ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: A FAMILY AFFAIR: AFRICAN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES CONCEPTUALIZING AND NAVIGATING COLLEGE CHOICE

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The purpose of this study was to understand the postsecondary aspirations, expectations, and access strategies of sub-Saharan African immigrant families in the United States. This study generates knowledge around how 1.5- and second-generation African immigrant college going students and their first-generation immigrant parents conceptualize and navigate the college choice process. The primary framework utilized for this study was Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined model of college choice, with funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 2005) and ecocultural theory (Weisner, 1997) serving as supplemental frameworks. Following an ethnographic multiple case design, four families (cases) from Nigeria and Kenya were recruited to participate. Data from demographic questionnaires, in-depth interviews, participant observations and participatory diagramming were used to identify how families conceptualize and navigate college choice.

While Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model was useful, findings reveal a much more rich and complex college choice process that reflects the development of a college-

going culture. Therefore, this study presents a new frame for understanding the college choice process of the cases by using baobab trees as a metaphor to illustrate how the families in this study engaged in college choice as *Baobab Families*. Baobab Families engaged in college choice as a family process, which emphasizes the development of a college-going culture within the home and community. Although Baobab Families experienced challenges in navigating the U.S. educational system and the college choice process, they used a number of proactive strategies as well as familial and culturally based resources to socialize children into a college-going culture as well as to navigate the college choice process. These included college-going legacies, active home-based parental involvement, high academic expectations and pressure, the use of cultural and familial identity, and extended family/community networks. This study can contribute to emerging scholaontrship on African immigrants in higher education and push education research, practice and policy to keep pace with today's changing student demographics.

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By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my own Baobab Family…

To my husband, Alex Mwangi, for your love, patience, guidance, sacrifice, and partnership along this journey. You inspire me each day and this dissertation truly belongs to you as well.

To my parents, Annunciata and Gilbert, and my grandparents, Cyril, Ralda, and Nancy for being my first teachers. You always encouraged and supported my academic endeavors. Everything I am stems from each of you.

To my extended family and community because it took a village to accomplish this goal and you all constantly play a part in helping me to achieve my dreams.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Imagine a room full of accomplished Black alumni of Harvard University meeting for reunion. Speech after speech is given highlighting that the Black student population at Harvard is increasing and achieving success. Yet, tension grows in the room when two professors, Dr. Henry Louis Gates and Dr. Lani Guinier express that although the Black student population is indeed growing, the majority of these Black students are not the descendants of Black American slaves (Rimer & Arenson, 2004). Instead, "…the majority of them [Black students]— perhaps as many as two-thirds — are West Indian and African immigrants or their children…" (Rimer & Arenson, 2004, para. 3).

In 2004 this incident hit national news with debates ensuing about how Black students, who are not the descendants of Black slaves in America, should be positioned within the U.S. racial structure. These dialogues have since ranged from naming Black immigrant students as the new "model minority" (Page, 2007) to questioning whether they are wrongly reaping benefits of their minority status in the college admissions process (Jaschik, 2009). The Harvard incident has many implications to consider, including how Blackness is defined in America; whether being Black should be viewed in the same manner for Black immigrants as it is for African Americans in gaining access to higher education; and whether race should be defined through a historical context of "redressing past wrongs" or through a contemporary lens of "diversity and inclusion" in higher education policy and practice. Yet, one implication of great importance which is often ignored is how today's Black students' diverse sociocultural backgrounds are impacting their educational pathways. Researchers provide data illustrating that the educational achievement for some Black immigrant groups surpass that of all other

immigrant groups as well as that of native-born Blacks (and in some instances, native-born Whites) (In Educational Attainment, 2003; Rong & Brown, 2001; Stepkick & Stepkick, 2003). Yet, we still know little about these Black immigrant students and how they navigate the educational system in the United States.

In following up on his remarks at the Harvard Black Alumni Reunion with the *New York Times* Dr. Gates stated:

> We need to learn what these immigrants' kids have so we can bottle it and sell it because many members of the African American community, particularly among the chronically poor, have lost that sense of purpose and values which produced our generation, (Rimer & Arenson, 2004, para. 29).

What Dr. Gates suggested is that there are college going characteristics found within the Black immigrant population that should be examined and shared for the benefit of all Black youth. He suggested that there is something these Black immigrants "have" that is valuable in achieving educational success. Whether or not this is true is difficult to ascertain because now a decade after the Harvard incident, there is still a dearth of literature on the Black immigrant student demographic. There continues to be a strong and consistent Black immigrant presence in U.S. colleges and universities, but there also continues to be scant empirical research examining how Black immigrant first- and second-generation students make meaning of their educational experiences, nor how they develop and actualize their postsecondary aspirations. This gap in the literature led to the development of the current study, which focuses on the postsecondary aspirations, expectations, and access strategies of sub-Saharan African[1] immigrant families. The

[1] The terms "sub-Saharan African immigrant," "Black African immigrant," and "African immigrant" are used interchangeably throughout this manuscript.

study examines the intergenerational dynamics between first generation sub-Saharan African immigrant parents and their 1.5 and second generation children[2] as they navigate the college choice process together. This first chapter begins by providing greater context to the study followed by an outline of the research purpose and questions. A demographic profile of African immigrants in the United States as well as justification for my selection of this demographic in this study is provided. Next, I discuss the research design, significance of the study, and definition of terms. The chapter concludes with a review of the overall organization of the study.

Background and Problem Statement

Immigrant Growth and Education

Immigrants and their children comprise a significant proportion of the U.S. population and therefore their educational attainment plays a crucial role in the overall development of an educated and skilled workforce in the United States. For example, today approximately one in five adults in the United States are immigrants (Ryu, 2010). On average, foreign-born family households have higher numbers of children under the age of 18 than native-born family households (Greico et al., 2012). In fact, immigrants' children are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. child population and as a result, the proportion of immigrant students in U.S. schools is expected to increase rapidly in the next few years (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008). According to Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, and Todorova (2008), 20 percent of young people growing up in the United States have parents who emigrated from other countries, and it is projected that by 2040, one in every three children in the United States will grow up in an immigrant family.

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[2] Born in the U.S. (second-generation) or immigrated to the U.S. before age 12 (1.5 generation).

Since the passage of the Hart-Celler Act of 1965 (Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments) there has been a massive influx of immigrants of non-European descent to the United States (Massey, 1999). This policy removed restrictions on immigration based on national origin, while emphasizing family reunification and occupational preferences (Massey, 1999). The unintended outcome of Hart-Celler was an influx in the numbers of immigrants from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, which greatly contributes to the increased ethnic diversification of American schools in the late 20th century (Massey, 1999; Ryu, 2010).

One group of immigrants that receives little attention in education research are those who are racially Black. Yet, over three million of America's Black population are immigrants and this group contributed to nearly 25 percent of Black population growth in the United States from 2001 to 2006 (Kent, 2007). In 2004 more than 12 percent of all Black undergraduate students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities were foreign-born (Kent, 2007). Still, although the representation of Black immigrant college students as a proportion of the overall Black college student population in the United States is significant, there is a lack of research in higher education literature on this population (George Mwangi, 2013a; Massey, Mooney, Torres, & Charles, 2007). Research on Black college students often merge native- and foreign-born Black students as a single demographic or do not include Black immigrant student data (George Mwangi, 2013a; Massey et al., 2007). Consequently, the experiences, backgrounds, educational expectations and needs of Black immigrant students go unheard. However, as the Black immigrant population grows and increasingly seeks access to U.S. colleges and universities, it is important that education practitioners, researchers and policymakers

become more aware of how this population makes decisions about college. On one hand, because of the college successes of the first generation, Black immigrants are a demographic that researchers and practitioners can learn from regarding college access and degree attainment. Conversely, there is little empirical evidence examining how the children of Black immigrants are faring academically and as this population continues to enter the U.S. educational pipeline at high rates, it will be important to understand their strategies as well as their challenges in gaining access to college.

Educational Aspirations and Outcomes of the Children of Immigrants

Since 1990, the number of school-age, second-generation immigrant youth has risen seven times faster than the number of school-age children in native-born American families (Schmid, 2001). As these students have entered and continue to enter college, there became greater academic as well as societal interest in their educational and occupational outcomes. Researchers argue that the children of today's diverse immigrants have multiple incorporation options or pathways, as opposed to the theory of straight-line assimilation, which provides only one pathway and was attributed to earlier European immigrant waves (Alba & Nee, 2003; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993). On one side, researchers align with Gans' (1992) generational decline hypothesis, asserting that the children of immigrants, particularly people of color and those with low levels of human capital, will face obstacles in achieving educational and occupational success in the United States (Huntington, 2004; Telles & Ortiz, 2008). As a response to discrimination and blocked opportunities, these 1.5 and second-generation immigrants will experience downward assimilation and the adoption of an oppositional standpoint towards education and school (Gans, 1992; Telles & Ortiz, 2008).

Conversely, the "immigrant optimism" perspective hypothesizes that the immigrant 1.5 and second generation is in the best position to achieve educational success relative to the first or third generations (Alba & Nee, 2003; Kao & Tienda 1995). For example, second-generation adolescents demonstrate full English proficiency and high levels of parental optimism for their education (Kao & Tienda 1995). In their study of immigrant ethnic groups, Kasinitz, Waters, Mollenkopf, and Holdaway (2008) found that despite many of the barriers that some 1.5 and second-generation immigrant groups have faced such as discrimination in schools and tracking into less rigorous courses, overall they are performing well academically. The authors suggest that a "second-generation advantage" exists among these immigrants due to the value of having two cultures and moving between them in different contexts and for different benefits (Kasinitz et al., 2008).

There are many additional theories related to the incorporation process of contemporary 1.5 and second-generation immigrants that fall in between the polar sides of generational decline and immigrant optimism (see Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1994), illustrating that there is a lack of consensus in the literature regarding the educational outcomes and integration of immigrant youth. However, one factor emerging in several studies is the important role of immigrant parents and family in the success of their children (Foner, 1999; Kasinitz et al., 2008; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Thomas, 2009; Zhou, 1999). For example, Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) identified the human capital that immigrant parents bring with them to the host country and the composition of the immigrant family as two major factors impacting the educational and occupational achievement of this population. Yet, regardless of their

socioeconomic background, many immigrant students are in a family environment that is strongly supportive of educational success as a means of achieving the American Dream (Kasinitz et al., 2008). The encouragement and aspirations of immigrant parents play an important role in the success of their children. Although these issues are examined in K-12 education literature, there is still a dearth of higher education research examining the role of immigrant parents and families in the development of their children's postsecondary endeavors and college going processes.

Much of the literature on 1.5 and second-generation Black immigrants also finds that social pressures, particularly in the school environment, tend to lead these individuals to self-identify as African American and have African American peer groups (Doucet & Suarez-Orozco, 2006; Rong & Brown 2001; Waters 1994, 1999). This issue is particularly salient for Black immigrants because in the United States being Black is considered a master status. A master status is a category that allows dominant groups (e.g. White majority) to ignore distinctions among people who vary in ethnicity and nationality (Foner, 2001, Hughes, 1945). Eventually the system of racial stratification or racialization in the United States imposes a racial identity, which is reflected by Bashi and McDaniel (1997) who state "new arrivals may not know their race when they arrive, but they certainly learn it eventually" (p. 676). The combination of racial stratification and assimilation for Black immigrants often leads to a transition from an identity based on national origin (e.g. Jamaican or Nigerian) to a pan-national identity (e.g. West Indian or African) to a pan-ethnic American identity (African American) over the course of time in the United States and over a period of generations (Guenther, Pendaz & Songora Makene, 2011; Rong & Brown, 2001; Rumbaut, 1994; Waters, 1994). These shifts in

racial/ethnic identity as a result of racialization can create intergenerational tension within Black immigrant households, particularly because Black immigrant first-generation parents often seek to maintain an ethnic identity among their children (Awokoya, 2012; Rong & Brown, 2002; Waters 1994, 1999).

Although the intersections of race, ethnicity, and nativity status for Black immigrants are explored in sociology and psychology literature (see Benson, 2006; Guenther et al., 2011; Hall & Carter, 2006; Rumbaut, 1994; Vickerman, 2001; Waters, 1994), there are only limited recent studies examining how these intersections impact higher education (see Awokoya, 2012; Fries-Britt, George Mwangi & Peralta, 2014; George Mwangi, 2013a; Griffin, del Pilar, McIntosh & Griffin, 2012), and none emphasizing how these intersections impact Black immigrant families within an educational context. Additionally, to date there is no empirical research focusing the topic of the current study, which is to explore how Black immigrant families from Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa navigate the college choice process; particularly the intergenerational dynamics between first-generation parents and their children regarding postsecondary aspirations and college going as well as how cultural and social structural factors may influence this college going process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to utilize qualitative inquiry to understand the postsecondary aspirations, expectations, and access strategies of sub-Saharan African immigrant families. This study generates knowledge around how 1.5- and second-generation African immigrant college going students and their first-generation immigrant

parents view and communicate with each other about educational expectations and college going. The research questions and sub-questions guiding this study are:

1. How do African immigrant families conceptualize the process of college choice?
    - How do African immigrant families develop and communicate educational ideologies about college going?
2. How do African immigrant families actively navigate the college choice process?
    - In what ways do African immigrant families perceive the role of family, culture and social structures impacting their college choice process?

Answering these research questions required collecting qualitative data that reflected the lived experiences of college going African immigrant students and their families. Understanding how students make meaning of their identities and educational experiences informs how they interact with and navigate their educational environment (Berg, 2009). Focusing on the college going process within a familial context illustrates how intergenerational family relations impact postsecondary access for African immigrants. Furthermore, Foner (2005) states, "we need additional, careful cultural as well as structural analyses of immigrants' family lives to appreciate the forms and patterns developed among them here" (p. 164). I examined both social structural and cultural factors that influence, guide, and challenge the college going processes of the participant families. This study focuses on Black immigrants from Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa and the next section will provide a brief overview of this population.

A Case for Black Immigrants from Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa

This study focuses on the experiences of Black immigrants from Anglophone (English-speaking) sub-Saharan Africa. This specific population of African immigrants

were selected because 1) immigrants in the United States from Africa who racially identify as Black are most often from sub-Saharan Africa (Capps et al., 2011); 2) the majority of African immigrants to the United States are from sub-Saharan Africa (Capps et al., 2011); 3) historically, Black African immigrants to the United States originated from Anglophone countries (Kent, 2007); 4) African immigrants from Anglophone countries are more likely to remain in the United States permanently and become U.S. citizens, which increases the likelihood of starting a family/having U.S.-born children (Kent, 2007); 5) African immigrants from Anglophone countries are more likely to speak English (Kent, 2007), which was advantageous to me as a researcher in my data collection because I do not speak any other language fluently.

A Profile of African Immigrants in the United States

Black immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa are a new, but rapidly growing population in the United States with 41 percent arriving between 2000 and 2005 and approximately 50,000 new arrivals annually (Elissa, 2005; Kent, 2007). Between 2000 and 2009, the Black African immigrant population grew by 92 percent (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2011). According to a report by the Migration Policy Institute, "If the trends of the past decade continue, by 2020 Africa will likely replace the Caribbean as the major source region for the U.S. Black immigrant population," (Capps et al., 2011, p. 3).

There are a variety of converging reasons for the recent surge in African immigrants to the United States. Gordon (1998) provides an extensive review of contemporary African immigration in which she explains that stricter immigration policies in England and other former colonial European countries have shifted African immigration to the United States over time. Gordon (1998) stresses five primary reasons

for recent African migration to the United States: 1) globalization and integration of the world economy; 2) economic and political development failures in Africa; 3) immigration and refugee policies in Europe and the United States; 4) Anglophone background; and 5) historic ties of sending countries to the United States.

The United States ranks third behind France and Saudi Arabia among receiving countries for African immigrants (Capps et al., 2011). However, African immigrants to France and Saudi Arabia are most often from Northern Africa. Thus, the United States likely receives the largest number of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa (Capps et al., 2011). African immigrants often enter the United States through family reunification or as refugees/asylum-seekers (Capps et al., 2011; Kent, 2007). Many also enter as international students or as professionals through the Diversity Visa Lottery Program (Capps et al., 2011; Kent, 2007). The Diversity Visa Lottery Program gives visas to individuals from underrepresented countries in order to diversify immigration, allocating more than 25,000 visas for Africans each year (Capps et al., 2011). The program also impacts the high educational and occupational levels of many African immigrants to the United States because it requires at least a high school degree or two years experience in a job that that entails formal training (Capps et al., 2011).

African immigrants tend to be highly educated, with nearly 40 percent having a college degree (Kent, 2007). Since 2001, over 30,000 students from sub-Saharan Africa were enrolled annually in U.S. universities, with more than half coming from Kenya, Nigeria, and Ghana (Kent, 2007). These countries are each former British colonies and Anglophone (English-speaking) countries. However, the educational level of African

immigrants is becoming more diverse as greater numbers have entered as the relatives of Africans already in the United States or as refugees (Capps et al., 2011; Kent, 2007).

African immigrants do not earn incomes or hold jobs commensurate with their education levels (Kent, 2007). For example, in their analysis of the median annual earnings of workers over age 16 in the United States, Capps and his colleagues (2011) found that the median earnings for Black African immigrants was $27,000 which is 20% below the median for U.S. born workers ($33,000). Furthermore, American Community Survey data illustrates that 36% of recent African immigrants with a college education earned abroad work in unskilled jobs in the United States (Capps et al., 2011). Research comparing White and Black immigrants from Africa found that White Africans earned more than Black Africans, even after accounting for differences in the education levels and the university where they earned their degrees (Kent, 2007). Still, when compared to native-born Blacks, Black African immigrants are less likely to be unemployed (7.9% of Black African immigrant adults are unemployed compared to 12.3% of native-born Blacks) or have a low socioeconomic status (18.8% of Black African immigrants are at or below the poverty line compared to 24.5% of native-born Blacks), which can translate into a higher household income for this immigrant population (Mason & Austin, 2011).

Today, there are over 1.5 million Africans residing in the United States as permanent residents, naturalized citizens, and second-generation native-born citizens (Kent, 2007). This African immigrant population includes a high volume of children: 17 percent of females and 14 percent of males are under age 18 (Hernandez, 2012). In 2005, more than one million U.S.-born Black children had at least one foreign-born parent and

approximately two-fifths of these children were from African families (Hernandez, 2012).

While this section provides a rationale for why I selected Black immigrants from Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa as the focus of the current study as well as a brief overview of the demographic characteristics of the African immigrant population, I provide more extensive information from literature describing their immigration and incorporation patterns, family dynamics, and educational experiences in chapter two.

Research Design Overview

This study utilized an ethnographic case study design with families as the unit of analysis. The design incorporates multiple embedded cases (Merriam, 2009). Consistent with case study methodology, data for the study was collected via a variety of methods including individual semi-structured interviews, family (group) interviews, participant observations, and participatory diagramming. I used purposeful sampling to select four families to participate in the study. Three frameworks were selected to shape the conceptual lens for the study: Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-stage combined model of college choice, funds of knowledge, and ecocultural theory. This study's design is also informed by an extensive review of literature on sub-Saharan African immigrants' immigration and incorporation patterns, family dynamics, educational expectations; research on college access and choice; and studies on the cultural and social structural factors impacting the educational outcomes and college access of Black immigrants.

Significance of the Study

The gap in literature on the experiences of African immigrant students is situated within the larger context of the homogenization of Black students in higher education

research. Studies on Black students in the United States have historically centered on the "universal Black experience," in which the characteristics, experiences, and history of these students are merged and compared to the White population (Harper & Nichols, 2008). Recent scholarship has elucidated within-group differences in Black students' experiences, particularly related to gender, socioeconomic status, and achievement patterns (Fries-Britt, 1998; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Harper & Nichols, 2008; Stewart, 2009). Still, Harper and Nichols (2008) observe, "within-group differences…have been, at best, trivially considered in published higher education literature" (p. 199). The current study points to the deficiency of a "one size fits all" approach to the Black student population and provides greater emphasis on exploring the diverse characteristics of Black students and families. Researchers have argued that it is important that educators, administrators and social science researchers distinguish between the varying ways in which Black students navigate the educational system and define their identity (Harper & Nichols, 2008; Stewart, 2009). Yet, there are still few empirical studies that seek to disaggregate data on the Black student population, particularly relating to ethnicity, nativity and generational status. Using these contexts, this study contributes to revising concepts of race and ethnicity for Black students and extend the literature on Black student heterogeneity.

This study also contributes to emerging scholarship on African immigrant college students. Although many contemporary African immigrants in the United States have achieved access to college successfully, there are few studies that describe or explain the processes and experiences concerning why this occurs. Furthermore, Takyi (2009) suggests, "very little is known about their [African immigrants'] family structures,

adaptive responses, and living arrangements while in America" (p. 238). By utilizing a qualitative approach, I share the voices of African immigrant families who are not often heard in higher education literature and create new knowledge around how they experience the college going process at various stages and within the familial context. As this population continues to grow and create roots in the United States, it will also be important to understand their educational experiences and learn whether the educational achievement experienced among new arrivals will continue over subsequent generations. Unlike other immigrant groups such as Latinos or Asians, ethnicity is overlooked for African immigrant students particularly after the first generation (Kasinitz et al., 2008; Waters, 1999). This invisibility is reinforced by the Black/White racial lens of American society, which determines that Black immigrants are the "same" as native-born Black Americans because of their racial connection (Bryce-Laporte, 1972). Second-generation African students' experiences are merged with those of native-born Blacks and thus their ethnicity is not considered formally or informally in schools or in education research (Massey et al., 2007). This is problematic because immigration literature reinforces that an immigrant background does make an impact on second-generation individuals' worldviews and experiences (Alba & Nee, 2003; Kasinitz et al., 2008; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). By exploring educational experiences and college preparation, the current study contributes to this line of research by focusing on a largely "invisible" immigrant population, the children of Africans immigrants.

College access literature states that parents play a crucial role in their children's college preparation (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989). Common themes in this research are the role of parental encouragement and involvement

as well as structural factors such as parental income and level of education, which will be explored in greater detail in chapter three. Yet, there is little published in higher education research that includes parents or other family members as research participants. The current study gives voice to parents and other family members involved in the college going process, allowing their perspectives and experiences to be heard. Including immigrant families in research studies instead of exclusively focusing on students provides educators with insight into how to better involve and support these families through the college going process in culturally sensitive ways. This is particularly important for African immigrant parents who may not be fully knowledgeable or comfortable with the U.S. education system or with navigating the undergraduate college going process in the United States. Additionally, dominant cultural norms in America often emphasize individualism and adolescent autonomy, which is reflected in the student-centered research in the field of higher education (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999). Alternatively, many immigrant families emphasize familial interdependence and collectivism (Fuligni et al., 1999). As more children of immigrants enter the educational pipeline, it will be important to consider how a familistic focus may be impacting their choices about higher education. By focusing on how families navigate the college choice process, this study acknowledges and considers a familistic perspective.

Lastly, both the definition of "parents" as well as the ways in which parents provide support and encouragement should be interrogated in college choice literature. For example, many researchers have narrowly defined parents as a mother and father, excluding the role of other individuals such as siblings and family friends who can act as "cultural brokers," providing knowledge and resources to college going students (Cooper,

Jackson, Azmitia, Lopez, & Dunbar, 1995; Epstein & Gandara, 1995; George Mwangi, 2013b; Tierney & Auerbach, 2005). Yet, immigrant students can rely heavily on these individuals in navigating the U.S. education system. In their study on the role of families in college preparation, Tierney and Auerbach (2005) suggest, "the definition of family now needs to be more robust for virtually every group and culture," (p. 32). Researchers should acknowledge that students might receive "parental" guidance from other sources and this should not be ignored, undervalued, or underestimated (George Mwangi, 2013b). The current study is inclusive of extended social networks in the college going process and is open to non-traditional resources and knowledge that are present in students' lives, but often ignored in research and practice. This study contributes to college choice literature by pushing it to keep pace with today's changing student demographics, particularly the college choice process for the children of immigrants and their families. As more and more Africans fill U.S. classrooms and prepare for college, it will be important that the literature reflect the experiences of these students in order to better inform practice.

Definition of Terms

In order to reduce ambiguity, I have defined the following terms. Although these terms may have additional meanings, readers should use those provided here because these definitions were developed to fit the specific context of this study.

Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa: African countries that lie south of the Sahara Dessert, were former British colonies, and where English is still used widely. The countries that comprise Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa are Botswana, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Arthur, 2000).

Black African immigrant: Immigrants to the United States who racially identified as Black and were born in sub-Saharan Africa or who are the U.S.-born children of these immigrants (Capps et al., 2011). I use the terms Black African immigrant, sub-Saharan African immigrant, and African immigrant interchangeably throughout this manuscript.

College choice process: I operationalize Hossler et al.'s (1989) definition of college choice as a "complex, multi-stage process during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, followed by a later decision to attend a specific college [or] university…" (p. 7). Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model of college choice organizes the process into three distinct stages, predisposition, search, and choice.

College going student: An individual in grades 7 – 12, who is engaged or intending to engage in the process of applying to undergraduate institutions. This definition aligns with college access literature, which suggests that the college choice process begins in 7th grade (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989).

Educational ideology: A belief system about the purpose and value of education, which guides decision-making about educational choices and opportunities (Kiyama, 2010).

Family: A broad kinship network that could include immediate family (e.g. parents), extended family (e.g. grandparents), friends, and community members (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005).

First Generation: Immigrants to the United States born in a different country (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

1.5 Generation: A person born of first-generation immigrants who was also born abroad, but immigrated to the United States before age 12 (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

Second Generation: U.S.-born children of first-generation immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

Organization of the Study

Chapter one provided a review of the problem statement and context associated with this study, an outline of the research purpose and questions, a profile of African immigrants in the United States, and my reasoning for selecting this demographic as the study's focus. Additionally, this chapter included an overview of the research design, the significance of the study and definition of terms. Chapter two provides an in-depth description of sub-Saharan African immigrants in the United States, focusing on their immigration patterns, acculturation and identity of the first and second generations, family and intergenerational dynamics, and academic expectations.

Chapter three is comprised of three sections. The first section describes the three theories/models informing this study: Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined three-stage model of college choice, funds of knowledge, and ecocultural theory. The second section contains a review of research on the role of parents/families in the college choice process, specifically literature on the role of parental involvement and the process of college choice in immigrant families. The third section provides a review of literature on the cultural and social structural factors impacting the educational outcomes and college access of Black immigrants in the United States. The methodology and procedures I used to gather data are presented in Chapter four. This study was developed and analyzed using an interpretive, multiple ethnographic case study design with families as the unit of analysis.

Chapter five contains an in-depth review of findings within each of the four family cases. Chapter six provides a discussion and analysis of the findings across cases using a new frame (*Baobab Families*) for understanding the college choice process of the sub-Saharan African immigrant families in this study. In chapter seven, I present a summary of the study as well as study implications, suggestions for future research, and limitations.

Chapter 2: Sub-Saharan African Immigrants in the United States

College access and choice literature affirms that college going behaviors are developed through interactions with one's immediate environment and situated context (for example Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Perna, 2006). Thus, in order to begin to explore the college choice process of sub-Saharan African immigrant families, it is important to first understand the contextual factors that impact their educational experiences and positioning in the United States. This chapter focuses on sub-Saharan African immigration and incorporation patterns, acculturation and identity of the first and second generations, family and intergenerational dynamics, and familial expectations regarding educational achievement. I review this literature to provide a broad base for understanding the demographic of this study.

African Immigration Patterns in the United States

African immigration to the United States occurred in four waves (excluding the transatlantic slave trade). The first was early after the end of the American Civil War, when very small numbers of Africans emigrated from Liberia and other areas of Western Africa (Nyang, 2011). The second wave arrived in the early 20th century and were mainly elites from African British colonies seeking an American higher education; however, most of these immigrants returned to Africa after receiving a college degree. Both of these waves were small (500 – 2,500 in the first wave and less than 20,000 in the second wave) and often resulted in return migration (Zeleza, 2009).

The final two waves of African immigrants began in the mid/late 20th century and overlap in terms of timeframe; however, the waves are distinguishable by the immigrants' characteristics. One is comprised of highly skilled/educated African

immigrants seeking greater economic opportunity, while the other wave is comprised of African refugees and asylees (Arthur, 2000; Nyang, 2011). Both waves came to the United States due to a variety of push factors in Africa and Europe as well as pull factors to America. One major push factor was Africa's independence period that began in the 1950s, in which numerous African countries broke ties with their European colonizers (Gordon, 1998; Nyang, 2011). This period resulted in political upheaval and economic instability in Africa as countries sought out a new postcolonial identity. As a result, many Africans fled their countries as political refugees/asylees or for better economic opportunities (Arthur, 2000; Humphries, 2009). At the same time, many European governments were becoming more xenophobic and creating stricter immigration policies that refused access to Africans throughout the 1960s and 1970s (Gordon, 1998). Thus, the United States became a viable alternative host country for this population. Because this was also during the Cold War, the United States welcomed African immigrants, offering college scholarships and other incentives in order to create allegiances with newly independent African nations and expose them to democracy (Arthur, 2000; Nyang, 2011).

Four U.S. immigration policies dramatically increased African immigration to the United States: the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Immigration Act), the Refugee Act of 1980, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, and the Immigration Act of 1990 (Arthur, 2000; Gordon, 1998). The Hart-Celler Immigration Act removed preference quotas for European immigration and enhanced opportunities for family reunification, while the Refugee Act increased the number of refugees allowed to resettle in the United States and gave preference to Africa as an area of "special humanitarian concern" (Arthur, 2000; Gordon, 1998). IRCA allowed a path to

citizenship for undocumented immigrants and the Immigration Act of 1990 created the Diversity Visa Lottery program, which gave preference to immigrants from countries that are underrepresented in the United States (Arthur, 2000; Gordon, 1998). Djamba and Kimuna (2011) highlight that 20% of African immigrants to the United States in 2008 came through the Diversity Visa Lottery program.

The push factors in Africa and Europe combined with U.S. immigration policies' pull factors led to African immigrant populations doubling or tripling each decade in America since 1960 (Gordon, 1998; Kaba, 2009; Zeleza, 2009). While African immigrants from earlier immigration waves were primarily male (and are still majority male), opportunities for family reunification and educational opportunities created an influx of African female immigrants in the two later waves (Nyang, 2011). The economic and political instability occurring in many African nations has led to a more diversified immigrant population from across all regions of Africa, although the majority originate from Western and Eastern Africa. This regional shift is also reflected in the racial composition of African immigrants who prior to 1965 were primarily from North Africa and considered White, but are now primarily from sub-Saharan Africa and are Black (Humphries, 2009).

After Africa's independence period, many secondary and tertiary schools were developed in the new African nations, but the economic infrastructure has not been able to support the labor needs of the educated population (e.g. in Ghana, unemployment rates are generally higher for college-educated citizens than for those without college degrees) (Arthur, 2008). Due to lacking opportunities for highly educated workers in Africa, almost half of all African immigrants residing in the United States are college-educated,

particularly in STEM fields (Kaba, 2009). For example, only 10% of physicians trained in Kenya, remain in Kenya and there are more African engineers in the United States than in all of Africa (Kaba, 2009). While only 3.6% of people in Africa are college-educated, 31% of African migrants are college-educated, illustrating the great loss of talent in Africa (e.g. Brain Drain) (Kaba, 2009). Due to continuing challenges in Africa including political instability, lack of political/economic freedom or job opportunities, lack of social services, and low wages, many African immigrants are choosing to remain in the United States permanently or at least until retirement age (Arthur, 2000; Gordon, 1998; Kaba, 2009).

African Immigrant Incorporation

Immigration literature cites immigrant incorporation[3] as critical to projecting social and economic mobility (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Common factors used to measure incorporation include naturalization, homeownership, English language proficiency, participation in the labor market, and income (Arthur, 2000; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Generally, sub-Saharan African immigrants have higher levels of English language proficiency, labor market participation, and income levels than other immigrant groups, while having lower levels of naturalization and homeownership (Capps et al, 2011; Takyi, 2009). Their lags in naturalization and homeownership may be explained by being a newer immigrant population in the United States as compared to other groups and because many intend to return to Africa to retire or to start future businesses (Arthur, 2000; Capps et al., 2011, Takyi, 2009). For example, instead of

[3] Incorporation is a term broadly referring to immigrants' reception by and adaption to the host society (DeWind & Kasinitz, 1997). There are a number of theories of immigrant incorporation including integration, acculturation and assimilation (DeWind & Kasinitz, 1997).

investing in a home in the United States, some African immigrants rather send money to family in Africa to build a house for their retirement (Arthur, 2010).

While sub-Saharan African immigrants have high labor participation rates (75% of 18 to 64 year olds) and on average have higher income levels than other immigrants in the United States, their income levels do not reflect the high levels of education that many within this population possess (Capps et al., 2011). For example, while sub-Saharan African immigrants generally have higher levels of education than U.S. born workers, they make 20% below the median income level of U.S. born workers (Capps et al, 2011). Many Africans are undermatched in employment, which may reflect their newcomer status or be because their foreign education credentials are not transferable within the U.S. labor context (Capps et al., 2011). Additional obstacles immigrants face in gaining access to highly skilled jobs include restricted access to information, lack of knowledge or social networks, and racial/ethnic discrimination in the hiring process (Djamba & Kimuna, 2011). Capps et al. (2011) found that the longer Africans remain in the United States, the more these labor obstacles, particularly underemployment, are diminished.

First-generation African Immigrants

First-generation African immigrants to the United States frequently cite one or more of four reasons for migrating: 1) a desire to pursue postsecondary education 2) to reunite with family members 3) to take advantage of economic opportunities 4) to escape political terror and instability (Arthur, 2000). While African immigrants illustrate positive incorporation into U.S. society, they face significant challenges throughout the process. Djamba and Kimuna (2011) state that successful African immigrant incorporation

depends upon three factors: pre-migration cultural legacies (e.g. attitudes, values, and beliefs about employment and schooling), selectivity of migration (e.g. socioeconomic status and education level prior to migration), and prevailing job market practices in the United States. While some characteristics depend on the immigrant, others are dependent upon reception by the host society. As aforementioned, Black African immigrants may have trouble securing employment commensurate with their skill and/or education level as new arrivals (Capps et al, 2011). Djamba and Kimuna (2011) found that Black African immigrants earn less than White African immigrants with the same sociodemographic characteristics. Consequently, racial discrimination in hiring practices may provide some explanation as to why Black African immigrants earn less than is commensurate with their capabilities.

Additionally, first generation Black African immigrants have to adjust to the American racial context and racialization process. For Black Africans in the United States, their ethnicity is subsumed into a homogenous Black identity (Humphries, 2009). However, these immigrants have their own notions of race based on their home country's racial system and thus find it challenging to relate to racial definitions in the United States (Humphries, 2009). Both Kibona Clark (2009) and Yenika-Agbaw (2009) found that first generation African immigrants in the United States were much more likely to identify as African than as Black. Furthermore, because these immigrants seek greater social mobility and African Americans are a marginalized group in the United States, Black African immigrants may try to use their immigrant identity as a means of distancing themselves from African Americans (Zeleza, 2009). Black African immigrants use social distancing to distance themselves from racial stereotypes and prejudice that are

projected towards native-born Black Americans. Distancing may include focusing on ethnicity in stating "I'm Black but…" (Jackson, 2010) or use of cultural indicators such as national flags (Waters, 1999). Organizing around culturally based notions of ethnicity provide Black African immigrants with a means of protecting themselves from racism and race-based discrimination in the United States (Jackson, 2010).

