African Immigrants to the United States:
The Influence of Culture in Academic Achievement
Among Nigerian Immigrants and Their Children in Northern New Jersey Post-1960

by

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Dr. Sabrina Marie Chase
and approved by

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ABSTRACT

**Background:** Over the last four-and-a-half decades, more African immigrants have voluntarily come to America than were reportedly shipped to America through the slave trade. Over 60% of these African immigrants are from Nigeria. As Nigerian immigrants establish themselves in American cities, towns, and rural communities, they are becoming involved in their communities, starting small businesses, and participating in local politics. They are also raising families and sending their children to college. The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of culture on educational achievement among Nigerian immigrants and their children. The central question guiding the study was “How does culture and social structure influence academic achievement among Nigerian immigrants and their children in the northern New Jersey area?”

**Methods:** First and second-generation Nigerian immigrant participants were recruited through purposive snowball sampling. Observations of Nigerian immigrant meetings and gatherings were undertaken, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 Nigerian immigrant parents and 28 young adult children of Nigerian immigrants attending college at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), Rutgers University, and Essex County College. Student participants were interviewed on campus, while parents were interviewed in their respective towns at public places near their homes. Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and analyzed using Transana 2.30. Content analysis was utilized to identify key themes related to educational achievement.
Results: Five key themes were identified among parent participants: 1) supervision of children, 2) preservation of Nigerian culture, 3) maintaining high expectations, 4) supportive family collaboration, and 5) strong involvement in school activities. Five additional themes were identified among student participants: 1) educational opportunities in the US, 2) family and friendship networks, 3) students’ self-confidence and motivation, 4) parents’ expectations of educational achievement, and 5) supportive networks of Nigerian churches, associations, and organizations. Study findings suggested that Nigerian immigrant parents have adapted their cultural and social practices to promote their children’s academic achievement in the U.S. Students who self-identified as Nigerian, attended Nigerian churches, and participated in Nigerian community activities in this study were more likely to excel in college than those who did not. Results also suggested that these social and cultural structures may prepare second-generation Nigerian immigrant students to perform well in formal academic environments. Finally, they indicated that the ongoing support of community networks—especially in the case of Nigerian churches and associations—was important in helping the second-generation Nigerian students in this study succeed in college.
This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Janet Airehebuwa Igbinovia and my father, Abraham Ima Igbinovia. My mother has been my number one supporter and encourager. There are not enough words to express my gratitude for your love and guidance. You both resting now in the bosom of our Lord, continue to rest peacefully until we meet again. Thank you, mom, and dad, for being my loving parents and my daily inspiration.
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CHAPTER 1
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Nigerian Immigration into the United States

According to the Census Bureau (2012), immigrants currently account for a significant percentage of the population. Bureau data shows that the total estimated foreign-born immigrant population is over 50 million, or 12.9% of the total U.S. population. This number includes both legal and illegal immigrants and their U.S-born children. Since the official language of the U.S. is English and the country was founded on a commitment to freedom for all citizens, millions of people worldwide seek refuge in the U.S. (Akresh, 2007; Banks, 2006; Kotkin & Ozuna, 2012). Since the 1960s, the U.S. immigrant population has grown from 1.4% to 26.3% of the total; 7% of immigrants are from Africa (Akinrinade & Ogen, 2011; Alex-Assensoh, 2010). Of the 7%, 18.5% come from Nigeria (Alex-Assensoh, 2010).

Over the last four-and-a-half decades, more African immigrants have voluntarily come to the U.S. than those who were shipped to the United States through the slave trade (Alex-Assensoh, 2010). Immigration is a controversial labor and social issue in the U.S. and has significant impacts on the present and future of the country’s educational conditions. The pattern of immigration over the last few decades, coupled with the tendency for ethnic differences in educational attainment to persist over subsequent immigrant generations, has led to an increasing gap in educational attainment among some of the fastest growing immigrant communities in the U.S. and the native-born population. A review of the U.S. census data of 2000 and 2010 reveals that African
immigrants, Nigerian immigrants in particular, have surpassed all ethnic immigrants in educational attainment (U.S. Census Bureau 2000 & 2010). What is more, Nigeria, among African countries, has the highest immigration rate to the U.S. (Djamba, 1999). As Nigerian immigrants make their homes in America, they are slowly changing the dynamics of American residential, cultural, and economic life. This change has called into question the very meaning of the terms Black and African American (Alex-Assensoh, 2009; Stroller, 2002).

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Nigerian immigrants’ income levels are typically higher than those of native-born African Americans. This higher income level among Nigerian immigrants can be attributed to higher education levels. However, the average salary of Nigerian immigrants is still lower than those of White or Asian Americans, even when factoring in education, perhaps suggesting continued discrimination (Djamba, 1999). Based on the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau data (Alex-Assensoh, 2009), Nigerian immigrants to the U.S. are more likely to be college educated than any other immigrant group (Djamba, 1999). The census data also show that 48.9% of all Nigerian immigrant adults earned a college degree, mostly in the U.S. Nigerian immigrants are more educated than any other native-born ethnic group, including White Americans (Djamba, 1999 & Alex-Assensoh, 2009).

Most immigrants arriving on the shores of the U.S. are young, and they generally form families shortly after arrival. A large and rapidly growing second generation community of young adults has recently completed their college education and started new careers (Farley & Alba, 2002). Nigerian immigrants and their children are in the forefront of revitalizing once-decayed Newark neighborhoods by opening business,
churches, and mosques, buying homes, and using local public schools as vehicles of individual and collective mobility. This is a story that needs telling, and I plan to tell the story through this research study.

Nigerian immigrant communities in New Jersey are growing. Nigerian restaurants, groceries, and convenience stores are opening almost daily in neighborhood business districts in Newark, East Orange, Elizabeth, Irvington, and Union, NJ. I have gathered information about the Nigerian community in Newark through written documents, interviews, and observations of Nigerian immigrant students and their families. The purpose of these interviews and observations is to determine what role cultural and social structures play in shaping academic achievement among young Nigerian adults.

The interviews were conducted with NJIT, Rutgers, and Essex County College Nigerian immigrant students and their families, and with some Nigerian immigrants who work as staff and faculty at these universities. They were conducted in English. Because the researcher is a Nigerian immigrant who is familiar with Nigerian traditions and practices, trust and rapport were more easily built with study participants. This is important due to the sensitivity of some of the interview questions, including those about religion and immigration status. Using the qualitative research techniques of direct participant-observation and semi-structured interviewing in schools and communities, I sought to answer the question, “How do Nigerian cultural and social structure values shape academic achievements among Nigerian young adults?”

For the purpose of this study, academic achievement is defined as the ability for the Nigerian immigrants and their children to gain admission into colleges and
universities. Academic achievement also references the extent to which a student or institution has achieved either short term or long-term educational goals. This achievement may be measured through students’ grade point average or the achievement can be measured through graduation rates.

Immigration has always been a social issue and a controversial labor problem for the U.S., with very important influence on present and future U.S. education. Waves of immigrants from Africa and Asia have impacted educational achievement in the society as whole. The immigration pattern of the last 50 years, together with the possibility of ethnic differences in attaining education among subsequent immigrant generations, has resulted in an increasing gap in educational achievement among some of the fastest growing immigrant communities in the U.S. and the American-born population (Alex-Assensoh, 2009). At this same time, there is a long-term structural change unfolding in the U.S. economy, measuring the importance of education and making high-school completion a minimum requirement for any individual who wishes to compete successfully in the labor market (Alex-Assensoh, 2009). Educational institutions in the U.S. are currently faced with two issues: (a) the need to educate a larger and more diverse population, and (b) the need to bridge the gap in educational attainment among the various ethnic groups (Farley & Alba, 2002). Immigration is also going to strongly impact the future of the U.S. educational system. As immigrants and their children increasingly account for a larger proportion of school age children, it will become more important to better understand the educational attainment of immigrants, especially those immigrants from Africa, and Nigerians in particular.
The Rise of Non-White Immigrants and the Decline of the US White Population

The U.S. Census Bureau’s release of race and age statistics for 2017 points to two noteworthy milestones about the nation’s increasingly aging white citizens and its growing diverse population. First, for the first time since the Census Bureau has released these annual statistics, they show an absolute decline in the nation’s white non-Hispanic population, documenting an accelerating phenomenon that was not projected to occur until the next decade (Frey, 2018).

Second, the new numbers show that for the first time, there are more children who identify as minorities than those who are white, at every age from zero to nine. This means we are on the cusp of seeing the first minority white generation, born in 2007 and later, which we can perhaps dub Generation “Z-Plus” (Frey, 2018). Together, these new data suggest that a signature feature of U.S. demographic change in the 21st century is the aging and decline of the white population, along with population growth among young minorities to counterbalance this trend.

America’s white population has been increasing since the first census was taken in 1790. Table 1 shows the change in the non-Hispanic white population using data from the censuses of 1790 to 2010, and annual population estimates for 2011 to 2017, based on the most recent release. These new numbers show, for the first time, an absolute decline in the nation’s white population of more than 9,000 whites between 2015 and 2016 and more than 31,000 whites between 2016 and 2017 (Frey, 2018).
Table 1: Non-Hispanic whites’ population

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<td>1970</td>
<td>169,023,068</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>180,256,366</td>
<td>11,233,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>188,128,296</td>
<td>7,871,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>194,552,774</td>
<td>6,424,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>196,817,552</td>
<td>2,264,778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>197,486,707</td>
<td>669,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>197,641,635</td>
<td>154,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>197,692,643</td>
<td>51,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>197,802,527</td>
<td>109,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>197,844,074</td>
<td>41,547</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>197,834,599</td>
<td>(9,475)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>197,803,083</td>
<td>(1,516)</td>
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Although these annual whites’ declines are extremely modest (-0.005 and -0.016 percent in 2015-16 and 2016-17), they are an early harbinger of the long-term trend that the Census Bureau projected previously last year. Those projections showed the white population declining after 2023. This is indicative of general aging of the white population, which means proportionately fewer white women in their childbearing years, and excess deaths over births (a natural decrease) (Frey, 2018). The recent downsizing of the white population could reflect post-recession-related fertility declines in the white population, leading to an inflation of white natural decrease to its levels of the last six years.
The good news for the nation is that white aging and potential future declines will be countered by gains in racial minorities. These populations increased by 4.7 million in the two years that the white population declined, including gains of 2.4 million among Hispanic, 1.1 million among Asians, and 1.2 million among all other races, according to the new estimates from US Census Bureau. Moreover, these gains are especially important in offsetting white declines that are occurring among the nation’s youth.

A second noteworthy finding from the new census estimates is that, for the first time, minorities outnumber whites nationally for each age under 10. While earlier estimates revealed “minority white” status for some of these youth, this is now solidly the case for the individuals born in each year since 2007. Hence, this generation, which might be called Generation Z-Plus, is the first truly minority white generation, at 49.6 percent white, where 26 percent of its members are Hispanic, 13.6 percent African-American, and nearly 10 percent include Asians and persons of two or more races (Frey, 2018).

There is variation in Generation Z-Plus’s racial profile across the country. Notably, they are now minority white in 15 states, including Hawaii, New Mexico, California, Texas, and Nevada, plus the District of Columbia. In each of the latter states, the population under the age of twenty-two is less than 35 percent white. At the other extreme, 17 states located largely in New England, the Midwest, and Mountain West, house Generation Z-Plus populations that are more than two-thirds white. This population is minority white in 43 of the largest 100 metropolitan areas, including in Los Angeles, where less than 20 percent of the 0-9-year-olds are white.
The rise of the minority white Generation Z-Plus has a lot to do with a steady decline in whites among America’s youth since 2000. This occurred as more white young people entered adulthood than were born or immigrated to the U.S. However, this trend was counted to some degree by a growing youthful minority population. Nationally, whites under the age of 10 sustained a loss of 1.2 million between 2010 and 2017, according to new estimates from Census Bureau. This loss of youthful whites is fairly pervasive, occurring in 43 states and 81 of the nation’s 100 largest metropolitan areas. This trend has also taken place in over four-fifths of the nation’s 3,100 counties. The parts of the country that have not seen white child declines tend to be places that have attracted recent white migrants, including younger segments of the white population. The states of Texas (especially Houston, San Antonio, and Austin), Washington (Seattle), as well as North and South Dakota are in this category.

These white declines are countered by gains in minorities. Between 2010 and 2017 the under age 10 population showed gains among minorities of nearly one million, lessening the nationwide young child decline to just 276,000. Minorities have not stopped all geographic areas from population decline but they contributed to gains in the under age 10 populations for 17 states and District of Columbia, 48 of the 100 largest metropolitan areas, and over 800 counties. Some of these gains are attributable to immigration, but in fact, only 38 percent of total minority growth is due to immigration, with the remainder attributable to natural increase. Nonetheless, it is clear that the younger minority population will be significant contributors to the nation’s youth in light of the overall aging of the white population.
These new census estimates underscore important demographic mega-trends that will affect the country’s future. As older baby boomers retire, there will be an increasing need for younger generations to contribute to a vibrant, productive labor force. Clearly, the emerging minority white Generation Z-Plus will be small, and being born since the onset of the Great Recession will play a key role (Frey, 2018). This underscores the urgency of investing in the well-being of America’s racially diverse youth and their immigrant parents in the years and decades ahead.

The Purpose of the Study

The intent of this study is to learn about the influence of culture on academic achievement among Nigerian immigrants and their children. The cultural influences that were examined included parental involvement and expectations, acculturation, peer relations and social networks.

The results of this research will provide a foundation for further research on academic achievement among Nigerian immigrant communities, given the scant information currently available on African immigrants in general and Nigerian immigrants in particular. This study will also add to the limited body of research by shedding light on the cultural and social influences that have shaped academic achievement in Nigerian second-generation immigrants in the U.S. The cultural and social influences identified for high academic achievement in this study will aid in the development of strategies to improve the school performance of all low achievers in their respective ethnic groups. At the same time, the results will perhaps help to make the school adjustment process easier and faster for all immigrant children by promoting an understanding of their cultural and social values.
An analysis of the Nigerian immigrant pattern is crucial in understanding Nigerian immigrant educational attainment for several reasons. First, a continuous influx of Nigerian immigrants into the U.S. over the last five decades has resulted in a significant proportion of the U.S.’ population today being comprised of second-generation Americans (e.g., children of Nigerian immigrants). This proportion will continue to grow in the future. Second, while first-generation Nigerian immigrants receive little or none of their early education in the U.S., their children (second-generation Nigerian immigrants) and native-parentage adults receive all their education in the U.S. Third, second-generation Nigerian immigrants are born in the U.S. but unlike native-parentage adults, their parents, who play an important role in the formation of their human capital, influence Nigerian immigrants. Therefore, a careful exploration of the educational attainment of Nigerian immigrants and their children will enable us to understand if educational differentials decrease with each successive generation. That exploration will help us to recognize the intergenerational influence of cultural and ethnic background on educational outcomes.

The Research Problem/Question

The existing literature, though scant, suggests that most Nigerian parents believe that education makes people into better persons and education gives people a better life (Macharia, 2010). It also indicates that some Nigerian parents also believe that the way to success is through education, which is why some affirm that helping their children strive for academic excellence is one of their most important tasks as parents (Macharia, 2010).
Orozco (1989) reported that second-generation immigrants’ strong affinity for their ethnic group and their resistance to certain kinds of Americanization might be the key to socio-economic success. Orozco also reported that unlike involuntary minorities whose counter-cultural practices inhibit education, immigrant children often develop a dual frame of reference, which allows them to utilize education as a ladder for socio-economic advancement (Ogbu, 1990; Orozco, 1989; Macharia, 2010). In a study of immigrant students from Central America in inner city schools, Suarez-Orozco (1987) found that students maintained a dual frame of reference that enabled them to contrast their experience in the U.S. with that of their home countries. That point of reference to their home countries led them to develop positive attitudes towards academic achievement in school. Based on the above assessment, Nigerian immigrant children’s performance in the school system may well be substantially influenced by their identification with their ethnic culture or place of origin.

Even though there is speculation that immigrant and racial minority status may double the disadvantage that Black immigrant children in U.S. schools face, no researchers have actually studied the educational attainment of immigrant Black youth. This study attempted to do this with first and second-generation Nigerian immigrants. The study’s results suggest that the success of Nigerian immigrants and their children in the American school system might depend largely on how well they maintain their Nigerian culture.
Research Questions

The central question guiding this study is the following: “How does culture and social structure influence academic achievement among Nigerian immigrants and their children in the northern New Jersey area”?

To answer this central question, I posed the following targeted questions:

Questions for parents:

a) What role do you play as a parent in the education of your children and how is this influenced by your culture?

b) What do you do to support your children in their educational experience in this country? Please describe this to me in detail.

c) How involved are you in the Nigerian community in the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area, and do you get your children involved?

Questions for children:

a) What are the factors that most influenced your educational experience and the decision to pursue a college education?

b) How involved are you in the Nigerian community in the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area, and who got you involved?

c) How is your relationship with your parents regarding your educational experience?

Influence of Culture on Education

Some previous studies in the US have found that culture and ethnicity have different effects on the educational outcomes of immigrant children (Tan, 2017; Ogbu, 2002; Portes, 1995, 1996). According to Bok (2003), “The achievement gap is
nationwide, it is substantial and it has not diminished in the last 15 years” (p. 20). In California, studies show that Asian Americans do much better than White Americans in school achievement, while Black and Hispanic students do much more poorly in educational achievement (California Department of Education, 2007). The capacity to classify experiences and codify such classifications lays the foundation for what we know as culture (Adutwum, 2009). We then become imbued with the capacity to teach such experiences to others and in turn enculturation enables a younger generation to reproduce the values and attributes of the previous generation.

Giger and Davidhizar (2004) argue that individuals make sense of the world they live in and develop a suitable response to their surroundings because of their particular cultural lenses. The processes of interactions in all cultures are usually controlled by rules that are unstable, which arise from the culture’s history, values, and social structure (Tan, 2017; Adutwum, 2009). These unstable rules are normally not taken seriously by a culture’s members and are always complicated to the understanding of outsiders. In 1976, Hall categorized cultures as high or low context “based on the relative importance of the social situation in determining and interpreting behaviors” (Hall, 1976). In low-context cultures, communication is explicit and, in most situations, individuals are expected to communicate information, needs, and expectations directly. In the U.S. by virtue of its diversity and heterogeneity, it is a relatively low context. In contrast, Nigerian immigrant’s cultures tend to be high context and collectivistic, because Nigerian immigrant’s cultures are more homogenous, interaction are governed by rules and expectations that are embedded in the social context. High-context cultures tend to be collectivist, focusing on the needs and concerns of the groups: the family, clan, or social
or work unit rather than the individual. These high-context cultures might also have contributed to the high academic achievement of Nigerian immigrants.

One of the most pressing issues within the U.S. educational system is the understanding of the many different ways that race, ethnicity, and culture impact student academic achievement in formal education settings. Among Nigerian immigrants, this issue engenders a high sense of urgency given the fact that the majority of “students from some racial and ethnic minority groups do not ‘achieve’ in school at rates comparable to European-American students or to students from particular racial and ethnic minority groups” (Adutwum, 2009; Bok, 2003). The various assumptions underlying these concepts of learning must be well understood to explore how race, ethnicity, and culture might influence student learning. Adutwum (2009) reported that if current trends in educational underachievement among the underprivileged continue, millions of racial minority students, primarily poor Blacks, American Indians, and Latinos, would not attain the necessary education to fully participate in the social, economic, and civic life of the country. The inequality that will result from differences in educational attainment of minority children is likely to have a negative impact on the U.S.

Another important theory suggests that student “learning and achievement that reflect the values, beliefs, and traditions of some racial/ethnic groups may place less of an emphasis on achieving within the dominant education context” (Bok, 2003; Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi, 1986). In Nigerian immigrant group, high emphasis is placed in achievement especially in the area of education. Research captures the essence of this view by linking the different ways that many minority groups go into the society and by extension, their approach to schooling, thus detailing the reasons why many members of
some minority groups do not seem to do well in mainstream schools. Another researcher reviewing Ogbu’s research on immigrant and non-immigrant minorities has decided on a different approach by suggesting that a macro level of analysis should be considered when studying why students from some minority groups achieve in school at greater levels than others, which now moves the discourse to another direction (Abad & Sheldon, 2008).

Children of African immigrants who are born and raised in this country are often faced with conflicts over whether to follow the norms and traditions of their family’s country of origin (natal culture) or those of the American mainstream society (host culture). Abad and Sheldon’s 2008 study of African second-generation immigrants suggested that when first-generation immigrants allow their second-generation immigrant children to decide on their own concerning their cultural identity, their second-generation children will be more likely to internalize their parents’ traditions and they will experience greater well-being.

These authors use self-determination theory to address the question of identification (Abad & Sheldon, 2008). “Self-determination theory states that all human beings need to feel self-directed in their lives, and that the feelings of autonomy are fostered by supportive psychological environments” (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Abad & Sheldon, 2008). “Parenting is defined as autonomy supportive when parents try to give the child as much choice as possible in decision making or offer a meaningful rationale when choice is not possible, thereby promoting both discipline and empowerment” (Grolnick, 2003). In contrast, the controlling parent will make parenting decisions without considering the child’s perspective in the decision-making and make no attempt
to engage the child in discussion. If the child did not follow through with the parent’s decision, this may result in force (Grolnick, 2003). The support of parental autonomy in all aspects of raising a child has been linked to positive outcomes among children of all ages, including increased motivation to succeed in school, increased self-regulation and self-responsibility, which also point to a lower incidence of behavioral problems, and higher overall levels of well-being (Abad & Sheldon, 2008; Grolnick, 2003; Sorkhabi, 2005). From these results, hypotheses can be drawn regarding how first-generation immigrant parents may have an impact on the development of their second-generation immigrant children’s ethnic identity (Abad & Sheldon, 2008). If parents let, their children have the opportunity to explore all aspects of the host and natal cultures without any restrictions, their children may feel free to approach and internalize their native culture on their own terms (Abad & Sheldon, 2008). In contrast, those immigrant parents who curtail their children’s freedom to explore may produce children who are not well motivated to investigate their ethnic identity and therefore, are not as strongly identified with their parent’s tradition and culture (Abad & Sheldon, 2008).

**Nigerian Economic and Educational Success**

Several determining factors drive individuals to leave their home country and relocate to a new, unknown community. Such factors include but are not limited to: a) the ability to obtain a higher standard of living for self and family; b) flight from war; c) failing economy; d) political crisis; e) government instability; and, f) poverty (Afolayan, 2011; Ukochovwerwa, 2014; Nwangwa, 2012). At one point, Nigerian immigrants came to the U.S. for educational advancement with the intention of leaving
upon completion of the degree. However, as the socio-political climate, economic stability, and living conditions of Nigeria changed, so too did the end goal of migration.

Early Nigerian immigrants came to the U.S. to study, acquired terminal degrees, and return home. Many Nigerian Americans settling in the U.S. copied this ambitious habit. Through their status as American citizens or permanent residents, some Nigerian Americans were able to acquire prestigious jobs in academia and other professions. Other Nigerian immigrants without academic qualifications accepted jobs in various sectors of society. Some established their own businesses in the U.S., and many trading in Nigerian and other African costumes have become profitable business. This requires travelling between Nigeria and the U.S. to arrange importation of items. In many American cities, it is not uncommon to find Nigerian and other African restaurants owned and operated by Nigerians immigrants. Nigerian immigrants have established their own small businesses, including travel agencies, parking lots, taxi stands, cultural exchange programs, and health and life insurance agencies. Even though they target the general population for their clientele, Nigerian immigrants invest time in acquiring Nigerian and other African clienteles.

Summary

Over the last four-and-a-half decades, more immigrants that are African have voluntarily come to the U.S. than those who were shipped to the U.S. through the slave trade (Alex-Assenoh, 2010). Immigration is a controversial labor and social issue in the U.S. and it has significant impacts on the present and future of the country’s educational conditions. The pattern of immigration over the last few decades, coupled with the
tendency for ethnic differences in educational attainment to persist over subsequent immigrant generations, has led to increasing gaps in educational attainment among some of the fastest growing immigrant communities in the U.S. and the native-born population. A review of the U.S. census data of 2000 and 2010 reveals that African immigrants and Nigerian immigrants in particular, have surpassed all ethnic immigrants in educational attainment (U.S. Census Bureau 2000 & 2010). The census data also show that 48.9% of all Nigerian immigrant adults earned a college degree, mostly in the U.S.

The intent of this study was to learn about the influence of culture and social structure in shaping academic achievement among Nigerian immigrants and their children. The cultural influences examined included parental involvement and expectations, acculturation, peer relations and social networks. This chapter provided an overview of Nigerian immigrants and introduced the study.

