
Women and Intercultural Communication

Caroline. N. Mbonu
University of Pot Harcourt

&

Ngozi N. Iheanacho
University of Pot Harcourt

Abstract

Cultural diversity and intercultural communication are important and dynamic social facts of existence in the contemporary world. Thus, the degree of inter cultural contact is high. With the consequent implications of unprecedented acculturation, precarious conditions and tumultuous experiences, the world is in imperative need of increased awareness, understanding, tolerance, and respect for cultural differences that abound humanity. Since cultural criss-crossing cannot be avoided, it is better to understand its transfer dynamics – channels and patterns of interaction and adaptation. This is with the aim of gathering useful information for improving human condition and a better world. Against this backdrop, the objective of the paper is to examine the role of women as agents of intercultural communication *ipso facto* appreciation and respect for the value of cultural diversity. With ethnographic methodological tools and, indepth qualitative analysis we identified women as cultural educators, especially as they leave their families of orientation to that of reproduction, in most cases outside their culture areas. Through the kitchen hearth and itinerant trading – from one market to another, and their unflinching faithfulness to cultural norms and religious prescriptions, women balance cultural differences – turning human diversity into valuable heritage for understanding, co-operation, relationship and peaceful disposition.

Keywords: Women, Culture, Intercultural Transmission, Education

Introduction

Cultural diversity is a feature of humanity. Consequently, the degree of intercultural contact and acculturation are on the rise and, inevitable. The phenomenon underscores the need for intercultural awareness, tolerance and respect. Given the complex and diverse character of culture, it requires approach

from different prisms. In contemporary time one of the topical subject areas and polar of human existence is gender and women studies. Therefore, study of women's role in intercultural communication is both plausible and, a welcome development in the wake of an emerging global culture and increasingly pluralistic environment. The argument that women are custodians of culture can be substantiated by a critical approach to intercultural communication. Women's role as curators of community's core values, namely: peace, love, and justice, place them in a unique position of furthering intercultural communication. As guardians, women are likely to reject cultural trends they adjudicate unfavorable to the community. Culture is not stagnant; it evolves, advances, and grows just like any living organism because it is the fabric with which life is woven. These developments allow for the inclusion of plural views of the world culture. Culture can be likened to the wisdom of the ages, of saints, martyrs, philosophers, theologians, and economists, something to be studied and discussed. From the discussions perennial truths might be mined for guidance in modern living. Indeed, what some claim as authentic culture may be no more than a hybridization of cultures. As a way of life, culture consists of material and non-material components. A spotlight on women's potency and processes in facilitating intercultural communication is the thrust of our paper. In pursuit of this objective we used ethnographic tools of data collection and analysis skewed in indepth qualitative approach.

Culture and Intercultural Communication

Culture has been given diverse meanings and interpretations, and in different subjects and contexts. In course of reviewing the situation, Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952:181) came up with 164 definitions of culture, which are made up of the complex, the fanciful and the simple, like: "culture is the programming of the mind", or that "culture is the human-made part of the environment" (Lonner & Malpass 1994:7). In spite of the plethora of definitions, that of Tylor (1871) remain an all time model. According to him, "Culture is that complex whole which include knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". From the various definitions, there is a latent and general agreement that the substance of culture lies in the characteristics common to a particular group of people. The facts of culture are learned and not given by nature. In sum, culture comprise of almost everything a group of people do for their existence – in thought pattern, beliefs, politics, economic and sundry value systems. The situation suggests that it is biological issues and development that can be excluded from culture, (Iheanacho and Owete 2013).

Culture is learned through the process of enculturation. The purpose of the learning is to integrate people into their group. As every member is enculturated into the same cultural dictates, the people share common values, ideas, perceptions and expectations, as a group. The cultural facts learned are

transmitted from one generation to the next. This is because “culture is a social inheritance; it consists of ideas that may have developed long before we were born ... the ideas developed over time are taught to each generation and “truth” is anchored in interaction by people long before dead” (Charon 1999:94). This function of linking generations is a manifestation of the nexus between culture and communication. In other words, communication convey cultural facts such as habits, principles, values, attitudes etc., to every member of the group, and from the old generation to the present, (Samovar et al 2007:28).