Yet, distancing themselves from African American/American culture can backfire on Black African immigrants, as many Americans are ignorant of advancements in Africa and continue to believe it is a primitive continent (Zeleza, 2009). Zeleza (2009) explains, "…in addition to a racial tax, African immigrants pay a cultural tax, the devaluation of their human capital in a society where things African are routinely negatively stereotyped and despised" (p. 41). These immigrants experience stereotyping and ignorant statements made towards their culture, accent, and homeland. While African immigrants often learn about the United States in school, they are surprised to find that many Americans know little about Africa, particularly from a contemporary perspective (Awokoya, 2012).

African immigrants are expected to help financially support family members in Africa, which can diminish a significant portion of their household income. Kaba (2009) suggests that many African immigrants wire hundreds to thousands of dollars each month to relatives in Africa. While this responsibility may put a financial strain on the immigrants, it can elevate their status in the home country community and help them to maintain communication with their relatives (Kaba, 2009). First generation African immigrants' constant communication and involvement with their home country shapes them as transnationals whose experiences in the United States are continuously impacted by both the home and host society.

Even with the challenges they face in America, many African immigrants still find that they have more opportunities in the United States for upward mobility than they would have had in their home country (Arthur, 2000, 2008; Ogbaa, 2003). They use this dual frame of reference as insulation from discrimination, labor market challenges, and acculturative stress. First generation Africans may turn to ethnic associations, religious organizations, and other co-nationals to assist with adjusting to American society, particularly if they do not have other family members in the United States. Ethnic associations engage immigrants in cultural events, provide legal, financial, and other critical resources to assist with adjustment, and create community and sense of belonging among members (Arthur, 2000, 2008; Ogbaa, 2003; Swigart, 2001). African mosques and churches provide not only places of worship, but also act as community centers that help to maintain cultural traditions and provide a social network (Olupona & Gemignani, 2009; Swigart, 2001). These ethnic churches and associations connect immigrants who can share information and experiences regarding adjustment in the United States, thus helping one another successfully achieve immigrant incorporation (Olupona & Gemignani, 2009; Swigart, 2001).

1.5 and Second-generation African Immigrants

While many first generation African immigrants cling to their African/national identity, the same may not occur for their children who were born in the United States or who emigrated at a young age. Children of Black African immigrants can grow to develop identities based on an American/Black American identity, an ethnic African identity, or a combination of both. Yet, while these children become socialized both by American society and by an African heritage, they may not completely identify with

either, as Kibona Clark (2009) explains, "Legally they are African Americans, but in reality they are neither fully African nor fully African American" (p. 257).

In her study on the children of African immigrants, Kibona Clark (2008, 2009) found that parents' activeness in the African community, level of child's socialization in a local African immigrant community, frequency of families' travel to Africa with the child, and the extent to which the child was exposed to African language, culture, and food were major indicators regarding whether the child would embrace an African identity as part of self-identity. However, parents/family are not the sole socializing agents for their children. School, peers, and the media also impact the identities of the children of African immigrants (Awokoya, 2012; Yenika-Agbaw, 2009). Yet, these different contexts do not always present unified values and expectations. For example, African immigrant children often do not learn about their heritage or culture in American schools and when they do, it may be misconstrued or presented from a deficit perspective (Harushimana & Awokoya, 2011). These children are exposed to conflicting cultural norms and values of the White American "mainstream culture," the Black American "minority culture," and the culture of their African parents (Yenika-Agbaw, 2009).

Having a bicultural identity presents both challenges and benefits for the children of African immigrants. Inconsistent messages at home and at school can leave these children confused or frustrated, particularly if they are unable to successfully reconcile the two (Yenika-Agbaw, 2009). Black African immigrant children may be pressured by American peers to select a racial identity as the primary identity due to the racialization process in the United States (Kibona Clark, 2009). These children also receive pressure by their parents and the African immigrant community to conform or even prove their

"Africanness" (Adeniji Neill, 2011; Awokoya, 2012; Kibona Clark, 2009). Awokoya (2012) illustrates this challenge in stating, "African immigrant youth often face many complex identity issues. In some circles, the authenticity of their African identity is questioned; in others, their American experiences are undervalued" (p. 255).

Yet, there are many positive aspects to being bicultural. The children of African immigrants have two cultures that they can move between in different contexts and for different benefits. Each of the participants in Kibona Clark's (2008, 2009) study expressed that growing up in a bicultural environment made them more comfortable in diverse settings and in communicating with diverse groups. This outcome was also confirmed in Swigart's (2001) study of African immigrants in Philadelphia. Many second-generation Black African immigrants also state that they act as mediators between African American and African immigrant communities in order to help both groups dispel stereotypes about one another (Kibona Clark, 2008, 2009). While it may take time and self-awareness to develop a balance between both cultures, being able to navigate the two successfully provides the children of African immigrants with a wealth of diverse knowledge, resources, and skills.

African Immigrant Families

In many African societies it is the needs of the collective family, rather than the individual that are prioritized (Swigart, 2001). Strong family ties and extended family networks comprise the typical family structure and as Africans immigrate to the United States they seek to replicate this familial structure in their new environment (Ogbaa, 2003; Swigart, 2001). However, because they are often not able to move with their entire extended family, African immigrants tend to live in a nuclear family setting once in the

United States. In order to augment this change, immigrants engage in their local African ethnic community and with African religious organizations to develop a fictive kin network that provides emotional and economic support (Arthur, 2000; Kamya, 2005; Olupona & Gemignani, 2009; Swigart, 2001). For example, established Nigerian immigrants assist newcomer Nigerians by providing lodging or other resources to assist with adjusting to American life as part of a fictive extended family system (Ogbaa, 2003). Swigart (2001) explains this behavior of creating a family of co-nationals as "members of the same ethnic or national community who play the role that family would at home," (pp. 5-6), which may include giving guidance around family issues, providing financial support, and attending family milestones such as weddings. It can also include community parenting in which African immigrant parents within a community are all expected to collectively mobilize resources and act as authority figures to the children within the community (Arthur, 2008, 2010).

African immigrant families are not spatially bound, as they remain heavily involved and interconnected with family members in their home country. Thus, although the immigrant family may live in a nuclear family household in the United States, they cannot solely think in terms of that arrangement (Nyang, 2011). Instead, the survival and success of family members "back home" depends on remittances sent by the African immigrants in the United States. However, family members in Africa may have raised money to send those immigrants to America in the first place and therefore reciprocity is expected through remittances and/or future U.S. sponsorship (Arthur, 2008, 2010). Arthur (2000) explains this transnational family cooperation, "The African immigrant family is more than a social unit. It is also a unit of production, harnessing the

contributions of its members to help raise their standard of living," (p. 96). Immigration to the United States is an investment in the entire family network's future and is part of a collective goal system.

It is typical in African immigrant families for both spouses to work outside of the home (Kamya, 2005). However, childcare can become expensive or parents may not trust sending their children to strangers. Thus, gender roles become more flexible in America with husbands helping with household chores and childcare, which may differ from gender expectations in the home country and cause marital conflict (Arthur, 2000; Kamya, 2005; Swigart, 2001). Families who have the financial means will often sponsor a female family member to come to the United States and live in the home to assist with childcare (Arthur, 2000). It is also not uncommon for African immigrant parents to send their children back to the home country for periods of time to live with grandparents or other family members as a means of handling the high cost of childcare in the United States or to expose children to African culture and values (Arthur, 2000, 2008; Coe, 2012). However, this can create familial tension if it becomes challenging for the children to bond with their parents upon return (Arthur, 2008; Coe, 2012; Kamya, 2005).

Intergenerational Dynamics

There is a lack of developmental literature on African immigrant families in the United States (Stassen Berger, 2011). Stassen Berger (2011) suggests this is because African immigrants are considered positively incorporated "model minorities" that do not need many interventions or assistance. However these families face many intergenerational challenges as parents attempt to raise their children the way they were raised in Africa, alongside conflicting external socializing agents found in American

society (e.g. school) (Swigart, 2001). Cultural norms and values are learned within the family context and are passed on from one generation to the next (Kamya, 2005). Without this transmission, "gaps in shared family history" emerge in immigrant families and parent-child interactions become strained (Kamya, 2005, p. 103).

Adeniji Neill's (2011) study on Nigerian immigrant families concludes that a major theme in their parent-child dynamics focuses on parents attempting to balance the transmission of their cultural norms and expectations with encouraging their children to succeed in American society. African parents who fear their children are becoming too "American" or "African American" can become extremely protective, restricting peer groups and only allowing socialization with other African immigrant families (Arthur, 2000). Conversely, children may reject their parents' cultural foods or language as a means of rebellion or because they do not want to be considered different from American peers (Kamya, 2005; Yenika-Agbaw, 2009). Nyang (2011) suggests "There is a serious gap between the ideals of the first generation of African immigrants and the needs of the second and subsequent generations" (p. 163). As first generation parents try to replicate their African family structure, cultural expectations and values, they may find themselves having to defend these traditions to their 1.5 and second-generation children who have trouble balancing parental expectations with peer pressures to conform (Arthur, 2008).

Additionally, children are able to navigate American society with greater ease than their parents and often act as cultural brokers in helping parents adjust to American cultural norms (Swigart, 2001; Yenika-Agbaw, 2009). Because of this role reversal, parents can have a harder time maintaining authority in the home (Yenika-Agbaw, 2009). Yenika-Agbaw (2009) found that this was particularly difficult for African fathers, who

felt that American culture/media undermines the role of parents as disciplinarians, encouraging children to be disrespectful and rebellious.

African families seek out a variety of strategies to mitigate intergenerational tensions. A primary strategy is turning to the local African immigrant community such as an ethnic association, religious organization, or other African immigrant families. Many African immigrant ethnic associations in major cities offer cultural events, language classes, and family programs to help engage children in their cultural heritage (Ogbaa, 2003; Yenika-Agbaw, 2009). In their study on African immigrant religious organizations, Olupona & Gemignani (2009) found that transmitting cultural and religious values to the second generation is a major goal of these groups as well a providing "…informal support for parents grappling with decisions about how to strengthen cultural identities and values in the context of intergenerational conflicts, youth ambivalence, and widespread negative media images and stereotypes of Africa" (p. 337). Sending children back to Africa for periods of time or bringing relatives to the United States to live with the family have worked to link children to their cultural heritage, but can also further disrupt family dynamics (Arthur, 2008). Ultimately, many of the researchers who study African immigrant families suggest that parents come outside of their own comfort zone to assist their children in navigating and bridging their African and American cultures (Awokoya, 2012; Nyang, 2011; Yenika-Agbaw, 2009).

African Immigrant Families and Education

For African immigrant families in the United States, education is often the primary means of upward mobility. Arthur (2000) highlights that the education system is the first point of cultural contact in America for most African immigrants, who often

migrate to pursue (or eventually pursue) an undergraduate or graduate education. Because most come to America for economic and educational opportunities, they see U.S. society as a meritocracy and an open mobility environment (Arthur, 2010). In addition, these immigrants may believe that high levels of education can help buffer or overcome the racial discrimination they experience in the United States. For African immigrants, educational achievement and credentializing provide access to the American Dream. Education is perceived as an investment in human capital that can bring resources to both the family in America and to the extended community abroad (Arthur, 2000; Ogbaa, 2003).

African immigrant parents diligently work to instill the value of education in their children. Parents express to their children the lack of educational opportunities in Africa (e.g. lack of free education, dearth of technology and other educational resources, limited access to a postsecondary degree) (Arthur, 2000; Obeng, 2008; Ogbaa, 2003). The pressure to succeed academically is high and children are expected to achieve this goal not only for their own individual success, but also for the collective success and reputation of their family (Adeniji Neill, 2011; Arthur, 2000). Parents use cultural constructs to emphasize the importance of education. For example, children are taught cultural values such as the importance of discipline, sacrifice, listening, respect for elders and authority, hard work, social responsibility, and service, which all serve to reinforce a focus on academic achievement and a success orientation towards schooling (Adeniji Neill, 2011; Arthur, 2000, 2008, 2010).

Families engage in a range of child-rearing strategies to ensure that their children internalize the value of education. In addition to using cultural constructs, parents who

have access to other African immigrant families may pool financial resources to hire and share an academic tutor (Arthur, 2008, 2010). Parents may also have a more authoritative parenting style and engage in home-based parental involvement by ensuring their child's homework is complete, assigning additional schoolwork, and controlling their child's free time (Obeng, 2008). Arthur (2008) and Obeng (2008) found that fathers often play a large role in their children's education and in making decisions about where their children should go to college (often desiring a selective college close to home), while both parents heavily monitor children's academic performance, expecting them to achieve at a higher level than their American peers. Overall, children receive an American style education at school and an indigenous style education in the home (Adeniji Neill, 2011).

Because first generation African immigrant parents did not attend primary and secondary schooling in the United States, they struggle with the stark differences in the American educational system. For example, in Africa teachers are revered and school discipline is very strict (oftentimes corporal); therefore parents may view teachers in America as too accommodating or children in the United States as disrespectful (Obeng, 2008; Yenika-Agbaw, 2009). Due to these differences, 1.5 and second-generation African immigrants struggle with their parents' understanding of or involvement in their schooling. Additionally, parents that are not familiar with navigating the U.S. educational system may inadvertently provide less educational support and advocacy to their children than peers in American families (Swigart, 2001). Still, research on the children of immigrants suggests that resilience and an obligation to academic success and careers that make their families proud become internalized for the children of African immigrants (Adeniji Neill, 2011). Yet, overall academic success may depend on how well the

children can operationalize these messages outside of the home and within the school setting.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of African immigration patterns to the United States, incorporation among the first and second generations, and family dynamics with particular emphasis on intergenerational dynamics and familial attitudes towards education. This review reflects studies on African immigrant groups of specific nationalities (e.g. Nigerian immigrants) as well as studies focusing on the general sub-Saharan African immigrant population. Many researchers (for example Arthur, 2010; Essandoh, 1995; Humphries, 2009) express that Black immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa share numerous common experiences in the United States; however, I also recognize that this population has diverse and unique historical contexts, traditions, cultures, ethnic groups/tribes, languages, and backgrounds. An in-depth review of each of these factors across specific African nationalities is beyond the scope of this section. However, through my use of ethnographic methods and within case narratives, I acknowledge some of these unique factors in my findings as they relate to the college choice process of participant families.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This chapter is comprised of three sections. The first section provides a review of the theories/models informing this study's conceptual framework: Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined model of college choice, funds of knowledge and ecocultural theory. Each presents a foundation for the study's design and emphasizes broad themes around college choice or family engagement. The next two sections extend the concepts presented in the conceptual framework through a review of literature useful for understanding the college going experiences of African immigrant families. The second section focuses on families in the college choice process through a review of literature on parental involvement and encouragement in college choice as well as research on college access in immigrant families. The third section focuses on Black immigrants' educational outcomes and college access in the United States. The research in that section is dominated by two themes: 1) educational outcomes and college access of Black immigrants is shaped by culture and 2) educational outcomes and college access of Black immigrants is shaped by social structures.

Conceptual Framework

College Choice Models

College choice models centered on the student are generally framed within one of three foundational categories: econometric/human capital, sociological/status attainment, or combined (Hossler et al., 1989). Early models of college choice primarily used either the econometric or sociological perspective. Econometric models are based on assumptions of rational choice in which individuals will make decisions regarding postsecondary education by considering long-term monetary gains versus short-term

educational costs (Becker, 1993; Paulsen, 2001; Perna, 2005). Thus, an investment in human capital is a primary driver of decisions regarding college choice (Paulsen, 2001). Factors influencing this investment include cost of college, availability of financial aid, and potential for current or future occupational earnings. In his review of econometrics in higher education research, Paulsen (2001) concludes that students will be more likely to enroll in college as their return on investment increases.

Researchers using the econometric model have indicated that students are more likely to enroll in college if their earnings potential is higher than that of high school graduates, when there is less direct college cost to the student (e.g. cost is subsidized via financial aid), and/or when the wages students will forgo to attend college is lessened (e.g. during an economic recession) (for example Heller, 1997; St. John, 2003). Although econometrics are widely used in higher education literature, this model is criticized for focusing too much on financial factors in college choice rather than considering how less tangible factors such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status can affect this decision as well (Hossler et al., 1989; Perna. 2000a).

The sociological or status attainment models of college choice focus on the use of social and cultural capital in the college choice process. Cultural capital refers to the set of linguistic and cultural competencies an individual inherits from family or learns through formal schooling, which gives one an advantage to succeed (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu's (1986) assumption is that individuals inherit cultural capital based on their social status and cultural background. Social capital focuses on social networks and their value as well as the ways in which relationships are sustained (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998). Education researchers identify social capital as a gateway to gaining access to

human, cultural, and other forms of capital, in addition to institutional resources and support (Perna, 2006; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995).

By incorporating social and cultural capital, the sociological models of college choice prioritize factors such as social networks, academic ability, and socioeconomic status in gaining access to college. Sociological models focus on how the interactions of these factors impact educational aspirations and achievement (Hossler et al., 1989). Early models developed by Blau and Duncan (1967) and Sewell, Haller, and Strauss (1957) concluded that parents play an important role in college choice by developing students' aspirations through encouragement and provision of resources based on socioeconomic status (e.g. parents' income and level of education). Yet, these earlier studies are now criticized for their focus on the experiences of White male college going students, suggesting that they are not as effective in explaining the process for other populations such as students of color (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005).

Hossler and Gallagher's combined model of college choice.

The primary framework informing this study is Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-stage combined model of college choice. Combined models of college choice integrate human capital and sociological perspectives. In their review of college choice frameworks, Hossler and colleagues (1989) concluded that the combined approach is most useful for developing student interventions because it uses an applied method and is inclusive of diverse variables.

In 1987, Hossler and Gallagher developed a three-stage combined model of college choice, which focuses on students' college decisions rather than the decisions of educational institutions. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) considered college choice to be

strongly impacted by students' background characteristics including factors such as academic ability, parental encouragement and socioeconomic status. The researchers proposed that the choice process for college is organized into three distinct stages, each consisting of specific factors and effects (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). The first stage is predisposition, which is described as a student's growing awareness and interest in career and educational aspirations (Hossler et al., 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). During predisposition, students begin acquiring academic qualifications for college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989). Particularly important during the predisposition stage are parents (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Parents who are involved in their child's early education (e.g. positive encouragement, emotional support, assisting with assignments) can influence their child's college choice (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). The second stage, search, includes the narrowing of students' collegiate choices into select institutions and educational interests (Hossler et al., 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). The search process involves students including and excluding institutions from their consideration set of campuses as they search for colleges and universities that will provide the best fit for them academically, socially, and culturally (Hossler et al., 1989). This stage includes engaging in activities such as developing a list of institutions; visiting and actively engaging with institutions; talking to family and friends about higher education; and narrowing the list of possible higher education options (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989). Choice, the final stage, involves application to college as well as the ultimate decision and enrollment of a student into an institution of higher education (Hossler et al., 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). While high-income students often place more importance on college selectivity/quality during the choice phase, low-

income students are more cost sensitive (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989). Yet, lower parental education level and income may have less adverse effect on students' college choice/matriculation when students are academically prepared and submit college applications (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000).

Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined model is frequently used as a framework to study diverse populations and sub-groups of college students. For example in 2000, Cabrera and La Nasa extended Hossler and Gallagher's model to focus on the college choice of low socioeconomic students. Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) developed timeframes for each of the three stages, finding that the college choice process begins as early as the seventh grade. They also determined that parental involvement is the strongest influential factor in the choice process.

Additionally, Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, and Rhee (1997) used Hossler and Gallagher's three-stage model as a framework for their study examining the predisposition and application behavior of students from different ethnic/racial groups. This study was successful in outlining differences across race/ethnicity from the perspective of the three-stage model. However, the researchers admitted that traditional choice models might not adequately address the process of ethnic/racial groups, particularly because they do not account for factors such as racial inequalities that exist (Hurtado et al., 1997). Although this realization did not invalidate the conclusions of their study, it suggests that the three-stage model may not adequately acknowledge the diversity of pathways to college that students of color might use in lieu of traditional methods. Additional researchers using Hossler and Gallagher's framework to study

college choice of underrepresented populations have reached similar conclusions (for example Freeman & Brown, 2005; Perna, 2000a; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002).

Funds of Knowledge

I used Hossler and Gallagher's model as the primary framework for the current study. However, the shortcomings that researchers such as Hurtado et al. (1997) identified in its application to students of color (e.g. does not account for factors such as racial inequalities, unequal access to information about college, or diversity of pathways to college) led me to incorporate funds of knowledge to supplement the framework. Funds of knowledge is an anthropological concept defined as "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133). Funds of knowledge was first used to describe how working-class Mexican immigrant families utilize their social networks, labor skills, and knowledge about goods and services to enhance their well-being (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992) used the term to refer to non-market forms of exchange among households as well as general knowledge and cultural exchange among households. Therefore, within a community of household clusters (e.g. extended kinship network), funds of knowledge are used as currency that is exchanged between households (e.g. small favors) and that helps to maintain relationships within the network. Households engage in family rituals that bring members of the network together to reaffirm solidarity and cooperate by investing labor or pooling resources (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). Households accumulate funds of knowledge from previous generations, discard those funds that are no longer applicable to their lives, and transmit funds to their children.

Children are directly and indirectly exposed to funds of knowledge, which are found both within households and within the cluster networks of the community where children live and socialize (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992).

Funds of knowledge was adapted by education researchers Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) to acknowledge that students' homes and communities "contain rich cultural and cognitive resources" that can be connected and integrated into the school environment. Funds of knowledge focus on factors including a household's labor history, social interactions, educational experiences, language use, and daily activities (Rios-Aguilar, 2010). Funds of knowledge is particularly relevant to the current study's focus on family because this model fully incorporates familial background into the educational experience. Furthermore, this framework integrates the traditional and nontraditional knowledge and resources families use to define and navigate the college choice process.

The funds of knowledge framework has been primarily used in K-12 education studies on historically underrepresented and low-income students to incorporate their home experiences into curriculum (for example Knobel, 2001; Rubinstein-Avila, 2004; Vélez- Ibáñez, 1996). However, Kiyama's (2010) study of Mexican American families used the lens of funds of knowledge to examine their college aspirations. Kiyama (2010) concluded, "The college process, including choice and preparation, was constructed in nontraditional ways…" (p. 341), which highlighted the role of familial values and practices in establishing educational aspirations and achievement. Kiyama (2010) found that families could develop helpful and/or limiting ideologies about education and the college choice process. Major factors influencing the development of these ideologies included college artifacts, academic cultural symbols, and social networks. While

Kiyama's (2010) study focused on college going, it was based on in-depth interviews with parents of K-5 students participating in an outreach program. Therefore, her study did not focus on the complete family unit or families currently engaged in college choice.

Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama (2012) argue that while most higher education research incorporate parental characteristics (e.g. parental level of education) and/or suggest that parental involvement is critical in students' college outcomes, this may not reflect the diverse ways in which families influence students. Additionally, this research may not be inclusive of the diverse family configurations present in households (e.g. extended family), which can also impact students' outcomes. Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama (2012) suggest that funds of knowledge reframes the role of family in higher education through a focus on families as the unit of analysis. While studies implementing a funds of knowledge perspective often identify funds as a set of resources, it is also important to understand "how, when, and by whom funds of knowledge are negotiated, activated, and expanded upon" (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012, p. 13). There are still uncertainties regarding how funds of knowledge are developed and operationalized. Additionally, much of the research using funds of knowledge focuses on Latina/o students. Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama (2012) suggest, "it is important for the development and understanding of funds of knowledge to also include other subgroups of Latina/o students and other ethnic minority, immigrant, and low-income families" (p. 13). I expand the application of this theory to African immigrant families engaged in college choice.

Ecocultural Theory

Ecocultural theory is the third framework used to inform this study. The college choice model framing this study focuses on the individual student's process of college

going. However, because I examined how the family as a unit engages in this process, it was important that my overall conceptual framework reflected a focus on family. As an ecological-cultural model, ecocultural theory explains how families interact with, adapt to, and make meaning of their environment (Bernheimer, Gallimore & Weisner, 1990). Ecocultural theory is closely related to family ecology theories such as Bronfenbrenner's (1979) human ecology theory, which focus on how families interact with their environment. Yet, ecocultural theorists criticize Bronfenbrenner's (1979) human ecology theory for being static and not capturing the dynamic and proactive adaptations found in families (Bernheimer et al., 1990; Gallimore, Weisner, Kaufman & Bernheimer, 1989). Instead, ecocultural theory suggests that "Families do not merely 'have' ecology around them, they also actively create their family ecology" (Nihira, Weisner & Bernheimer, 1994, p. 552). In addition, ecocultural theory draws from a psychocultural model developed by Whiting and Whiting (1975), Cole's (1991) cultural activity theory, and social constructivism (Gallimore et al., 1989). Families are at the center of this theory, with family goals, values, and needs taken into account to provide a holistic view of the family environment and daily activities (Bernheimer et al., 1990).

Key concepts of ecocultural theory include: 1) ecocultural niche and niche features 2) accommodation 3) family themes and culture 4) daily activity settings and 5) family action (Gallimore et al., 1989). The ecocultural niche is broadly defined as "the larger sociocultural environment surrounding the child and family" (Bernheimer et al., 1990, p. 223). Every family has a niche, but the way in which the niche is constructed and maintained is unique to each family (Phenice, Griffore, Hakoyama, & Silvey, 2009). Families proactively work individually and collectively to make their niche comfortable

and sustainable (Phenice et al., 2009). This process is called accommodation. Accommodation involves adapting, exploiting, counterbalancing, and/or reacting to various social and economic forces (e.g. niche features) impacting the family (Bernheimer et al., 1990; Gallimore et al., 1989). Bernheimer and colleagues (1990) suggest, "What matters is what is real to the family; in other words, the family's social construction of their circumstances" (p. 228). Thus niche features such as family structure (e.g. grandparents living in the home) may appear as a benefit to one family, while being considered a constraint to a different family. Reactions to niche features are impacted by family themes and culture. Family themes are the goals, values, and beliefs of a family, which combine to create a family culture (Gallimore et al., 1989). Ecocultural theory focuses on families' daily routines, which mediate external forces and are developed and made meaningful by family themes and culture. Family routines are comprised of activity settings, which give children the opportunity to learn, model, and engage in family culture (Gallimore et al., 1989). Family actions involve finding a stable fit between family routine and family resources (social ecological fit); assessing and meeting the needs of the competing interests of family members; developing a routine that provides a meaningful and moral/cultural fit with the family; and developing a sustainable routine that is flexible, yet stable (Janhonen-Abruquah, 2006).

The ecocultural model was first applied to families that have children with disabilities, in order to explore the ways in which families adapted their daily routines (Weisner, 1997). However, the theory is also meant to be cross-cultural as "…ecocultural theory is distinguished by its applicability to families in all cultures because the theory is based on the cross-cultural literature" (Bernheimer et al., 1990, p. 221). It is applied to

studies on ethnic and immigrant populations to understand how cultural and ecological (social structural) factors impact their acculturation experiences (for example Cooper, Jackson, Azmitia, & Lopez, 1998; Reese, Gallimore, Goldenberg & Balzano, 1995; Weisner & Gallimore, 1994). Janhonen-Abruquah (2006) used the theory to understand the daily life of transnational families, concluding that ecocultural theory "…allows transnational families to be studied not only from the point of view of a specific national culture, but also from the point of view of a family facing a new situation to which they have to adapt" (p. 4). Thus, while ecocultural theory acknowledges the role of ethnic or national culture, it is the role of family culture that carries the most weight.

Gibson and Weisner (2002) state, "ecocultural circumstances of family and community life typically lay outside the realm of rational choice theory, but are important in decision-making" (p. 155). Because much of the theory relies on how families socially construct their household routines, Weisner (1997) suggests qualitative approaches as an effective fit for operationalizing the theory in empirical research. Quantitative methods may not detect the nuances and complexity of family culture and accommodations. Therefore Weisner (1997) specifically recommends the use of ethnography for understanding families' ecocultural contexts on three levels: (1) the ecocultural context that shape families' and children's development (e.g. family structure and demographics, social supports, and institutions); (2) families' cultural models (e.g. beliefs, values, ideas) of child development, parenting, and familial roles and (3) the family interactions that occur in everyday routines, which shape children's lives.

Ecocultural theory has not been previously applied to families in the college choice process. However, it situates my study within the context of family, familial

adaptation to processes such as college choice, and the concept of family culture. While I used funds of knowledge as a framework to examine the knowledge, skills, and resources families use in college choice, ecocultural theory helped me to examine how families develop funds of knowledge as well as how families operationalize funds of knowledge in the college choice process, which are current gaps in the literature. Ecocultural theory is inclusive of cross-cultural research, which accommodates my focus on African immigrants. It also informed my methodology as many studies used to develop ecocultural theory included ethnographic interviewing, home visits and participant observation (Weisner, 1997), which were foundations of my data collection process.

Summary of Conceptual Framework

This study draws from Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined model of college choice, funds of knowledge, and ecocultural theory (see Table 1 for conceptual framework). I used Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model as the primary framework to provide structure to the college choice process and guide my understanding of how families may move through the process. Participant selection, data collection, and initial data analysis were organized by the three stages of the model (predisposition, search, and choice). However, the three-stage model emphasizes individuals moving through the choice process, rather than families and thus I used funds of knowledge and ecocultural theory as secondary frameworks. Funds of knowledge allowed me to examine the traditional and nontraditional resources, knowledge, and skills families bring to the college choice process. This model highlights the role of familial and cultural values in establishing positive educational aspirations and achievement (Kiyama, 2010). I also applied ecocultural theory, which focuses on how families make meaning of and adapt to

various internal and external forces impacting the family unit (Weisner, 1997). Ecocultural theory views family as proactive in navigating their environment and constructing a stable ecocultural niche. Families are the unit of analysis in the current study and I used key components of ecocultural theory (ecocultural niche and niche features; accommodation; family themes and culture; daily activity settings; family action) to explore how families conceptualize and navigate college choice as well as how they use funds of knowledge in the choice process. The combined use of these three models structured my examination of college choice as a process with family at the center of the process.

Table 1. Conceptual Framework

Theory/Model	Role within Conceptual Framework	Key Components
Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) Combined Model of College Choice	• Focus on college choice • College choice as a process • Role of students' background and preparation	• Integrated economic & sociological approach to college choice • Stages: Predisposition, Search, and Choice
Funds of Knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992)	• Focus on familial and community networks • Resources, knowledge, and skills developed in the home/community	• Funds of knowledge and transmission of funds • Household cluster/kinship network • Family rituals and daily practices
Ecocultural Theory (Weisner, 1997)	• Focus on family unit • Process of how families interact with, adapt to, and make meaning of their environment	• Ecocultural niche & niche features • Accommodation & family action • Family themes and culture • Daily activity settings

Families and College Choice

This section focuses on the role of family in the college choice process. The first two sections review literature on the role of parents in college choice. The themes most prevalent in this research are the role of parental encouragement and involvement as well as structural factors such as parental income and level of education. The third section incorporates both education and immigration literature to examine the role of family in immigrants' educational attainment. This literature extends the focus on the college choice process beyond the parental role by including familial and community connections. Additionally, it considers the impact of immigrant optimism, family interdependence and acculturation gaps on the education of immigrant students.

Parental Encouragement and Involvement

Researchers cite parental encouragement and involvement as vital components of the college choice process. Throughout the three phases of Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined model of college choice, parents are sources of influence and support. In their study on the college choice process for low-SES students, Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) found that parental encouragement is the strongest factor for predicting the educational aspirations and predispositions of a student. Parental involvement in school activities had a positive impact on becoming college qualified and graduating from high school (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Furthermore, parental expectations of their children obtaining a college degree also affected whether the children applied to college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Perna (2006) also reinforces the important role of parents in college choice, concluding that at the individual/micro level, a college going habitus (internal

belief system) is developed through interactions with one's immediate environment, including interacting with parents.

Parental involvement and encouragement can take many different forms. Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) cite parental encouragement as having two dimensions: 1) motivation and maintaining high educational expectations for children and 2) proactive involvement such as engaging in school matters, saving for college tuition, and discussing college and career plans with children. Perna and Titus (2005) conceptualized parental involvement as a form of social capital that would "enable a student to gain access to human, cultural, and other forms of capital, as well as to institutional resources and support" (p. 488). In their study on the role of parental involvement in college enrollment, Perna and Titus (2005) found that the odds of a student enrolling in a two-year or four-year college immediately after high school increased with the frequency that parents discussed education-related topics, contacted their child's school to volunteer, and initiated communication with the school regarding academics. Odds of college enrollment also increased in tandem with the level of parental involvement at the school.

Tierney and Auerbach (2005) identify parental education, parents' educational aspirations for their children, and parental encouragement for college as three main predictors for college enrollment. Parental engagement with student learning increased the likelihood of college enrollment among students who were at moderate to high risk of dropping out of high school (Choy, Horn, Nuñez, & Chen, 2000). Overall, research suggests that the values and attitudes transmitted to students by parents focusing on educational achievement can enable access to higher education (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Perna, 2006).

Impact of Structural Characteristics

Irrespective of race or socioeconomic status (SES), parents' educational expectations shape children's postsecondary predisposition and academic endeavors (Cooper, Chavira, & Mena, 2005; Paulsen, 1990). Yet, structural factors such as parental level of education, family composition, and SES affect the ability for parents to play an active role or provide resources that positively contribute to the process (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Students from low-income families are 30 percentage points less likely to enroll in college than peers from high-income families (Aud et al., 2012). Furthermore, students with parents who are not college educated are less likely to pursue a postsecondary education, particularly at four-year institutions, than peers with college-educated parents (Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007).

Parents' own awareness of college impacts their expectations of and involvement in their child's preparation process (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989). Literature suggests that parents without college degrees are often unable to provide college guidance, which creates a disadvantage in college preparation (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989; Perna, 2000b). Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) found that only 23% of lowest-SES parents could provide guidance about college based on their own experience, whereas 99.3% of highest-SES students were raised in families with postsecondary experience. Additionally, some researchers suggest that parents of color and low-SES parents are less likely to participate in formal school activities due to barriers such as working multiple jobs, language barriers, and mistrust in the educational system (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Fordham, 1996; Rowan-Kenyon, Bell & Perna, 2008). Underrepresented students are often tracked into academic classes that do not provide

college readiness or they attend schools that do not offer rigorous college preparatory curricula (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; McDonough & Fann, 2007; Perna, 2000b). Even in classrooms, studies have shown that teachers' ignorance or biases about race and class can impact their encouragement of students' college aspirations and academic success (George & Aronson, 2003; McDonough & Fann, 2007).