Chapter 2 provides a broad context in which to consider the findings of the study. It primarily focuses on the literature regarding education that is relevant to the educational achievement of the children of immigrant Nigerians: educational equality and disparities, theories explaining academic achievement and academic achievement among immigrant’s children. However, it also explores racial and ethnic identity, the history of African immigrants, and the health of African immigrants.

Chapter 3 describes the research design and methods adopted for the study. This chapter also describes the research participants and how they were recruited. Use of the prevailing forms of data collection associated with qualitative inquiry (particularly interviews and participant observation) are discussed here as well, as is the researcher’s
approach to data analysis and the identification of the central themes in study participants’ responses.

Chapter 4 explores the context in which first and second-generation Nigerian immigrants operate in their New Jersey/New York communities. This chapter provides a short overview of Nigerian communities in the U.S. with an emphasis on the Nigerian communities of New Jersey, where this research took place. Chapter 5 describes the results of parent participants’ interviews regarding their children’s education. It also explores the dimensions of proactive parenting strategies as practiced by Nigerian immigrants with their American-born children in the U.S.

Chapter 6 presents the results of student participants’ interviews about their educational achievement. This chapter also explores students’ perspectives about how their upbringing affected their educational achievement. Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation and summarizes the research project. It describes the most critical factors emerging from this study that appear to have the greatest impact on the overall academic success of Nigerian immigrants and their children.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

To provide a broad context for this study, this literature review will embrace a range of subtopics. It will primarily focus on the literature regarding education: educational equality, disparities, the impact of immigration on education, theories explaining academic achievement and academic achievement among immigrant’s children. However, it will also consider racial and ethnic identity, the history of African immigrants, and the health of African immigrants.

In terms of education, I will classify the existing literature on immigrant educational attainment into two broad categories based on research methodology and discipline. Anthropologists and sociologists, who form the first category, have led the major work in this area. Most recently, economists have also become engaged and form the second category (Chiswick & DebBurman, 2003).

Anthropologists and sociologists have proposed two theories, which dominate their research on the educational achievement of U.S. immigrants: cultural discontinuity theory and cultural ecology theory. Cultural Discontinuity Theory suggests that immigrant youth have fewer advantages due to language, cultural, and social interactional conflicts between immigrant home and school (Tan, 2017; Carter & Segura, 1979; Perlmann, 1988). These researchers found that immigrant educational achievement increased the longer they stayed in the U.S. with more acculturation to American society. However, the cultural-ecological theorists suggest that immigrant educational attainment has been affected by a complex interaction of many influences, which are part of the motivation to immigrate, i.e., perceptions of opportunity and labor market payoff for
educational attainment (Ogbu, 1987, 1978; Ogbu & Mattute-Bianchi, 1986). Ogbu and other theorists have proposed that ethnicity and generation of immigrants together determined educational achievement. On the other hand, some recent researchers have published findings that do not always fully agree with one or both of these two theories. Nevertheless, these two groups offer important findings that will be discussed later in this chapter (Tan, 2017; Chiswick & DebBurman, 2003).

Additional research has had considerable influence on our understanding of the post-immigration schooling of immigrants. Schaafsma and Sweetman explored the influence of age on educational achievement at the time of immigration in 1999. These Canadian researchers reported that educational attainment differed by age at immigration. Immigrants who arrived when they were between the ages of 15 and 18 had less total education after they arrived than those who immigrated at a younger or older age. These researchers suggested that adjustment to a new country during or near the transition out of high school might have accounted for this finding. Gang and Zimmerman (1999) reported that differences in educational achievement between immigrants in Germany and comparable German-born citizens were much smaller in the second generation if compared to differences in the first generation. They concluded that assimilation did exist in the educational achievement of immigrants. This latter report seems to agree with Schultz (1984) and Betts and Lofstrom’s (2000) finding that the schooling level of the children of immigrants in the U.S. converged toward that of the children of native-born Americans.

Several recent studies reported that immigrant generation plays a vital role in educational attainment and school performance (Pinquart & Ebeling, 2020; Portes &
Rumbaut, 2001; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Rong & Grant, 1992). When academic achievement was measured in middle schools based on reading and math standardized test scores and middle school grades, the second-generation youth performed better academically than either the first-generation youth or native-born youth. Those first-generation immigrants’ children who immigrated to the U.S. when they were very young usually showed the same educational achievement as those attained by second-generation immigrant youth (Kao, Tienda, & Schneider, 1996). According to Rong and Grant (1992) and Pinquart & Ebeling, (2020) most of those studies also showed that one substantial effect of ethnicity on educational attainment can be seen in Asian students who outperformed other groups in educational attainment. Hispanic students, however, have often sustained lower achievement levels and higher dropout rates as compared to Asian and non-Hispanic White students (Rong & Grant, 1992; Pinquart & Ebeling, 2020). Rong and Grant’s 1992 study also pointed out that the immigrant generation also influenced youth educational achievement, but this influence was not consistent across generations and ethnicity.

Asian Americans have been stereotypically identified as the model minority group in the U.S., a standard by which other minority groups are measured. The assumption by many in the U.S. is that Asian American students are uniquely prepared for rigorous academic work due to a homogeneous Asian culture and help from their parents who have worked their way from immigrant poverty to economic comfort. Jamie Lew’s book, *Asian Americans in Class: Charting the Achievement Gap among Korean American Youth* (2006), powerfully disputed these traditional beliefs by pointing out that many
Asian American families in the U.S. are poor. She noted that almost one in four Asian American families in the U.S. earned less than $25,000 in 2000.

Jamie Lew’s research was based in Queens County in New York City, where 24% of Asian American children lived in poverty in 2003 (Lew, 2006). The heart of her research focused on the myth of academic achievement among Korean high school students and their peer networks, families, and schools. This research showed that significant support was crucial to student success among the middle class in this study group. Middle class students “were afforded private tutoring by parents, attended well-resourced schools, and had access to Korean American peers who could supply information about applying to college” (Lew, 2006). Working class students, on the other hand, lacked the jobs and income required to afford private tutoring and they attended poorly resourced schools. Jamie Lew reported that many of these working-class students became frustrated with school and ultimately dropped out and picked up minimum wage jobs.

Lew’s research (2006) also revealed that Asian American students’ academic achievement was not just a matter of cultural attitudes and hard work, although those attributes were very important. However, educational achievement has vital roots in what money and social capital can purchase. Nigerian immigrants show similar educational achievements as do Asian/Korean Americans. However, little or no research has been done with Nigerian immigrants until now.

Despite a large and extensive growing body of literature on educational attainment among immigrants and those native born, limitations persist. This study will
attempt to deepen our understanding of educational attainment among Nigerian immigrants in Northern New Jersey.

The Importance of Education in the 21st Century Economy

Education prepares young people for life, work, and citizenship. Knowledge of natural and engineered environments and how people live in the world is critical to all three of these educational goals. Critical thinking, creativity, interpersonal skills, and a sense of social responsibility all influence success in life, work, and citizenship (Strauss, 2015). For example, unhappy personal relationships often spill over into the work environment, while a stressful workplace or unemployment negatively influences family life. Uninformed, disengaged citizens lead to poor policy choices that affect life, work, and citizenship (Strauss, 2015).

There is no doubt that most individuals understand the importance of education. After all, education is touted as leading to a number of benefits, including financial security and a prosperous career. However, the role of education in the 21st century plays a big part in other aspects of one’s life, such as improving overall quality of life, health, and creating opportunities. Graduates with higher levels of education typically have more jobs open to them than those who do not further their education after high school. College graduates also usually earn more money than non-graduates do. A study conducted by the US Census Bureau found that earnings increased with increased levels of education, too, with respect to every successive degree, with the exception of a doctorate degree (US Census Bureau, 2017). Average earnings included, from the 9th to 12th grades: $10996;
high school graduates: $21,569; some college: $27,361; associate’s degree: $32,602; bachelor’s degree: $42,783; master’s degree: $53,716; professional degree: $79,977; doctoral degree: $73,575 (US Census Bureau, 2017).

The College Board reported that the graduate of a four-year college who enrolls at age 18 and graduates in four years can usually earn enough by the time he or she is 36 to compensate for four years of not working and pay back what they paid in fees and tuition that was not covered by any grant assistance. Evidence has shown that the median earnings of a full-time, 40-year working life are 65 percent higher for those with higher education than for high school graduates.

In general, the College Board considers the practical benefits of higher education to encompass economics, health, civic involvement, personal development, better communication (verbal and written), realization of passions, a greater sense of discipline, and sense of accomplishment. As you can see, the benefits of higher education in the 21st century are not just career-oriented. Being able to develop one’s self is invaluable, and having a higher education helps to accomplish this.

Graduating from high school does not open doors to rewarding careers as it did in past generations. These days, the U.S. has moved from a manufacturing-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, and the significance of a higher education today may be compared to a high school education 40 years ago in terms of providing more opportunities and better career options (College Board, 2017). The quickest pathway to a rewarding career for many, if not most, is going to college. One might not know exactly what one wants to do after graduating from college, but most people do know they want a career that is more rewarding, pays well, and is something they feel secure in and
satisfied with. This is why many people invest in college with both their money and their time.

Higher education trains people to think analytically, understand subjects that are complex, and communicate them in an effective way. Additionally, it instills important skills like self-discipline, organization, and being able to finish a task from start to finish. It builds professionalism and confers work-related skills that can qualify graduates for a wider range of career choices in different fields that offer you more room for advancement.

**Educational Disparities in the United States**

Disparities in academic achievement in the United States are the result of government policies, differences in schools’ disparities in wealth parenting styles, race and ethnicity and those resources available to children and to schools. W.E.B. DuBois was right about the problem of the 21st century: the color line divides us still. In recent years, the most visible evidence of this in public policy has been the persistence of attacks on affirmative action in higher education from Americans who believe that the last vestiges of discrimination have disappeared (Luttig, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 1998). These Americans assert that affirmative action now provides an unfair advantage to minorities. From the perspective of others who experience the consequences of ongoing discrimination, affirmative action is needed to protect opportunities that are likely to evaporate if an affirmative obligation to act fairly does not exist. In addition, for Americans of all backgrounds, the allocation of opportunity in a society that is
becoming ever more dependent on knowledge and education is a source of great anxiety and concern (Flores & Halsall, 2017)

At the center of these debates, do standardized test scores measure interpretations of the gaps in educational achievement between white and non-Asian minority students as? The presumption that guides much of this conversation is that equal opportunity now exists; therefore, continued low levels of achievement on the part of minority students must be the function of genes, culture, or a lack of effort and will (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Franko, 2016). The assumptions that undergird this debate miss an important reality. Educational outcomes for minority children are much more a function of their unequal access to key educational resources, including skilled teachers and quality curricula, than they are a function of race. In fact, the U.S. educational system is one of the most unequal in the industrialized world, and students routinely receive dramatically different learning opportunities based on their social status (Franko, 2016). In contrast to European and Asian nations that fund schools equally, the wealthiest 10 percent of U.S. school districts spend nearly 10 times more than the poorest 10 percent, and spending ratios of 3 to 1 are common within states (Flores & Halsall, 2017; Monroe, 2005).

In the U.S., a family’s socioeconomic status (SES) has a significant impact on the child’s education. The parents’ level of education, income, and jobs combine to determine the level of difficulty their children will face in school. It creates learning inequalities between children from high SES families and children from low SES families (Willingham, 2012). High SES Families will ensure that their children receive high quality educations while low SES families are usually not able to ensure a quality education for their children. Thus, children of less wealthy families perform less well in
schools than children of wealthier families (Willingham, 2012). There are several factors that contribute to this disparity; these factors narrow into two main areas: resources and environment.

The type of environment in which a student lives is a determinant of the education they receive. The environment in which a child is raised creates their perceptions of education. In low SES homes, literacy is not stressed as much as it is in high SES homes (Luttig, 2013). It has been shown that wealthier parents spend more time talking to their children and building up their vocabulary early on, enhancing their literacy skills (Hart, 2003). Low SES families may not be able to afford as many books at children’s ever-changing reading levels. This endangers the child’s ability to quickly build up literacy skills because their only access to books of differing levels is at school. They are unable to challenge their reading skills at home, while wealthier children may have a wide variety of books because they live in an environment that encourages reading. Children in low SES families are also exposed to a more stressful environment than children in higher SES families. Monetary struggles also increase the number of parents’ arguments, which creates a high-stress environment for the child and may prevent him or her from concentrating on schoolwork (Monroe, 2015). This inability to concentrate on homework or perform in class without worrying about environmental factors at home can cause a decline in academic performance (Monroe, 2015). This decline is less likely to occur to high-SES students because their home environment produces fewer stressors. The student is able to give his or her full attention to academic endorsers.

There is a great variation in the resources available to children in home and in school. Higher SES families are able to invest more in the education of their children.
This ability manifests in the popular tactic of shopping around for school districts. This refers to the way in rich parent’s plan where they are going to settle down and live based on the quality of the school district. High SES parents are able to choose where they live and they can afford to live in areas where other high SES families reside. This congregation of high-SES families produces a school district that is well funded. These families are capable of donating to their children’s schools, literally investing in their children’s education. Having access to such funds gives the schools the capacity to gather high caliber resources, such as excellent teachers, advanced technology, good nutrition options, clubs, sports, and books (Luttig, 2013).

These resources have a notable effect on education attainment (Monroe, 2003). If students have access to such resources, they are able to learn more effectively. Children of lower SES families do not have such resources. Their families are not able to shop around for school districts; they tend to settle down where there is an availability of jobs. Clusters of low-SES families typically produce worse school districts (Luttig, 2013). These families are not in a position to donate to their children’s school and see to it that they are well funded. This results in an underfunded school that cannot compete with wealthier schools. These schools lack the appropriate funding for high quality teachers, technology, and books. When students do not have access to these things, they fall behind those who do (Willingham, 2012; Monroe, 2003).

**The Nature of Educational Inequality**

The type of environment in which a student lives is a determinant of the education they receive. Americans often forget that as late 1960s most African-American, Latino,
and Native American students were educated in wholly segregated schools funded at rates many times lower than those serving whites, and these students were excluded from many higher education institutions entirely (Franko, 2016; Monroe, 2003). The end of legal segregation, followed by efforts to equalize spending since 1970, has made a substantial difference for student achievement (Bloome, & Western, 2011). On every major national test, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the gap in minority and white students’ test scores narrowed substantially between 1970 and 1990, especially for elementary school students (Childs, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 1998). On the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the scores of African-American students climbed 54 points between 1976 and 1994, while those of white students remained stable (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Even so, the educational experiences of minority students have continued to be substantially separate and unequal. Two-thirds of minority students still attend schools with few white students, many of which are located in central cities and funded well below those in neighboring suburban districts (Franko, 2016). Analyses of data prepared for school finance cases in Alabama, New Jersey, New York, Louisiana, and Texas have found that on every tangible measure, including qualified teachers and curriculum offerings, schools serving greater numbers of minority students had significantly fewer resources than schools serving mostly whites students (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Inequitable systems of school finance inflict disproportionate harm on minority and economically disadvantaged students as noted by Darling-Hammond, (1998). On an inter-states basis, such students are concentrated primarily in Southern in states, primarily in the South, that have the lowest capacities to finance public education. On an intra-state
basis, many of the states with the widest disparities in educational expenditures are large industrial states. In these states, many minorities and economically disadvantaged students are located in property-poor urban districts, which fare the worst in educational expenditures, or rural districts that suffer from fiscal inequity.

Even within urban school districts, schools with high concentrations of low-income and minority students receive fewer instructional resources than others do. Tracking systems exacerbate these inequalities by segregating low-income and minority students within schools. In combination, these policies leave minority students with fewer and lower-quality books, curriculum materials, laboratories, and computers. Significantly, minority schools are also left with larger class sizes, less qualified and less experienced teachers, and less access to high-quality curricula. Many schools serving low-income and minority students do not even offer the math and science courses needed for college, and they provide lower quality teaching in the classes they do offer (Bloome, & Western, 2011).

What happens when minority students do get access to more equal opportunities? Studies find that better curriculum quality and greater teacher skill makes more of a difference in educational outcomes than the initial test scores or racial backgrounds of the student. Analyses of national data from both the High School and Beyond Survey and the National Educational Longitudinal Survey have demonstrated that, while there are dramatic differences among students of various racial and ethnic groups in course taking. In such areas as math, science, and foreign language, for students with similar course-taking records, achievement test score differences by race or ethnicity narrow substantially (Willingham, 2012).
Racial and Ethnic Identity

The question of identity has always been particularly salient for African immigrants, who arrived as strangers to a different society. Immigrants are faced with questions of how to identify with the people in their host society, just as those in the host society decide how to categorize or identify immigrants (Waters, 1999; Childs, 2014). The social identity that immigrants adopt or are identified with can have enormous consequences for individuals.

Ethnic or racial identities are social identities. As Virginia Dominguez (1997) noted, identity can only be understood in the context of people interacting with each other. Social identities are not the same as material objects. Material things have a specific existence whether people recognize this existence or not, social identity is not a material object. An identity can be defined as a conception of oneself, which is made up of a selection of physical, psychological, emotional, or social attributes (Dominguez, 1997; Childs, 2014). Identity does not have any social relevance when it is not named, but it simply does not exist when it has not been formulated, conceived, and elevated to public consciousness (Childs, 2014).

The word “ethnic” is generally used to refer to groups defined by cultural attributes, while “racial” groups are defined by physical attributes (Dominguez, 1997). In the folk usage of these terms in the U.S. of America of today, Blacks and Whites are racial groups different from each other because of the color of their skin, hair texture, and other facial features, which are physical characteristics that may define an individual as socially as Black or White.
Ethnic groups can be defined as groups that share the same practices, languages, behaviors or ancestral origin (Waters, 1999). For example, Nigerians and Ethiopians are ethnic groups, as are Italians, Poles, and the British. Yet in the U.S., people generally do not seem to pay attention to ethnic differences within the White race, while treating Black Americans as if they are both a racial and an ethnic group with no intra-racial differences (Kretsedemas, 2010). However, unlike West Indians, Africans are more likely to identify themselves as Africans, Nigerians, or Blacks, depending on the situation in which they find themselves.

Before travelling to U.S., Nigerians were identified only by their tribe and by religion. Race as a concept was never present in Nigerian daily life. However, as Nigerian immigrants began to settle in the U.S., they discovered that due to the color of their skin they were identified as Black. They also discovered that with the color of their skin also came problems, baggage, and all sorts of assumptions. As Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie described in her novel, Americanah, a new identity was thrust upon her. She became Black in U.S. even though never thought of herself as Black in Nigeria. (Adichie, 2013).

Ethnic and racial identification is usually not a zero-sum identity. It is possible to hold several identities at the same time, and identities are very clearly situational (Waters, 1999). In one situation a person can feel very American, at another time Nigerian, and at yet another time African or Black. One could hold all identities simultaneously. But the recognition of the multiplicity and situationality of social identities does not mean that people are free to choose any identity they want or to attach any meaning they want to any particular identity. History and current power relationships form the opportunities
people experience in their day-to-day lives, giving some people “ethnic options” and others “racial labels.” Shared or contested meanings are also attached to different groups that affect individuals’ ways of thinking about themselves (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015).

As it true for West Indians (Waters, 1999; Dominguez, 1997), for most people the decision to call himself or herself Africans or a more specific nationality is situation-specific and identities are interchangeable. When African immigrants are among a large number of non-Africans, they tend to identify themselves as Africans and to feel an affinity with any other immigrants from Africa. When there are a large number of people of the same ethnic group or predominantly African people, they tend to identify with their particular country and to make distinctions and draw social boundaries between different countries (Waters, 1999; Ramasubramanian, 2011).

Self-identification as African is important to the African, which may be different from the way Black Americans perceive themselves. African immigrants do not see themselves as Black Americans. Often African immigrants tend to distance themselves from Black Americans because they do not share the same cultural values and inheritance (Waters, 1999; Mastro Tukachinsky, 2011). African immigrants have very strong motivations and aspirations; they are a very industrious group of people and struggle to be successful in life. African immigrants see many differences between the family lives of Black Americans and themselves. African immigrants see themselves as having stronger and intact families and enforcing a stricter upbringing of their children (Waters, 1999; Ramasubramanian, 2011).
Negative stereotypes exist on both sides. The negative stereotypes that African immigrants hold about Black Americans include beliefs regarding Black American culture (Dominguez, 1997; Kretsedemas, 2010). The stereotypes Black Americans hold about African immigrants include beliefs that Africans sold them into slavery, that they immigrated to the U.S. to steal their jobs, and that they “talk funny” (Dominguez, 1997; Adichie, 2013). Social identity theory helps to explain the tenacity of some of these negative images, even as immigrants encounter many outstanding Black Americans whom they recognize as cultured and hardworking people (McLeod, 2008). African immigrants tend to see themselves as the in-group and Black Americans as the out-group (McLeod, 2008; Mastro Tukachinsky, 2011). Out-group members are often given dispositional attribution for the same behavior that is granted situational attribution for in-group members. These psychological decisions about the behavior of individuals and groups help people to maintain stereotypes both good and bad in the face of disconfirming evidence (McLeod, 2008).

The History of African Immigration into the United States

The voluntary African immigrants to the United States have been historical, a continuous process, had it not been for slavery. The voluntary migration might have been higher than the trickling numbers that migrated here after the Civil War ended in 1865. Judging from the Immigration and Naturalization Service records of 1881-1890, less than 1,000 Africans migrated to the U.S.; but as memories of slavery subsided and became less vivid, the number of Africans who migrated to the U.S. increased substantially. Between 1901 and 1920, more than 15,000 African immigrated to the U.S. of America according to
Arthur, (2000). The first quantitative immigration law was adopted in 1921 when temporary annual quotas were set according to nationality. This same act was later strengthened by the Immigration Act of 1924, which used national origin to impose immigration quotas restricting the total number of immigrants that could be admitted into the U.S. to 150,000.

The new act favored Western European immigration because the allotments to the various countries were based solely on how many Americans could trace their ancestry to a particular region of the world. The African quota was restricted to two percent of the total number of immigrants that could be admitted annually into the U.S. (Arthur, 2000). These restrictions, together with the discriminatory practices and segregation in the country, severely reduced African immigration. According to INS data between 1921 and 1930, only 6,286 Africans were admitted into the country compared to 112,059 from Asia during the same period. The number of African immigrants to the U.S. significantly increased after the Second World War according to Ashabranner (1999). Who stated that Americans now saw the need to establish links to other non-European countries and realized that discriminatory immigration practices should be abolished.

In 1965, U.S. Congress removed “national origin” as the basis for American Immigration and the act was amended in the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act. Under this act, the quota for Africa stood at 1,400 compared to 146,667 for Europe and 2,990 for Asia (Ashabranner, 1999). According to Ashabranner (1999), African admission into the country increased from 14,092 between 1951 and 1960 and 80,779 between 1971 and 1980.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 further boosted the African immigration into the U.S. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of
1986 was a comprehensive reform effort that (a) legalized the status of aliens who had resided unlawfully in the U.S. since January 1, 1982; (b) established sanctions prohibiting employers from hiring, recruiting, or referring for a fee aliens known to be unauthorized to work in the U.S.; (c) created a new classification of temporary agricultural worker and provided for the legalization of such workers; and (d) established a visa waiver pilot program allowing the admission of certain non-immigrants without visas. This act is mainly responsible for the vast increase in the number of African immigrants into the U.S. in the 1980s and 1990s.

The portion of the act that legalized illegal aliens had a very important effect on African immigrants. After legalizing their status, Africans were able to bring their family members from Africa, which vastly increased the population of African immigrants in the U.S. In addition, the 1995 Immigration Diversity Program established by Congress substantially increased the African immigrant population in the U.S. The National Visa Center in the U.S. State Department holds a lottery once a year and winners are randomly selected among all the qualified entries. Anyone who is selected under this lottery program is given the opportunity to apply for permanent residence. Whenever the permanent residence is approved and granted, the individual is authorized to live and work permanently in the U.S. The individual is allowed to bring his or her spouse and any unmarried children under the age of 21 to the U.S. Every year 50,000 immigrant visas are made available through a lottery to people who come from countries with low rates of immigration to the U.S. These lottery visas are not made available to people who resided in countries that have sent more than 50,000 immigrants to the U.S. in the past five years. Although African immigrants comprised only 5.9% of the total number of immigrants in
the 1995 fiscal year, the 42,456 African immigrants admitted into the country that year were up until then the most ever recorded for Africa (Adutwum, 2009).

Most of the increase in African immigration from 1994 and 1995 was due to admission under the Diversity Immigration Lottery Program. In 1994, the Diversity Lottery Program admitted 26,716 African immigrants into the U.S. and that number nearly doubled in 1996 with the total number of Africans admitted at 52,889. These favorable immigration policies, regulations and laws together ushered in a significant increase in the number of African immigrants admitted into U.S. Between 1991 and 2000, over 350,000 Africans immigrated legally to the U.S., and this number represents over 50% of the total number of African immigrants admitted between 1820 and 1991 (Adutwum, 2009).

