

Popular Nigerian Women's Magazines and Discourses of Femininity: A Textual Analysis
of Today's Woman, Genevieve, and Exquisite

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the Scripps College of Communication of Ohio University
and the Institute for Communication and Media Studies of Leipzig University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degrees

Master of Science in Journalism (Ohio University),
Master of Arts in Global Mass Communication (Leipzig University)

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April 2021

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This thesis titled
Popular Nigerian Women's Magazines and Discourses of Femininity: A Textual Analysis
of Today's Woman, Genevieve, and Exquisite

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Abstract

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April 2021

3716548

Popular Nigerian Women's Magazines and Discourses of Femininity: A Textual Analysis of Today's Woman, Genevieve, and Exquisite

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This study evaluates the popular Nigerian-based women's magazines, *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite*, to uncover how the editorial content of these publications represent Nigerian femininity and womanhood, using social representations theory, originally coined by Serge Moscovici in 1961, as a theoretical framework. This study also evaluates how the representations of women featured in the editorial content of these magazines align with the theory of africana womanism. By conducting a qualitative textual analysis of 60 articles, this study found that Nigerian women are most frequently and significantly represented by their jobs/careers, the condition of their bodies, their self-esteem/self-sufficiency, the opinions of others, and their life challenges. This construction of Nigerian femininity and womanhood supported the following tenets of africana womanism: ambition, role flexibility, recognition, strength, black female sisterhood, respect, wholeness, adaptable, self-definition, and male compatibility.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Gina Ogwude, and my father, Emmanuel Ogwude. Without their endless love and encouragement I would never have been able to complete my graduate studies. I love you both, and I appreciate everything that you have done for me.

This thesis is also dedicated to my late grandmother, Shirley Basta, and my grandmother, Maria Ogwude, whose wisdom and strength inspired me to illuminate the experiences of women across the African diaspora.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following people, without whom I would not have been able to complete this research, and without whom I would not have made it through my double-degree program!

To my chair Dr. Elizabeth Hendrickson, whose enthusiasm, support, insight, and encouragement steered me through this research. And special thanks to my committee members, Dr. Eddith Dashiell and Rosanna Planer, for all of your support and guidance.

To my Leipzig cohort (Sidik, Yasmeen, Michelle, and Tess), whose friendship and comradery kept me sane during this arduous process.

To my dear friend Kenyetta Whitfield, who had to put up with my stresses and moans for the past three years of study!

And my biggest thanks to my family and friends for all the support you have shown me through this research.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgments.....	v
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	3
Global Impact of Women's Magazines	3
Impact of Media on Nigerian Women	6
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework	11
Africana Womanism	11
Social Representations Theory	15
Chapter 4: Methodology	20
Sample.....	21
Data Collection and Analysis.....	25
Chapter 5: Results	29
Theme 1: Job/Career	29
Ambition	29
Recognition	33
Entrepreneurial.....	36
Hard-working.....	39
Responsibility	40
Adaptability.....	41
Role Flexibility	43
Theme 2: Condition of the Body	45
Health.....	45
Appearance	51
Theme 3: Opinions of Others.....	57
Advice	57
Reputation/Societal Expectations	61
Theme 4: Self-Esteem/Self-Sufficiency	68

Empowerment	68
Confidence	73
Wholeness	78
Theme 5: Life Challenges	80
Adversity	80
Abuse	88
Adaptability	91
Strength	94
Chapter 6: Discussion	97
What Are the Themes Used to Represent Nigerian Women in Nigerian-Based Women's Magazines?	98
How Does the Representation of Nigerian Women in Nigerian-Based Women's Magazines Adhere to the Tenets of Africana Womanism?	109
Chapter 7: Conclusion.....	112
References	115
Appendix	127

Chapter 1: Introduction

Findings from decades of mass communication studies have demonstrated that media has a direct impact on consumers' lives and has the potential to form and/or shape people's opinions on a variety of topics (Daramola et al., 2013; Davison, 2017; Happer & Philo, 2013). According to Daramola et al. (2013), "The media is one, if not the major platform through which we interact and make meanings of other people- (race, gender, faith, age, social status...)" (p. 1). In other words, the media can unite people and impact the collective identity of a social or cultural group through its representation of group members (Daramola et al., 2013).

The narratives that are represented in the media, however, are largely decided by those who are in decision-making positions (Endong, 2017). This research considers Nigerian media, and where, historically, women are largely left out of the news as subjects, content creators, and producers (Daramola et al., 2013; Okunna, 2005; Tijani-Adenle, 2016). When women are featured in the news, they are usually mentioned alongside prominent male relatives, and their roles as wives and mothers are prioritized (Daramola et al., 2013; Okunna, 2005; Tijani-Adenle, 2016).

However, Endong (2017) theorizes that as more women are promoted to decision-making positions at Nigerian news outlets, the production of media will change as will the sort of messages being disseminated. Endong also contends that the promotion of female content creators and producers will reduce the number of stereotypical depictions of Nigerian women included in the media and will enhance how women and their contributions to society are viewed and valued. Indeed, some female journalists today

believe that it is their duty as journalists to advocate for gender equality in the news coverage in Nigeria (Daramola et al., 2013).

Yet, despite this cultural shift, Endong (2017) states that there are still many female journalists in Nigeria who reinforce stereotypical and patriarchal representations of women that are explicitly and implicitly demeaning and degrading. According to Okunna (2002), improving the representation of women in the media as journalists and newsmakers is not enough to combat the issue of sexism in media content. Instead, a wide-scale social and political transformation must take place within Nigerian society, which includes the inclusion of gender studies in the curriculum of journalism schools (Okunna, 2002).

The purpose of this research was to conduct an in-depth, qualitative textual analysis of three popular Nigerian-based women's magazines (*Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite*) to determine the common themes used to represent women in the editorial content of these publications that are owned and operated by Nigerian women. In addition, social representations theory and the theory of africana womanism were used as the theoretical frameworks for this study. The goal of this study was to uncover the themes and possible stereotypes used to construct the social representation of women, and how these social representations reflect the tenets of africana womanism.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Global Impact of Women's Magazines

The media has the potential, and some would argue the responsibility, to promote gender equality by portraying men and women in non-stereotypical and diverse ways (Macharia, 2015). By including a balanced representation of men and women, the media is providing consumers with a more realistic depiction of gender relations, while also respecting the dignity of the groups they are representing (Macharia, 2015).

Several studies, however, have concluded that the media often does not promote gender diversity in their news coverage (Macharia, 2015; Rattan et al., 2019). Globally, women are far less likely than men to be seen in the media (Rattan et al., 2019). When women are portrayed in the media, gender stereotypes are usually utilized in the construction of these representations (Macharia, 2015). As subjects of stories, women only appear in a quarter of television radio and print news (Rattan et al., 2019). Also, women only make up 19% of the official or expert, sources included in news stories (Rattan et al., 2019). The discrepancy in coverage of women and women's issues is a global matter that affects nearly every country (Macharia, 2015).

Numerous studies have evaluated how women are represented in the media in various countries, and how these representations shape societal attitudes and behaviors (Macharia, 2015). For instance, Sanger (2009) conducted a study that examined how femininity was represented in the advertisements and editorial content of three modern South African women's magazines – *Fair Lady*, *Femina*, and *True Love*. Sanger's findings indicated that there are racial differences in the way that femininity is represented in the media, and that these publications employ a heteronormative tone,

whereby women, both black and white, are portrayed as hypersexual. Within the article, the author supported the notion that magazines impact the process of socialization by normalizing and perpetuating certain ideas about gender, sexuality, and race. She concluded that the constructions of femininity included in the magazines are often racist and sexist and reinforce patriarchal domination by featuring articles that promote the regulation of women's bodies and sexualities (Sanger, 2009).

Similarly, Lauer (2013) conducted a content analysis of advertisements featured in seven popular women's magazines in South Africa. Lauer also found that despite the numerous and ever-changing roles that South African women fulfill in society, they are usually portrayed in stereotypical roles in the media, specifically advertisements. Women are usually featured in advertisements as romantic or sexual objects, wives and mothers, and in leisurely roles (Lauer, 2013).

In contrast, Chinese publications offered a dichotomous representation of women in women's magazines (Chen, 2016). Local titles often portrayed Chinese women in caregiving, self-sacrificial, and family-oriented roles (Chen, 2016). Chen stated that this "natural femininity" is promoted as the norm for women in local women's magazines. However, western glossies that entered the Chinese market at the end of the 20th century, included a new depiction of Chinese women that includes what Chen calls "power femininity." Western glossies celebrated women's individualism, their power as a consumer, and their glamorous, globalized lifestyle (Chen, 2016). In other words, western magazines promoted freedom, pleasure, and individuality, while local magazines promoted familial duties (Chen, 2016).

However, Chen (2016) noted that the brand of empowerment advocated by the western glossies is largely based on material consumption and western ideals of femininity. While the western magazines included new depictions of Chinese women not yet seen in the country's local titles, the consumerist representations did not bring social change or eliminate gender equality; rather they appealed to individual consumerist pleasures, which ultimately reinforced patriarchal capitalism (Chen, 2016). The author did note, however, that while these western glossies emphasized westernized power femininity, they also had a tendency to maintain a feminine ideal that is uniquely Chinese (Chen, 2016).

Lastly, of note is the content analysis of two popular women's magazines in Singapore—*Cleo* and *Her World*—conducted by Basnyat and Chang (2014). The authors analyzed 24 issues of each magazine to identify how femininity is framed in print media in Singapore (Basnyat & Chang, 2014). Their results indicated that representations of women in Singapore print media increasingly included more "masculine" traits (Basnyat & Chang, 2014, p. 83). The masculine traits included in the content of Singaporean women's magazines emphasized individualism and self-esteem (Basnyat & Chang, 2014). Although modern femininity that included masculine traits was used to portray women, there were numerous feminine stereotypes used to construct the image of women in these magazines as well (Basnyat & Chang, 2014). The authors reported that beauty, lifestyle, health, and relationship stories were the dominant frames used when constructing stories about women. In other words, while these magazines strived to present the depiction of a

modern, independent woman, they often emphasized the trope of the traditional feminine woman (Basnyat & Chang, 2014).

These scholarly examples illustrate how the representation of women in women's magazines tends to differ from country to country. The purpose of this research was to understand how Nigerian women's magazines depict women. I sought to discover the common themes Nigerian-based women's magazines use to portray women, and whether these themes are more traditional, like in the local Chinese magazines, or more balanced, like the Singaporean titles.

Impact of Media on Nigerian Women

Some researchers have hypothesized that women's involvement in journalism began with the creation of the *West African Pilot*, a newspaper founded by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1937 (Daramola et al., 2013). This periodical included a column titled "Milady's Bower" that contained comments and pictures of women (Daramola et al., 2013). Other studies credited the advent of women in editorial management to the first time a woman was appointed by the *Daily Times* in 1951 to write and edit a column devoted to women (Daramola et al., 2013; Nigeria, 2017b). However, Ogunbiyi was later succeeded by Adaora Lilly Ulasi in 1953 (Daramola et al., 2013; Nigeria, 2017a). While a growing number of women entered the field of journalism between 1950 and 1975, it wasn't until the 1980s that the first female editor of a national newspaper, Dr. Doyin Abiola, was appointed (Daramola et al., 2013). This period is often referred to as the "golden era" of women in journalism in Nigeria (Daramola et al., 2013).

Although there are more women in journalism than at the start of the 20th century, journalism in Nigeria continued to be a male-dominated field (Daramola et al., 2013). Of the journalists reporting the news on radio, television, and newspapers, 95% were male (Okunna, 2002). A study published in May 2002 evaluated 42 cover stories from Nigerian newsmagazines such as *Newswatch*, *TELL*, *The News*, and *The Week* (Okunna, 2002). These stories were analyzed to determine women's participation in the news as subjects and journalists (Okunna, 2002). According to the findings, of the 101 reporters whose bylines appear, 91% were male and only 9% were female (Okunna, 2002).

Several researchers have supported the idea that women's lack of representation in the news as subjects and content producers is a reflection of the way women are marginalized in Nigerian society (Daramola et al., 2013; Okunna, 2005; Tijani-Adenle, 2016). According to Daramola et al. (2013), Nigerian society perpetuated gender differences and assigned roles and responsibilities based on gender stereotypes. Nigeria, the largest country in Africa and the sixth largest country in the world, had a population 206,139,589 in 2020 (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2021; Worldometers.info, 2020). Even though women made up 49.34% of the population, they were often regarded in Nigerian society as appendages to their male relatives, such as their husbands, sons, brothers, etc. ("Nigeria - Population," 2019; Okunna, 2005; Tijani-Adenle, 2016). Women were also considered to be domestic laborers and were often expected to do household chores, such as cleaning and cooking (Daramola et al., 2013). This can be seen in the way women were portrayed in print news. Women usually only made the news if

they were the wives of prominent men and were rarely newsmakers in their own right (Okunna, 2005). Moreover, when women were portrayed in print news, particularly news magazines, they were often stereotyped as wives and mothers, and their domestic roles were overemphasized (Okunna, 2005). In addition to the stereotype of the domestic workers, women were often portrayed in style and entertainment pages and publications as sinful sex symbols (Tijani-Adenle, 2016). Tijani-Adenle (2016) stated that these representations of women were often included in news media because the content that trivializes women often increased sales and generated advertisements.

According to Bosch (2011), since 1995, the Global Media Monitoring Project has been publishing reports on how women are portrayed in the news around the world, including Nigeria, and found that gender stereotypes were often used in the construction of media. Although feminist activism has led to increased media coverage on women and the issues they find to be important, the framing of these stories were still quite patriarchal and sexist (Bosch, 2011).

Furthermore, even when women in leadership roles in politics and business were featured in the Nigerian news media, their stories were usually placed on the back pages or the politics and governance pages (Tijani-Adenle, 2016). Their stories were rarely seen as breaking news or significant to the mainstream consumer (Tijani-Adenle, 2016). Their stories were also usually less than a full page unless it was a feature in an entertainment or style page (Tijani-Adenle, 2016). The placement of these stories underscored the idea that stories about women and their respective issues should only be of concern to women and carry little news value for the rest of society (Tijani-Adenle, 2016).

While several studies evaluated the roles of Nigerian women in the production of news content, as well as their representation in said news content (Daramola et al., 2013; Okunna, 2005; Tijani-Adenle, 2016), few studies have investigated how Nigerian women are portrayed in lifestyle magazines, particularly those that are targeted towards their demographic. A study conducted by du Plessis (2016) is currently the only study that has evaluated female representation in Nigerian women's magazines.

In her study, du Plessis (2016) conducted a content analysis using a sample of 13 issues from two popular women's magazines: *Today's Woman* and *Genevieve*. She also conducted three focus groups with female consumers of the magazines who were in their mid-twenties, employed, and married with children, and three interviews, one with a member of the editorial staff at a leading Nigerian women's magazine and two with professors from the University of Ibadan (du Plessis, 2016). She found that African women are often portrayed as professional and successful women resisting patriarchal stereotypes (du Plessis, 2016). According to the results of her study, women were identified by their occupations and professional achievements, and a strong emphasis was placed on female entrepreneurship (du Plessis, 2016). Women were often portrayed as, "self-reliant, self-starting and industrious individuals who, through hard work and determination, can overcome very specific socio-economic challenges" (du Plessis, 2016, p. 39). In this study, du Plessis (2016) noticed that participation in the financial sphere was not only encouraged but expected of Nigerian women. According to the focus groups and interviews, these depictions of women as industrious and entrepreneurial have contributed to women's view of themselves as strong, resilient hard workers and

achievers (du Plessis, 2016). The conclusion that Nigerian women's magazines can act as a vehicle for change when it comes to how Nigerian women are portrayed in the media seems to run counter to the research concluding that African women are often portrayed in African media as domestic laborers (Bosch, 2011; Okunna, 2005).

This study builds on the work of du Plessis (2016) that examined the ways in which print media, specifically but not limited to women's magazines, affected the formation of the African female identity and how the content of African women's magazines contributed to the dialogue on women's empowerment. This study differs in that it focuses solely on the content of Nigerian-based women's magazines, and the construction of femininity and womanhood included in the textual content of these publications. My identity as a Nigerian-American woman also differs from du Plessis's (2016) identity as a European woman, and I believe that this allows me to gain a better understanding of the representation of Nigerian women and how it reflects the socio-cultural setting in which these meanings are constructed and disseminated. My standpoint as a Nigerian-American woman allows me to contextualize these representations and present them in ways that take into account the lived realities and personal agency of Nigerian women.

This study sought to uncover whether the representation of women in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* aligned with the findings of du Plessis (2016) or if the depictions of femininity and womanhood were rooted in patriarchal ideals and supported the theories of Bosch (2011) and Okunna (2005) and the representation of Nigerian femininity most often communicated in the news media.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Africana Womanism

Feminism is defined as a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression; however, womanism is designed to accomplish these goals as well, with an additional commitment to highlighting the unique experiences of black women and women of color (Hudson-Weems, 2001; Ntiri, 2001; Sesanti, 2009).

According to Sesanti (2009), womanism is defined as an, "Afro-centric form of feminism," that takes into account gender concerns, as well as race and class concerns (p. 214).

Africana womanism, which was coined in the late 1980s by Clenora Hudson-Weems, takes it a step further by creating "a separate and distinct identity for the Africana woman and her movement" that is "grounded in African culture and focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of Africana women" (Blay, 2008, p. 65; Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Hudson-Weems, 1997, 2001; Mangena; 2003). In her 2001 journal article, Hudson-Weems discusses the differences between africana womanism and other women's movements.

Neither an outgrowth nor an addendum to feminism, africana womanism is not Black feminism, African feminism, or Walker's womanism that some africana woman have come to embrace. africana womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in africana culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of africana women. (Hudson-Weems, 2001, p. 136)

African-based women's theories, such as African womanism, aim to discuss gender roles in the context of other forms of oppression such as racism, neocolonialism, cultural imperialism, socio-economic exclusion and exploitation, gerontocracy, religious fundamentalism, as well as dictatorial and/or corrupt government systems (Arndt, 2002; Terborg-Penn, 1995). This approach exceeds the race-class-gender approach of African American feminist theories, and the highly limited approach of western, white feminism that is female-centered, individualistic by nature, and does not acknowledge race or class difference (Arndt, 2002; Hudson-Weems, 1997; Ntiri, 2001; Oyewumi, 2000).

Cooperation with men and the affirmation of motherhood and family-centeredness are paramount to the theories of africana womanism (Arndt, 2002; Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Hudson-Weems, 1997, 2001; Kolawole, 2002). Africana womanists do not seek to dismantle their patriarchal societies, but rather negotiate within the patriarchal society to gain new scope for women (Arndt, 2002). Africana womanism is not antagonistic to African men; rather, it challenges them to be aware of the specificities of women's subjugation, which differ from the oppression of all African people (Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Hudson-Weems, 1997, 2001; Reed, 2001). Africana womanism recognizes that certain inequalities existed in traditional societies and that colonialism reinforced them and introduced others, and it seeks to incorporate African men into the struggle to end domination and western exploitation (Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Hudson-Weems, 1997, 2001; Reed, 2001).

Africana womanism is also distinguishable from other female based theories because of its prioritization of race, class, and gender, in order to focus on female

empowerment, it's family-centered, race empowerment agenda, and lastly, its applicability to all women of African descent (Blay, 2008; Hudson-Weems, 1997, 2001; Kolawole, 2002; Ntiri, 2001). Africana womanism resists the universalization and projection of western ideals and argues for an emphasis on culture in the analysis of African realities (Blay, 2008; Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Hudson-Weems, 1997, 2001; Reed, 2001).

According to several types of African-based women's theories, including africana womanism, power is negotiable, relative, and framed within cultural, historical, and generational contexts (Blay, 2008; Hudson-Weems, 2001). Africana womanists resist the idea that womanhood itself is a cause for oppression, and that womanhood is often defined and dictated by specific sociocultural contexts within which she exists (Blay, 2008; Hudson-Weems, 2001). Thus, an analysis of the representation of women in Nigerian-based women's magazines must take into account these specificities and must be contextualized within Nigerian culture and society (Blay, 2008).

By imploring africana womanism as a theoretical framework for this study, I attempted to capture the different cultural imperatives, historical forces, and localized realities that shape the ways in which women are represented in Nigerian-based women's magazines, and to ultimately uncover how these representations may support or subvert the tenets of africana womanism (Blay, 2008; Hudson-Weems, 1997; Pellerin, 2012). When conducting an African-centered study, it is imperative that researchers utilize an Afrocentric perspective, putting Africa in the center of the lives and concepts of Africans (Hudson-Weems, 1997). When using African-based critical theories for analyzing the

experiences of Africans, researchers can begin to create institutions of ideas that can be used in discussing and categorizing the lived experiences of Africans, past, present, and future (Hudson-Weems, 1997).