College access literature often uses the concept of capital to illustrate the variety of skills, resources, and knowledge required to gain access to college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Perna, 2000b). Perna (2000b) defines capital as "…resources that may be invested to enhance profitability, productivity, and enhance upward mobility" (p. 73). The types of capital often used in this literature are those defined by Bourdieu (1986) as cultural capital (e.g. education, language), social capital (e.g. social networks, connections) and economic capital (e.g. money and other material possessions). Students from families familiar with higher education tend to receive information about types of institutions, college admission, and financial aid from a wide range of sources, which increases their cultural capital (e.g. education, language) (Bonous-Hammarth & Allen, 2005; Perna, 2000a; Perna, 2006). Conversely low-SES and first-generation students may not have the social capital (e.g. networks, connections) required to access this information and gain familiarity with the college preparation process (Perna, 2000b; Perna, 2006). These factors put underrepresented groups at a disadvantage in terms of gaining access to college and college degree attainment.

However, it is important to note that the concept of capital can reinforce cultural deficit perspectives in college choice research because the term suggests particular groups having capital and particular groups lacking it. Furthermore, what is considered

valuable economic, social and cultural capital is defined by dominant cultural norms and practices (Bourdieu, 1986; Yosso, 2005). For example, in a hierarchical society, the knowledge of the upper and middle classes is considered valued capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, the ways of knowing and resources of populations outside of the dominant group are considered less adequate. Additionally, capital is inherited from the past (e.g. from family) or gained through formal schooling (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, those who are not from privileged families or who are unable to attend well-resourced schools can easily be labeled as disadvantaged. The sole use of economic, social and cultural capital in college access frameworks makes it easy overlook other non-traditional resources that may be present in students' lives, but often ignored in research. Although capital plays a major role in college access, contemporary researchers suggest that it is important that immigrants, students of color, first generation students, and/or low-income students are not portrayed as capital-deficient solely because they do not possess traditional forms of capital (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005; Villalpando & Solorzano, 2005; Yosso, 2005).

While structural factors such as income and parental level of education impact college access for students generally, research suggests that immigrants/children of immigrants experience differences in the process of educational attainment as compared to native-born students (for example Baum & Flores, 2011; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008). The next section highlights literature examining educational attainment/college access for immigrants, with particular emphasis on the role of parents and family.

Children of Immigrants, Immigrant Families, and Educational Attainment

Baum and Flores (2011) cite that immigrants and their children have higher levels of postsecondary educational attainment than their native counterparts. The researchers

conclude that postsecondary access and attainment for children in immigrant families is not hindered by immigrant status, but instead many other factors including country of origin, race, parental socioeconomic status, place of residence (communities, schools), and host receptivity interact to affect variations in college access (Baum & Flores, 2011). Similarly, in their study on the children of immigrants, Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) explain that there are a number of factors that impact the educational attainment of this population, which can be broken into internal and external factors. Internal factors are those relating specifically to families and are typically not targeted for interventions, including parenting style (e.g. authoritative parents), cultural capital brought from the home country, motivational messages and "stories from home" transmitted from parents to children, as well as number, age order, and gender of children in the home. External factors are those impacted by policy and programs such as academic and pre-college outreach programs and number of school counselors trained to work with immigrant students and families (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008).

One factor impacting educational attainment that is unique to immigrant families is the concept of immigrant optimism, which parents use to motivate their children to succeed academically. Immigrant optimism refers to psychological resources that immigrants use to overcome socioeconomic disadvantages in the host country (Baum & Flores, 2011). Baum and Flores (2011) state that immigrant optimism combined with immigrant selection in outmigration act as powerful forces in shaping the academic success of children of immigrants. Families with financial challenges in the United States, but that came from a middle-class status in the home country have "a solid cultural memory" of success that they use as cultural capital to motivate their children to

achieve (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008). Immigrant parents also use "defensive success," by telling their children that they should reject their present status and seek higher occupational attainment than what they have achieved (Fuligni, 1998; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008). Children of immigrants internalize these messages and aspire to meet the high parental expectations. In a 1996 study on the children of immigrants, Vernez and Abrahamse found that immigrants' higher expectations in going to college translated into higher college enrollment. In another study, Fuligni and Fuligni (2007) conclude, "students from immigrant families spend more time studying, seeking extra help, and expending effort on their studies" (p. 237). Children of immigrants in a study by Nicholas, Stepkick and Stepkick (2008) also illustrated how strict parenting styles and parents' emphasis on schooling and resistance to Americanization were strategies contributing to the success of the children throughout high school.

Familial interdependence and obligation work in tandem with immigrant optimism to act as motivation for the children of immigrants. Many immigrants in America have cultural traditions focusing on collectivism and familism (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999). Family interdependence is often exacerbated in the United States, where family members have to depend on one another and their immigrant communities for support throughout the process of incorporation (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007; Tseng, 2004). Children also have family obligations, often acting as cultural brokers for their parents (e.g. assisting with language barriers) (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007; Fuligni et al., 1999). Additionally, these children feel the responsibility of contributing to the family via performing well in school as repayment for sacrifices their parents have made (Fuligni, 1998; Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007; Tseng, 2004). Academic achievement represents fulfilling

a family obligation rather than self-satisfaction (Nicholas et al., 2008). Tseng's (2004) study on the children of immigrants and native-born found that children of immigrants place greater emphasis on family interdependence. Fuligni et al. (1999) suggest that adolescents with the strongest family obligation attitudes place the greatest importance on academic success, spend the most time studying, and have the highest educational aspirations; yet if the behavioral demands to family are too high, the interdependence negatively impacts GPA. Still, overall researchers found that the children of immigrants tended to retain their familistic orientation and that this had a positive impact on academic achievement, with family cohesion making a positive impact on their development (Fuligni et al., 1999).

While cultural traditions and parenting style can promote familism, it is how the immigrant students respond that will determine whether the messages have an impact on academic performance (Nicholas et al., 2008). Differences in levels and speed of acculturation (e.g. generational dissonance) can weaken the influence of these messages as well as cause intergenerational tension (Dennis, Basanez, & Farahmand, 2009; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Rumbaut, 2005; Zhou, 1997). While all families deal with generation gaps between parents and children, generational dissonance leads to acculturation gaps, which compound the generation gap (Leung, 1997). Acculturation gaps are seen in students' frustration with parents' lack of English proficiency or in different levels of interest between parents and children in maintaining cultural values and traditions (Dennis et al., 2009; Leung, 1997). Acculturation gaps also result in parents' lacking the ability to help their children navigate the U.S. educational system's "invisible codes of power" due to factors such as a limited English proficiency, less

social/cultural capital and lack of knowledge about their parental rights regarding the children's education (Perez Carreon, Drake, & Calabrese Baron, 2005). Immigrant parents may also hold beliefs different from the American mainstream regarding student learning and parental involvement, which can limit their involvement in the educational experiences of their children or make it challenging to meet the educational needs of their children (Adams & Kirova, 2007; Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007).

In order to offset the challenges stemming from acculturation gaps, immigrant families often turn to extended family members, co-nationals, or the local immigrant community for assistance. Second generation immigrant children are more likely to succeed academically if they have positive role models from their family, extended family and immigrant community (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998). Immigrant families may also work with other immigrants to pool resources to hire academic tutors or provide other forms of supplementary education for their children (Arthur 2008, 2010; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998). In a study on children of immigrants, the children who exhibited academic success were surrounded by family, extended family, and community members reinforcing messages about education and sharing resources to help them succeed (Nicholas et al., 2008). Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) explain:

> In addition to authoritative, alert parents, is the appearance of a really significant other. That person can be a teacher, a counselor, a friend of the family, or even an older sibling. The important thing is that they take a keen interest in the child, motivate him or her to graduate from high school and to attend college, and possess the necessary knowledge and experience to guide the student in the right direction. (p. 26)

Thus, while immigrant parents play a major role in influencing their children's success, the support of others can help mitigate any shortcomings families experience in navigating the American educational system and college choice process.

According to Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, and Todorova (2008), 20 percent of young people growing up in the United States have parents who emigrated from other countries, and it is projected that by 2040, one in every three children in the United States will grow up in an immigrant family. Since 1990, the number of school-age, second-generation immigrant youth has risen seven times faster than the number of school-age children in native-born American families (Schmid, 2001). As these immigrant students continue to become of college going age, researchers have noted the traditional concepts of parental involvement and college going pathways do not always align with the needs and processes of immigrant families (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005). Still, although there is growing literature on immigrants and college access, much of the research focuses on Latino and Asian immigrant students/families (including studies presented in this review) and there is still a significant gap in research on other immigrant populations' educational experiences and college choice process.

Black Immigrants' Educational Outcomes and College Access

This section of the literature review captures research on the educational outcomes and college access of Black immigrants in the United States. To provide a comprehensive review of the literature, I extend the focus beyond Black African immigrants to include literature on Black immigrants in general. This is because early research on Black immigrants focused predominantly on those originating from the Caribbean or combined the experiences of Black Caribbean immigrants with those of

Black African immigrants. Black immigrant research is dominated by Caribbean immigrant samples because the influx of voluntary Black African immigrants to the United States is a new phenomenon (Capps et al., 2011). The literature is only beginning to reflect the shift in the areas of origin of Black immigrants in order to focus on the experiences of African immigrants as well.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2004 more than 12% of all Black undergraduate students enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities were foreign-born, which is approximately four times the rate of White foreign-born students (Kent, 2007). Approximately 25% of all Black immigrants have a postsecondary degree (Hernandez, 2012). Although the representation of Black immigrant college students as a proportion of the overall Black college student population in the United States is high, there is a lack of research in the higher education literature on this population (George Mwangi, 2013a; Massey et al., 2007). Much of the literature on Black college students is situated within a historical context that stems from slavery in the United States and later, the Civil Rights movement; yet, this is not the heritage or experience of all Black students who attend college (George Mwangi, 2013a). Moreover, research on Black college students often merges native- and foreign-born Blacks as a single demographic or excludes Black immigrant student data altogether (George Mwangi, 2013a; Massey et al., 2007). Only within the past decade has there been extensive study on the educational experiences of Black immigrants. Earlier literature that did include ethnicity/nativity of Black college students tended to focus on all immigrant student populations and not specifically on the experiences of Black immigrants (for example, Vernez & Abrahamse, 1996).

Much of the literature on Black immigrants is drawn from sociology and anthropology research. There are two central themes or arguments in the literature that consistently emerge across these fields of study. These are: 1) the experiences and outcomes of Black immigrants are shaped by social structures (for example Butcher, 1994; Lobo, 2001) and 2) the experiences and outcomes of Black immigrants are shaped by culture (for example Waters 1994, 1999). These themes are also present in education literature on Black immigrants. Thus, this section of the literature review on Black immigrants' educational experiences in the United States highlights the cultural and/or social structural explanations for their educational outcomes and college access.

Defining Culture and Social Structures

Before providing a review of the literature, it is important to first define cultural factors and social structural factors as well as the difference between the two concepts. Culture is shared, learned, symbolic, transmitted across generations, is adaptive, and is integrated (Bodley, 1994). Peoples and Bailey (2011) describes five elements of cultural knowledge as norms, values, symbols, classifications of reality and worldviews. Noel (2000) described culture as inherited from one's cultural group and the lens through which one sees, perceives and believes. Cultural factors that impact the experiences and mobility of immigrants include cultural characteristics and behaviors that immigrants form in the homeland or that are modified through adaptation to the host society (e.g. future orientation, fatalism, achievement orientation) (Fukuyama, 1993; Sowell, 1981).

Social structural factors are contextual, external characteristics that impact an individual or group including social networks, institutional structures and economic/educational structures (Portes, 1995). Waters (1999) states, "A structural

explanation sees people's behaviors not primarily as reflections of inner values and beliefs but as responses to the environment," (p. 99). Examples of structural elements that impact the experiences and mobility of immigrants include selectivity in out-migration and receptivity by the host country (Model, 1995; Waters, 1999). What distinguishes cultural factors from structural factors is that cultural factors are internalized and are based on one's ideas, attitudes, norms and customs that are influenced by one's cultural group, whereas structural factors exist external to the individual psyche or consciousness and are responses to one's external environment (Waters, 1999).

Structures and the Educational Outcomes & College Access of Black Immigrants

Social structural factors impacting the educational experiences of Black immigrants include legal structures, social networks, economic structures and educational structures (Waters, 1999). Some researchers argue that Black immigrants' positioning in the social class system, labor market, and racial structure of American society create accessibility or barriers to their educational and occupational attainment (Model, 1995;Waters, 1999). For example, privileged class and educational backgrounds contribute to who migrates to the United States. Foreign-born Blacks who come to the United States voluntarily (e.g. not refugees or asylees) are often positioned more favorably to be successful (Grasmuck & Grosfoguel 1997; Model 1995). According to Lobo (2001) African immigrants are disproportionately represented in professional, managerial, and technical (PMT) occupations — 44 percent of African immigrants to the United States who declared an occupation have PMT qualifications, compared with 34 percent of all immigrants. As highly skilled workers, these African immigrants tend to have higher levels of capital and greater opportunities for mobility in the United States

(Lobo, 2001). Likewise Nicolas, DeSilva and Rabenstein (2009) found in their study of Haitian immigrant youth that regardless of desire to succeed, SES was predictive of educational attainment levels. Thus Haitian immigrants from higher SES backgrounds are more likely to attain higher levels of education (Nicolas et al., 2009).

Researchers seeking to illuminate the impact of structural factors on Black immigrants often compare this population to native-born Black Americans of similar occupational and/or educational level (for example Butcher, 1994; Kasinitz et al., 2008; Waters, 1999). For example, much of the research on Black immigrant college access focuses on determining why this population is overrepresented in higher education as compared to native-born Black Americans. In 2007, Massey, Mooney, Torres and Charles published one of the most heavily cited higher education empirical studies on Black immigrants. The researchers used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen (NLSF) to examine Black immigrant and Black native-born students attending selective colleges and universities in the United States to determine whether academic success factors are different for each group. Massey et al. (2007) stated that although first and second generation Black immigrants only comprise 13% of the 18 to 19 year old Black population, they comprise 27% of Black students at selective colleges and 41% of Black students at Ivy League institutions. Based on their data analysis, the researchers found that the most critical difference between the two student groups was that Black immigrants were more likely to come from two-parent households and to have fathers that graduated from college and held advanced degrees (Massey et al., 2007). Black immigrants were also more likely to have gone to private schools and to have lived in racially integrated neighborhoods (Massey et al., 2007). Yet, overall the researchers

found that among other economic and social factors, there were few differences between the two populations. Massey et al. (2007) concluded:

> That immigrant origins per se are not favored in the admissions process but, for whatever reason, children from immigrant families have come to exhibit the set of traits and characteristics valued by admissions committees, both those that are readily observable (grade point average, quality of high school, and advanced placement courses taken) and those that are more difficult to observe directly (self-esteem, self-efficacy, and social distance from Whites). (p. 268).

Bennett and Lutz (2009) conducted a similar study asking the question, "How immigrant or African American is the net Black advantage?" (p. 71). The "net Black advantage" refers to previous findings that "although a smaller proportion of Black high school graduates enroll in college after high school, Blacks are more likely than are Whites to attend college, net of differences in socioeconomic background and academic performance" (Bennett & Lutz, 2009, p. 70). The researchers wanted to determine whether this advantage reflected Black native-born students or if the enrollment of Black immigrants was the factor contributing to this "Black net advantage." Their study provided data collection from a wider array of institutional types than the research conducted by Massey and colleagues (2007), which only focused on selective colleges. The researchers found that while there is a net Black advantage for native-born Blacks across all institutional types (e.g. two- and four-year colleges, HBCUs, selective colleges), this advantage only held for Black immigrants at selective colleges. Like Massey et al. (2007), Bennett and Lutz (2009) found that Black immigrants were more likely to come from two-parent households and attend private school in K-12. When the

researchers controlled for social and economic backgrounds, the college going gap between immigrant and native-born students was significantly reduced. Thus, Bennett and Lutz (2009) concluded that structural resources rather than cultural differences were most impactful in these students' college going behaviors.

Culture and the Educational Outcomes & College Access of Black Immigrants

Some researchers argue that Black immigrants cultural responses to racism and oppression in the United States helps to foster their educational and occupational success (Waters, 1994, 1999). For example, Waters (1994) conducted a study with 83 second-generation Caribbean youth to examine the racial and ethnic identities of this demographic. Based on their responses, she asserted that these youth categorize themselves into one of three identities: a Black American identity, an ethnic or hyphenated national origin, or an immigrant identity. The participants' peer groups, socioeconomic status, and connection with parental country of origin influenced these identities. Waters (1994) suggested that those youth who identify as Black/African American often experienced greater downward assimilation than the other groups (e.g. poor educational performance and occupational aspirations) because they tended to perceive greater racism and prejudicial treatment of Blacks. She concluded that youth who identified as West Indian tended to exude more effort and initiative in schooling because they did not perceive a high level of racial limitation (Waters, 1994).

Conversely, Awokoya (2012) found negative implications of ethnic and cultural markers on the educational experiences of Black immigrant youth. In her study of Nigerian 1.5 and second-generation students, participants

> Felt that many White teachers expected them to be both role models for the Black race and ambassadors for Africans. Taking on both of these roles, sometimes simultaneously, proved difficult for many participants, and they often felt that their inability to enact both identities might serve to confirm negative stereotypes about Blacks and Africans. (p. 267)

In these instances, being Nigerian engendered a number of stereotypes from teachers and peers about these students' intelligence, academic abilities, and ethnic heritage (Awokoya, 2012). These experiences put academic and emotional pressure on participants within the school context (Awokoya, 2012). Thus, like social structural factors, culture and cultural identity can have both positive and negative implications for Black immigrants' educational experiences and outcomes.

There are also findings that support the importance of cultural factors in navigating access to college for Black immigrants. For example, Haynie (2002) conducted a mixed methods study on the ethnic composition of Black students at Harvard University and the influence of ethnicity on their college access. Haynie (2002) found that 55% of the Black students at Harvard had at least one parent or grandparent that was foreign-born. Approximately 12% of all Black students were of African heritage and 23% of Caribbean heritage. While only 3.3% of Blacks in America were projected to be second-generation Black immigrants, 41% of Black students at Harvard were second-generation immigrants. Haynie (2002) found three predominant themes regarding how ethnicity influence college access to Harvard among the Black students in the study: 1) self- and cultural-identity patterns 2) the presence of opportunities to excel academically during the pre-college years 3) familial educational ideologies. Her findings suggested

that native-born Blacks were motivated to attend Harvard in order to prove wrong the stereotyping that they endured regarding their educational merit as well as to overcome the legacy of discrimination against Black Americans that their parents or other family members had experienced. Conversely, Black immigrant students were more likely to strive to attend Harvard due to their families' legacy of immigration to the United States and the importance of taking advantage of opportunities in America, which was a message instilled in them and modeled by their immigrant parents. Haynie (2002) did also find social structural factors that contributed to Black immigrants' high enrollment numbers at Harvard, including the students having parents with high educational attainment, participating in college preparatory programs, and/or having global kinship networks, which made the students more comfortable interacting with diverse populations.

Griffin, de Pilar, McIntosh, and Griffin (2012) provide the most recent study on the college choice process of Black immigrants, focusing solely on this population in their article. Like Haynie (2002), Griffin et al. (2012) found that "culture, prestige, and the value parents place on education," (p. 96) were primary factors influencing the college choice process of Black immigrant students. High parental/family expectations about academic achievement and college going were messages instilled in students from an early age. The researchers argue that these messages helped students to develop a habitus or worldview that emphasized the importance of attaining a college education as part of their cultural legacy. Furthermore, parents instilled in students that attending college was a family accomplishment, rather than an individual one. Griffin and colleagues (2012) also introduce the concept of displaced capital, which refers to

immigrant parents whose high level education and wealth in the home country was not transferable to the United States; yet, the memory of these resources allowed the parents to motivate and instill the value of education in their children. Additionally, students described the value of education, the discipline required to achieve academically, and the goal to attend college as cultural norms embedded in their ethnic identities (Griffin et al., 2012). Thus although social structures such as SES did impact Black immigrant students, they were able to use cultural factors as motivating forces to overcome structural barriers in the college choice process.

Presence of Cultural and Structural Factors

One of the most well known theories used to explain the school performance of Black immigrants is John Ogbu's (1987) Cultural Ecology Theory (CET), which considers both structural and cultural factors. Ogbu (1987) based the academic achievement of minorities on the historical context of their arrival into the host country and minorities' responses and perceptions of their treatment in these systems. Ogbu (1987) argued that involuntary immigrants (e.g. native-born Black Americans) have less trust in the U.S. educational system because it was an imposed system that sought to eradicate their culture. Thus, these groups develop an oppositional cultures and identities. Conversely, voluntary immigrants (e.g. Black immigrants) who come to the United States for economic reasons downplay discrimination and emphasize improvement in their economic condition (Ogbu, 1987). Ogbu suggests that immigrants have this attitude because they are comparing themselves to poorer homeland peers and not to affluent White Americans (e.g. dual frame of reference). Although Americans may not value these Black immigrants, the immigrants can look to experiences in their home country

and their culture as a means of motivation and empowerment to succeed in the United States.

Each of the few published studies on the college going process of Black immigrants tends to also reflect the structural and cultural themes that are present in the broader literature on Black immigrant educational outcomes. While Massey et al. (2007) and Bennett and Lutz (2009) suggest that structural factors play the largest role in college access for this population, Haynie (2002) and Griffin et al. (2012) suggest that cultural factors also play a major role in this process. Because the literature suggests that cultural and/or social structural factors can impact the mobility and college access of Black immigrants, the current study investigates both cultural and social structural factors that may impact the college choice process of African immigrant families.

Additionally, while each of the studies reviewed here highlight that familial characteristics and background significantly impact college access for Black immigrants, none incorporated family members into the research design. The current study expands upon the initial findings of these studies, which illustrate that family and background matter, by incorporating the narratives and experiences of both students and their family members.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I draw from Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined model of college choice, funds of knowledge, and ecocultural theory to create the conceptual framework guiding the current study. Combined components of each of these frameworks represent the process of college choice; the knowledge, resources, and skills families create and utilize; and how families proactively work as a unit to navigate processes.

Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model serves as the primary framework, providing initial structure and definition to college choice as a stage-based process that is impacted by students' background and preparation. However, due to the family-centered emphasis of the current study as well as the shortcomings of Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model, which I addressed in this chapter, I chose to incorporate funds of knowledge and ecocultural theory as secondary frameworks. These two frameworks consider the resources and strategies immigrants, minorities, and/or other underrepresented populations use in navigating their environment (Bernheimer et al., 1990; Moll et al., 1992). Additionally, these frameworks give attention to the family unit and family engagement, rather than the experiences of individuals (e.g. students) (Kiyama, 2010; Weisner, 1997). Thus, drawing from Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined model of college choice, funds of knowledge, and ecocultural theory, I developed a conceptual framework that was used to inform how African immigrants conceive of and navigate the college choice process as a family.

I also reviewed literature on the role of family in the college choice process. Much of this research focuses on the role of parental encouragement and involvement as well as structural factors such as parental income and level of education. The literature clearly concludes that while parents play a critical role in the college choice process, parental support can be hindered or enhanced by structural factors, which creates inequities for students in successfully navigating college choice (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Fordham, 1996; Rowan-Kenyon, Bell & Perna, 2008). The literature also suggests unique factors impacting the educational attainment of immigrants including immigrant optimism, family interdependence and acculturation gaps. While structural factors impact

college access for students generally, researchers suggest that immigrants/children of immigrants experience differences in the process of educational attainment as compared to native peers (Baum & Flores, 2011; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008). My study addresses gaps in the literature related to the role of family in college choice because this literature typically only includes students as study participants and thus only examines the role of family through the student lens. However, my study's conceptual framework (particularly the use of funds of knowledge and ecocultural theory) supported a focus on family as the unit of analysis, which provides a rich and more complete understanding of families engaging in college choice. Furthermore, although their continues to be greater acknowledgement of diverse types of family structures and parental/family support in the college choice process (Knight, Norton, Bentley & Dixon, 2004; Tierney & Auerbach, 2005; Villalpando & Solorzano, 2005; Yosso, 2005), research is still limited in terms of representing this diversity in research frameworks, samples and analysis. However, my research design and conceptual framework combined both traditional and less common ways of understanding family structure and engagement in college choice as a means of guiding my study of how African immigrant families engage in attaining access to college.

Lastly, I reviewed research on factors impacting Black immigrants' educational outcomes and college access. This research informed my investigation of the cultural and social structural factors impacting African immigrant families as they navigate the college choice process. While much of the research emphasized either cultural or structural factors, bringing together the research in this review suggests that both have an influence on educational outcomes and college access. Thus, the current study addressed

a gap in the literature by examining both cultural and structural factors impacting the educational aspirations and college going of African immigrant families.

Chapter 4: Methods

This chapter provides an in-depth description of the research methods I used to answer the following research questions:

1. How do African immigrant families conceptualize the process of college choice?
    - How do African immigrant families develop and communicate educational ideologies about college going?
2. How do African immigrant families actively navigate the college choice process?
    - In what ways do African immigrant families perceive the role of family, culture and social structures impacting their college choice process?

First, I review a pilot study that informs the development of the current study's research methodology. Next, I describe the research approach as well as the rationale for site selection and sampling. Subsequent sections include data collection and data analysis procedures. Lastly, I describe methods for ensuring quality of research as well as frame the role of the researcher.

Pilot Study

In spring 2012, I conducted a qualitative study that acts as a pilot to the current study. The purpose of the pilot study was to explore how 1.5 and second-generation African immigrant college going students and their first-generation immigrant parents view and communicate to each other about educational expectations and college choice. I developed and analyzed the study using a constructivist grounded theory approach, which incorporated in-depth interviews and participant observation to understand how African immigrant families engage in and perceive the process of communicating about college.

Research participants were recruited who met one of two sets of criteria: 1) A first-generation African immigrant and the parent of a college going individual or 2) A 1.5 or second-generation African immigrant and a college going individual. I defined college going individuals as current undergraduate students or individuals who were engaged or intending to engage in the process of applying to college. Although I did not have a traditional site, I depended heavily upon the African immigrant network and community within the Maryland, DC, and Virginia area to conduct this study. The final sample for this study included four families (a total of ten individuals).

I employed a qualitative research design based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews lasting approximately 60 to 75 minutes. Three of the interview sessions were conducted in the families' homes and one interview was conducted at the family's church. Parents and children were interviewed separately; therefore, during each interview session I did one interview with the parent(s) and one interview with the child(ren) for a total of eight interviews. The interview questions were informed by the literature, specifically by factors identified as important in college access and choice literature (e.g. academic preparation, role of family, educational expectations and aspirations) (for example, Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989; Perna, 2006). However, the semi-structured nature of the interview protocol allowed me the flexibility to omit some questions, add additional questions, and change the ordering of questions as needed during the interviews in order to better grasp how participants made meaning of their experiences (Daly, 2007). In addition, I collected participant observation data based on my interactions with families before, during and after the interviews (approximately one to two and a half hours each session). My focus regarding these observations was on

how the parents and children interacted and communicated with each other as well as any further insights the participants made about education.

For the data analysis, I initially developed open codes primarily relating to how African immigrant parents develop and transmit messages about higher education to their college going children and how these children utilize those messages as part of their educational experience. Some codes were developed from the literature (e.g. college knowledge) and others in-vivo from comments made by participants (e.g. tug of war, land of opportunities). Through axial coding and comparing across the different cases, I refined my coding system. During this process, I reduced my number of original open codes and connected the remaining to larger categories. Through the selective coding process, the core category that emerged was "college as a birthright." One of the quotes from the third parent interview relates to this theme, "…She has to go to college. She doesn't even have a choice of do you want to go or not go. It's not a choice, **it is like her birthright** you know?" This quote led me to create a code for "birthright" because it illustrates the notion of going to college as not only a positive goal, but also a pathway that the child was born into and obligated to follow. Other parents spoke in a similar manner about college for their children and thus this concept created a storyline of how parents used strategies to instill the belief of "college as a birthright" in their children and how children perceive and react to that concept and/or internalize it. The children in the study appeared to benefit from their parents' strategies, each expressing an internalized perspective that they would be academically successful and attend college.

Although a constricted timeline and small sample created limitations for this pilot, the findings that emerged were useful in guiding the current study. For example, the pilot

informed the sampling structure of the current study. In the pilot, I openly sampled families with college going/college enrolled children and treated college choice as a simple event rather than a complex process. Because my sampling was not purposeful, I was not prepared to engage participants with interview questions that aligned with the point they were at in the choice process (e.g. questions were too broad or irrelevant to their stage in the choice process). Therefore, in the current study I developed more specific sampling criterion and a case screening process. I also used Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model of college choice as a heuristic guide to select cases engaged in the college choice process. Additionally, in the pilot I defined individuals as the unit of analysis. However, this was ineffective because I was most interested in understanding family dynamics and communication as well as the process of college going within the family. Alternatively, in the current study the primary unit of observation and analysis is at the family level, rather than individual level and I used funds of knowledge and ecocultural theory to frame how families define and navigate college choice. Lastly, I used the data collection experiences in the pilot to further refine my interview guides and analytic strategies.

Research Approach

I utilized a multiple embedded ethnographic case study approach to examine the college choice process of sub-Saharan African immigrant families. This section will first review social constructivism as the epistemology for this qualitative study. Next I briefly explain ethnography and case study as well as their roles in shaping my research design. Lastly, I present my use of ethnographic case study as the overall design approach for this study.

Social Constructivism

This qualitative study reflects a social constructivist epistemology. The social constructivist epistemology conceptualizes a constructed reality and is founded upon the belief that there are multiple realities (Daly, 2007). Social constructivism focuses on how individuals make meaning of their experiences and external reality (Daly, 2007). According to Charmaz (2006), "Constructivists study how – and sometimes why – participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations," (p. 130). The current study focused on families as a unit; yet, the perceptions and experiences of individual members of the family with the world around them can differ. Social constructivism guided my research process because it lessens the emphasis on which family members are "correct" in their narratives, allowing my focus to be on incorporating the multiple perspectives that emerged (Daly, 2007). In addition, this epistemology provides space for the researcher's voice and considers the influence of the researcher's engagement with participants in the study (Daly, 2007). As a researcher, social constructivism recognizes that my own experiences, particularly as an insider/outsider and my previous work on Black immigrant populations, influenced my interpretations of the data.

The constructivist worldview informed my study through its focus on participants' perspectives and experiences as well as its emphasis on the importance of interacting with others to form meaning. I used this worldview to develop research questions focused on how families make meaning of the college choice process. Additionally, I aligned my research design with a social constructivist lens; for example, my use of in-depth interviews and participant observation to understand how African immigrant families perceive and engage in the college going process. Constructivism

emphasizes the influence of cultural and historical norms on how individuals live and experience their lives (Daly, 2007). This reflects the nature of my study, which examined how the participants' sociocultural contexts influenced their college going experiences.

Ethnographic Approach

The current study incorporated an ethnographic approach. Situated within the field of anthropology, ethnographers seek to understand and describe cultural and/or social groups (Spradley, 1979). Creswell (2007) explains that ethnographic studies examine individuals and groups interacting in ordinary settings and attempts to discern pervasive patterns such as life cycles, events, and cultural themes. Ethnography describes a culture-sharing group, uses themes or perspectives of the culture-sharing group for organizational analysis, and seeks interpretation of the culture-sharing group for meanings of social interaction (Spradley, 1979). Ethnography assumes that the principal research interest is largely affected by community cultural understandings. Thus "ethnographies recreate for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people" (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993. pp. 2-3). I used the ethnographic approach because the role of culture and cultural transmission across generations as part of the college going process was central to my study. I operationalized the ethnographic construct of microcultures, which are systems of cultural knowledge characteristic of subgroups within larger societies (Neuliep, 2012). Members of microcultures share characteristics, values, and behaviors with the greater society, but also share a common cultural knowledge and bond with other members of the subgroup (Neuliep, 2012). In the current study, I framed African immigrant families as microcultures, which are the unit of observation and analysis in this study.

Ethnography is emic (focused on the perspectives of the group under study) and etic (focused on the researcher/outsider perspective). The current study emphasizes the perceptions and experiences of participants as well as integrates their voices in the research (Mertens, 2005). To do this, I utilized an ethnographic process of inquiry, which suggests prolonged observation and in-depth interviews. However, ethnographic studies also define the researcher as a key instrument in the data collection process, who describes and interprets observations of a cultural group (Mertens, 2005). As a key instrument, I engaged in extensive and dynamic participation in the field as well as employed reflexivity through memo/field note writing and peer debriefing.

Case Study Approach

Case study is an appropriate method when the researcher deliberately wants to explore contextual conditions that might be critical to the phenomenon of study (Yin, 2003). The boundaries of a case study are set in terms of time, place, events, and/or processes (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). However, the case (also described as a bounded system or unit of analysis) remains the main focus of the study (Merriam, 2009). Case study researchers utilize several sources of information in data collection in order to provide in-depth description and explanation of the case (Merriam, 2009).

This study employed an interpretive multiple embedded case design. Interpretive case studies go beyond describing the phenomena to present the data that supports, challenges or expands existing theories (Merriam, 2009). I defined the case as an African immigrant family with family members (e.g. parents, children) as embedded units within the case. I used a multiple-case design through inclusion of four families or cases (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). The case study approach allowed me to explore these

bounded systems or cases over time through in-depth data collection and analysis. I described the themes within each case/family as well as provided an interpretive analysis and discussion across cases (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Additionally, I engaged in holistic inquiry through the collection of in-depth and detailed data from multiple sources of information including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and participatory diagramming. These data collection methods will be described in depth in a subsequent section of this chapter.

Ethnographic Case Study

This study utilized a combination of ethnographic interpretation and case study techniques to provide, "a sociocultural analysis and interpretation of the unit of study," (Merriam, 1988, p. 23). Ethnographic case study uses a wider range of data collection and analysis techniques than in traditional ethnography and can be conducted in familiar or unfamiliar cultures (Simons, 2009). Simons (2009) defines ethnographic case study as an "…analysis of observations over time in a natural setting within a bounded system to gain close-up descriptions of the context and to understand the case in relation to theories of culture" (p. 22). The current study meets each of the criteria for an ethnographic case study:

- ***An analysis of observations over time:*** I engaged with each family on multiple occasions throughout the data collection period including three home visits. I analyzed data on an ongoing basis and used preliminary analysis to modify and refine the data collection protocol for each subsequent case observation.
- ***A natural setting:*** A natural setting was critical to this study as I was interested in observing family dynamics and communication. Therefore, I conducted data

collection in participants' homes. Although I cannot eliminate the effect that my presence had on this setting, I used multiple, in-depth observations to build rapport with each family.

