu ihe I choghi ka agbanwe n' omenala n' odibendi obodo unu gbasara etu esi emeso ndi ajadu? Kedu ihe I jighi choo ka agbanwe ya?

Do you think every widow (rich and poor) in this town goes through the same experience?

35a. I chere na umu nwanyị ajadu nile na enweta mmeso nhata nha?

Are there some preferential treatments and if so, why?

36a. Odi gi ka onwere ndi ana asoro anya, O buru na onwere, gini ka I chere na-akpata ya?

At this point, I would like to learn more from you about property ownership in your culture?

Property Ownership

Tell me about how:

37a. Koturu m maka:

b. Property ownership is dealt with in a family?

Ba. Otu esi enwe ihe aku na uba na ezi n' ulo?

C. And who controls the property especially when the husband is dead?

Ca. Kedu onye na-enekota ihe aku-aku ndia anya ma okacha mgbe di nwanyị nwugolu?

36. Tell me about any property/money/land your husband left behind (**who inherited them?**)

36a. Kedu maka aku n’uba, ego na ana di gi hapuru were laa mmuo? (Onye ritere ihe ndia?)

Who saw to them when he died?

38a. Kedu onye lekotara ihe ndia anya mgbe di gi nwulu?

Did anybody make undue claim to his property?

39a. O nwere onye choro iji uzo aghugho wekoro ihe aku-aku di gi?

How much of those properties came to you when your husband died?

40a. Ihe aku-aku one ndia ahu ka I nwetara mgbe di gi nwuru?

Personal Evaluation

What does it mean to be a widow in your town?

41a. Kedu ihe oritelu ibu nwanyi ajadu n’omenala n’obodo unu?

What would you change about yourself as a widow, if you could?

42a. O buru na oga ekwe mee, Kedu ihe I ga-acho igbanwe n’ ndu gi dika nwanyi ajadu?

43. Are you associated with any widows’ group like a group of women lawyers? (If yes, ask the next question, if no, skip it).

43a. Onwere otu ndi umu nwanyi ajadu dika otu umu nwanyi okikpe gi na ha na-emekorita ihe?

How does this association operate?

43a. Kedu ka otu ndi a si eme?

Finally, I will ask brief and descriptive questions regarding you and your family

What is your date of birth?

1a. Kedu mgbe amuru gi?

What is your husband’s date of birth?

2a. Kedu afo amuru di gi?

What was your educational level when you got married?

3a. Kedu ebe I gudebere akwukwo mgbe I lulu di?

What is your educational level now?

4a. Kedu ebe I gudebere akwukwo ugbu a?

What was your husband's educational level when he married you?

5a. Kedu ebe di gi gudebere akwukwo tupu O luo gi?

What was his educational level when he died?

6a. Kedu ebe di gi gudebere akwukwo tupu onwuo?

What is your religion before you got married?

7a. Kedu uka I na-eje tupu I luo di?

What is your religion now?

8a. Kedu uka I na-eje ugbu a?

What do you do for a living, that is, your job or profession?

9a. Kedu ihe I na-arụ?

What did your husband do for a living or what kind of job did your husband have?

10a. Kedu ihe bu oru di gi mgbe O no?

How old were you when you got married?

11a. Afo one ka I di mgbe I luru di?

How old was your husband at marriage?

12a. Afo one ka di gi di mgbe O nulu gi?

How long were you married before your husband died?

13a. Afo one ka unu lulu di na nwunye tupu di gi anwuo?

How old was he when he died?

14a. Afo one ka O di mgbe onwuru?

How long ago did he die?

15a. Afo one ka omegoro di gi nwuru?

What was life like after the death of your husband?

16a. Kedu ihe I nwere ike ikwu maka ndu gi, eri di gi ji nwusi?

Did you have any children with your husband? **(If yes, ask questions 18, 19, and 20, if no, skip question number 18, 19 and 20).**

17a. Gi na di gi amutara nwa?

How many?-----

18a. Umu one?-----

How many boys----- and girls?-----

19a. Umu nwoke one----- umu nwanyi one?-----

When your husband died, how old were the boys----- and girls-----

20a. Mgbe di gi nwuru, afo one ka umu gi ndi nwoke diga-----umu nwanyi-----?

Did you ever have children after your husband died?

21a. I mutara nwa ka di gi nwusiri?

How many?-----

22a. One ka ha di?-----

How old are they now? Boys----- Girls-----?

23a Afo one ka ha di? Ndi nwoke----- umu nwa-----?

What is your current annual income?

24a. Ego ole ka I na-enweta n' afo?

What was your husband's annual income?

25a. Ego one ka di gi na-enweta n' afo?

MODIFIED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MEN #4

Greetings and appreciation of the environment are the right place to begin the interview. Asking about the family members and their health condition which are at the core of Igbo cultural way of greeting might be helpful to dispose the respondents for subsequent questions. For example: *Kedu ka unu melu? Ndibegikwanu?* Which translates in English to: How are you and how about your family?