I attempted to accomplish these goals by using the theory of africana womanism to guide this qualitative study. As a Nigerian woman, I believe that grounding myself in my culture, through the utilization of africana womanism as a theoretical framework, promotes an agency-driven investigation of africana womanhood. By utilizing this theory, I was able to identify the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires communicated within Nigerian-based women's magazines, and conceptualize the realities of africana women (Pellerin, 2012).

The inclusion of African womanism as a theoretical framework for this study is appropriate because it recognizes the contributions that Africans have had to the women's rights movement, as well as the contributions that feminist scholarship on and from Africa has had on the fields of women, gender, and sexuality studies, African studies, and media studies (Ahikire, 2014; Sesanti, 2009). It is important that I use a theoretical framework that is 1) concerned with consciously investigating African woman phenomena, 2) is opposed to the rejection of African cultural values, and 3) argues for women's rights and equity from the premise of African cultural values (Hudson-Weems, 1997; Pellerin, 2012; Sesanti, 2009). Furthermore, when conducting an "African-centered" study, it is imperative that one uses a theoretical framework that places African ideals, culture, and behavior at the center of one's analysis (Blay, 2008; Hudson-Weems, 1997; Pellerin, 2012).

According to Kolawole (2002), "In addressing gender in Africa, historical and cultural contexts are fundamental. The failure to consider context accounts for misconceptions of the relevance of feminism in many African societies, including the rejection of feminism by some African scholars," (p. 92).

Women's rights activists, as well as africana womanists, also believe in using the media as a platform to achieve their goals. Because of this, I am interested in evaluating how women's magazines as a form of media have represented Nigerian women and how these representations support or subvert the principles of africana womanism (Sesanti; 2009).

Social Representations Theory

This study also employs social representations theory, founded by Serge Moscovici in 1961, as the theoretical framework (Bidjari, 2011; Höijer, 2011; Howarth, 2006). Moscovici developed the theory to explain how social groups are structured and behave according to shared social representations (Serrano, 2013). He sought to gain an understanding of how social groups perceive, transform, and communicate representations, as well as how power structures contribute to these representations (Serrano, 2013).

Social representations theory built on Émile Durkheim's concept of "collective representations," which refers to the ways of evaluating social reality (Höijer, 2011; Orfali, 2002). According to Höijer (2011), social representations are "different types of collective cognitions, common sense or thought systems of societies or groups of people" (p. 4). In other words, they are social, cultural, or symbolic representations of something

that can influence the attitudes and actions of members of a community (Bidjari, 2011; Höijer, 2011; Tateo & Iannaccone, 2012). Howarth (2006) explains that social representations not only impact our actions, but also affect and form our social interactions and practices.

Moreover, social representations are values, ideas, and practices associated with a particular topic that are shared amongst members of a community or social group and enable communication amongst these members (Höijer, 2011; Serrano, 2013). Social representations are an individual and collective activity characterized as the relationship between the carriers of the representation, the object or idea that is being represented, and the social or cultural group that is making sense of the representation (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999).

It is important to note that social representations are socially constructed and reinforced through social norms, meaning they become stable entities through a shared pool of perceptions, symbols, and habitual behaviors (Bauer & Glaskell, 1999; Bidjari, 2011; Höijer, 2011; Wagner et al., 2015). However, social norms can only derive from a representation that embraces and supports that behavior (Wagner et al., 2015). New representations, however, can form when divergent perspectives and norms arise from community members (Höijer, 2011). According to several researchers, it is through these contrasting perspectives that individuals become aware of representations, particularly when they challenge our reality (Bauer & Glaskell, 1999; Howarth, 2006). New representations of individuals or ideas are often formed when an existing representation

causes conflict or tension in a community (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999; Höijer, 2011; Howarth, 2006).

Representations come into being through the processes of anchoring and objectifying (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999; Bidjari, 2011; Orfali, 2002; Serrano, 2013). Anchoring involves the naming and classifying of people, things, or ideas (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999; Bidjari, 2011; Orfali, 2002; Serrano, 2013). Anchoring produces a common code, language, and references between the individual and social or cultural group (Orfali, 2002). Objectification involves making the abstract idea into a concrete concept or social reality (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999; Bidjari, 2011; Orfali, 2002; Serrano, 2013). This process occurs by building a specific image of an object and sharing it amongst the group until it becomes a part of the constructed reality (Orfali, 2002). It is through communication that representation is formed and spread (Orfali, 2002). Through these processes, existing social representations may be reshaped, or new social representations may develop (Bidjari, 2011; Serrano, 2013).

Through the processes of social representations, meanings become ambiguous and contested, and this then leads to the possibility of reinterpretation and debate (Howarth, 2006; Serrano, 2013). As Bidjari (2011) states, "Social representations constitute a form of knowledge, socially worked out and shared, having a practical and convergent aim in building a common reality which is used for a social group" (p. 1595). The media, i.e., newspapers, radio, television, magazines, and even social media, act as mediums through which representations are communicated (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999; Höijer, 2011). The

media impacts how social representation is disseminated, and this spread of information impacts the formation of opinions, attitudes, and even stereotypes (Orfali, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to uncover the social representations of women in Nigerian-based women's magazines. I aimed to discover how Nigerian women, as a social group, perceive, transform, and communicate representations of women, as well as how these representations reflect the tenets of africana womanism. Specifically, I sought to gain an understanding of how the themes used to represent women in women's media speak to the ways in which womanhood is constructed and communicated in Nigerian media. According to Howarth (2006), due to the pressures of globalization, meanings and representations have become highly contested. This has led me to wonder about how globalization and the emerging women's magazine industry have impacted the meaning and representation of womanhood in Nigeria.

Various studies of social representations have examined the understanding of expert or scientific knowledge amongst different groups and communities (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999; Orfali, 2002). These studies have focused on the circulation of knowledge from a group of experts to the public, and the transformation of these complicated ideas into accessible images, metaphors, and practices (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999). In comparison, few studies have evaluated how social representations have been used by groups and individuals to oppose hegemonic representations that may limit or oppress their identities, which was the central aim of this study (Howarth, 2006).

According to Serrano (2013), studying social representations theory allows researchers to understand and make visible aspects of a culture and its relation to gender.

Serrano (2013) states, " a specific topic, place and historical period may be researched, looking at how social representations define the elements that conform specific identities, how they are part of the culture and how they configure specific gender identities" (p. 67). In other words, evaluating how gender is discussed in Nigerian-based women's magazines that are owned and operated by women, using the social representations theory, allowed me to understand how knowledge is constructed and re-constructed in a society in order to advocate for more gender-equitable representations (Serrano, 2013).

Social representations theory was beneficial in guiding this study because I aimed to shed light on how the social representations of women in women's magazines are constructed and communicated. This study evaluated what social representations are constructed; how media, specifically Nigerian-based women's magazines, impact the formation and dissemination of these representations; how social representations reflect individual and group life experiences; how representations reinforce or subvert existing knowledge about Nigerian women; and how women's magazines impact dominant norms in Nigerian society surrounding gender and femininity (Serrano, 2013; Wagner et al., 2015).

The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the themes used to represent Nigerian women in Nigerian-based women's magazines?

RQ2: How does the representation of Nigerian women in Nigerian-based women's magazines adhere to the tenets of africana womanism?

Chapter 4: Methodology

This study employed a qualitative magazine textual analysis. Three mass circulating Nigerian-based women's magazines, *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite*, have been analyzed. The results of this study builds on the finding of du Plessis (2016) whose study examined women's media, including *Today's Woman* and *Genevieve*, from an African feminist perspective to determine what representations of femininity they produce.

Textual analysis is a methodology that involves evaluating language, symbols, and/or pictures present in texts to gain information about how people make sense of and communicate life experiences (Allen, 2017; McKee, 2003). It is often understood that messages may reflect and/or challenge the historical, political, cultural, or ethical contexts in which they are situated (Allen, 2017; McKee, 2003). Therefore, it is imperative that I understand the broader social structures that impact the messages present in the text(s) that are being evaluated (Allen, 2017; McKee, 2003).

According to Brennen (2017), textual analysis is all about language and how to compare the meanings of a text to our social realities. Understanding the language, concepts, ideas, themes, and issues of a "text" is a key component of textual analysis (Brennen, 2017). In this study, four issues from *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* were selected and five articles from each issue were evaluated in order to gain an understanding of what representations of women were being communicated in these magazines, and how these representations reflect the cultural and social contexts they are situated in.

Sample

Magazines included in the sample were required to meet the following criteria: must have been established and managed by women, have circulation figures of 5,000 or more (average per month), must have print editions of their publications, and must be based in Nigeria with a target audience of Nigerian women ranging in age from 25 to 61 (Olanrewaju, 2018). Reliable circulation figures are useful in evaluating the worth and influence of the media channel, which, in this case, is magazines (Lauer, 2013).

Therefore, one can assume that magazines with high circulation figures are popular vehicles for disseminating messages about women, womanhood, and femininity. As this study explored the representations of women in Nigerian-based women's magazines, magazines created by and targeted towards women that featured women as editors and writers were selected. Magazines such as *ThisDay Style* and *Vanguard Allure* were excluded from the sample because they are subsidiaries of larger media conglomerates, ThisDay Media Group and Vanguard Media Limited respectively. Both were founded and are run by men ("About Us," n.d., "This Day," 2020).

Other popular magazines amongst women in Nigeria include: *Glam Africa*, *Fashion Online*, *Pulse.ng*, *We Love Style*, amongst others (Abraham, 2019). *Glam Africa* was originally selected for this study. However, due to the lack of availability of past issues, this magazine was ultimately removed from the sample. *Fashion Online*, *Pulse.ng*, and *We Love Style* were excluded from the sample because they are strictly online magazines. Print editions of these publications are not published, and this study is strictly focused on evaluating the depiction of women in print magazines.

Once the sample frame had been specified, purposive sampling was used to select issues that would highlight the ways in which women are represented in Nigerian-based women's magazines presently. Ultimately, three Nigerian-based women's consumer magazines were selected—*Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite*—between March of 2020 and May of 2020. From these publications, four issues, a November/December issue, and a May/June issue, were selected between the years of 2018 and 2019. This time frame was chosen because I wanted to understand the contemporary representation of Nigerian women in these publications, and these were the most current years available. Issues were chosen from the months of November, December, May, and June because I wanted issues that were representative of the entire year. Choosing a Fall/Winter and Spring/Summer issue allowed me to see if representations of Nigerian women differed based on the season or time of year.

The resultant sample included 60 articles in total, one profile, one feature, and three stories pertaining to the topic of beauty and/or fashion. The profiles allowed me to gain better insight on how prominent Nigerian women were portrayed in women's magazines. The features allowed me to understand the issues and topics that are heavily discussed and important to Nigerian women. The beauty/fashion articles helped me to understand how these magazines discussed the appearance of Nigerian women. In addition, it helped me to understand how Nigerian women present themselves and the social structures surrounding beauty and female gender presentation.

The first of these titles included in the sample is *Today's Woman*, which was started in 2007 by publisher and editor-in-chief Adesuwa Onyenokwe, a former reporter

for NTA, Nigeria's largest television network ("About Us," 2019a; "Adesuwa Onyenokwe," 2020; Amagiya, 2015; Olanrewaju, 2018). *Today's Woman* began as a program for the television network because Onyenokwe recognized a lack of reported stories featuring women (Amagiya, 2015; Olanrewaju, 2018). However, Onyenokwe felt that producing a regular show was not personally viable, so she launched *Today's Woman* magazine ("About Us," 2019a; Amagiya, 2015; Olanrewaju, 2018). Today, the magazine is published by TW Media Development Concepts and is printed in Nigeria ("About Us," 2019a). TW Media Development Concepts is a byproduct of the magazine's success ("Adesuwa Onyenokwe," 2020). *Today's Woman* is published 10 times a year, has a circulation of 5,000, and even has an accompanying app that costs approximately \$1.40 or 500 naira a month ("About Us," 2019a; Olanrewaju, 2018). In addition to stories about beauty, lifestyle, health, and relationships, *Today's Woman* covers hard news stories and topics that many people in Nigeria see as taboo, such as drug abuse and domestic violence (Olanrewaju, 2018).

The second title included in the sample was *Genevieve*, founded by editor-in-chief and chief executive officer, Betty Irabor in 2003 to celebrate successful women (Okonofua, 2018; Olunrenfemi, 2015; OnoBello, 2012). Her vision was to create a magazine that would be an inspiring lifestyle guide to women all over the world, and one that would promote wholesomeness (Olunrenfemi, 2015; OnoBello, 2012). However, during that time, advertisers invested very little in magazines for women (Olanrewaju, 2018; Olunrenfemi, 2015). Irabor obtained advertising contacts through her husband, Soni Irabor, to secure funding for her publication (Olanrewaju, 2018; Olunrenfemi,

2015). Soni Irabor is an award-winning broadcaster, advertising practitioner, media manager, communications consultant, speech trainer, and talk-show host ("Soni Irabor," 2019).

Despite securing this monetary support, many people in Nigeria's media industry did not believe that *Genevieve* would last (Olanrewaju, 2018). However, as of 2019, *Genevieve* has been one of the leading women's magazines in Nigeria for 16 years (Olanrewaju, 2018; Olunrenfemi, 2015; OnoBello, 2012). *Genevieve* publishes 10 issues a year, retailing for approximately \$2.80 or 1,000 naira per copy, has a staff of over 14, has a circulation of 30,000- 35,000, and is based in Lagos (Olanrewaju, 2018; Olunrenfemi, 2015).

Lastly, *Exquisite Magazine*, also founded in 2003, is a lifestyle magazine based in Lagos and helmed by editor-in-chief and chief executive officer, Tewa Onasaya (Olanrewaju, 2018; Sotade, 2017). Onasaya said that she started the magazine because she wanted to showcase African culture on a global scale and bring it to the mainstream (Olanrewaju, 2018). *Exquisite Magazine* is a bi-monthly publication that produces six issues a year and mainly covers stories about fashion and celebrity news (Olanrewaju, 2018). *Exquisite Magazine* has a circulation of about 10,000, and a yearly print subscription retails for approximately \$8.29 or 3,000 naira; the online subscription retails for approximately \$2.76 or 1,000 naira (Olanrewaju, 2018; "EM Subscription," 2020). However, the website has about 152,000 subscribers and receives about 1 million visits a week ("About Us," 2019b; Olanrewaju, 2018). The publication also distributes content via e-mail newsletter and WhatsApp (Olanrewaju, 2018).

Data Collection and Analysis

Coding is a crucial stage of qualitative textual analysis that involves labeling and organizing qualitative data to identify the different themes and relationships between them (Medelyan, 2020). These labels can be words, phrases, or numbers; but in the case of this study the labels assigned consisted of words that were used to represent important themes in each passage of text (Medelyan, 2020). Coding requires the development of a coding manual (Lauer, 2013). The coding manual serves as a guideline that includes a set of codes, definitions, and examples used as a guide to help qualitative data (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Saldaña, 2009). Codebooks are essential to analyzing qualitative research because they provide a formalized operationalization of the codes (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). This study included a codebook, and also utilized a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) called Quirkos, that also contained a code list that was stored on this program. The codebook and CAQDAS code list includes the name of the code, a brief definition, synonyms, guidelines for when to use the code, and examples (Saldaña, 2009).

A list of 18 characteristics that define africana womanism, created by Hudson-Weems, was used to guide this study's qualitative coding process (Blay, 2008; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). These characteristics are: (1) self-naming; (2) self-defining; (3) family-centeredness; (4) wholeness; (5) role flexibility; (6) adaptability; (7) authenticity; (8) black female sisterhood; (9) struggling with males against oppression; (10) male compatibility; (11) recognition; (12) ambition; (13) nurturing; (14) strength; (15) respect; (16) respect for elders; (17) mothering; and (18) spirituality ("Africana

Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). By incorporating these 18 characteristics in the coding process of this study, I sought to uncover which of these characteristics, if any, appear most significantly within these publications and how they emerge in discourses pertaining to femininity and womanhood in Nigerian-based woman's magazines.

These 18 characteristics were the initial 18 codes included in the coding process. During the first cycle of coding approximately 25 additional codes were added to the codebook and CAQDAS code list. This study employed a line-by-line method to coding the data. Line-by-line coding refers to applying codes to each line of qualitative data (Kriukow, 2017). All sentences and statements that did not fit within any of the 43 defined codes were coded as "context," the 44th code. This code was also used for passages that served as contextual or background information for an article topic or interview, or when a passage discussed the abstract concept of an interview. Although "context" was the most frequently used code, it will not be included in the results and analysis of this study, since this code did not pertain to the representation of women/womanhood, but merely served as an organizational tool to separate the relevant information from the irrelevant, or contextual, information.

First and second cycle coding methods were used in this study. Eclectic coding, which is the utilization of two or more first cycle coding methods, was employed in this study (Saldaña, 2009). This method also includes analytic memo writing and second cycles of recoding that help to condense the variety and number of codes into a more unified scheme (Saldaña, 2009).

A combination of provisional coding, descriptive coding, and simultaneous coding were used as the first cycle coding methods for this study. Provisional coding includes a predetermined set of codes prior to fieldwork (Saldaña, 2009). The provisional list is often generated through preparatory investigative work such as literature reviews related to the study; the study's conceptual framework and research questions; previous research findings; pilot study fieldwork; the researcher's previous knowledge and experiences; and researcher-formulated hypotheses (Saldaña, 2009). The provisional list in this study was generated from the study's theoretical framework.

Descriptive coding is the process of using a word or short phrase to summarize the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data (Saldaña, 2009). When new codes were created, descriptive coding was often used. Lastly, simultaneous coding was used if a passage was descriptively and inferentially meaningful (Saldaña, 2009). If there was a passage that fit under two or more codes, and it was justifiable, simultaneous coding was used.

The second cycle coding method used in this study was focused coding. Focused coding involves searching for the most frequently used and/or significant codes (Saldaña, 2009). During this second cycle, passages were recoded, and codes were grouped together based on thematic or conceptual similarity (Saldaña, 2009). The end result of this process highlighted 15 themes that emerged from this study. These themes were: Job/Career, Condition of the Body, Opinions of Others, Self-Esteem/Self-Sufficiency, Life Challenges, Romantic/Sexual Relationships, Familial/Community Relationships, Education, Domestic Responsibilities, Personality Traits, Citizenship/Nation Building,

Beliefs/Values, Identity as a Nigerian Woman, and Creative Pursuits and Satisfaction with One's Life. The five most frequent and significant themes will be discussed in the results of this study.

Finally, an analytic memo was kept during this process and was used to jot down any notes and observations I had during the first and second cycle coding methods. The analytic memo was also used to edit, transform, and, in some cases, combine codes, and to jot down pre-writing ideas. I was the sole coder for this study, therefore there was no need to establish intercoder reliability. However, there was input given by the chair of this thesis, Dr. Elizabeth Hendrickson, during the coding process.

Chapter 5: Results

Theme 1: Job/Career

This study found that Nigerian women were often represented by their job and/or career, and were highlighted as being professionally active, gainfully employed, and successful, thereby supporting the findings of du Plessis (2016) and reinforcing the tenets of africana womanism that state that africana women are ambitious, demand recognition for their power, are independent, and have experience in the private and public spheres of life ("Africana Womanism," 2020; du Plessis, 2015; Hudson-Weems; 2001). The following sub-sections include a more detailed analysis of the topics that fall under the theme of job/career.

Ambition

Articles featured in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* often discuss a Nigerian woman's drive and determination, as well as their plans, hopes, and dreams for their career. For example, in *Genevieve's* May 2019 issue, Abisoye Ajayi-Akinfolarin, a social entrepreneur and founder of Pearls Africa, discusses the mission of her foundation, which is to build a tech community of girls from disadvantaged areas through technology. Ajayi-Akinfolarin explains, "That is our vision, we want more women technically involved in solving problems that tackle our nation's most pressing issues and when this happens, there is space for economic growth," (Belonwu, 2019, p. 27).

In the May 2018 issue of *Exquisite*, author Damilola Shote sits down with the three organizers of Fashion's Finest Africa, the largest fashion event in Africa (Shote, 2018b). Yetunde (Yetty) Ogunnubi, fashion designer, entrepreneur, project strategist,

brand developer, CEO of the public relation agency, YD Agency, and the only female organizer of Fashion's Finest Africa, shares her vision for the fashion event. "I see Fashions Finest becoming better established, having a very wide following among Nigerian fashion aficionados, empowering African designers in terms of excellent standards and garment production," Ogunnubi states (Shote, 2018b, p. 22).