- ***A bounded system:*** The cases are African immigrant families with family members as embedded units of analysis. Informed by my pilot study and literature on African immigrants (for example Arthur, 2000; Kamya, 2005; Swigart, 2001), I extended the notion of family beyond the "nuclear family" definition to include a broader kinship network (both immediate and extended family as well family friends and community members that are involved in the college choice process). Because each family/case is unique, I took a nominalist/ constructivist approach to case binding, which engages participants in shaping the unit of analysis (Harper, 1992; Wells, Hirshberg, Lipton & Oakes, 1995). Using this approach, I treated members of the immediate household (e.g. parents, children) as the heart of each case and worked with these members of the household to co-construct the boundaries of their distinct family unit. During the first data collection session, each household developed an eco-map that identifies family members involved in the college choice process and extended the boundaries of the family unit to include these additional individuals.
- ***A close-up description of the context:*** My within case analysis includes an in-depth description of each family case (family profiles). In these family profiles I described the demographics, dynamics, culture and college-going process of each family. These profiles allow the reader to learn extensively about each case and its distinct context.
- ***Understanding of the cases in relation to theories of culture:*** The literature reviewed in chapters two and three as well as the pilot study findings reviewed in this chapter

suggest that culture is a major factor in the college going process of African immigrants (e.g. ethnic culture, American culture, family culture). I used the concept of culture on multiple levels to inform the research design including ethnographic methods, development of research questions and conceptual framework (e.g. funds of knowledge and ecocultural theory), and as a theme to guide data collection and analysis.

Research Site

The research site for this study was informed by the approach I used in the pilot study. The pilot study was primarily interview-based and I did not have a traditional field site where I conducted research on an ongoing-basis. However, I conducted the majority of the interviews for the pilot study at the participants' homes. I chose to conduct the interviews at the participants' homes when possible because it was a convenient location for them and it was a place where I could also observe their family dynamics and communication in a natural setting. At each of the data collection sessions for the pilot study, I conversed informally with the participants both before and after the interviews for approximately one to two and a half hours. During this time, I was often offered food and asked questions about my research and about the college going process by the families. This allowed me time to interact with the participants on a more informal level as well as observe how the parents and children interacted with each other. I used this time to build rapport with the participants and also considered these interactions as research data. Thus, the homes of the pilot study participants (and in one case the church of the participants) became my research sites.

I applied a similar "network" or "multi-site" approach to my research site selection for the current study. In doing so I defined the field as a network, rather than a specific spatial terrain such as a village or school. Burrell (2009) states that the traditional ethnographic concept of a field site as a "bounded space containing a whole culture," (p. 182) is no longer applicable to all forms of ethnographic research. She suggests that the "field site as a network" is instead "composed of fixed and moving points including spaces, people, and objects," (p. 189). In their work on multi-sited ethnography in sociological research, Nadai and Maeder (2005) define the field as, " composed of a collection of forms of practice, which may be found in different, but complexly connected sites," (p. 5). Rather than seeking a specific physical place such as a neighborhood or school as my site where all cases are found, I worked with the African immigrant network and communities within the Maryland, DC, and Virginia area as entry points to conduct this study. I defined each family's home as a research site and thus there were multiple research sites. Burrell (2009) and LeCompte et al. (1993) warn that in developing a field network, it is critical to create artificially bounded groups because natural boundaries such as geographic location may not exist. Therefore, using eco-maps I worked with each family to co-construct the bounds of their family unit, which could exist outside of the spatial boundaries of the primary research site/home. For example, while I collected data in all of the families' homes, due to how they defined their family structure some families invited other individuals that they considered family (e.g. a grandmother or an adult child) to the home to participate in the interviews even if the individual did not reside in the home. Thus, while all data was collected in homes, all of the participants did not necessarily live in the home. The next section of this chapter

describes my sampling methods, which provided an in-depth explanation of the case boundaries and criterion I developed using my conceptual framework and pilot study experiences.

Research Sample

Description of the Population

Black African immigrants are one of the fastest growing immigrant populations in the United States, increasing by almost 100 percent into the 21st century (Hernandez, 2012). There are over 1.1 million sub-Saharan African immigrants in the United States who identify themselves racially as Black (Hernandez, 2012). Two-fifths of all second generation Black immigrants have at least one parent from Africa (Hernandez, 2012). The 2000 Census illustrates that approximately 80% of the children in Black African families in the United States are second generation (Thomas, 2010). Black African immigrants from Anglophone countries have the highest college graduation rates of African immigrants (Hernandez, 2012). For example, the majority of immigrants from Nigeria, Cameroon, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe have at least a four-year degree (Hernandez, 2012). Since 2001, over 30,000 students from sub-Saharan Africa were enrolled annually in U.S. universities, with more than half coming from Anglophone countries (Kent, 2007).

I bounded this study to the population of Black sub-Saharan African immigrants in the Washington DC metropolitan area. African immigrants comprise 14% of the DC metro region's foreign-born population, which is four times the national average (Terrazas, 2009). The Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD area is the second-largest destination for African immigrants (11.3 percent) (the New York-Northern

New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA metropolitan area has the largest number of African born at 13.8 percent), (Terrazas, 2009). Black African immigrants are a new immigrant population in the DC area, with less than six percent arriving before 1980 (Wilson, 2008). However, they are the fastest growing immigrant population with more than two-thirds of Black African immigrants in the Washington DC metro area arriving in the United States since 1990 and more than one-third between 2000 and 2005 (Wilson, 2008). In her study on Black African immigrants in Washington DC, Wilson (2008) found that the four main reasons these immigrants gave for settling in DC were because of the area's cosmopolitan nature/diversity, manageability in size and cost of living compared to other urban areas in the United States, reputation as a hub for international work, and because it is the nation's capital/the most important city in the United States. Washington DC and Maryland have two of the highest percentages of Africans in their total district/state populations (In Motion AAME, n.d.). I bounded the current study to the DC metropolitan area because of its large and growing population of African immigrants and because I already have a network of informants established within this area. Additionally, DC provides a region for studying African immigrant families that have permanently settled in the United States as it is among the top five cities having African residents that transitioned to permanent resident status between 1980 and 1993 (Macharia, 2011).

Sample Selection

Using purposeful sampling I drew a sample of four African immigrant families from the larger population. Purposeful sampling requires the researcher to select the most effective sample to answer the research questions. Through this sampling method, I sought to understand the context, concepts, and processes found in the cases (La Rossa,

2005, Small, 2009). There are three characteristics of the purposeful sampling method that I focused on in my sample selection: network-based, theory-based and criterion-based characteristics.

I entered the field through network selection/snowball sampling (Daly, 2007; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). This is an effective means of sampling when potential participants are scattered throughout the population and form "no naturally bounded, common groups," (Goetz & LeCompte 1984, p. 80). This method is particularly useful to the current study, which uses a multi-sited approach that has no natural boundaries. I worked with previous contacts made through my pilot study as a means of re-entry into the African immigrant network within the Maryland, DC, and Virginia metropolitan area. This included the parents and children of my pilot study who worked as informants, introducing me to additional families that could qualify for participation based on the defined criterion. After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for my study in July 2013, I provided each informant with an electronic recruitment flyer (see Appendix A) to send to potential participants and asked informants to connect me via email to individuals that expressed interest in participating. I also sent an electronic recruitment flyer via email to each family screened for the study to share with others and gave both electronic and hard copies of the recruitment flyer to families who I interviewed. From this method of recruiting, I was connected to seven families, two of which were eligible for the study (see Appendix B for Follow-up Email to potential participants).

In addition to working with pilot study informants, I reached out to African immigrant-related organizations in the Washington D.C.-metro area to assist in recruiting

participants for this study. This strategy allowed for the potential of making contact with families who were not affiliated with pilot study participants. I identified and emailed two organizations. One was the African Immigrant and Refugee Foundation (AIRF), which is a non-profit organization and the Office on African Affairs (OAA), which is a government agency. I selected these organizations because based on their website information, they provide a number of resources and outreach events geared towards African immigrant families and children. OAA responded to my email and met with me to learn about my study in September 2013. After the meeting, the staff agreed to distribute recruitment flyers to their email listservs, publicize my study on their organization website, and/or discuss my study at organization events. Through this recruitment method I connected with ten families, three of which were eligible for the study (see Appendix B for Follow-up Email to potential participants). One of these three families withdrew before data collection was complete and therefore was not included in this study.

I also incorporated theory-based sampling, which allows researchers to identify cases that embody a particular theoretical construct. I used Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined model of college choice as a guide to select cases that were engaged in the college choice process. Using the definitions of college choice outlined in the model, I screened each potential participant family prior to selecting them for the study in order to determine if they were engaged in the process of college choice. I recruited families who were at least broadly engaged in one of each of the three stages of Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) choice process (predisposition, search, or choice). I use the expression "broadly engaged" because while the model served as a guide, I also remained open to

families who may not neatly fit into one of the three stages, but that were engaged in college choice activities as outlined in college choice literature.

In purposeful sampling, the most important component is the criteria used to select participants. According to Goetz and LeCompte (1984), "Criterion-based selection requires that the researcher establish in advance a set of criteria or list of attributes that the units for study must possess," (p. 73). My unit of observation and analysis were families and thus the criteria I used to generate a sample focused on families. The subsequent section provides a description of each of the sampling criterion and why each is important to the study (Merriam, 1998).

Sampling Criterion

Families selected for the study needed to meet each of the five following criterion:

1) The family must be Black sub-Saharan African immigrants from an Anglophone country. These families must be comprised of voluntary immigrants (e.g. not refugees or asylees). In their text on developing ethnographic research studies, McCurdy, Spradley and Shandy (2005) express that there are several important attributes of good cultural informants. One of these attributes are: "A cultural informant [participant] should know the culture well, not be just learning it…" (McCurdy et al., 2005, p. 25). It was critical that each family is of the specific culture/ demographic that I am studying in order to provide rich sociocultural perspectives that assist in answering the research questions. I selected Black sub-Saharan African immigrants from Anglophone countries because this population comprises the largest number of immigrants from the continent of Africa and because they are more likely than other African immigrants (e.g. North Africans) to

remain permanently in the United States and have their children enter the U.S. school system (Capps et al., 2011; Kent, 2007). Additionally, I delimited the cases to include only voluntary immigrants because refugee and asylee families often experience distinct psychological and emotional traumas (Arthur, 2000) that are beyond the scope of this study to investigate.

2) Parents in the family must be first-generation immigrants (immigrants to the United States who were born in a different country) and at least one of their children must be a 1.5 or second-generation immigrant (a child of first-generation immigrants who was born abroad, but immigrated to the United States before age 12 or a U.S.-born child of first-generation immigrants). It was important to examine intergenerational households because the children of immigrants comprise the fastest growing child population and are rapidly entering the U.S. educational pipeline (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008). A common factor emerging in several empirical studies on immigrants is the important role of parents and family in the educational success of the second generation (Foner, 1999; Kasinitz et al., 2008; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Thomas, 2009; Zhou, 1999).

3) The 1.5 or second-generation immigrant child must be a college going individual. I define college going as an individual currently in grades 7 – 12, who is engaged or preparing to engage in the process of enrolling in an undergraduate institution. This definition aligns with college access literature, which suggests that the college choice process begins in 7th grade (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989). McCurdy et al. (2005) explain that participants should be currently involved in the experiences of the culture-sharing group, rather than previously involved. It was important that the 1.5 or

second-generation immigrant child is engaged in the college choice process in order for families to be able to provide the most detailed and lucid descriptions of the process.

4) The family must reside in the DC/MD/VA metropolitan area. African immigrants comprise 14% of the DC metro region's foreign-born population, which is four times the national average and this region is the second largest destination for African immigrants (Terrazas, 2009). In addition, McCurdy et al. (2005) express that it is advantageous in student ethnographies that "an informant [participant] should be located nearby and have time for the research," (p. 26). I reside in the DC/MD/VA area and had an established network to draw from during the study. The close geographic proximity of the participants allowed me the ability to have multiple, in-depth observations.

5) The family must be willing to allow me to conduct data collection in their home. Data collection for ethnographic case studies should occur in natural settings (Simons, 2009). Conducting data collection in participants' homes highlighted families' dynamics and communication as well as demonstrated how families use their space in the college going process. Although not all participants lived in the home, all spent time in their families' home on a regular basis (multiple times per week).

Data Collection

I utilized a case screening process and the following forms of data collection: demographic questionnaire, in-depth interviews, participatory diagramming, and participant observation.

Case Screening Process

In multiple case study research, screenings are used to ensure that participants selected for the study fit the research design (Yin, 1993). To ensure that families met the

sampling criterion for this study, I engaged an adult member of each family in a screening interview. I scheduled a time to talk to the potential participant on the phone for the screening. The screening process lasted approximately 15 minutes. I asked the participants a series of case screening questions (see Appendix C for case screening protocol). These questions were developed using my sampling criterion, research questions and conceptual framework. The case screening assisted me in selecting families who met the sampling criterion as well as helped to clarify their level of engagement in the college choice process so that I could refine my initial data collection protocol to better fit the family's point in the process.

Demographic Questionnaire

During the first interview session, I asked the family to complete a brief demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D). I designed this questionnaire to capture information about each family as a household (e.g. household income, number of children in the home) and about each individual family member (e.g. highest level of education, age, gender). The family also used the form to select a pseudonym for each individual participant (first name) and for the family (last name). The information collected was used to obtain simple background information about the family without using additional time during the interviews.

In-depth Interviews

I conducted interviews with each family together as a group (group interview) as well as conducted 1:1 interviews with individual members of families. During each data collection session, I started with the family group interview to explore the "family conversational voice" (Beitin, 2007) that emerges when families have social exchange

and can construct meaning together. After the group interview, I conducted individual interviews with the college-going student, parent(s), and other participating family members to provide them the opportunity to describe their experiences privately and in more detail. I also used responses given in the group interview to stimulate discussion during the individual interviews, allowing new or deeper concepts to emerge (Beitin, 2007). While I developed interview guides (see Appendices E and F), the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed me the flexibility to omit some questions, add additional questions, and change the ordering of questions as needed during the interviews in order to better grasp how participants made meaning of their experiences (Daly, 2007). Individual interviews lasted 45 to 60 minutes each and family group interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes each. All interviews were audio-recorded and I also took notes using a participant observation form (this form is described in a subsequent section of this chapter).

I conducted three interview sessions with each family. The first interview centered on gaining an in-depth understanding of the family and family dynamics. The funds of knowledge and ecocultural theory frameworks informed interview themes which included familial roles and responsibilities; family traditions, dynamics, and communication; family history of immigration to the United States; and family experiences with education. The second and third interviews focused on the college choice process (e.g. participants' experiences with the college going process and reflections on the meaning of the college going experience to the family). The interview questions were informed by factors identified as important in college choice literature such as academic preparation, role of family, educational expectations and aspirations

(for example, Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989; Perna, 2006) and the stages of college choice as outlined by Hossler and Gallagher (1987). I also used themes linked from the first interview to inform and adapt the interview guides for the second and third interviews in order to include questions that address how the family's background, dynamics, and culture influenced the college choice process. Specifically, the second interview session focused on how families' define/conceptualize the college choice process and how they navigate this process based on their definition of college choice. The third interview focused on how families navigate the college choice process. Although the time between interviews depended upon the schedules of both the families and myself, on average I had two to four week intervals between each session. This gave me adequate time to reflect on and begin preliminary analysis of the interview session, which helped to inform subsequent sessions but not present such an expansive time gap that continuity and rapport diminished. Over the course of the study, I conducted twelve group interviews and 48 individual interviews, spending between 10 to 21 hours interviewing each family.

Participatory Diagramming

Participatory diagramming are research techniques that include a variety of diagramming methods such as timelines, flowcharts, graphics, and/or tables that are generated by research participants (Alexander et al., 2007; Hopkins, 2006; Kesby, 2000; Pain & Francis, 2003; Umoquit et al., 2008). Often used in focus groups or group interviews, this form of data collection helps to "draw out issues and galvanize further discussion, analysis and action" (Alexander et al., 2007, p. 112). Participatory diagramming is visual, inclusive, and participatory. It uses both visual and oral methods

as participants create a visual and then engage in facilitated discussion about the visual (Alexander et al., 2007; Umoquit et al., 2008). Participatory diagramming is inclusive as it engages individuals within the group environment who may otherwise be reluctant to share (Hopkins, 2006). It is also useful in assisting groups to process complex concepts (Hopkins, 2006). It is a participatory method of data collection as it shifts the focus from the researcher or single members of the group to the whole group who works together to create and describe the diagram (Alexander et al., 2007).

I used participatory diagramming as discussion stimulus in the family group interviews. For the first family interview, I had participants draw an eco-map of their familial network. An eco-map is a flow diagram of an individual's or family's relationship systems and illustrates the degree of closeness to different people or networks within the system (Hartman, 1995; Kennedy, 2010). Additionally, I asked the family to express which individuals in the eco-map were involved in the college choice process as well as asked them to explain how the individuals are involved. In the second family interview, I asked participants to diagram the steps or components of the college choice process. For both the eco-map and the college choice diagrams, the family was given a sheet of butcher paper and markers. Families were instructed to work together to draw one diagram for the family. Each family member present during the group interview had to participate in the diagramming in some manner, whether through drawing, providing ideas for the diagram, or some other type of involvement. See Appendix E for the participatory diagramming instructions I gave to participants.

I used participatory diagramming for three main purposes. One was to learn how the families conceptualize their family structure as well as the college choice process.

The eco-map assisted me in constructing the boundaries of each family (unit of analysis) by having the family co-construct the boundaries using their eco-map. The visual of the college choice process stimulated discussion around the research questions, which relates to how families conceptualize and navigate the college choice process. The second purpose was to observe the families' dynamics as they create and describe the diagrams. The third purpose was to help stimulate additional discussion during the family group interviews and individual interviews. I also used the diagrams to refine interview questions during subsequent interview sessions (e.g. developing an interview question focused on a specific individual the family drew on their eco-map).

Participant Observation

During each data collection session, I spent from 30 minutes to two hours with the families outside of the formal interview time engaging in conversation and building rapport. This time included when I first arrived in the home, engaging in conversation in between interviews with individuals, and at the conclusion of my formal interviews. I considered this interaction to be data, but because it was informal and unprompted dialogue I often did not audio-record this interaction as I did with the formal interviews. Thus, in order to document this engagement and other insights gathered during these data collection sessions, I conducted participant observation throughout my interactions with families. My observations focused on how the families interact with each other (e.g. family dynamics and communication), insights the participants made about education/college going, and the interview space (home) and how the space is used in the college going process. I also observed family interactions as families engaged in participatory diagramming.

To document my observations I used a modified version of Schatzman and Strauss' (1973) field note technique, which suggests that field notes be written to serve different purposes (as cited in Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001). I am familiar with this technique and used it during my pilot study. In using this method, I included four types of field notes: 1) observation notes that are purely descriptive 2) theoretical notes based on conceptual development 3) methodological notes which reflect on the methods used and 4) observer comments as personal reflections. Each of the four field note types aforementioned was given a code: 1) OBN 2) THN 3) MTN 4) OBC that I used to assist in focusing my observations in the field and to organize the field notes for later data analysis (see Appendix G for participant observation/field notes form).

Because my participant observations were also based on informal interactions I did not always write complete notes during the data collection session, but instead made mental notes or short written jottings of my observations and impressions (Emerson et al., 2001). Upon returning home from the interviews, I used the field notes form to engage in free-writing a memo about my overall observations, which I used in subsequent data analysis.

Protection of Human Subjects

I used the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines to develop data collection and analysis procedures that protect the research participants from harm. During data collection I explained the study's goals and purpose to participants in lay language and answered all questions. I expressed to participants that they may opt out of the project at any point. During the case screening, I engaged participants in an oral consent process. Additionally, all participants selected for the study

were presented with a written consent form at the first data collection session. If the participant was a minor, both the minor and parent/guardian of the minor were given a written consent/assent form. All participants received a copy of the consent form for their records. During the consent process, participants were informed that there was no more than minimal risk associated with the study, they did not have to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable, and they could withdraw at any time. All consent forms used for the study are provided in Appendix H.

This study includes both group (family) interviews and individual interviews. I informed participants that all interviews would be audiotaped with their consent. I used IRB group procedures for family interviews. During the family group interview consent process I informed participants that a potential risk might exist that a participant would discuss information outside of the group that could be traced back to the participants. However, before beginning each family interview, I informed participants that information shared in the interview session should not be shared with anyone outside of the group. All individual interviews were conducted in a private area away from others to maintain privacy.

I sought to maintain participant confidentiality throughout the data analysis and reporting process. Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and I kept this recorder in a locked file cabinet in my home office. Only I had access to the file cabinet. The recordings and participatory diagrams were uploaded onto my personal and password-protected computer. The computer is located in my home office and only I had knowledge of the password for this computer. Any participant contact information used to schedule the interview was not included in the research report. Each individual

participant as well as the family as a group provided a pseudonym on their demographic questionnaire.

In creating participatory diagrams, some participants used their actual names or the names of individuals in their family on the diagram. When this occurred, I took a photograph of the participatory diagram and then using computer software I shaded or skewed the names on the diagram so that they could not be read. I then destroyed the hard copy of the diagram and deleted the original photograph, only retaining the edited photograph of the diagram. Additionally, during interviews, when participants referenced specific persons such as another family member, these names were replaced with a pseudonym in the final interview transcript in order to protect the identity of these individuals.

Due to the nature of my study, I presented data on individual participants and individual families, which creates limitations regarding confidentiality because the data is not being presented in aggregate form (Merriam, 2009). I informed participants of this limitation, explaining that I would be developing both an individual participant description as well as a family description in my dissertation, which could make it possible for someone to learn their identity. While I could not eliminate this possibility, I gave all participants the opportunity to view their profiles before including it in my final dissertation, allowing them to remove any information that they might feel uncomfortable with others learning if their identity was ascertained.

Data Analysis

I used Merriam's (2009) constant comparative method of case study analysis (modified from Glaser & Strauss' use of constant comparative in grounded theory) to shape the data analysis. I selected Merriam's (2009) analytic approach because I am most

familiar with this method (I used a similar method of analysis in my pilot study), her approach to data analysis aligns with my qualitative/constructivist orientation, and the approach helped me to move my analysis of cases from description to interpretation. I engaged in a comprehensive analytic process, which is described in detail below. Although, I describe this analysis linearly, the process itself was iterative and overlapping, which is a characteristic common of qualitative data analysis and particularly for analyzing ethnographic data (Merriam, 2009; Spradley, 1979). For example, I engaged in data collection and analysis simultaneously. I would use data from an initial interview within a case to assist in refining subsequent interview protocols within that case in order to engage participants more deeply in their lived experiences (Merriam, 2009). In addition, while the constant comparative method suggests a three stage coding process, I engaged in open and axial coding stages concurrently in order to make adjustments to the analysis as new codes and categories were developed (Merriam, 2009).

Managing the Data

Before beginning my data collection and analysis, I developed a system of data management (Merriam, 2009). I used NVIVO 10 software to organize and manage all of my data as a case study database (Merriam, 2009). This brought all of the data together, while also allowing for retrieval of specific data throughout the analysis. I created a folder within NVIVO for each family case. After each data collection session with a family, I uploaded scanned copies of field notes, participatory diagrams, and demographic questionnaires to the software within their respective folder. I also uploaded the audio files of individual interviews and group interviews to NVIVO. I used NVIVO

to personally transcribe each family interview verbatim and saved these interview transcripts in NVIVO. However, I sent the individual interview audios to a professional transcriber. Once I received the transcript documents from the transcriber, I uploaded them to NVIVO. I spot-checked each of these transcripts by reading through the transcript document as I listened to the corresponding interview audio file to correct any inaccuracies in the transcript.

Writing Analytic Memos

Merriam (2009) suggests that qualitative data analysis should occur throughout data collection. After each data collection session, I reviewed my field notes and wrote post-interview session analytic memos to document my emerging analysis such as concepts related to the research questions, literature/conceptual framework, and initial patterns and themes. I wrote memos about individual family members and about the family unit. These memos helped me to refine my data collection protocols as well as provided a means of reducing and interpreting the data. Each of these memos was stored in my NVIVO file and organized by family case. I continued to write memos as I engaged in later stages of analysis, which allowed me to process emergent themes and concepts across cases as well as within cases. I reviewed my analytic memos throughout my data collection and analysis and also used them as an audit trail to document my inquiry process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

Within Case Analysis

This study followed a multiple case study analysis in which the data is first examined case by case through thematic analysis (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). I treated each family as a complete case and engaged in a separate coding process for each family

in order to substantially understand their unique college choice process. Therefore, although my data collection and analysis for families overlapped at times, I developed a standalone coding system or codebook for each of the four cases.

Open coding.

I first engaged in multiple reads and comparative examinations of the data for each family case. During this early stage of analysis, I openly coded "data that strike as interesting, potentially relevant, or important to the study…for answering the research questions" (Merriam, 2009, p. 178). My approach to open coding was both inductive and deductive. I used a deductive approach by identifying sensitizing concepts, which guided my initial data collection and analysis. These sensitizing concepts included key terms from my conceptual framework including funds of knowledge, transmission of funds, kinship networks, ecocultural niche, accommodation, family culture, and the stages from Hossler and Gallagher's combined model of college choice (predisposition, search, choice). I created nodes in NVIVO for these terms and as I read each transcript, I coded at the responses that reflected these coding categories. As the participants and I engaged in constructing meaning of their college choice process, I also used inductive analysis to remain open to new and emerging themes (Emerson et al, 2001). To do so, as I read through transcripts, I made annotations at lines in the text that appeared useful in answering my research questions. I developed a list of open codes from these annotations for each case and created corresponding nodes for these codes in NVIVO as well.

Axial coding.

The next stage in the constant comparative method is axial coding, which I engaged in both during my open coding process and after my initial open codes were

developed. This stage in the process includes comparing and connecting emerging codes into categories (Merriam, 2009). Categories are "conceptual elements that cover or span many individual examples or codes previously identified" (Merriam, 2009, p. 181). I used NVIVO to group together data by open code in order to reassemble the data and view patterns and themes within the cases (Merriam, 2009). Through axial coding, I developed and refined my coding system and connected open codes to broader categories that comprised recurrent patterns within the data (Merriam, 2009). For example, within one case I had codes called "Extended Family," "African Immigrant Community," "Church Members," and "Co-Workers." In reviewing these codes I saw that they were all related to that family's social networks and therefore I placed each within a larger category called "Family and Community Networks." In NVIVO, I was able to organize categories into hierarchies, moving from general categories at the top (the parent node) to more specific codes (child nodes). The axial coding process also assisted my development of a codebook for each case. My codebooks served as an additional data management tool for organizing and storing my coding system. The codebooks included a list of codes/categories for each family case, definitions of each code/category, and an example of data that was coded using the code/category (Miles & Huberman, 2005).

Constructing cases.

Merriam (2009) observed that within case analysis should provide "as much about the contextual variables as possible that might have a bearing on the case." (p. 204). In order to provide an in-depth understanding of the family cases, I utilized each family's coding system/codebook as well as the research questions to develop a detailed case profile for each of the four families. These case profiles include a summary of the

experiences and educational pathways of each family member that was interviewed (embedded units within each case). Following these individual summaries I organized the remainder of each profile by subheadings, which aligned with my research questions. These were: family's structure and culture; the family's academic and college going ideologies; and the family's college choice process. The within case profiles share comprehensive, contextual detail regarding each case's family, educational experiences and college choice process.

Cross Case Analysis

After creating each within case profile, I began engaging in a cross-case analysis. I searched for emergent themes that generally fit each case, although themes varied to some extent from case to case (Merriam, 2009). Through this cross-case analysis I developed "an integrated framework covering multiple cases" (Merriam, 2009, p. 204).

Refining and reducing categories.

In my cross-case analysis, I first attempted to develop a cross-case coding system or codebook. Therefore, I turned to the codebooks of each family case, looking for codes and categories that overlapped across cases and collapsing them into one category within my cross-case codebook. For example, each of the four family case codebooks had a code for "Predisposition," which was one of my sensitizing concepts from the conceptual framework. So, in my cross case codebook, I placed these four codes within the category "Predisposition," in order to later compare how each family case experienced predisposition. Refining and reducing codes/categories for inductive coding was more challenging, as these codes were often different within each family case. However, by using the definitions and examples provided for each code/category in the codebooks, I

was able to sort and collapse codes that captured a recurring pattern across cases (Merriam, 2009). Through this process, I refined and reduced my codes and categories from four separate codebooks, into one cross case codebook or coding system.

Linking categories

I made a copy of my original NVIVO file in order to refine my coding system for the cross case analysis and still maintain a copy of the original within case coding system. In this copied version of the NVIVO file, I made revisions to the NVIVO file coding system in order for it to reflect my cross-case codebook. I began to explore the content of each parent and child node across family cases. I would open up a node and examine all of the coded references for that node as well as the number of times I coded at the node and across how many cases the code was referenced. I was able to link codes and categories that were relevant to the research questions and compare the ways participants/families made sense of their experiences across categories. Using the participants' narratives, I began to interpret the findings in relation to my conceptual framework and literature on the topic.

Selective coding.

During the selective coding process I pulled together themes to develop a storyline/core category (La Rossa, 2005; Merriam, 2009). The core category "is the central defining aspect of the phenomenon to which all other categories and hypotheses are related or interconnect" (Merriam, 2009, p. 200). The primary narrative emerging across cases reflected how families developed a college-going environment or culture in their home and community. This process interacted with intergenerational, cultural, and social dynamics within families as they engaged in college choice. However, as this core

category emerged, I found myself limited in my ability to describe and interpret the core category through the lens of my conceptual framework. While I found many aspects of the framework useful, a number of emergent findings fell outside of the scope of the framework, particularly Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined model of college choice. Therefore, I searched for alternative ways to develop the core category. Using a method of communication common among the families in the study, I turned to a metaphor for understanding their college choice process. Metaphors are useful in data analysis as data- reducing devices that "have an immense and central place in the development of theory" and can help clarify and communicate complex experiences (Miles & Huberman, 2005, p. 250). The metaphor I used in this study relates to the symbol of a baobab tree and how families embody the baobab (*Baobab Families)* as they conceptualize and navigate the college choice process.

Data Quality

I used four strategies to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of my data: triangulation, member checks, peer debriefing and thick, rich description (Krefting, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I incorporated methodological triangulation through use of multiple forms of data collection (interviews, participant observation, participatory diagramming). Additionally I used a number of data sources (e.g. parents, children, other family members, myself) and collected data on multiple occasions, which reflects data triangulation. Uphold and Strickland (1989) state that when using the family as the unit of analysis, "Researchers can benefit from using multiple family respondents for triangulation" (p. 408). While I do not suggest that each family member provided the same data/narratives, interviewing multiple members of each family delivered a richer

and more detailed description of the family unit. According to Krefting (1999), triangulated data should be crosschecked against each other to confirm, "all aspects of the phenomenon have been investigated," (p. 177). Thus, I compared my field notes from participant observation to my interview transcript data as well as compared the data within and across each family to gain a fuller understanding of the lived experiences of the participants and the nature of the families' college going processes.

Member checking involves testing the interpretations of the data that I develop with the research participants or other stakeholders in the study (Krefting, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I conducted member checking with families as a follow up to their interviews. During the coding process, I provided family members with their individual coded transcripts as well as my initial coding scheme to gain their feedback. The participants were asked to read through the documents and comment upon my codes and preliminary findings. After the second and third group interviews, I provided the family with themes and patterns that I had identified in the group interview data and asked for their feedback and clarification. I used participants' reactions and suggestions to refine my coding system before moving into further analysis. Additionally, in my within-case families profiles, I included individual family member narratives/profiles. I provided each family member with a draft of his or her individual narrative/profile, asking him or her to provide feedback on the draft as well as to inform me of whether there was any information that they would like to have included or excluded from the draft. This provided another form of member checking and also ensured that participants were comfortable with the information that I was including about them in my study. Lastly, I sent at least one member of each of the family cases a description of the baobab tree

metaphor that I used to describe the cross-case analysis. Each of participants confirmed their satisfaction with the use of this metaphor. For example one participant expressed "Wow you really get us!" in assessing the fit between the baobab metaphor and his family's experiences.

I engaged in peer debriefing with a writing group comprised of doctoral students that I met with throughout the research study. This group provided an effective peer debriefing setting because these other students were unaffiliated with my research (disinterested peers) and could give me honest feedback as peers (equal power dynamic) (Krefting, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During these meetings I informed my group of my research progress, asked for feedback, sought guidance in challenges I faced related to my research, and discussed my preliminary findings. Additionally, I met with two African immigrants (one first-generation immigrant and one second-generation immigrant) periodically throughout the study to discuss my work. These immigrants were also unaffiliated with the participants in the study and the research I conducted, but provided perspective on my data analysis process as insiders to the demographic of the study.

My objective was to achieve an in-depth understanding of the context, concepts, and processes found in the cases (Creswell, 2007; La Rossa, 2005, Small, 2009). Thus, I increased the transferability of the study through the use of thick, rich description (Krefting, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My interactions with each family on multiple occasions resulted in prolonged and in-depth engagement. I was able to engage in naturalistic and ongoing conversations with families, hearing their stories to solicit further thick description. In presenting the data, I used extensive, direct quotes from the

participants and vignettes to illustrate their experiences. The use of peer debriefing along with triangulating data, member checking, and incorporating thick, rich description contributed to enhancing the quality of my research study.

Researcher Role and Reflexivity

Reflexivity serves a variety of purposes in this research. It aligns with my epistemological position and research methods (social constructivism and ethnographic case study), which require the researcher's "self" to be present in the study (Daly, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Additionally, reflexivity provides another form of credibility and trustworthiness to research data because it required me to be conscious of the ways in which my background and experiences influence how I collected and interpreted data (Krefting, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I considered researcher reflexivity in two primary ways: reflecting on my researcher role and identity as well as considering the impact of my social positioning on the researcher/participant relationship (Daly, 2007).

When I study Black immigrants, my own identity regarding ethnicity and nativity often becomes more salient. I have one parent who is a Black immigrant (West Indian). As a 2.5 generation Black immigrant, I am interested in this line of research in part due to my own experiences of having both an American and West Indian identity. Furthermore, I am married to an immigrant from Kenya, which has given me greater access to the African immigrant community and provided me with an ability to achieve faster camaraderie and build trust with this population of research participants. This dissertation stems from my personal background growing up with a familistic orientation, extended kin networks, and a bicultural identity, which ultimately played a part in my educational experiences and decisions about college. I wanted to conduct a study that would shed

light on whether and how these factors may influence other Black immigrants' decisions about education. Yet, it was important to approach this study knowing that participants would have experiences that may differ from my own. Knowing my own biases played a role in my selecting African immigrants for the study because with this population I am also an outsider as an American-born individual, not of (recent) African descent. I worked to remain aware of how my insider/outsider identities shaped my research design, focus, interview questions, and interpretations. To do so, I engaged in reflexivity through memo and field note writing, in which I included my own personal reflections. I also engaged in reflexivity with a working group to peer debrief throughout the study.

The researcher/participant relationship is another concern that was important to consider. For example, during my pilot study because I collected data in partcipants' homes it was easy to become more informal in my interactions them than I typically am in more formal research settings. Each of the parents in my pilot study expressed an interest in me speaking with their children about the importance of college, which was something I did not expect and thus did not originally prepare for. Through peer debriefing and personal reflection, I was able to consider how my own knowledge and skills might be useful to the participants and was able to work on developing a more reciprocal relationship with participants by offering to connect them to individuals at universities/pre-college outreach programs that could assist them with the college going process and offer them information about college admissions. Consequently, as I designed this dissertation study I reflected more on my social positioning as a PhD student who has navigated the college choice process numerous times and as a former college administrator and admissions counselor. For the current study, I chose to be more

intentional about engaging in reciprocity. In addition to assisting participants by connecting them to professional university/pre-college outreach staff that could assist them with the college going process, I also offered to conduct a workshop with participants about the college choice process and success in college after the data collection was complete.