Culture is based on symbols. Therefore, language is the most essential of the symbolic part of culture. This is because sharing and transmitting cultural facts and properties would not be possible without the force of language. On this strength, the language element of culture is also a strategic concourse point between culture and communication. With language and communication being driving forces of culture, we also note that it is dynamic. Thus, culture change over time, as it exists in situation of flux, reinvention and modifications. The changes and alterations thereabout culture reach every member of the group through communication processes. Consequently, the functional essence of culture among people manifest its other character of being an integrated system. In other words, culture is an integrated whole, of a dynamic system – a network of human facts of survival and co-existence. This character makes every member bounded and amenable to the group’s values, common aspirations and expectations. However, all these can only be possible with effective communication processes among the people who share such culture. To state the obvious, in the words of Hall (1977:14) “Culture is communication and communication is culture”.

Communication: Communication is a derivative of culture. Its substance is the sharing of information between people on different levels of awareness and control. Communication process can also be in the form of symbol, image expression or through material culture. All these are part of the factors which aggregate to form a group’s cultural pattern – the fundamentals of people’s enculturation, socialization, and integration into the group. Consequently, every member of the group carries such cultural facts and precincts. And with such they share meanings and interact freely.

Intercultural communication: Intercultural communication is another derivative of culture. It refers to the contact, association, and interaction between cultures. Humans are the driving force and hub of intercultural communication, through the diverse aspects of their existence and interaction across cultures of the world. Thus, it is from the human cross cultural interaction, as typified in the case of women (as discussed in this paper) that intercultural communication is founded.

Again, intercultural communication is used to describe a wide range of communication problems that naturally appear within an organization made up

of individuals from different religious, social, ethnic, etc., backgrounds. The term intercultural is chosen over the largely synonymous term cross-cultural, because it is linked to language use, as in co-operation between people with different scientific backgrounds.

Women and Cultural Education

The cultural education of women takes various forms both in traditional and contemporary societies. In almost every part of Africa, the expectation remains that women marry and leave their natal home since the culture is patrilocal. For this reason, women receive the education, what in popular parlance is termed “home training,” that would enable them navigate their new environment. Teaching and learning generally takes place in the home and are mostly experiential – that is why the home is called family of orientation for the offsprings. A young woman learns by observing the role her mother plays in the home. It is not uncommon that mothers imbue in their daughters cultural elements of her natal home (family of orientation). A woman from Etcheland married to someone from Yorubaland, for example, is most likely to first teach her children the Etche way of life before that of the Yoruba. Cultural exchange takes place and the children may likely grow up bi-cultural.

- Young women learn cultural agricultural skills. In addition traditional culture exposes women at a tender age to the dances, foods, and other antics of neighbouring cultures. It is not surprising, for example, that a young woman from Ndashi Etche can dance the *Ekpukete* dance of the Ijaw in Bayelsa State or the *Atiloghwu* dance of the Awka in Anambra State. Such bi-cultural upbringing tends to produce new realities and facilitate intercultural communications. Some feminist scholars, however, insist that women’s education while precluding female social and political growth is primarily directed towards the affirmation of eternal female virtues such as docility, self-abnegation and chastity (Eboh, 1998: 333). But a critical reading of these “home lessons” does not suggest patterns of dehumanization. Rather young women undergo such education so that they can effectively navigate the patriarchal system in which most will eventually find themselves. Patriarchal system relates to patriarchy. It is used here to refer to a system in which the role of the male as the primary authority figure is central to social organization, and where fathers hold authority over women, children, and property.

- In addition, cultural education of women places premium on relationship. Relationships entail concern for hospitality and community. Hospitality speaks to concern for others, especially the stranger, the weak and the vulnerable. Community embrace the sense of “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am,” part of the foundational narrative that form our African understanding of people-hood. The intersection of community and hospitality remains the heart of intercultural communication. Accordingly, hospitality is inclusive; it is standing together as a community. Thus, women’s

cultural education takes seriously and sensitively relatedness and inter-relatedness that touch on reciprocity, mutuality, and justice that community living demands (Oduyoye, 2001:32). Relationships such as these provide the vehicle for the transmission of culture, particularly through marriage relationship.

Marriage and Intercultural Communication

In most traditional African societies, women establish agency through marriage. Marriage setup affords women greater latitude in building capability than men. Consequently, the institution provides women a broader base of interaction. Normally in many African societies, the men usually remain autochthonous and wives regarded as “foreigners.”