Other articles examined in this study discuss a Nigerian woman's desire to be a renowned actor, director, producer, musical artist, entrepreneur, and more. These articles include their short term, as well as long term, goals and the plans they have made to achieve their objectives. The passion one has for their chosen field or career is also heavily represented in these publications. In *Genevieve's* December 2018 issue, Kanyinsola Onalaja, founder of the Onalaja fashion brand, discusses her passion for the fashion industry: "During the hustle and bustle it is the passion you have for what you are doing that will get you through," (Abiodun, 2018, p. 75). Onalaja also discusses the advice she has received during her career that has been integral to her success. She shares that advice with the readers of *Genevieve*, in order to encourage them to seek their dreams.

Kanyinsola shares her favorite quote that literally gets her through tough times by a lady called Anatole France "To accomplish great things we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe." She said of her best career advice "It is so important to do something towards your goals and dreams everyday." (Abiodun, 2018, p. 75)

In these publications, Nigerian women are represented as highly respected and ambitious members of their given fields, who have knowledge to impart onto others about how to obtain success within their industry. In several articles included in this study, Nigerian women give advice to readers about how to achieve success, start and run a business, and general professionalism. They also share advice given to them from their mentors, friends, and families. This is highlighted in the quotes from Kayinsola. This study found that Nigerian women are portrayed as active in the workforce but must overcome hierarchal constraints and gender barriers in order to achieve success (du Plessis, 2016). Discourses also emphasize Nigerian women's role in assisting other women into these new avenues of opportunity (du Plessis, 2016). In these publications, Nigerian women are portrayed as determined, ambitious, and enterprising, and it is these qualities that have afforded them the respect and opportunities that they now possess. Nigerian women are represented by their drive to keep achieving even when they have reached success. For the Nigerian woman, success is something that is constantly being sought after. This representation of Nigerian women as active in the workforce and determination to overcome gender constraints supports the findings of du Plessis (2016). For example, "Success does not have a final destination, it is about developing by prioritizing learning so that more value can come from you and when the next big opportunity comes, you are ready," Owen Omogiafo, President and CEO of Transnational Corporation of Nigeria Plc, states in *Today's Woman* June 2019 issue (Yesioh, 2019).

Such a pronouncement suggests that Nigerian women are constantly preparing for the next stages in their careers, despite societal opinions about women in the workforce. The act of featuring Omogiafo in this issue of *Today's Woman* works to counter misconceptions about women in the workforce by emphasizing the professional achievements and participation of successful Nigerian women such as Omogiafo.

Lastly, knowledge/education was a separate theme in this study and was quite insignificant in the depiction of Nigerian women in Nigerian based women's magazines. The frequency of this theme differs from the results of du Plessis (2016) which found that education was a significant theme found in the construction of femininity and womanhood. However, when education was discussed in these publications, it was often in relation to how formal education gave women the power and credentials to access jobs that allowed them to contribute to their families, communities, and the economy which supports the findings of du Plessis (2016). Many articles included in this study discuss the level of education of their female subjects, and how that education or knowledge has contributed, in part, to their current success. As differing forms of education and training are understood to increase the economic opportunities for Nigerian women, there also exists in these publications a concern over the quality of education available for women as well as the barriers that exist in Nigeria that may impede their access to education. These concerns are addressed in an article featured in the May 2019 issue of *Genevieve* about Pearls Africa, an organization designed to provide tech skills and knowledge to girls from under-served areas so that they can be economically independent and can create solutions to the problems that plague their community and nation (Belonwu, 2019).

Concerns about the quality of fashion education available in Nigeria were also addressed in the May 2018 issue of *Exquisite* magazine (Yahaya, 2018).

Representing Nigerian women by their ambitious qualities adheres to the eleventh tenet of africana Womanism ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). This tenet subscribes to the belief that ambition, as well as responsibility, are highly important to africana women, their families and communities ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). In fact, ambition is expected from an africana woman, and others depend on this quality because their contributions are integral to the preservation and progress of their societies and communities ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

Recognition

This study found that Nigerian women are often represented in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite*, in relation to the capability, power, and influence they possess in their industry or field. Nigerian women are also given recognition for their many talents, as well as their ability to excel in more than one career, field, or industry. Recognition of their achievements are also heavily featured in these publications. Not only are Nigerian women represented as ambitious and successful, but they are also recognized by the power and influence that this success has afforded them. For example, in *Genevieve's* December 2019 issue, the author discusses the achievements of Bolaji Fawehinmi, CEO and Founder of Few Models Agency ("Bolajo Fawehinmi," 2019).

Representing the first Nigerian model to walk for YSL; then signing six new models to YSL; representing models that walked for major brands at New York, Milan and Paris Fashion Weeks for brands like Miu-Miu, Prada, Victoria's Secret and YSL; having one of the most active modelling agencies in Africa, are just a few (see what we did there?) of the many accomplishments that elusive CEO and Founder, BOLAJO FAWEHINMI, has under her belt. ("Bolajo Fawehinmi," 2019, p. 82)

A majority of the recognition given to Nigerian women in these magazines are often self-given. Nigerian women are often represented in Nigerian-based women's magazines as humble yet confident enough to recognize their own power, influence, and achievements. They are aware of their abilities and are not afraid to honor them. For example, Oby Ezekwesili, chartered accountant, co-founder of Transparency International, and former 2019 presidential candidate, gave recognition to her ability to be president of Nigeria in the December 2018 issue of *Today's Woman* (Akinyede, 2018b). She stated, "I can stand on the world stage with any leader, because I already do that. I'm the one with the character, the competence, and capacity, to organize solutions to the problems that assail us as Nigerians," (Akinyede, 2018b, p. 79).

In *Exquisite's* November 2019 issue, Mercy Eke was recognized as the first female contestant to win Big Brother Naija, a reality show in which contestants live in an isolated house and compete for a large cash prize worth \$100,000 ("Big Brother Naija," 2020). In this article she not only recognized her achievement of winning Big Brother Naija, but also recognized how she has grown as a person through the reality television

experience. She explained, "What I discovered about myself that I didn't know before BBNaija is that I am a strong lady that can achieve anything I put my mind on, that I can be what and who I want to be" ("Mercy Eke," 2019, p. 36).

In addition to self-recognition, constructions of femininity and womanhood also included a demand for recognition that was not linked to one's relationship to a man. Although society often sees prominent Nigerian women as appendages of their husbands or sons, many women featured in these publications demanded to be recognized for their own merits and not that of a man. For example, Annie Adibia discussed her desire to be known as more than just a wife in *Genevieve's* December 2018 issue (Belo-Osagie, 2018b).

I don't want to be known just as 2Baba's wife as if I am only a trophy wife. I want to be known as Annie, an actor, a mum and a woman who empowers over 1000 people every year through a program that helps them develop skills. (Belo-Osagie, 2018b, p. 44)

Lastly, Nigerian women featured in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* also give recognition to other prominent Nigerian women, as well as the qualities and general humanity that exists within Nigerian women as a whole. This representation of Nigerian women adheres to the tenth tenet of africana womanism that states that an africana woman demands recognition for herself in order to acquire true self-esteem and self-worth, which in turn enables her to have complete and positive relationships with all people ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

In these publications, Nigerian women are not only recognized for their power and influence, but they often are the ones giving recognition to themselves and other women. They demand recognition, and this, in turn, shows that they value themselves and their contributions to their respective industries, society, and country.

Entrepreneurial

This study found that Nigerian women are often represented in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* as enterprising businesswomen. Several articles featured in these publications discuss the creation and operation of a Nigerian woman's business, agency, or foundation. Articles tend to discuss how a Nigerian woman came up with the idea, who the target audience is, what sort of funding, if any, they might have received, the day-to-day operation of the business, and any advice they may have for fellow entrepreneurs. According to the findings of du Plessis (2016), and supported by the results of this study, entrepreneurship is presented as a realistic possibility for self-sufficiency for all women, and portrayals range from owning a juice-making business to owning a high-end fashion brand. Discourses of women in business construct them as industrious individuals who, through hard work, determination, and ingenuity, are able to overcome socio-economic challenges within the Nigerian context and create a source of revenue that allows them to provide for themselves, their families, and their community (du Plessis, 2016).

For example, in the December 2018 issue of *Today's Woman*, author Jennifer Ugboh explained how Temi Aboderin-Alao, CEO of JP Kingdom, JP Couture, Golden Curvy Agency, and the convener of Plus-Size Fashion Week Africa, developed the idea

to start Golden Curvy Agency (Ugboh, 2018b). She also discussed some of the socio-economic challenges she overcame in order to obtain success (Ugboh, 2018b).

After her move back to Nigeria, she launched JP Kingdom in 2011, an online store for imported clothes that offers image consulting and premium styling service for plus size women. Launching the business wasn't enough, almost immediately, Temi discovered that to sell the clothes she stocked, she needed plus size models to model them and so she started a modeling agency - Golden Curvy Agency where she trains plus size models for fashion and runway shows. (Ugboh, 2018b, p. 43)

An article featured in *Genevieve's* December 2018 issue even discussed Betty Irabor's latest business initiative, The Dew Collection. Irabor is the founder and publisher of *Genevieve* magazine, as well as a mental health advocate ("All About," 2018). She stated that the Dew Collection is a burst of colorful designs in a variety of fabrics, with the intention of creating awareness for mental health ("All About," 2018). These two articles are just examples of the many ways in which these publications discussed Nigerian women in relation to their business, foundations, initiatives, agencies, and general entrepreneurial qualities.

Lastly, this study found that the characterization of the Nigerian woman as an entrepreneur includes the inevitability that they will have to persevere through numerous economic obstacles (du Plessis, 2016).

For example, Yetty Williams, creator of the social media brand Lagos Mums, spoke to *Exquisite* magazine's Damilola Shote in their May 2018 issue about the creation

of her brand, some of the challenges she's faced thus far, and gave advice to other entrepreneurs who are interested in social media branding.

As LagosMums is such a niche market, it can be a challenge to get enough advertising dollars or naira from companies who target just mothers and their families and want to advertise with us. Getting skilled staff has also been quite a challenge; potential staff sometimes do not realize the amount of work that goes into creating engaging content (consistently) and to successfully manage an online business. (Shote, 2018a, p. 17)

Because of these challenges and others mentioned in the article, she imparts the following advice onto *Exquisite* readers,

I would say "Get Your Staffing Right." When you start to hire be very clear on the deliverables and make sure you get the right people with the right attitude to their work. Stay focused and committed, build your network of people that will help you excel and push you to grow your business. (Shote, 2018a, p. 17)

Although the representation of Nigerian women as entrepreneurs does not specifically adhere to any of the tenets of africana womanism, I think it loosely supports the eleventh tenet of africana, which is the belief that ambition, as well as responsibility, are highly important to africana women, their families, and communities ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

Ambition is expected from an africana woman, and others depend on this quality because the contributions of africana women are integral to the preservation and progress of their societies and communities ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013;

Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). This reoccurring theme of Nigerian women as entrepreneurs in Nigerian-based women's magazines support the african womanist beliefs regarding ambition, because in order to be a successful entrepreneur one must have the ambition, drive, and determination to start and run her own business.

Hard-working

This study found that Nigerian women are often portrayed in Nigerian-based women's magazines as hard-working, diligent individuals, who are dedicated to forging a place for themselves in the workforce despite gendered stereotypes (du Plessis, 2016). Their grit and tenacity with which they are able to grow and establish businesses or climb the ladder of success in their chosen fields and industries, despite socio-economic challenges, contributes to the construction of women in Nigerian-based women magazines as formidable economic participants (du Plessis, 2016). This representation of Nigerian women supports the finding of du Plessis (2016) that these representations make for an exemplary model for young Nigerian female readers that can aid in pushing them towards participating in the public sphere.

For example, in the article featuring Owen Omogiafo in the June 2019 issue of *Today's Woman*, author Oghenechuko Yesioh discusses several attributes of Omogiafo, including but not limited to her hardworking qualities. "That Owen does not shy away from hard work in any form appears to be one of her biggest strengths, coupled with her true sense of humility," (Yesioh, 2019, p. 54).

This study also found that Nigerian women once again are portrayed as advice givers. In addition to entrepreneurial advice and advice about how to excel in one's

chosen field, Nigerian women also give advice to readers about being hard-working, persevering through work tasks, and persevering through failure.

Although the representation of Nigerian women as hard-workers does not specifically adhere to any of the tenets of africana womanism, I think it loosely supports the eleventh tenet of africana, which is the belief that ambition, as well as responsibility, are highly important to africana women, their families, and communities ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). This theme of Nigerian women as hard-workers in Nigerian-based women's magazines supports the africana womanist beliefs regarding ambition, because in order to be successful in one's chosen job and/or career one must be an ambitious individual, as well as a diligent hard-worker who is committed to providing an excellent job performance.

Responsibility

Along with the topic of being a hard-worker, Nigerian women are often portrayed in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* in relation to their work and domestic responsibilities. The daily demands of a Nigerian woman's job or career, as well as her daily domestic duties is a topic that is frequently discussed in these publications. Nigerian women are portrayed as responsible individuals who are willing and able to take on many tasks that ensure the successful operation of one's job, home, or community. The stress that these responsibilities can place on a Nigerian woman are also occasionally discussed in these magazines. Some of the responsibilities mentioned range from specific work duties such as meeting deadlines and improving operational efficiency, to domestic duties

such as cooking, cleaning, and child rearing, to financial responsibilities, such as managing personal and joint accounts.

Although the representation of Nigerian women as responsible does not specifically adhere to any of the tenets of africana womanism, I think it loosely supports the eleventh tenet of africana womanism, which is the belief that ambition, as well as responsibility, are highly important to africana women, their families, and communities ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Responsibility is expected from an africana woman, and others depend on this quality because the contributions of africana women are integral to the preservation and progress of their societies and communities ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

Adaptability

Discourses in Nigerian-based women's magazines also portray them as adaptable. Nigerian women are portrayed as able and willing to adapt to different work environments, social settings, and living conditions. Discourses include the ability to adapt to the multiple demands of a job which inevitably allow a Nigerian woman to accomplish a goal or project. Discourses also include anecdotes about a Nigerian woman's ability to adapt to financial struggles, new environments and socio-cultural settings, obstacles in one's relationships with others, obstacles in one's marriage, etc.

An example of this representation can be found in the June 2019 issue of *Today's Woman*. In the previously discussed article on Owen Omogiafo, author Ogheneochuko Yesioh discusses Omogiafo's history of being able to adapt to different economic

settings, therefore making her more relatable to different groups of people who come from a myriad of backgrounds.

She was born into an upper middle-class family with all the attendant benefits of comfort and privilege, but, falling on hard times when her father's business took a turn for the worse when she was 7 and lasted till she was in her early 20s, also taught her very valuable lessons, "I went from 'silver spoon' kid to 'no spoon'," she jokes. Today Owen feels at home with the haves and have-nots and has no qualms giving respect to whom it is due, a vital character trait on this job. (Yesioh, 2019, p. 58)

The representation of Nigerian women as adaptable adheres to the sixth tenet of africana womanism, which states that black women not only adapted to different work environments but also to the lack of luxuries that were often experiences by white women ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). This theme of Nigerian women as adaptable supports the belief that africana women demand no separate space for nourishing her individual needs and goals, but instead are more focused on the needs and goals of the entire team, family, and/or community ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Due to the conditions that black women faced under white domination, such as colonialism and slavery, they developed the ability to be adaptable and to sacrifice one's own goals and desires for that of her people ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

In the articles included in this study, Nigerian women often sacrifice their wants and needs for those around them. They take on more responsibility at work than what fits within their job description; they sacrifice their comfort for that of their elders and other members of their community who are in need; they work multiple jobs while also taking care of their children so their husbands can chase their dreams; they shoulder a lot of financial burden so their children won't have to; and more.

Role Flexibility

Lastly, in terms of one's job/career, Nigerian women are often represented by their ability to balance the private and public spheres of their lives (du Plessis, 2016). In accordance with the findings of du Plessis (2016), Nigerian women are depicted in Nigerian-based women's magazines as both family oriented and career focused. They prioritize their responsibilities at work and at home in order to maintain the balance of wife, mother, career, and self, thus producing a well-rounded woman capable of having it all (du Plessis, 2016). The publications under review place women on a pedestal and often praise them for their ability to juggle their various roles and still establish a good relationship with their families (du Plessis, 2016).

This depiction of Nigerian women also falls in line with the fifth tenet of africana feminism—role flexibility—that suggests that black women experience flexible gender roles and have never been a subjugate to black men ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Contrarily, black women are in many ways equal to black men and are expected to have careers and professions, as well

as families. This balance between the professional and the personal is expected from black women and men.

Long before marriage, I knew that the kind of life that appeals to me is a full one in which being a great wife and mom would not be inconsistent with excelling in my profession. I decided to accord priorities to all my realities as a woman-professional, daughter, sister, wife and mom – in a way that I would not trade off one role for the others. (Akinyede, 2018b, p. 79)

This quote from Oby Ezekwesili exemplifies the ways in which Nigerian women are represented as well-rounded individuals who are able to balance their responsibilities in the public and private spheres of life (Akinyede, 2018b).

In the study conducted by du Plessis (2016), results indicated that if balance cannot be achieved, the family should take precedence, therefore reinforcing a patriarchal construction of femininity. However, the results of this study did not come to the same conclusion. If anything, constructions of femininity and womanhood in magazine discourse focused more on the responsibilities of the public sphere and less on the responsibilities of the private sphere. Women were more often represented by the responsibilities, goals, and achievements of their jobs and careers than they were by their families. However, both the private and public sphere were discussed significantly, especially in relation to how an individual maintains balance, often espousing advice on how to achieve balance, a successful marriage, and a happy family. Constructions of femininity in magazine discourse includes a large degree of complexity in its depiction of the well-rounded woman, and includes progressive views grounded in African womanist

ideologies and traditional worldviews that stem from patriarchal ideologies (du Plessis, 2016). As stated by du Plessis (2016),

These conflicting discourses about femininity in women's media can be understood as a reflection of the socio-cultural context in which they are produced: just as the society contains within it conflicting voices, so too does the text that is produced by this society. (p. 56)

Theme 2: Condition of the Body

This study found that representations of Nigerian women in Nigerian-based women's magazines, such as *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite*, are heavily concentrated on their bodies, including the maintenance and appearance of said bodies. Nigerian women are portrayed as health-conscious individuals who are deeply concerned with the health and well-being of themselves and their community. Nigerian women are also portrayed as people who value their appearance and the appearance of others. Articles included in this study discuss various skin care and anti-aging treatments, dieting and weight loss, fashion and beauty tips, societal expectations regarding beauty, social media brands and business pertaining to the topics of beauty and fashion, initiatives created by Nigerian women to raise awareness about various physical and mental illness, and more. The following sub-sections discuss the topics that fall under the theme, 'condition of the body.'

Health

Discourses in Nigerian-based women's magazines often pertain to the physical and mental health of women. Discourses in numerous articles included the concepts of

weight, diet, and exercise. Many of these articles provided guidance on how to lose weight, discussed the realities of being overweight in Nigerian society, and debated about the body positivity movement.

For example, an article in the December 2018 issue of *Today's Woman* assembled a panel of women to discuss the body positivity movement ("Call It What It Is," 2018). The panel discussed the movement, the realities of being overweight in Nigerian society, gender differences when it comes to being overweight in Nigeria, dating as an overweight person, their own body image, and their personal concepts of beauty ("Call It What It Is," 2018). On the topic of body positivity and its alleged promotion of obesity, Sandra, one of the panel members states, "If you can lose weight fine, if you can't: manage yourself and make sure you're healthy for yourself and nobody else" ("Call It What It Is," 2018, p. 60).

In addition to weight, articles in this study often discussed various skin care treatments, such as laser hair removal, Botox, and anti-aging treatments. Several articles included make-up and skin care tips for people with different skin types. One of the most significantly discussed topics was the sale of skin bleaching creams, as well as the health effects that could occur from using such products. These products are designed and sold, due to discrimination based on one's skin color, also known as, colorism ("Discrimination based on skin color," 2020; Tharps, 2016). Colorism is defined by African American novelist, short story writer, poet, and social activist, Alice Walker, as the, "prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color" (Tharps, 2016, para. 5). In other words, colorism is the preference and privileging of light skin over dark

skin (Tharps, 2016). This light-skin preference has been a common practice all over the African diaspora for generations and has caused many people with dark-skin to feel as if they are not beautiful or valued in society, ultimately leading them to seek products and treatments to alter their complexion (Tharps, 2016).

Articles in this study frequently reported on the physical and mental health effects of colorism in Nigerian society. For example, in an article about the beauty of black people, featured in the June 2018 issue of *Genevieve* magazine, author Niki Igbaroola, explained the ways in which colorism manifests in Nigeria and the toll it's taken on Nigerian people, especially women (Igbaroola, 2018a).