**Uniqueness of African immigrants**

African immigrants are “reluctant immigrants” because they did not calculate the economic benefit they would gain from living in the US before migrating (Macharia, 2010). Unlike the European immigrant groups before them, Africans did not make decisions based on economic reasons that saw America as a place of better opportunity for them and their family for economic well-being. Only since the 1990s have African immigrants realized that coming to America was for economic reasons that would better their lives or to achieve the so-called “American dream.” During the same period, the whole continent of Africa was going through economic hardship brought about by the policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund on the continent (Macharia 2010).

Those that migrated to the US in the 1990s also included refugees from several war-torn African countries, notably are Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Burundi, Rwanda, and
others. Unlike those who came before them, those immigrants that came in the 1990s were more likely to be engaged in different forms of entrepreneurship and have a sense of “home” being in the US. They were determined to settle in what they believed was their newfound land of “peace and economic tranquility.”

Many Africans took advantage of the U.S. Visa Diversity Program or “Lottery Visa.” These people successfully applied and won the lottery to move themselves and families to the U.S. They are among the “economic immigrants” that migrated to the U.S. for better economic opportunities than were available in their home countries.

Theory: Theoretical Explanation for Academic Achievement

This research draws on human capital theory, which was proposed, by Schultz in 1984 and Becker in 1964. The assumption in human capital theory is that people invest in human capital to get the maximum from their net wealth. Chiswick (1988) extended Becker’s (1964) investment framework which primarily analyzed educational achievement and rate of educational returns for people in a human capital framework by studying the labor market through its application to aspects of immigration. This limited human capital model has now been used to examine how immigrants adjust to the host-country labor market (Chiswick, 1988). Chiswick’s main hypothesis is that the demand for educational attainment is a result of economic incentives. If there were to be an increase in the costs of schooling that would cause individuals to not to attend school, then an increase in the benefits from going to school would increase the chances of the individual’s attainment of education. Based on the above theory, Nigerian immigrants
may have focused on educational achievement as a way of moving up the social economic ladder of the society, like many other immigrants to the U.S.

According to Chiswick and DebBurman (2003) the model of immigrant settlement in a new country based on human capital theory proposes that the economic status of immigrants will improve the longer they stay in the US. In other words, immigrant assimilation in the country in which they immigrated will be related positively to how long they stay in the host country. The second-generation immigrants will probably achieve more than the first-generation immigrants because the former not only possess more destination specific skills, they are born and raised in the host country. The second-generation immigrants may achieve more than native-parentage immigrants because of the positive influence of their foreign-born parents. This arises from the bias in migration, which seems to imply that immigrants tend to be disproportionately more able or highly motivated people (Chiswick, 1999).

The first theory will read as follows: “Among immigrants’ educational attainment will differ by immigrant generation. The second-generation of immigrants (children of immigrants) will exhibit higher educational attainment than first-generation immigrants and may receive more schooling than those with native born parents.”

The second theory that will apply in this research will read as follows: “Educational attainment will vary with age at immigration. Specifically, post-migration educational attainment will tend to fall with age at immigration and fall at a decreasing rate.”
Academic Achievement among Immigrants’ Children

Immigrant groups are making a difference in school performance according to an article by Schmidt (1990). It is not just the immigrant group’s culture that is responsible for this difference but also how that group and culture interfaces with the opportunities in the U.S. that were lacking in their home country. Educational performance is a strong predictor of future career mobility in this and many societies around the world. Nigerian immigrants use a future career as an incentive for high educational performance. Differences among students of various nationalities in the U.S. point to potential inequalities in their eventual economic and social adaption. Portes and Zhou (1993) have used the term “segmented assimilation” to refer to what they see as major differences in the success and opportunities of today’s second generation. Segmented assimilation suggests different immigrant groups assimilate into different segments of society. This perspective stresses that the U.S. is an unequal, or stratified society, and thus when immigrants arrive in the US different segments are available to them, depending on factors such as socioeconomic status. Segmented assimilation is largely formulated based upon the experience of second-generation immigrants. The theory seeks to explain what happens to the children of immigrants. In this view, some newly hyphenated Americans are on a rapid course of upward assimilation, riding on the strength of family and community resources, while others have a high probability of undergoing “downward assimilation” because of a compounded set of family and community disadvantages. (Portes and Zhou, 1993)

The first path of assimilation is like a classical model of assimilation. Immigrants who came to the United are able to integrate into the middle class. These immigrants
have no problem adjusting to life in this country, and they have a relatively easy time here in the U.S. The second path of assimilation involves difficulty assimilating into American society, and creates downward mobility. On this second path, immigrants usually assimilate into poorer segments of the society. They often experience poverty and lack of opportunity on this route. Portes and Rumbaut (2001 and 1990) have also explored a third path, which involves maintaining many of the immigrants’ own cultural values and traditions while trying to integrate economically into society’s mainstream culture. This third path often results in better economic outcomes for the immigrants.

These immigrants’ communities condition the orientation of community members toward their future, influencing the immigrants’ perception of what is achievable in this society and how to achieve them. Such contextual effects may transcend those of individual and family characteristics, influencing how children from a community may perform in school. Rumbaut (1997) said it better: “The diversity of contemporary immigration is such that, among all ethnic groups in America today, native and foreign-born, different immigrant nationalities account at once for the highest and lowest rates of education, self-employment, home ownership, poverty, welfare dependence and fertility. … These differential starting points, especially the internal socioeconomic diversification of particular waves within the same nationalities over time, augur differential modes of incorporation and assimilation outcomes that be extrapolated simply from the experience of earlier immigrant groups of the same nationality, let alone from immigrants as an undifferentiated whole (p. 500).” Nigerian immigrants do well academically in the U.S. because most came here already speaking the English language with a strong secondary school background and high will to succeed academically in the new home. Others came
for an economic reason with no educational background. Those are among the group with the lowest rates of education.

According to Ogbu (1990), the cultural models of ethnic groups may provide the framework for interpretation of educational events and experiences. Ogbu states, “The more academically successful minorities differ from the less academically successful minorities from the understanding they know of the working of the larger society and their place as minorities in the working order” (p. 7-8). Therefore, unlike involuntary minorities whose counter cultural practices inhibit education, immigrant children develop a dual frame of reference, which allows them to utilize education as a ladder for socioeconomic advancement (Suarez-Orozco, 1987). Suarez-Orozco (1987) concluded that immigrants who develop an adversarial relationship towards mainstream American values are less likely to succeed in the education system. Ironically, in certain immigrant groups, the second generation’s strong affinity to their ethnic group may be the key to socioeconomic success. This conclusion was drawn by Suarez-Orozco’s (1987) study of Central American immigrant students in inner city schools, where he found that immigrant students’ dual frame of reference enables them to contrast their experience in the U.S. with that of their home countries and do well in school.

The Impact of Immigration on Education

The increase in the volume and diversity of immigrants to the U.S. since 1960 has given rise to the question of whether assimilation benefits educational achievement among immigrants and their children. The U.S. has the most extensive and diverse educational system the world has ever known. The educational system in U.S. is well
known for its many goals, including promoting democracy, assimilation, nationalism, equality of opportunity, and personal development. These goals, combined with the complexities of race, ethnicity, and culture, provide a challenging environment for educational development. The children of various immigrants’ groups have to arduously navigate this complex school environment fashioned to accomplish multifaceted and seemingly incongruous goals.

The substantial increase of immigrants from different countries into the U.S. have led to increases in the number of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who are enrolled in school systems. The country is being transformed by high levels of immigrants who continue to enter America regularly, and no institution has been more affected by this transformation than American public schools and institution of higher education (Adutwum, 2009). A high percentage of students currently entering institution of higher education are born outside the country and many school districts in U.S., along with teachers and school administrators, are grappling with a sudden explosion of students speaking languages never previously heard before, e.g. Edo, Twi, Yoruba, Ibo, Benghali, or Vietnamese (Adutwum, 2009). The New York/New Jersey metropolitan area saw an increase of approximately 10% in international migrants between 1990 and 2000, and African immigrants accounted for 16% of that immigrant population in the area (Adutwum, 2009).

The growth of Nigerian immigrant students in major metropolitan areas underscores the need for researchers who understand what may hinder or facilitate learning and academic achievement among their students.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODS

The Research Question

This study explores how cultural and social structures influence academic achievement among Nigerian immigrants and their children in northern New Jersey. In the context of this study, I explored cultural influences which include the attitude of parents and students towards education, parent and community involvement in education, peer relations, and available community support systems. The influence of culture I examined came in the form of parental involvement and expectations, acculturation, peer relations and social networks.

As a reminder, the central question that will be guiding this study was the following: “How does culture influence academic achievement among Nigerian immigrants and their children in the northern New Jersey area?” To answer this central question, I explored the following sub-questions, posing them to parent and children participants respectively:

Questions for parents:

a) What role do you play as a parent in the education of your children and how is this influenced by your culture?

b) What do you do to support your children in their educational experience in this country? Please describe this to me in detail.

c) How involved are you in the Nigerian community in the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area, and do you get your children involved?
Questions for children:

a) What are the factors that most influenced your educational experience and the decision to pursue a college education?

b) How involved are you in the Nigerian community in the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area and who got involved?

c) How is your relationship with your parents regarding your educational experience?

Research Design

Design and Sampling

The intent of this qualitative descriptive study was to obtain a rich, informative and detailed description of the ways in which cultural and social structures influenced the educational achievement of the children of Nigerian immigrants. Participants were interviewed, audio recorded and the recordings transcribed verbatim by me using Transana (2.30). I also utilized participant observation and observation and document collection. Content analysis was used to analyze transcribed interviews and identify significant statements or quotations from which themes and categories were derived. The themes and categories were used to create detailed textural and structural descriptions of the participants’ cultural experiences as it related to educational achievement.

Transana (2.30) software was selected to transcribe, code, and analyze study interviews because it is sophisticated qualitative software for both textual and auditory data. It offers a wealth of features designed to facilitate the process of making sense out of such data. For example, Transana allowed me to select, categorize and code portions of auditory data as part of the analytic process. I was able to select small or large portions
of long audio files and I could identify analytic significance in several different ways. This offered me maximum flexibility.

I utilized purposive snowball sampling as the goal of this research was to reach saturation on the topic of study (Padgett, 1998). I selected first-and-second generation Nigerian immigrant participants, mainly based on their willingness to speak with me and respond to my questions freely. I interviewed 15 Nigerian immigrant parents and 28 children of Nigerian immigrant college-age students at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), Rutgers University, and Essex County College. Students were interviewed on campus. Parents were interviewed in their respective towns in public places near their homes. (See Table 1).

**Researcher’s Role**

As the primary data collection instrument for the study, I approached this study with an experiential background as a member of this Nigerian immigrant community. I am also the faculty advisor to the African students’ association (AFSA) in NJIT. This student body is made up of nearly 75% of Nigerian immigrants and children of Nigerian immigrants. This study presented the voices of Nigerian immigrants and reproduced their statements. As an educator of over 20 years of experience in higher education in northern New Jersey, I have had the opportunity to observed and continue to observe immigrant parents and children navigating through the higher education system. This unique background and perspective offer a great opportunity to compare and contrast the experience of Nigerian immigrants with what I have experienced daily on campus.
Having served as the president of Nigerian Association in New Jersey for two years and as a National Chairman of Council of Presidents for another two years, I was able to use my access to the community to break into the rigid boundaries most immigrants erect around themselves. Notably, I was not constrained by the ethnic, linguistic, or social barriers that outside investigator would have faced. Overall, the benefits of my “insider” status far outweighed any limitations. I was sensitive to the fact that in conducting this study, I came into contact with personal information. I made every attempt to assuage the concern of my study participants by explaining the purpose of the study and maintaining non-judgmental attitude throughout the research, which enabled me to observe and describe group patterns, similarities, and differences as they occurred.

For this research investigation, it was incumbent on me as the researcher to approach it with care, setting-aside any pre-conceptions, pre-suppositions, judgement, and biases as a member of this community. I attempted to maintain an open mind in listening to study participants, and to remain sensitive to their concerns. Strauss and Corbin believe that sensitivity comes from a number of sources, including professional literature, professional experience, and personal experience. The credibility of a qualitative research report relies heavily on the confidence readers have in the researcher’s ability to be sensitive to the data and to make appropriate decisions in the field (Eisner, 1991; Patton, 1990). I also attempted to cultivate what Glaser & Strauss, 1967, and Strauss & Corbin, 1990 refer to as “theoretical sensitivity,” which they describe as a personal quality of the researcher.
Setting

The study was conducted on the campuses of NJIT, Rutgers University Newark, and Essex County College Newark. Interviews with students were conducted from March 2019 to August 2017 and were conducted at students’ respective schools. Interviews with parents conducted from July 2017 to September 2017 and the interviews were done at public places near their homes. Student participants from NJIT were interviewed in the researchers’ office conference room. The student participant from Rutgers Newark, and Essex County College were interviewed in their school library meeting rooms respectively. Interviews of parents were conducted in a quiet public place near their homes. For example, the researcher met parent participants in their local town library, in a quiet room in a restaurant, and in neighborhood public schools.

Research Participants

Interviewees fell into two groups. The first group consisted of 28 college students of Nigerian descent pursuing an undergraduate degree of various majors, ten students from Rutgers Newark (Table 4), ten students from NJIT (Table 3), and eight students from Essex County College (Table 5). The second group consisted of 15 Nigerian immigrant parents (Table 2). All the participants self-identified as Blacks or Nigerian American and the students ranged in age from 18 to 22 years of age and parents ranged in age from 49 years to 63 years old. All but two of the student participants were born in the USA and the two that were born out of the USA were born in Nigeria; however, they relocated to the USA at a very early age. All the parent participants were all born in Nigeria and
migrated to the U.S. within the last 40 years. See tables below for more detail descriptions.

**Recruitment of Study Participants**

Using Krueger’s (2008) guide, I was able to identify a potential avenue for recruiting students’ participants for the interview. At my request, the president of the African Students Association at NJIT, Rutgers University Newark, and Essex County College sent an IRB approved recruitment email to all the children of Nigerian immigrants in their association describing the eligibility criteria for the study and requesting the interested students to contact the researcher directly.

I also requested from the president of African students’ association on NJIT campus to attend the student association meetings to select students for the interviews. The President invited me to their next association meeting. At this meeting, I explained the purpose of the project to the members and told them I needed ten children Nigerian immigrant student volunteers for the research interview. More than 15 students agreed to participate in the interview. Ten of the students were randomly selected. The president of the NJIT African students’ association helped me to contact his counterpart in Rutgers and Essex County College as a follow up to email to contact the contact already made earlier. Ten students responded positively from Rutgers University Newark and eight students responded positively from Essex College. I employed snowball techniques (Krueger 2008) to recruit student participants, relying on several of the student participants to inform their parents about their interest in participating in my research
study. If parents expressed interest, the students informed me of this and agreed to introduce us (see more about this below). Fifteen parents agreed to participate.

### Table 2: Showing Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (Parents)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Pharmacist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Public School Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>School Certified Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>College Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Certified Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Housewife for 35 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Registered Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>College Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>High School Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Research Scientist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Physicist—Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Pathologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Cab Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Electrical Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Clerical Worker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All study participants have been assigned pseudonyms.

### Table 3: Showing NJIT Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (Student-NJIT)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Majors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Samson</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Electrical Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eve</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Business Information Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ama</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Biomedical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingsley</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Mechanical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nosa</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adesuwa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Civil Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogbe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Electrical Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Industrial Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ima</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All study participants have been assigned pseudonyms.
Table 4: Showing Rutgers Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Majors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crystal</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osazee</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ifueko</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>International Relations—Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunle</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abiola</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Biology—PreMed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modupe</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All study participants have been assigned pseudonyms.

Table 5: Showing Essex County College Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Majors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlos</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precious</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nike</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>International Relations—Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raphael</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All study participants have been assigned pseudonyms.

Ethical Considerations

Study participants were provided with clear instructions on the nature and purpose of the investigation and informed consent agreement approved by the IRB. I took careful and deliberate steps to protect the anonymity of the research participants. For instance, during recorded interviews they were referred to by assigned alphabetical designation.
that only I know. Finally, when I wrote the research participant profiles, I used pseudonyms. I interacted with all research participants by carefully approaching each interview with an open mind with preconception. All participants were approached in the spirit of learning about the individual and believing that I would be amazed by the answers I was about to hear.

**Details of Informed Consent**

As noted above, all students and parent participants were provided with clear instructions about the nature and purpose of the study and an informed consent agreement, which was approved by the IRB detailing their rights and assuring confidentiality. All the student participants were asked to inform their parents about study and the researcher. Student participants initially informed their Nigerian immigrant parents, and if these parents showed interest in participating in the study, the students informed me and made the first introduction between us by phone. I then followed up that initial contact by calling parents directly to arrange a meeting and thank them for agreeing to participate in the study. During my meeting with Nigerian immigrant parents, they were also provided clear instructions about the nature and purpose of the study. An informed consent agreement approved by the IRB established their rights and assured confidentiality.

**Data Collection**

The two prevailing forms of data collection associated with qualitative inquiry are interviews and observation (Patton, 1990). In this study, both were employed, though
semi-structured interviews were the primary form of data collection and document analysis was also used. Review of documents related to students’ achievement. Archival research in both electronic (i.e., Internet-based) and hardcopy newspapers as well as minutes and reports of meeting, and other similar documents were compiled. I kept a field diary and logbook detailing all my activities in relation to the study that helped to facilitate data collection and analysis. Finally, the young adults and parents who participated in this study were interviewed separately and all interviews were conducted in English. All students were from New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rutgers University, and Essex County College and these interviews were conducted on their respective campuses.

**Interviews**

The semi-structured interview technique allowed me to acquire important information and comments from study participants, which provided necessary structure while keeping a relatively high degree of flexibility (Robin & Babbie, 2001). Semi-structured face-to-face interviews with student participants were carried out from March 2017 to August 2017 and all interviews were done at their respective schools. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews with parents were carried out from July 2017 to September 2017 and all interviews were done at public place near their homes.

As noted above, parents were initially contacted by phone, at which time appointments were made for the interview. Interviews lasted for 45 to 60 minutes per participant. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were all conducted using an
interview protocol (See Appendices A and B). Study participants were allowed enough time to speak and express their thoughts on the research topic as freely as possible. I spoke with parents and students about the amount of time students spent on homework, participating as a family in Nigerian organizational activities, in relationships with individuals from other ethnic groups, and I spoke with parents and students about the value placed on education by students themselves and their families. All interviews were recorded using an audio/digital recorder. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were all conducted using an interview protocol with includes open ended questions.

Open ended questions allow the respondents to include more information that gives me more useful contextual feedback. Open ended questions also allow me to better understand the respondent’s true feelings and attitudes about the questions. In contrast, closed ended questions due to limitations, do not give respondents the choice to truly give their opinions. Open ended question in an interview solicit additional information to be contributed by respondents which helps build a better picture of how to achieve the goal of answering the big question of how culture influence Nigerian immigrants and their children academic achievement in the U.S.

Open ended question encourages the respondents to give replies in their own words and are intended to evoke more data than the close-ended questions. Open ended questions give the respondents the freedom to express their idea, thoughts encouraging critical thinking and creativity. Open ended questions enable collection of more detail data that truly qualifies and clears up the responses, yielding more exact and noteworthy understanding for the researcher.
Observation and Participant Observation

The observation method used was to watch Nigerian immigrants in the churches, African restaurants, African grocery stores, Nigerian monthly community meetings, and Nigerian parties. Observation and participant-observation are classic forms of data collection in qualitative research (McLeod, 2015). Observational data and participant observation of Nigerian immigrant families was conducted in churches, African restaurants, African grocery stores, Nigerian monthly community meetings, and Nigerian parties to better understand Nigerian cultural values and practices from the perspectives of study participants. Observation and participant-observation led to deeper understanding than could have been achieved by interviews alone because it offered a deeper knowledge of the context in which events occurred, and enabled me to examine day-to-day life in way that study participants themselves might not be aware of, or that they might be unwilling to discuss (Patton, 1990).

The other goal of observation and participant-observation was to examine how students and their parents related to each other and to compare the actions observed with the interview questions and responses. Observations and observation-participant sessions were conducted in September 2017 during church services, meetings of various, and at the parties, as noted above. I observed family participation, individual reactions, and the group dynamic at the events. I recorded what I saw in field notes.

The strength of these methods of observation is being able to observe the flow of behavior in its own setting. The researcher also has the opportunity to study the total situation, often suggesting avenues of enquiry not thought of before (McLeod, 2015). The limitations of these observation methods are that they often conducted on a small scale...
and may lack a representative sample based in relation to age, gender, social class, or ethnicity. Findings may lack the ability to generalize to wider society (McLeod, 2015).

Data Analysis

As previously noted, Transana (2.30) was used for data analysis. Transana is a computer program for transcribing and analyzing interview data for research purposes; it can be used to transcribe as much or as little detail as needed and used in conjunction with large collections of audio or video data. It is different from other similar qualitative software programs in that it not only applies coding to clips but also displays coding across time. (Woods, D. & Dempster, P. 2011). In this study, Transana was used primarily to code textual interview data.

A preliminary data analysis was conducted iteratively, while data was being collected. Data analysis continued afterwards and during the writing of the results chapters, as I returned to the date repeatedly to compare my analysis with raw data (results can be found in chapters six and seven). Themes and categories emerged and were refined throughout data analysis and writing (Patton, 1980). Throughout this process the researcher employed “imaginative variation” in continuously reviewing the themes and categories from different angles to derive the textural and structural descriptions (Monstakas, 1994).

Content analysis was used to identify themes in the responses to the open-ended questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Five themes emerged from the analysis of data drawn from interviews with parent participants. These themes are 1) careful supervision of children, 2) preservation of Nigerian culture, 3) maintaining high expectations,
4) supportive family collaborations, and 5) strong involvement in school activities. Five themes also emerged from the analysis of student participants’ responses to the interviews. They were: 1) educational opportunities in the U.S, 2) family and friendship networks, 3) students’ self-confidence and motivation, 4) parents’ expectations of educational achievement, and 5) supportive networks of Nigerian churches, associations, and organizations.

Finally, field notes were also analyzed. The analysis of field notes based on an inductive approach aimed to identify patterns in the data by means of thematic codes (Patton, 1980). “Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they should emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis” (Patton, 1980 p.306).

Verification

Triangulation was achieved by conducting forty-three interviews (28 student participants and 15 parent participants) and observations conducted at meetings and marriage ceremonies. The parent participants served as a confirming and validating mechanism with respect to the student participants’ interview answers. The responses from the student participants and their parent participants were consistent. In addition, each research participant was afforded the opportunity to review the summary of the transcribed interviews and the researcher incorporated all changes as requested.
CHAPTER 4
NEW JERSEY/NEW YORK NIGERIAN COMMUNITIES

Introduction

To understand the context in which first and second-generation Nigerian immigrants operate, it is important to explore their communities. This chapter provides an overview of Nigerian communities in the U.S. with an emphasis on the Nigerian communities of New Jersey, where this research took place.

History of Nigerian Immigrations

The U.S. has a long history of African and Nigerian immigration dating back to the slave trade of the past centuries, but free Nigerian immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon. Today there are more than 1.5 million African immigrants in the U.S., comprising about 4% of the total U.S. foreign-born population. Nigerian immigrants make up approximately 75% of the 1.5 million African immigrants (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2011). African immigrants are among the fastest growing groups of immigrants in the U.S., increasing by about 200% during the 1980s and 1990s and nearly 100% during the 2000s (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2011).

African American lives in the U.S. have been framed by migrations, forced and free (Alex-Assensoh 2009). A forced migration from Africa-transatlantic slave trade carried Black people to the Americas. A second forced migration – the internal slave trade – transported them from the Atlantic coast to the interior of the American South. A third migration – this time initiated largely, but always, by Black Americans – carried
Black people from the rural South to the urban North (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2011). At the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, African American life is again being transformed by another migration, this time a global one, as peoples of African descent from all parts of the world enter the U.S. (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2011).

Although migration has diverse patterns and motivations, indications are that historical and political ties with colonial powers may explain, at least in part, the migration dynamics of African populations (Djamba, 1999). Colonial associations facilitated early migrations to the United Kingdom, France, and Belgium (Capps, McCabe, & Fix 2011; Djamba 1999). However, more restrictive immigration policies implemented in the United Kingdom required entry visas for persons from several of its ex-colonial states; the deportation of illegal immigrants in France; and a long period of economic recession in West Europe shifted African migration flows from Europe to the U.S. (Djamba, 1999).