- As foreigners in marriage women import culture. Women’s foreign status permits the importation of cultures from their natal home. A woman going into marriage goes not as a *tabula rasa*; but carries with her elements of her own culture. Just as an Asian or a European woman married a Nigerian comes to Nigeria with her cultural patterns, an Efik woman married to an Igbo goes into marriage with her Efik cultural patterns. This kind of situation essentially constitutes the core of intercultural communication. Critics may ask if a woman continue to maintain her cultural identity in a patrilocal culture. But experience shows that the hegemony of patrilocal culture does not destroy identity. Although married to an Igbo, an Efik woman cannot be an Igbo.
- Married women initiate change in their matrimonial cultures. American Harry Gailey, and African historian, elucidates the point on the influence of women’s foreign status within marriage in African: “Exogamy gave the women of one village the ability to influence other women over a wide range” (Gailey, 1970:100). Culturally, women influence not only their fellow women but men as well. Gailey, further states, “In addition to their influential roles as wives and mothers, they were accustomed to being consulted on issues affecting the village.” Interactions through consultation further inter cultural communication. Women can thus become catalysts for social change even in areas considered staunchly patriarchal. A single most basic example is that women can effect socio-cultural changes in terms of raising children.
- As participants in exogamous marriages, women represent goodwill ambassadors of their towns and villages. Women carry a great deal of goodwill across cultural boundaries. The texture of the relationship promotes intercultural communication and fosters peaceful co-existence between peoples of different cultures. Situations exist where exogamous marriages have been exploited for political ends or for social advancement. Regardless of the circumstance, women carry along their natal (families of orientation) cultures wherever they go.
- As custodians of culture, women carry with them certain cultures of their natal home into their matrimonial home. The meeting of these cultures, natal (family of orientation) and matrimonial (family of reproduction) produces

something new. One can identify this newness expressed in foods, fashion, dialect, and language. Without belaboring the point, a few examples would further illumine the argument of women and intercultural transmission. Assuming a young Etche woman marries an Ijebu man. Since marriage in this part is patrilocal, the bride leaves her family of orientation (natal home) and enters the house of her father-in-law, (family of procreation) becoming part of the extended family; she carries with her part of her Etche culture to Ijebuland. Within this new culture, she learns, for example, to prepare foods such as *amala* and *ewedu*, for her family and also shows off same when she visits her family in Etche. Similarly, she prepares for her new Ijebu family *okashi na mmgbam*, a typical Etche cuisine, which the new family also shows off to their friends and relatives. In effect, she can potentially change the culinary arts of her community both in Etche and Ijebu. In this process, a hybridization of culture begins to form.

Hybridization of culture can produce a positive communication in society. Such interaction can undercut ethnocentrism which often represents a potential source of conflict. Furthermore, the idea of hybridization could provide us with a conceptual tool with which to argue for what is possible in intercultural communication event. We can expand our local example to include the current global trend. Hybridization appears even more urgent today especially in the context of the hegemonic homogenization unleashed by the hyperculture of globalization, which threatens the integrity of local particular cultures. Through what may be called “intentional hybridity,” a local culture in the intercultural traffic with the global will exercise its agency in subverting, reinterpreting, and incorporating only those elements which are good in the global while not jettisoning its own but utilizing both as the opportunity may present itself. While the global tries to homogenize by uprooting and deterritorializing the local, the local through the framework of hybridity pushes back by reterritorializing itself through resistance and agentive subversion. Women especially married women have succeeded in doing this and there is a lot to learn from the experience of women which might be a useful approach in engaging intercultural communication.

- Marriage promote cross-traffic of language in contracting cultures. We return to the Etche-Ijebu example. In the event that the new couple decides to settle in the groom’s town, the bride of necessity learns to speak Yoruba. The knowledge of Yoruba is necessary for effective communication in the new environment. On the other hand, the groom also acquires some Etche vocabulary in order to communicate with his in-laws. This small example illustrates a process of intercultural communication at the grassroots. Thus, the couples influences their environment linguistically. In sum, a new way of life can evolve for the bride and groom as well as their extended family. Women nurture this new way of life in the hearth (*mgbala, uso-ekwu*).