Today, there are many across Nigeria making good money from the sales of "creams," which are advertised as exfoliants but really work to bleach beautiful dark skin to this imagined lighter hue that often times comes out a shocking orange and can lead to skin cancer for the user. (Igbaroola, 2018a, p. 28)

Igbaroola also discusses how colorism, or the eradication of such a concept, can affect the mental health of young children.

Secondly, from a mental health perspective, we have to think of what it does to the confidence of young girls, boys and women to grow up in a society where their beauty is actively celebrated, where they do not see the colour of their skin as standing in the way of their ability to be great. (Igbaroola, 2018a, p. 29)

As discussed, numerous articles include discourses on colorism in Nigeria and how it affects a woman's mental and physical health, self-esteem and confidence, and generally how colorism may have been a challenge throughout a woman's life. The topic

of colorism as it pertains to Nigerian women will be discussed in further detail in the following sections.

When it comes to the topic of mental health, this study found that, in addition to the mental health effects of colorism, several articles also discussed maternal mental health such as post-partum depression (PPD), the rates of suicide amongst Nigerian women, advice about how to deal with mental health, tools to combat mental illness, and campaigns and initiatives designed by/for Nigerian women to raise awareness about mental and physical health issues.

For example, in article about maternal mental health in the June 2019 issue of *Today's Woman*, Dr. Wale Aminu, head of clinical services for the Postpartum Support Network (PSN) Africa, discusses the reputation of PPD in Nigeria (Anifowoshe, 2019). "Sadly the mental condition (PPD) is often unnoticed as the condition is usually misinterpreted in these parts as a form of spiritual attack or a diabolical battle," Dr. Aminu explains (Anifowoshe, 2019, p. 45).

The article also includes: personal stories from women who have dealt with post-partum depression; more information about PSN Africa and how they are spreading awareness and information about maternal mental health and PPD; information about She Writes Woman, an organization that supports women living with mental illness; and advice on how to deal with mental health (Anifowoshe, 2019).

Below is a quote from Hauwa Ojeifo, the founder of She Writes Woman and recipient of the Queen's Young Leaders Award, about her own struggle with mental illness and how the essays helped her cope (Anifowoshe, 2019).

I was diagnosed with bipolar and post-traumatic stress disorder in December 2015. Barely 2 months after, I had a relapse that sent me to a near-suicide attempt and finally got me to a place I had start antidepressants and mood stabilizers. She Writes Woman was born 2 months after as an outlet to my silent struggles over the years pre, during and post diagnosis. (Anifowoshe, 2019, p. 47)

An article published in *Genevieve's* December 2018 titled "All About the Dew Collection" issue also discussed the topic of mental health and the initiative created by founder and CEO of *Genevieve* magazine and mental health survivor, Betty Irabor, to raise awareness about mental health in Nigeria ("All About the Dew Collection!", 2018). On the reputation of mental health in Nigeria this article states, "In Nigeria, depression and mental health still remains a taboo subject with the result that many suffer and die in silence, mainly by suicide," ("All About the Dew Collection!" 2018, p. 84).

Although the representation of Nigerian women as health-conscious individuals is not directly derived from one of the tenets of africana womanism, I believe it loosely adheres to the second, eighth, and fourteenth tenets africana womanism. These tenets are self-definition, black female sisterhood, and strength ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Self-definition describes realities that African women face through a Pan-African lens and explores gender inequalities and stereotypes in the modern patriarchy ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Several articles in this study discussed the gender differences of mental and physical health, as well as the reputation of health based on gender. This study found that Nigerian women face a

disproportionate amount of stigma from being overweight or suffering with mental illness, such as PPD, than Nigerian men.

The eighth tenet, black female sisterhood, is the idea that genuine sisterhood is integral to the survival of women in a male-dominated society ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Sisterhood in africana womanism has to be genuine and is genuine through the fact that black women go through similar experiences of oppression and can, therefore, empathize with one another ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Constructions of femininity and womanhood in Nigerian-based women's magazines, include women sharing their experiences with their own mental and physical health battles, in hopes of empathizing with other women who may be going through similar circumstances. Discourses also emphasize projects, initiatives, and organizations started by Nigerian women to raise awareness about illnesses that disproportionately affect Nigerian women. Sharing one's stories in the hopes that it will help other women, and creating initiatives to aid in this goal, is the essence of black female sisterhood.

Lastly, the fourteenth tenet, strength is the belief that black women are physically and mentally strong and have persevered through centuries of struggling for herself and her family society ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Although the results of this study did not confirm in totality that Nigerian women are always physically and mentally strong, it did find that Nigerian women are often represented in Nigerian-based women's magazines in terms of their physical and mental health. In some ways, their abilities to discuss health issues and to

provide one another with support during their health journeys through the retelling of their own stories, providing advice from their experiences, and through the creation of projects, initiatives, and organizations supports the belief that Nigerian women are strong even during their weakest moments. It is their resilience and ability to address and deal with health concerns that makes them strong.

Appearance

In Nigerian-based women's magazines, Nigerian women are often represented by their physical appearance, or the defining traits or features of their bodies. Nigerian women's hair, clothes, figures, and other defining features are heavily discussed in Nigerian-based women's magazines. In *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* Nigerian women are often discussed in relation to their weight or size. Magazine discourse also emphasizes their weight loss journeys, ongoing battles with their weight, ridicule they may have faced throughout their life pertaining to their weight or general appearance, and the body positivity movement. General dislikes one had about their appearance, as well as their journeys to self-love and self-acceptance, were also frequently used in the construction of femininity and womanhood.

For example, in a previously discussed article published in the December 2018 issue of *Today's Woman* about body positivity, Feyi, one of the panel members, discusses the love and respect she has for herself, that is absent of societal beauty standards ("Call It What It Is," 2018). "I'm not my size, not my hair, not my color, I'm just me... I'm more than my size," ("Call It What It Is," 2018, p. 60).

In an article published in the June 2018 issue of *Genevieve* magazine, Nigerian singer, songwriter and actress, Simi discusses her own definition of beauty which is absent of societal beauty standards (Belo-Osagie, 2018a). "To me, beauty is when a person is comfortable in the way they look. Beauty is relative. What's beautiful to one person might not be beautiful to another person. Every individual is their own standard," she explains (Belo-Osagie, 2018a, p. 44).

Another article published in *Genevieve's* June 2018 issue also discussed the topics of self-love and body positivity ("My Beautiful Story," 2018). The article titled "My Beautiful Story" consisted of followers sharing no make-up selfies and short stories about their journey to self-love, self-acceptance, and self-confidence ("My Beautiful Story," 2018). Lateefah Hassan, one of the young ladies featured in the article, states, "Why do I have to try so hard to conform to society's standard of beautiful? I am my own beautiful, I love every inch of my perfection and yes, I am owning it," ("My Beautiful Story," 2018, p. 25).

These examples highlight the ways in which Nigerian women have used and continue to use Nigerian-based women's magazines to promote self-love and body positivity. They also use these publications to discuss their own journeys to self-love and to encourage readers to embark on this journey as well. The magazines included in this study often represent Nigerian women as self-affirming individuals whose self-esteem is internally derived and is not dependent on outside opinions. This theme will be discussed in further detail in the following sections.

Despite this representation, discourses in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* also include the aspects of the body that Nigerian women do not like or feel confident about. Some of these articles even include some self-deprecating language. Other discourses also include beauty and fashion advice that aim to help women hide "undesirable" parts of their bodies, which can be quite problematic because these articles, whether consciously or subconsciously, are encouraging women to hide parts of their bodies to conform to Eurocentric standards of beauty adopted by Nigerian society.

For instance, in an article titled "Trimming the Edges" published in the December 2018 issue of *Today's Woman*, author Omotara Adeniyi shares a few fashion tips that could help camouflage seemingly "undesirable parts" (Adeniyi, 2018, p. 44).

Go for clean classy jewelry, as anything chunky or overtly busy will make you look heavier...If you have chunky calves/ankles aka "cankles" and/ or very wide feet avoid flats - a little heel, no matter how small, helps and if you do go for flats, make sure they are uber stylish and are either pointed or slightly pointed (Adeniyi, 2018, pp. 44-45).

Although readers are delivered messages in other articles that are meant to empower them to embark on a journey of self-love absent of societal beauty standards, other articles, like the one mentioned above, serve to reinforce societal beauty standards and make readers feel self-conscious about their bodies. However, these deprecating articles are few and far between in comparison to the other articles that are meant to uplift and empower. In fact, there are numerous articles aimed at providing make-up or fashion tips to readers, that are aimed to enhance their beauty not criticize it. The advice in these

articles include evening wear suggestions, how to shop on a budget, how to properly apply lipstick to avoid smudging, how to achieve nude/natural make-up looks, the best skin care treatments for various skin types, how to reduce clutter in one's purse, and more.

In addition to beauty advice, discourses about colorism and European beauty standards are often used to construct representations of Nigerian women. The health effects of colorism was a popular topic used to portray Nigerian women in Nigerian-based women's magazines and was discussed in the previous section. However, the general topic of colorism and European beauty standards as it affects Nigerian beauty standards was also a widely discussed topic pertaining to Nigerian women. In some of the articles included in this study, Nigerian women explained the realities of being a dark-skin individual in Nigeria, how colorism affects Nigerian society, and how it has affected them and their self-esteem personally and professionally. They also provided personal anecdotes of their experiences with colorism in Nigeria. The condemnation of colorism, and the reaffirmation of the beauty of all skin tones was frequently included in the representation of Nigerian women.

For example, in the June 2018 *Genevieve* article featuring Nigerian singer, songwriter and actress Simi, author Belo-Osagie (2018a) explains that people often bleach their skin because light-skin women are considered to be more beautiful. However, Simi reaffirms the beauty of all skin tones by stating, "I don't think they're more beautiful or less beautiful. I think you're as beautiful as you are. The end. If you're

dark-skinned and beautiful, the end. If you're light-skinned and beautiful, the end too," (Belo-Osagie, 2018a, p. 44).

Lastly, this study found that Nigerian women are often represented by professions that pertain to beauty and fashion, such as cosmetologists, stylists, fashion designers, and beauty bloggers in Nigerian-based women's magazines. Women are also represented by their love for fashion and the value it adds to their lives. For many Nigerian women, fashion and make-up is a creative outlet that allows them to express themselves. Fashion, for Nigerian women, is personal and is meant to reflect their personalities. Fashion is not about trends or what's popular but is about what they feel comfortable in and what makes them feel good about themselves. Fashion helps them to create their identities.

An article in the November 2019 issue of *Exquisite* magazine featuring Bukola Atunbi, fashion designer and CEO of Lahmielesho, discusses Atunbi's background, how and why she started her brand, and her views on fashion. "Fashion is a statement and it speaks even before you utter a word," she continues, "Fashion will always change but what remains constant is your style," (Atunbi, 2019, p. 17).

Although the representation of Nigerian women as people who care deeply about their appearance and the appearance of others is not directly derived from one of the tenets of africana womanism, I believe it loosely adheres to the eighth and fifteenth tenets of africana womanism. These tenets are black female sisterhood and respect ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

The eighth tenet, black female sisterhood, is the idea that genuine sisterhood is integral to the survival of women in a male-dominated society ("Africana Womanism,"

2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Sisterhood in africana womanism has to be genuine and is genuine through the fact that black women go through similar experiences of oppression and can therefore empathize with one another ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Many of the articles previously discussed include women sharing their journeys to self-love and self-acceptance, in hopes of empathizing with other women who may be going through similar battles. Several articles also discuss the social, cultural, and political issue of colorism, while reaffirming the beauty of Nigerian women of all skin tones and shades. Sharing one's self-acceptance stories in the hopes that it will help other women and bringing awareness to issues that affect the self-esteem of Nigerian women while also empowering them and affirming their beauty exemplifies the tenet of black female sisterhood.

The fifteenth tenet of africana womanism is respect, and it refers to the reverence an African woman has for herself, absent of colonized standards ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Respect includes determining one's worth, while ignoring politics, and demanding respect for one's self in order to acquire true self-esteem and self-worth ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Many of the articles discussed in this section discuss a Nigerian woman's journey to self-love and self-acceptance, which impacts one's self-respect and self-worth. In this construction of femininity, Nigerian women determine what beauty is for themselves, absent of European or societal standards of beauty. They have reverence for themselves and other Nigerian women.

Although a few articles seek to reinforce societal standards of beauty, a majority of articles aim to dismantle these standards and encourage Nigerian women to create their own standards of beauty in which their bodies and features are valued and celebrated.

Theme 3: Opinions of Others

This study found that representations of Nigerian women in Nigerian-based women's magazines, such as *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite*, are heavily focused on the opinions of others. In other words, this study found that Nigerian women are often portrayed as individuals who seek advice from experts or peers, are concerned with one's reputation, and/or care deeply about societal expectations. Whether they attempt to follow societal expectations or subvert them, Nigerian women recognize the importance of societal expectations in their communities and attempt to cast light on these expectations in hopes of either maintaining these expectations or eradicating them. Nigerian women are also portrayed as individuals who care about their reputation, especially their professional reputation. They strive to present themselves as competent and polished individuals, often seeking advice from other women in order to maintain this image. Nigerian women also seek a wide range of advice in these magazines, from fashion tips, to entrepreneurial advice, to parenting advice. The following sub-sections discuss the topics that fall under the theme, 'opinions of others.'

Advice

As previously stated, Nigerian women are portrayed in Nigerian-based women's magazines as advice givers and receivers. From the articles included in this study, I found that Nigerian women often seek the advice of other Nigerian women on a variety of

topics including: fashion and beauty, business and entrepreneurialism, parenting, aging, work/life balance, spirituality, physical and mental health, self-esteem and confidence, social media, education, dating and marriage, and general life advice. However, as highlighted in previous sections, a majority of the advice given in these articles pertains to the topics of fashion, beauty, physical and mental health, business, entrepreneurialism, work/life balance, and career advice.

In this section, I will briefly discuss some of the other types of advice often given to and from Nigerian women. For instance, the December 2019 issue of *Today's Woman* featured an article titled "4 Generations Deep: The Family Next Door" that included interviews from the first daughters of three families. In this article, the interviewees relayed advice given to them throughout their life from the elders in their families. When discussing wisdom passed down from one's mother or grandmother, Ameera Abraham, CEO of the Nail Bar stated,

My mum's advice has been three-fold: 1. Teach your children to love the Lord, pray and read their bible from a young age. 2. Create a quiet time for myself, it's important to reflect, pray and create a structure around my life. 3. Finance: always have a budget and structure your finances to ensure that your children are adequately covered. ("4 Generations Deep," 2019, p. 48)

In another article published in the December 2019 issue of *Today's Woman*, Peju Fadirepo, brand manager, wife, and mother of three, imparts some sage advice onto readers about maintaining a proper balance between work and personal life, aging,

overcoming obstacles, and spirituality ("Peju Fadirepo," 2019). On the topic of work/life balance and aging Fadirepo states,

Be a lifelong learner. Never believe you know it all as learning is for a lifetime.

Age is a number so be humble. In this age of digitization, you have to be open to learn from everyone, especially those younger than you. ("Peju Fadirepo," 2019, p. 46)

On the topic of spirituality, which is a common advice topic found in Nigerian-based women's magazines, Fadirepo states, "Keep God in the center of it all. Make Him your anchor notwithstanding all," ("Peju Fadirepo," 2019, p. 46).

In an article published in the May 2019 issue of *Genevieve*, Abisoye Ajayi-Akinfolarin, social entrepreneur and founder of Pearls Africa, imparts some educational advice onto career-minded young girls.

I would strongly advise them to take online courses, volunteer with organizations so as to gain some form of practical experience...It may not be easy but they should have the mindset that says 'it's possible' they should also not expect success overnight, they must be ready to read and learn and endure the process of growth, be able to delay gratification. (Belonwu, 2019, p. 27)

Lastly, this study found that advice about dating, sex, and marriage was also frequently discussed in Nigerian-based women's magazines. Several articles provided advice on how to date in the digital age, how to deal with marital obstacles such as mistrust and physical distance in one's relationship, and single's advice. For instance, in an article published in the May 2018 issue of *Exquisite* magazine Yetty Williams,

founder of the popular social media brand Lagos Mums, gave career advice, romantic advice, and general life advice to *Exquisite* readers.

I would say be flexible, stay hungry for success, do not jump to running your own business because you have a problem with listening to authority. For single ladies, know yourself, take the time to grow, build your skill set, and work on your relationship with God before you get married. (Shote, 2018a, p. 17)

Although the representation of Nigerian women as advice givers and receivers is not directly derived from one of the tenets of africana womanism, I believe it loosely adheres to the eighth tenet of africana womanism, black female sisterhood ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

The eighth tenet, black female sisterhood, is the idea that genuine sisterhood is integral to the survival of women in a male-dominated society ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Sisterhood in African womanism has to be genuine and is genuine through the fact that black women go through similar experiences of oppression and can therefore empathize with one another ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Many of the articles previously discussed include women sharing their thoughts, opinions, and experiences in hopes of imparting wisdom onto other women who may be going through similar circumstances. Sharing advice about different aspects of life in Nigeria in the hopes that it will help other women, especially the younger generation of Nigerian women, while simultaneously validating their experiences and respective struggles, exemplifies the tenet of black female sisterhood.

Reputation/Societal Expectations

This study found that Nigerian-based women's magazines often include stereotypical and traditional ideals that are a consequence of an embodied range of social and cultural demands related to gender that women are expected to embody in society (du Plessis, 2016). Nigerian women are represented in Nigerian-based women's magazines as individuals who are deeply concerned with the ideals and expectations perpetuated by their society, as well as their reputation and the reputation of their peers, their community, and their country. Some Nigerian women even expressed ways in which they'd like to improve the reputation of themselves, their communities, or country. They've also expressed a desire to subvert societal expectations around a myriad of topics. Articles included in the study often include discourses about societal viewpoints towards plus size women and the body positivity movement, mental illness, abuse towards women, skin color, women celebrities, the LGBTQ community, female sexuality, and single motherhood.

Several articles discuss the ways in which these cultural norms are reflected in the actions, thoughts, and opinions of Nigerian people, in particular women (du Plessis, 2016). This study also found that Nigerian women pay close attention to perceived societal expectations of how one should live and work in Nigerian society. However, Nigerian women often discuss these expectations in relation to how they can change or impact them in order to create a more equitable society. In accordance with the findings of du Plessis (2016), conventional motherhood, the nuclear family, and a lasting marriage are depicted as attainable goals that are expected of Nigerian women to reach. However,

unlike the findings of du Plessis (2016), marriage and parenthood are not the ultimate expression and fulfillment of their ambitions for themselves as persons.

Although many articles discuss the nuclear family, several articles include depictions of nonconventional families such as single parent families, blended families, long-distance families, etc., therefore, subverting societal expectations concerning domestic life in Nigeria. Many articles also discuss a Nigerian woman's desire for her own identity that is defined by her economic achievements, which was heavily discussed in the sections on ambition, recognition, and entrepreneurship. Many articles also discuss a Nigerian woman's desire for her own identity absent from her relation to her husband or children. This desire for an independent identity based on one's own skills and merits will be further discussed in the section "self-esteem/self-sufficiency." Although societal expectations regarding motherhood were prevalent in this study, the general theme of "mothering/nurturing" was not found to be as significant in this study as it was in the study published by du Plessis (2016).

An example of the ways in which societal viewpoints and expectations are communicated in Nigerian-based women's magazines can be found in an article published in the June 2019 issue of *Today's Woman* about maternal mental health (Anifowoshe, 2019). In this story, clinical psychologist Dr. Aminu discusses the reputation and stigma of mental illness in Nigeria (Anifowoshe, 2019).

A lot of mothers fear being stigmatized or branded a 'mad woman', so in some cases our support group at PSN Africa have had to work extra hard in persuading

the mother to take treatment/therapy even though it is obvious to her that she needs help. (Anifowoshe, 2019, p. 45)

As discussed in previous sections, due to the misconceptions of mental illness, many Nigerian women have had to endure prolonged suffering due to a lack of knowledge and professional care (Anifowoshe, 2019).

In this article, Hauwa Ojeifo, founder of She Writes Woman, also discusses the societal receptions towards abuse and domestic violence.

Whether it is social vices like gender-based violence, substance abuse, abusive marriages and parenting, unfair cultural norms and systemic inequalities, people have been told to keep quiet about these issues or risk being shamed... The longer answer is that we have created a culture of silence. Where silence is enabled, shame thrives. (Anifowoshe, 2019, p. 47)

As indicated in these quotes, although Nigerian women are cognizant of the ways in which issues such as mental illness, abuse, and domestic violence are viewed and treated in Nigerian society, they aim to change this cultural expectation of silence by bringing awareness to these issues. They also aim to subvert these expectations by providing advice, resources, and strategies to their readers who may be dealing with these problems.