Chapter 5: Family Profiles

I utilized an ethnographic case study methodology to describe and analyze the college choice process of sub-Saharan African immigrant families. The research questions for this study are:

1. How do African immigrant families conceptualize the process of college choice?
    - How do African immigrant families develop and communicate educational ideologies about college going?
2. How do African immigrant families actively navigate the college choice process?
    - In what ways do African immigrant families perceive the role of family, culture and social structures impacting their college choice process?

To address these questions, chapter five provides findings within each of the four family cases. I begin with a summary description of the four cases, followed by an in-depth profile of each case.

Summary of Family Profiles

Using data from the questionnaires and interviews, I present a summary description of the four family cases. This summary presents demographic data on each family unit and their individual family members as well as demographic data focused on the college-going child in each family. Each of the families in this study met five basic sampling criterion outlined in the methodology chapter four:

1) The family must be Black sub-Saharan African immigrants from an Anglophone country. These families must be comprised of voluntary immigrants (e.g. not refugees or asylum-seekers). All of the families participating were comprised of Black sub-Saharan African immigrants from an Anglophone country. Two of the participating

families originated from Kenya and two from Nigeria. All families have immigration histories that reflected a move to the United States in part to advance a family member's college education (e.g. voluntary immigrants).

2) ***Parents in the family must be first-generation immigrants (immigrants to the United States who were born in a different country) and at least one of their children must be a 1.5 or second-generation immigrant (a child of first-generation immigrants who was born abroad, but immigrated to the United States before age 12 or a U.S.-born child of first-generation immigrants).*** All of the cases include parents born in Kenya or Nigeria (e.g. first generation immigrants). Two of the families have one child in the household (one family with a 1.5 generation child and one family with a 2nd generation child), one family has three children in the household (two 1.5 generation children and one 2nd generation child) and one family has five children in the household (four 1.5 generation children and one 2nd generation child).

3) ***The 1.5 or second-generation immigrant child must be a college going individual. I define college going as an individual currently in grades 7 – 12, who is engaged or preparing to engage in the process of enrolling in an undergraduate institution.*** Each family has one college-going child in the home. Although two of the participating families have multiple children in the household, only one child in each household met the definition of a "college going individual" outlined above. Therefore, there were four college-going children who participated in the study. These children represented the 7th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades and each was engaged in or preparing to engage in the process of enrolling in an undergraduate institution.

4) ***The family must reside in the DC/MD/VA metropolitan area.*** Each of the four families resides in Maryland (two families in Howard County, one in Baltimore County, and one in Prince George's County).

5) ***The family must be willing to allow me to conduct data collection in their home.*** Each of the families allowed me to collect data in their home.

I used demographic questionnaire and interview data to provide a summary of each family and college going child in the tables below.

Table 2. Demographic Summary of Family Cases

Family	**Origin**	**Family Income**	**Name (Age)** ***Excludes College Going Child***	**Relation to College Going Child**	**Occupation**	**Level of Educ. Attained**	**Years in the U.S.**
Enemari Family	Nigeria	$70,000 - $99,999	Adakole (48) Owole (47) Simon (23) Nehemiah (21) Helen (18) David (18)	Father Mother Brother Brother Sister Brother	Educator Health Aide College Student College Student College Student College Student	Masters HS HS HS HS HS	21 12 12 12 12 12
Obi Family	Nigeria	$40,000 - $69,999	Esther (62) Ruth (36)	Grandmother Mother	Nutrition Aide System Analyst	MS Masters	11 18
Magimbi Family	Kenya	$40,000 - $69,999	Gatwiri (36)	Mother	Research Associate	Masters	18
Amolo Family	Kenya	$70,000 - $99,999	Atieno (44) Kenneth (46) Sara (18) Imani (7)	Mother Step-father Sister Half Brother	Teacher Consultant College Student Student	Masters Bachelor HS 1st Grade	14 28 14 U.S.-born

As aforementioned, each of the families has a country of origin in sub-Saharan Africa, either in Kenya or Nigeria. Two of the families are single parent households and two of the families are two-parent households. In the single parent homes, the household

incomes range from $40,000 - $69,000 and in the two parent homes, the income ranges from $70,000 - $99,000. Each family has at least one parent who has attained both a bachelor's and master's degree. All parents and grandparents in the families are currently employed. The adults in the families have spent a range of 11 to 28 years in the United States. In the families with more than one child, those children who have completed high school are all currently enrolled in college.

Table 3. Demographic Summary of College-Going Participants

Name	Family	Gender	Country of Birth	Age	Grade and Type of School	Self-Reported GPA (unweighted) and Academic Track	Primary Extracurricular Involvement
Agaba	Enemari Family	Male	United States	13	7th grade; Public School	3.6 and in all Honors courses	Club Soccer School Soccer Church
Priscilla	Obi Family	Female	United States	15	10th grade; Public School	3.75 and in Honors and Gifted & Talented (GT) courses	Volleyball Team Manager Drama Church
Olaf	Magimbi Family	Male	Kenya (immigrated at age six)	16	11th grade; Public School	3.14 and in Honors, GT and Advanced Placement (AP) courses	Club Soccer School Soccer (Captain) Astronomy Club Orchestra
Hannah	Amolo Family	Female	Kenya (immigrated at age seven)	17	12th grade; Public School	3.6 and in Honors courses	Internship Culinary Arts Club

There are two male and two female college-going participants in this study, ranging from ages 13 to 17 years old. Two of the participants were born in the United States, while two emigrated from Kenya at age six and age seven. All of the children

attend public school, with three students in high school and one student in middle school. All of the children are on a college preparatory academic track and have a grade point average in the "A" or "B" range. Additionally, all of the children are involved in extracurricular activities both in school and outside of school including athletics, church, student organizations, internships and music.

Organization of Family Profiles

I developed each of the four family profiles using data from participants' interview narratives and participatory diagrams as well as from my observations. The family profiles begin with an introduction of the family through a vignette of my entry into their home. Next, I review the experiences and educational pathways of each family member that was interviewed. While the unit of analysis for this study is the family, each individual family member is an embedded unit within the case and their narratives provide a deeper understanding of the lived experiences occurring within the families. Each family profile also includes a section on the family's structure and culture; the family's academic and college going ideologies; and the family's college choice process. These sections are organized around my research questions and sub-questions. For example, presenting findings on each family's college choice process addresses my primary research questions (*How do African immigrant families conceptualize the process of college choice? How do African immigrant families actively navigate the college choice process?*). The section on families' academic and college going ideologies references the sub-question: *How do African immigrant families develop and communicate educational ideologies about college going?* The section on families' culture and structure addresses the sub-question: *In what ways do African immigrant*

families perceive the role of family, culture and social structures impacting their college choice process?

It is appropriate when using ethnographic methods to include detailed descriptions of the context, settings, and individuals present in the study (Creswell, 2007). While my voice and observation notes provide a method for initially introducing each family and describing some of the family context and characteristics in each case, I have chosen to use the families' own voices and participatory diagrams as the primary method of presenting the findings. Thus, the within case findings include a number of short and long quotes to support the themes described in this chapter. Using the participants' own words acknowledges and values the ways in which they construct meaning about their family, education and college pathway.

Enemari Family

On the front door of the Enemari house is a sign that states, "All are welcome in our home" and the members of this household truly live up to that statement. Each time I arrived to collect data there was always a meal prepared that I was obliged to eat, at last an hour of conversation expected before the formal interviews began, and many other family friends in the home that provided a lively environment. At the end of each interview session, which were always held on Sunday evenings, the father, Adakole, or one of the older children would get in their car and lead me out of their neighborhood to ensure that I safely got back to the highway and asked that I call when I arrived home to make sure that I reached my house safely as well. The Enemaris welcomed me into their lives, providing personal narratives of their immigration history, educational achievements, college going experiences, and family life. This profile begins with a

description of the Enemari household members: first the parents Adakole (father) and Owole (mother), followed by a description of the four eldest children Simon, David, Nehemiah and Helen, and lastly a description of the youngest child Agaba who is currently engaging in the college choice process.

Adakole and Owole

Adakole is a man with a large presence in both stature and personality. In meeting him, I felt instantly that he was the "head of the household" as he introduced family members, gave all of the directions for the participatory diagramming exercises, and was often the first to speak when I asked questions during group interviews with the family. Adakole grew up in Nigeria as the youngest of ten siblings. Although he was the youngest child he always strove to be a strong leader in the family by performing well in school. He did his undergraduate studies in education in Nigeria and married his high school sweetheart after college graduation, "I was 22 years old when I graduated and then before I turned 23 or even started my first job we [he and Owole] got married."

Although he had a bachelor's degree from Nigeria, Adakole wanted to move to the United States "primarily to go to school for a better education and second, to avail myself of the opportunities that are here [in the United States] with jobs and in the economy." Less than two months into his job in Nigeria, Adakole received admission to come to the United States for a Masters program in theology, but his wife was pregnant and so, "I had to defer my admissions for the next year because our baby was on the way and so I was teaching at home [in Nigeria] and working." In 1990, Adakole and Owole had their first son, Simon. After Simon's birth Adakole began making plans to come to the United States to pursue his degree, but soon found out his wife was pregnant again

with their second child. Still, Adakole "had to pursue my studies because the school would not let me defer again, so it was a lot of pressure. The time I was coming over here [United States] coincided with the time she [Owole] had the second child [Nehemiah]." Adakole and Owole decided that Owole would remain in Nigeria and live with family members to raise the children while Adakole pursued his Masters program in the United States. "So I was here [United States], but was going home [Nigeria] every year to visit. One of the years I went home Owole became pregnant with our twins [Helen and David] and so she had all four children with her in Nigeria."

Adakole received two Masters degrees while in the United States, the first in theology at a small Bible college and the second in education at Bowie State University, however

> Once I started at Bowie I couldn't go back home [to Nigeria] anymore because I was working to pay my tuition and had a family of four at home to send money back to, so it was not easy. On my part I had to make the sacrifice of leaving my family back in Nigeria for a period of nine years, six years I didn't see them at all so that I could go to school here and then be able to have a job so that I could find a place for them to stay and to support them when they came here [to the United States].

While Adakole was pursuing graduate school and a career in the United States, Owole was raising four children in Nigeria, but she explained

> I wouldn't call myself a single parent while my husband was in the U.S. because I had help from my family and his family in Nigeria. There was always family willing to help out and I communicated with my husband by phone everyday.

Still, Owole sacrificed her own college education in order to stay at home with the children. She had hoped to pursue a career in nursing, but with Adakole in the United States and with four young children, she could not attend college in Nigeria. In 2001, after nine years of living apart Owole and the children received visas to come to the United States. Owole expressed that

> We [she and the children] were very excited in the moment to finally come to America and be with my husband, but I found the weather to be terrible and it was very lonely because I was home all by myself. In the morning he [Adakole] goes to work and then the kids all go to school and then I'll be here all by myself and it wasn't easy.

Later after moving to the United States, Owole became pregnant with the youngest child, Agaba and so she remained at home with him until he was school age.

The transition to life in the United States was not easy for either Owole or Adakole. While Owole struggled with the loneliness of being away from her family and community in Nigeria, Adakole struggled with his career in teaching,

> After finishing my second masters at Bowie State, I got a job teaching at a high school. It was like the difference between day and night, compared to what I experienced back home [in Nigeria]. Because here [in the United States] I see students come to school and some of them are playing their music in the back of the classroom. Some of them were just partying, sleeping, or they come with their little babies. It's like they don't really care whether you teach or don't teach. It is like mission impossible.

Although Adakole was eventually able to adjust to teaching in the United States, he also struggled with,

> The accent. I never knew I had an accent until I came to the U.S. So for the first time, I had to repeat myself so people can understand what I was saying and that was very, it was belittling. It was embarrassing because you've always spoken fluently in Nigeria and people understand what you say the first time, but not now.

Still even with the hurdles that both parents faced, overall their attitudes about moving to the United States were positive. Adakole explained "There were so many good people that I met both in the church, in school, and in the community that helped me a long the way," and Owole found that

> I liked the opportunity where the children have free school because back in Africa after elementary school, from middle school all through high school you have to pay. But here it's free and so I enjoyed that and their [the children's] education was worth our [she and Adakole's] sacrifices.

As parents, both Adakole and Owole have found that raising children in the United States provides the children with a more organized and stable academic environment, as Owole explained

> The American [school] system allows you to know what your children are doing because we know what time they leave to go to the school bus, when they are dismissed from school, get on the bus and come home. So we can monitor them and that helps a lot. Whereas if we were back home [Nigeria], there are no student monitoring schemes in the schools. Once it's time to go to lunch, every child runs

> all over the place. It's not as organized as here [United States]. In Nigeria only God knows what the children are doing and where they are going within that time. Children can actually go out of the school premises and wander around. But here [United States], you can't do that. It's much more controlled here.

Additionally, Adakole and Owole have created schedules that allow them to be very present in their children's lives, which is important to the both of them as Adakole expressed,

> My wife and I deliberately choose to put our schedule together in such a way that we are home all the time when the children are home from school. I choose to be a teacher so that when I'm teaching, I can go to work Monday through Friday and then come home when the children are home so that I can be in their lives. My wife was a homemaker for a long time so that she could take care of the children all the time. She chose to go to work recently, but with her schedule she can wait until [Agaba] gets on the school bus to go to work and then is already home from work by the time [Agaba] is home from school. So we put the family interests in the center and our schedule has to be arranged to work around that.

By being intentionally present and involved in their children's lives, Adakole and Owole believe that they have been able to give their five children stronger guidance, which they see as integral to their children's academic success.

Simon, Nehemiah, David and Helen

Simon (23 years old), Nehemiah (21 years old), David (18 years old) and Helen (18 years old) are the four eldest children of Adakole and Owole. Each of them was born in Nigeria, but spent the majority of their lives in the United States. Additionally, they are

all currently enrolled in college. Simon is outgoing and outspoken like his father, but during the interviews he expressed, “Me and my dad have gotten into a lot of conflicts because of my college and career choices.” Simon originally began college as a pre-medicine major, with the intent of becoming a medical doctor. However, during Simon’s sophomore year, he became involved with the African Student Association and developed a strong interest in the economic development challenges that exist within many African nations. During his junior year he decided to switch his major to Business/ Managerial Economics to be able to pursue these interests as a career. However, he was afraid of disappointing his parents and did not tell them until the beginning of his senior year when he realized that he would not graduate on time due to unfulfilled course requirements for the new major, “When I finally told my parents, they were devastated that I had kept such a big secret and that I’d have to spend another year in school, which is a financial burden.” Adakole also explained,

> I am proud of my son for his passions of wanting to help our people, but I also want him to make sound decisions about his life. Lying to me and his mother was not a sound decision, so it’s been hard to trust his judgment since.

While this issue initially put both emotional and financial strain on the Enemari family, Simon is now in his fifth year of college and has worked hard to “prove to my dad that I have good judgment.” He is on track to graduate in the spring of this year and was recently offered a job at a nonprofit organization that focuses on international development in Africa.

David attends the same college as Simon (University of Maryland, Baltimore County) and is also planning to graduate this year, which is his fourth year. Both brothers

have always commuted to college from home but unlike Simon, David originally wanted to "spread my wings and move away from the family for college." However, Owole explained that due to the financial cost and the desire to have the children stay close to home "We [she and Adakole] tried to advise all of them [children] to stay in state for college. But oh my God, David fought so much to go out of state." When he realized that going out of state for college would not be an option, David

> Decided that I wanted to go to Frostburg University because at least that was far away, but still in state. But in the end I decided to go to UMBC because it made the most sense for our family and that university [Frostburg] was way out in the boonies, not a place I wanted to be.

Currently, David is studying biochemistry and is president of a Christian organization at UMBC. Every Sunday he brings other UMBC students to his family's church and then the group always goes to the Enemari home afterwards for a Nigerian meal. Now as a senior in college, David admits that his parents were correct about staying close to home for college because "I see so many of the kids in my [Christian] organization that are homesick because their families don't live close by and so I can actually say that I'm happy to be near my family now, they're really supportive."

Helen is the only Enemari child to live away from home for college. She is currently a freshman in the Honors Program at the University of Maryland, College Park. Because she is participating in the Honors Program, she has chosen to live on campus. However, the transition to college has not been easy for her. Helen expressed that "all of my life I made nearly straight As, but in college I'm barely passing my classes." Helen admits that she has a hard time making friends or asking for help in her classes because

she's shy. Therefore, she did not fully utilize resources such as professors' office hours, study groups or academic support services to seek help until she found it "was too late." Owole was shocked when at the end of Helen's first semester, her daughter called her,

> Crying and crying and crying. I said, "What is going on girl, what is going on?" She said, "I disappointed you and daddy because I didn't do well the way I expected and this is the reason and that is the reason." She says she's already prepared to do better next semester, she's made all her schedule, she's this, she's that. I said, "Good for you, let's watch. I'll pray for you and see what comes out this time."

Although Helen is struggling in her first year of college, her twin brother Nehemiah is having a smoother transition academically. He is also studying at the University of Maryland, College Park, but commutes from home. Nehemiah is enrolled in the School of Engineering and after his first semester, he achieved nearly a 4.0 GPA. However, Nehemiah explained that attaining this GPA has not been easy, particularly because he also has a part-time job so,

> Most of the time I have to take public transportation home from school because I don't have a car and so I'll do some homework on the bus. But usually I'm up until 2am or 3am finishing homework. On the weekends, I work at K-mart and have to be there at 7am. So I feel like I never get any sleep, it's overwhelming.

Nehemiah had originally only planned to work during the summer before he started college, but his parents encouraged him to keep the job part-time during his freshman year because the family is financially strained with four children in college. While

Adakole sees the stress that working part-time places on Nehemiah, he appreciates his son's financial independence because

> If the other kids worked like [Nehemiah] then we [he and Owole] wouldn't cry so much because the financial load would be a little bit off of our head. [Nehemiah] has his own spending money and even contributes to household bills. But not all of our children can handle a part time job and school…it takes a lot of discipline.

Each of the four eldest Enemari children are pushing themselves as well as being pushed by their parents and each other to succeed in college. Nehemiah explained that in the Enemari home, the children have a saying that in terms of their grades they are "no less than all A's and one B kind of Africans." Meaning that the goal for each of them was always to have no more than one B on their report cards (the one B was allowed because they explained that "everyone is allowed to make a mistake occasionally"). All of the children expressed that their academic motivation stems from seeing the sacrifices that their parents have made in order to provide them with opportunities in the United States. During the group interview, David's voice became emotional when he said,

> When it's all said and done no one has ever helped me as much my parents and no one on this planet wants the best for me as much as they do. I have a long way to go in living up to their hard working character, but I'll get there.

All of the other Enemari children nodded in agreement with David's statement and quietly said, "thank you" or "God bless you" to their parents at the end of that interview.

Agaba

Agaba, the youngest Enemari child, is 13 years old and in the 7th grade. In meeting Agaba I found him to be both young and energetic, but also very thoughtful and

mature in terms of his responses to questions during the interviews. Adakole joked that Agaba "thinks he's already in college because he wants to be like his siblings, he wants to be ahead of his years." Still, as the youngest of five siblings, Agaba finds that he is "definitely the baby in house." His older brothers and sister believe that their parents are more lenient with Agaba in his upbringing and give him more attention than they received growing up because he is the only child that has experienced having both parents in the home all of his life. Yet, while some of Enemari siblings find that Agaba is more spoiled or coddled because he's the youngest, Agaba conversely believes that he has just as much if not more responsibilities in the home as compared to his siblings because

> I'm the one that does the chores around the house that no one else wants to do. And if they're [siblings] cleaning outside of the house or doing something where they need help, I'll be the first one that's called to help them.

During my visits it did seem that Agaba's position as the youngest child in the family required him to engage in many tasks given to him by his parents and older siblings. For example, when his brother David asked if I would like a glass of water and I responded "yes," David told Agaba to bring it to me instead of getting it for me himself. Agaba was also expected to clear the table after the meal that Owole and Helen prepared and additionally, both his parents and his siblings consistently asked Agaba to get them water or snacks as we engaged in the interviews. However, Agaba never complained or seemed to have a problem with fulfilling his family's requests, instead stating "sometimes it's like having six parents instead of two, but it's what comes with being the youngest kid in a Nigerian family I guess."

Agaba is the only Enemari child to be born in the United States, but in terms of identity he views himself as

> A mixture of both [American and Nigerian identities] because I was born in America and was brought up here, but then our [family's] values and culture reminds me of Nigeria. I mean I was born in America, but I'm still of Nigerian descent.

While Agaba is proud of both his Nigerian and his American heritage, he has been teased at school for having an African background. He explained, "at first most of my classmates usually think I'm American because I don't have an accent, but some people can tell I'm African when they find out my last name." When some of his classmates realized he was African they made fun of him, asking him questions such as "Did you live in a hut?" and "Why don't you guys wear more clothes?" However, Agaba expressed that these students were just ignorant because "most of them are Black and so even though they say that they're American, they are descendants of Africans too, but just from further back. Some people are a little ignorant about that." While his classmate's comments used to bother him, Agaba explained that the comments are no longer a problem because he feels like there are many benefits to having a Nigerian culture such as the food and getting to travel abroad to visit family.

Agaba and his family visited Nigeria together in 2009 and he enjoyed getting to spend time with his extended family, "It was really fun. A lot of kids and a lot of playing. I was actually crying when we had to leave because everywhere I went there was always kids my age around and time to play outside." Agaba explained that in the United States his parents are more restrictive on who his friends are and where they go to have fun

because Adakole and Owole can get worried about his safety. However, in Nigeria Agaba could be free to run around with his younger cousins without his parents or other adults worrying about them.

Agaba explained that his parents are strict, but they teach him many positive values. For example,

> Patience and discipline because sometimes I want to play outside all day and instead they'll [Adakole and Owole] sit me down and say, "You need to read a book or stay inside and study." Now I know if they weren't telling me this stuff, I probably wouldn't understand as much as I do now because I'm reading a lot. I love reading now.

In addition, growing up in a large family has taught Agaba about the importance of what he calls "shared responsibility." In the Enemari house everyone has his or her own chores and responsibilities and Agaba admitted, "Sometimes I get lazy with it and I just want to watch TV or something. But I know everybody else is working and I have to work too. It can't just be them working, we all have our part."

While Agaba would sometimes rather be playing or watching TV than doing chores, he realizes the value of the lessons he's learning in his family. He also feels like his family spends more quality time together than some of his friends' families, which he appreciates as well,

> A lot of American parents give their children, from what I've seen at school and stuff, everything they want. My friends come to school with all of these IPhone 5s and new sneakers. But a lot of times their [his friends'] parents aren't around much because they work a lot and so their parents try to buy their love with gifts.

> I mean, sometimes wish I could have some of the materialistic stuff too, but I'd rather get along with my family and we spend a lot of time together, which is nice.

Agaba feels that he owes a great deal to his parents, particularly his mother for the sacrifices they have made so that he could get a U.S. education and have a good life,

> I'm reading a book called *Outcasts United* and it's talking about these refugee kids who were in Nigeria and they moved to the U.S. because of the war. So it was talking about how some of the boys that moved were adapting to the U.S. culture and they were slacking in their work habits and their mom was reminding them where they came from and how she carried them through the desserts to a refugee camp and the struggles they came through. The book reminded me of my family because sacrifices are a big thing with us. Because my mom, she skipped college for me, to take care of me in the house when I was growing up. Because of what she did for me, I want to give back to her and my family when I grow up. So I can't slack off either.

Agaba also expressed that his siblings help to motivate him to do well in school and not "slack off." For example, "since I started middle school, my brothers and sister have enforced the 'All As and one B' policy with me and it's not easy, but they did it in middle and high school, and so I don't really have an excuse." When Agaba does not meet these grade expectations both his parents and his siblings often reprimand him, which can be overwhelming for him at times. However, he admits that the reprimands are making an impact because he is striving for straight As next academic quarter.

Agaba enjoys having siblings in college because it allows him to interact with many of his siblings' college friends and other young adults, particularly when David brings UMBC students to their home after church. Owole laughed saying that "on Sundays you see [Agaba] talking in the midst of all the college students, you'd think he knows everything." Recently, one of Agaba's older cousins from Nigeria came to visit because as Adakole explained

> He's going to college in West Virginia and during the winter holiday he had an opportunity to come and stay with us for the break. He and [Agaba] became so buddy buddy. He was telling me that [Agaba] must have a book in his head because he has never seen a young child be smart like that in his whole life. Agaba has all kinds of information in his head, too much of it.

Agaba enjoys learning about college life, having conversations with new people about their experiences, and sharing his own knowledge about different topics. However, he struggles with staying focused in school and being disciplined in the classroom. Owole explained, "His [Agaba's] teachers, all of them say he is so extraordinarily smart, but he is not focused. Sometimes he knows too much so that he doesn't really focus, but he's doing well in school though overall." Agaba attributes some of his lack of focus in school to being bored in class, although he is in an Honors curriculum. Unlike his siblings, he does not like science or health related classes and instead enjoys reading and language arts. His academic interests and his desire to learn from as well as teach others, has led him to want to be an educator like his father. However, Agaba emphasized, "My second choice career is a teacher." When I asked what his first choice was he burst into

laughter and then appeared embarrassed to answer the question. Then he quietly and quickly explained,

> Well, I play soccer now and I'm pretty good. So, but if it doesn't work out than a teacher. The chances are like one out of a million to become a professional soccer player, but I'm pretty good so. But I have a back-up plan if it doesn't work.

Agaba enjoys being physically active and plays on his school's soccer team as well as for a club soccer team. Both his parents and his siblings believe that he is an exceptional soccer player, but are discouraging him from pursuing soccer as a career. Therefore, while Agaba still aspires to play for a professional soccer team, he is planning to pursue college and get a degree in education as a "back up plan."

Enemari Family Structure and Culture

When the Enemari family began drawing their family ecomap (see Appendix I), Adakole suggested that they start "with something that represents God because God is our family's protector." The other members of the family agreed and they decided to draw a shield to reflect God's presence in their family and God's protection. Creating the diagram by starting with God represents one of the many ways this Christian family expressed the high value they place on religion as part of their family culture and structure. Adakole, who studied theology and is an ordained minister, explained,

> Our highest value in this family is God. For us, religion is not just a norm or a formality. Religion is our life; it is a matter of life and death. So we believe in God. We know that we have to put God first and we seek God and his righteousness and then all that we have becomes a blessing from God. So we

> believe in God, we serve God, we have faith in God and God ultimately is the drive, the chief drive for all that we do.

Every Sunday the Enemari family attends church together and is involved in church activities. Additionally, each of four older Enemari children participates in or leads a Christian organization at their university. Family members made references to God, the Bible and Christianity throughout their interviews, highlighting that Christianity is a driving force in the family's values, daily life, and children's upbringing.

In addition, the Enemari's involvement in their religion and in their church has given them access to a community and place of fellowship. Every Sunday they open their home to their children's friends and other church members to come over, fellowship together, and have a Nigerian meal, as Helen described, "Our house is a center for everybody on Sunday. The house is always full everywhere. So we cook for everyone. It's a lot of fun." Owole also added,

> We are used to that [having guests] and we are happy about it. It makes a world of difference because when our family first came to the U.S., this type of fellowship was what we missed the most. It just gives the feeling of back home [in Nigeria].

Trying to emulate aspects of community life in the United States is important to the Enemaris and allows the family to maintain some of their Nigerian culture as Simon explained, "In Nigeria, community is part of the system, the tradition, the way people do it. Hospitality is in-born. So Sundays give us the chance to share this part of our heritage with others." On the Enemari ecomap, Agaba drew a Nigerian flag at the center of the family to demonstrate their connection to the family's home country. With few family

members outside of their household living in the United States, remaining connected to extended family back in Nigeria has been critical as Adakole explained,

> Nigeria is our homeland. We [Enemari household] have a house there. We [Adakole and Owole] have our brothers and sisters there; every family member is there. We're just removed from there. So, when we go to Nigeria we know we are going home. And there we are more than a number. We are complete entities, whole flesh human beings. We are received for who we are. So that's where we have our friends and family. In the U.S. we are sojourners.

The Enemari children feel less like sojourners in the United States, but still feel a strong connection to their Nigerian roots. Twice a year the family travels to a conference held in Maryland, New York or North Carolina where immigrants from their home district in Nigeria come together "so that we can remain connected to each other, allow our children to become close, advise and encourage one another about our lives in the U.S., and keep up with what is going on in our hometown [in Nigeria]," Owole described. Because all of the members of the Enemari family cannot travel to Nigeria regularly due to cost, these conferences provide a means of keeping the family involved in the Nigerian immigrant community and linked to Nigeria. Agaba explained "it's really cool to see how many other Nigerians from the same community that my mom and dad grew up in live in America now." Simon, who is now the president of the African Student Association at his university, added that

> When we first moved to the U.S., it was hard being an African because of all of the stereotypes, but now with [Agaba] he's seeing all of us [older siblings] be proud of our culture and I think it helps him to feel the same way.

The Enemaris, particularly Adakole and Owole, believe that their lives in the United States are connected to the lives of family members in Nigeria as Owole explained, “We have that type of shared belief that we can work for the family here [in the United States] and then extend it to the family there [in Nigeria].” However, the Enemaris chose not to draw their extended family in their ecomap. Instead, inside their shield they drew the seven members of the Enemari household, which they see as the primary focus of daily life. As parents, Adakole and Owole strive to be consistently present in their children’s lives, for example setting up their schedules to ensure that at least one of them was always home when their children arrived home from school. Adakole explained that he and Owole also find it important to

> Set the example and the tempo for our children such that we [parents] don't fight each other or quarrel with each other in front of the children. We try to address things in a very friendly and understanding manner. We show a lot of respect and honor and love for one another. So that sets the tempo for the children. So from the go, our children know that they cannot fight one another because we don't.

Nehemiah can now appreciate the rule of “no fighting between siblings,” describing his relationship with his brothers and sister as

> Extremely close, our parents taught us [siblings] to be each other’s best friends. We even weren’t allowed to yell at each other growing up, which was really hard with so many kids. If we [siblings] did get into a fight we would actually agree to hide it from mommy and daddy so we wouldn’t get in trouble, so even when we were mad at each other we had to work together.

Family cohesion and togetherness are major values of the Enemari household as are hard work and discipline, which was represented by the final component that Helen added to the Enemari ecomap, a small picture of the American flag which they chose to represent the "American Dream." Adakole explained that in the Enemari household, while many of their values stem from a Nigerian and Christian foundation,

> For us, one of the American values and cultural points of view that we share wholeheartedly is the American Dream. The American Dream that says you can be anything you want to be as long as you are willing to work hard and pay the price. So in other words, in America there is room for self-improvement. You can start from point zero and get to the top and that can only happen in America. That is what is called the American Dream. That is why we are here. As long as you work hard and do what is expected of you, you can live freely and you can become what you dreamed to become. So that is the wonderful American value that we share.

Enemari Family Academic and College-Going Ideologies

The Enemari family believes strongly that the children have a role to play in achieving the American Dream for their family, which begins with their performance in school. Adakole and Owole also believe that their children are representing the family when they are at school as Adakole explained,

> We've [he and Owole] spent time with homework, we've spent time managing and guiding how they perform in school. At same time at home, we've taught them behavioral manners and morals that will help them to go out there to school and not be a disgrace. The last thing we want to see is our children bring shame to

> the name of our family. To avoid that, we have to make sure and guide them because they project the family name and represent the family. By the way they behave, their performance in school and in college, and their level of self-discipline.

In order to ensure that the children are prepared to represent the family, Adakole and Owole promote a high level of structure in the home to encourage the children to focus on their academic work. For example, Helen explained that growing up, she and her siblings were not allowed to watch television from Monday through Thursday because of the distraction it could bring to completing homework or studying, "Even though I live on campus now, to this day I rarely watch TV during the week because it's just so ingrained in me not to do it." Agaba added that at the Enemari house, there is space set up in the basement with desks to do homework after school, which he and his siblings have nicknamed "the dungeon," so "when I come home from school or soccer practice, I change clothes, eat a snack and then get started on my assignments in the dungeon." Additionally, as aforementioned, Owole and Adakole have work schedules that allow them to be present in the home once their children were home from school to ensure,

> We are involved in what they do. To ensure that they have help when they need it and that they follow the rules of the home. We provide structure when they're at a tender age. So when they are tender, that is like the twig. When the twig is tender, that is when you can actually bend it. As you bend the twig as it will grow.

Now that the older children are in college, they are more self-guided in their schedules, but when Helen and Nehemiah went to college this year, the family sat down together and came to a consensus that whoever lived in the home would follow the same rules in

order to provide consistency for Agaba. Therefore, all of the children (excluding Helen who lives on campus) still complete schoolwork in the "dungeon," refrain from watching television, texting, and playing video games during the school week, and spend at least one hour on Saturday and Sunday studying the Bible or reading a non-school-related book.

In addition to believing that structure is a key to academic success, the Enemari family strongly believes in self-discipline and setting high expectations. During a group interview, Nehemiah explained that, "academic success for us is being able to put in your best efforts at whatever you do. Like when you shoot for the moon you can at least get to the stars." Adakole agreed with Nehemiah but also explained that for him, it is more important that his children put in their best effort in school, than have the highest GPA, "If you have the ability of achieving As and you just don't put in any effort and it comes to a B, that is not good, but if you do your best and get a B, I can understand that." However, David laughed at this, "I understand what my dad's saying, but I don't think he's ever been okay with any of us getting a B." Adakole responded, "Because I know each of you are all capable of getting As if you put in your best effort, so why would I be okay with Bs?" While it is important for the Enemari children to perform at their best academically, this expectation is reinforced by their parents' belief that they have the ability to be above average students. For Agaba, he is both motivated and pressured by his parents expectations and the academic accomplishments of his siblings, "Deep down, I know they're [family] right about the importance of school, but it's a lot to live up to. I know I can do it, because they've done it, but I just don't want to let anyone down."

Agaba also explained that at school,

> I'm given a lot of praise for things that I do well, but at home it's not that no one cares, but they just want me to do better…Then at school, American kids come and they're not even prepared. When they get in trouble and the teachers threaten to call their parents, they don't even care because nothing really happens. If a teacher ever told me he was calling home, I would be so scared. So it's kind of a difference, the discipline, which is frustrating.

Both parents concurred with Agaba's observations, expressing that academic goals and expectations are communicated in the Enemari family through "tough love and discipline" because, according to Owole,

> If you pacify your children now and try to buy them over, they are going to grow up and not be prepared for the real world. Everything starts in your home. We don't give our kids money or rewards for getting good grades or going to college. Yes, we give them praise when they do well, but they are disciplined when they do not. We make sure that they know that the world that we live in is a difficult place and they should be ready for those difficulties and challenges.

Thus, while Agaba may receive more praise in school than at home for academic accomplishments or be disciplined more at home than at school for poor academic performance, his parents believe that their practices will better prepare him for the world when he is an adult. However, for Agaba, it is frustrating to see these inconsistencies between him and his classmates as well as between school and home regarding academic performance.