The *Mgbala*, *Uso-ekwu* (hearth) and Intercultural Communication

The argument that women are custodians of culture is foreground in the notion of the *mgbala* (hearth). The *mgbala*, like the biblical house of the mother (in Hebrew, *bêt ʿēm*), is usually a married woman's domain. The woman's *mgbala* is the primary institution for cultural and intercultural communication. The hearth is not merely the circumscribed fireplace in a woman's kitchen. For the Etche, the fireplace (the *agbata-ekwu* or *ekwu*), is a sacred space. Physically, the *mgbala* includes a woman's living room, bedrooms in which is often erected the altar of *Chi*, a kitchen space and a garden. Within this space the female passion, compassion, and imagination coalesce in the very art of birthing, sustaining, and preserving the community life energy. In other words, in the *mgbala*, life and hope are nurtured and celebrated; dignity protected and secured (Mbonu, 2010:38). As the foundational establishment for transmitting traditional values, a child learns the rudiments of culture in this space. In the Bible also, *bêt ʿēm* is a child's primary academy, where character is formed and life related skills inculcated in the young. In this *bêt*, wounds and brokenness are healed and hope restored (cf. Ruth 1:8). Without grounding in one's culture, it would be difficult to understand or appreciate other cultures. Somebody cannot begin to speak of intercultural communication if one is not well versed in their native culture, because the indigenous context remains the source of cultural value and meaning. The significance of the *mgbala* in intercultural communication resonated with a saying from William Ross Wallace's poem (1865) titled "What Rules the World: The Hand That Rocks the Cradle Is the Hand That Rules the World." In essence Wallace's insight highlights the fact that in the hearth, the child is socialized into a base culture that can shape the imagination about how to understand the self in relation to the world.

Furthermore, the head of the *mgbala*, the mother, holds political, economic, and moral sway over every member of the hearth-hold. The Nigerian scholar, Chinweizu, insists that the matriarch authority in the nest (*mgbala*) is exercised not only over the children but over the husband as well for by this power, the woman distributes the resources, commodities and opportunities for her domain (Chinweizu, 1990:109). Usually a young woman going into marriage aims at reproducing patterns of relationship she experienced in her mother's *mgbala* thus, she continues to communicate her natal (family of orientation) culture weaving it together with the new and in the process a new culture is born. Next to the foundational institution of learning, the *mgbala*, another major women's activity that carries cultures across cultural boundaries is trade.

Women's Trade and Intercultural Communication

Trade is central to the life of many women in Nigeria and West Africa at large. Most women in these parts describe their occupation as "petty trader." Trade is perhaps the single most important activity responsible for women's

travel out of their homes. Their work as traders takes them beyond the narrow confines of their own towns and villages (Gailey, 1970:100). Most significantly, the market place represents the seedbed for intercultural transmission, both in traditional society and in contemporary times. Strong alliances with persons from other cultures can be formed by women in the market place. Women's trade determines significant changes in socio-cultural environment of the society. They influence changes in the culinary arts, leisure, fashion, for example. Mercy Amba Oduyoye points out that women's retail trade plays a significant role in raising the politico-economic barometer (Oduyoye 1995, 81). Women's influence outside the confines of their marital homes, particularly their control of trade and commerce became critical to their socio-political struggle in the nascent years of colonization in Nigeria. Trade and the markets became a vital communication channel. Because women could send messages across the land through the market network, they could gather in a short notice. It is not surprising therefore, that the much celebrated *Ogu Umunwanyi* (Women's War) 1929-1931, was planned and executed through the market system (Mbonu, 2010:97-100).

Today, women's trade has gone beyond of the towns and villages. A significant number of Nigerian women trade internationally. Their trade takes them across continents: the Middle East, Asia, Europe and America. Indeed, at this level, women's role as communicators of cultures becomes very obvious in the sense that they can influence decision on imports and exports. We do not have to look too far for evidence to support the changes that trade has produced in present-day Nigeria: Home décor, foods, and clothing, to name a few. A particular example of clothing is worth bringing up: the white wedding dress. The white wedding dress provides a typical paradigm of intercultural communication. Interestingly, the much celebrated white wedding dress, without which most Nigerian young women consider their marriage not properly constituted, comes to us by way of Europe. According to Kelsey McIntyre, "The marriage of Queen Victoria to her cousin Albert of Saxe-Coburg in 1840 has had more influence on wedding than any other . . . white was now set as the color of choice for weddings and has continued ever since." Although the cultural exchange in terms of white wedding seems to be asymmetrical, there exist other possibilities of cultural swap. Women's trade whether national or international does not have those characteristic of a capitalistic type. As custodians of culture, women trade to improve the life of the community and not to exploit it. In a quiet but steady manner, women traders continue to influence and change the socio-cultural landscape across communities in the country. As women traders travel across towns and countries, they carry with them their religious tradition. To that tradition we now turn.