In an article published in the June 2018 issue of *Genevieve*, author Niki Igbaroola (2018a) discusses the societal expectations around beauty in Nigeria, namely colorism. Igbaroola also discusses how colorism and the privileging of lighter skin as a social norm impacted the attitudes and actions of older Nigerian women. In this article, however,

Nigerian women are not subverting the harmful expectations that Nigerian society places on them but are reinforcing them.

Age has allowed me to further understand the pervasiveness of the idea that lighter skin is more attractive in Nigeria and across Africa. The solidity of this position has been clear in the ways that I have heard older women disparage babies for their "darkness" saying in local dialect or English, "it's not good for a baby to be too dark." The concern is always more pressing when said baby is a girl. (Igbaroola, 2018a, p. 28)

In an article about domestic violence in LGBTQ communities, published in the December 2018 issue of *Genevieve*, Igbaroola (2018b) also discusses the ways in which Nigerian society views the concept of gender and the LGBTQ community, including queer women and how these receptions affect legal policies and social interactions. She also discusses the interweaving of culture, religion, and government and how this often leads to the creation of laws that criminalize LGBTQ identities (Igbaroola, 2018b). This article is a suitable example of how societal expectations can affect the thoughts, opinions, and actions of Nigerian people, including women. This article discusses the ways in which socio-political policies and expectations shape the way gender is defined and expressed in Nigeria. However, by including an article that speaks to the hostile receptions of LGBTQIA communities and identities, *Genevieve* magazine attempts to subvert cultural notions surrounding this community by shedding light on the issues that affect them, therefore aiding in the visibility of this community in Nigerian society.

These laws, in conjunction with already hostile receptions to the LGBTQIA communities, has led to an increase in both legal and illegal persecution of bodies that do not conform to heteronormative identities. That there is a singular way to be man and woman is still an overarching belief that continues to stunt freedom of expression and being. (Igbaroola, 2018b, p. 32)

Another article published in *Genevieve* magazine discusses public viewpoints and societal expectations regarding female sexuality (Nwoke, 2019). In this article, Nwoke (2019) discusses how sexual agency for women is met with critical reception due to the patriarchal quality of Nigerian society that holds male validation and marriageability as a societal expectation. Yet, *Genevieve* once again attempts to subvert cultural notions of female sexuality in their publication with the inclusion of this article. By representing women in relation to their sexuality, *Genevieve* attempts to change the narrative around sexual practices in Nigeria by encouraging the agency of women and highlighting their experiences. Sexual conservatism, as a societal expectation for women commonly communicated in Nigerian-based women's magazines, supports the findings of du Plessis (2016).

This biased sexual establishment determines and vetoes who buys condoms, who keeps condoms and who puts them on. For the majority, the "who" is male. When the tables turn and the "who" is female, she is not just female; she is slut-shamed and dismissed as a woman who has lost her sense of decency and virtue. (Nwoke, 2019, p. 48)

This study found that discourses in Nigerian-based women's magazines feature women who aim to change the status quo by attempting to eradicate or change certain societal expectations. Some discourses even provided advice on how one can deal with societal expectations, negative reputations, gossip, stereotypes, rumors, etc. Constructions of femininity and womanhood emphasize the reputation of a particular Nigerian woman in her industry or field of work. This study found that magazines discourse emphasizes the general reputation of Nigerian women, including stereotypes and their perceived reputation within Nigeria and abroad. Lastly, this study found that articles frequently discuss the sort of reputation a Nigerian woman wants for herself.

For example, an article published in the May 2019 issue of *Exquisite* magazine featuring entertainer, performer, model, and humanitarian Asogwa Amuche Alexandra, a.k.a. Alex Unusual, discusses the type of reputation Alexandra hopes to cultivate for herself and how she wants to be remembered in the future ("Alex Unusual," 2019). "I want to be of positive impact on all lives I come across and be remembered for that. I want to be remembered for leaving positive marks and memories everywhere I go and living a life worth emulating," she explains ("Alex Unusual," 2019, p. 33).

The representation of Nigerian women as individuals who are deeply concerned and affected by the opinions of others, especially those from their sociocultural groups and communities, but seek to change narratives and expectations that do not serve them is not directly derived from one of the tenets of africana womanism, but I believe it loosely adheres to the second tenet of africana womanism, self-definition ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Self-

definition describes realities that African women face through a Pan-African lens and explores gender inequalities and stereotypes in the modern patriarchy ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

Several articles in this study discussed the ways in which Nigerian society views and treats women based on cultural and social beliefs about various topics such as gender, single motherhood, beauty, health, female sexuality, and more. Discourses often emphasize the reputation of women and how these reputations affect the way they are treated in society. Many of the articles also emphasize societal expectations that govern people's thoughts, opinions, and actions in Nigerian society. The examples detailed above are just some of the gender inequalities and stereotypes that Nigerian women face on a daily basis. This study found that Nigerian women face a disproportionate amount of stigma, criticism, and even abuse when it comes to mental health, weight, beauty, sexual and gender identity, single parenthood, etc. This stigma often affects the actions of Nigerian women as well.

This study found that in order to cope with the opinions of others, women either try to ignore the criticism or seek ways to change the way others see them. They even give advice to other women who are also affected by these reputations and expectations, which also exemplifies the eighth tenet of africana Womanism, black female sisterhood ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Sisterhood in African womanism has to be genuine and is genuine through the fact that black women go through similar experiences of oppression and can therefore empathize with one another ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013;

Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Many of the articles highlighted in this section include the discussion of issues that impact the lives of Nigerian women. Similar experiences of oppression regarding mental health, abuse, domestic violence, colorism, and more are featured in the magazines included in this study. By sharing one's experience as an author or subject in these articles, and relaying advice and resources that can help others deal with such hardships, exemplifies the tenet of black female sisterhood.

Theme 4: Self-Esteem/Self-Sufficiency

The results of this study indicate that Nigerian women are often represented in Nigerian-based women's magazines as self-confident and self-sufficient people. Discourses in these publications emphasize ways in which Nigerian women have been empowered or can empower others. These articles also discuss the level of self-confidence, self-esteem, or self-respect a Nigerian woman has for herself, as well as the level of confidence or respect others have in a Nigerian woman. Lastly, this study found that Nigerian women are also represented as self-sufficient individuals who need not rely on others to provide them with emotional, physical, or financial security. Nigerian women are portrayed as independent beings who are able and willing to care for themselves and others. The following sub-sections discuss the topics that fall under the theme, 'Self-esteem/ Self-sufficiency.'

Empowerment

This study found that discourses in Nigerian-based women's magazines include the ways in which women have been empowered by others throughout their life.

Empowerment in this study is defined as the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights. Discourse in these publications also include things, ideas, and situations that have empowered Nigerian women or given them a boost in confidence, as well as various times they have been given the authority or power to do something in their personal or professional lives. Some passages also discuss one's journey to becoming more self-confident. These articles also feature advice given to and from Nigerian women on how to be more confident and self-assured. Lastly, articles included in this study frequently discuss movements that were created to empower women, such as the body positivity movement. Thus, Nigerian-based women's magazines fulfill the function of empowering women by teaching them to appreciate themselves and their abilities and giving them a platform to celebrate themselves (du Plessis, 2016). According to du Plessis (2016), this message of empowerment highlights femininity in a positive way.

An example of empowerment as it is discussed in Nigerian-based women's magazines can be found in an article published in the December 2018 issue of *Today's Woman*. In this article Oby Ezekwesili discussed the ways in which her father instilled confidence within her from a young age (Akinyede, 2018b). "My dad always told me that I am such a treasure, and that I personify what is good, and that, I must never, ever, take myself down, by looking at myself from any other prism," (Akinyede, 2018b, p. 72).

This quote highlights the ways in which magazine discourse often includes examples of men empowering women. According to the theory of africana womanism, as exemplified by this quote, mutually beneficial relationships between a well-respected

African woman, and a supportive, like-minded man can and often do occur ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; du Plessis, 2016; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). The africana womanist desires positive relationships with men, in which each individual is mutually supportive and an important part of a positive africana family ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). The above quote highlights this type of mutually beneficial relationship between men and women that are commonly included in the construction of femininity in Nigerian-based women's magazines. In addition to mutually beneficial and empowering relationships between men and women, discourse also includes supportive and empowering relationships between women. The depiction of solidarity amongst women is prevalent in the construction of femininity and womanhood in these publications (du Plessis, 2016)

In the previously discussed article, featured in the December 2018 issue of *Today's Woman* that included a panel of women discussing the body positivity movement, Kittan, one of the panelists, chats about how her body-positive friends have empowered her ("Call It What It Is," 2018).

A lot of people have self-image issues and there are a lot of days where I can feel uncomfortable or think this doesn't fit right but I think I'm very blessed, in that I have a lot of body-positive friends who say things like everyone is beautiful and don't let anyone tell you the way you look isn't ok. ("Call It What It Is," 2018, p. 64)

Several articles featured in the December 2018 issue of *Exquisite* discuss the people, things, or ideas that that empower, motivate, or inspire Nigerian women to achieve their goals, strive for success, and generally work to be a better version of themselves. For example, in an article about Tefal Studios, a child and family first photography company, owner Tosin Rufai discusses the women who have empowered and inspired her. "I am inspired by many strong and powerful women that I have not necessarily met. Also, an older cousin with a PhD that I have watched since I was a little girl. She is a huge inspiration!" (Shote, 2018c, p. 33).

Lastly, this study found that magazine discourse often includes the ways in which one's appearance can contribute to a Nigerian woman's self-esteem. Several articles discuss a myriad of fashion and make-up tips that aim at enhancing a woman's natural beauty and boosting her confidence. Other articles discuss empowering advice given by a Nigerian woman to the readers. The purpose of this advice is usually to empower a Nigerian woman to take control of her life and her destiny.

In addition, a few articles also pertain to a business, organization, or initiative started by a Nigerian woman aimed at empowering other Nigerian women. Solidarity amongst women is prevalent in the representation of women who are committed to programs that empower women in society through education and training (du Plessis, 2016). These programs not only aim to empower women but to uplift them to be full participants in society (du Plessis, 2016).

For example, *Exquisite* magazine hosts the annual ELOY (Exquisite Ladies of the Year) conference as a part of the initiative of the ELOY Awards Foundation ("The ELOY

Conference," 2020). The ELOY conference is a platform designed to educate and empower thousands of women ("The ELOY Conference," 2020). The aim of the ELOY Awards Foundation and conference is to empower and challenge women by providing them with access to resources, business skills and tools that will enable them to grow, transform, and/or sustain their businesses, which will benefit their communities ("The ELOY Conference," 2020).

An article about the 2019 ELOY conference was featured in the November 2019 issue of *Exquisite*. The theme of the conference was "Empower Her to Sustain Her" ("Everything You Missed," 2019). In this article, the author discussed the conference, the featured panels and panelists, the workshops and classes, and the pitch competition that offered a 250,000 Naira grant prize ("Everything You Missed," 2019). The author also discussed the general atmosphere of the conference and the welcoming environment that Tewa Onasanya, publisher and CEO of *Exquisite* magazine and convener of the event, cultivated ("Everything You Missed," 2019). "The convener of the event, Mrs. Tewa Onasanya welcomed the attendees and encouraged them to push themselves harder and always know that they can achieve everything they set out to do," ("Everything You Missed," 2019, p. 11).

Although the representation of Nigerian women as empowering individuals is not directly derived from one of the tenets of africana womanism, I believe it loosely adheres to the eighth tenet of africana womanism, black female sisterhood ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). The tenet black female sisterhood is the idea that genuine sisterhood is integral to the survival

of women in a male-dominated society ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Sisterhood in africana womanism has to be genuine and is genuine through the fact that black women go through similar experiences of oppression and can, therefore, empathize with one another ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). I believe the empowered representation of Nigerian women adheres to the tenet of black female sisterhood because many of the articles included in this study highlight women sharing their experiences of being empowered by various people and things in their lives. They discuss their own journey to self-confidence with the idea that it will empower readers. They also attempt to empower other Nigerian women through advice and encouraging words of affirmation.

Confidence

This study found that Nigerian women are often represented in Nigerian-based women's magazines by their confidence. In *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite*, the confidence of a Nigerian woman, or lack, therefore, is a frequent topic of discussion. Articles included in this study discuss aspects of a Nigerian woman's life that she's particularly confident about such as her body, her intellectual abilities, skills, her altruistic qualities, her work ethic, etc.

An example of confidence as discussed in Nigerian-based women's magazines can be found in article titled "My Beautiful Story" published in the June 2018 issue of *Genevieve*. The article consisted of followers sharing no make-up selfies and short stories

about their journey to self-love, self-acceptance, and self-confidence ("My Beautiful Story," 2018). Irene Ochanya, one of the young ladies featured in the article, states,

An ex once told me, "You are not completely fine. It's not only facial beauty a woman needs, she needs a well curved body too." I smiled over that because I accepted my body, and no one could break my confidence. I love my big tummy, big thighs and chubby cheeks and because of that acceptance I found true happiness and love. ("My Beautiful Story," 2018, p. 25)

In that same article, Omogbeja Olubori Olaotan discusses her journey to self-love and self-confidence ("My Beautiful Story," 2018). She describes a time in her life when she felt inferior due to her lighter complexion, but as she got older, she learned love her skin ("My Beautiful Story," 2018).

I realised self-love is the best thing that can happen to anyone. Now, I'm comfortable with whatever skin colour the weather brings me. I look at my white patches and I smile. When people call me 'afin', I take it as a compliment. If I don't love myself, who will? ("My Beautiful Story," 2018, p. 25)

Articles also discuss a time in a Nigerian woman's life where she felt self-conscious or had low self-esteem. This study found that in Nigerian-based women's magazines Nigerian women often discuss feeling self-conscious about their bodies and their abilities to do their job. Discourses also include any fears or regrets they may have had about their lives and futures, as well as times when others picked at their insecurities.

For instance, in an article featured in the June 2018 issue of *Today's Woman* Yetty Williams, founder of the popular social media brand Lagos Mums, explains to author,

Jennifer Ugboh, how she was born with an accumulation of blood vessels on her face causing a disfigurement, and how this once affected her confidence (Ugboh, 2018a).

For a long time I was scared to do visuals because of the defect on my face, but everybody has their 'why me', we are all born unique and I have done writing for so long I need to continue to reach out to more women. (Ugboh, 2018a, p. 52)

A previously discussed article included in the November 2019 issue of *Exquisite* magazine featuring Bukola Atunbi, fashion designer and CEO of Lahmielesho, examines Atunbi's background, how and why she started her brand, and her views on fashion (Atunbi, 2019). In this article Atunbi also examines some of the fear and apprehension she felt when starting her brand. "I had fears and I still have, my major fear was acceptance. I was skeptical because I knew there were other brands dominating the market already and the majority are high end," Atunbi explains (Atunbi, 2019, p. 17).

As mentioned, discourses surrounding self-love and self-respect were found to be frequently used in the representation of Nigerian women. Discourses often examine their journeys to self-love and self-respect, often through the inclusion of advice aimed at highlighting the importance of self-love and self-respect, and how one can achieve such a lofty goal.

For example, in a June 2018 article featured in *Genevieve* magazine, Nigerian singer, songwriter, and actress, Simi discusses the importance of self-love (Belo-Osagie, 2018a).

I'm a big advocate for self-love and I think, personally, that people tend to feed off the value that you have for yourself. Not everyone can be taken for granted.

Some people can take you for granted because you let them. (Belo-Osagie, 2018a, p. 44)

In another article published in the December 2019 issue of *Genevieve* about single motherhood in Nigeria, Maureen Nwaezeigwe, single mom and founder of the NGO, Singlemomhood Support Initiative, discusses the importance of women loving themselves (Ekwegh, 2019). "Women need to love themselves, because it is the lack of love and respect that leads to [that feeling of] inferiority," Nwaezeigwe states (Ekwegh, 2019, p. 41).

In this article, Nwaezeigwe also discusses the lack of confidence and shame that single mothers often feel due to the stigma towards single motherhood in Nigerian society (Ekwegh, 2019). However, she also discusses the confidence, self-love, and self-respect that many single mothers have despite said stigma and stereotypes (Ekwegh, 2019). Chef Imoteda, for example, is one of the single mothers included in this story, who owns her life and her decisions, and refuses to be ashamed for the choices she's made in her life (Ekwegh, 2019). Imoteda has cultivated a sense of self-respect, absent of Nigerian societal standards (Ekwegh, 2019).

I personally don't let myself focus on those sorts of things, because it doesn't make me better for myself or my daughter. I know myself; I am generally a nice person, I work super hard, I take care of my kid. I know that about myself, so it doesn't matter what anybody says. (Ekwegh, 2019, p. 41)

Although the representation of Nigerian women as confident individuals is not directly derived from one of the tenets of africana womanism, I believe it loosely adheres

to the fifteenth tenet of africana womanism, respect ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). The principle of respect refers to the reverence an African woman has for herself, absent of colonized standards ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Respect is the idea of determining one's worth, while ignoring politics ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). This is a crucial step to becoming a confident African woman ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). The africana womanist, above all, demands respect for herself in order to acquire true self-esteem and self-worth, which in turn enables her, among other things, to have complete and positive relationships with all people ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

I believe the representation of Nigerian women as confident individuals who practice self-love and self-respect, adheres to the tenet of respect because constructions of femininity and womanhood in these publications underscore the confidence a Nigerian woman has about her appearance, work and creative abilities, skills, her life choices, and more. These constructions also emphasize the love and respect a Nigerian woman has for herself, as well as her encouraging attitude towards other women's journeys to self-love and self-respect. While some articles discuss various insecurities, regrets, fears, and shame that a Nigerian woman may possess, they often include the efforts made to overcome said anxieties. This study found that even when Nigerian women are dealing with low self-esteem, they are often able to pull themselves out of this self-deprecating

mindset. Lastly, not only do representations of Nigerian women emphasize the love and respect they have for one's self, but they also highlight times in when they had to demand respect from others. Nigerian women have too much reverence for themselves to allow others to disrespect them or underestimate them. Whether through words or actions, Nigerian women make it clear that they are formidable beings.

Wholeness

This study found that Nigerian women are represented in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* as self-sufficient, independent people. Magazine discourse includes representations of Nigerian women as resourceful individuals, who are concerned with their finances because they seek to provide, or participate in providing, for themselves and their families. The results of this study also indicate that Nigerian women are independent people who seek to have an identity that is not based on their relationships with men. They desire to be seen as autonomous beings capable of making their own choices in life. They demand to be given their own name and identity, where they are valued for their own contributions and attributes. They are more than the wives of their husband or the mothers of their sons.

For example, in an article about Lagos Mums, featured June 2018 issue of *Today's Woman*, Yetty Williams, creator of the social media brand Lagos Mums, discusses how she has been able to be adventurous career wise because she is financially independent and has a healthy attitude towards saving. "I always have a cushion; I always save more than I spend and do things that generate wealth. I get bored very quickly, so I

always have a comfortable fall back plan of 6 months," Williams explains (Ugboh, 2018a, p. 52).

In an article published in the December 2018 issue of *Genevieve* magazine, Annie Idibia, actor, mother, and wife of musician Innocent Idibia, discusses how she did not initially agree to participate in the article because she wanted to be known as more than just Innocent Idibia's wife (Belo-Osagie, 2018b). She desires to be recognized as an autonomous person and not just an appendage of her husband (Belo-Osagie, 2018b). She demands her own identity (Belo-Osagie, 2018b).

It was just that in the first few years of our marriage I felt I had no identity apart from being 2Baba's wife, so I avoided joint interviews with my husband... I do believe there is so much more to me that I'm yet to unravel, rather than just being Innocent's wife. (Belo-Osagie, 2018b, p. 48)

Representing Nigerian women as independent and self-sufficient adheres to the fourth tenet of africana Womanism, wholeness ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013 Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). This principle describes the importance of self-sufficiency that an African woman must have in order to upkeep her household ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013 Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Wholeness also stresses the required self-esteem that emanates from within an African woman who must be strong for not only herself, but for her family and community as a whole ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). By representing Nigerian women as financially independent, resourceful, and self-sufficient, it supports and affirms the tenet of wholeness that

emphasizes a Nigerian women's independence not only for herself but also for her family. Wholeness also refers to the self-esteem and completeness an african woman must have, in order to maintain her autonomous identity. The representations of Nigerian women discussed in this section adheres to this aspect of wholeness as well. Nigerian women are not only financially independent but emotionally independent as well. They are autonomous people with their own lives, interests, and concerns, and are not merely defined by their roles as mothers and wives.