For the Enemari family, the expectation is that doing well in middle and high school in the short-term leads to enrollment in undergraduate and graduate school as well as a successful career in the long-term. Adakole finds that

> College is very vital for us, both for our background and for our personal family lives. There is a saying in my hometown that your education is your meal ticket. So college is what opens the world to you. So, we have high value for education in our family life and we work hard, very hard at achieving some level of education and we push our children to go even further.

Each of the Enemari children during both individual and group interviews expressed that going to college was never presented as an option, there were not alternatives that they could have considered or presented to their parents. David, who participated in ROTC as a high school student admitted that "joining the armed forces did cross my mind, but my brothers just laughed at me when I brought it up and I knew even mentioning it to my parents would have caused an uproar, so I just let that one go." Likewise, Agaba aspires to be a professional soccer player, but he knows that college is the only path that his family will approve of for him.

Enemari Family College Choice Process

The Enemari family completed the college choice process for four children and therefore, they feel adequately prepared to ensure Agaba successfully enrolls in college. Thus, while the family's participatory diagram of the college choice process focuses on Agaba's trajectory (see Appendix I), his siblings are illustrated throughout the diagram showing their influence on his process as well. The family drew his college going journey beginning at birth because as Owole suggests

> When they [children] were young, we [parents] had in our minds that God is helping us to train them from a baby through primary school, through high school and then to college. That is kind of the mindset that we as parents have from the beginning.

Although Adakole and Owole believed that Agaba and their other children would go to college from birth, Agaba remembers his first memories about college occurring during Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten when his older brother Simon,

> Was in middle school or high school and he would talk about wanting to go to college to be a doctor and my parents and the other grown-ups seemed happy about it and would brag about him. So I figured going to college and being a doctor was what I was supposed to do too.

After learning more about the medical profession, Agaba eventually decided that he did not want to be a doctor; however, the goal of going to college remained a constant presence in his life, "Through elementary and middle school I've seen my brothers and sister go off to college and my parents always say to me, 'One day it will be your turn." Adakole agrees with Agaba, explaining,

> For us, as a family, we always tend to have the end in view from the beginning. Our end goal for each one of them is not just to go to college and get a bachelor's degree; it is an end goal that each of them will get a graduate degree or PhD. So they know from the go that it is not a choice, it is something that you have to do. Like [Agaba] he knows already, he knows that there is no option. So it has always been inculcated into him.

Throughout his life Agaba has heard consistent messages about going to college and seen his siblings each accomplish this goal.

Some of Agaba's siblings would also involve him in their college search. For example, Agaba attended college visits, researched colleges on the Internet, read college materials and helped his siblings practice for the SAT (e.g. doing flashcards of SAT vocabulary). These experiences exposed him early on to the process of college choice. For example, he decided in the 5th grade that he wanted to attend the University of Maryland, College Park because

> I remember when [Helen] was looking at colleges, she and I would research on the internet and we found a chart that said that the University of Maryland is the 58th best school in the world. That's really impressive, especially since it's so close by.

Since that time, Agaba still continues to be interested in attending the University of Maryland, although he has not given much additional thought to enrolling there, "I haven't talked about it [going to UMD] with my parents or my teachers too much yet. 10th grade is probably when I'll start discussing it more with my parents because now I guess I'm too young." Adakole and Owole hope that Agaba continues to want to attend a public university in Maryland "even though our other children will have graduated by then, we still may have to help them with graduate school. So we still have to consider the cost of college for [Agaba]." Adakole expressed that even though he works as an educator and therefore has an understanding of the U.S. educational system, he did not realize how expensive college would be for his family. Owole explained that her children who are currently in college receive financial aid and scholarships, but there is still a

financial cost that they bear, “We can't wait for them to finish because it is a whole load to carry for four children in college.” While the Enemari family is experiencing financial strains due to having four children in college, Nehemiah expressed that his parents never made any of the children feel as if they could not go to college due to cost, “we each had the opportunity to go to a reputable school with a strong program of study. I think we’ve each had an equal opportunity in that way because there are a lot of good colleges in our state.” While Owole and Adakole believe that Agaba will have to experience some of the same restrictions in terms of his college options as his siblings due to cost, Agaba’s oldest brother Simon explained that by the time Agaba goes to college

> Me and maybe [Nehemiah] might be financially stable and could even help out with his [Agaba’s] tuition if need be, so if he does want to go out of state, he might have more of the opportunity to do so than we did.

Simon and his older siblings are committed to helping out their youngest sibling in whatever way they can in terms of college, whether it is helping with homework, providing advice and guidance or even potentially helping pay for his college tuition if they are able. However, Simon also admitted, “But I think our parents like having us nearby and so even if we could pay for [Agaba] to go out of state, they might not want him to go.” There does seem to be some conflation between cost and proximity in the college choice process of the Enemari family. While cost is certainly a factor that would make going to a geographically closer college a more feasible option, it is not the only reason that remaining in state is pushed, as Adakole explained,

> The rule of parenting does not stop when your child goes to college. Because even though they are 18, going to 19 and 20 and so on in college, they still need the

> family to be involved in their lives. They need a guide. So to have them close so that you can see and monitor their lives, so that you can be involved in their lives, is critical. So if they need help, you can take care of it and fix it before it gets out of control.

Thus, although staying close to home is financially easier on the family, the Enemari parents also want their children to live in close proximity (and even at home) while in college in order to continue to provide close guidance and family involvement.

Now in middle school, Agaba and his family are most focused on his academic performance in school as a means of ensuring that he can be accepted into college in the future. Adakole explained, "As an educator, I know how important grades are even at this early stage." As aforementioned, Agaba is currently enrolled in a college preparatory/ Honors curriculum. However his last quarter report card ("All As and 3 Bs") did not meet the expectations of his family, "We are happy, we are happy for his GPA, for his grades. But we know that he can do better than that. We know that he can do better than that if he pays more attention, if he keeps away from distractions, if he does all that he needs to do." Agaba agreed with his mother, "Yeah, I know that I've seen all four of them [siblings] go to college. I know what to do and what not to do. Like I need to study more. The grades, the GPA, putting in my effort." In order to ensure that Agaba improves his academic performance, his parents try to be involved with his middle school, as Adakole explained,

> We are involved. We attend the back to school night, and programs that they have. So we are involved in the school programs, we make calls and we go there

> to inquire how things are going. We wish we could attend more, but sometimes our schedules do not permit, but we do try.

The Enemaris feel that being involved in the school can help ensure that the family "is on the same page" with the school to ensure Agaba's academic success. Adakole and Owole believe that it is never to early to start ensuring that the children are on the right track academically and also expressed that they communicate to their children the importance of,

> Short-term goals and the long-term goals. In order for you to reach your long-term goal of having a good life, you must be able to fulfill your short-term goal, which is to be a good student. To fulfill your short-term goals, you have to have devotion and determination. The choices you make now, the successes you make today, will help you in the long term because the future that they expect really starts now. So if you do you best today, it will lead to the future you have later.

Overall, for the Enemari family, going to college is a goal that each child is expected to successfully accomplish as part of their long term goals. However, they are each responsible for each other's success, as Nehemiah expressed, "My dad always says that we have to remember the saying, 'I am because we are and because we are, therefore I am.' And so we have to look out for one another." The Enemaris work together as a family to help ensure each other's success. They study together, engage in decision-making together, motivate each other academically and "refuse to let each other fail." Adakole offered that while each member of the Enemari family has had to make small sacrifices to ensure that everyone could go to college, the overall benefits positively impact the whole family because,

> We don't believe in one, we believe that if one person in the family fails, everybody fails. If one family member succeeds, everyone succeeds. So the success of one person is the success of the other person. So we are all in this together as a family.

Obi Family

The Obis are a Nigerian family who live in a suburban Baltimore rowhome. At our first interview, I met 15-year old Priscilla sitting at a desktop computer in the family room with her grandmother Esther siting at a nearby table reading the Bible and Ruth, Priscilla's mother, moving between the kitchen and family room as she prepared a traditional Nigerian dish of fish and jollof rice. While each member of the family pursued their own interests, as they shared the family room space I sensed that they enjoyed being physically close to one another. This illustration stayed with me as I got to know the family over time, finding that they were indeed a close-knit group who valued spending time together. However, before describing the family unit, I will present each of these three family members individually.

Esther

Esther (62 years old) does not live in the home with Priscilla and Ruth, however it was important for them to include Esther in this study because she is the matriarch of the family and is very active in helping to raise Priscilla. It was clear in my conversations with Ruth that Esther is a very valued member of the family. Ruth explained to me that any lessons she teaches her daughter about education and life, stem from her mother Esther. Therefore, for a full understanding of the Obi family, it was important for me to hear from the matriarch who lives less than ten miles from Priscilla and Ruth. Esther

regularly picks up Priscilla from after-school activities during the week; has attended school meetings for Priscilla when Ruth was unable to due to work; and according to Priscilla, Esther is her "second mom." While Esther is small in stature, her presence exudes an air of authority in the family. For example, when Esther's cellphone rang during a family interview, Esther looked to Priscilla who jumped up to retrieve it for Esther without a word being spoken. When Esther coughed slightly, Ruth went to the kitchen to get her a glass of water without prompting. Esther explained, "In Nigeria, our culture is for the younger one to help or take care of the senior one. Respect for elders." Priscilla and Ruth appeared to want to ensure that Esther was comfortable and that her needs were being met at all times.

Esther moved to the United States in 2002 and works as a nutrition aide at a local middle school. While she is a woman of few words, when she discusses her children and their accomplishments her tone becomes more passionate and she conveys a sense of pride. Including Ruth, Esther has seven children who over the years have all migrated to the United States to pursue undergraduate or graduate degrees. Yet, Esther did not go to college and in fact, only attained the U.S. equivalent of a middle school education; however, she believes strongly in the value of education and in doing whatever it took for her children to have the best educational opportunities. In speaking with her I learned that she and her husband, who also did not go to college, sent their children to boarding and military schools in Nigeria as well as paid for daily private tutoring when the children were home for vacation. This all incurred a heavy financial cost to the family; yet, her husband was a successful entrepreneur and therefore they had the economic ability to provide these educational resources. Esther stated that "not being a college graduate did

not stop me from laying an emphasis on education and I stressed the importance of college since my children were in nursery school."

However, when her children were growing up, the university system in Nigeria was very limited and often unstable, with colleges regularly shutting down due to faculty going on strike. Esther explained,

> One thing about America that I appreciate is that when things are getting hard the government always renders a help. But in Nigeria, it's not like that. There is bribery and corruption and it even affects our schools and universities.

Due to the challenges occurring in the Nigerian university system, Esther and her husband sought out alternative college pathways for their children. Three of Esther's siblings had attended college in the United States in the 1970s and one of them suggested the option of signing up some of the Obi children for the Diversity Visa Lottery Program.[4] Because of her siblings' economic success in the United States, Esther agreed to sign up her eligible children for the program as a means of them being able to attend college in the United States.

Through the Diversity Visa Lottery program two of Esther's children, Ruth and one of Esther's sons, were able to attend college in the United States and eventually attain U.S. citizenship. Yet, Esther still had five other children that she wanted to go to college and she believed that a U.S. college degree would be the best opportunity. Once Ruth achieved permanent residency in the United States (a step in the pathway to citizenship), she was allowed to sponsor a visa for her parents and siblings to come to the United States; however, while there are no green card limits or waiting lists for parent or child

[4] This program gives U.S. visas to individuals from underrepresented sending countries in order to diversify immigration (Capps et al., 2011).

sponsorship, sponsoring a sibling can take more than a decade.[5] Therefore, it would be faster for Ruth to sponsor a parent and then that parent to sponsor their children than for Ruth to sponsor her siblings herself. The Obi family decided that Ruth would sponsor her mother Esther and then Esther would be able to eventually sponsor the remaining children. Esther explained that she never thought she would move permanently from Nigeria to the United States, but did so to help further her children's education. She did this by allowing Ruth to sponsor the parent visa and then once Esther moved to the U.S. and achieved permanent residency status, she was able to sponsor her remaining children to come to the United States as well. This process required patience and sacrifice as Esther spent nearly eight years away from her children who remained in Nigeria while she was in the United States. Yet, this process also allowed each of Esther's children to come to the United States to pursue undergraduate and/or graduate degrees.

Esther's husband still lives in Nigeria and so she returns annually to visit him. He also comes to the United States each year to visit her, their children and grandchildren. As a mother, Esther explained that her main desire was to teach her children a "love for God, family, and education." In addition to speaking with me about her family and their educational values, Esther spoke openly about being a devout Christian and quoted Bible scriptures throughout her interviews. Esther views faith in God as a foundation for any endeavor, including educational ones, which she illustrated in saying:

> Like yesterday, I was encouraging my last son concerning his education in this country. And the final thing I said is that you can't put God aside and you cannot

[5] Parents and children are given first preference for visa sponsorship, while siblings are given fourth preference. There are annual limits and waiting lists for fourth preference sponsorship, which can take three times as long to attain than sponsorship for first preference family relatives (http://www.uscis.gov/).

> run ahead of God. You have to keep God first and He will help you in your schooling. So in our family we always emphasize being obedient to God. Trust in God in everything.

Outside of the home, Esther spends the most time with her family at their church, which is predominantly comprised of Nigerians and other African immigrants. For example, she, Priscilla and Ruth attend church together two to three days per week. This includes attending services, participating in women's groups and engaging in volunteer opportunities. Both Esther and Ruth work together as part of the church Welcome Committee. Thus, while Esther lives in a separate home from Ruth and Priscilla, she plays an integral role in their daily lives as a parent/"second mom," family matriarch, and spiritual guide. Furthermore, Esther was intentional and self-sacrificing in ensuring that her children receive a quality college education, which has provided greater opportunities for subsequent generations in the Obi family.

Ruth

Thirty-six year old Ruth is a single mother to Priscilla and works as a systems analyst. Growing up, she was one of seven siblings and her nickname was "mother nature" because she always wanted to take care of her family. She explained,

> We had a maid and a cook growing up in Nigeria, but I still wanted to do the cooking and serving and cleaning for everyone. Can you imagine? I didn't know what I would be missing when I came here [to the United States].

In addition to being a caregiver, Ruth is very outgoing and talkative. During the family interviews and participatory diagramming exercises, she often took the lead. For example, while Esther was more of a passive participant during the participatory

diagramming (e.g. giving feedback, but not actually drawing or organizing ideas), Ruth was the first to grab materials and get to work creating the diagrams. Her combination of a gregarious personality with a caregiving attitude makes her a warm and welcoming individual.

Ruth told me many stories about her childhood and schooling in Nigeria. She worked hard in school and actually skipped two grades so that she graduated from high school when she was 16 years old. She credits much of her academic motivation and achievement to her parents, who expected her and her siblings to study year round,

> When we were in boarding schools for breaks, like Easter Break, we would still have private tutors that came to the house to get us ready for the next grade. So even when you are home on vacation you are preparing for the next class for one or two hours each night.

Ruth also highly credited her mother, Esther, for being heavily involved in her education,

> So she [Esther] was there to make sure when we were getting back from school that we did what we needed to do and before the tutor came in, she followed up, she got the reports on how we were doing and she was the one who went through our report card…and also tried to figure out the details, like 'Why couldn't you do better here?' and 'Why did you miss this point?'

In Nigeria, there was a large emphasis on the Joint Admission Matriculation Boards (JAMB), which was the national entrance examination for college. Ruth did well on this test and was accepted to college directly after high school, which she described as "a big thing to get admission right after high school because people take JAMB two or three times and pay extra to try to get themselves ready." Ruth had aspirations to become

a pharmacist, but attending college in Nigeria was riddled with political problems. She stated, “I started there [college in Nigeria] in 1994 and I didn’t even complete registration and get started into school when the faculty went on strike. So I had to go back home for six months…” However, one of Ruth’s aunts had signed Ruth up for the Diversity Visa Lottery program and in 1995 she was selected for the program. With Ruth’s university in Nigeria closed, she decided to come to the United States to pursue a college degree.

Ruth moved to the United States from Nigeria in 1995 to attend college and become a pharmacist. She began at a community college, but after finishing her associate’s degree and transferring to a four-year college Ruth unexpectedly became pregnant with Priscilla out of wedlock. She explained that this initially caused a lot of strain on her relationship with her family who is highly religious and traditional. However, Ruth was determined to succeed in the United States because she said that if she went back to Nigeria,

> I wouldn't even be able to finish my education. I would be forced to settle with a guy because you don't want to be single parent by yourself. You might even get into a marriage that isn't what you want because you don't want your parents to be ashamed of you anymore or because you need somebody to help you raise your child. Things like that you'd be forced to do.

While Ruth did not maintain a relationship with Priscilla’s father, she was able to eventually reconcile and get assistance from family members already in the United States such as her older brother who was also attending college through the Diversity Visa Lottery program. Although finishing college became a struggle, Ruth explained, “I knew as long as I was in school I knew my family would support me. It is easier for them to

support you knowing that you are going after something because education is very important to my family." Still, after giving birth to Priscilla and taking a year off from college to get settled, Ruth had to reassess her college and career plans,

> I started with a biochemistry major to be able to have the opportunity to go to pharmacy school. But I was not able to maintain that major and it was very hard. Actually my grades weren't even good anymore because I didn't have the time to study in preparation for class. My school was no longer my number one priority. So my priority kind of shifted which became putting a roof over our head and making sure that she's [Priscilla] safe. So after my first year I had to switch my major to information systems.

Ruth was able to complete her Bachelor's degree in information systems, although with having a young child it took her four years to complete the program, instead of the two years it should have taken her after going to community college. During this time she also accrued student loans to help pay for the program and other bills, which she is currently still paying off. After graduating, she became employed as a systems analyst, but she knew that she wanted to eventually pursue a graduate degree. While Priscilla was in elementary school, Ruth decided to use her employer's tuition remission benefits to go back to graduate school part-time and in 2007 received her master's degree. Ruth explained that when she received her master's degree she thanked her daughter, Priscilla

> For being there to understand that this was important to me. So even she sacrificed, like especially on a weekend she wanted to have her Mommy's attention and I'm like 'Not now because I'm doing schoolwork.' So when I got my master's in 2007, I said 'thank you' to her for being there, for not being

> destructive, for not making me feel guilty that I'm not spending enough time with her. Getting my degree was important to me and to her too.

Although Ruth has struggled at times as a single mother in the United States, she is proud to have attained two college degrees, purchased a home and raised a daughter. Ruth explained that her motivation to succeed stems from an internal drive, her Nigerian upbringing and a desire to provide a good life for Priscilla and her extended family. For example, one of the main motivations for Ruth in buying a house was to ensure that Priscilla had a stable home environment and could therefore focus on school. Ruth places a large emphasis on education in her communication with her daughter and suggests that education should also be Priscilla's primary focus. In highlighting her educational expectations for Priscilla, Ruth expressed, "I told her [Priscilla] that she doesn't have to work [while in high school]. Your job at this point is to be a child and a student." Because Ruth believes that Priscilla's main "job" is to be a good student and child, "even when she [Priscilla] does extracurricular activities in school, I [Ruth] tell her those are privileges, but her grades come first. If her grades drop or she misbehaves, I pull her from the activities." Ruth explained that putting school first was the way she was raised growing up in Nigeria and although Americans value athletics and other extracurricular activities, she does not share this value. As a parent, Ruth described herself as controlling and protective and during a family interview, Ruth expressed to Priscilla,

> I am the only parent you have and you are the only child I have. I'm not trying to have any others. So you have all of my attention, you have all of my focus, all of the resources I can give. Sometimes it can be overwhelming. It can be positive and negative.

Ruth recognizes that her parenting style often conflicts with American parenting, which she views as more flexible and permissive. Yet, Ruth believes strongly that a strict upbringing, a close-knit family, an emphasis on God/Christianity, and a focus on education have led to her own successes in life and will ultimately lead to Priscilla having a successful life as well.

Priscilla

Priscilla recently began her 10th grade year at a public high school in Baltimore County. During the family interviews, Priscilla appeared shy and reserved. While her mother and grandmother openly responded to questions, Priscilla only responded when I specifically prompted her and even during those times her response seemed short and somewhat guarded. Additionally, during the participatory diagramming she took on more of an "assistant role" providing her mother with markers and making a few comments, but not taking a lead in the process. However, during my individual interviews with her, Priscilla was much more outspoken and expressive. She shared stories about her life, her favorite music group *One Direction*, and her involvement in school volleyball and with her church youth group. I learned that this shift in her personality was one of many qualities that could at first appear contradictory about Priscilla, but were actually just the way she naturally balanced living at the intersection of many different contexts such as growing up in both an American society and a Nigerian home as well as transitioning from being a child to a teenager/young adult.

When I asked about her shift in communication patterns from the family to individual interview, Priscilla attributed some of it to what she perceives as her position in the Obi family, where she is referred to as the "big baby." Priscilla is an only child to

Ruth and has never had a relationship with her father. Priscilla, Ruth, and Esther stated during our interviews that Priscilla was sheltered growing up. Priscilla explained that she was raised "in the church" and that her mother was strict in terms of her friends. She was not allowed to attend sleepovers or to attend social gatherings with friends that were not church-related. Although she explained that she is generally comfortable around adults, when she is with family she reverts back to the role of "the baby" in the family and her voice is often disregarded. Priscilla also struggles with her position in her family because although she has a large extended family and a number of cousins, they are all either in their twenties or under age ten. Thus, in addition to being an only child, she does not have other same-age peers in the family. She explained, "I don't see myself as a big baby but I feel that I'm in that lone place in my family."

While Priscilla may feel out of place at times, she explained that overall she places a high value on family. At home, she and Ruth spend time together by going for walks around their neighborhood and watching Grey's Anatomy. Priscilla expressed that she and Ruth have a very close relationship and that she has a great deal of respect for her mom,

> Because she was a full-time student and a full-time mom and she was still able to get us a house and all this stuff. I was never a child that didn't have anything as a kid. I always had clothes, I always had toys. I always had books. I had everything I needed and a lot that I wanted.

Priscilla explained that she also enjoys having a large extended family that lives nearby because she is the "go-to babysitter" for her many younger cousins and her extended family always gathers at her house for major holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Her church community also plays a familial role in Priscilla's life; particularly her youth pastor whom Priscilla describes as "fun and free willing. She [youth pastor] wants to help us [children in the church] in the best way she can. She is a role model to me."

In addition to spending time with her family in the United States, when Priscilla was eleven she had the opportunity visit her family in Nigeria with her grandmother, Esther. In speaking about the trip, Priscilla said,

> It was completely different from the United States. I didn't really know what to expect, and then we got to my grandfather's house that night. He had to open the gate to get in and it was really tall. I knew he had some money but I didn't know he had a big house and everything.

During an individual interview Priscilla showed me a picture of her grandfather's house and it looked like a large compound or mansion. In seeing her grandfather's house, Priscilla fully came to realize the wealth and prestige her family possessed in Nigeria, which was different from the middle-class life she has in the United States. Priscilla explained that at first she felt out of place because " my mom didn't go with me and I was meeting a lot of family members for the first time. They had never been to America before." Additionally, during her six weeks in Nigeria it was challenging for her to get used to the infrastructure challenges in a developing nation like the "power going out all of the time." Yet, despite these hurdles, Priscilla expressed that going to Nigeria helped her to better understand and feel connected to her family and her Nigerian heritage. Although Priscilla has not been back since that trip, she desires to visit again in the future and mentioned "I even have a Nigerian passport because you can have dual citizenship with Nigeria and the U.S., so I'm part of both nations."

Academically, Priscilla is enrolled in a college preparatory curriculum and self-reported a 3.75 unweighted GPA. She revealed that she has mixed feelings about her academic performance and preparation for college due to mixed messages she receives between school and home. For example, Priscilla explained that at school, "I've been told so many times by teachers and other students, 'Don't worry about college until junior year,' but I'm like, 'That's not the case in my family. I don't know how to do that.'" She also stated that teachers have told her that is okay to get a "B" in a college preparation class because they are more rigorous, while in her family getting less than an "A" is unacceptable regardless of the level of course difficulty, "My mom doesn't even care if it [report card] says I have an 'A' overall in the class, she's going to look at each individual assignment grade, mid-term grade, exam grade and expect an 'A' on those as well."

While Priscilla has heard at her school that college preparation truly begins in the junior year, she feels that she has been preparing for it all of her life. She explained to me that as an elementary school student she would often visit the University of Maryland, Baltimore County when Ruth was enrolled there and one day,

> The dean of UMBC just walked by us. He looked at me and said to my mom, 'Hi. What grade is she in?' and my mom replied 'Class of 2016,' so even then I didn't know what college was, but I knew I was going to it.

While Priscilla works hard academically and feels that she is preparing herself to be a competitive college applicant, she is frustrated by financial and geographic constraints regarding college. Ruth believes that Priscilla should go to college in state so that she will not need to have loans and could possibly live at home. Because Ruth incurred a large amount of debt as a college student, she is against Priscilla getting loans for an

undergraduate degree. Ruth also wants Priscilla to go to a college with a strong/prestigious reputation and believes that that at least two public universities in the state of Maryland meet that requirement. However, Priscilla would prefer to go to school out-of-state and is worried that without scholarships, this goal will not be attainable. Therefore, while Priscilla and Ruth are in agreement about Priscilla going to college, they are experiencing tensions regarding cost and location. When they have disagreements about college-related issues, they often turn to members of the extended family to provide further insight. The next three sections will provide greater detail about the Obi family culture and structure as well as how this family communicates about educational ideologies and engages in the college choice process together.

Obi Family Structure and Culture

While the immediate Obi household is comprised of two individuals (Priscilla and Ruth), Ruth suggested that she and Priscilla (and Esther) represent "a small leaf on a large tree," meaning that they are a small component of a much larger family structure. When I asked them to draw an ecomap (see Appendix J), Esther was concerned that the 30" x 25" piece of paper they were given to draw the ecomap on would not be large enough to fit their entire family who reside in the United States, Nigeria, and Canada. Esther stated that "in Baltimore alone, we are 19 [members of the family]," which led Ruth to suggest that they draw an ecomap comprised solely of family living in Baltimore. This included Esther and her husband (who only lives in the United States for a few months each year), Esther's five sons and two daughters (including Ruth), her children's spouses, and all of her grandchildren. All of Esther's seven children have a bachelor's degree and four have or are pursuing a graduate degree. However, some of the children

who received a bachelor's degree in Nigeria had trouble transferring that degree to occupations in the United States. For example, one son was an architect in Nigeria, but was not able to pursue that career path immediately when he immigrated because his Nigerian college degree was not marketable in that field in the United States. Of the grandchildren who are over age 18, all have or are pursuing a college degree.

Initially, Esther wanted to solely include blood relatives in the ecomap because tracing the family bloodline is very important in Nigerian culture. Esther explained, "Most times we can trace our family members five or more generations down and it is very important to us to maintain our heritage and that family line." Yet, both Ruth and Priscilla convinced Esther to include individuals in the ecomap that were not blood-related as well. Priscilla expressed that family "is anyone who you have been through thick and thin with that has still hung by you…. someone you have known over the years and have gotten that close to." For example, Ruth included an individual whom she called Priscilla's "cousin." However, she explained that the cousin was not a blood-relative, but instead was a close family friend who helped to babysit Priscilla while Ruth was in college. Today the cousin is pursuing her MBA and is also Priscilla's math tutor. During subsequent interviews, the Obis added additional non-blood related individuals to the ecomap who play in role in their family's educational decisions and Priscilla's college choice process. This included a section called "church family" and a section called "hometown family." The church family reflected their church's leadership and members of the congregation. The "hometown family" reflected a local organization that the Obis belong to, which is comprised of other Nigerian immigrants who have moved from their hometown in Nigeria to the DC metro area.

Esther explained that in their ecomap, a line connects each child in the family to all of the adults because they "belong to everyone and are the responsibility of everyone [in the family]." Sense of responsibility was the predominant theme in how the Obis described their family unit. Esther shared, "I think what qualifies someone to be a member of our family is carrying out your responsibility to the family…it may be financial responsibility or moral responsibility or some other type, but it is a responsibility that is shared." Ruth agreed with this statement, expressing that even when family members living in Nigeria who she has not seen in years need help, she "still feels that sense of responsibility to them and I step up where I can." This sense of responsibility is not seen as a burden. Instead it reflects a sense of closeness that the family experiences emotionally and even geographically as Ruth shared,

> We are close, we live very close to one another and I think that helps us more to be there for one another. In case of emergency, everyone would pull their last resource so it is like an extra kind of insurance for us.

Thus, while family members are obligated to help one another, they also know that familial support will be reciprocated when needed.

Priscilla explains that in comparison to her American peers, "there's a much tighter bond with Nigerian families and African families in general." Esther agreed with Priscilla, stating, "in America it [responsibility to family] is a voluntary thing, people don't put family first." In order to maintain familial closeness and ties to Nigerian culture, the Obis regularly get together for family functions, attend a Nigerian church together, and participate in a Nigerian community organization. However, the Obis also expressed that maintaining a familial sense of obligation can be challenging in American

society, particularly for the children in the family, such as Priscilla, who are being raised in the United States. Priscilla explained this experience by stating,

> In America you are here and so it's [American values] all around you and so it's hard to not identify with it. But then when you come home you are with your family and you see all of these different [Nigerian/family] values.

Still Ruth was clear that "She [Priscilla] has grown up in a Nigerian family and does not have too many American friends, I make sure of that." While Priscilla has expressed that Ruth's perspective can be overbearing at times, Ruth and Esther believe that remaining a "Nigerian family" in the United States is critical. The strength of the Obi family appears situated within tight bonds and obligations that they have to one another, which also relates to how they navigate and conceptualize college going.

Obi Family Academic and College-Going Ideologies

Like many African immigrants, the Obi family's arrival to the United States was directly connected to college aspirations. Although Esther did not go to college, one of her sisters and three of her brothers came to the United States in the 1970s as international college students. Therefore, Esther was encouraging when her sister signed Ruth up for the Diversity Visa Lottery program so that she too could come to the United States to pursue a college degree. After Ruth became a citizen of the United States, she sponsored her mother Esther to come to the United States as well. This allowed Esther to then sponsor her remaining children in Nigeria. While this process took a number of years and required long periods of separation between members of the Obi family, it opened opportunities for social and economic mobility in the United States via postsecondary education that was more limited in Nigeria.

Priscilla grew up seeing her mother get a bachelor's and eventually a master's degree. She also witnessed several of her aunts, uncles, and cousins come to the United States to pursue a college degree. Ruth expressed, "She [Priscilla] was there for her aunts' and her cousins' college graduations. So it has become like the norm, a norm for people around her…everywhere she looks she see someone who is pursuing college." Thus for Priscilla, going to college became a familial norm early in life and one that is worth short-term sacrifices including financial cost, loss of personal comforts and leaving one's home country. Priscilla explains her family's educational standards,

> I know my grandma pushed my mom and her kids a lot more than my friends' parents push them. Like most of my friends find that the grades that I get like being a B student is a really good thing, but to my mom, it's like being an A student is better…I think it is a good expectation, I mean she [mother, Ruth] wants me to be the best that I can be… My people [family] know I make the [good] grades and know I'm going to do the right thing, but they still push.

In addition, the Obi family views an undergraduate degree as only a minor accomplishment with the ultimate goal being a graduate degree. All of Priscilla's aunts and uncles either have or are pursuing graduate degrees. During their individual interviews, both Priscilla and Ruth expressed that Priscilla is expected to achieve the same. Ruth shared, "We [she and Priscilla] have a saying that whatever education I have she has to exceed me...So since I have a master's, she has to have a PhD." Similarly Priscilla explained,

> She [Ruth] knows her standards…She has her masters [degree] and she always tells people "my daughter has to get a degree higher than me," so I will be a

> doctor one day. So that kind of lifestyle it is one that really toughens me and makes me know I need to push myself.

Yet, the familial pressure Priscilla receives regarding education can be overwhelming at times and run contrary to her own desires of what the outcome of a college degree or career path should be,

> There's the automatic expectation that you're going to college. But then there's the expectation of what you're going to do with that. Like, I can't go to college and become an actress. With people like my grandparents, I can't do that. I can be a doctor or an engineer.

For example, Priscilla is excited about her child development class this semester, where she works with elementary school students as a volunteer. Priscilla explained that the career she chooses in the future must involve children because that is her passion. This has led many of her family members to encourage her to become a pediatrician. However, she is beginning to question whether she wants to go to medical school and is open to other options such as being a teacher, social worker, or daycare owner,

> They [family] see how much I like kids. Just because I like kids, doesn't mean I have to be a pediatrician. I feel like, "Would you guys [family] really be okay with it if I don't go into a math or science program in college? Are we not going to have that strong bond like I thought we did? I thought you loved me no matter what I do."

Priscilla is experiencing tension between her family's desires and beliefs about success and her own. When I asked whether she would select a college major that her family disapproved of, she stated that she would not because "I'm going to see them [family] for

the rest of my life. I don't want them being upset with something I'm happy about." While Priscilla may change her mind later on in life, at this moment her family's approval regarding her college choices and career pathway are critical. Her perspective appears to reflect a more collectivist perspective on decision making in which familial pressure and responsibility motivate Priscilla to make decisions more so for her family instead of for herself.

Ruth also uses a familial perspective in ensuring that Priscilla has a strong support network and is not disadvantaged in her academic endeavors,

> That's my goal, that me being a single parent or she [Priscilla] being raised in a single parent household would not be a barrier…Where I'm struggling, my family members can help me. If it's something that I can't help with I say, "Go to this uncle. He's good at this. He can help you. Go to this cousin, she can help you with your writing." She [Priscilla] knows that her academic support system is not solely focused on me. She can tap into other family and friends. They're pretty involved. At least she's not just hearing it [message of going to college] from me. I don't want her to get tired of hearing my voice. I'm sure she is by now but if she hears it from me and she hears it from other family members then she knows that this is really important to the family. I know none of them [family members] will steer her wrong when it comes to education.

Among the Obis, the socialization that occurs around college-going goals involves the family pushing one another and setting examples of success. These educational ideologies appear to connect back to the Obi family structure and culture, which is founded upon familial responsibility, closeness, and reciprocity. Likewise, the

achievement of a college degree is an achievement for the whole family. It is in the aggregate that these degrees mean success to the family and contribute to the family unit as Esther explains,

> We [Obi family] have come a long way to this country. [Education] was valuable to us when we were in Nigeria. So we cannot come to this country and let it go. Education is something that is who we are and it will make our family successful.

Obi Family College Choice Process

When the Obi family began drawing their diagram of the college choice process (see Appendix J), they began the process with Priscilla's enrollment in Kindergarten. While, Ruth stated that she knew her daughter was going to go to college "from birth," Kindergarten for Priscilla was also when Ruth graduated with her bachelor's degree. Priscilla remembers "being so happy and excited" at Ruth's college graduation. Esther explained, "Even though she [Priscilla] was so young, ever since her mother's graduation, Priscilla has always talked about college as being a part of her plans." During these elementary school years the family would also make "deals" with Priscilla about college and her academic performance. For example, Ruth promised Priscilla a car if she received a full scholarship to go to college, "I figure $50,000 tuition versus a $10,000 car, so that way I won't have to worry about tuition." It is also important to note that going to graduate school was an important part of Priscilla's development of college going plans. As aforementioned, Priscilla and Ruth had a deal that Priscilla would achieve a higher level of education than her mother, which means she has to achieve greater than a master's degree. Some of her uncles also promised Priscilla trips, visits to restaurants

and gifts to motivate her academically and to set goals about going to college. Thus, from Kindergarten to 5th grade, Priscilla began developing an initial desire to attend college with family providing encouragement and support along the way.