Women's Religious Culture and Intercultural Communication

The influence religion exert on a people qualifies it as agent of culture change. Religion stands out as a strong agent of intercultural communication. The American Scripture scholar, Carol Meyers (2005:14) contends that the broad understanding of religion is best designated as religious culture. As a way of life, religion is decidedly within women's sphere. Women's religious culture typically involves material and behavioural elements. While belief in a higher power and a sacred text represents some material elements of religion, the behavioral element constitutes the various practical expressions of religious faith. In traditional Igboland, women take along the material and behavioural components of their religion to their marital homes.

Women's religious culture within the context of marriage is a fertile ground for intercultural communication. Because religion can have a dynamic relationship with daily realities and is often manifest in activities, using available cultural forms, that help people negotiate the urgent and immediate needs of their daily existence, they have enormous social and personal values (Meyers, 2005:15). For this reason, in many traditional African societies, brides cling on their religious traditions. The traditional Etche bride is not unlike her Yoruba counterpart, who at marriage, moves to her marital home with her "family/ancestral deities" known as *Chi* or *ofo* (Nzegwu, 2006:165; Olajubu, 2003:32). She establishes a personal shrine within her home, usually her bedroom in which the *Chi* is enshrined; thus, sanctifying her environment as a ritual space. From here she pontificates as the ritual cultic person (Nzegwu, 2006:165). The practice suggests that though married, the woman is spiritually connect not only to her marital family but to her natal family. The Senegalese historian, anthropologist, physicist, and politician, Cheikh Anta Diop, clearly stated that the particularity of African cultures based on matriarchy enables women to carry their clan deities to their places of marriage (Anta Diop, 1991:112). Igbo women institution altar for *Chi* in the hearth. This is a live experience of the people. Women speak of the *Chi* in these terms: *Chi nmem*, meaning, the *Chi* of my foremothers. Thus, if the Etche woman had been married to an Ogoni, she would necessarily take symbols of the *Chi* along with her to Ogoniland. In this way, her religion becomes part of her new environment with a potential of influencing the new. But one must not ignore the possibility of, that the receiving culture may be unreceptive. Some examples from a larger context further throw light on the subject of a particular religious practices. Religious faith and practices represent a core issue in intercultural communication. It is the case because the same symbols may convey different significations in different cultural semiotic codes. In East Asia, for example, precisely, Japan, the dragon is a symbol of the emperor; but in the West, influenced by Christianity; it is a symbol of evil. Again in North India, the cat is a symbol of witches but simply a pet in the Western world. How can interlocutors from these two different cultural contexts engage in successful

intercultural communication without destroying each other's values and meanings, without essentializing or totalizing propensity? Thus, a number of questions may arise. How does the symbol of the *Chi* with which the woman enters into marriage is regarded by and among her husband's people. What if the *Chi* symbol means something evil in Ogoniland, how is the woman coming with it to negotiate that liminal space? Does the cultural code carried by her *Chi* have to be altered to acquire a new meaning in order to be acceptable to the patrilocal culture? If that be the case, should cultural codes need to change, or what? That brings us to the issue, namely, how the intercultural communication event is able to negotiate the diverse, even competing and conflicting cultural demands.

In a multicultural society such as the Rivers State of Nigeria, where the question of multiple belonging engenders a struggle to find a way of dealing with a variety of cultures occupying the same space, the importance of intercultural communication cannot be overemphasized. It demands respect and acknowledgement of the otherness of diversity and the consequences of living together. Respect for difference goes beyond mere recognition or tolerance. Respect actually requires the hard struggle with the meaning of difference and the ability to live with it even if it means living in a healthy tension. It is about the Etche adage, "*egbe bere ugo bere, keshi ibe ya ebele, nku akwa ya.*"

The practice of entering into marriage with the *Chi* or *ofo* of one's lineage is reminiscent of the practice found in ancient Israel. It was a common practice among the Canaanites and their neighbours. In the eleventh chapter of the First Book of Kings the author is clear about the fact that Solomon's foreign wives brought with them their natal religious traditions to Israel. The author goes on to describe the cultural changes the foreign women's religious traditions produced in Israel. The fear of negative effect of intercultural communication prompted the author of the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah to forbid the returnees from exile to the land of Judah to bring their foreign wives. The men were enjoined to divorce their wives. "Ezra's Religious Reforms--Divorce of Mixed Marriages: When Ezra learned that the people had taken on wives of unbelievers in the land against the exhortations of Scripture he mourned, confessed the nation's sin before the Lord and organized a meeting with all of the people to expose them to their sin, whereupon, they too confessed their sin and agreed to divorce their foreign wives resulting in an outworking of the purification 9:1--10:44." Critics of this policy cite the Book of Ruth. They argued that the Book of Ruth was written about the same period to counter the order that Israelite marriage of foreign women was counter-cultural and indeed a corruptive agent. Ruth, a non-Israelite, a Moabite was faithful and true. She adapted well to live in Bethlehem, married Boaz and eventually became the great-grandmother of Israel's greatest King, David.

