

## **“I was glad I had gotten rid of it”: Dialectical Tensions in Nigerian Women’s Discursive Constructions of their Personal Abortion Experiences.**

Helen Ufuoma Ugah

Elizade University, Nigeria/ Postdoctoral Research Fellow, African Cluster Centre, University of Lagos, Nigeria

### **ABSTRACT**

With the restrictive laws on abortion in Nigerian, women who have undergone abortion are stigmatized and made to live with the guilt and shame of ‘taking a life’. While existing studies on abortion in Nigeria have argued about the criminality of abortion, the need for the creation of sustainable family planning method, the creation of legal and safe abortion clinics and reproductive freedom for women, literature has paid little attention to the dialectical tensions evident in women’s narratives about their personal abortion experiences, and the effect of the tensions on the enactment of their reproductive agency. Hence, using discourse analytic methods, this study analysis the sites of struggles obvious in the linguistic and discursive resources utilized by women in the narration of their personal abortion experiences, and the dialectical tensions in the linguistic/discursive choices. The data consist of 40 narratives of women who have procured abortion. Their responses are analysed using insights from the Relational Dialectic theory (Baxter and Norwood, 2015). Findings reveal avoiding stigma versus living with guilt, relief versus Regret, informed versus unprepared, silence versus openness, and only choice versus other choices as sites of tension in women’s abortion narratives. The study concludes that abortion causes women stress and tension despite the fact that abortion is a way through which women reclaim their bodies and lives.