However, it was from 6th to 8th grade (middle school) that Priscilla's desire to go to college grew because according to Ruth,

> That is when we were being told as parents [by the school] that their [students'] grades matter, and they were being told as students that the grades matter. They need to start focusing on their grades and their plans for higher education. So, we started talking about career goals and more about family expectations for school.

Yet, Priscilla explained that in middle school she also started receiving mixed messages about her academic performance between school and home, with the expectations at home being much higher. For example, if she did poorly on a test and the teacher explained that it was okay because the test was only a small percentage of her overall grade, she would still be punished at home for the low score. Or if "I got an A on a test and I was like, 'Oh yeah, Grandma, that test was super easy.' She's like, 'Well, if it was super easy, why didn't you get all the answers correct?'" Priscilla has always been an A or B student, with no final grades ever below a B. However, because the family believes that Priscilla "can do better," they seek to provide her with "encouragement, focus and discipline" in her academic preparation. Additionally, Priscilla has been enrolled in a college preparatory track since middle school, taking Honors and Gifted & Talented classes (GT). However, while Priscilla would like to take some non-academic courses, her mother pushes for a more rigorous curriculum, "I wanted to do another music elective this year, but my mom was like, 'No, just get more of your academics.'"

On the diagram, 9th and 10th grade were separated as the next component of their process. When the Obi family described this component, it represents a time in which the family developed some of the parameters for the type of college Priscilla will attend. For example, during this time, Ruth sat down with Priscilla and explained, "that I don't have any kind of trust fund for her or anything saved up for her education. My prayer is that she will do something in state and I can afford to pay." Thus, focusing on colleges in state and/or with a low tuition cost has become a major requirement in the college search. Additionally, Ruth would prefer that Priscilla attend a college "close to home" or commutes to college from home so that "I can still monitor what she's doing and where I can still have a say in how she goes about her academics." Conversely, Priscilla strongly wants to attend college out-of-state, but during the interviews stated "I wish cost wasn't a factor, but it is."

Both Priscilla and Ruth view reputation as an important college characteristic, but in different ways. Ruth believes that the undergraduate institution is much less important than the graduate institution Priscilla will attend, "if it is a masters [program] and you want to go to an Ivy League, I get it. But for undergrad, without scholarships I won't encourage you to go out there and get loans." She views the in-state colleges in Maryland as possessing enough of a good reputation for an undergraduate education. Priscilla believes that her college should have a good reputation in terms of not being a "party school" and she is interested in attending a Christian college so that "I can still keep in touch with my religious status…keeping a connection because I don't want to go to a place where I'm going to lose myself or I'm going to completely change."

For the Obi family, getting a college education is predominantly tied to following a specific career pathway. However, Priscilla is still unsure of what her ultimate career will be. Because of this, Ruth believes that it may be a good decision for Priscilla to start at community college instead of going straight into a four-year institution, explaining "This is what I say to her [Priscilla], 'If by the time you finish your senior year, you don't have a major, I'm not going send you to a four year college. I believe it's going be a waste of money.'" While Ruth sees community college as a viable option for Priscilla, she also views this message as a way to motivate Priscilla to select a career path because she knows Priscilla would rather start at a four-year college.

In high school, Priscilla continues to receive high academic expectations. However, she struggles with maintaining the level of academic discipline that is expected from her family. Still, next year she plans to enroll in a "Parallels Program" offered at her school, where she can enroll in classes at a nearby community college, with the classes counting as both high school and college credits. She also stated that at the end of this year, she would speak with her college counselor about college options because at her school the end of the sophomore year is when you can begin making appointments with counselors to talk about college. While Ruth has never been heavily involved with Priscilla's school, she stated that she often engages with Priscilla about academics at home and has told Priscilla's teachers,

> I like to stay on top with her [Priscilla]. I will go over assignments with her; you [teacher] don't have to go over it with her. I'll go over it with her and if she has follow up questions she will come to you. If you discuss it with her and the students in class that's fine. But, I will her discuss it with her at home, especially

if she's doing it wrong. If I see she is struggling, I will know how to offer her assistance as a parent.

Additionally, Ruth and Priscilla have reached out to their social network to help with academics and the college search process. Ruth regularly speaks to her family, friends and co-workers who have children in college to learn about the process. Priscilla often talks to one of her older cousins because, "At least in our family, she is the first one who has done education here from K through 12th grade in this country and through college as well, so she has an idea of what I need to do." Some of Priscilla's family members have taken her on college tours and a family friend who is also a college professor has let Priscilla sit in on one of her classes. So although Ruth and Priscilla are sometimes unsure of the college search process, Ruth explained, "I told her [Priscilla] and I tell her teachers, we have a lot of resources to tap into. There are a lot of college-educated people in our family and social network."

Although Priscilla is only in the 10th grade, the family included the 11th and 12th grade in their college choice diagram to illustrate the steps that Priscilla should take in the future. The Obi family included meeting with a college counselor, taking the SATs, applying for financial aid, learning college requirements and applying to college. Priscilla explained that she believes the SAT will be the most challenging part of the college choice process because she has heard that the test is very challenging and intimidating. She is even concerned about taking the PSATs this year stating, "This year I'm taking the PSATs and honestly, they [her school] haven't said anything about it. Isn't it something you should be worrying about? Teachers should be talking about?" Although she realizes that it is an important test, Ruth is unsure about the format and scoring of the SAT,

"Right now I don't know much about it [the SAT]. I don't even know the scoring, the scorecard, or the interpretation. I guess as we get closer I would have to educate myself on it, but I know it's required." Yet, because Priscilla is nervous about the test and Ruth is not familiar with it, Ruth explained that she would enroll Priscilla in an SAT test preparation program outside of school so that she can get additional assistance for the exam.

As aforementioned, Ruth does not want Priscilla to take out any loans for college and while Ruth is aware that they may qualify for federal financial aid in the form of grants, she is unsure of how much they may qualify for. Therefore, Ruth has agreed to pay the cost of in-state tuition for Priscilla and if Priscilla decides to go to an out-of-state school or to a private school, Priscilla will have to make up the difference in tuition through an academic scholarship. Ruth has told her daughter to apply for any scholarship she can, "Take every advantage she has for her, single parents, Black, minority, the first immigrant family to go to college, all these kind of things that can be put for her, take advantage of them." In terms of learning college requirements and applying to college, Priscilla knows that she will apply to in-state colleges and community college, but she also plans to apply to other colleges as well with the hopes of getting a scholarship.

Overall, in reviewing the college choice process with the Obi family, it is clear that Priscilla experienced an early inclination towards college. Her family and community have provided support, encouragement, high expectations and motivation to help her achieve success in the process. Priscilla's grades and college preparatory academic track also provide her with a foundation to become a competitive college applicant. However, her family and her college search is constrained by the financial cost of college, which

may likely be the deciding factor in where she attends college in the future. Additionally, while as a parent Ruth is heavily involved in Priscilla's academics, she is less confident about some critical components of the college choice process (e.g. SATs) and is not connected to Priscilla's school. Therefore, much of the assistance Priscilla and Ruth receive in the process is from non-school related individuals such as family and friends. Furthermore, Priscilla's career pathway is strongly tied to her college choice process and while Priscilla and her family are all in agreement that she should attend college and eventually graduate school, she is stressed by the pressure to choose a career in a field that she does not want. As a sophomore in high school, Priscilla is at a point in which she and her family are both heavily engaged in the college choice process and yet they still have many questions to address and steps to take.

One way to summarize the Obi family philosophy on the process of going to college was offered by Ruth. She noted that the family would take each step in stride, one at a time because,

> Preparing for college is like making bread or cake. You're just molding it, putting every ingredient and then mixing, mixing, mixing. Everything's not going to come out fast. But, finally when you bake it and everything is out then you're like, "Wow, that was what all of the work was for!"

Magimbi Family

The first time I entered the Magimbi home I was greeted with hugs from Gatwiri and Olaf. Gatwiri is a 36-year old woman from Kenya who has lived in the United States on and off over the past 18 years. She is a single mother to Olaf, a 16-year old in the 11th grade who was born in Kenya, but immigrated to the United States at age six. Gatwiri and

Olaf welcomed me with open arms into their condominium in suburban Maryland, where I spent three afternoons getting to know about their lives and their process of readying Olaf for college. Listening to the two of them during the family interviews was like watching an episode of the *Odd Couple*. Gatwiri and Olaf engaged in a witty and playful back and forth banter that illustrated a genuine closeness and openness between them. They are the only two members of their family to live in the United States, which reinforces their close relationship and also leads them to have strong ties to family "back home" in Kenya. Both their individual stories and their family story is thus a combination of experiences in the United States and in Kenya that shape their educational and college going experiences.

Gatwiri

Gatwiri was born in Nairobi, Kenya as the second of three daughters. Growing up, she felt that education for girls was considered generally less important in her community because parents figured, "at the end of the day you're [girls] going to get married and have kids so it [a college education] doesn't really matter." However, as a child Gatwiri performed very well in school and received a great deal of praise from her teachers. This led her parents to recognize her academic potential, "once my dad figured out that I was smart, then he slave-drove me. Every day, he came up with new math problems or puzzles for me to do and so my life became just doing work." Still, Gatwiri explained that if her family had a son, she would not likely have received so much encouragement from her parents regarding her education; but, because the family was comprised of three daughters, her mother and father focused their support on Gatwiri since she presented as the most academically gifted child. While Gatwiri felt that the level of academic

expectations and discipline that she received from her parents was excessive, she recognizes that her parents' interest and encouragement in her education allowed her to believe that attaining a college education was an achievable goal.

Gatwiri's high level of performance in primary school led her to be accepted to a prestigious secondary school that was known for sending students abroad to the United Kingdom and the United States for college. While in school, Gatwiri developed the goal of going to the United States to study international public health or international education. However, a university in a small town in Kentucky that did not have these majors heavily recruited Gatwiri, offering a tuition amount that was more financially feasible for her family than some of the other U.S. colleges that offered her program of study. Lacking knowledge about the United States and not wanting to pass up the opportunity to study as an international student, she enrolled in college in Kentucky. Gatwiri did not have any family or friends in the United States and she struggled with her transition,

> It was tough because you are dealing with a different culture. I mean everything was different. More so because I came with no family connections, no connections whatsoever and so I had to navigate it [the United States] on my own. I didn't know how to drive, I'd never written a check before, I didn't know how to balance it. I did not know a thing. So I had to learn and learn fast. I had to sink or swim.

Fortunately, Gatwiri found college in the United States to be easier academically than her schooling back in Kenya, "It's [school] a lot more strict in Kenya. The curriculum is heavier and the workload is a lot more. The teachers are much more serious and the

students are much more studious, much more determined." Therefore, while she struggled to adjust to daily life in the United States she was able to achieve a high GPA in her classes during her first semester at the university.

However, while in Kentucky Gatwiri learned that she was pregnant. Before coming to the United States she had conceived a child with her long-term boyfriend in Kenya, but did not know it at the time. When she learned of the pregnancy, Gatwiri decided to return to Kenya to have the baby because she had no familial support system in the United States. Gatwiri withdrew from her university and returned to Kenya where, "I was a teen mom, but my family rallied around me." Still, Gatwiri struggled because Olaf's father refused to believe the child was his and instead felt that Gatwiri became pregnant while she was away in the United States. Furthermore, while Gatwiri's parents and sisters helped her to raise Olaf, Gatwiri felt that the family no longer believed she would be successful in life or return to college. Yet, Gatwiri's short experience being an international student led her to believe that she could be successful in a U.S. college classroom and she promised herself that she would return one day to finish her bachelor's degree and to give Olaf the opportunity to have a U.S. education. Thus, while in Kenya, Gatwiri spent the majority of her time raising her son and planning to return to the United States.

It took six years for Gatwiri to gain a visa for her and Olaf to go back to the United States, where she eventually gained acceptance to a college in Maryland that had a dual bachelors-masters degree program in international public health. While in Maryland, Gatwiri became connected to a Kenyan immigrant community that helped her

with childcare and with adjusting to life as a student and single mother in the United States,

> So for example, when I was going to graduate school and even undergraduate, fortunately enough I never needed to hire a babysitter because I had other Kenyans to pitch in. I had night classes and somebody would be willing to keep him [Olaf] until I came from class. So that's basically how we made it, through people helping out.

By 2009, Gatwiri had completed her bachelor's degree and her master's degree, securing a job as a research associate at a large non-profit organization. By that time Olaf was 12 years old and he and Gatwiri were living in their own condominium in Howard County, Maryland. Additionally, Gatwiri began providing financial support to her parents and sisters who live in Kenya. Gatwiri had achieved the promise she had made to herself years earlier, becoming "the first of many in my family; the only one who has left the country [Kenya] and the only one who has got a college degree." However, now that Gatwiri has accomplished her goals and is sending her son to college in the next year, her plan is to move back to Kenya once Olaf enrolls in a university. As the only member of her family in the United States (apart from Olaf), Gatwiri often experiences loneliness and a desire to be "back home" with her family. She explained to me,

> I always tell my mom, 'You don't understand, you have no idea how hard it is to be all the way out here [in the United States] on my own and have to live everyday. You don't know how many times I've had to cry myself to sleep, but I can't let my son see that and I have nobody to share that with and so it's tough; it's

tough putting on that brave face all the time. There are times I just want to break down.

To be successful in the United States and not break down, Gatwiri explained that she had to overcome a cultural difference in gender expectations between the United States and Kenya. While Gatwiri was raised by her parents to be disciplined and hardworking, as a female in Kenya she was also raised to be meek, gentle, and compliant, which did not serve her well in the United States, "I wish I was raised with confidence and with self-assuredness. I wish I were raised to know or to believe that I could do anything because coming here [to the United States] you're already timid and shy. Just that confidence would have made a difference because you have to be tough to navigate this place [the United States]."

As a result of her experiences, Gatwiri wanted to instill a sense of confidence in her child and to create a relationship in which they could be open with one another. Thus she describes her parenting style as "liberal compared to how I grew up. I try to encourage him [Olaf] to have his own voice and to have his own opinion. I mean even when I feel like I'm disciplining him, I want to hear his side of the story." However, Gatwiri also feels that due to her more liberal parenting style she has "created a monster" because Olaf is very outgoing and outspoken, which makes her feel as if she sometimes loses control with her son. For example, during the participatory diagramming exercises, Olaf was very quick to develop a plan and begin the diagram on his own, with Gatwiri only providing minor instruction. When I asked about her participation, Gatwiri explained,

> I don't know that I had a very big role because I feel like my voice wasn't heard. He [Olaf] likes to be the voice at the top and he likes to be the leader. He doesn't do very well as the follower. So sometimes I struggle with that because this is a prime example [diagramming] where we're supposed to do something together and then he's like "No, no, I got it, I got it, I know what I'm doing." So he tends to do that a lot and it's a fine balance trying to figure out when to be like "Fine I'll let him" and when I have strong enough feelings about the task where I have to say "You need to stop and listen."

While Gatwiri believes that overall Olaf is a "good kid with a good heart" she often struggles as a parent because she finds "it's difficult to be a single mother. It's very difficult to be a woman raising a man."

Olaf

Olaf Magimbi is a self-described "jokester" who tries not to take life too seriously. In interacting with him and Gatwiri, I felt that he provided a comic relief and lightheartedness to some of the stresses that his mother deals with as a woman supporting both a son in the United States and family members in Kenya. This is not to say that Olaf takes the situation lightly, but instead he appears to want to take some of the stress away from his mother by making her laugh, have fun, and enjoy life. He explains, "I try to lighten the mood a lot with jokes, but when anyone needs me I'm always there for anyone in the family." While he presents an easygoing personality, Olaf is also very self-assured. During the first five minutes of our first interview he used a car analogy to describe himself, "A person without self-confidence is like a Honda, but with confidence you're like a Lamborghini. And who wants to drive a Honda when you can drive a

Lamborghini? I'm like the Lamborghini." Although Gatwiri struggles with Olaf's more dominant personality, he explains that she taught him to be this way,

> My mom says that I'm a strong enough person to know if I'm in a bad situation or if something is not good for me. She's always tried to inspire me to make my own decisions and not just listen to what other people try to tell me to do. She's taught me to be a good person and to make good judgments.

Olaf's confidence makes him a natural leader and he also sees himself as the "man of the house." Olaf's perspective on his position as a leader in his family stems from his belief that "family is everything and I've been taught by my mom to put your family over everything else. Since we don't have a man in the household, I had to step up and be the man for my family." Both Gatwiri and Olaf spoke about times in which Olaf has put the family's needs before his own needs. For example, cancelling his plans with friends when Gatwiri is sick to stay home and take care of her as well as getting a part-time job this year to be able to contribute to the money Gatwiri sends to family back in Kenya. Olaf explained that he sees the value of "family first" constantly modeled by his mother, who he says "came here [to the United States] primarily to help her family and to help me. And I'm really grateful to her for that." Olaf's role as a leader in the family is also founded upon his Kenyan heritage, which he explained,

> In Kenyan families the first-born is the one who has all of the responsibility for taking care of the family. My grandpa was the first born in his family and my dad was the first born in his family. I am the first born in this family.

Olaf views his familial position as a responsibility to his mother, his family, his culture and to himself. Thus while he is a "jokester," he also illustrates a high level of maturity and focus on being an asset to the Magimbi family.

Although Olaf and Gatwiri live thousands of miles away from family in Kenya, Gatwiri has been intentional in keeping Olaf connected to the family and to Kenyan culture. Gatwiri and Olaf go to Kenya for eight to ten weeks each summer and they are in constant communication with relatives who live there. Olaf explained, "My mom calls her mom and sisters everyday, I text back and forth with my uncle everyday and talk to my grandpa at least once a week." Going back to Kenya every year is particularly important to Olaf because it gives him the opportunity to connect with male role models in his family,

> I feel like going back [to Kenya] has been able to help me stay stabilized as a person. When I go there I'm able to spend time with the men in my family. They give me advice and talk to me about life and give me guidance. The values that I get when I go back, the values that my grandpa and other people tell me help me and I keep them in mind for myself when I'm back in the U.S.

Additionally, while in Kenya three years ago Olaf participated in his tribe's male circumcision ceremony, which "every boy goes through to become a man." Although Olaf is not allowed to describe the ceremony to women and thus would not provide me with details about it, he explained that it had a positive impact on his life and has given him higher standing in his extended family,

> So because I became a man a couple of years ago I interact more with the adults than the kids in the family now when I go back to Kenya. I talk to the adults and

> they give me all of these responsibilities because they tell me that when I'm older "you're going to be the leader of the family."

While, Olaf's status as a man and as a leader translates well in the Kenyan environment, these characteristics do not work as well in the U.S. school environment. Gatwiri explained,

> In his [Olaf's] school, I'll have teachers say he doesn't do well in groups because he feels strongly about being a leader and so he doesn't share that role very well. He doesn't like to be in situations where he doesn't come out on top. And if he knows he's not going to succeed and he's not going to come out on top, he's not going to try.

Olaf finds that when he is not challenged in the classroom, he can quickly become disengaged. Therefore, although he may understand the course content, his grades can easily slip because he becomes disinterested in the course and stops completing assignments on time or studying. In fact, Gatwiri often wonders if it would have been better for Olaf to go to school in Kenya because she sees the Kenyan school system as more disciplined and challenging,

> I think [Olaf] is just smart and gets things quickly and so he gets bored quickly. So when the teacher's there trying to explain something to the class, he's already ten steps ahead and is like, 'Okay. So what do I do now?' So he'll start to draw or sing or just be a distraction and I've told him, "You would never get away with that in Kenya. Never."

Olaf explained that he only had one teacher ever challenge him in school and that was in the 4th grade, in which the teacher would give him harder assignments to complete while

the other students worked on the regular coursework. During the interviews I asked if Olaf was tested for a Gifted and Talented program or was ever put in more advanced classes. Gatwiri explained that when Olaf was in elementary school she was unaware that these programs existed, but in middle school he began to enter a college preparatory academic track. Olaf is currently taking both Advanced Placement and Honors classes in high school. He is also involved in extracurricular activities, acting as the captain of his school soccer team and playing the cello in the school orchestra.

In the future, Olaf believes he will attend college on a soccer scholarship. He receives encouragement about opportunities to play soccer in college from his club and high school soccer coaches as well as from former teammates who are now in college. Because of this influence he is particularly interested in going to the University of North Carolina (UNC), Chapel Hill,

> Because freshman year my coach talked to me the last day we had class and he told me I was going to play for them [UNC Chapel Hill]. And a lot of my friends who are on the soccer team there now always text me saying how the current coach [at UNC Chapel Hill] has talked about me going there.

While Olaf is open to attending other institutions, he expressed that he would not apply to a school that did not have a soccer team or that had a team that he could not play for. Conversely, while Gatwiri supports Olaf's desire to attain a soccer scholarship, she also wishes that he were more interested in selecting a school based on academic reputation. Furthermore, she does not want him to attend UNC Chapel Hill as she has heard from friends and colleagues that Olaf should not attend a university in the south because,

> I've heard horror stories about racism and race issues in the south. I'm not from here, so I don't know for sure. But, I've literally been told by college professors who had experience teaching in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky that you don't want a Black man in the South, period. So, I'm concerned about that. When I was in college in Kentucky, we were told that the neighborhood is pretty racist and so we were advised not to walk outside the campus grounds and true enough, there was a man who was known to shoot at Black people.

Gatwiri's own experiences as an international student in the south coupled with the information given to her by others has led her to believe that Olaf should not attend college in North Carolina. However, Olaf does not share her concerns, having heard from current students and his coaches that he will have a good experience at UNC Chapel Hill. While Gatwiri and Olaf are considering the advice they are receiving from individuals within their social networks, they are currently at a standstill regarding whether UNC Chapel Hill will be the best fit for Olaf.

Magimbi Family Structure and Culture

As aforementioned, Gatwiri and Olaf are the only members of the Magimbi family to live in the United States. However, their family ecomap is comprised of 35 additional individuals, 29 of whom live in Kenya (see Appendix K). Gatwiri explained, "I've had a lot of support from my family even when they're not here [in the United States]. And because we [she and Olaf] stay connected we're never that far away from them." As a parent one of Gatwiri's primary goals was to ensure that Olaf remained connected to his larger family and to Kenyan culture, which Olaf has embraced, "In Kenyan culture, family come before everything. Family first over everything and I really

believe that." Yet, instilling this value of family in a child who is growing up in the United States was challenging at first for Gatwiri because,

> It's [the value of family] different from the way things are here [in the United States]. Here they don't put family first. The intensity is different. In the African culture you are sort of brought up to believe that your family is your life and you owe them everything that you are and everything you become. You can't think about yourself without thinking about your family. Here [in the United States] you are an individual first. So, I think in the Kenyan culture family means life really.

Gatwiri was intentional about exposing Olaf to Kenyan culture through food, engaging with other Kenyan immigrants in the United States, remaining in constant communication with family members in Kenya and returning to Kenya each summer to visit family. These experiences have taught Olaf a sense of respect towards his mother and his family that he sees lacking in some American families,

> Sometimes here [in the United States] you hear the way kids talk to their parents. They say, "Mom I hate you and dad I hate you." I think to myself, "I don't know how they can say because I can never see myself saying that." If I ever said that I'd be killed most likely. You have to have a level of respect for your parents and not just them but for the rest of your family.

Olaf took the lead in drawing the Magimbi ecomap and was insistent he draw the faces of the people in the family because he believed this illustrated "the respect that we have for family that we would take the time to draw each person." The ecomap includes Olaf's mother, father, and each side's extended family network. However, Olaf explained

that he included his father's side only because he is close to his father's family (e.g. Olaf's paternal grandfather), not because he is close to his father

> I wouldn't really see my father as a parent. I just talk to him a couple times and whenever I do talk to him he's just asking me how I've been. It's more surface level, which is why he just 'father' on here [ecomap] and my mom is 'mommy' because she is really the main parent.

The ecomap also includes Gatwiri and Olaf's closest friends who they also consider family; for Olaf, these friends all live in the United States and for Gatwiri, it is a mix of friends in the United States, Kenya, and the United Kingdom. From looking at the ecomap, there is nothing that distinguishes Olaf and Gatwiri from the other people on the diagram to show their ownership of the diagram or that the diagram stems first from the two of them. However, Gatwiri explained that this was intentional because,

> Whether we [the family] all get along or not, we are connected, we are one cohesive unit. Me and my son are just a part of this unit and so in this picture [ecomap] it is important that we just blend in with everyone else.

Remaining closely connected to her family back in Kenya and to Kenyan culture has been instrumental in terms of helping Gatwiri to overcome the challenges of being a single parent in the United States. In fact, she explained,

> I don't really see the fact that my son comes from a single parent house to be a disadvantage to him. I don't even really consider us a single parent household because my family is so involved. We have plenty of support. My mom and his other grandparents just have done an amazing job because it hasn't been just me. They are very much a part of his life in terms of talking to him and spending time

> with him and saying "This is what a man does and this is what is expected of you." And his grandfather is very good at giving those lessons consistently. So even when I've needed help passing on a message to [Olaf] his grandfather will tell me "You know I've got it, don't worry about it." And he's [Olaf] gained enough respect for his grandfather not to disobey him.

Olaf agrees with his mother, stating that his "grandpa is the one who lays down the law. He scares me, well he doesn't scare me, but I've built a level of respect for him that when he says something I do whatever he says." Thus, when Gatwiri needs assistance with disciplining Olaf or ensuring that Olaf fulfills his responsibilities at school and at home, all she has to do is make a phone call to Kenya and she can depend on members of the family to support her although they are thousands of miles away. Multiple members of the family will immediately start calling, text messaging and emailing Olaf to "straighten him out." While the involvement of his extended family in his life can overwhelm Olaf at times, there are also benefits as he explained,

> In the African family when something happens with one person, the entire family will know about it. Like whenever I do something bad, my whole family will know about it within minutes. The first person who will call me is my grandpa and I'm like "Oh God." But I think it's good because then everyone in the family can keep tabs on whatever I'm doing. It helps keep with the togetherness of the family even though we're apart.

While Gatwiri and Olaf remain strongly connected to family in Kenya, they also maintain a close and open relationship with one another. Olaf and Gatwiri are both very active and often spend time together playing tennis, swimming, and going hiking. They

also go to church together every Sunday and pray together everyday. Both Gatwiri and Olaf spoke about their shared value of acknowledging one another. Gatwiri expressed,

> One thing that we always do is acknowledge each other. For me growing up, this is something that got lost somewhere. Especially being a child in an African home, traditionally women and children were seen and not heard. So we [she and her sisters] tended to get disregarded a lot and there wasn't space to speak about your feelings. So, I've tried to encourage that with him and we formed the habit of spending time to intentionally communicate and talk about issues. Also every night before he goes to sleep we say "good night." And every morning before he leaves we say "good morning and good bye." It's a small thing, but just checking in like that is important when it's just two people living in the home.

Olaf also expressed that he appreciates his mother's concern for him because

> Some parents let their kids do whatever and they don't even care. The good thing with my mom is she'll let me do things and she'll just say "Call me when you get there." She'll make me check in with her and at least I know she cares about me and is worried about my safety.

Overall, the Magimbi household structure and culture reflects what Gatwiri and Olaf view as the best of Kenyan culture such as family unity and involvement. Gatwiri has also been intentional in disregarding what she views as the unbeneficial aspects of her Kenyan upbringing such as "not allowing children to have a voice," in order to ensure that Olaf thrives and is successful in American society. Thus, it appears that Gatwiri and Olaf are working to utilize the "best of both worlds" in their lives.

Magimbi Family Academic and College-Going Ideologies

The Magimbi household appears to draw from both individualistic and collectivistic paradigms when discussing their views on education and college going, which may similarly reflect the influence of both Kenyan and American ideals. For example, Gatwiri sees what she deems as a more American perspective of being an individual as important to Olaf's academic success,

> Because he [Olaf] has to have something that distinguishes him from the rest of his classmates– from everybody else. He has to always…I don't want to say outsmart everybody but just be the best academically. Stand out. Be different. That's the only way you're going to get noticed and respected and appreciated in America.

Yet, at the same time Gatwiri explained that she tries to show Olaf that his academic success will positively impact the family and that the Magimbi family is invested in his academic success,

> Because just having your family, people who care about you, show you that they're invested in your success has been critical. All of them [family] are constantly backing him up and all of us are giving him the same message that it's important to go to college and that we're behind you.

Similarly while Olaf views academic success and going to college as goals that he wants to achieve for himself, he also feel that he has an obligation to use a college education to help his family back in Kenya,

> When I go to college and I get an education, I'll probably get a good job and support myself in the future. But I also want to support my family in Kenya and

> give them money and stuff. Because some of them in the village might not go to college and some might. And some of them can't find jobs and if I could just help them, I can help them with whatever I can if I have a college degree and a good job.

Both Gatwiri and Olaf expressed that being an individual and personal gain are linked to academic success. Yet, they also both indicate that familial support and involvement is important in successfully attaining an education as well as that using one's education to help support the family is an important value.

While Gatwiri, Olaf and the extended Magimbi family are all in agreement about the importance of Olaf going to college, there exists tension around academic expectations and performance. Olaf finds that his family "wants perfection with school" and he has trouble living up to that expectation,

> I don't do anything bad, I don't consider myself a bad kid. But if I get a "C" in school, even if it's not the final grade, I get in trouble as if I'm failing or something. My mom will talk to everyone in the family and then everyone will call or text me and talk to me.

Gatwiri admits that she does "get the family involved" when Olaf brings home grades less than a "B." Olaf has a self-reported 3.14 unweighted GPA and Gatwiri is not happy with this grade point average. In asking her about conversations she's had with Olaf regarding his grades, Gatwiri explained that these conversations are,

> Frustrating as always and I tell him, "I know you can do better. I'm not impressed" because I think he can do better. Freshman year and sophomore year,

> I think it was just a lot of breezing through for him but this [junior year] is his make it or break it year.

Gatwiri believes that Olaf wants to be successful, but that because he is academically gifted, he can get by in many of his classes, which has made him less driven, "the past couple years, he hasn't really…I feel like he hasn't really even tried, and he got decent grades without trying. So I see that if he can push himself harder, and if he really applied himself, he can do better." Gatwiri struggles between being "overly pushy" and "providing support" to Olaf academically. While she believes that Olaf has the talent to achieve higher grades, she does not want to be as stringent as her parents were with her growing up in Kenya. Olaf struggles with the academic pressure that he receives from his mother and other family members, but also feels an obligation and a sense of pride in these expectations,

> I mean, first starting off with my family's heritage. My grandpa was the first person in his tribe to go to college and to get out of the village. And then my father also went to college and is a doctor in Kenya. Most of the people on my father's side of the family went to college. And then my mom was the first in her family to go to college. They all expect a lot of me with school stuff. Especially since in each generation the first-born is supposed to do well in life. So when I mess up in school, I'm not setting a good example.

Olaf feels that his family should be more flexible with his grades because he is heavily involved with extracurricular activities at school, and particularly because he believes his soccer talent will earn him an athletic scholarship to college. Additionally, Olaf's teachers and coaches have told him that his involvement makes him a well-

rounded individual, which colleges will view as an asset. During the group interview, Olaf explained to Gatwiri,

> Because I feel like education is really important, but then you can have someone who just does education and nothing else. That goes to school, comes home, studies and does nothing else. You also need to do other stuff. Because I do music, and sports, and school, so I feel instead of just being someone who does good in school, you should be more of a well rounded person. Like, if I was a college admissions person, the other guy with a 4.0 GPA looks great, but a guy like me with a 3.0 that does all these athletics and does music and is involved in school is more of a well-rounded person than just the guy who does education and nothing else.

Gatwiri responded to Olaf, "Maybe so, but I think the college admissions person would prefer above both of those guys, someone who has a 4.0 and is involved as well. You should strive to be that person." While Olaf is not necessarily striving to be "that person" who is both heavily involved in activities and has a perfect GPA, Gatwiri sees this as an attainable goal if Olaf would only put forth greater effort. Still, Gatwiri supports Olaf's involvement in non-academic activities and explained that one of the reasons she moved to her current neighborhood is because of the good schools in the area and the opportunities the schools provide with both curricular and extracurricular activities,

> You don't find a whole lot of schools in Kenya offering the things that he's being offered here. And I think it just kind of helps make him a well-rounded person being able to learn about different music of the world and being able to play an instrument and being able to play a sport. I feel like it awakens different parts of

> your brain. It puts you in touch with different people. It opens you up as a person and enhances your academic experience.

Both Olaf and Gatwiri agree on the importance of being well rounded, but while Olaf feels he balances his academic and non-academic commitments quite well, Gatwiri does not share his belief. They differ in what they each believe good grades and academic success are.

One of the frustrations Gatwiri expressed is that Olaf's school does not expect enough of him academically, which may lower his own academic expectations. She wants him to strive to be the best, while some of the teachers give Olaf messages that it is okay to be a "B" student if you are involved in sports or have some other talent. To combat this, Gatwiri enlists the rest of the Magimbi family to "just reinforce our message. Being very vocal about working hard, getting good grades and giving him everything he needs to succeed, whether it's support in terms of financial, moral, whatever it is. Just being supportive." Although Gatwiri is often frustrated with Olaf's teachers, she believes that it is her responsibility to be a proactive parent and ensure that Olaf has the support he needs to be academically successful and ultimately attend college,

> You can't put responsibility on anybody but really yourself as a parent. I get involved and have an attitude of it takes a village to raise a child. If you understand that, you know that the teacher plays her part. Your child needs to play his part, you need to play a part and everybody around that child needs to play a part. It can't be just me saying, "Oh, you need to work hard." I literally tell his grandparents, "You need to talk to him [Olaf] again about this school issue," so that everybody is saying it…we all seem to have a unified message.

Olaf believes that his family's academic expectations are clear and that he has all of the support he needs to be successful,

> I'm kind of forced, but it's also my decision to be successful. I'll give you an analogy. So you know when you put a poster on the wall. I'm putting the poster up on the wall and then my mom is putting staples just to make sure it stays up there. My mom puts the staples and then the other people in my family put tape just to make sure.

Using Olaf's analogy, if the poster represents academic success and college going, then Olaf is committing himself to these goals by putting the poster on the wall. However, the Magimbi family communicates educational and college going ideologies through reinforcement. Gatwiri and the family continue to reinforce and strengthen messages regarding academics goals, represented by tape and staples, ensuring that the poster stays on the wall and that Olaf stays on target towards achieving access to college.