African migration to the U.S. accelerated in the late 1960s after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act. This trend began after decolonization, as many Africans came to the U.S. seeking an education, and it has risen steadily over time (Djamba, 1999). These immigrants came with the sole purpose of advancing themselves before returning to their respective countries (Clark, 2008). However, in recent years, the number of African immigrants interested in gaining permanent residence in the U.S. has increased (Clark, 2008). A severe brain drain occurred in the economies of African countries due to many highly skilled professionals leaving Africa to seek their economic fortunes in the U.S. and elsewhere (Apraku, 1991).
The first wave of African immigration to the US was from 1940 to 1960. In this period, the African countries were in dire need of a better-trained African work force to fill the positions left by the former colonialists during the independence era. The second wave occurred from the latter part of 1960 to 1980 and until this time, these immigrations were driven by the quest for education. The third wave, which started in the middle of 1980 up until recent times, is mostly driven by economic immigration. The deteriorating economic conditions of the African states in the 1980s and 1990s and the hardship brought to these countries by structural adjustment programs imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund on the struggling economies of these countries gave rise to the exodus of immigrants from Africa in the 1990s.

These economic hardships also contributed to unstable political situations in various countries, which led to the struggle over access to resources. This struggle consequently led to civil war in many African countries, which eventually produced political refugees that fled to the US. The countries recently affected by civil war that sent refugees to the US include Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somali, Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Democratic Republic of Congo (Clark, 2008).

Census data from 2010 shows that the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area is the number one intended settlement for African immigrants, followed by Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, and Washington, DC (U.S. Census, 2010). The draw to the New York/New Jersey metro area is the abundance of colleges and universities in the area. Other factors include social networks of relatives and friends in the area as well as economic and educational opportunities. The large presence of other like minorities is also a plus for African immigrants.
In 2009, about 1.5 million African immigrants resided in the U.S., an increase of more than 40-fold over the past 50 years, growing from 35,355 in 1960 according to the 2010 Census data (Alex-Assensoh, 2010). This growth has been driven in large part by increasing numbers of immigrants from West Africa and East Africa, who make up almost two-thirds (64.7%) of the entire African immigrant population. The top five countries of origin for 1.5 million African immigrants in the US are Nigeria (209,908, or 14.1%), Ethiopia (148,221 or 9.9%), Egypt (138,194 or 9.3%), Ghana (108,647 or 7.3%), and Kenya (87,267 or 5.8%). The other 14.1% accounts for the other African countries (see Table 6).

New York had the largest number of African immigrants in 2009 with 168,426 individuals, or 11.3% of the total African-born population. New Jersey’s African immigrant population during the same period was 79,420, or 5.3%. Africans accounted for over 16% of all immigrants in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area in 2009. According to 2010 Census data, 3.5 million self-identified members of the African Diaspora resided in the U.S. (Alex-Assensoh, 2010).

**Immigrant Generations**

Approximately 376,000 Nigerian immigrants and their children (the first and second generations) live in the U.S., and Nigeria is the largest source of African immigration to the U.S. The size of the Nigeria-born population in the U.S. has grown from a small base since 1980, when an estimated 25,000 Nigerian immigrants were U.S. residents according to Migration Policy Institute, (2015). Today, Nigerian immigrants
account for 0.6 percent of the U.S.’ overall foreign-born population, about half of whom arrived before 2000 (MPI, 2015). A similar proportion of Nigerian immigrants are naturalized U.S. citizens.

The Nigerian immigrant is the best educated of the 15 immigrant groups, according to the Migration Policy Institute analysis, which was prepared for the Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program (MPI, 2015). The 15 immigrant groups are Bangladeshi, Colombian, Egyptian, Filipino, Ghanaian, Haitian, Indian, Kenyan, Mexican, Moroccan, Nigerian, Pakistani, Salvadoran, and Vietnamese Diasporas populations. According to the Migration Policy Institute’s analysis, a far greater share of the Nigerian first and second generation earned undergraduate degrees than the U.S. population overall (37 percent versus 20 percent), and members of this Nigerian immigrant population are more than twice as likely to have secured an advanced degree (29 percent versus 11 percent). Members of the Nigerian immigrants are also substantially more likely than the general U.S. population to be in the labor force and work in professional or managerial occupations. Despite such educational and professional advantages, households headed by a member of the Nigerian immigrant have only a slightly higher median annual income than the general U.S. population ($52,000 versus $50,000), and Nigerian households are no more likely than U.S. households to be in the highest quartile or deciles of the U.S. income distribution (MPI, 2015).

The largest numbers of Nigerian immigrants in the U.S. reside in Texas, Maryland, and New York. By metropolitan area, New York City has the largest Nigerian immigrant population, followed by Houston and Washington, DC. In no major
metropolitan area do Nigerian immigrants make up more than 0.3 percent of the population.

Nigerian immigrants have begun to build a network of organizations in the U.S. and about half of those organizations are located in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area. Reflecting the relatively small and recently arrived nature of the Nigerian immigrant population, these Nigerian immigrant organizations tend to be volunteer-led, with modest revenue streams (Alex-Assensoh, 2010). Most of these Nigerian-based organizations were identified for this research; none reported an annual revenue above $200,000.

Nigerian immigrant organizations take a number of forms, including societies that promote the development of Nigeria, the arts and culture of the homeland, women’s empowerment, or the provision of health and other social services to Nigeria’s most vulnerable populations. Many of these tribal groups focus on a shared sub-national ethnic identity, such as Yoruba or Ibo, a testament to Nigeria’s wealth of linguistic and cultural traditions.

The People’s Club of Nigerian, the Foundation for Democracy in Africa, the Anambra State Association, Edo National Association, and the Elegba Folklore Society are among the U.S.’ most prominent Nigerian immigrant groups. The Nigerian in Diaspora Organization (NIDO), founded by Diaspora members at the urging of the Nigerian government, also has several chapters in the U.S. under the umbrella of NIDO Americas, and collaborates closely with the Nigerian Embassy and other government structures (Alex-Assensoh, 2010).
The U.S. is the primary destination for Nigerian-born international migrants and the top source of Nigeria’s remittances (MPI, 2015). According to the Migration Policy Institute, Nigerian immigrants in the U.S. transferred approximately $6.1 billion in remittances to Nigeria during 2012 (MPI, 2015). Nigeria’s remittances totaled $20.6 billion and represented 7.9 percent of the country’s $262.2 billion gross domestic product (GDP) (MPI, 2015).

First and Second-Generation Nigerian Immigrants

The term first generation immigrant means a foreign-born citizen or resident who has immigrated to a new country of residence, or the first generation to migrate. A native-born citizen or resident of a country whose parents are foreign born, or a foreign-born citizen whose parents immigrated when that person was very young, is referred to as the second generation.

Thus, second-generation immigrants in the U.S. are individuals born and raised in the U.S. who have at least one foreign-born parent. The growing presence of first-generation immigrants in the U.S. has led to a growth in the percentage of the population that can be categorized as second-generation Americans. This is because immigrants are more likely than native-born adults to have children (Passel, J and Taylor, P, 2011). In 2009, immigrants, both legal and unauthorized, were parents of 23% of all children in the U.S. (Passel, and Taylor, P, 2011).

The process by which second-generation immigrants undergo assimilation into U.S. society affects their economic successes and educational attainments, with the general trend being an improvement in earnings and education relative to the parental
Second-generation Americans have an increasingly important impact on the national labor force and ethnic makeup. In 2009, 33 million people in the U.S. were second-generation immigrants, representing 11% of the national population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). There are significant differences in income and education levels between the second-generation immigrant population and the first-generation immigrant population in the U.S. Second-generation immigrants are doing better overall and are assimilating more successfully into U.S. society than first-generation immigrants.

Most immigrant youth tend to demonstrate higher academic accomplishment at all levels, at times even having greater levels of post-secondary education than their parents and grandparents (Marks, A; Ejesi, K; and Garcia-Coll, C, 2014). This phenomenon can be explained by reviewing some contributing factors. Immigrant children usually have more in the way of family obligations than children not born of immigrants, so they are more likely feel pressure to study seriously at school and gain the ability to provide for their relatives (Geel, M; and Vedder, P, 2009). Optimism is also a factor: the idea that if they put in the work they will achieve social mobility in the host nation. This is also an important factor that motivates immigrant generations to work hard and succeed (Hill, N; and Torres, K, 2010). Most immigrant generations learn their mother tongue alongside the local national language of their host country. This give them an advantage over other citizens on all tasks, especially those involving conflicting attention (Carlson, S and Meltzoff, A, 2008).
Second-generation immigrants are more educated compared to first-generation immigrants, often exceeding parental education (Kasinitz, P., etc., 2008). A greater percentage of second-generation immigrants have obtained a level of education beyond a high school diploma, with 59.2% having at least some college education in 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Also in 2009, 33% of the second-generation immigrant population had a bachelor’s degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The graph above (Figure 1) depicts the data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau on educational attainments for immigrant generations in the year 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).
In earlier studies, migration is shown to be a risk factor in child development. However, many immigrant adolescents perform equally or even better than native-born adolescents, specifically in school work. Reports have shown that immigrant adolescents earn better grades in school than their national contemporaries, despite their lower socio-economic status (Geel, M; and Vedder, P, 2009). However, as immigrant youth assimilate into U.S. culture, their developmental and educational outcomes become less optimal (Marks, A; Ejesi, K; and Garcia-Coll, C, 2014). This phenomenon is known as the Immigrant Paradox (Crosnoe, R. and Turley, R, 2014).

There are several explanations for this phenomenon, the first being the free public education system of the U.S. For African immigrants, free access to education is a major factor in deciding to immigrate to the U.S. and once they arrive, they press upon their children the importance of succeeding academically To make their lives better (Hill, N and Torres, K, 2010). Another factor increasing the initial educational success of immigrants is the fact that many of them are bilingual. Native bilingualism allows immigrants a distinct advantage in the completion of composite tasks (Carlson, S and Meltzoff, A, 2008).

Nigerian immigrants in the U.S. are highly educated, with a large proportion of Nigerian immigrants holding bachelor’s degrees or advanced degrees (MPI, 2015). Thirty-seven percent of those age 25 and older had a bachelor’s degree as their highest educational credential, compared to 20 percent of the general U.S. population (MPI, 2015). Twenty-nine percent of Nigerian immigrants age 25 and older held a master’s degree, PhD, or an advanced professional degree compared to 11 percent of the U.S. population overall (MPI, 2015).
Characteristics of Second-Generation Nigerian Immigrants

First generation African immigrants and those Blacks of Caribbean origin in the U.S. tend to hold on tightly to their ethnic identities and they usually resist social pressure to identify as African American, instead they prefer to be identified as Africans or Caribbean natives respectively (Waters, Mary, 1994). The children born to these African and Caribbean immigrants can easily enter the category of African Americans, as they tend to lack the accents exhibited by their parents. A popular destination for these black immigrants is New York City, where the second-generation black immigrant population is significant (Water, 1994). Another population destination is New Jersey, and in Newark, there exists a strong African and Nigerian community. In this community, Nigerian influence is clear as shops are decorated in bright African colors and decorations.

Further studies reveal that the common identification of second-generation immigrants of African and Caribbean heritage as African American leads these children to be more aware of racial discrimination in the U.S. In addition, their assimilation into Black society and Black culture in the U.S. is hindered by their parents’ oppositional stance to American Black culture, contributing to identity conflict (Waters, Mary, 1994). In the case of Nigerians, first generation Nigerians hold on strongly to their foreign identity, as they associate the preservation of their culture with stronger solidarity with the community. These first-generation Nigerians attempt to instill this same Nigerian pride in their children as they want their children to succeed on the basis of ethnic solidarity and the preservation of Nigerian culture, and not by “giving in” to American
culture (Ette, E, 2012). This creates a clash between the ideas and values these children learn at home, and those learned from their peers and the non-Nigerian Black community. Thus, these children face conflicting pressures from family, non-second-generation immigrant peers, and discrimination by the larger society (Ette, E, 2012).

Racism is an important deterrent to the process of assimilation for Black second-generation immigrants, as it is for second-generation immigrants of other minorities (Lacy, K, 2004). Children of middle-class Black immigrants undergo assimilation that coincides with one of the pathways theorized by segmented assimilation, in which they assimilate into mainstream society while attempting to hold on to their Black culture (Lacy, K, 2004). These children make use of the resources available to the U.S. middle class alongside their white counterparts, but they are still affected by racial discrimination. They make use of so-called “Black spaces,” which are spaces exclusive to the Black community, such as network and ethnic enclaves designed for African Americans. Thus, these spaces are free of racism and are used to connect with other African Americans and other African immigrants and reconnect with the cultures of their parents (Lacy, K, 2004). Similar to Asian second-generation immigrants born into the middle class, these Black second-generation immigrants of middle-class status are also aware of their inferior position and the disadvantages associated with being ethnic minorities in the U.S. (Lacy, K, 2004).

The second-generation Nigerian population consisted of approximately 163,000 U.S.-born individuals with at least one Nigeria-born parent (MPI, 2015). Sixty-two percent of second-generation individuals reported that both parents were born in Nigeria, and 25 percent said that one of their parents was U.S.-born (MPI, 2015). The Nigerian
second-generation population in the U.S. tends to be young, with a median age of 13. Sixty-three percent of the second-generation was below age 18, and 37 percent was working age of 18 to 64 (MPI, 2015).

**Income**

In comparison to first generation immigrants, second-generation immigrants are more likely to report higher earnings (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In 2008, the median annual earnings of second-generation immigrants were $42,297 while the annual earnings of first-generation immigrants were $32,631 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In the same year, the U.S. Census Bureau found that second-generation immigrants had higher earnings overall, with 42% of second-generation immigrants earning above $50,000 compared to just 31% of first-generation immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Second-generation immigrants are also less likely to live in poverty relative to their first-generation counterparts (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Households headed by a Nigerian immigrant had a slightly higher median annual income than U.S. households did overall. The median annual income of Nigerian immigrant households was about $52,000 versus $50,000 for all U.S. households (MPI, 2015). Nigerian immigrant households and U.S. households were equally likely to be in the higher income brackets. Twenty-five percent of households in both of these groups reported annual incomes greater than $90,000, and 10 percent reported annual income exceeding $140,000 (MPI, 2015).
Employment

Nigerian immigrants age 16 and older were more likely than the general U.S. population to be in the labor force, 73 percent versus 64 percent (MPI, 2015). The employment rate among those in the labor force was nearly the same for Nigerian immigrants as for the U.S. population overall, 88 percent versus 91 percent (MPI, 2015). Nigerian immigrants were employed in professional or managerial occupations at a higher rate than the general U.S. labor force, 46 percent versus 31 percent (MPI, 2015). Nigerian and Indian immigrants were the two groups of the 15 that the Migration Policy Institute analyzed to work in professional or managerial occupations (MPI, 2015). These occupations include specialized fields, such as engineering, science, law, and education, as well as administrative and managerial jobs, in areas such as finance and human resources (MPI, 2015).

Nigerians in the United States: Settlement Patterns

Unlike African Americans who are present in large numbers in many metro areas, Nigerian immigrants first settled in the metro areas, but are now dispersed throughout the country. Approximately one quarter of Nigerians live in one of the ten largest metropolitan regions and these metro areas are geographically dispersed (Adutwum, 2009). This is in contrast to African Caribbeans, for example, who are heavily concentrated in just a few metro areas, all on the East Coast (Waters, 1999). The New York metro area and Houston have the greatest Nigerian-born populations.

For many centuries, most of the people who immigrated to the United States headed to large metropolitan areas, where they clustered in the central cities that offered
cheap housing and employment (Chacko, 2003). As these immigrant groups grew in strength and numbers, they created urban spaces, distinct ethnic areas close to the center of the city, usually the business district that was occupied primarily by blue-collar workers (Burgess, 1925; Chacko, 2003). The most frequent destinations for immigrants were cities such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, which were mosaics of ethnic neighborhoods and ghettos (Sowell, 1981). As the immigrants’ social aspirations and economic circumstances improved, they relocated to the suburbs (Sowell, 1981). The distribution of zip codes having 200 or more Nigerian immigrants shows that these immigrants have important residential clusters in the neighborhoods around the periphery of Newark in Union, Somerset, and Middlesex counties (Figure 2).

In these areas, the Nigerian presence is most tangible as indicated by the high number of businesses, stores, restaurants, and churches in a small area. There is a corresponding Nigerian immigrant concentration in the cities of Newark and New York as well. According to Li (1998) and Zelinsky and Lee (1998), the occurrence of hetero-localism shows a de-territorialized ethnic community that is bonded together by many organizations such as ethnic churches, business associations, sports leagues, and cultural and entertainment centers. The type of space in which the ethnic groups live does not matter. Hetero-localism, as described by Zelinsky and Lee (1998), is an alternative model of socio-spatial behavior among immigrant ethnic communities, which means that members of certain newly arrived groups may be able to sustain their identity as an ethnic community despite immediate or rapid spatial dispersion. They will shape the built environment to meet their needs and wishes, which reflect their social and cultural identities (Zelinsky & Lee 1998).
The number of Nigerians choosing to stay in this area identify themselves as immigrants, establish institutions, and organize cultural festivals that are similar to those organized in their home country has increased (Chacko, 2003). These cultural festivals include marriage anniversaries, traditional weddings, naming ceremonies after childbirth, birthday celebrations, and religious worship. Nigerians assert an identity that proclaims their ethnic origin whenever they come together after the death of any member of their community, the birth of a new baby, a crisis, or just for the purpose of celebration.

Nigerian students who came to the U.S. in the 1970s formed the first group of Africans who began to acclimate to the U.S. population. They organized their lives at both the individual and community levels as a circle of immigrants (Macharia, 2000). Several of these communities of immigrants in these metropolitan areas have existed for some time and were established by West Africans, especially Nigerians, in the case of New York and New Jersey’s metropolitan areas. Nigerians are an interesting case if you compare them with other African students of the 1970s. Nigerians came to the US at a time of economic abundance generated by the oil boom in the 1970s. However, in the decade that followed, no money was coming from home any longer because of an economic downturn. A number of Nigerian students became workers to continue going to school and maintain something close to the lifestyles they had before they suffered financial setbacks (Macharia, 2000). Many of these Nigerians also turned out to be the first critical mass of Nigerian immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.S. Entrepreneurship and community building have tended to go hand in hand in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area (Macharia, 1997).
As the number of Nigerian immigrant groups grew in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area, so did the numbers of entrepreneurs and churches (See Figure 1). Actual numbers are hard to establish, as this would require more in-depth research and mapping of the enterprises and churches. However, some of the entrepreneurial activities run by Nigerians include African food stores, meat markets, hair braiding and hair dressing salons, tailor shops specializing in African textiles and garments, restaurants, clubs and bars, taxi cabs, and music and movie stores specializing in selling Nigerian movies and music (Chacko, 2003). Other Nigerians are owners and operators of pharmacies, medical supply stores, and physician offices as well as auto repair shops.

Figure 2. Nigerian settlement patterns in New York/New Jersey Metropolitan cities and suburb
Note: Personal survey by the author based on 2010 Census data
Conceptual Frameworks: Spatial Assimilation and the Ethnoburb

The theory that I am using to characterize Nigerian immigrants’ residential location is the spatial assimilation model. This model assumes that upon entry, immigrants cluster in low-class neighborhoods mainly with their relatives or with their co-ethnics. Once they attain higher education and social status, they may opt to leave the ethnic neighborhoods as they begin to translate their socioeconomic mobility into residential attainment. Ethnic enclaves or ethnoburbs are area of concentrated ethnic entrepreneurship and residential activity (Li, 1998).

Portes and Rumbaut (2000) hypothesized that the emergence of ethnic enclaves has depended on three conditions: (a) the presence of a number of immigrants with substantial expertise normally acquired in their home countries; (b) access to sources of capital; and (c) access to labor. Nigerian immigrants, unlike other Africans, have not created ethnic residential enclaves. The area that is closest to an ethnic enclave is the ethnoburb of Newark and its surrounding areas. For example, Newark renamed one street “Ghanaian Way” (Figure 14) with several Ghanaian and Nigerian shops and restaurants. Even though there may be substantial numbers of Nigerian immigrants in Atlanta, GA, Houston, TX, Los Angeles, CA, New York City, NY, and Washington, DC they have not formed what may be described as an ethnic enclave, as has occurred here in New Jersey.

Most recent immigrants who arrived later have tended to first live with those who are already established in New Jersey and then move out to live on their own once they have found a job. In northern New Jersey, professionals are more likely to live in the suburbs, while new immigrants and non-professionals settle mainly in the inner cities for easy access to transportation, jobs, and other services (Chacko, 2003).
As immigrant populations become assimilated and acculturated, they tend to leave city neighborhoods, only to be replaced by the most recent ethnic immigrant groups. As a result, ethnic neighborhoods in the central city progress through lifetime cycles that are transitory in nature (Chacko, 2003). Li (1998) observed this growing homogenous ethnic residential and retail population in suburban locations. She called these spatial forms of ethnic clustering in the suburbs “an ethnoburb,” which she defined as multiethnic clusters of residential and business districts in large metropolitan areas, in which one group has a significant concentration but does not necessarily hold the majority.

Following this definition, whenever the concept of the Nigerian ethnoburb is used in this paper, it refers to the establishment of Nigerian groups in sizeable form in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area that is not necessarily in the majority. This means that there is an increase in the number ofarians choosing to stay in the area identifying themselves as immigrants, establishing institutions, and organizing cultural festivals that are similar to those organized in their home country.

Table 6 shows the number of African immigrants in the U.S. as of 2002. It also shows the African foreign born, by region and country of birth in Africa who migrated to the U.S. in 2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional/Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>1,013,880</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East African</td>
<td>263,415</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>87,543</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Eastern African</td>
<td>175,872</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Africa</td>
<td>23,993</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Africa</td>
<td>204,728</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>108,371</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Northern Africa</td>
<td>96,357</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Africa</td>
<td>71,883</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>70,275</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Southern Africa</td>
<td>1,608</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Africa</td>
<td>357,360</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>139,493</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Western Africa</td>
<td>217,867</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa (not elsewhere classified)</td>
<td>92,501</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. African Immigrants in United States, MPI March 2009

The Ethnoburb model was based on the Chinese experience in Los Angeles’ San Gabriel Valley, which led Li (1998) to propose the new model of ethnic settlement which she called the ethnoburb, or ethnic suburb. This concept also applies to other immigrants in the U.S., especially those Nigerian immigrants who settled in the New York/New Jersey Metropolitan areas. The model asserts that a new type of immigrant settlement has emerged over the past two decades due to the influence of international geopolitical and
global economic change, increases in national immigration and trades policies, and local demographic, economic, and political contexts (Li, 1998).

Global economic and geopolitical restructuring have changed the economic relationship of the world in making capital, information and labor flows among countries more internationalized and have created the conditions necessary for the establishment of an ethnoburb. The process of ethnic restructuring started with the de-industrialization of traditional manufacturing industries and rapid expansion of service-sector activities in the U.S. (Davis 1992). Also important in this process of ethnic restructuring is foreign direct investment and growth in the scale and spatial reach of multinational corporations (Davis, 1992). These processes resulted in changes in domestic economic structure and labor demand. This labor demand created needs for both high skilled professionals and a low skilled labor market. During this same period, several regional conflicts and deteriorating socioeconomic situations in other parts of world pushed international populations to emigrate from their home countries to the U.S. (see table 6) and other industrialized countries (Li, 1998).

These changes in national economic and immigration policies created opportunities for entrepreneurs and investors to come to the U.S. National immigration policies also attracted cheap labor and opened the door to immigrants of different backgrounds to enter the U.S. and create an ethnoburb (Li, 1998). Two good examples are the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. These agreements stimulated national economic and international competition that led some sectors and industries to start searching for low-skilled laborers, while the
producer-service industries were also searching for high-skilled professionals to expand their role in the international finance, trade, and real estate industries (Li, 1998).

The U.S.’ immigration laws, quotas, and preference systems of 1965 and 1990 allowed immigrants to come and adjust to these shifts in labor market demand. The 1990 Visa Diversity Program, or lottery visa, was responsible for populating the Nigerian ethnoburb because many educated and entrepreneurial Nigerians took advantage of this opportunity to immigrate to the U.S. The stipulated requirements for the lottery visa were to be highly educated or own a business for five or more years during the time of application. Several Nigerians successfully applied and won the lottery, moving themselves and their families to the U.S. This interplay of changing geopolitical, economic and social dynamics at all levels was responsible for the creation of the ethnoburb in certain localities.

Ethnoburbs are recognizable in the suburban community due to ethnic clusters of residential areas and business districts in big cities and other metropolitan areas. Both vibrant people of the same ethnic and economies background, and strong ties to the globalizing economy are characterize by the local context of the ethnoburb (Li, 1998). An ethnoburbs then, is a multi-ethnic community in the suburbs in which one ethnic minority group has a significant concentration, but does not necessarily comprise a majority (Li, 1998). The demographic composition of the ethnoburb community can change quickly, however. The continuous moving in and out of new and old immigrants usually keeps the population steady and dynamic. The ethnoburb functions as a settlement type with similar features as an enclave and other features similar to traditional ethnic ghettos/enclaves in inner cities (Li, 1998).
The term ethnic enclave is defining as a geographic area with high ethnic concentration, characteristic cultural identity, and economic activity (Portes and Bach, 1985). The term is usually used to refer to either a residential area or workspace with a high concentration of ethnic businesses. Portes in 1992 shifted the focus from ethnic to immigrant enclave. In one of his papers, he defined the enclave economy as involving immigrant groups also concentrate in a district spatial location and organize a variety of enterprises serving their own ethnic market and/or the general population. The basic characteristic of an enclave economy is that a significant proportion of the immigrant workforce is employed in enterprises owned by other immigrants (Portes, 1992).