But the practice of taking the symbols of one's natal deities may not resonate with contemporary religious practice. A small percentage of the population in Nigeria continues to practice the traditional religion. Major have

become either Christians or Moslems. However, a critical knowledge of the past gives a perspective for the future, particularly in terms of culture. Worthy of note remains the fact that women practice of taking symbols of their natal deity to marriage is in contradistinction to the Greco-Roman world from which Christianity received its cultural definition. The Greco-Roman culture denies competence to the woman to worship her clan deities in her marital home (Ante Diop, 1991:112).

Conclusion

From the research, the relevance of women engagement in intercultural communication for contemporary times is obvious. Women continue to be weavers of cultural fabrics of human society whether in traditional or contemporary society. Their activities in the home or in the market place exert enormous influence on the way of life of many societies. For this reason, it is safe to conclude that women's activities drive culture. Women's engagement in intercultural communication emphasizes the importance of dialogue, especially today in a world ripped apart by violence and conflicts. At a time when some are predicting the clash of civilizations, women's experience in intercultural communication indicates that a different path is possible: that of dialogue of cultures, religions, civilizations, and above all, of enhanced intersubjectivity regardless of our differences.

References

- Anta Diop, Cheikh. (1991) *Civilization or Barbariam: An Authentic Anthropology*, trans by Yaa-Lengi Meema Ngemi, eds Harold J. Salemson and Marjolijn de Jager. New York: Lawrence Hill Books.
- Charon J.M. (1999) *The Meaning of Sociology* 6th ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Chinweizu. (1990) *Anatomy of Female Power: A Masculinist Dissection of Matriarchy*. Lagos, Nigeria: Pero Press.
- Eboh, Maria Pauline. (1998) The Woman Question: African and Western Perspective. In *AfricanPhilosophy: An Anthology*, (pp. 333-336). (Ed.) Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, Oxford: Blackwell Publisher.

- Gailey, Harry A. (1970) *The Road to Aba: A Study of British Administrative Policy in Eastern Nigeria*. New York: New York University Press.
- Hall E.T. (1977) *Beyond Culture*. Garden City New York: Anchor Double Day.
- Iheanacho N.N. & Owete K.I. (2013) "The Evolution, Conception and Theoretical Matrix of Culture" in A.R. Kilani & N.N. Iheanacho (eds) *Culture, Development and Religious Change* Port Harcourt: M & J Grand Orbit.
- Kluckhohn C. & Kroeber A. (1952) *Culture* New York: Random House.
- Lonner W.J. & Malpass (1994) "When Psychology and Culture Meet: Introduction to Cross-Cultural Psychology" in Lonner W.J. & Malpass R.S. (eds) *Psychology and Culture* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Malick, David. Retrieved June, 25, 2011 from: <http://bible.org/article/argument-books-ezra-nehemiah>
- Mbonu, Caroline N. (2010) *Handmaid: the Power of Names in Theology and Society*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock.
- Mbonu, Caroline N. (2010) "A Retrieval of Women's Religious Experience in *Things Fall Apart*: Towards a Liberative Spirituality". *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, vol. 22, pp. 38 – 47
- McIntyre, Kelsey. "History of the White Wedding Dress:" Retrieved June 24, 2011 from <http://www.fromtimespast.com/wedding.htm>
- Meyers, Carol. (2005) *Households and Holiness: The Religious Culture of Israelite Women*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Nzegwu, Nkiru Uwechia (2006) *Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Cultures*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba (2001) *Introducing African Women's Theology*. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press.
- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba (1995) *Daughters of Anowa: African Women & Patriarchy*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Olajubu, Oyeronke. (2003) *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*. Albany, New York: State University of New York.
- Samovar L.A. et al (2007) *Communication Between Cultures* 6th ed. United Kingdom, United States: Thomas Wadsworth.