Theme 5: Life Challenges

Finally, this study found that representations of Nigerian women in Nigerian-based women's magazines, such as *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite*, are frequently focused on the challenges they have faced throughout their life. Life challenges discussed in Nigerian-based women's magazines include career obstacles; the death of a loved one; emotional, physical, and verbal abuse; bullying; marital challenges; and more. Magazine discourse also emphasized Nigerian women's ability to adapt and overcome life challenges and obstacles. The following sub-sections discuss the topics that fall under the theme, 'life challenges.'

Adversity

Representations of Nigerian women often include discourses about the various obstacles or challenges that a Nigerian woman has faced in her life, especially in pursuit of a particular goal. Whether it's starting one's own modeling agency, catering business, or starting a career in acting, the obstacles faced in pursuit of a goal were heavily

discussed in Nigerian-based women's magazines. The challenges that come with pursuing two or more career paths were also frequently discussed in these publications.

For example, in an article published in the December 2018 issue of *Today's Woman*, Temi Aboderin-Alao, CEO of JP Kingdom, JP Kouture, Golden Curvy Agency, and convener of Plus-Size Fashion Week Africa, discusses some of the challenges she faced when laying the foundation for plus-size acceptance in the fashion industry (Ugboh, 2018b).

It wasn't easy. There were times when we were blatantly overcharged, there were times when our models were treated with hostility, when we were segregated from the other models and refused makeup. I had to go along with a full production team every time, doubling as trainer, creative director, makeup artiste, whatever it took, just so the show could go on. (Ugboh, 2018b, p. 43)

Discourses in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* also include the challenges business owners and entrepreneurs face when it comes to infrastructure in Nigeria. For instance, in an article featured in the May 2018 issue of *Exquisite* magazine, Yetty Williams, creator of the social media brand Lagos Mums, discusses some of the infrastructure problems she's encountered. "The challenges we have with infrastructure in Nigeria; lack of steady electricity, costly internet among others makes things hard and gives you additional stress even before you start your day and get into business mode," (Shote, 2018a, p. 17).

In addition to professional obstacles, constructions of femininity in Nigerian-based women's magazines feature discourses about the obstacles and challenges a

Nigerian woman faces in her personal life. Some of the obstacles a Nigerian woman faces in her personal life include marital struggles, death, and dealing with single motherhood. These constructions of womanhood also emphasized the ways in which Nigerian women have adapted to and pulled themselves and their families out of difficult times. The magazines included in this study also discussed forums created by Nigerian woman to vent about their situations and to find support in one another.

In accordance with the findings of du Plessis (2016), and as stated in the section reputation/societal expectations, marriage is culturally valued and expected in Nigerian society, therefore the maintenance of one's marriage is of the utmost importance. Women are constructed in Nigerian-based women's magazines as individuals who are bestowed the responsibility and power to navigate any challenges or difficulties that may arise in one's marriage in order to protect the sanctity of said marriage (du Plessis, 2016). One of the marital challenges discussed in Nigerian-based women's magazines is the fear that women will have to deal with the infidelity from their husbands (du Plessis, 2016).

For instance, Annie Idibia, actor, mother, and wife of musician Innocent Idibia, discusses a very difficult time in their marriage in the December 2018 issue of *Genevieve* (Belo-Osagie, 2018b).

The first year of my marriage was extremely hard. I wasn't even sure we were going to make it through into the second let alone the third year... We always had heated quarrels and he would drive off and wouldn't be back until midnight. I would cry my eyes out until he returned home... I'm an extremely jealous woman; every phone call was a problem for me. (Belo-Osagie, 2018b, p. 48)

In this article, Idibia goes on to discuss how her suspicions of infidelity almost ruined their marriage. Even though her husband does have a history of infidelity, it was the responsibility of Annie Idibia to overcome this obstacle for the sake of their marriage. By overcoming marital challenges, Nigerian women are celebrated as strong individuals (du Plessis, 2016). In this article, and several others, it is mutual trust in the relationship that prevents their husbands from cheating. Although problematic, it highlights the many challenges and obstacles Nigerian women face in their marriages, and the ways in which they adapt and overcome them.

In the December 2019 issue of *Genevieve*, Perri Shakes-Drayton, Olympic athlete, discusses her marriage with Mike Edwards, the first runner-up of the fourth instalment of *Big Brother Naija* (Irabor, 2019). In this article, Shakes-Drayton discusses how challenging it was being away from Edwards while he was filming *Big Brother Naija* (Irabor, 2019). "Being unable to pick up the phone to make a call and tell him about my day and how much he is loved. Even though I was able to see him it wasn't the same as a video call," she states (Irabor, 2019, p. 51).

However, marriage is not the only obstacle communicated in these publications. The loss of a loved one is a common life challenge represented in Nigerian-based women's magazines. In the December and June 2018 issues of *Today's Woman*, Oby Ezekwesili and Omoni Oboli discuss losing one of their parents during a critical part of their lives (Akinyede, 2018a, 2018b). Ezekwesili was married and pregnant with twins when her father passed, and Oboli was married and her son had just turned a year old when her mother passed (Akinyede, 2018a, 2018b). Both women discussed the emotional

toll these losses took on them and their families (Akinyede, 2018a, 2018b). They discussed their struggles with depression and the support they received from their husbands (Akinyede, 2018a, 2018b). Although it is not explicitly coded as "Adversity," the following quote speaks to the ways in which Oboli coped with the loss of her mother and the support she received from her husband.

My sister was so broken when my mum passed, I had to be the strong one because she was still at home with her. I had my husband that I could cry to at night, even if I was proving strong during the day, but you know she didn't have that.
(Akinyede, 2018a, p. 57)

Oboli also discusses how she married early so that her mother could witness the birth of her grandchild (Akinyede, 2018a). However, her mother soon passed afterwards due complications after her hysterectomy (Akinyede, 2018a). She discusses her feelings of helplessness during this difficult time (Akinyede, 2018a). "I was helpless running around the hospital like a mad person, crying from one department to the other looking for doctors. It was a mess," she explains (Akinyede, 2018a, p. 57).

Oboli also goes on to discuss the loss of her grandmother and father as well in 2017 (Akinyede, 2018a). She discusses how this was a particularly difficult time for her as well because she and her father were just beginning to grow close before he passed (Akinyede, 2018a). This was also a particularly difficult time because she was also battling a case of copyright infringement for her movie, "Okafor's Law" (Akinyede, 2018a).

I went through a very dark patch and coming out of it I said to myself that there's so many people who are going through so many things that don't have any hope. There are so many kids who are from poor backgrounds and don't think that they can be anything. (Akinyede, 2018a, p. 63)

As mentioned, the obstacles a Nigerian woman has faced in her life are often discussed in Nigerian-based women's magazines as something that has inspired them to create a forum for other women, in similar situations, to vent and find support. For example, in the June 2018 issue of *Today's Woman*, author Ugboh (2018a) discusses Yetty Williams' struggles as a young mother and how it led her to start her social media brand Lagos Mums.

Her circumstances as a relatively young mother herself, living in the bustling city of Lagos and struggling to balance motherhood with other aspects of her life led her to start a forum where mothers can come, unburden their concerns and questions without shame, and leave satisfied. (Ugboh, 2018a, p. 51)

Although Nigerian women are often represented by the challenges and obstacles they've faced in their life, this representation is not directly derived from one of the tenets of africana womanism. However, I believe it loosely adheres to the sixth, eighth, and fourteenth tenets of africana womanism. These tenets are adaptability, black female sisterhood, and strength ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Adaptability is the idea that black women not only adapted to different work environments, but also to the lack of luxuries that were experienced by white women ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013;

Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Adaptability also refers to the ability to adapt to different circumstances in one's life ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

Representations of women included discourses about the ways in which Nigerian women adapted to and overcame various life obstacles, challenges, and circumstances, such as the death of a loved one, career setbacks, health issues, difficulties starting and running a business, etc. Discourses also included instances in which Nigerian women have adapted to different living conditions and socio/cultural settings from that which they were previously accustomed. These representations also feature times when a Nigerian woman had to overcome certain obstacles in a pursuit of a particular goal, such as landing an acting role or winning a reality show competition. This theme of Nigerian women as adaptable supports the belief that africana women demand no separate space for nourishing her individual needs and goals, but instead was more focused on the needs and goals of the entire team, family, and/or community ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Due to the conditions that black women faced under white domination, such as colonialism and slavery, they developed the ability to be adaptable and to sacrifice one's own goals and desires for that of her people ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

The eighth tenet, black female sisterhood, is the idea that genuine sisterhood is integral to the survival of women in a male-dominated society ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Sisterhood in

africana womanism has to be genuine and is genuine through the fact that black women go through similar experiences of oppression and can, therefore, empathize with one another ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Constructions of femininity and womanhood in these magazines include women sharing their past life challenges, some in hopes of empathizing with other women who may be going through similar circumstances. A few articles also discuss forums and outlets started by and for Nigerian women to vent about their situations and find support. Sharing one's stories in the hopes that will help other women and creating safe spaces for Nigerian women to talk candidly with one another about their experiences and feelings, as well as seek support, is the essence of black female sisterhood.

Lastly, the fourteenth tenet, strength is the belief that black women are physically and mentally strong and have persevered through centuries of struggling for herself and her family society ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Although the results of this study did not confirm in totality that Nigerian women are always physically and mentally strong, it did find that Nigerian women are often represented by the strength they have exhibited in order to overcome difficult and troublesome circumstances, situations, and life conditions. In some ways, their ability to overcome such obstacles, while simultaneously providing a space for healing for other women through the creation of forums and other outlets supports the belief that Nigerian women are strong even during their weakest moments.

Abuse

This study found that Nigerian-based women's magazines also frequently depict Nigerian women in relation to any emotional or physical abuse that they might have endured during their life. Some forms of abuse mentioned in these publications include bullying, shaming, sexual abuse and harassment, domestic violence, and more. Abuse, as depicted in these magazines, also includes societal forms of discrimination and prejudice such as racism, colorism, classicism, and homophobia.

For example, in an article featured the December 2018 issue of *Today's Woman*, Temi Aboderin-Alao, CEO of JP Kingdom, JP Couture, Golden Curvy Agency, and the convener of Plus-size Fashion Week Africa, discusses some of the emotional abuse that her plus-size models have faced in the industry (Ugboh, 2018b).

Starting out was difficult people would say things like, 'can these ones walk?'

'They are going to break the stage', 'they are going to fall over in their heels', 'what are these fat girls doing here' and stuff like that. (Ugboh, 2018b, p. 43)

Stories of physical and sexual abuse were also featured in a special report on women's mental health in the June 2019 issue of *Today's Woman*. In this report titled, "Am I Mad? Why Maternal Mental Health is Important," Hauwa Ojeifo discusses how her history of physical and sexual abuse led her to start her organization She Writes Woman, an organization that gives love, support, and hope to women living with mental illness (Anifowoshe, 2019).

[Three] sure things led me on this journey. First, I had an abusive underage relationship where I suffered psychological, domestic and sexual abuse. Second, I

got raped in my bed and had to see my abuser nearly every day for a year, and thirdly, I realized that I lived much of my life feeling trapped in my own body, unable to fully express and be the person I was destined to be. (Anifowoshe, 2019, p. 47)

In an article featured in the December 2018 issue of *Genevieve*, author Niki Igbaroola (2018b) unpacks domestic violence in queer communities in Nigeria. Igbaroola examines a collection of essays recounting the experiences of Queer Nigerian women titled *She Called Me Woman*.

Violence as shown in *She Called Me Woman*, comes in many forms. For some it is in learning about their mother's past female lovers and the barely concealed pain she carries that comes with having been forced to repress her true identity....For others, it is being physically beaten by loved ones or raped by men - known and unknown - in an effort to excise the gay. Unfortunately, it is also running from hostile family to the hands of a lover that thinks violence is a form of love and finding that you do not know how to live in a love that lacks brutality. (Igbaroola, 2018b, p. 33)

Another example of how Nigerian women are portrayed by the abuse they've suffered in their lives can be found in the December 2019 issue of *Genevieve*. In the article "Navigating Life as a Single Mother," various single mothers discuss the emotional and physical abuse they have experienced simply because they are unwed mothers (Ekwegh, 2019). For example, Chef Imoteda, a Lagos based chef and mother of

a 12-year-old girl, discusses the time she was physically attacked at a wedding for being a single mother (Ekwegh, 2019).

I was at a wedding, talking about my daughter, and somebody asked about the dad [to which] I replied, "I am a single mother" and he slapped me. I just walked away because it was my friend's wedding and I didn't want to cause a scene. (Ekwegh, 2019, p. 41)

In this article, Ayoola, a single mom to an eight-year-old girl, discusses some of the horrible cases of domestic violence she has witnessed, as well her thoughts and feelings about the subject (Ekwegh, 2019).

It's almost like it is better to be married and bullied, married and miserable, than to get out alive. I remember some years ago there was a lady who was physically abused by her husband [and] her family insisted she stay in the marriage, telling her things would change. Guess what? She died. (Ekwegh, 2019, p. 41)

Although Nigerian women are often represented by the physical, emotional, mental, verbal, or sexual abuse they may have faced in their life, this representation is not directly derived from one of the tenets of africana womanism, but I believe it loosely adheres to the second and fourteenth tenets africana womanism. These tenets are self-definition and strength ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

Self-definition describes realities that African women face through a Pan-African lens and explores gender inequalities and stereotypes in the modern patriarchy ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

Several articles in this study discussed gender-based violence and abuse, such as domestic violence, physical and sexual violence in queer women's communities, and violence towards single mothers. This study found that Nigerian women face a disproportionate amount of stigma and violence when it pertains to topics such as physical appearance, skin tone, mental health, etc. This gender inequality affects the ways in which Nigerian women live and work in Nigerian society.

The fourteenth tenet, strength, is the belief that black women are physically and mentally strong and have persevered through centuries of struggling for herself and her family society ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Although the results of this study did not confirm in totality that Nigerian women are always physically and mentally strong, it did find that Nigerian women are often represented by the strength they have exhibited in order to endure and cope with different types of abuse. Their ability to endure and cope with abuse and live to tell their stories supports the belief that Nigerian women are strong even during the hardest moments of their life.

Adaptability

This study found that Nigerian women are often represented in Nigerian-based women's magazines as adaptable. Although the representation of Nigerian women as adaptable was discussed in the section of Job/Career, that theme of adaptability referred to Nigerian women's ability to adapt to different work environments and living conditions.

In this section, however, adaptability refers to the ability to adapt to the challenges and obstacles in one's private life. This study found that Nigerian women are portrayed as individuals who are able to adapt to challenges and obstacles such as poverty, family separation, marital disputes, being a new stepparent, living in a new country, and other personal hindrances.

For instance, in the article "The Reality of Being a Dark-Skinned Woman in the Age of Colorism" published in the June 2018 issue of *Genevieve*, TV personality, writer, and actress Sika Osei (2018) discusses her time travelling and living abroad and experiencing other cultures. Osei (2018) also discusses having to adapt to being the only African person or the darkest person in the room most of the time. "I embraced it. I understood the occasional stares and the sometimes annoying and funny line of cultural interrogation...I also understood that it was not Africa," she explains (Osei, 2018, p. 91).

Osei (2018) also discusses how she knew this form of cultural interrogation came from an innocent and curious place, and never served to make her feel inferior. Because of this, it was easy for her to brush off the occasional ignorant comments (Osei, 2018).

In an article published in the June 2019 issue of *Today's Woman*, author Ogheneochuko Yesioh (2019) discusses the ways in which Owen Omogiafo and her family have adapted to living in different cities and countries.

Right now, shuttling and keeping in touch via technology is the story of the lives of the Omogiafos, with mummy and baby in Abuja, two teenaged kids in Lagos and Daddy in New York. But Owen says that's the life of today's woman, and she is built for it. (Yesioh, 2019, p. 59)

The representation of Nigerian women as adaptable adheres to the sixth tenet of africana womanism that states that black women not only adapted to different work environments but also to the lack of luxuries that were often experiences by white women ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013 Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). This theme of Nigerian women as adaptable supports the belief that africana women demand no separate space for nourishing her individual needs and goals, but instead was more focused on the needs and goals of the entire team, family, and/or community ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Due to the conditions that black women faced under white domination, such as colonialism and slavery, they developed the ability to be adaptable and to sacrifice one's own goals and desires for that of her people ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

In the articles included in this study, Nigerian women often sacrifice their wants and needs for their families. They take on extra domestic responsibility in order to support their husbands' dreams, they sacrifice being with their children on a daily basis in order to work and provide for them, they overlook ignorant comments and questions from others in order to avoid confrontation, and they learn to adjust to being a new stepparent. As mentioned in a previous section, they also adapt to new work responsibilities and tasks, they sacrifice their own comfort for that of their elders and other members of their community who are in need, they work multiple jobs while also taking care of their children so their husbands can chase their dreams, they shoulder a lot of financial burden so their children won't have to, and more. This study found that in Nigerian-based

women's magazines, Nigerian women are portrayed as selfless individuals who are willing to adapt to changes, obstacles, and challenges in their life in order to fulfill their responsibilities and take care of their families and communities.

Strength

This study found that Nigerian women are often represented in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* magazine by the strength they exhibit when overcoming life challenges. Nigerian women are portrayed as physically and mentally strong enough to withstand hardships, obstacles, and hindrances, such as physical, emotional, and verbal abuse, bullying, difficult romantic and familial relationships, and more. Representations of Nigerian women as strong also include discourses about the strength of mothers and the sacrifices they make for their families. Discourses also include advice to and from Nigerian women about being strong in the face of adversity.

For example, in an article published in the June 2018 issue of *Genevieve*, Nigerian singer, songwriter, and actress, Simi, discusses the strength she possesses that has allowed her to stand up to those who bullied her over her petite frame (Belo-Osagie, 2018a). "I always knew how to speak up for myself and people around me. And if anybody tried to bully me, I somehow found the strength and will to shut it down," (Belo-Osagie, 2018a, p. 44). Simi also explains that she developed this strength from her mother who instilled a healthy amount self-confidence in her from a young age (Belo-Osagie, 2018a).

In another article featured in the December 2019 of *Genevieve*, Perri Shakes-Drayton, Olympic athlete and former participant of UK reality TV show, *Dancing on Ice*,

discusses the strength and perseverance it took to overcome disappointments in her life (Irabor, 2019).

Small disappointments - I have to put them behind me and move on and take it as 'it just wasn't meant to be.' Big disappointments however, I have to come up with a plan as to how I can avoid it happening again by learning from experiences.

(Irabor, 2019, p. 51)

Owen Omogiafo relays advice about being strong in the face of adversity to the readers of *Today's Woman* in the June 2019 issue (Yesioh, 2019). "Don't sit down and indulge in self-pity. Use that energy constructively," she states (Yesioh, 2019, p. 58.)

The representation of Nigerian women as strong is directly derived from the fourteenth tenet of africana womanism, strength ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). Strength, according to the theory of africana womanism, is the belief that black women are physically and mentally strong and have persevered through centuries of struggling for herself, her family and community ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001). The results of this study support the belief that Nigerian women are represented in Nigerian-based woman's magazines as physically and mentally strong enough to overcome adversity and other challenges in one's life. Discourses emphasizing their ability to disregard bullying and verbal abuse from others, and to persevere through minor and major setbacks exemplifies the quality of strength that Nigerian women possess. Several articles also discuss times when their mothers or fathers taught them to

be strong, as well as times when they had to use this strength to defend themselves and others.

Constructions of femininity and womanhood in Nigerian-based women's magazines highlight strength as a significant quality that exists within Nigerian women. They do this by providing examples of instances when they had to be mentally and physically strong in the face of adversity. This representation of women aligns with the africana womanist belief that Nigerian women are not and have never been subjugates ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Brown, 2013; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

Chapter 6: Discussion

This study set out to examine popular Nigerian-based women's magazines to determine the ways in which Nigerian women are represented as well as ascertain in what ways these representations reflect, reinforce, or contradict the africana womanism agenda. This research was based on the fact that, while much attention is paid to women's roles in the production of news content and the representation of women as subjects in news content, other forms of media that produce knowledge for and on women, like that of women's magazines, have not been equally assessed for their potential to include non-stereotypical depictions of women. Although some studies have evaluated the representations of women in the mass media, specifically women's magazines, these studies have been tailored to examine the depiction of women outside of Nigeria and have largely focused on analyzing the pictorial and advertisement content. Based on text rather than images, this study sought to utilize social representations theory and the theory of africana womanism to discover the ways in which Nigerian-based women's magazines construct femininity and womanhood, and how these constructions positively identify with the principles of africana womanism. In light of this gap in media research, the objective of this study was to analyze discourses pertaining to femininity to answer the following two questions:

RQ1: What are the themes used to represent Nigerian women in Nigerian-based women's magazines?

RQ2: How does the representation of Nigerian women in Nigerian-based women's magazines adhere to the tenets of africana womanism?