Nigerian/African grocery stores, barbershops, restaurants, pharmacies, and small manufacturing shops, furniture stores and more exist in the Nigerian ethnoburb. All these businesses are owned and managed by Nigerian immigrants. These businesses also employ non-Nigerian Newark residents. Nigerian immigrants are also represented in the healthcare industry to cater to their community, which includes New Jersey residents as well as the immigrants’ community.

The Newark African Commission honored two of these entrepreneurs in a city ceremony during the First Annual African Diaspora Festival in 2009. The two African immigrants honored were a Nigerian, Joy Adsumola Adenubi Olateru Olagbegi, founder of the Joy School of Hair Design and Hair Products; and a Ghanaian, Alex Dennis, a barber and business leader. At the awards ceremony Deputy Mayor Muniz of Newark said, “The richness of this event lies in the appreciation of African influence throughout the world; and here in Newark we honor and celebrate that richness and acknowledge its significance in our collective lives.”
The Ethnoburb as Global Outpost

Due to economic globalization and geopolitical activities all over the world, the Nigerian ethnoburb was created as an urban ethnic community in the greater New York/New Jersey metropolitan area with an extensive connection to Africa. African residents migrated from all parts of the continent, with the majority of them coming from Nigeria. Their economic and occupational structures show strong connections with the world’s mainstream economy, which also indicates that the Nigerian ethnoburb population has achieved a high socioeconomic status (Table 7). The ethnoburb is now a place where Nigerian immigrants gravitate to make a living and conduct business mainly through their own ethnic networks.

Nigerians eat their own types of food in the ethnoburb, go shopping in the Nigerian markets, speak their native languages, and discuss home politics with other Nigerians. In other words, they feel at home in this ethnoburb. The economic activities of the Nigerian people who reside in the ethnoburb community in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan areas are closely tied with the globalized economy. Many of the residents are involved in international trade and other related businesses. Many are also involved in the restructuring of the local economy. However, the ethnoburb retains some features of an ethnic enclave economy.

Table 7 below depicts African immigrants and other foreign-born immigrants in the U.S. It compares the percentages of their employment across several occupations in the civilian labor force. In addition, the table shows the occupations of employed workers in the civilian labor force age 16 and older by gender and origin as of 2007 (MPI, 2009).
Nigerian immigrants, who constitute a high percentage of these African immigrants, demonstrate high percentage numbers in all these occupations in contrast to other foreign-born immigrants in the U.S.
Table 7. Occupations of Employed Workers in the Civilian Labor Force Age 16 and Older by Gender and Origin, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Category</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persons age 16 and older employed</td>
<td>543,964</td>
<td>350,462</td>
<td>13,476,859</td>
<td>9,081,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the civilian labor force</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Percent</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management, Business, Finance</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Science and Engineering</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services and Legal</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Training and Media Entertainment</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health-Care Support</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, Fishing, and Forestry</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction, Extraction, and Transportation</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing, Installation, and Repair</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Source: African Immigrants in the United States, MPI, February 2009

Nigerian Ethnic Place-making

The U.S. Census 2010 figure for foreign-born Nigerians in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan areas was over 97,837 in 2009. This number was over 46% of the
total number of Nigerian immigrants (209,908) in the US (US Census Bureau, 2010). As one of the largest and oldest African communities in the area, Nigerians’ efforts in ethnic place-making can serve as a model for understanding the creation and maintenance of ethnoburb communities by new immigrants. The Nigerian population’s residential patterns exhibit elements of both dispersal and concentration in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan areas. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) data for the period between 1990 and 2000 shows that of the over 200 zip codes in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area that reported new arrivals, all 200 had at least two or more Nigerian immigrants. This dispersion is characteristic of heterolocality and widespread scattering, which is countered by a measure of concentration. By heterolocality, I mean a small and relatively homogeneous group or region surrounded by a larger and different group or region (Zelinsky, W and Lee, BA, 1998). The distribution of zip codes containing more than 200 Nigerian immigrants indicates that they form significant residential clusters in the neighborhoods around the periphery of Newark in Union, Somerset, and Middlesex counties. In these areas the Nigerian presence is most palpable as indicated by the high density of businesses, stores, and restaurants in a small area (Chacko, 2003). Corresponding Nigerian immigrant concentrations occur in Newark and New York cities as well (Figure 2, p. 82).

Nigerian immigrants stay connected and flourish as a society through activities that bring them to centralized places. These types of community action can include physical sites with visible elements of Nigerian material culture or less tangible and even virtual sites that cannot be identified on the landscape but nevertheless have real and symbolic value to the immigrants (Chacko, 2003). The key physical locales that serve as
ethnic places for Nigerian immigrant communities in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area are ethnic institutions that serve as connectors for the community and areas with concentrations of ethnic businesses. These areas not only provide goods and services but also provide meeting places for the community (Figure 3). In these places, Nigerian immigrants sustain their ethnic identity and heritage in ways that leave imprints on the urban and suburban landscapes (Chacko, 2003). This is in contrast to residences occupied by Nigerian immigrants, which are lacking in visual ethnic markers, which is why it is difficult to identify Nigerian homes in urban and suburban neighborhoods where they live in relatively larger numbers.

Figure 3: Ethnoburb: Hamilton Street in Somerset, NJ

Nigerian immigrants who come to the U.S. perceive themselves as members of a distinct ethnic group. They are very proud of this identity and wish to preserve their home culture even as they interact with and absorb elements of American culture (Chacko, 2003). Many formal and informal community organizations play a crucial role in aiding immigrants by acting as bridges and institutions that provide the milieus and
infrastructure for the establishment of networks (Chacko 2003; Zelinsky 2001). Through social engagement and participation in various ethnic and cultural activities, Nigerian immigrants maintain their ethnic identity. Building institutional structure is essential in nurturing collective and individual ethnic identity, which lends credence to the presence and permanence of the community while activities organized by various organizations draw the groups closer.

Many Nigerian institutional structures and their geographic places are religious in nature. Even though half or more of Nigeria’s population is Muslim, those who migrated to the U.S. are overwhelmingly Christian, educated, and speak English. Thus, most Nigerian Christian churches are located in areas with high concentrations of Nigerian immigrants. Table 8 below shows a list of Nigerian churches and mosques, located in Newark, New Brunswick, Somerset, and Union New Jersey. Also listed on the table are the names of the pastors and imams who lead these religious places.
Table 8: Nigerian churches and mosques in the New Jersey Metro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Pastor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Celestial Church of Christ</td>
<td>Newark NJ Parish</td>
<td>Celestial</td>
<td>Pastor J. Ogbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Psalmist Worship Center</td>
<td>Lyons Ave, Newark</td>
<td>House of Restoration</td>
<td>Pastor B.R. Joshua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Sheppard Church of Christ</td>
<td>Springfield Ave, Newark</td>
<td>Methodist Church of Christ</td>
<td>Pastor J. Olu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Eternal Covenant</td>
<td>Springfield Ave, Union</td>
<td>Cherubimand</td>
<td>Pastor O.J. Taiwo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Power</td>
<td>Beecher Street, Somerset</td>
<td>Church Of God Mission of</td>
<td>Rev. Solomon Asare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Ministry</td>
<td>Stuyvesant Ave, Newark</td>
<td>Seraphim Church Inc</td>
<td>Pastor Richard Ero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ Apostolic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pentecostal Church of Faith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of God Mission NJ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Redeemed Christian of God</td>
<td>Orange Street, New</td>
<td>The Redeemed Church</td>
<td>Pastor Toyin Laoye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masjid Rahman Mosque</td>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masjid Waruth-Udeen Mosque</td>
<td>MLK Blvd, Newark</td>
<td>Islamic</td>
<td>Imam Mohammed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nye Ave, Newark</td>
<td>Islamic</td>
<td>Imam Wyudeen Sharief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Personal survey by author

Most Nigerian immigrants attend churches organized by Nigerians and those churches offer a supportive environment for the social and academic development of Nigerian children. Nigerian churches started booming in the America in the 1990s and there has been a substantial increase in their number. For many Nigerian immigrants, churches have become a substitute for the extended family to which they belonged prior immigrating into the U.S. Nigerians themselves established most of these independent churches for their spiritual awakening and growth. Others are branches of American churches especially established for the Nigerian community. The other category of churches includes those that are branches of major churches in Nigeria.

Nigerian immigrants embrace a wide range of religious faiths. A large number are Roman Catholic, and Nigerians are active members of several New Jersey parishes. St.
Mary’s Church on Martin Luther King Blvd in Newark has a congregation that is 75% Nigerian. The church environment has been transformed by Nigerian culture and styles of service. Many Nigerian immigrants are also members of Baptist and Methodist churches. There are 13 African churches and 2 African mosques in Newark, according to my personal survey.

These are also traditional churches that utilize styles of service that were imported directly from Africa. Traditional churches are usually very small and membership ranges from about 25 to as many as 200 members. With few exceptions, these churches are housed in commercial or residential buildings that have been converted into churches (Figure 4). According to Weightman, 1993, this type of practice of converting and using former residential and commercial buildings for religious purpose is common among immigrant groups that have not yet acquired the financial and political assets to build large structures with a distinct ethnic stamp.

The Sunday service typically includes a musical band, singing, and dancing, and they create lively and inspirational services. Nevertheless, church is not only a locale for religious ceremonies and services; it also provides a venue for meetings and socialization with fellow ethnic immigrants. The church is an important place for organizing activities that benefit the Nigerian community, including native language classes aimed at second generation Nigerians. These churches are involved in educating their new immigrants and providing assistances, including but not limited to social services, immigration and citizenship matters, employment training, and individual and family counseling.
These different associations and institutions play a major role in building community in Nigerian ethnoburbs by helping immigrants get established in the new environment of the host country (Briggs & Mueller, 1997). These organizations vary in their objectives. Some engage in cultural and economic activities while others assist immigrants in adjusting to the new environment. New Nigerian immigrants are not just interested in making money; they are also interested in building stronger communities and organizing themselves to become a more powerful political and economic force in their respective communities. Groups such as All Nigerian People’s Congress in Newark NJ, The Nigerian-American Chamber of Commerce, the Nigerian Women’s Eagles Club,
and Nigerian Heritage Inc. all help their members become active in their communities and create better understanding between Nigerian and Americans (Table 8).

These Nigerian organizations are non-profits dedicated to improving the lives and self-sufficiency of Nigerians living in New Jersey and beyond. Most of these organizations were founded in the 1980s by groups of Nigerians to give a helping hand to other new immigrants. These organizations provide health, housing, legal, educational, and social services to over 1000 immigrants each year. Over 40 Nigerian community associations exist in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area, representing all Nigerians in the U.S. Some of these associations are made up of specific ethnic subgroups. For example, the Edo Club of NJ, based in Elizabeth, NJ, is comprised of the Edo people of Nigeria (Table 9).

These Nigerian associations and organizations not only arrange conferences and seminars on issues related to Nigeria but also provide financial advice and work to revitalize traditional norms, values, and civic unity within the Nigerian ethnoburb and the community at large. All these organizations have multiple roles, as they assist in socialization of immigrants from Nigeria, consolidation of the community, and preservation of cultural heritage. Some Nigerians point to the tremendous influence of the Cuban community in Miami as a blueprint for what Nigerians in New York/New Jersey can accomplish if they are well organized (Ette, 2012). Table 9 below shows some Nigerian organizations and their locations in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area. These Nigerian organizations play vital roles in the educational attainment of Nigerian Second-generation American.
Table 9: Some Nigerian Organizations in New York/New Jersey Metro Area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nigerian Organizations</th>
<th>Location in US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Nigeria American Congress</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edo Club of NJ</td>
<td>East Orange, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibo World Congress</td>
<td>Elizabeth, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria Foundation</td>
<td>Somerset, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian People Association</td>
<td>Newark, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eghosa Alumni Association</td>
<td>Maplewood, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bini Organization of New York</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edo Boys Alumni Association</td>
<td>Piscataway, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria Development Organization</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Nigeria Peoples’ Association</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian Women Eagles Club</td>
<td>Hillside, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nigerian Cultural Heritage, Inc.</td>
<td>New Brunswick, NJ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Personal survey by the author

Unlike their counterparts of the 1960s and 1970s, whose primary objective was to obtain an American education before returning home to contribute to nation building, new African immigrants are mainly refugees and asylum seekers escaping the ravages of civil wars and political persecution or highly skilled professionals disappointed by worsening economic conditions. Also unlike their early counterparts, these new immigrants come with every intention of establishing permanent residency and acquiring U.S. citizenship. Consequently, they quickly learn how to live the American dream. They become involved in their communities, start small businesses, and participate in local politics. Their children become professional football, baseball, and basketball players. They often become highly trained professionals who are employed in the both the public
and private sectors. What the future holds for the continued flow of African migrants to the U.S. is unclear. Nevertheless, by all indications, it appears that African migration, immigration, and integration into American political, social, and economic spheres will continue.

In the process of maintaining their ethnic identity and progressing socially and economically within American society, immigrants engage in place-making, creating ethnic spaces in both urban and suburban settings in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area. Clearly evolving urban and suburban ethnic places reflect the changing needs and aspirations of the communities involved in creating and sustaining the Nigerian ethnoburb in the New York/New Jersey metropolis. Nigerian immigrants in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area have fashioned these ethnic places in both traditional and innovative ways.

**The Role of Nigerian Community Organizations in Education**

**Community Building**

There are several Nigerian organizations operating in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area whose main mission is organizing the Nigerian Diaspora to promote policies and awareness of issues concerning Nigerians, African-Americans, and the African Diaspora. Foremost among these organizations is The African Commission, which is dominated by Nigerians and was created as part of the Mayor’s Office on January 10, 2007 with the support of Mayor Cory A. Booker of Newark, NJ to promote policies and address issues of concern to Africans, African-Americans, and African immigrants living in Newark and North Jersey. By Africans, I mean those who are living
on the continent of Africa. “African immigrants” refers to those of us who immigrated to the U.S., and African-Americans refers to those who were forced here unwillingly.

Because of its deep history with African immigrants, the City of Newark has a shared culture and extensive relations with the continent of Africa. Thus, the Mayor created this commission as part of city government, to encourage an understanding of contemporary African culture and civilization. The commission is based in Newark but reaches out to other communities of the African Diaspora here and abroad. The mission of the African Commission is to promote policies and awareness concerning the cultural, social, economic, political, educational, health and general well-being of Africans, African-Americans, and people of African descent. The commission collaborates with and assists other civic and private groups in organizing and sponsoring programs and events aimed at promoting African Diaspora cultural awareness and contemporary policy considerations. The Commission has been very active since its creation.

The commission has organized several events that highlight African culture to the greater Newark community. Some of the events this past year include an African Diaspora Festival at Lincoln Park, where African immigrants gave cultural performance bringing together Africans and friends of Africans to celebrate their shared ancestry, history, and spiritual heritage. The celebration included arts, music, dance, fashion, food, and storytelling. Some members of the African community were recognized for their hard work in keeping the African culture alive during the festival. Those individuals who were honored included the retired President of Essex County College, Dr. Zachary Yamba, who is an immigrant from Ghana; U.S. Congressman, the late Donald Payne;
and the Director of the Africana Institute of Essex County College, Dr. Akhil Kokoyi Khalfani, who is an immigrant from Nigeria.

One of the international events organized by the Commission included getting the city of Newark to sign a sister city agreement with Abomey-Calavi in the Republic of Benin. The city of Newark is a home to hundreds immigrants from the Republic of Benin, West Africa, who left their native land in search of better economic conditions in the U.S. Former Mayor Cory A. Booker, Vice President of the City Municipal Council Luis A. Quintana, and the Newark African Commission met with the Mayor of Abomey-Calavi, Patrice Hounsou Guede, in the Newark Municipal Council Chamber on April 30, 2010. The ensuing sister-city agreement will open cultural, trade exchanges between the two cities, and help unite the African communities of Benin and the African Diaspora of Newark. The president of the African Commission, Dosso Kassimou, thanked Mayor Booker and the Municipal Council for establishing the African Commission and stated that the commission is working hard to bridge the gap among communities and that establishing the commission is an excellent way to achieve this objective (African Commission Website).

The commission also launched the first three-day African cultural and sports festival. This festival, which included family activities, musical performances, and a celebration of African culture, held from June 3 through June 5, 2017 in Military Park. An international soccer tournament was also held in Vailburgs Park. A number of events are planned 2018, including an African Woman’s Day, a symposium called “Dismantling Imaginary Borderlines among Africans”, an African fashion fair, an African beauty contest, and an African youth forum. According to the Commission president, the African
Woman’s Day Celebration in Newark will help empower a new generation of African women to embody within themselves the values of great women who stood up in the past to protect the foundations of African cultures, traditions, and value systems. He also said that the event would help motivate and empower young women of African descent with the mission of leadership responsibilities in the Diaspora and the continent of Africa (Personal communication). The African Commission and other African organizations in Newark are building strong community in Newark, North Jersey, and New York by identifying themselves as Africans and portraying the African culture and tradition and sharing them with all Americans.

**Living the American Dream**

Increasingly, the quest for areas where the immigrants can live is influenced by their desire to live a more tranquil life and raise their children in a safer environment than can be provided in some of the larger cities like New York, Chicago, Houston, or Los Angeles. Nevertheless, perhaps the most important factor influencing the decision to migrate to any particular city or area is the prevailing racial climate, political tolerance toward immigrants, and employment opportunities. This may explain why Newark, where Black Americans occupy important economic and political positions in the city administration, has become a new home for Nigerian and African immigrants.

Very often Nigerian immigrants are quick to accept any employment opportunity that is available to them. Although there are over 100,000 well-educated professionals across the U.S. in 2010 (African New Services, 2010) many more are also working in
jobs that require less educational qualification than they have. They work as cab drivers, parking lot attendants, airport workers, servers, waiters, and cooks in restaurants. Still others have become entrepreneurs. In Newark for example, Nigerian immigrants own restaurants, healthcare agencies, and specialty stores that cater to the need of the large Nigerian and other African immigrant populations here. Nigerian women who had previously been in the background based on traditional Nigerian family structure, now find themselves at the forefront of economic opportunities in the U.S. by being gainfully employed. They are playing important economic roles in maintaining the family structure both for their immediate nuclear family and for the extended families back in Nigeria. Commenting on the importance of African women immigrants to the U.S., Daff (2001) reminded us that African women, especially those from Nigeria, have stopped waiting for their men to mail checks home from the U.S. They now come to the U.S. to join their husbands, earning their own income, while others have come on their own, leaving husbands and children behind.

Figure 5. Pictures of a traditional Nigerian wedding in Newark.
Figure 6. well-wishers at the wedding ceremony.

Figure 7. Nigerian traditional wedding couple.
Figure 8. bride sitting between bridegroom parents.

Figure 9. both families sitting opposite during the ceremony.
Figure 10. members of bridegroom family posing for picture of the wedding.

Entrepreneurship and business involvement

Figure 11. Picture of Nigerian business and Enterprises in Newark.
Figure 12. African market shop in Newark.

Figure 13. A Street in Newark named for Ghanaian in Newark.

Summary

Census data from 2010 on African immigrants shows that the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area is the number one intended settlement for African immigrants, followed by Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, and Washington, DC. The draw to the New
York/New Jersey metro area is the abundance of colleges and universities in the area. Other factors include the social networks of relatives and friends in the area as well as economic and educational opportunities.

Unlike African Americans who are present in large numbers in many metro areas, Nigerian immigrants first settled in the metro areas, but are now dispersed throughout the country. Approximately one quarter of Nigerians live in one of the ten largest metropolitan regions and these metro areas are geographically dispersed (Adutwum, 2009). Contrast that with African Caribbean immigrants, for example, who are heavily concentrated in just a few metro areas, all on the East Coast (Waters, 1999). The New York metro area and Houston have the greatest Nigerian-born populations.

Approximately 376,000 Nigerian immigrants and their children (the first and second generations) live in the U.S., and Nigeria is the largest source of African immigration to the U.S. The size of the Nigeria-born population in the U.S. has grown from a small base since 1980, when an estimated 25,000 Nigerian immigrants were U.S. residents according to Migration Policy Institute, 2015. Today, Nigerian immigrants account for 0.6 percent of the U.S.’ overall foreign-born population, about half of whom arrived before 2000. A similar proportion of Nigerian immigrants are naturalized U.S. citizens.

In the process of maintaining their ethnic identity and progressing socially and economically within American society, immigrants engage in place-making, creating ethnic spaces in both urban and suburban settings in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area. Clearly evolving urban and suburban ethnic places reflect the changing needs and aspirations of the communities involved in creating and sustaining the
ethnoburb in the New York/New Jersey metropolis. Nigerian immigrants in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area have fashioned ethnic places in both traditional and innovative ways.
CHAPTER 5

NIGERIAN PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN’S EDUCATION

Overview

One overarching theme emerged from this study’s interviews with fifteen Nigerian immigrant parents. At the broadest level, this theme focused on proactive parenting strategies. These strategies included inculcating children with a strong cultural orientation. This chapter explores various dimensions of proactive parenting strategies as practiced by Nigerian immigrants with their American born children in the U.S. As I started to code and categorize the data using Transana (2.30), five thematic categories or domains emerged based on coding of participants’ responses. These themes are supervision of children, preservation of Nigerian culture, maintaining high expectations, supportive family collaboration, and strong involvement in school activities (See Table 10). Each of the themes will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

In a global context, immigrants have always continually changed the composition of American, Asian, African, and European populations. Many Nigerian immigrants have searched for better educational opportunities for their children as part of their migration process. Some Nigerian immigrants came to the U.S. as students and others came through diversity visa programs (Akerele, 2003). Many also came as tourists. Like other immigrants, Nigerians have experienced dynamic phases as they have adjusted to their new country. They have moved through a tough process of acculturation to enter
mainstream American society. They have had to educate and retrain themselves for currently available jobs (Chapman & Bernstein, 2002).

Like other immigrants, Nigerian parents have been subjected to complex, stressful situations as they have integrated themselves into the dominant culture. Suarez-Orozco has identified some of the dynamics of this stressful process of immigration and acculturation:

… for many immigrants’ families, migration results in substantial gains. It provides many challenges to the individual involved. It removes individuals from many of their relationships and predictable context, extended families and friends, community ties, jobs, living situations, customs, and often languages. Immigrants are stripped of many of their social relationships as well as of the social roles that provide them with culturally scripted notions of how they fit into the world resulting in acculturative stress (Suarez-Orozco, 2003, p. 2).

The concept of acculturation as cultural adjustment is a process comprising both positive and negative experiences for Nigerian immigrants. For many Nigerian immigrants, acculturation or adaptation to a new culture involves changes in multiple areas of functioning (e.g., values, behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, languages, relationships and more). Some adjustments experienced by individuals, families, and groups throughout the acculturation process are experienced as stressful. The stress that accompanies difficulties in acculturation is referred to as acculturative stress (Akerete, 2003). This type of stress is different from the general experience of stress. Acculturative stress is known to stem from differences in culture and language between the acculturating individual and the host culture. It is also believed that acculturative stress is more closely related to the symptoms of anxiety than depression, and it is more
associated with the presence of negative emotions rather than the absence of positive emotions (Suarez-Orozco, 2003).

Although the experience of acculturative stress was conceptualized by Suarez-Orozco, 2003 from immigrants’ experience, the same stress is relevant for any individual living in multiple cultural worlds, which is the case for many U.S.-born ethnic and racial minority individuals. Some of the factors that Nigerian immigrants have experienced that are hypothesized to relate to acculturative stress include majority language ability, assimilation pressure, acculturation style, demographic factors, distance between culture of origin and host culture, pre-immigration and migration experience, and interfamilial acculturation levels/conflicts. These acculturative stresses affect the early education of these immigrants as they struggle between the culture of host country and the culture of origin, especially regarding language.

Acculturative stress and its effects on family life and early education form the background that Nigerian immigrant parents must adapt to as they seek to help their children succeed in school. As this chapter will show, the parents interviewed in this study were able to meet this challenge. The following sections will explore each major theme that emerged from parental interviews in turn.