Relationship with wife:

In your opinion, does widowhood practice exists in Enugwu Ukwu/Izzi?

1a. *Asi gi kwue, odigika enwere emereme nid ajadu n' obodo a?*

How did you get married: was it an arranged marriage or one based on romantic love?

2a. *Kotukenere m ka Isi nuo nwunye gi?*

What in particular attracted you to her?

2a. *Asi gi kwue, gini ka I ji nwe mmasi n' ebe nwunye gi no?*

Can you describe the life you shared together with your wife?

4a. *Kokenere m maka ndu unu dika di na nwunye mgbe nwunye gi no?*

Would you marry her again, if you were to do this all over again?

5a. *Ana-abia uwa ozo, I ga-anukwa nwunye gi a ozo?*

Treatment as a Widow:

Is there a customary or traditional practice expected of a widow in your town?

6a. *O nwere ihe puru iche ana-ene anya n'aka nwanyi ajadu ma di ya nwuo?*

Tell me about how widows are treated in your town from the following perspectives:

- a. The siblings of the dead man
- b. The Kindred
- c. The Village
- d. The Town
- e. The Church
- f. The Umuada

g. The Gomenti

7a. Asi gi kwue, kedu ka isi fu otu umunne, umunna, ndi ogbe, ndi obodo, ndi uka, umuada na ndi gomenti, si emeso ndi ajadu omume.

If you had passed away before your wife/sister/daughter, please, describe for me the way you would have liked your wife/sister/daughter to be treated as a widow?

8a. Asina onwere ife mere ma Chi ekwena, kokenere m ka I ga-esi acho ka ndi mmadu meso nwunye/nwanne gi nwanyi ma obu ada gi omume?

In the light of your description, what is your opinion about such treatments (Do you approve of such treatments?)

9a. Dika I si kwue, kedu ihe I chere banyere udi mmeso ahu ga? (Ikwadolu ha?)

How was your life impacted after the death of your wife? **(ONLY FOR A WIDOWER)**

10a. Kedu ka onwu nwunye gi si metuta ndu gi?

What did your wife die of?

11a. Gini gburu nwunye gi?

Did you have any fears about dying when your wife was dying and what are your fears?

12a. O diri eche gi uche ihe ga-eme mgbe nwunye gin a-anwu? (Keduga ihe na-eche gi mgbe ahu?)

Have there been any efforts to address the problems?

13a. Onwekwaranu ihe ana-eme maka nsogbu ndi a?

By whom or through what institution was the effort made?

14a. Kedu ndi ma obu onye na-eme nke o na-eme?

TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS

Tell me about the traditions and customs of your town as they affect the lives of the widows.

15a Dika omenala na uwa obodo unu si di, onodu umu-nwanyi ajadu mgbe mbu na nke kita, kedu nka mma?

How would you feel if your widowed daughter/sister/wife is harassed or victimized in the name of customs and traditions?

16a. Kedu ka oga esi emetu gi masi na-akpagbue ada gi/nwanne gi/ nwunye gi bu ajadu make ihi omenala?

Do you think every widow (the daughter of the soil/those from out of town/ rich or poor in the town goes through the same experience?

17a. I chere na umu nwanyi ajadu nile na-eweta mmeso nhatanha? (Ndi amuru n'ulo, na ndi esi obodo ozo nuta, na ndi ogaranya na ndi ogbenye?)

Are there some preferential treatment and, if so, why?

18a. Onwere ndi ana-asoro anya ma ihe mee, o buru na onwere, gini ka ichere kpatara ya?

At this point I would like to learn from you about ownership of property in your culture

Property Ownership

Tell me about how property inheritance and its control is dealt with in Enugwu Ukwu/Izzi, when the man is no more?

19a. Asina ihe mee, kedu onye ana ahanye aku n'uba ezi-na-ulo nile n' aka?

Does your wife know about the family resources?

20a. Nwunye gi o diri mara maka aku n'uba gi?

Do you suspect that somebody will make undue claim over your property and how do you intend to forestall it.

21a. I chere na o nwere ony nwere ike iji uzo aghugho zoro aku n' uba gi ma ihe mee, ma kedu ka isi agba mbo ihu na egbochiri ya?

Is there anything important you think I should know about our discussion that we did not discuss?

22a. I chere na o nwere ihe ozo I mkpa kwesiri ka m mata anyi akpaghi maka ya na nkata anyi?

How does it feel to talk about this topic?

23a. Kedu ka osi metuta gi iko maka nkata anyi a?

Please can you give me a title or summarize in one statement our discussion?

24a. Biko, kedu isi okwu I nwere iji chilota nkata mu na gi ugbu a ma obu kowaa n' out ahiri okwu nkata mu na gi?