The main empirical findings are summarized into five main themes, including a discussion on how these themes are used in the construction of femininity and womanhood in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite*. The five themes converge to answer the first research objective:

What Are the Themes Used to Represent Nigerian Women in Nigerian-Based Women's Magazines?

Firstly, women are represented by their economic participation, such as their professions and work-related achievements, as well as their desire for success, which supported the findings of du Plessis (2016). Their drive and determination enable them to provide for their families and communities and become positive role models for future generations (du Plessis, 2016). Discourses also present women as active in different types and levels of employment, and eager to resist stereotypes that usually block them from accessing power (du Plessis, 2016). For instance, discourse in Nigerian-based women's magazines includes women breaking institutional hierarchies and moving into workspaces that have traditionally been reserved for men (du Plessis, 2016).

Discourses in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* magazine also emphasize their entrepreneurial pursuits, their hard-working personalities, their work and domestic responsibilities, their ability to adapt to different work environments, social settings and living conditions, and their flexible gender roles. However, the economically independent portrayal of women also includes instances in which Nigerian women had to overcome adversity in the workforce, such as negative stereotyping, colleagues underestimating their abilities, and being given work outside of their job description (du

Plessis, 2016). Although gendered stereotypes still exist in the workplace, featuring prominent women in these publications and highlighting their professional achievements works to counter misconceptions by emphasizing the prevalence of women's economic participation (du Plessis, 2016).

In accordance with du Plessis (2016), this representation of women as full participants in the public sphere is situated within a social context that promotes the idea that the working woman is a form of empowerment within society. Within this social structure, women are able to gain agency through economic participation and entrepreneurship (du Plessis, 2016). According to du Plessis (2016), discourse in these publications construct the image of an industrious and determined Nigerian woman who is able to achieve her goals despite challenges presented to her due to economic class and cultural background. Although the findings of this study cannot speak to the intentions of the writers and editors when constructing these representations, I believe the construction of Nigerian women as able to excel despite restrictive socio-cultural factors perpetuates the idea that they are a model of femininity and womanhood to which readers should aspire (du Plessis, 2016).

Secondly, Nigerian women are represented by the condition and maintenance of their bodies. This study found that Nigerian women are often discussed in relation to their mental and physical health, beauty, and appearance. Several articles attempt to bring awareness to various mental and physical illnesses that are common amongst Nigerian women, such as post-partum depression, breast cancer, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, and more. This construction of femininity that emphasizes the condition

and maintenance of women's bodies is a distinct finding that arose in this study and did not appear in the research conducted by du Plessis (2016).

Representations of Nigerian women's attempt to confront and highlight the mental and physical illnesses that are common amongst women, in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and in turn, encourage others to do so as well. This construction of femininity and womanhood makes no room for the patriarchal notion that illness makes someone weak. In fact, it is the acceptance of illness, pursuing the proper treatment, and being in communion with other women who are dealing with similar circumstances, that enable Nigerian women to continue living a healthy and fulfilling life and achieve true strength.

Femininity as it relates to socio-cultural standards of beauty frequently populated the discourse in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite*. An emphasis on weight and skin complexion was found in these publications, as well as discussions about body modification treatments such as skin bleaching and anti-aging treatments. Discourse about weight as it relates to appearance often serves to remind women that beauty can be achieved at any size. The promotion of body positivity was a frequent and significant topic found in these publications.

Although several articles promote the acceptance of various sizes and shapes, some articles seek to provide women with suggestions on how to transform their bodies to a more socially acceptable size. In other words, while some articles attempt to usher in progressive depictions of women's bodies, other articles reinforce patriarchal standards of beauty that will likely be internalized by readers of these publications.

The topic of body modifications as it pertains to anti-aging and skin-bleaching treatments are also prevalent in the construction of femininity and womanhood in Nigerian-based women's magazines. I found that articles about these treatments are featured in these publications in order to promote the idea that women's bodies must be managed and maintained, especially as one gets older. Although seemingly harmless, this representation may communicate to readers that their natural appearance may not be acceptable in society; that in order to correctly perform femininity, they must undergo expensive procedures that aim to alter their appearance.

However, articles that discuss skin bleaching treatments are quite contradictory to this assessment. In these articles, skin bleaching treatments are vilified due to the origins of colorism from which they are created, sold, and bought. Skin bleaching treatments are not endorsed in these publications but are discouraged through the sharing of personal stories from Nigerian women who have been the victims of colorism. Women featured in these articles attempt to share their experiences, as well as highlight the physical and mental risks of these products, and the threat it poses to Nigerian culture and society. They seek to subvert Eurocentric standards of beauty and femininity that originated in the West and have been adopted by Nigerian society, by reaffirming the natural beauty of Nigerian women.

Thirdly, discourses in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* magazine also include the portrayal of Nigerian women as being conscious of their reputation, as well as the reputation of various issues and topics that impact their lives, and the societal expectations that are placed upon them and often dictate the ways they think and act in

society. Discourses also represent Nigerian women as advice givers and receivers, who seek to provide or obtain opinions on a variety of topics including, fashion, and beauty, business and entrepreneurialism, parenting, aging, work/life balance, spirituality, physical and mental health, self-esteem and confidence, social media, education, dating and marriage, and more. Much of the advice shared in Nigerian-based women's magazines stems from the lived experiences of Nigerian women. These magazines also include stereotypical and patriarchal ideals in the construction of femininity and womanhood that are produced from a range of social demands related to gender that women are expected to follow (du Plessis, 2016). Based on the results of this study, female identity in Nigeria is largely influenced by these ideals and expectations. Some of the topics discussed in which societal expectations were communicated include the body positivity movement, mental illness, abuse towards women, skin color, women celebrities, the LGBTQ community, female sexuality, and single motherhood.

Nigerian women are often represented by the ways in which the socio-cultural ideals surrounding these issues impact their thoughts and actions. For some, these ideals and expectations serve as a guide for how they should live and operate in society. For most of the women featured in these magazines, however, these ideals and expectations are to be resisted and dismantled. Discourses in these publications highlight the ways in which Nigerian women partake in various forms of activism aimed at liberating women from the burden of having to conform to these patriarchal standards.

As previously stated, Nigeria, as of 2020, is the largest country in Africa and the sixth largest country in the world with a population of approximately 206,139,589 (CIA,

2021; Worldometers.info, 2020; Zhukovskii, 2020). Even though women made up 49.34% of the population, they were often regarded in Nigerian society as appendages to their male relatives, such as their husbands, sons, brothers, etc. ("Nigeria - Population," n.d.; Okunna, 2005; Tijani-Adenle, 2016). This marginalization has led Nigerian women throughout history to partake in various forms of activism in an effort to gain equity in society (Salami, 2018). Women's liberation has been an integral part of society since Nigeria's formation in 1914 when a group of women organized and staged a protest against both indigenous and British men who marginalized them in decision-making (Salami, 2018). Since then, various movements have formed with the aim of gaining power for women in Nigerian society (Salami, 2018). From the Nwaobiala Movements in 1925 that sought to overthrow colonial values, to the "Women's War" of 1929 where 10,000 women fought against a drop in female leadership, to the formation of WIN (Women in Nigeria), an organization founded in 1983 with the goal to establish an "ideologically feminist movement" in the country, Nigerian women have been involved in various forms of activism aimed at elevating their position in society and liberating themselves from socio-cultural expectations and norms that attempted to limit their identities and their contributions to society (Salami, 2018).

As discussed, more contemporary forms of activism were found to be quite prevalent in the construction of femininity and womanhood in Nigerian-based women's magazines included in this study. Representations of women emphasize their social responsibility to act on behalf of other women to liberate them from oppressive systems and principles in order to advance their position and status in Nigeria. Economic

independence is not enough for Nigerian women, they seek bodily autonomy, agency over their personal lives, and respect in their interpersonal relationships. They refuse to be bound by traditional standards that aim to govern their lives and limit their influence in society.

One of the ways through which they attempt to change societal expectations is by improving the reputation of the topics mentioned above, as well as the overall reputation of Nigerian women. They aim to erase the stigma surrounding single motherhood, mental health, gender-based violence survivors, the LGBTQ community, and more. Discourses surrounding societal expectations portray Nigerian women as politically and social engaged in the affairs and concerns of Nigerian women.

Fourthly, this study found that the construction of women in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* magazine emphasizes their self-confidence and self-sufficiency. Discourses often focus on the ways in which individual Nigerian women have been empowered in their lives, as well as initiatives and organizations aimed at empowering women and young girls by providing them with the proper skills and resources to seek power. The representation of women in these publications also includes discourses about the level of self-confidence and self-esteem that a Nigerian woman possesses, especially as it relates to her appearance or talents/skills.

Discourses also focus on the emotional and financial independence that many Nigerian women possess. Nigerian women are portrayed as self-assured individuals who, despite life's challenges, are able to rise above their circumstances in order to provide not only for themselves, but for their families and communities. Similar to the topic of

societal expectations, Nigerian women do not adhere to the notion that the value of one's self is dependent upon the opinions of others within their society but have determined that their worth is self-evident and absent of patriarchal standards.

The portrayal of Nigerian women as individuals who are self-assured and self-reliant supports the findings of du Plessis (2016), who concluded that Nigerian-based women's magazines fulfill the function of empowering readers through the inclusion of articles that encourage women to appreciate themselves and their abilities by giving other prominent, successful, and fulfilled women platforms to celebrate themselves. Empowerment, as it is featured in these publications, highlights a positive representation of femininity in which femininity and womanhood is not seen as inferior or subservient, but is rather depicted as powerful and resourceful (du Plessis, 2016).

Constructions of femininity and womanhood, found in this study and that of du Plessis (2016), also emphasize the ways in which women are empowered by important individuals in their lives and by education/ professional training. The construction of femininity based on empowerment emphasizes solidarity between Nigerian men and women when it comes to the advancement of female power and influence in Nigerian society (du Plessis, 2016). Supportive and mutually beneficial relationships between men and women, as well as solidarity amongst women, are needed to bridge gaps in gender inequality at the micro and macro level. In other words, power is not merely self-derived in Nigerian society, but is also reliant on positive relationships between men and women in the community, where power is negotiated and exchanged.

Depictions of Nigerian women in these magazines are also heavily reliant on the assertion that women are highly self-confident and self-determined. Although some articles also discuss a lack of confidence a Nigerian woman may possess, they often counter such claims by discussing tactics used by women to overcome insecurities, as well as the general pursuit towards self-love and self-respect upon which a woman may have embarked. As previously discussed, representations of women in Nigerian-based women's magazines highlights their advice-giving attributes, and this is also evident in discourses related to confidence and self-esteem. Nigerian women place great importance on providing readers with tools to boost their own self-esteem, therefore empowering them to seek control of their lives and to claim their rights.

By portraying the subjects of these magazines as confident individuals, these publications, in turn, promote the idea that confidence is an integral part of femininity and womanhood in Nigerian society. It underscores the notion that Nigerian women are secure in their identity and are comfortable confronting aspects of themselves and their lives that may make them feel insecure. Even when Nigerian women have insecurities, they are able to overcome them through positive thought and a reaffirmation of their individuality. The inclusion of confident, self-assured women as subjects in these magazines encourages readers to be more confident and to aspire to a higher level of self-esteem.

Additionally, discourses in Nigerian-based women's magazines also include the representation of women as self-sufficient and independent. This representation of Nigerian women emphasizes their resourcefulness, autonomy, and ability to construct

their own identities that are not dependent on their relationship to men. Nigerian women, as featured in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite*, are authentic individuals who are able to upkeep their household, provide for their families, and support their communities emotionally and financially ("Africana Womanism," 2020; Blay, 2008; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Reed, 2001).

In addition to financial independence, discourses also emphasize their emotional independence as well, and their desire for autonomy in all aspects of their life. Nigeria women seek to be recognized by their own merits and achievements, and not just in relation to their fathers, sons, or husbands. They seek to cultivate their own reputation based on the content of their character and the contributions they provide to their families, communities, and society.

Fifthly, this study found that Nigerian women are often represented by the challenges they've endured in their life. These challenges include career obstacles, deaths, abuse, marital challenges, and more. When discussing life challenges, discourses focus on four central topics: general adversity one has faced in their life especially in pursuit of a goal; emotional, physical, or verbal abuse including systemic forms of abuse and oppression such as racism, colorism, homophobia, and sexism; the ability to adapt to difficult changes in one's life; and the strength that is exhibited in order to overcome adversity and abuse.

By representing women by the obstacles they have faced, it sends the message to readers that Nigerian women are strong and adaptable enough to handle any hardships that may arise in their life. Marital challenges were one of the most frequently discussed

topics in relation to adversity. Discourses about marital challenges emphasized the important responsibility that women have to protect their marriage by overcoming and navigating any challenges or difficulties that may arise (du Plessis, 2016). Discourses in these publications contribute to the construction of Nigerian women as strong and adaptable, often sacrificing their own emotional well-being for the well-being of others, in particular their families and communities. The responsibility of maintaining one's marriage, as well as the general responsibility to find solutions to the problems that affect themselves, their families, and communities, supports the notion that Nigerian women are not only resilient individuals but are often expected to bare the burdens of others. This portrayal emphasizes their nurturing and selfless qualities. While this representation could urge female readers to be strong and adaptable in the face of life's challenges, it could also persuade readers to deal with the obstacles of others at the expense of their own well-being.

` This study found that the representation of women also focused heavily on other challenges they face in their life absent of their roles as wives and mothers, whereas the study published by du Plessis (2016) mainly included discourse about marital challenges and did not include discourse pertaining to other types of adversity. This study also found that portrayals of Nigerian women also emphasized various forms of abuse they have endured in their life, which does not align with the findings of du Plessis (2016).

The most frequent and significant themes used to represent women in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite* converge to answer the second research objective:

How Does the Representation of Nigerian Women in Nigerian-Based Women's Magazines Adhere to the Tenets of Africana Womanism?

The five major themes found in this study that are most frequently and significantly used in the construction of femininity in Nigerian-based women's magazines, adhere to several tenets of African womanism. The portrayal of women in these publications aligns with the following africana womanist principles: role flexibility, recognition, ambition, strength, black female sisterhood, respect, wholeness, adaptability, self-definition, and male compatibility. The representation of Nigerian women as career-oriented individuals who are able to balance the public and private spheres of their lives, who are health and body conscious, who are socially and politically active, who are self-confident and independent, and who are able to persevere through challenges and adversity coincide with the paradigms of africana womanist theory.

Discourses pertaining to the representation of femininity and womanhood highlight the ways in which women work within established institutionalized structures to negotiate power and autonomy and utilize new and traditional methods to overcome their oppression (du Plessis, 2016). This negotiation of power and freedom is representative of the africana womanist standpoint that posits that africana women do not seek to dismantle patriarchal socio-political structures but instead seek to negotiate within the patriarchal system to gain new avenues of power for women (Arndt, 2002; du Plessis, 2016). Although they do not seek to dismantle the patriarchal system, these constructions do include discussions and critiques of these patriarchal structures and gender roles, especially in the context of economic issues, socio-economic exclusion, neocolonialism,

cultural imperialism, homophobia, colorism, etc. (du Plessis, 2016; Terborg-Penn, 1995). The inclusion of such discussions supports the African-based women's theory of africana womanism and exceeds the race-class-gender approach of African American feminist theories and the female-centered, individualist approach of Western, white feminism (Arndt, 2002; Hudson-Weems, 1997; Ntiri, 2001; Oyewumi, 2000).

In the constructions of femininity featured in *Today's Woman*, *Genevieve*, and *Exquisite*, women regard cooperation with men, the prioritization of the family, and an emphasis on culture and tradition as paramount which also supports the theories of africana womanism and the findings of du Plessis (2016) (Arndt, 2002; Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Hudson-Weems, 1997, 2001; Kolawole, 2002). However, this study also unearthed some unique results not included in the findings of du Plessis (2016). This study found that constructions of femininity included discourses about the maintenance and condition of women's bodies, including their mental and physical health and appearance which was not found in the study published by du Plessis (2016). This study also found that constructions often focused on women as advice givers and receivers and emphasized various forms of adversity and abuse that they've endured in their life, which was not as salient in the findings of du Plessis (2016).

Despite the discrepancies in our results, I agree with du Plessis (2016) in that the representation of femininity in Nigerian-based women's magazines can be said to reflect the principles of africana womanism through its discourses about the lives of Nigerian women situated in a Nigerian context. I also contend that Nigerian-based women's magazines are able to usher in progressive depictions of femininity and womanhood,

which are representative of changes taking place in Nigerian society in which less traditional constructions of femininity are becoming more prevalent (du Plessis, 2016). This representation of Nigerian women is also indicative of a changing society where traditional ideals are just one amongst a number of discourses on femininity (du Plessis, 2016). However, despite the progressive portrayals of womanhood featured in Nigeria-based women's magazines that are predominantly owned and operated by Nigerian women, this form of media is located within a patriarchal socio-cultural context and can sometimes reflect the patriarchal ideas that are embedded in society and often reinforced by women themselves (du Plessis, 2016). There are a number of articles included in this study, especially pertaining to societal beauty standards, which have reinforced patriarchal ideals. However, most of the articles discuss Nigerian women's desire to change patriarchal ideals and societal expectations that seek to impact their thoughts and actions in Nigerian society.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge about the ways in which women are represented in media. This research contributes to media studies, women and gender studies, feminist studies, African media studies, and African feminist studies. This study included an analysis of the textual representation of women, as opposed to the pictorial representation, in women's lifestyle magazines, rather than newspapers or news magazines, in order to identify the representations of femininity and womanhood as they appear in women-centered media. In addition, this study utilized qualitative methods rather than quantitative methods in order to evaluate the meanings pertaining to femininity located in the texts that are produced by, for, and about women. Building on the work of du Plessis (2016) who focused on how African women are generally represented in women-centered media and how those representations play a part in their empowerment, this study attempts to focus the discussion by evaluating the representation of Nigerian women in Nigerian based-women's magazines that are owned and operated by Nigerian women.

Instead of stereotypical and degrading depictions of women, this study finds that Nigerian-based women's magazines present an image that is predominantly positive and is situated within a Nigerian socio-cultural context and has the potential to inspire and empower women. By applying the theory of africana womanism, this study underscores the importance of applying local forms of knowledge to local subjects, thus differentiating itself from other studies on women in the media.

As a consequence of the chosen methodology, a number of limitations need to be considered. First, the use of purposive sampling generated a small magazine sample that was unable to incorporate all the years of publication. However, the study employed a deductive textual analysis that did not require a large data set as is the case with quantitative analysis, so a small sample size was sufficient. Second, the choice of Nigerian-based women's magazines narrows the scope of the study to a group of educated and gainfully employed women who reside in predominantly large urban areas. This medium was chosen as an example of media written for women, on women, and by women to ascertain what representation of femininity women construct and disseminate. However, the transferability of this study allows it to be replicated in other settings. For example, future research on other West African countries could conduct comparative studies as this form of media fulfills the same role across countries and cultures (du Plessis, 2016). Third, its focus on profile, feature, and beauty/fashion articles, and its exclusion of other content places a limitation on the scope of the study. However, this content is highlighted in the issues of each respective publication and is representative of the ideology surrounding femininity that is communicated through these magazines and sufficient for the purposes of qualitative analysis.

Through an examination of popular Nigerian-based women's magazines, this study set out to determine the ways in which femininity is represented in this form of media, and how these representations align with the principles of africana womanist theory. Contrary to the notion that Nigerian media, particularly newspapers and news magazines, presents stereotypical representations of femininity, this study finds that

women's magazines can and do include positive, progressive portrayals of womanhood that align with many of the characteristics of an africana woman as espoused by the theory of africana womanism.

Future studies have the potential to evaluate under-investigated forms of media, such digital and online media, to ascertain the ways in which these new forms of media could contribute to women's empowerment in Nigeria. Specifically, future research could investigate how mobile technology, such as smartphones and tablets, impact women's empowerment movements in Nigeria. Future research could also evaluate, in more detail, the ways in which LGBTQ identity is represented in various forms of Nigerian media such as women's lifestyle magazines, digital and online media, newspapers, etc. Future research could also investigate how gender as a social construct is communicated in various forms of media, and how this representation impacts identity formation in Nigeria. Lastly, future studies could conduct a comparative analysis to unearth representations of women in advertisements and subsequently compare them to the representations of women in Nigerian-based women's magazines found in this study.