All names use in this study are pseudonyms names.
Table 10: Thematic Categories and subcategories

Themes: Parental Interviews

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<th>Summary of Categories and Subcategories from the analysis of the Students interview</th>
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<td><strong>Categories and Subcategories</strong></td>
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<td>Visiting their children’s schools</td>
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<td>Going over and helping their children with homework</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting with their children’s teachers</td>
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<td><strong>Theme 2: Preservation of Nigerian Culture</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Giving their children Nigerian names</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintaining Nigerian traditional roles at home</td>
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<td>Cooking and eating Nigerian traditional food</td>
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<td><strong>Theme 3: Maintaining High Expectations</strong></td>
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<td>From parents and Nigerian immigrant community</td>
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<td><strong>Theme 4: Supportive Family Collaborations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family and friendship network</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supportive family members living in close proximity</td>
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<td>Supportive family members living abroad</td>
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<td>African student network on campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive networks of Nigerian associations/organizations</td>
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<td><strong>Theme 5: Strong Involvement in School Activities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending children school activities: sports and others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 1: Careful Supervision of Children**

The first theme to emerge will examine is Nigerian parents’ careful supervision of their children. Some of the Nigerian immigrant parents interviewed for this study were strikingly committed to proactive parenting practices in raising and preparing their
children for college. In response to a question about parenting styles and supervision of his children, Mr. Johnson, a 60-year-old research scientist, reported unpleasant experiences with the teachers of his children. He described several difficult experience regarding his son:

“Other children in the school started to pick on him all the time. Sometimes, he was pulled out of the playground and was prevented from playing with other children. This incident of social humiliation continued for a very long time. The teachers did not do anything about it. On one occasion, when one of our children was celebrating a birthday, one of the teachers was invited. The sister stated that her brother was always embarrassed in this teacher’s class. When I asked my son about this, he was very upset. He was informed by one of the teachers that “B” is a good grade; he should not work hard to get an “A” because both grades are the same. I will not allow these terrible incidents to repeat themselves again. I am always watchful about the emotional disposition of my children.”

This quote demonstrates how some Nigerian immigrant parents’ careful supervision plays a very significant role in child raising. In this sample, many parents visited their children’s schools and met with their teachers on regular basis as a way of monitoring their children’s educational progress. They did this is to make sure that their children were doing their work in school and at home. Education among these Nigerian immigrant parents was celebrated at every stride, regardless how minute the feat may be. Mr. Johnson was surprised and shocked to learn that a teacher told his son not to work hard in school and that a “B” grade was just as good as an “A” grade. Nigerian immigrant parents are very serious about their children educational achievement as testify by the quote above. They seem to spend a lot of time helping their children with school work and monitoring their progress in school.
Another Nigerian immigrant parent, Ms. Barbara, who is a higher education administrator, responded to the same question about parenting styles of children supervision in this way.

“I let my children know it is always necessary to pay attention when teachers are discussing details about the foundations of some particular concepts, values or skills or the application of any ideas. I ensure that they go to school prepared to learn. One of the ways of doing this is to always make sure their homework exercises are completed. I reinforce them consistently by saying you all can do well in any subject in the school. I let them know that what they need to include is obedience, collaboration, attention, consistency, hard work, and self-confidence”.

Ms. Barbara not only becomes a teacher at home for her children, she also becomes their counselor and mentor. She works with her children at home, as they do their homework, while teaching them about hard work and the benefit of hard work in everyday life. She also spends time teaching and reinforcing the importance of good behavior, self-confidence, and obedience to help her children maintain their good character and academic successes in later years, judging from the above quote. This style of parenting of proactive parenting was repeatedly mentioned by Nigerian immigrant parent as important in ensuring their children’s academic success.

This quote makes it clear that success in academic work is not a magical act; it takes effort to be engaged in consistent learning. Nigerian immigrant parents like Ms. Barbara believe that teachers are to be respected and that their children should follow all instructions given by teachers. In addition, they raised their children to believe that teachers are parent figures in school; therefore, they must respected as if they are one’s parents. In the words of Ms. Barbara, “I let my children know that they have to respect, be obedient to the teacher as they would to a parent at home.” This style of raising their
children to see their teachers as they see their parent influences the ways their children learn and excel.

Another Nigerian immigrant parent, Ms. Mary, is public school certified teacher. She said that she observed that other students in the school unduly harassed her children. She called the school and sent a note to the school. One of the teachers expressed that there was nothing they could do about the behaviors perpetuated on her children. She formally informed the school that if no actions were taken, she would report the matter to the school administrators.

The school eventually rectified the situation. Ms. Mary, like other Nigerian immigrant parents, was very persistent, especially in matters relating to her children’s education. As in the story above, she persisted by sending notes and messages to the school, and finally, by threatening to go to the administrator. This paid off when her issue was resolved successfully.

These stories also suggest that teachers’ perceptions of Nigerian immigrant children’s academic competence may influence their learning performances. Many Nigerian immigrant parents in this study attempted to create a conducive environment for academic engagement to help neutralize unwelcoming school environments and hostile behaviors towards minorities. These parents ensured that their children were supervised regularly and meaningfully so that they would be able to engage in schoolwork and demonstrate a consistent level of participation in all activities associated with academic purposes.

Finally, Mr. Steve, who is a professor in New York, stated that when his children were in high school he regularly visited their schools. He believed that visits to his
children’s schools were necessary routines that he maintained throughout their high school days. He and other Nigerian Parents on this study regularly contacted and collaborated with their children’s teachers, participating in an open house, conferences, and school community events. He believe that parents should visit district offices to get additional resources for their children’s academic activities. He also described the importance of setting firm boundaries inside and outside of the home. In the quote below, he emphasizes the importance of setting clear rules and enforcing them consistently.

“I visit my children’s school on my day off from work. I guided my children with putting restrictions on things and setting boundaries. I always tell my children to respect every person outside the home just as you respect your parents. I tell them that they should not allow anybody to pick them up from school except me. I tell them that once I say “no” it is “no”. Then once I say “yes” it is “yes”. My children do not question my authority, but I make sure that they are involved in setting the rules for the home. My decisions are inspired by our culture and our Christian beliefs. I let my children know that one of the secrets of success in life is “WORK, PRAY, WORK, PRAY, WORK, and PRAY. “

Theme 2: Preservation of Nigerian Culture

The second theme focused on the preservation of Nigerian culture. Many Nigerian immigrant parents give Nigerian names to their children to deliberately establish positive expectations and hopeful possibilities for them. These names can be categorized into five distinctive groups. The first is “personal introduction”, which refers to announcing the gift and purpose that the person is expected to embody. The second is “personal identity”, which reveals individual uniqueness. The third is “personal information”, which indicates the resources that this person will make available to others through his or her gifts. The fourth is “personal inspiration”, that relates to the encouragement and inspiration that the
individual will bring to himself or herself and others. The last is “personal individuality” that indicates peculiar strengths and apparent limitations. Some examples of these names are as follows: Omosigho (meaning the prestige of children is greater than the glamour of wealth); Omosefe (every child is greater than the benefits of wealth); Amawianhota (he or she who does not prepare for the future should not expect any surprise); Enoru-omwen (hard work pays); Ighadaro (I am looking forward to the future with great expectation); and Ajagungbade (I fought and won the crown).

The Nigerian immigrant parents in this study gave several reasons for giving these names to their children. Some of the reasons they gave are as follows. They believed that these names would help their children to confront adversities with resilience and determination. They thought these names would direct their thoughts towards creative adjustment and positivity. The quote below by Mr. Johnson seem to explain it well.

“I purposely named my children cultural names, which are Nigerian names, because I want them not to forget their culture and where they came from. Nigerian names have meanings and I explained the meaning of their names to them in English”

Ms. Sofia and Mr. Steve gave their children Nigerian names to preserve their cultural heritage.

“Naming my children Nigerian names is to make sure they always remember where they came from. Whenever they mention their names people ask them where are from, that will always remind them or make them talk about Nigeria and their cultural background” (Ms. Sofia)

“In my culture, names have meanings and it is very essential that you name your children accordingly. So that their names will say things or have meanings that are supposed to motivate them to work hard and succeed in life. That is why I choose to name my children Nigerian names” (Mr. Steve).
These parents believe that Nigerian names will give their children the anticipation of the benefit of hard work and experience. They affirm that their names will prepare their children to identify the best opportunities in every situation of challenge. Moreover, they hope these names will prepare their children to remain positive and confident in difficult situations and circumstances.

Most Nigerian immigrant parents still maintain the traditional roles of father and mother. One Nigerian immigrant parent, Ms. Anna, who is a homemaker, stated this during her interview:

“The choice to have children by-Nigerian immigrant children is a cultural priority. The responsibility of preparing their children for college is a generational sacrifice and the desire to support their children in life is a sociological necessity. To a large extent, not to have children as a Nigerian is an ultimate failure in life. To have children and not prepare them for college is a generational challenge. To have children and not support them to succeed in life is a cultural irresponsibility and societal negligence”.

As noted above, it is a tradition in Nigeria that once you are married you must start to have children. In addition, you must prepare to live your life through your children’s eyes. In other words, as a Nigerian parent, your main priority is now your children. You have to sacrifice a good part of your life, culturally, for the betterment of your children as indicated by the quote above. It is your responsibility to make sure they get an excellent education and proper support. If not, you are considered a failure in the Nigerian community as described by Ms. Mary.

“I like the education my son is getting from here even though I think the education system in Nigeria that I went through was much tougher than the one here in the United States. Nevertheless, the opportunity here is what I like very much. My daughter is doing very well in school and getting good grades. She seems to be learning a lot which the purpose of school is. It is so much pressure here to raise children and if you fail because your children did not graduate from
college, our community gossips about you and calls you a failure. I am glad my children are doing well.”

Some Nigerian immigrant parents tell their children stories about Nigerian traditional beliefs and customary practices. They share the rituals of their religious adherence, which demonstrate resilience, industry, and respect for people as Ms. Rosemary described below.

“I trained my children to appreciate the importance education as my parents trained me by telling them the story of the rituals religious adherence, hard work, and respect for people that my parent also told to me. Every one of them is expected to do well here in the United States”.

Ms. Rosemary also explained that she allows her children to interact with some people who are not aware or familiar with African and Nigerian history. However, she informs her children that it is their responsibility to learn the history of Nigeria and teach others about it. In the quote below, Ms. Rosemary describes one of her Children’s teachers who sought out information about Nigeria.

“A teacher in my son’s school stated that she knows some details about Nigerian culture because her brother’s wife is from Nigeria, and she had watched many movies from Nigeria and has eaten some Nigerian food. She also went to the library to get some books that were written specifically about the history and geography of Nigeria.

**Theme 3: Maintaining High Expectations**

The third theme expressed by many Nigerian parents in this study focuses on the importance of holding their children to very high standards. In the quote below, Mr. Johnson described the expectations that many Nigerian immigrants hold for their children.
“It is expected that children should do well at all cost. The expectations from Nigerian immigrant children require that Nigerian immigrant children should perform well as best as they could but not in any standards, less than what their parents had attained. Parents always do everything within their power and influence to make sure that theirs will do well and achieve higher than they have attained”.

Any of the Nigerian immigrant parents in this study expected their children to do well in school and do better than their parents had done, according to Mr. Johnson. Based on the quotes below, they expected their children to not only to do well in school, but to actually do better than they did. The reason they often gave was that their children were raised with the Nigerian culture of hard work and positive attitude combined with academic achievement. These parents believed that it is the parents’ responsibility to show their children the values and belief system they learned and practiced in Nigeria. In so doing, they maintained high expectations and high standards for children.

“I believe that my children who are currently in college will graduate and becomes professionals in their fields, either be doctors, lawyers, teachers or nurses. I trained them to appreciate the importance of education as my parents trained me. Every one of them is expected to do well here in the United States” (Ms. Sofia).

Extended families with parents or children in this study had high expectations in regards to children’s success in school. They expressed their expectations for academic success by enhancing their children’s success. They put in serious efforts to help their children to achieve academically and also to achieve more than they did. These parents take pride in their children’s academic successes and feel they have failed as parents if their children do not achieve academically. Some encouraged their older children to help to ensure academic successes among the younger ones. Dr. Robinson described his support of his children in this way:
“I have three children; I make as a point of duty to treat all of them the same irrespective of their unique abilities because I realize from experience that each child is specially endowed with capabilities that are different. My own parent has taught me as well that you may not know the child that will eventually bring prestige and glory to your family; he or she may not have been the brightest of the brightest amongst your children”.

“My female children are not allowed to leave the house until they married, that is based on our culture. Even though many Nigerians have relaxed the cultural rules in America. In my house I still maintain that cultural rules. The male children can move out or choose to stay when they become an adult, married or not”.

It is a popular maxim that “The words of our elders are words of wisdom.” Many Nigerians believe that their elders have been through many of the particular situations or circumstances that younger people contend with, so they are respected because they were here first. Nigerian youth are raised to want be like their parents. Even elders who are not one’s parents they are respected people in Nigerian communities due to their wisdom according to Ogbaa, 2003.

“When I came here, it was difficult. I remember that I came to join my husband here. The first year I cried uncontrollably. Even now that my kids are grown up, even though it is expensive, we still try to take our kids home to Nigeria and stay at home and see many of our extended family members because we believe in extended family. When we took our kids home about five years ago we could not believe how large our extended family was. Here I am just here by myself. So it is very important as part of growing up to enjoy those privileges instead of just staying here in America without the love of closed relatives and family members.”

Ms. Sofia missed her family back in Nigeria and felt loneliness when she first arrived the U.S. as you can see from the quote above. However, she managed to survive by linking with other Nigerians to form associations to help bridge the gap of family relationships. These Nigerian associations and organizations became a substitute for
family members that helped to limit the loneliness she felt as she assimilated into the American society.

Theme 4: Supportive Family Collaborations

The fourth theme focuses on the importance of a supportive, collaborative family. For Nigerian immigrants, the extended family is critically important, as Ms. Sofia explains above. Without a local extended family, one of the most formidable tasks that Nigerian immigrant parents contend with in the U.S. is the issue of caring for their children while they are at work. The extent of the challenge of childcare varies from family to family. As a result of the high cost of child care services, some families may decide to agree that either the father or the mother will become a temporary child care provider. This decision is sometimes based on whoever makes the highest income or who has the most convenient career that will accommodate the best interest of everybody in the family. Sometimes, other plans are made to provide childcare among a group of families depending on their respective schedules of work. Alternatively, a younger adult who has completed high school or who is in college may be paid to provide childcare at relatively cheaper rates than conventional daycare providers would charge. Mr. Bob, a certified public teacher, stated that:

“For over one and half years my wife did not take up any professional career. We agreed that she should forget about a professional career. She was at home raising the children and I was supporting them. We eventually brought a family member from Nigeria. It was this family member that helped us to provide childcare and cultural orientations to our children while we were away from home during our professional career.”
Some Nigerian immigrant parents described discussing educational and child-raising matters with parents in Nigerian association meetings in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area. Their concerns were specific to their children’s educational activities and professional inclinations. Sometimes they talked about these critical issues in children’s psychosocial and educational development at birthday celebrations, graduation ceremonies, sporting competitions, and lunch engagements. Mr. James, a physicist, stated that:

“As we start to compare notes, we notice that there has been one significant advantage in this process. We are able to talk while we meet and we exchange ideas on what to do at school. What levels … and how not to push the kids too far. We have also been blessed with some of our members who are counselors at high schools. They come to our meetings and share secrets on how to push our kids to advance classes. ...”

Both quotes above represent the saying that “it takes a village to raise child.” This is an African proverb that means that other family and community members play a part in raising children. Mr. Bob made sure that his wife stayed home while he was the only one working until they were able to bring a family member from Nigeria to help raise their children. Mr. James sought out help and information that would benefit his children from the Nigeria community during celebrations and meetings. In this way, the support of extended family and friends was crucial.

Themes 5: Strong Involvement in School Activities

The fifth theme that emerged from my interviews with Nigerian immigrant parents was the importance of strongly involving themselves in their children’s school activities. Mr. Victor, an electrical engineer and professor at a New Jersey university, described his involvement in his children’s school activities in the following way:
“The school my children went to was really great. In fact, the children were fully occupied; they participated in the regular school hours and after school hours. They have to go dancing. They have soccer practice. Any time I can I will sneak in to talk to them about their health and how they are doing in school. There are times when they really want to relax, and not to do their homework. We find a way for them to do their homework. They must do their homework. Every evening a time was scheduled for them to do their homework. It was arranged that before 8 pm was time for homework. …“

This parenting style could be referred to as the authoritarian parenting style according to Ogbaa, 2003. It is characterized by a heavy disciplinarian approach (Ogbaa, 2003). Home life is focused around children’s school-related responsibilities. Based on the quotes above and below from Nigerian immigrant parents in this study, this authoritative parenting style is warm and loving, but also high on limit setting and establishing boundaries. Nigerian parents in this study like this firm but warm parenting style because it produces great results.

“My wife and I tell our son from day one that getting college degree is a must and that we will support him in paying the school fees as long as he works hard to earn good grades. We keeping encouraging him and advising him on daily basis the benefit of college education. So far he is doing well. Whatever we have, we will continue to support and encourage him.”

Many parents in this study were generally “friendly” with frequent conversations happening between parents and children, revealed in the quote above by Mr. Bob. These conversations encouraged their children’s academic achievement while keeping parents involved with their children’s educational choices.

In response to a question about parental involvement in children’s education, Mr. Joshua, a cab driver described:

“We took a very active role; especially my wife takes a deep interest in their education. My wife volunteered in the PTA (Parent-Teacher-Association)
In this quote, Mr. Joshua describes how he and his wife stay very closely involved with PTA, his children’s teachers, and even the school principal. This intense and ongoing involvement encourages his children’s teachers to make sure they are being asked to work to their highest potential. Recently, a counselor told him that these children who participate in sports and music generally tend to do well in academically. He thinks that participating in sports and other extracurricular activities can sometimes help children to learn more about their environment and the world which they are about to enter.

Therefore, he and his wife now encourage their children to broaden their scope and broaden their lives by participating in sports and other extracurricular activities in school.

“My children were very athletic, so I started to attend all their games and encourage them to put all their efforts on the games as I continue to encourage them not to neglect the academic. So far, they are performing very well on both sides.”

This parent said that sports seems to teach children endurance and stress relief, so all these activities combined created a strong education. Mr. Victor, as quoted above, now encourages his children to be involved in extracurricular activities at school. At one point, his daughter was not participating in sports. All she wanted to do was read. He and his wife put some restrictions on her reading to encourage her to participate in sports and get involved in other extracurricular activities. He noted that this is part of children’s social development and it helps them in their studies as well.
At one point, I observed the president of the Nigerian Association in New Jersey answer the following question: “As the leader of this group of Nigerian immigrants, what are some of the things that you think would be most appropriate in preparing children for college? He answered:

“We have also been blessed with some of our members who are counselors at high schools. They come to our meeting and share secrets on how to push the kids to advance. So within the association in itself our children have been doing well, believe me, exceeding well in their studies. I think we have 99.9% of success in an attempt to get out children from high schools to colleges, and not just only colleges, mainly Ivy League and other high-ranking universities in the country.”

He continued his response by saying that Nigerian immigrants came here with a purpose. He noted that it has been instilled in most Nigerian immigrant parents that they must succeed. He said that Nigerian immigrants have been told that education will lead children to a greater height. “We keep reinforcing this to our children, that they too must climb higher and education is an easy path to get that done.” He asserted that one of the most outstanding benefits of being a member of the Nigerian association is the push to move Nigerians forward. He believes that Nigerian immigrant parents have an edge by virtue of being together and being able to compare notes, and then come up with the best and most improved ways to boost children to higher places.

Summary

Many of the Nigerian immigrant parents in this study supported their children in developing the insights and the wisdom necessary for adaption to novel situations and circumstances. They seek to create a sensitive awareness in their children, so that these
children will be able to learn from their experiences. The central theme regarding Nigerian immigrant parenting practices discussed in this chapter indicates that they demonstrate proactive inclinations to prepare their children for college as much as possible, based on the response from many of the parents interviewed. These Nigerian immigrant parents persuaded their children to respect the authority and guidance of their elders and other respected persons. They also encouraged their children to recognize their own uniqueness and the many possibilities that await them in the future.

The dynamics of parental communication as demonstrated have shown that these parents engaged their children in an intricate process of perceiving and processing ideas, concepts, and precepts to enhance their children’s knowledge, skills, and values. Parents sought to instill their children with a strong cultural orientation in the hope of inspiring integrity, sincerity, persistence and insight. Opportunities to acquire vibrant educational experiences and opportunities were enhanced through the stability, commitment, and discipline enforced by these Nigerian immigrant parents.

Additionally, these Nigerian immigrants appear to have absorbed the idea that socioeconomic class is not rigid in the U.S., and concepts like individual opportunity and the American dream often encourage individuals to work hard to achieve their goals. Nigerian Americans appear to have adjusted their behavior to adapt to American ways of life. In doing so, they have encouraged their children to work hard in school and become successful academically and socially.
CHAPTER 6
NIGERIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND THEIR EDUCATION

Overview

As a reminder, this study of Nigerian immigrants and their children sought to explain the effects of cultural and social structures on the college-level educational outcomes of the children of Nigerian immigrants in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area. In particular, it focused on the impact of parents’ values and attitudes towards education on their children’s educational attainment. This chapter focuses on student study participants.

Three questions were posed to the 28 students who participated in this study.
1) What are the factors that most influenced your educational experience and decision to pursue a college education? 2) How involved are you in the Nigerian community in the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area, and who got you involved? 3) How is your relationship with your parents regarding your educational experience? Student’s answers to these questions, and their additional thoughts make up the data that was coded and analyzed for this chapter.

As I started to code and categorize the data using Transana (2.30), five themes were identified based on the participants’ responses. They are: 1) educational opportunities in the U.S., 2) family and friendship networks, 3) students’ self-confidence and motivation, 4) parents’ expectations of educational achievement, and 5) supportive networks of Nigerian churches, associations and organizations (See Table 11). My
analysis of these data, collected from twenty-eight students’ interviews, supports these five themes. These five themes are explained and explored below, and each theme is illustrated with supportive excerpts from interviews with the 28 students who participated in this study.
Table 11: Categories and subcategories from the analysis

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Interview Themes and Subthemes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1: Educational Opportunities in the U.S.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Variety of disciplines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plenty of choices (e.g., majors, courses, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunities for experiential learning (e.g., internships)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal freedom to choose your career path</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Theme 2: Family and Friendship Networks</strong></th>
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Theme 1: Educational Opportunities in the U.S.

The first theme will describe students’ perceptions of their educational and personal opportunities in the U.S., focusing on their common experiences as they made decisions to attend college. Based on their answers below, these students indicated that they hold mental images of an ideal future, have had help in framing them from their parents and key members of the Nigerian community, and have used these images to move forwards the accomplishment of their dreams.

Student participants generally indicated that they believed that U.S. offered many more academic and personal opportunities than their parents’ homeland. Two typical conclusions arose. First, interviewees typically noted that they believed that the U.S. higher education system was better than that of their parents’ country of origin. For example, Precious, a female participant who attends Essex County College stated: “... And here you have more opportunities and options, and you don’t get criticized like they do in Nigeria and not able to get admitted into the program you want…” In addition, Kingsley, a male student participant who major in mechanical engineering at NJIT stated, “It’s different here than in Nigeria because there are many colleges and universities, and if one did not admit you another one will, while in Nigeria if you don’t know people high places, it hard to get admission into universities.” Second, participants typically noted that they believed there was greater personal freedom of choice in the U.S. than in their parents’ own country. In the words of Osazee, a male student participant who majored in biology at Rutgers, “you can do what you want to do and still come out successful, compared to over there in Nigeria…” Irene, a female student participant from Rutgers described her experience as follows:
Definitely, we have more opportunities than our parents. Our parents want us to be the best we can be. They came from Nigeria to America to give us more than they had. They want us to be smart and do our best in school...my parents encouraged me and told me that is how to get a good job especially in America, by studying science.

A number of the participants believed that the personal freedoms and choices in America are endless. Abiola, a student participant who is attending Rutgers, described her experience as shown below:

Though my parents did not go to college, they told me all the advantages of a college degree. They said they did not have opportunities when they were young and able. My father told me that he had a very rough life growing up. He lost his father at a very young age and he wanted to attend college but his mother could not afford it. He is glad that he immigrated to the United States where his children have all the opportunities he did not have.

These quotes, and especially the one above, show that these students think their parents want them to archive high grades in school. They were told to take advantages of the opportunities in the U.S., as most of these opportunities are lacking in Nigeria, which is why their parents struggled to migrate here. As noted above these students believed that one of the main reasons their parents migrated to the U.S. was so they could have opportunities that their parents did not have in Nigeria. Ivie, a female student participant who attends Rutgers echoed this thinking as she discussed her parents’ impact on her decision to attend college.