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Appendix

Table 1

Magazine Sample

Publication	Month(s)	Year	Issue #	Title	Author
Exquisite	May/June	2018	98	“(Lagos Mums) Yetty Williams”	Damiola Shote
Exquisite	May/ June	2018	98	“Fashions Finest Africa: ‘The Epic Show’ Organizers”	Damiola Shote
Exquisite	May/June	2018	98	“Candid Opinion: On Fashion Education”	Abolarinwa Yahaya
Exquisite	May/June	2018	98	“Keepin’ It Casual”	StyleItKell
Exquisite	May/June	2018	98	“Designer Dossier of Onnistic Fashion”	N/A
Exquisite	November/December	2018	100	“Crave Nature”	Damiola Shote
Exquisite	November/December	2018	100	“Tefal Studios”	Damiola Shote
Exquisite	November/December	2018	100	“History of Adire Fabric”	Karah Audu
Exquisite	November/December	2018	100	“Style on a Budget”	Karah Audu

Table 1: continued

Exquisite	November/December	2018	100	“Designer Dossier”	Damiola Shote
Exquisite	May/June	2019	104	“Alex Unusual”	n/a
Exquisite	May/June	2019	104	“Etiquette with Janet: What’s in Your Bag? Part 2”	Janey Adetu
Exquisite	May/June	2019	104	“Style Q&A of Nonye Udeogu”	N/A
Exquisite	May/June	2019	104	“Ask a Stylist”	N/A
Exquisite	May/June	2019	104	“Fashion Tips”	N/A
Exquisite	November/December	2019	106	“Mercy Eke: Owning Her Thrown”	N/A
Exquisite	November/December	2019	106	“Eloy Conference 2019”	N/A
Exquisite	November/December	2019	106	“Designer Spotlight: Lahmielesho by Bukola Atunbi”	N/A
Exquisite	November/December	2019	106	“Style Q&A of Mawuli Gavor”	N/A

Exquisite	November/December	2019	106	“Feet Fetish”	N/A
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Table 1: continued

Genevieve	June	2018	140	“Simi”	Isoken Belo-Osagie
Genevieve	June	2018	140	“The Reality of Being A Dark-Skinned Woman in the Age of Colourism”	Sika Osei
Genevieve	June	2018	140	“My Beautiful Story”	N/A
Genevieve	June	2018	140	“Black Beauty Re-Captured”	Niki Igbaroola
Genevieve	June	2018	140	“Five Most Influential Nigerian Beauty Bloggers”	N/A
Genevieve	December	2018	152	“Innocent & Annie: On Love and Marriage”	Isoken Belo-Osagie
Genevieve	December	2018	152	“Unpacking Domestic Violence & Queer Communities in Nigeria”	Niki Igbaroola
Genevieve	December	2018	152	“My Sew Cut Life”	Tosin Abiodun

Table 1: continued

Genevieve	December	2018	152	“All About the Dew Collection”	N/A
Genevieve	December	2018	152	“Lagos Fashion Week”	N/A
Genevieve	May	2019	155	“Abisoye Ajayi-Akinfolarin: Creating a New Girls in Tech”	Vivienne Belonwu
Genevieve	May	2019	155	“The Misgendering of Sexual Protection”	Doreen Uloma Nwoke
Genevieve	May	2019	155	“Ask A Stylist” Kayito Nwokedi”	Kayito Nwokedi
Genevieve	May	2019	155	“Ask Clara”	Clara Gbadebo
Genevieve	May	2019	155	“Vivienne Odofin-Daniel”	Vivienne Odofin-Daniel
Genevieve	November/December	2019	159	“Mike and Perri Edwards Are Ready for Life to Begin”	Sonia Irabor

Table 1: continued

Genevieve	November/December	2019	159	“Navigating Life as a Single Mother in Nigeria”	Nneoma Ekwegh
Genevieve	November/December	2019	159	“The Thing About Skincare and Ageing”	Psalmuel Josephs
Genevieve	November/December	2019	159	“Bolajo Fawehinmi”	N/A
Genevieve	November/December	2019	159	“Mo Agosto”	Sonia Irabor
Today’s Woman	June	2018	Vol. 10 No. 6	“Omoni Oboli: The Wonder Years”	Syreeta E. Akinyede
Today’s Woman	June	2018	Vol. 10 No. 6	“Yetty Williams: The Lagos Mum”	Jennifer Ugboh
Today’s Woman	June	2018	Vol. 10 No. 6	“Get Rid of Unwanted Facial Hair”	Nnena Okoye
Today’s Woman	June	2018	Vol. 10 No. 6	“Timeless Zizi”	N/A
Today’s Woman	June	2018	Vol. 10 No. 6	“A Holisitc Approach to Weightloss”	Jennifer Ugboh
Today’s Woman	December	2018	Vol. 10 No. 9	“Obiageli Ezekwesili”	Syreeta E. Akinyede

Table 1: continued

Today's Woman	December	2018	Vol. 10 No. 9	"Call it What it is Fat (An Expose on BoPo)"	N/A
Today's Woman	December	2018	Vol. 10 No. 9	"Chinelo Ikeme: My Hair Story"	N/A
Today's Woman	December	2018	Vol. 10 No. 9	"Temi Aboderin-Alao"	Jennifer Ugboh
Today's Woman	December	2018	Vol. 10 No. 9	"Trimming the Edges"	Omotara Adeniyi
Today's Woman	May/June	2019	Vol. 11 No. 3	"Owen Omogiafo"	Ogheneochuko Yesioh
Today's Woman	May/June	2019	Vol. 11 No. 3	"Am I Mad? Why Maternal Mental Health is Important"	Shina Anifowoshe
Today's Woman	May/June	2019	Vol. 11 No. 3	"Headwraps as a Fashion Accessory"	Olunfunmiola Irantiola Olurinola
Today's Woman	May/June	2019	Vol. 11 No. 3	"Food as Medicine: Myth or Fact"	Yomi Anenih
Today's Woman	May/June	2019	Vol. 11 No. 3	"It's All in the Hack"	Fifunmi Oshinubi

Today's Woman	December	2019	Vol. 11 No. 3	"Peju Fadirepo"	N/A
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Table 1: continued

Today's Woman	December	2019	Vol. 11 No. 3	"4 Generations Deep: The Family Next Door"	N/A
Today's Woman	December	2019	Vol. 11 No. 3	"An Artist With the Jazz Effect"	N/A
Today's Woman	December	2019	Vol. 11 No. 3	"Temi Rebecca Olanrewaju: The Reva Stryder Woman"	N/A
Today's Woman	December	2019	Vol. 11 No. 3	"The 5 Step Skincare Guide for Dry Weather"	Jennifer Obiuevbi

Table 2

Codes

Code Name	Definition
Self-Naming	Discusses the importance of self-identifying as an African woman in society. Identifying as Africana, distinguishes self from feminism and black variants, recognizing need for her own movement and name.

	This code was used anytime a woman identifies as an Africana womanist or anytime a woman identifies with a women's liberation movement.
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Table 2: continued

Self-Defining	Begins to describe realities that African women face through a Pan-African lens. Self-Definition explores gender inequalities and stereotypes in the modern patriarchy.
Family-Centered	This principle focuses on the entire black family unit. Any important outcomes are shaped as overarching closeness of the black community enforced by the women in society. Africana womanist is more concerned with her entire family rather than just herself and her sister. This code can also refer to a lack of family centeredness. This code may also be used when a passage discusses a lack of familial support unity.
Wholeness	This principle describes the importance of self-sufficiency that an African woman must have in order to upkeep her household. Wholeness also stresses the required self-esteem that emanates from within an African woman who must be strong for not only herself, but for her family and community as a whole. Seeks both wholeness (completeness) and authenticity (cultural connection) in her life. Can also refer to the independence of an African woman including financial independence. Synonyms: Self-sufficiency, self-esteem, completeness
Role Flexibility	This principle acknowledges and discusses the fact that the black woman has never been a subjugate. Historically, black women have experienced flexible gender roles, meaning that black women not only had experience working outside of the home along with men and within the home.

Table 2: continued

Adaptability	<p>Black women not only adapted to different work environments but also to the lack of luxuries that were experiences by white women/feminists.</p> <p>Africana womanist demands no separate space for nourishing her individual needs and goals.</p> <p>Due to the conditions of black women under white domination, the ability to be adaptable and sacrifice one's own goals and desires.</p> <p>Adaptability also refers to adapting to different work environments as well as different living conditions.</p>
Authenticity	<p>See wholeness.</p> <p>Cultural connection to one's roots.</p> <p>Authenticity also refers to authentic self-expression.</p> <p>Authenticity is when our actions and words are congruent with our beliefs and values.</p>
Black Female Sisterhood	<p>The concept of genuine sisterhood is integral to the survival of women in a male-dominated society.</p> <p>Sisterhood in African womanism has to be genuine and is genuine through the fact that black women go through the same/similar experiences of oppression and can therefore empathize with one another.</p> <p>Reciprocal, in which each gives and receives equally.</p> <p>Fellowship with other black women is critical for healthy communal relationships and for support.</p> <p>This code can be used when passages discuss women helping other women, personally or systemically.</p>
Struggling with Males Against Oppression	<p>Africana womanists see that there is a fight against oppression that is being fought by black men and see themselves as fighting on the same team as black men.</p> <p>Having strong relations with like-minded men in the struggle for black liberation and black women's liberation.</p>

Table 2: continued

Male Compatibility	<p>This principle is based upon mutually beneficial relationships between a well-respected African woman, and a supportive, like-minded man.</p> <p>The Africana womanist desires positive male companionships, a relationship in which each individual is mutually supportive, and important part of a positive Africana family.</p>
Recognition	<p>This principle refers to the acknowledgement of humanity, capability, and power of black women.</p> <p>The Africana womanist demands recognition for herself in order to acquire true self-esteem and self-worth, which in turn enables her to have complete and positive relationships with all people.</p> <p>This includes recognition of someone power and influence within their professional fields.</p> <p>Recognition also includes recognition of one's achievements and any awards one may have been given. This includes self-recognition as well.</p> <p>This code also includes passages that discuss one's lack of recognition for their labor, work, talents, efforts, etc.</p>
Ambition	<p>A strong desire to do or to achieve something, typically requiring determination and hard work.</p> <p>Desire and determination to achieve success.</p> <p>Ambition and responsibility are highly important in the life of Africana womanists, for her family, too, depends on these qualities in her.</p> <p>Anytime an article references a person's professional success this coded as ambition.</p>

Table 2: continued

Nurturing	<p>The nurturer and motherer are both described as a call for all community members to play an active role in the rearing of the community and propaganda of the race through care.</p> <p>It is an African womanist's duty to not only care and nourish her family, but to provide the care and nourishment for her race as a whole.</p> <p>This could also refer to when a woman is lacking the quality of nurturing. Could be used to code passages that discuss scenarios in which a woman did not fulfill this nurturing role.</p> <p>Nurturing as a tradition, including how someone was raised, and how they, in turn, raise their own children.</p> <p>Synonyms: Nurturer, provider, protector</p>
Strength	<p>Black women are physically and mentally strong</p> <p>She (Africana women) has persevered through centuries of struggling for herself and her family.</p> <p>Enduring hardships and making sacrifices at the expense of one's own well-being can be coded as strength.</p>
Respect for self	<p>Refers to the reverence an African woman has for herself, absent of the colonized standards.</p> <p>Determining one's worth, while ignoring politics, is a crucial step to becoming a confident African woman.</p> <p>The Africana womanist, above all, demands respect for herself in order to acquire true self-esteem and self-worth, which in turn enables her, among other things, to have complete and positive relationships with all people.</p>
Respect for Elders	<p>An extension of the historical African tradition of ancestral reverence.</p> <p>Ancestral reverence is the habitual act of caring for elders and eventual ancestors within a community or society.</p>

	True Africana womanist respects and appreciates elders, insisting that her young do likewise, for Africana elders have served as role models and have paved the ways for future generations.
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Table 2: continued

Mothering	<p>See nurturer</p> <p>The motherer and nurturer are both described as a call for all community members to play an active role in the rearing of the community and propaganda of the race through care.</p> <p>Committed to the art of mothering her own children in particular and humankind in general.</p> <p>This could also refer to when a woman is lacking the quality of mothering. Could be used to code passages that discuss scenarios in which a woman did not fulfill this role.</p>
Spirituality	<p>This principle stresses the importance of the reverence for traditional African spiritual systems.</p> <p>These spiritual systems call for a collection of the principles including ancestral reverence, oneness with oneself, and with nature as well.</p> <p>Africana womanist are also very spiritual and believe in a higher power.</p> <p>This code can also be used when passages are talking about western and/or monotheistic religions as well, such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism.</p>
Creative Expression	<p>This code can be used any time a passage is discussing the expression of one's feelings, thoughts, or ideas, especially in writing, art, music or dance.</p> <p>This code may include cultural expression, which is the expression that results from the creativity of individuals, groups, and societies, and that have cultural content.</p>
Activism	<p>This code can be used when a passage is discussing the act of setting someone free from imprisonment, slavery or oppression.</p>

	<p>Liberation meaning freedom from limits on thought or behavior.</p> <p>Synonyms: freeing, release, discharge, deliverance, freedom, liberty, etc.</p>
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Table 2: continued

Mental Health	<p>This code refers to any passage that discusses a person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being.</p> <p>This code can also be used when the passage is about mental health as a social phenomenon. This code can also be used when passages are discussing mental health treatment.</p>
Advice	<p>This code refers to any passage that includes advice given to the readers about a particular topic, or when a subject is discussing advice that has been given to them in their life.</p>
Knowledge/Education	<p>This code can be used when a passage is discussing the intellect of an individual.</p> <p>This code can be used when a passage is discussing the knowledge a person has about a particular topic or the knowledge a person is gaining about a particular topic.</p> <p>This code can also refer to any formal education an individual has received.</p> <p>This code also refers to a lack of knowledge or education a person has about a particular topic.</p>
Skills	<p>This code can be used when passages discuss a particular ability a subject has.</p> <p>This includes practical abilities or expertise.</p>
Abuse	<p>This code refers to any passage that discusses any cruelty or violence someone may have endured.</p> <p>Abuse meaning any cruel or violent treatment of a person or animal.</p> <p>Can include physical, mental and emotional abuse, as well as bullying or societal forms of abuse such as racism, colorism, homophobia, etc.</p>

Table 2: continued

Entrepreneurial	<p>Having to do with the creation and development of economic ventures.</p> <p>When discussing an innovation this is coded as Entrepreneurial.</p> <p>Innovation is applying your creativity to come up with a unique idea or solution. Entrepreneurship, by contrast, is applying the innovation to bring the ideas to life.</p>
Dating/Sex	<p>This code can be used when a passage is discussing the romantic involvement between two or more people.</p> <p>This code can be used when discussing the attraction between two or more people.</p> <p>Dating is when two people go out with each other to figure out compatibility.</p> <p>This may include serious or casual relationships.</p> <p>When discussing sexual intimacy between two or more people this can also be coded as dating/sex.</p> <p>Casual romantic or sexual relationships that are not a prelude to engagements and marriages may also be coded as dating/sex.</p>
Values	<p>This code should be used when a passage discusses the things a person believes to be important in the way you live and work.</p> <p>Values are a person's principles or standards of behavior; one's judgement of what is important in life.</p> <p>Synonyms: Beliefs, principles, ethics, morals, etc.</p>
Development	<p>This code refers to the development and progression of Nigeria as a country and Africa as a continent.</p> <p>Can refer to societal progression and the development/progression of ideology and land.</p> <p>Can be a tangible or abstract concept.</p>

Table 2: continued

Satisfaction	<p>This code can be used when a passage is discussing the fulfillment of one's wishes, expectations or needs, or the pleasure derived from this.</p> <p>This code also refers to a level of happiness or contentment one may have with their life, status, employment, etc.</p> <p>A general sense of happiness.</p> <p>This code can also refer to passages that discuss one's lack of satisfaction or happiness with one's life or the stage of life they're in.</p>
Accessibility	<p>To be used when a person is discussed in terms of their flexibility, friendliness and approachability.</p> <p>This code can also be used when passages discuss situations in which someone felt that the other party was accessible, easy to get along with, approachable, kind, loving, etc.</p> <p>Accessible may also refer to the accessibility and availability of goods and services and opportunities.</p>
Humility	<p>A modest view of one's own importance; humbleness.</p> <p>This code can include passages when an individual is admitting to being wrong or admitting when they are not qualified to talk about a particular topic.</p>
Societal Expectations	<p>This code is used to describe passages that discuss an internalized social norm for individuals and groups and society as a whole, about what people should do.</p> <p>Could be used when an article is discussing public viewpoints about different topics.</p>
Hard-Working	<p>This code applies to any text that is discussing the work ethic of an individual. Not to be confused with the code ambition.</p> <p>Ambition is about one's goals and how they strive to meet them. Hard-Working is more about their day to day work ethic.</p>

Table 2: continued

Confidence	<p>This code refers to any passage where a person is discussing a time when they believed in or questioned their abilities, had confidence or lack thereof is one's self and ability, was self-conscious or had low self-esteem, or had high-self-esteem.</p> <p>This code differs from empowerment, in that empowerment refers to the act of giving one confidence.</p> <p>Confidence as a code refers to giving one's self confidence or having confidence that emanates from one's self. Empowerment is when someone or something else gives you confidence or encouragement.</p> <p>This code can also be used when passages are discussing one's fears or regrets.</p>
Reputation	<p>This code can be used when a passage is discussing the beliefs or opinions that are held about someone, something or someplace.</p> <p>Can include, but is not limited to, stereotypes or gossip.</p>
Adversity	<p>This code can be used when a passage is discussing the difficulties one may have faced during their life, especially in pursuit of a particular goal.</p> <p>Synonyms: Challenges, misfortunes, obstacles.</p>
Marriage	<p>This code can be used anytime a passage is discussing the legal and formal recognized union of two or more people.</p> <p>This code can also be used when a passage is discussing the engagement and wedding that occurs before a marriage.</p> <p>This code can also be used when a passage is discussing a divorce or separation.</p>
Appearance	<p>This code can be used when a passage is discussing the defining traits or features about your body.</p> <p>These are aspects that are visually apparent, knowing nothing else about the person.</p>

	The first thing you see when you look at someone could be their hair, clothes, nose, or figure.
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Table 2: continued

Responsibility	<p>This code can be used when a passage is referring to an obligation to do something or having control over or care for someone as a part of one's job or role.</p> <p>Use this code when a passage involves important duties a person has as well as their independent decision-making abilities and control over others.</p> <p>Responsibility also includes one's social responsibility and/or civil responsibility.</p>
Empowerment	<p>This code can be used when a passage is discussing the authority or power given to someone to do something.</p> <p>This code can be used when a passage is discussing the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights.</p> <p>This code differs from empowerment, in that empowerment refers to the act of giving one confidence.</p> <p>Confidence as a code refers to giving one's self confidence or having confidence that emanates from one's self.</p> <p>Empowerment is when someone or something else gives you confidence or encouragement.</p>
Physical Health	<p>This code refers to any passage that discusses the condition of the body, taking into consideration everything from the absence of disease to fitness level.</p> <p>Physical health is critical for overall well-being and can be affected by lifestyle, diet, level of physical activity, and behavior (for instance, smoking or addiction).</p>

Table 2: continued

Context	<p>This code can be used to describe the parts of an article where the author discusses the abstract concept of their interview.</p> <p>Can also include any passages that serve as contextual or background information.</p> <p>Context is defined as the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed.</p> <p>The parts of something written or spoken that immediately precede and follow a word or passage and clarify its meaning.</p> <p>Can include cultural context, which is the environment or situation that is relevant to beliefs, values, and practices of the culture under study.</p>
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Note. Some codes were renamed or grouped together based on conceptual or thematic similarity during second cycle coding methods.

Table 3

Thematic Groups

Theme	Codes	Amount of Times this Theme Emerged in the Data
Job/Career	Adaptability, Recognition, Hard-Working, Ambition, Role Flexibility, Responsibility, Entrepreneurial	686

Education	Knowledge/Education, Skills	141
Family/Community Relationships	Black Female Sisterhood, Male Compatibility, Family-Centeredness	212
Table 3: continued		
Citizenship/Nation Building	Accessibility, Development, Activism, Struggling with Males Against Oppression, Responsibility	226
Domestic Roles	Nurturing (combined with Mothering), Role Flexibility	83
Personality Traits	Kindness, Strength, Humility	74
Self-Esteem/Self-Sufficiency	Empowerment, Confidence (combined with Respect), Wholeness	266
Condition of the Body	Appearance, Health (combined physical and mental health)	627
Life Challenges	Adversity, Abuse, Adaptability, Strength	257
Identity as an African Woman	Self-Naming, Self-Defining, Authenticity	72
Beliefs/Values	Spirituality, Values, Respect for Elders	162
Creative Pursuits	Creative Expression	184
Satisfaction with One's Life	Satisfaction	97

Opinions of Others	Reputation, Societal Expectations, Advice	400
Romantic/Sexual Relationships	Marriage, Dating/Sex	138



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