“The difference between the educational system here and the educational system in Nigeria according to my parents is that in this country there are so many options. Once you are admitted into college, you will have so many options of majors. You can have so many choices. In Nigeria, they limit you to one choice”.
Some of the student participants asserted that personal freedoms, opportunities, and choices in America are endless; they believed that anyone coming here could take advantage of these opportunities. These Nigerian second generation children appeared to take advantage of open access to higher education in the U.S., which they believed was lacking in Nigeria. Samson, a male, majoring in electrical engineering, who is a student at NJIT described how he decided to go to college.

“I knew I have to go to college because my parents struggle to go to college and earned their degree and they told me many times and in many ways that America is land of opportunities and if you take advantage of the opportunities you will not suffer and you will live a good life. That talks stay in my head and I have been working very hard on schoolwork since then. I also want them to be proud of me”.

These students appear to inculcate their cultural experience and their parents’ view of limited Nigerian opportunities into their daily life in the U.S., which helps them to focus on education as a way to have better life here. As Samson noted, several student’s participant said that they not only attend college to further themselves in society, but also to make their parents proud of them. This is not always easy to do! Some students mentioned the challenges they face. Adesuwa, who is majoring in civil engineering at NJIT, described her college work habits and the challenges of college below:

“When I feel like college is too much for me, I just realize that I have a great deal ahead of me and a lot on my mind that I want to fulfill. I remember what my parents have said to me about hard work. That is what keeps me going. When I have tests and assignments to do, I do not really think about them. Instead, I thinks about what I needs to do to get a better grade and make my parents proud of my achievement”.

This student overcome her challenges by remembering her parents’ advice during a hard period in school, doing what she needed to do to make her achievements happen.
These quotes make it clear that many of the students in this study thought about their parents’ descriptions of the benefits of the U.S. educational system. They remembered their parents’ stories of Nigerian education, and decided to attend college to realize their own aspirations. The students in this study carefully and deliberately thought about the things they needed to do and the steps they needed to take to accomplish their dreams and aspirations. In this process of implementing their intentions and making a commitment to achieving academic success, they initiated positive actions they learned at home to bring their visions to reality.

**Theme 2: Family and Friendship Networks**

The second theme focused on family networks and influence of other members of the Nigerian immigrant community. Involvement with relatives and friends was an essential component of daily life for some study participants. These Nigerian family and friendship support networks were noted to be important for coping with the ongoing stresses of daily life in the U.S.

Most student participants reported that they had a good, influential family network. The typical response of a participant was that he or she had a supportive family member who lived in New Jersey or at least within the U.S. Joseph, a male student participant from Rutgers, described how he was influenced by his family network:

““The way my parents and family network influenced my education is by pushing me into schools they thought were very good schools. They take education seriously and they help me select good school to attend. They also taught me the value of education and how you use your knowledge to help others…”"
Maria, a female student participant from NJIT, described how the family networks in Nigerian community churches influenced her college education.

“When I attend Church of Pentecost I meet other young Nigerian immigrants who are doing well in school and therefore it motivates me to study hard. I ask questions and they are very eager to help answer my questions about college. Also the church elders encourage us to succeed in school. Every student who graduates from college get an award from the church”

The quotes above and below demonstrate how Nigerian community family members who had already graduated from college helped the younger generation in the community get into good schools by talking directly to these students or to their parents. They also helped them to complete college applications and followed them to college open houses where they learned more about these schools. As noted above, some Nigerian community churches even organized an awards day to honor those students who excelling in school by given them awards and scholarships. Ima, a male student participant majoring in architecture at NJIT, described his family and friends networks in the Nigerian immigrant community as follows:

“Some of my relatives on my mother’s side are in New Jersey, some in other parts of the United States and in Nigeria. I chose this university because of my relatives who told me this university is a good architectural school and that the career services department helps their students get an internship that usually leads to full-time jobs with a good company. They also helped me out with completing the application to NJIT and answered several questions about the school”.

Another student by the name of Nike, from Essex County College, and whose parents are not college educated, described how community church members influenced her decision to attend college.

“My parents have not much clue how the school system works here in the United States. They provide me and my other siblings with moral and financial support
but I do not get anything from them that point me as to where to go with my education. I depend on the older people at the church and in the community a lot. Whenever I have any question about the school, I contact them and they usually point me to the right direction.”

In this quote by Nike, she explained how she depended on a community network of other college graduates and church members to point her to the right college and answer her questions about getting into college. Her parents were unable to help, but her family and community network was able to help her to get into right college. For students like Nike, the Nigerian community network is even more important than for other students who can depend on their parents to help them get into college.

Theme 3: Students’ Self-Confidence and Motivation

The third theme, as expressed by many Nigerian students in this study, focuses on the importance of students’ self-confidence and motivation. As previously noted many student participants reported that strong parental influences shaped their educational goals. However, their own motivation, aspirations, and self-confidence sustained them in their educational endeavors. Samson, a male student participant majoring in electrical engineering at NJIT described how his self-confidence and aspiration to emulate his father helped him choose an electrical engineering major.

“I was not advised by my guidance counselor to go to this university; instead, he advised me to go to county college because it is cheaper and easy to get in. I found this university on my own with help from my father, who told me to research any school before I decide. I did my research. My major is electrical engineering because I want to be an engineer like my father who is also electrical engineering. The other reason I picked electrical engineering is that it is very hands-on, and it is a well-paying profession.”
Raphael, a student who is attending Essex County College and majoring in business, stated:

“Once I was accepted into the school, I started to think about what I will do that would help in the development of Africa. There is not a lot of development in Africa. I realized it has not been developed. I decided to focus on business management which can help me work hard to bring industry to Africa … I hope to go back someday to help in the development of Africa”.

Kunle, a student participant from Rutgers responded this way:

“I choose to attend a university because I know that I wanted a better life. My parents told me if I want a better life, I should focus on education so that I can get a better job and earn high pay. Therefore, I am doing my best to make them proud of me. I am the oldest of four and I want to set a good example for my younger siblings”.

The confidence and motivation shown by these young Nigerian students is evidenced from the above quotes. They were motivated to study hard, get good grades and graduate, sometimes at the top of their class. They used their parent’s words of advice to motivate themselves and build the confidence to become successful in college.

Some of these students in this study use subtle cognitive planning techniques to evaluate situations to determine if certain activities would benefit their long-term aspirations. Without thinking too much about it, students use their self-confidence and cultural experience to motivate themselves to get into the universities of choice. An example of this is found in Samson’s words about how he got into the University of his choice: “I found this university on my own with help from my father, who told me to research any school before I decide. I did my research”. This type of cognitive planning and self-confidence is also necessary to keep students from giving up during difficult
periods and helping them persist if they do not perform well on particular exams or assignments.

**Themes 4: Parents’ Expectations of Educational Achievement**

The fourth theme focuses on the importance of parents’ expectations about the educational achievement of their children. More than 80% of the participating students had a parent who was college educated. Many of the interviewees reported that their parents think very highly of higher education, and they were brought up with the idea that higher education is the only way to make a better living. For many of these students, parents’ expectations of educational achievement were critically important, as Faith, from Essex County College, explains below. “My mom did not have a higher education, and she wanted us to be very professional because my grandmother wanted her to be very professional. Because she could not achieve that dream, she wanted her children to achieve a higher education”. Another interviewee, Raphael from Essex County College, explained that:

> “School is the most important thing; my dad always tells me. My dad was just like every Nigerian parents in my community and they always tell us that education is the most important way of getting ahead in this world and we should study hard in school and get a degree”

Here Raphael explained that Nigerian parents tend to encourage and push their children to attain higher education as a way of achieving a better life for themselves. He was one of several students to say this. This is also evident in the responses of Nosa, a male NJIT student majoring in computer science:

> “My parents think there is no way but to get a higher education. No other options about it. My parents, both of them graduated from college and for them; there are
no other options but to get a higher education because it is the only way for a better living”.

As the quotations above shows, some Nigerian immigrant parents appear to give their children no option but to attend college and achieve the best grades. This involvement can start as early as elementary school, as indicated by some of the student interviews. Parental involvement encompasses a broad range of parenting behaviors, such as helping their children at home with schoolwork, discussing their daily activities, and providing financial assistance. Nigerian parents are also often involved in decision making regarding which college to attend and which course of study to select, as in the case of Joseph from Rutgers, who reported as follows:

“I was interested in going to college, but my parents were very much involved in all the planning. The sat me down to complete all the applications to all the colleges they and I choose. My parents have been telling that I am going to be engineer and make sure I study and do all my homework. My father especially always checks”

Many parents provide home assistance/tutoring and home educational enrichment as needed for their children, as shown in the previous chapter.

Quite a few of the student interviewees reported that their parents had guided them toward attending college from an early age and helped to make sure that they graduated and became professionals in their fields. These student participants were taught at home that education is the best way to move into a high socioeconomic class in this society as Joseph describes above. The two quotations below are additional examples of Nigerian parents’ influence on their children education. The first quotation is from Samson.

“Well, the way I will say my parents influence me the most is I mean coming up moving to a different country and giving birth to us and moving here from Nigeria they expect us to do better. They expect us to get more opportunity that they did
not get in Nigeria. School is the most important thing my dad always tells us. Every African parent always tells their children that education is the important ways of getting ahead in this world. …“

This quotation is from Crystal, a female student from Rutgers majoring in nursing.

“‘Our parents want us to be the best we can be. They came from Africa to America to give us more than they had. They want us to be smart and do our best in school. You did math or you did science. I never thought about anything else. I have always studied math and sciences and my parents encouraged me and told me that it is how to get a good job, especially in America or Nigeria’.”

Both quotations above described how Nigerian immigrant parents instill the importance of education into their children. In answering a follow-up question about why students decided on college education, some of the student participants in this study reported that their parents told them from a very young age that they were expected to go to college and get a degree; multiple students affirmed that their parents expressed strong preferences about what kind of professional they should become. Ama, a female NJIT student majoring in biomedical engineering, said this:

I have always wanted to attend a university because growing up in my house, it is a given because of my parents rather prepare you for that. They started telling you from a young age what they want you to do or get a degree. My parents wanted me to study medicine and became a doctor. I started out wanting to study medicine; however, I changed my mind because I prefer being a researcher. Therefore, I am now studying biomedical engineering.

One of the most significant and powerful skills the students in this study exhibited was the ability to plan strategies and steps to overcome this kind of cultural pressure when it arose. The statement above, demonstrate Ama’s ability to handle the cultural pressures her parents put on her and plan her way through and/or around them.

Another male student, Israel from Essex County College who is majoring in general science, described a similar kind of cultural pressure:
“The way I think my parents influenced me in my education is that they pushed me … and they pushed me. My parents, especially my Dad … he wanted me to study engineering. They would have preferred petroleum or chemical engineering. I speak Arabic, because of that; my parents wanted me to study chemical or petroleum engineering so that I can work in the Middle East or in Nigeria”.

In every case, the students interviewed affirmed that their parents were very much involved in their educational activities from high school until the present. These students described how their parents were determined to make sure they succeeded in college by constantly reminding them that graduation was necessary and that it would elevate the entire family. This was accompanied by cultural pressure to meet their parents’ expectations.

Another female student, Ifueko, explained that

“The house I grew up in, going to college is not your choice, because from childhood my parents started asking me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I would say I do not know, they would say I would be lawyer, a doctor, a professor and so on. Therefore, I knew I would go to college from day one”.

These quotes illustrate the powerful cultural influence that moves humans in the direction of the images they see ahead of themselves. In this case, Nigerian immigrant parents used words and language in a way that evoked images of desirable, preferred, and ideal futures for their children, and their children adopted some version of these images for themselves. Some of these children tried very hard to live up to these expectations.

These students’ responses indicated that they constantly think about their future and how to succeed academically to make themselves and their parents happy. It is interesting that many of these Nigerian immigrant parents started to prepare their children to become what they wanted them to be from very young age. The image of academic
success became so prominent in these children’s lives that they focused on academic achievement with intensity. Everything they did academically seem designed to make their visions a reality for themselves and their parents.

Theme 5: Supportive Networks of Nigerian Churches, Associations and Organizations

The fifth theme that emerged from my interviews with Nigerian immigrant students was the importance of Nigerian church attendance and support from Nigerian associations and organizations. Seventy-five percent of the student participants and 90% of parents in this study attended a Nigerian church. Abiola, is a female participant who was born in Nigeria but came to the U.S. when she was two years old. Abiola is currently a junior at Rutgers who is majoring in biology with the hope of attending medical school in the future. She said that she does not remember anything about Nigeria. She described enjoying growing up in the Nigerian community in Newark. She attended church with her parents every Sunday and on weekdays, and reported that she is a member of her church choir. She reported the following about her community experience:

“When I go to Nigerian church of Pentecost, I meet other young Nigerian immigrants who are doing well in school and therefore it motivates me to study hard. Also, the church elders encourage us to succeed in school. Every student who graduates from college receives an award from the church”.

Most of the participants in the study indicated that they wear their Nigerian traditional attire almost every Sunday because they go to the Church of Pentecost, where more than half of the participants worship with their parents. Church services resemble
community events in Nigerian villages, which include drumming and dancing. Sundays are usually days of celebration. The pastor is from Nigeria and the church usually has other visiting pastors from Nigeria. I happened to attend one of the churches during the occasion of Nigeria Fifty-Seven Independence Day celebrations for worship and observation. After hearing the drumming and dancing it was hard to tell that the celebration was not taking place in Nigeria. All the members were in celebratory moods and they were dancing to the tune of Nigerian music before they heard a sermon that focused on Nigeria’s struggle for independence. Here, I met several of my study participants.

Osazee, a male student from Rutgers who resides in Hillside and is a member of the choir at this church credits his success in college mainly to the support he receives from his parents, friends, and his church. This student was born in the U.S. to two Nigerian parents who migrated to this country about thirty years ago. Osazee reported that his parents struggle very hard to make it and they have no college education, so they yearn for him to succeed in college. Osazee said that his parents often tell him how much they want him to succeed. According to Osazee, he feels supported by some well-educated church members, which include teachers, doctors, nurses, and college professors. He feels that these professionals serve as guidance counselors since they understand how the American school system works. This quote below captures his experience with his family’s involvement in his education:

“My parents have no much clue how the school system works here in the United States. They provide me and my other siblings with moral and financial support but I do not get anything from them that point me as to where to go with my education. I depend on the older people at church a lot. Whenever I have any question, about the school, I contact them and they usually point me to right direction”.

Many of the participants in this study agreed that going to church on Sundays and a couple of other days during the week was a community affair for the whole family which gave them an opportunity to network with other Nigerian families.

Twenty-four out of 28 students interviewed indicated that Nigerian associations, Nigerian churches, and other Nigerian organizations take a proactive role in education and that this affected their perceptions about the importance of education. They mentioned the Nigerian Association’s Student Recognition program through which high school and college students are presented with certificates of recognition. Kingsley, an NJIT student majoring in engineering, stated his appreciation in the following manner:

“I was surprised that they would care about me so much as to present me with a certificate of recognition. Most of the members of this association are my role models because they were educated and have professional jobs. Because they gave me certificate of recognition, this motivated me to keep working hard to attain education just like them and more…”

Interviews with study participants suggested that one factor that has aided the success of Nigerian second generation students stems from the Nigerian community networks developed through the Nigeria Association, a myriad of churches, extended family networks, and other community organizations. As noted in previous chapters, Nigerian immigrants have maintained kinship and family bonds through large networks comprised of ethnic or national associations. An example of this can be seen in the quotation below from Samson, a student at NJIT:

“Once I got accepted into college with the help and assistance of Nigerian community elders and church members, they also advised me to study what I can use to help the development of Africa. I decided to focus in electrical engineering which can help me work in many industries in Africa … I hope to go there in the future to help in the development of that land.”
As noted by Samson and others, these networking opportunities provided young adults with the chance to develop support systems that would help them through the college experience. In some cases, where parents’ understanding of American education was limited, young adults relied on other community adults to help them navigate this complex system.

**Summary**

The five themes and the supportive excerpts from the interview with the students who participated in this study explained the effects of cultural and social structures on the college-level educational outcomes of the children of Nigerian immigrants in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area.

These students’ participants indicated that they hold mental images of an ideal future, have had help in framing them from their parents and key members of the Nigerian community, and have used these images to move forwards the accomplishment of their dreams. Involvement with relatives and friends was an essential component of daily life for some study participants. These Nigerian family and friendship support networks were noted to be important for coping with the ongoing stresses of daily life in the U.S. As previously noted, many student participants reported that strong parental influences shaped their educational goals. However, their own motivation, aspirations, and self-confidence sustained them in their educational endeavors.

Many of the interviewees reported that their parents think very highly of higher education, and they were brought up with the idea that higher education is the only way
to make a better living. Most of the Nigerian immigrant students that participated in this study believed Nigerian church attendance and support from Nigerian associations and organizations play an important part in their educational successes. Seventy-five percent of the student participants and 90% of parents in this study attended a Nigerian church and participated in the Nigerian associations and organizations.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This study explored the impact of social and cultural structures on academic achievement among Nigerian immigrants and their children in northern New Jersey. Its aims were to clarify those social and cultural influences shaping youth academic achievement, including the attitudes of parents and students towards education, parent and community involvement in education, impactful peer relations, and available community support systems. The study examined the impact of culture by eliciting parents’ reports of their involvement in children’s education, their expectations, and their perceptions of the potential impact of acculturation. It also examined students’ descriptions of the role of their parents, peers and social networks in shaping their educational achievements.

Six research questions guided the study as it sought to meet these aims. The first three questions were asked of participating Nigerian immigrant parents and the last three question were posed to young, college-enrolled adult children of Nigerian immigrants. These were as follows.

1) What role do you play as a parent in the education of your children and how is this influenced by your culture?

2) What do you do to support your children in their educational experience in this country? Please describe this to me in detail.

3) How involved are you in the Nigerian community in the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area, and do you get your children involved?

4) What are the factors that most influenced your educational experience and the decision to pursue a college education?
5) How involved are you in the Nigerian community in the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area and who got you involved?

6) How would you describe your relationship with your parents regarding your educational experience?

As previously noted, purposive snowball sampling was utilized to reach saturation on this topic (Padgett, 1998; Grossman, 2020). First and second-generation Nigerian immigrant participants were selected, mainly based on their willingness to speak with me and respond to my questions freely. In-person, semi-structured interviews with 15 Nigerian immigrant parents and 28 children of Nigerian immigrant college-age students at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), Rutgers University, and Essex County College were conducted. Students were interviewed on campus. Parents were interviewed in their respective towns in public places near their homes.

Using data that emerged from the coding of semi-structured interviews, this chapter will apply the study’s findings to each research question in turn. It will also discuss the implications of these findings for Nigerian immigrants and their children, for policymakers, and for future research. Each research question will be addressed in turn.

**Question 1: What role do you play as a parent in the education of your children and how is this influenced by your culture?**

Results indicated that in this sample, Nigerian immigrant parents played an important role in the education of their children. These parents described many ways in which they shaped their children’s education. First, the Nigerian immigrant parents
interviewed for this study appeared strikingly committed to proactive parenting practices preparing their children for college and raising them to succeed in academic settings. Many reported that they visited their children’s schools and met with their teachers on regular basis as a way of monitoring their children’s educational progress. They reported that they did this to make sure that their children were doing their work in school and at home. Their responses indicated that educational achievements were celebrated at every turn, regardless of how minute they appeared to be.

These parents ensured that their children were supervised regularly and meaningfully so that they would be able to remain actively engaged in schoolwork and demonstrate a consistent level of participation in all activities associated with academic success. Many echoed the words and practices of the parent who stated that when his children were in high school, he regularly visited their schools. He and other parents affirmed that visits to their children’s schools were necessary routines that they maintained throughout their children’s high school days. The Nigerian parents participating in this study regularly contacted and collaborated with their children’s teachers and participated in open house days, parent-teacher conferences, and school-based community events. These parents repeatedly asserted that parents should visit schools and even district offices to acquire additional resources for their children’s academic activities. Many of the parents in this study also described the importance of setting firm boundaries for their children inside and outside of the home, affirming that boundary setting had a positive impact on their children’s long-term habits and performance. These findings are expressed in **Theme 5: Strong Involvement in School Activities**.
Nearly all of the Nigerian immigrant parents participating in this study expressed their desire that their children to do well in school and especially, do better than they had done. The great majority believed that their children were meeting this expectation. The reason they often gave for this success was that their children had been raised with Nigerian cultural values of the importance of hard work and a positive attitude towards academic achievement. These parents affirmed that it is the parents’ responsibility to teach their children these values and beliefs that they themselves had learned and practiced in Nigeria. In so doing, they communicated their high expectations and set high standards for children. These findings are expressed in **Theme 3: Maintaining High Expectations**.

Part of their desire to communicate these cultural values to their children was reflected in their use of traditional Nigerian naming practices. These parents explained that traditional names would help their children confront adversities with resilience and determination. They thought these names would direct their thoughts towards creative adjustment and positive attitudes. These parents believed that Nigerian names would give their children the willingness to embrace hard work and experience in academic work and in life. They affirmed that these names would prepare their children to identify the best opportunities inherent in every situation or challenge. Moreover, they hoped these names would prepare their children to remain positive and confident in difficult situations and circumstances. This is explained in **Theme 2: Preservation of Nigeria Culture**.

As the post-interview coding process continued, recurring statements emerged that led to the formulation of themes related to preferred child raising styles in immigrant Nigerian culture. **Theme 1: Careful Supervision of Children** captures participating
parents’ sentiments about the raising of their children and their perceptions of a close parent-child relationship. Some of the Nigerian immigrant parents interviewed for this study were strikingly committed to proactive parenting practices in preparing their children for college from a young age. As previously noted, many parents in this sample visited their children’s schools and met with their teachers on regular basis as a way of monitoring their children’s educational progress. Many of these parents focused on preparing their children for college from an early age and made it clear that their children would be attending college. The overwhelming majority of parents voiced the belief that the traditional models of child raising they had learned in Nigeria were important in preparing their children for academic success.

Additionally, the Nigerian parents participating in this study expressed their desire to live their lives through their children’s eyes. In other words, their main priority was their children. They described willingly sacrificing a good part of their lives for the betterment of their children and explained that this was socially and culturally supported. They believed that it was their responsibility to make sure that their children received an excellent education and the proper support to ensure academic achievement. Some stated that parents who did not appear to adopt this belief were considered failures by the Nigerian immigrant community.

These Nigerian immigrant parents indicated that their traditional culture emphasized obedience and respect for authority. Rather than promoting individualism, it was described as placing more emphasis on communal wellbeing. Family loyalty and unity were affirmed to be paramount virtues in the Nigerian immigrant community by participating parents. Parents in this sample described how students are expected to be
obedient and respectful to teachers and other parental and educational authorities. They also noted that children growing up in the Nigerian immigrant community are not expected to voice their opinions on important family and academic issues that may affect them. This is perceived as very different from American approaches. Some of the parents in this study also expressed the idea that their community is torn between their cultural distinctiveness and the possibility of adopting American values. A few Nigerian immigrant parents in this sample noted that it is not unusual for Nigerian immigrant parents to be very concerned about the possibility that their children might adopt what they perceived as more casual inner-city American attitudes towards education. They also be worried that their children might reject the importance of strong academic performance because of the influence of their non-Nigerian peers.

Question 2: What do you do to support your children in their educational experience in this country? Please describe this in detail.

Many immigrant parents in this study described relationships with their children that were generally friendly. They described holding frequent conversations with their children when asked exactly how they supported their children’s educational experience. These parents further reported conversations encouraging their children’s academic achievement and keeping them involved with their children’s educational choices. Multiple parents echoed the words of a Nigerian immigrant parent who related how he and his wife stayed very closely involved with PTA, his children’s teachers, and even the school principal.
Several parents affirmed that this kind of intense and ongoing involvement encouraged children’s teachers to make sure their children were asked to work to their highest potential. One previously noted example concerned the parent who told me that when a school counselor explained that children who participate in sports and music tend to do well academically, he and his wife began encouraging their children to broaden their scope and participate in sports and extracurricular activities.

According to Ogbaa 2003, this parenting style could be referred to as an authoritarian parenting style. It is characterized by a heavy disciplinarian approach (Ogbaa, 2003). Home life in this style is often focused around children’s school–related responsivities. Based on the responses of the Nigerian immigrant parents in this study, this authoritative parenting approach was preferred in this sample and believed to boost children’s future academic success. Parents in this study described themselves as warm and loving, but also intent on limit setting and establishing boundaries. The Nigerian parents in this study articulated the idea that they preferred this firm but warm parenting style because it produces respectful, successful adults who are more likely to succeed in their future academic and life goals.

Many Nigerian immigrant parents in this study reported extending ongoing support of their children to help them develop personally, financially, socially, culturally, and professionally. Unlike typical American families, study participant indicated that Nigerian immigrants’ children are encouraged to stay in their parental home until they get married. Parents explained that male children can and do choose to continue to stay in their parents’ home after marriage, while female children will generally move with their husbands and live together elsewhere. However, if children choose to continue to stay in
their parents’ home, they and their spouses must continue to offer parents their due respect as elders. This practice is also described in Ogbaa, 2003.

When probed about other ways in which parents extend academic support to their children, some parent participants identified child care as a challenge, especially when parents are at work. The extent of the challenge varies from family to family. As a result of the high cost of childcare services in the U.S., some families decide to agree that either the father or the mother will become a temporary child care provider. This decision is sometimes based on whoever makes the highest income or who has the career that can best accommodate the needs of everyone in the family. Sometimes, other plans are made to provide childcare among a group of families, depending on their respective schedules of work. Alternatively, a younger adult who has completed high school or who is in college may be paid to provide childcare at relatively cheaper rates than conventional daycare providers would charge. **Theme 4: Supportive Family Collaborations** arose out of these conversations exploring immigrant parents’ support for their children’s educational requirements.

**Question 3: How involved are you in the Nigerian community in the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area, and do you get your children involved?**

The majority of the immigrant parents participating in this study indicated that they were very involved in their local Nigerian community and they described including their children in these community activities. The most important way in which parents reported interacting with the immigrant Nigerian community as a family was by attending Nigerian churches; Nigerian community association gatherings were also identified as
important. Nigerian church services encourage members to continue many traditional cultural practices including the wearing of traditional attire. Sunday services are considered celebrations, as church services generally resemble Nigerian village events that include drumming and dancing. Most local church pastors are from Nigeria; Nigerian-based pastors also visit regularly. In addition to providing religious services, local immigrant churches celebrate important Nigerian holidays such as Fifty-Seven Independence Day. At the end of each service, traditional Nigerian food is served to all who attend. The Nigerian immigrant parents in this study indicated that they attended church services with their children regularly and usually contributed money every Sunday to help the less privileged among them.

The Nigerian immigrant parents in this study also emphasized the importance of Nigerian community association gatherings. For example, every year local Nigerian communities organize a big soccer tournament between their second-generation children. The Nigerian community usually turns out in large numbers for these games, according to study participants. Parent participants reported the belief that sports seems to teach children endurance and stress relief, so these activities promote strong educational success.

**Summary: Research Questions 1-3**

As a group, the Nigerian immigrant parents in this study described drawing on traditional parenting styles and beliefs about the importance of education to support their children in developing the insights and wisdom necessary to adapt to novel situations and
circumstances. Based on this study’s interview data, most of the parents in the sample attempted to prepare their children for college as proactively as possible. In seeking to help them succeed in education and in life, they also attempted to persuade their children to respect the authority and guidance of elders, teachers and other respected persons. Finally, they encouraged their children to recognize their own uniqueness and the many possibilities and opportunities that awaited them in the future.

Parents reported engaging their children in an intricate process of promoting and processing ideas, concepts, and precepts designed to enhance their knowledge, skills and develop the values necessary for success. Parents sought to orient their children to cultural and social values that inspired integrity, persistence, a positive attitude, sincerity, and insight. Nigerian immigrant parents reported strongly encouraging their children to look for opportunities to acquire diverse educational experiences and reinforced their importance by emphasizing the necessity of commitment and discipline.

Additionally, these Nigerian immigrants communicated their awareness that socioeconomic class in the U.S. is fluid, and a wide range of individual opportunities may present themselves to those who are not afraid of hard work. Parents reported the belief that, in the U.S., people can work hard to become whatever they dream of becoming. The Nigerian American parents in this study appear to have utilized traditional beliefs and practices to customize emphasize the possibilities inherent in American life. In doing so, they have chosen to encourage their children to work hard in school and become successful academically and socially.
Question 4: What are the factors that most influenced your educational experience and the decision to pursue a college education?

Questions 4-6 were posed to the young adult children of Nigerian immigrants. These students indicated that they hold mental images of an ideal future (Davy, 2018) and have had help in framing them from their parents and key members of the Nigerian community; they have used these images to move forwards towards the accomplishment of their dreams. Student participants repeatedly reported they believed that the U.S. offered many more academic and personal opportunities than were available in their parents’ homeland. They explained that they were encouraged and pushed by their Nigerian immigrant parents to take advantage of them.

This suggests that these students recognize that their parents want them to earn high grades in school and become successful people in society. Young adults in this study were told to take advantages of the opportunities available in the U.S., as most of these opportunities are lacking in Nigeria, which is why their parents told them they had struggled to migrate here. As noted in previous chapters, these students believed that one of the main reasons their parents migrated to the U.S. was so their children could have opportunities that their parents did not have in Nigeria. Based on interview data, these student participants used the encouragement of their immigrant parents as a motivational tool to get into college and do well.

These second-generation children appeared to take advantage of open access to higher education in the U.S., which they were told by their parents was lacking in Nigeria. These students appear to absorb their cultural experience and their parents’ view of limited Nigerian opportunities into their daily life in the U.S., which helps these children to focus on education as a way to create a better life here. Many of the student
participants in expressed the idea that they overcome their own challenges by remembering their parents’ advice and doing what they needed to do to make their achievements happen. They reported that they remembered their parents’ stories about Nigerian education and decided to attend college in the U.S. to realize their own aspirations. The students in this study indicated that they carefully and deliberately thought about the things they needed to do and the steps they needed to take to accomplish their dreams and aspirations. This suggests that in the process of implementing their intentions and making a commitment to achieving academic success, these children initiated the kinds of positive actions that they learned at home to bring their visions to reality. These findings are captured in Theme 1: Educational Opportunities in the United States and Theme 3: Students’ Self-Confidence and Motivations.

Many of the student interviewees reported that their parents have always thought very highly of higher education, and that they were brought up with the idea that higher education is the only way to make a better living. For many of these students, their parents’ expectations of educational achievement were critically important in their decision to attend college. Some Nigerian immigrant parents appear to give their children no option but to attend college and achieve the best grades, according to some student participants. This involvement started as early as elementary school for some student participants. These findings are captured in Theme 4: Parents’ Expectations of Educational Achievement.

Young adults in this sample explained that their parents’ involvement encompassed a broad range of parenting behaviors, such as helping them with
schoolwork, discussing their daily activities, and providing financial assistance. Student participants also said that their Nigerian immigrant parents were often involved in the necessary decision making regarding which college to attend and which course of study to select. Student participants also noted that other close family members and friends often helped them with important educational decisions as well. This is captured in Theme 2: Family and Friendship Networks.

In every case, the students interviewed affirmed that their Nigerian immigrant parents were very much involved in their educational activities at least from high school until the present. These students described how their parents were determined to make sure they succeeded in college by constantly reminding them that graduation was necessary and that it would elevate the entire family. Themes 4: Parents’ Expectations of Educational Achievement arose out these factors and others that students described as important to their educational experience and choice to attend college.

As reported earlier, these students’ responses indicated that they constantly think about their future and how to succeed academically to make themselves and their parents happy. It is interesting that so many of the Nigerian immigrant parents in this sample started preparing their children to become who they wanted them to become from very young age. Student participants reported that the image of academic success became so prominent in their lives that they focused on academic achievement with intensity. It appears that almost everything they did academically seem designed to make their visions of academic success a reality for themselves and their parents.
Question 5: How involved are you in the Nigerian community in the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area and who got you involved?

Student participants were also asked to describe how involved they were in their local Nigerian immigrant community. The most commonly reported involvements the students described included Nigerian church attendance, participation in Nigerian association meetings with parents, attendance at Nigerian wedding ceremonies, funeral services, child naming ceremonies, and graduation ceremonies. Most study participants indicated that they wear Nigerian traditional attire almost every Sunday and more than half worship with their parents.

Some student participants noted that they like attending the Nigerian community church because they feel supported by well-educated church members, including teachers, doctors, nurses, and college professors. A few explained that these professionals served as informal guidance counselors since they understand how the American school system works. Many of the participants in this study agreed that going to church on Sundays and other days during the week was a community affair for the whole family which gave them an opportunity to network with other Nigerian families.

Twenty-four of the 28 students interviewed indicated that members of Nigerian associations, Nigerian churches, and other Nigerian organizations took a proactive role in their education and that this affected their perceptions about the importance of education. Several students mentioned the Nigerian Association’s Student Recognition program, through which high school and college students are presented with certificates of recognition. Interviews with study participants suggested that one factor that has aided the success of Nigerian second-generation students stems from these Nigerian community networks developed through the Nigeria Association, a myriad of churches, extended
family networks, and other community organizations. As noted in previous chapters, Nigerian immigrants have maintained kinship and family bonds through large networks comprised of ethnic or national associations, and this appears to benefit those second-generation children who wish to attend college.

This experience appeared typical of most of the study’s student participants who regularly attended Nigerian community events with their parents. These events provided networking opportunities for children of immigrants and for first-generation immigrants as well as described in previous chapters. It also provided opportunities for young Nigerian adults to develop support systems that could help them as they went through the college experience. In some cases, where parental participation in and understanding of American education was limited, young adult participants relied on other adults within the wider Nigerian immigrant community to help them navigate this complex system. This is captured in Theme 5: Supportive Networks of Nigerian Churches, Associations and Organizations.

Question 6: How would you describe your relationship with your parents regarding your educational experience?

Data from semi-structured interviews of student participants indicated that Nigerian immigrant children in this study who associate more with the Nigerian immigrant community reported that they were more likely to succeed in school. However, about 15% of the students in this study stated that they struggled in college and faced academic challenges. These students were less likely to self-identify as Nigerians or Africans and less likely participate in Nigerian community events. These students were
also less likely to get along with their parents and more likely to report communication problems with them.

Studies have shown that first-generation immigrants possess a dual frame of reference that is lacking in the second generation (Alex-Assenoh, 2010), ultimately producing psychological differences between the two generations. This study indicated that among some first-generation Nigerian immigrants who do possess the dual frame of reference and their children are usually involved in the Nigerian community and self-identify as Nigerian or Nigerian-American. The extent to which Nigerian children identify with their culture appears to impact their academic achievement as well as their ability to handle psychological bullying and problems of daily stress in this country (Alex-Assenoh, 2010).

Summary: Research Questions 4-6

The student participants in this study appeared to hold mental images of an ideal future and have had help from their parents and key members of the Nigerian community in developing and in framing them. They reported using their perceptions and the advice of their parents to move forwards towards the accomplishment of their dreams. Involvement with relatives and friends was an essential component of daily life for some study participants. These Nigerian family and friendship support networks were noted to be very important for coping with the ongoing stresses of daily life in the United States. As previously noted, many student participants reported that strong parental influences shaped their educational goals. However, their own motivation, aspirations, and self-confidence sustained them in their educational endeavors.
Many of the interviewees reported that their parents think very highly of higher education, and that they were brought up with the idea that higher education is the only way to make a better living. Most of the Nigerian immigrant students that participated in this study also believed that Nigerian church attendance and support from local Nigerian associations and organizations had played an important part in their educational successes.

**Concluding Discussion**

The results of this study suggest that, for some second-generation immigrants, a strong connection to one’s ethnic group and resistance to certain kinds of Americanization may be one key to socioeconomic success. The social, economic, and political institutions that second-generation Nigerian immigrants are establishing shape the frame of reference developed by Nigerian immigrants. Based on my research, these structures, in turn, influence how Nigerian students view education and advancement within American society. The Nigerian immigrant family achievement model that has emerged from this study can be compared to a family achievement model, which suggests that parents provide a home environment that regulate student’s activities with disciplined focus around educational achievement and hard work (Tan, 2017; Ceballo, 2004; Clark, 1983; Fan, 2001).

Often touted as the “land of opportunity,” the U.S. offers an abundance of possibilities not only for individual advancement, but also for obtaining an education that fits a student’s needs and can be tailored to his or her ambitions. A significant proportion of students in the U.S. have the chance or opportunity to attend college, unlike the
situation in many other countries (Nigeria in particular), where higher education is rarer privilege.

In the U.S., higher education is nationally governed, but it is standardized by accrediting agencies. Each school sets its own guidelines and has its own application procedures (Alex-Assensoh, 2010). This relatively easy access to education has allowed for establishment of a large and varying number of higher learning institutions. There are over 4,000 colleges and universities within the U.S. (Alex-Assensoh, 2010). These different types of institutions and the opportunities that they present, as well as the availability of helpful advice about choosing a school and a major, are what first and second-generation Nigerians means when they speak of the abundance of educational and personal opportunities in the U.S.

There is a large corpus of research regarding the links between parental educational expectations and aspirations and academic achievement among children in general (Pinquart, and Ebeling, 2020; Danişman, 2017; Froiland, Peterson, and Davidson, 2013; Raleigh and Kao, 2010; Fuligni, and Fuligni, 2007); however, very few studies to date have explored such relationships among immigrant children and Nigerian second-generation immigrant children in particular. It is important to explore such relationships among second-generation immigrants because there is growing evidence that immigrant parents hold higher expectations and aspirations for the children’s educational attainment than do native-born parents (Loughlin-Presnal, & Bierman, 2017; Fuligni, and Fuligni, 2007). In addition, immigrant parents are more likely than native-born parents to maintain high expectations and aspirations for their children’s educational attainment over time (Pingault, Côté, Petitclerc, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 2015; Raleigh and Kao, 2010).
Many ethnology researchers agree that the children of immigrants appear to be less motivated or focused on upward social mobility in the U.S. than their immigrant parents. However, in part because of their parents’ expectations, these children succeed academically (Castro, Expósito-Casas, López-Martín, Lizasoain, Navarro-Asencio, & Gaviria, 2015; Waters, M. 1999; Suarez-Orozco, 1995;). Suarez-Orozco reported that immigrant children’s development of a dual frame of references allows them to utilize education as a ladder for socio-economic advancement (Pinquart, and Ebeling, 2020; Danişman, 2017; Suarez-Orozco, 1989), while African Americans’ lack of a dual frame of reference might inhibit education success. Ethnographic studies of immigrant groups have made a strong case for the decoupling of Americanization from social mobility (Abad & Sheldon, 2008; Grolnick, 2003; Sorkhabi, 2005). According to Suarez-Orozco (1984), immigrants and those of their children who keep a strong affiliation with their culture and community are more likely to succeed educationally and utilize education as a ladder for socio-economic mobility (Tan, 2017). However, the same researchers assert that those immigrants who develop an adversarial relationship towards mainstream American values are less likely to succeed in the education system (Suarez-Orozco, 1989; Abad & Sheldon, 2008; Grolnick, 2003; Sorkhabi, 2005).

In this group of Nigerian-descended college students, student participants seem to uphold their immigrant parents’ expectations and aspirations, adopting them to fuel their own educational ambitions and achievements. At the same time, most parent participants reported supporting and protecting their children quite extensively to help them develop personally, financially, socially, culturally, and professionally. In this study, it appears that the factor most associated with college enrollment and academic achievement was
the way in which young adults interviewed internalized and remembered the social values and cultural lessons they learned at home (Davy, 2018).

Social values are often based on things like tradition (Giger and Davidhizar, 2004), so this finding is not unexpected. Additionally, the literature reports that the Nigerian family often views intergenerational obligations as paramount to those within the nuclear family (Akerele, 2003), and thus, Nigerian parents have a stake in rearing their young to respect their elders and listen to their advice. According to Akerele (2003), Nigerian immigrants are also likely to affirm that their children learn best in well-structured environments. The results of this study suggest that these social and cultural structures may prepare second-generation Nigerian immigrant students to perform well in formal academic environments. However, they also show that the ongoing support of community networks—especially in the case of Nigerian churches and associations—was also clearly important in helping the second-generation Nigerian students in this study succeed.

According to Chiswick and DebBurman (2003), the model of immigrant settlement in a new country based on human capital theory proposes that the economic status of immigrants will improve the longer they stay in the US. In other words, immigrant assimilation in the country to which they immigrated will be positively related to their educational achievement. The results of this study suggest that, for some Nigerian immigrants and second-generation Nigerian immigrants, a strong connection to one’s ethnic group and resistance to certain kinds of Americanization may be one key to this kind of academic achievement and socioeconomic success. Additionally, the Nigerian immigrant family achievement model that has emerged from this study can be compared
to a family achievement model, which suggests that parents provide a home environment that regulate student’s activities with disciplined focus around educational achievement and hard work (Tan, 2017; Ceballo, 2004; Clark, 1983; Fan, 2001)

Implication of Findings and Recommendations

Many of the Nigerian immigrant students in this study can be considered positive outliers. Most of these Nigerian immigrant students grew up in the inner city of New Jersey/New York metro area and their stories of academic success are not shared by most inner-city students even though they grew up in the same challenging, low-resourced neighborhoods and attended the same quality-starved schools. These Nigerian immigrant students did not have access to rich resources in their local schools, yet they succeed academically in an environment in which many of their peers did not even graduate from high school.

I believe that these Nigerian immigrant students have much to teach us. If we can learn what made these students academically successful, I believe it may be possible to extend those lessons more broadly to improve the lives of many more low-income, inner-city students. If we affirm that we find everything about poverty and its effects to be unacceptable, wasteful, and an affront to human dignity, and contend, as these Nigerian immigrant parents do, that education is a key vehicle for breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, then we need to do everything in our collective power to promote better educational outcomes for all low-income and inner-city students.

It is our collective moral imperative to affirm the human dignity and freedom of low-income, inn-city students by helping them break the cycle of poverty that holds them
back, rending them “powerless and alienated” (Anderson, et al., 2016). To achieve this vision, we need to find ways to ensure that the children of low income and inner-city students absorb the culture of educational hard work at home and in their community. We cannot leave any stone unturned in this effort to improve the lives of our poorest citizens and marginalized immigrant children. I believe this study suggests there may still be some stones left unturned. Like many of the second-generation Nigerian students in this study, others who share the same inner-city neighborhoods may be able to benefit from those factors that have been shown to fuel positive outcomes.

Research with immigrant youth has shown that they have a variety of orientations to their acculturation process. These different paths of acculturation strategies have been described in terms of assimilation, integration, marginalization and separation. This study showed that there are variable adaptations or outcomes to acculturation. The most important related finding of this study is that these variations in adaptation can be related to acculturation strategies as in the cases of many of these Nigerian-American youths. Most of the Nigerian American youths in this study involved themselves in both their cultural heritage and that of the host country, and, reported positive outcomes from this as well as benefits to their well-being. These Nigerian American youths reported being well adjusted in school and in the community, while achieving their educational goals. In contrast, those immigrant youths in this study that were minimally involved with their cultural heritage by assimilating into their host country reported more problems and greater challenges achieving their educational goals.
Recommendations for Future Studies

Similar studies should be extended to other communities in the U.S. where there are substantial Nigerian immigrant populations to gain a better perspective on how Nigerian immigrants and their children adapt to the U.S. and succeed educationally. I hope this study will stimulate interest replicating similar studies elsewhere. Extending this approach to a larger sample of Nigerian immigrants and their children across different regions may generate more insight into the ways in which Nigerian immigrants and their children have promoted educational achievement here in the U.S. Because so many of the participants in this study attended Nigerian churches and associations, it would be useful to conduct a similar study targeting Nigerian immigrant parents and students who do not participate as heavily in church and association activities. In this way, it would be possible to compare the two groups.

Similar studies in other parts of the country could also provide a more accurate account of parental models and community participation that support educational achievement in Nigerian immigrant communities across the U.S. Further studies could reveal how community organizations may collaborate with schools and administrators to create friendly and welcoming environments within school districts for young Nigerians who were born here. It would be an interesting project, and one more attuned to positive change, to engage students, parents, school administrators, guidance counselors, peers, and other community-based organizations in future studies of academic achievement among Nigerian immigrants. Including community-based groups could facilitate the development of new strategies to reach urban students, their families, school staff, and teachers in the process of supporting students.
Limitations

This was a qualitative study conducted in a Northeast urban city and its surrounding region. Its findings are not generalizable, although they may be transferable to similar settings in the U.S. Additionally, this research study sample does not represent all Nigerian immigrants and their children in New York/New Jersey metropolitan area, nor in the U.S. It is important to note that 75% of the student participants and 90% of the parent participants included in this study reported attending a Nigerian church and participating in the Nigerian associations and organizations. It is possible that this sample is biased towards church and association participation, and this may have influenced the outcomes of the study. As previously noted, it would be useful to conduct a similar study targeting Nigerian immigrant parents and students who do not participate as heavily in church and association activities.

Closing

In conclusion, I want to thank all the participants in this study. These include the students and parents who spent their free time sitting with me for each interview. Their willingness to be part of this work was very important for this research study. I wish the students continued success as they continue their academic journey and beyond. I also wish the parents continued success in their daily lives.
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*Inter press Services, Aug. 9.*


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APPENDIX A

Interview Consent Form
with Audio/Visual Recording

I am a PhD Student in the department of Urban Education Studies at Rutgers University, and I am conducting interviews for doctoral dissertation research. I am studying: African Immigrants to the United States: The Influence of Culture in Academic Achievement among Nigerian Immigrants and Their Children in Northern New Jersey (Post 1960).

During this study, you will be asked to answer some questions as to the influence of culture in academic achievement among Nigerian immigrants and their children. The influence of culture that will be examined will include parental involvement and expectations, acculturation, and peer relations and social networks. This study will examine the following research question: “What influence does culture play in association with academic achievement among Nigerian young adults?

This interview was designed to be approximately a half hour to Forty-five minutes in length. However, please feel free to expand on the topic or talk about related ideas. Also, if there are any questions you would rather not answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering, please say so and we will stop the interview or move on to the next question, whichever you prefer.

This research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes age, gender, marital status, income, and job title. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location in locked cabinet and password protected computer. The data gathered in this study are confidential with respect to your personal identity unless you specify otherwise.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for three years, after which all documents and data pertaining to this research will be destroyed by shredding or burning. You are aware that your participation in this interview is voluntary. You understand the intent and purpose of this research. If, for any reason, at any time, you wish to stop the interview, you may do so without having to give an explanation.
The risks of participation include: There are on foreseeable risks to participant in this study.

The recording(s) will be used for: The audio recording will be coded and transcribed for data analysis for the purpose of this research only.

The audio recording(s) will include coded identifier, not the names of the participants. If you say anything that you believe at a later point may be hurtful and/or damage your reputation, then you can ask the interviewer to rewind the recording and record over such information OR you can ask that certain text be removed from the dataset/transcripts.

The recording(s) will be stored in a 24/7 locked cabinet and the data in the computer will be password protected. The recordings will be kept for three years after which it will be destroyed by shredding or burning.

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact me at:

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You may also contact my faculty advisor:

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If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers (which is a committee that reviews research studies to protect research participants).

Institutional Review Board
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200
335 George Street, 3rd Floor
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Phone: 732-235-9806
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu
You will be offered a copy of this consent form that you may keep for your own reference.

Once you have read the above form and, with the understanding that you can withdraw at any time and for whatever reason, you need to let me know your decision to participate in today's interview.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Subject (Print) ______________________________________

Subject
Signature ______________________________
Date ______________________

Principal Investigator Signature ________________ Date ________________

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records. By participating in the above stated procedures, then you agree to participation in this study.
APPENDIX B

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The central question that will be guiding this study is the following: “How does culture influence academic achievement among Nigerian immigrants and their children in the northern New Jersey area?”

To answer the guiding question, I intend to explore the following questions:

1. What role do Nigerian immigrants play in the education of their children and how is this influenced by their culture?
   a. How do they compare the teachers of their children here in the United States with those in Nigeria?
   b. How different do parents think their educational experience was as compared to that of their children?
   c. How satisfied are they with their child’s educational experience in this country?
   d. What do they do to support their children in their educational experience?
   e. How do they describe how active they are in the United States political process at the city, county, and state levels?

2. How have the Nigerian immigrant self-identification and practices (speaking Nigerian language, attending community events, membership in
Nigerian church, etc.) had an influence on their children academic
achievement?

a. How involved are they in the Nigerian community in northern New Jersey
and do parents get their children involved?

b. What is their relationship with White, African, African American, and
Hispanic Americans as well as with other immigrants?

c. What was their experience as students in college?

d. When did they immigrate to the United States?

3. What is the settlement pattern of Nigerian immigrants?

4. Is there question I did not ask that you will answer for me that will shine light
on the central question about Nigerian second generation educational
achievement?

Central Research Questions

The central question guiding this study is the following: “How does culture and social
structure influence academic achievement among Nigerian immigrants and their children
in the northern New Jersey area”?

To answer this central question, I explored the following targeted questions:

Questions for parents:

a) What role do you play as a parent in the education of your children and
how is this influenced by your culture?
b) What do you do to support your children in their educational experience in this country? Please describe this to me in detail.

c) How involved are you in the Nigerian community in the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area, and do you get your children involved?

Questions for children:

a) What are the factors that most influenced your educational experience and the decision to pursue a college education?

b) How involved are you in the Nigerian community in the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area, and who got you involved?

c) How is your relationship with your parents regarding your educational experience?