Magimbi Family College Choice Process

Olaf and Gatwiri chose to each draw their own diagram of the college choice process because when they drew the ecomap together during the first interview, Gatwiri felt that Olaf was not allowing her to be fully engaged in the process of creating it. Therefore, they each created an individual college choice diagram (see Appendix K) and then I sat down with the two of them together to discuss their diagrams. In comparing the two college choice process diagrams with the Magimbis, they were quite similar. Both diagrams began with the junior year as the start of the process. Yet, when I asked Olaf and Gatwiri if the junior year was the first time they began to prepare for the process or talk about college, they both responded "no." For the Magimbis, junior year is when

many of the direct steps in the process take place. However, Olaf replied that he knew he was going to go to college

> Since middle school, which is when I remember really talking about it with mom. But now it's intensified…you can say "When did you start baking the pie, when you bought the ingredients or when you put it in the oven?" Middle school is when we bought the ingredients, but now in high school the pie is in the oven.

Gatwiri explained that she "feels like it's [conversations about college] all his life. Even before middle school. So I remember him saying that he wants to study astrophysics in school and college and become an astrophysicist ever since he was in elementary school."

However, both Olaf and Gatwiri feel that the junior year is critical to the college choice process and this is where they have begun to most rigorously engage in the process. Each of their diagrams illustrated that researching colleges and doing college visits should occur during the junior year. Olaf has not visited any colleges yet, but plans to "sometime when I have a break, like winter break or spring break." Gatwiri who would like Olaf to attend an Ivy League institution has visited Princeton University and talked to faculty at the University of Pennsylvania regarding their academic programs. For Gatwiri, reputation is a key characteristic in the college choice process because

> I feel like I coming here [to the United States], I wanted to go to an Ivy League or a prestigious school. I felt like I had the material to go, but at the time they were closed to international students unless you had money and could literally pay and I couldn't afford to go there. That and I feel like these more renowned colleges tend to have students who come from very connected families and given that we don't really have family here, I feel like at an Ivy League, he would have that

> opportunity to rub shoulders with some of the most, kids who come from really influential families. Those relationships are so key and who knows, maybe he'll go to school with Obama's daughter and maybe she'll be my daughter in law, who knows? Plus just the name of the school could get him places on his resume. The quality of education might really be the same, but it is the name that sells. I just want him to be in a position to compete. So that's what I mean by prestigious schools. Even given the field that he wants to get into like astronomy, I just want him to be able to come out with a good name on his resume, but also to be able to get those opportunities that he feels are important to him. To have a fair chance, given that he's not from here [the United States] and we don't have connections here.

Olaf is less interested in attending an Ivy League institution, and as aforementioned wants to attend the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill where he has been in contact with their soccer coach. He has also been in communication with soccer coaches who have scouted him from the University of Wisconsin and Pennsylvania State University. While he wants to go to a school with a good reputation, he does not feel that it has to be an Ivy League school because "A lot of state schools have top PhD people working there for astronomy, which is what I want to study. A lot of them are famous people who've been on TV and they teach at state schools."

As they try to determine which are the most important characteristics in a college, Olaf explained that for he and Gatwiri "right now it's just information gathering. And then I think filtering through everything is going to be the next step." While the Magimbi extended family in Kenya provide positive messages to Olaf about doing well

academically and the importance of going to college, because they do not live in the United States, they are less involved in providing information about the types of colleges that Olaf and Gatwiri should be researching. Instead, Olaf and Gatwiri seek out information about colleges from the Internet, teachers, soccer coaches, and Gatwiri's former college professors. Gatwiri expressed that,

> I can't give him my experience, because it's very limited from being an international student so I talk to other people who've been professors. I wouldn't say I personally base things off of any one person's opinion or resource. I'm just getting their feedback on their experiences and also connecting him [Olaf] with those people for him to ask questions and understand things that I may not have knowledge about.

To keep all of the information about colleges and universities organized Olaf explained that his mom, "has a little spreadsheet of everything she needs know for college that she started this summer because she wants to be ready and is just super organized. It has information about all the schools she thinks I should apply to."

Olaf's college choice diagram also illustrated that he should begin writing his college essays and preparing for the SAT exam in his junior year. In regards to this standardized exam he explained,

> I took the PSAT and I got a perfect score on it. I didn't do any prep for it. The school [his high school] offers prep classes this year for the SAT. It isn't mandatory, but I'm going to sign up for it.

While Olaf is proud of his perfect score on the PSAT, he does not consider it a "big deal" in part because he is focused more so on soccer being his primary pathway to getting

accepted to colleges, for example "I'd rather get an athletic scholarship, but if not then an academic scholarship would be the next best."

Gatwiri's diagram indicates that the junior year is also a time in which Olaf should be improving his grades. Olaf is currently taking Advanced Placement Chemistry, Advanced Placement World History, Honors English, Honors Pre-Calculus, and Gifted/Talent Art courses. This is his first year being in Advanced Placement classes and adjusting to the more challenging workload has been a struggle for him. Additionally, he wishes that Gatwiri better understood the academic curriculum at his school because "she doesn't really care which classes I'm in as long as I'm getting good grades because she's not from here [United States] and so she doesn't get it that the Advanced Placement classes are just harder, but they are important for college." Gatwiri argues that she may not fully "get it" but

> I feel like he doesn't realize that for him to be in advanced classes that's saying that you need to work hard to stay there. Obviously he's smart enough to get in [AP classes] in the first place and I appreciate that, but I just feel like he can work harder. That's a curse of being an African. It's like aiming for perfection. Ninety-nine isn't good enough. Why can you not get that extra mark? For him, I think it's like, "I'm still making the honors classes so what's the big deal? So what if I get a 70 here or a 90 there? Big deal. I'm still making the honors classes." But in my mind you can't just chill out because you're in the honors classes.

Olaf plans to continue taking Honors and Advanced Placement classes in his senior year as well. The senior year is the next area of focus on both Gatwiri's and Olaf's

college choice diagrams. While Gatwiri listed all components of the process in the senior year together, Olaf divided the diagram into two sections: 1) Start of senior year and 2) Middle-End of senior year because "the beginning of senior year you're still preparing for college and applying to college, but towards the middle and end you're actually making the decision of where you want to go to school." One aspect of the senior year that was listed on Gatwiri's diagram, but not listed on Olaf's diagram was searching for scholarships during the senior year, which relates to the cost of college. However, during the family and individual interviews it appeared that Olaf was more concerned with the cost of college than his mother. Olaf stated that cost is one of the factors he's concerned about regarding college because,

> I don't want to go to a college that's going to rid my mom of all her money. I don't want to put too much of a strain on her. But I'm going to get a scholarship so that she doesn't have to worry.

However, Gatwiri responded to Olaf "Why are you worried about cost? You don't need to really worry about it." During the individual interviews Gatwiri explained,

> The family has been really supportive, and I know that he wouldn't be in a situation where he needs to go to college and we can't come up with the money. It really isn't an option, so I think pretty much the whole family has to pitch in for him to go to college. That's what we're going to do. It's just the way it is, so I'm not worried.

In Kenya, Gatwiri expressed that one's community will often come together and give money to send a child to college. Although Olaf no longer lives in Kenya, she believes

that if there is any additional cost outside of scholarships and financial aid, their family/community will provide the additional funds necessary to send Olaf to college.

Lastly, on their college choice diagrams both Gatwiri and Olaf included the action of completing college applications. Gatwiri explained that there has been some tension between she and Olaf regarding, " just trying to figure out college in terms of what's more of a priority? Are we interested more in athletics, or are we interested more in a good academic school?" However, during the interviews, they explained agreeing to compromise that Olaf should apply to six colleges, three that Olaf chooses and three that Gatwiri chooses. Currently, the list that they have developed together includes the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Pennsylvania State University, University of Maryland, Princeton University, Brown University, and the University of Pennsylvania (the first three institutions being Olaf's choices and the final three institutions being Gatwiri's choices). While Olaf explained that this list of six universities might change as they continue to engage in the college choice process, these are the six that the family is currently focused on in terms of doing research and gathering information.

The Magimbi family college choice process involves a mutual desire for Olaf to attain a college degree, but also presents differences of opinion regarding whether Olaf's college pathway should be focused on athletics or academics. Both Gatwiri and Olaf are confident in Olaf's academic and athletic talents, but have differing levels of expectations regarding the role that these talents will play in his access to college. In order to attend the Ivy League institutions that Gatwiri prefers, Olaf will "have to bring up his GPA and take his classes seriously." Yet, Olaf is not fully interested in Ivy League institutions and believes that his passion and talent with soccer will allow him to be accepted at a school

in which he can play soccer as well as attain a degree in a strong astronomy program. While Gatwiri and Olaf have different perspectives on the type of institution that Olaf should ultimately attend, they are also openly communicating and making compromises that address both of their requirements. In addition, they are both seeking out resources and information to determine which institutions would be the best fit. Gatwiri summed up the college choice process for the Magimbi household,

> So, I've always tried to make him [Olaf] feel like he can be the president if he wanted to. Just instilling confidence and reminding him with hard work he can do anything, he can say anything. So with this whole process of going to college I've always said to [Olaf] that if you're good enough and if you put your heart and soul into it and this is what you really want to do, then things do end up falling in place for you.

Overall, Gatwiri and the extended Magimbi family are solidly in support of Olaf's academic endeavors regardless of which path allows him to get to college as long as he is consistently performing at his best and choosing the best opportunities for himself. However, Olaf and his family have differing definitions of "best," which will continue to be negotiated as they engage in the college choice process.

Amolo Family

"Karibu sana!" Atieno Amolo expressed as I walked in the door of her Maryland townhome for the first time. This Swahili word literally means, "draw close," but in this context Atieno was expressing to me "you are very welcome in my home." Atieno is a 44-year-old Kenyan mother of three and has lived in the United for 14 years. When I arrived her oldest children, daughter Sara, age 18, and daughter Hannah, age 17, were

sitting in the living room watching TV while their younger brother Imani, age seven played with his toys in a corner of the dining room. When Atieno announced my presence all of the children came to the front door to greet me and Sara began to make me a cup of Kenyan chai [tea]. Atieno's husband, Kenneth is also a part of the Amolo household; however, he is pursuing business ventures in Kenya and thus participated in the interviews via the phone and Skype. Although the household is separated by thousands of miles while Kenneth is abroad, I still saw a strong sense of togetherness among the family as Imani, sat on his mother's lap at the dining room table along with his sisters and his "virtual" father as I spoke to Atieno, Hannah, Sara and Kenneth about their lives and educational experiences.

Atieno and Kenneth

Before coming to the United States, Atieno had a successful career as a journalist for the second largest newspaper in Kenya. She was happy with her job and was also happily married to her first husband, Gordon. Atieno and Gordon had two daughters, Hannah and Sara and they all lived in Kenya's capital city, Nairobi. However, when Hannah and Sara were three and four years old, Gordon was killed in a car accident, which completely changed the course of Atieno's and her daughters' lives. Atieno explained,

> After his [Gordon's] death there was cultural pressure put on me because if your husband dies and you're still young, you are supposed to get another husband. And sometimes it's not the best of…because this is like you being given a chance to get somebody. But it's not like you're going to get somebody that is of your level. My father was saying, "They're giving you a chance, so you should be

comfortable with whoever is available to you because you have children." It's like somebody's doing you a favor. So no I didn't want to do that, to just get married for the sake of it.

However, shortly after Gordon's death Atieno was also nominated for and awarded a short-term fellowship to work at a newspaper in Miami, Florida for eight months. Although she did not want to leave her daughters behind, Atieno felt that this opportunity was the best way to avoid some of the pressure she was receiving from her family to remarry. Although her trip to the United States was intended to be temporary, "when I came to the U.S., I looked at the life here, the standard of living and decided I want to come and live in this country. I said to myself I'm going to come back and live here in America." When Atieno returned to Kenya after her fellowship ended, she applied for another fellowship that allowed her to take classes in the School of Journalism at the University of Maryland for one year. However, "even though we were supposed to be auditing classes, I took my classes for credit. I took 12 credits." Atieno was given a J-1 Visa[6] to participate in the program, which allowed to her obtain J-2 Visas[7] for her daughters so that they could also come the United States. Atieno then applied to Howard University and tried to transfer her academic credits from the University of Maryland to begin a masters program at Howard (she had already previously attained a bachelor's degree in Kenya). Although Howard had given her a scholarship "I could not transfer because of immigration issues. Someone had advised me poorly about my visa and I could not even get out of the U.S. to go back to Kenya and pack up the rest of our

[6] A J-1 Visa is a non-immigrant visa category for individuals approved to participate in work- and study-based exchange visitor programs (http://j1visa.state.gov/)

[7] A J-2 Visa is a non-immigrant visa for spouses and dependents of J-1 exchange visitors who accompany or later join the J-1 holder in the United States (http://j1visa.state.gov/)

belongings." Atieno's time limit on her visa had expired and because of this she could not attend Howard University. With a lapsed visa, Atieno was considered an undocumented immigrant and could not legally work. It took a number of years to get her visa reinstated, and during that time Atieno started working "under the table," cleaning houses as well as serving tables for a catering company. However she was determined to take advantage of the educational opportunities in the United States and so once she gained legal residency, "I went back to school at George Washington University because they had given me a scholarship for a master's degree in education. So I just got into it, studied, and got my Master's Degree." Since that time, Atieno has worked as a special education teacher and although journalism "is my first love, I had to do what it took to pay the bills and so I settled for teaching for now."

While in the United States, Atieno met Kenneth, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Kenya. Atieno and Kenneth had known one another in Kenya, but over the years had lost contact. A year after reconnecting in the United States, they decided to get married and later had a son, Imani. Kenneth grew up in the "village" or rural areas of Kenya. Growing up his "parents emphasized that education was the key of getting out of the village and getting to work in an office, you know and wearing a tie or a suit, that was considered being prestigious." While his parents had only achieved the U.S. equivalent of an 8th grade education, "which at the time was still quite an achievement," Kenneth aspired to "get out of the village." His parents were able to send him to a boarding school for his primary and secondary education and then for college he was accepted to Florida International University. For Kenneth, becoming an international student in the United States "was not easy, leaving your home and going there [United States] where you don't

know anybody and you are there by yourself and every penny getting spent has to come from your parents. It was hard." However, in the same breath he expressed,

> But, let me add to that once you have graduated from high school in Kenya and you come to the United States to go to college, you find everything so easy academically. It is like you have done those courses, I mean they prepare you for the higher education in Kenya, so the college work here is so easy for Kenyans compared to the kids who are educated in America.

Kenneth studied international business in college and desired an opportunity to return to Kenya once he graduated. However, his family discouraged him from returning because of the high unemployment that the country was experiencing. Therefore, instead of going back to Kenya, Kenneth secured a job in Washington, DC at a consulting firm that provided him with sponsorship to remain in the United States. Although Kenneth has returned to Kenya to visit family regularly since first coming to the United States, he always believed that one day "I could go back to Kenya and use my skills to help the country in some way…so many of us leave, get a good education and never go back. I just didn't want that to be me."

In 2010, Kenneth was presented with an opportunity to return to Kenya to work on a grant-funded project focused on creating new business opportunities and training for Kenyan entrepreneurs. Although he and Atieno were already married with three children in the home, both felt that it was an "opportunity that [Kenneth] should not pass up, especially because the Kenyan constitution had just been ratified and there were many new initiatives taking place in the country." Since then, Kenneth has spent three to nine months each year in Kenya, working on this project. Although the project grant will end

in 2015, Kenneth hopes to continue to pursue additional work in Kenya in the future, although he realizes "it's a sacrifice to not only me, but for my wife and kids too."

Kenneth being away in Kenya for a large portion of the year has changed some of the dynamics of the Amolo household. Atieno explained, "Now that he is gone so much, I'm head of the household and I'm making decisions and am being the one responsible. He's still a part of our lives, but I'm the one parenting day to day." Atieno has sought help from her oldest daughter Sara in handling some of the household responsibilities such as picking up Imani from school. Atieno admitted to Sara "I'm not really able to do everything. There are some things that I also struggle with, so you should not think that I can achieve or do everything right. I'm also human." Kenneth emphasized that even with all of the adjustments the family has made to him living abroad,

> We [he and Atieno] are blessed to have kids that have never given us any real trouble, even living here in the U.S. with all the freedom that they have. They may try to deviate a little, but we've always been able to keep them on the right path.

While the children have not overstepped their boundaries with the freedom they have in the United States, Atieno also spoke about freedom being one of the reasons she wanted her children to be raised in America because,

> Women are not as free in Kenya, and what really made me so much want to have my kids, especially my girls grow up here [United States] is the fact that you can wear anything you want and not think of what you're wearing, you can say what you want…in Kenya it's just so limiting, every time you're doing something you have to be thinking of what somebody else will be thinking.

As parents, both Kenneth and Atieno try to balance their desire for their children to be "free and fearless young people" along with their desire for their children to be "respectful and obedient young people." Kenneth admitted "we're [he and Atieno] probably giving them conflicting messages, but it's just that we want them to embrace all the opportunities that America has to offer and at the same time not forget who they are as Kenyans at the core."

Sara

Kenneth describes his stepdaughter Sara as a "quiet storm because she seems really quiet, but in reality she's always moving, always thinking." His description fit my impressions of Sara as well; she is soft-spoken and was slow to answer questions, but always thoughtful in her responses. While overtime she seemed to open up to me about her life and educational experiences, during our first meetings she appeared hesitant and nervous, later explaining about herself, "I guess I'm not really anxious, but just kind of always thinking about everything. Like worrying about what's going on in the house or maybe about school. I have a lot on my mind."

Growing up, Sara described her life as always hectic and so she became a "worrier" because "I remember the first few years of living in the U.S. as really hard because my mom was working all of these different jobs and money was always really tight, so it was like, 'is this really America?'" However, after Atieno married Kenneth and became a teacher, their lives became more stable emotionally and financially for a few years. Yet, now with Kenneth being in Kenya, Atieno is depending upon Sara to take on additional responsibilities in the home. Sara is also working part-time to contribute to

the household income because Kenneth's income in Kenya is much less than he was making in the United States and so finances in the family are strained. Sara admitted,

> I just give my mom my paycheck because I live at home and so I don't really need it [the money] right now. It's not a lot but it helps with the bills and she [mom] also has to send money to my grandpa in Kenya for his upkeep because he has Alzheimer's [disease].

While she and her sister Hannah are only one year apart in age, Sara was taught by her family growing up that as the eldest sibling she is "second in line after my mom, like the assistant. If she's not around then I'm the one who has the responsibility of taking care of everything. If she's not there, then I'm the one who kind of takes over." While, Sara is experiencing pressure to help take care of the family's needs, she is also clear about her role in the Amolo household and is committed to doing what she can to fulfill her role in the family.

When Sara first moved to the United States, she learned that a way to help relieve some of the pressures her family experienced in the transition was by doing well in school because "being a bad student would have just been one more thing for my mom to have to deal with." However, Sara ultimately found that she enjoyed being a student and she excelled in her coursework, particularly in mathematics and art. She also became involved in a number of student organizations and "by senior year [of high school] I was in National Honor Society, International Club, Korean Club, Bakery Club, National Art Honor Society, Math League and the Robotics Club." Sara maintained a high GPA and graduated as salutatorian of her high school. In talking about her sister, Hannah expressed "Teachers loved [Sara] and even though she's quiet, everyone knew her at school, she

wasn't popular because she's a nerd, but she's like a cool nerd." Sara was able to balance being academically successful with her extracurricular involvement, which she believed would make her a viable candidate for college.

Sara explained to me that she knew she was going to go to college after high school because it was a goal that she, Kenneth, and Atieno discussed consistently throughout her childhood. However, Sara knew that with her family's financial challenges, she would have to receive financial aid and scholarships to attend college. Atieno and Kenneth advised Sara to only apply to universities within the state of Maryland so that the cost of tuition would be lower. She applied to three universities, all within the state of Maryland. Two were public universities, but her first choice was a small private college that "I visited my sophomore year with the Math League for a competition and I fell in love with the campus." She got into all three universities, but was most happy about the $20,000 scholarship that she received from her top choice institution. Atieno and Kenneth were also pleased as Kenneth explained, "[Sara] received the scholarship in addition to financial aid grants and so in total she had nearly $30,000 worth of assistance. We thought she would be all set to go."

The Amolo family assumed that the $30,000 in grants and scholarships that Sara received would cover the majority of her tuition, fees, and room and board. Atieno expressed, "We thought we might have to contribute a few thousand dollars, maybe $5,000 per year at the very most. From what I understood, everyone at the college was saying that [Sara] had one of the best financial aid packages." Sara submitted her deposit for the college, graduated from high school and planned to attend the college in the fall once she returned from a trip to Kenya with her family that summer. However, three days

before the family was scheduled to fly to Kenya, Atieno received a phone call from Sara's chosen college, stating that the balance of the university bill "was going to be about $15,000. My jaw dropped. Here we are getting ready to leave the country, it's already the middle of July and we're just receiving this news?" Atieno immediately called Kenneth to determine what they would do because they would not be able to afford $15,000 per year for four years. They decided to wait until the family arrived in Kenya to speak with Sara about the issue. The conversation was very emotional as Sara explained,

> I broke into tears. Devastated doesn't even describe it. But I was still determined to figure out a way that I could go [to the college]. I figured that I had worked hard, I did what I was supposed to do, I got a scholarship and so there had to be a way.

Atieno, Kenneth, and Sara spent the majority of the family's visit in Kenya communicating with the university, friends, and colleagues in the United States about what they could do to finance the remainder of Sara's tuition. When the Amolos returned home from Kenya, they had still not come to a decision that would make both Sara and her parents happy. Sara wanted to take out a loan, but her parents "refused to allow me to go into so much debt." Kenneth and Atieno wanted Sara to go to one of the two public universities that she had also gotten admitted to, but Sara refused to believe that her top choice institution was unattainable. Two weeks before freshmen orientation for the college was to begin, Atieno made a decision for Sara and the family. She told Sara that she,

> Would have to go to Howard Community College to do her first two years of college and after that she can transfer to a four-year school and she can even take out loans if she so chooses because at least it won't be four years worth of loans.

Sara agreed to this compromise and is currently enrolled as a first-year student at Howard Community College. At first she "was embarrassed to be going to community college when all of my friends were going to regular colleges. I just felt like everyone expected more of me." However, now that her first semester is almost complete, she expressed that she no longer feels embarrassed because "I don't even think I want to go to that other college anymore. I've decided to major in computer science and there are better programs at other schools in Maryland for when I transfer." Sara explained her experience with going to college was similar to many aspects of her life growing up as an immigrant in which she learned that not everything always goes as planned,

> I guess a lot of people have a false sense of optimism that they can get everything and I have nothing against people being optimistic about getting something. But once you know that you can't have everything, I guess once you accept it, it doesn't seem as bad. You can kind of move on knowing you won't have it and that kind of helps you see what you do have. And I guess that also helps you not to take things for granted

Going to community college has allowed Sara to live at home, which her mother appreciates because Sara has been able to help take care of Imani (e.g. taking him to school and picking him up from school) and assist with other household responsibilities. Community college tuition was also much more affordable for the family and they did not have to take out loans for the tuition. Atieno explained, "I was advised poorly about

this whole college thing. People told me from the beginning that community college shouldn't even be an option for my kids because those schools aren't as good, but they were wrong." She believes that sending her daughter to community college was such a good decision that, "I'm not even having [Hannah] apply to four year schools, she's going to start at community college too."

Hannah

Like Sara, Hannah comes across as reserved and shy at first. However, Hannah's views on her position in the family are very dissimilar from her sister because while Sara considers herself to be a leader in her family, Hannah considers herself to be the black sheep, "[Sara's] the perfect one, [Imani's] the cute little boy, and I'm just different." When I asked Hannah to describe what she meant by "different," she explained, "I don't know. I keep more to myself and I just have different ideas than them [parents and siblings], we love each other, but they just don't get me." Over the course of the three mornings that I spent with Hannah she began to further open up to me about her perspectives on her family, her college and career aspirations, and why she feels like the "black sheep." In getting to know Hannah, I found that she is experiencing and trying to reconcile a number of tensions in her life related to her identity and culture, her education, and her desire to pursue a career that her family does not approve of. Each of these tensions appears to contribute to Hannah feeling "like I just don't belong anywhere." During our first interview, Hannah explained that she recently learned of the term "Third Culture Kid,[8]" which she said encompasses how she feels about herself,

[8] A third culture kid is a person who has spent a significant part or all of his or her developmental years outside of the original culture of his or her parents. (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009)

particularly in relation to her cultural identity, “like the Third Culture Kid. I guess it's like being here in America you don't fit in completely, but since you've been here so long you don't fit in back in Kenya. So you don’t really fit anywhere. That’s me.”

When Hannah first came to the United States with her sister to reunite with Atieno, she found that “as an immigrant you have to adapt and change, other people here [in the United States] aren’t going to change for you.” Hannah finds that living within two cultures can be “frustrating because it still isn’t a full fit because sometimes my American friends don’t understand why you can’t do certain things or why you don’t believe in certain things, it’s kind of like they sometimes look down on you.” For example, “one thing that is annoying is how Americans think it’s gross that we [Kenyans/her family] eat goat meat. Americans eat hotdogs and bologna, which I think is much worse.” However, while Sara identifies more with Kenyan culture along with Kenneth and Atieno, Hannah expressed during the interviews that she identifies with “American culture although it is a mixture of both. But my mom is constantly telling me I’m too American.” Atieno admits she does say that Hannah is “too American” because

> I tell her [Hannah] “You should see your cousins in Kenya, they work so much harder than you and they don’t have a lot of things. Since you’re in America you should work harder because there are people that are back home that are struggling. But growing up here, you’ve grown too accustomed to the easy life.”

Hannah believes that when her mom calls her “too American” she really is “trying to say that I’m lazy or that I don’t care, which isn’t true. I’m just trying to spend my energy on things that matter to me.”

Hannah is interested in pursuing the culinary arts as a career path, but has found that her family is not fully supportive of these plans. Kenneth expressed, "[Atieno] didn't bring her [Hannah] here [to the United States] to be a cook, it doesn't make sense." However, Hannah sees the culinary arts beyond being "a cook" and imagines that she can become a top chef at a well-known restaurant in a big city, "or maybe even open and run my own restaurant, which would focus on a fusion of East African and American cuisine." Atieno's major concern is,

> I just don't want [Hannah] to take the easy way out because she doesn't feel she's as good at school as [Sara]. If she wants to open up a restaurant she will need business skills as well as culinary skills and so she still needs to go to college to get a degree. I want to support her, but I just don't want her to go down a vocational track.

While Hannah does not like being compared to her sister, because her parents are doubtful of her desired career path, Hannah often confides in Sara, seeking advice from her about how to find a way to pursue her interests while still making Kenneth and Atieno happy. Sara says she "gets [Hannah's] passion for wanting to do culinary because she's creative and has always been interested in food and cooking. She's more of a free spirit than me." Hannah struggles both with wanting her parents approval and,

> Being brave enough to do my own thing. It's like my mom always talks about how we can be more free in the U.S. than in Kenya, but there are still limits on that freedom in our house. I'm not saying that I want to just sit around and do nothing. I want to have a successful career.

When I asked Hannah what makes her hesitate about "just doing her own thing" and pursuing a career in the culinary arts, she explained,

> Selflessness. My parents are always telling us [Amolo children] how to put others before ourselves, whether that's serving someone's food before you get yours or if someone isn't able to do something, not even having to ask them, but just doing it for them. And I feel like that probably goes into African culture too like community, always trying to put everyone else before yourself. With this decision [pursuing the culinary arts], I feel like it isn't just about me, I have to think of the impact it will have on my family. Even though I act like I don't care, I want their approval more than anything.

In order to help Hannah determine whether she will pursue a career in the culinary arts, Atieno suggested that she do an internship with a local restaurant. Hannah was able to receive academic credit for the internship, which she attends after school two or three times each week. Atieno explained, "I worked in catering and I know that working in a restaurant is hard, it's physically demanding, and I want her to experience that side of it, not just what she sees on reality TV." Contrary to her mother's beliefs, Hannah is enjoying the internship and is learning a great deal about the restaurant industry. Thus, the internship has not deterred her wanting to pursue the culinary arts as a career. Instead it helped to greater solidify her interests, but at the same time to her parents' satisfaction she also became interested in "pursuing a degree in Hospitality Management in addition to doing a culinary program. I learned about it [hospitality management] through my internship and maybe I can even get an MBA with an emphasis on hospitality management."

In addition to the internship, Hannah is enrolled in an Honors curriculum in high school, which is one academic track below an Advanced Placement (AP) curriculum, the highest academic track at her high school, "I didn't take all of the AP classes like Sara. I thought about taking some this year, but now that I know I'm going to be starting out at community college, it didn't seem worth the extra effort." Sara tried to motivate Hannah to take AP classes this year because "If you pass the AP exams you can get college credits for them." However, Hannah "just didn't see the point" because she believes that if she transfers to a four-year university, they will pay more attention to the classes she's taken in community college than while in high school. Therefore, instead of doing an AP curriculum, Hannah is choosing to focus on completing her internship and graduating from high school. Currently, Hannah has a self-reported 3.6 unweighted grade point average, explaining "I'm getting good grades in school and I'll make sure I get good grades in community college. It's hard because I'm constantly compared to [Sara], but if you compare me to a lot of kids at school, I'm doing fine."

Although Hannah complains about being compared to her older sister's successes, she admitted, "So I know you're not going to believe this, but [Sara] is truly my best friend. She's the only one that can relate to what we're going through at home, she has been with me before all of this [moving to the United States] and she's here with me now." Sara also expressed that Hannah is her best friend and that "we just have different ways of handling our lives. I try to make everything smooth and [Hannah] tries to push the boundaries. Neither way is really perfect." In describing Hannah, Kenneth explained, "She wants to be different, which isn't really a Kenyan thing, but I guess she's not really living a Kenyan life." Atieno agreed with Kenneth's description, further expressing

> [Hannah] gives me gray hairs, but she is a good kid. I struggle because I want her to feel that she can do anything, but at the same time if she fails I can't provide her with a full safety net because I'm not a rich woman. She's going to have to go out there and support herself and so I just want to make sure she pursues something that will bring her success.

Amolo Family Structure and Culture

The Amolo family ecomap is made up of two intersecting circles (see Appendix L). One circle represents Kenya because according to Atieno, "our extended family still lives there and that is also where all of our lives except for [Imani's] began." In the circle Atieno and Kenneth helped provide names of family members in Kenya for Sara and Hannah to write within it. The other circle represents the United States because as Sara expressed "America is where our family lives now and it's where we've made our home. We also have friends here that are like family." This circle was primarily comprised of Sara's and Hannah's close friends as well as an organization called *Akiba*[9], a Kenyan women's group that Atieno belongs to. Hannah had the idea to draw herself, Sara, Atieno, Kenneth and Imani at the intersection of the two circles, smudging the intersecting lines to illustrate,

> It kind of goes back to what I was saying about the Third Culture Kid, our family has one foot in each world [Kenya and United States], sometimes more in one than the other depending on the circumstances, but its never fully in one place.

For example, while Kenneth is currently very connected to the Kenyan "world" because he is spending much of his time there, he is also consistently communicating with the

[9] Atieno explained that the word "akiba" in Swahili means savings and that this group gets together for socializing, but also to engage in issues of financial planning and group savings.

Amolo family in the United States. Conversely, Hannah feels more connected to the American "world" because "I go to school here and so I'm spending most of my time in American society and although a lot of my family lives in Kenya, my friends and my life is here [in the United States]."

Smudging the lines between the intersecting circles also highlighted that the Amolo family structure is geographically fluid, moving back and forth between the United States and Kenya, as Sara explained,

> My stepdad comes back and forth a lot and then we also have family [from Kenya] that comes to visit us for months at a time like my aunt. Then we [she, Atieno, Hannah and Imani] go to Kenya about every other year.

Atieno explained that when relatives come to visit from Kenya they often stay for a long period of time to offset the cost and distance of traveling abroad. Additionally, because as a teacher Atieno has summers off in addition to her children, when they go to Kenya they can often stay between one to two months in the summer. The family is also engaging with family members in Kenya daily via the phone and the Internet. The Amolos view their family structure encompassing two nations that they are constantly moving between and as illustrated within the ecomap, it appears that their family is not restricted by geographic boundaries.

The Amolos also described how their perception of family life and the role of family are different in Kenya and the United States as Sara expressed,

> When we're here [United States] we don't see our cousins and aunts and uncles all the time, so our family is more just us [nuclear family] and then we have our individual friends. But when we're in Kenya, it's like our family is huge and

> we’re all one together. We rely more on family over there and you just feel like you’re part of something much larger.

Atieno agreed,

> In Kenya our extended family is very strong. Like [Sara] said, they are always around and people don't have to make appointments to come to your house. They can come anytime. That common feeling of everything almost being communal. Even if you own something, it's yours but your family also has access to it, to the point where there are no boundaries almost.

For Sara and Hannah, adjusting to this difference in family life from the United States to Kenya can sometimes be challenging because “when we’re in Kenya, we’re under a microscope, everyone is involved in our lives and there is a lot of pressure because they want to make sure that we are still acting Kenyan and being true to our roots.” For example, last summer when visiting Kenya, several aunts and uncles chastised both Hannah and Sara for speaking Swahili with an American accent. Hannah explained, “We didn’t even realize we were doing it, but it just happens. So I guess we’re really Kenyan Americans now.” For Kenneth, it is important that his children are able to balance the individualism expected in the United States with the collectivism expected when they are in Kenya. Additionally, he does not want them to embrace individualism to an extreme,

> Here [Kenya] you are part of the whole group, you are not an individual. But when you go there [United States], you are an individual to the point where I think it brings in an element of selfishness, of glorifying the individual, where everyone is self-focused, self-interested, where anybody outside of you doesn't count. It is individual success and your success is your success. It does not extend

> out to your family. So for us, who are immigrants you have to straddle both sides. There are times when you have to be an individual and there are times when you have to be a part of the community, it's just both sides of it.

In addition to balancing the cultural expectations of both societies outside of the home or with extended family members, the Amolo family also seeks balance between these values and expectations within their home. However, both parents explained that "it's hard raising children in the U.S." because these values can often clash. Hannah explained that,

> Typically Kenyan and African parents, they will always let you know that they are the parent and they have authority over you. It's not like they're not friendly with their children, but they do kind of still let their children know that the parent is above the child. Our parents do that too, but they aren't as rigid. We're [children] still able to speak our minds to an extent.

Atieno responded to Hannah with her own perspective stating,

> Growing up, I was often afraid to talk to my parents and I don't want my kids to be afraid to come to me if they need something or if something I did or said is bothering them. That openness between parents and kids is more of an American thing and I see the value in it. But at the same time there is a line of respect that has to be drawn as well and respect, especially for those older than you, is a very African thing.

Atieno wants the children to be respectful of their elders whether it is towards she and Kenneth as parents or towards teachers or other adults. However, they believe that respect can be paired with open communication between adults and children as well. Sara

summed up the Amolo family explaining, "I think Americans would think our house is too strict and Kenyans would think we're too lax. But we do what works for us as a family, we jut do the best we can."

Amolo Family Academic and College-Going Ideologies

"One thing in this family is that education is a huge thing," explained Hannah during the first group interview. Atieno expressed that the high value of education in the Amolo household stems from her and Kenneth's own parents and African upbringing. Explaining her childhood she said, "…one rule in my house where I grew up as a child, was that education is the key to success…My father…he made sure that even if we didn't eat, we got an education, so education was a priority in my life." Atieno grew up believing that education was of significant value, more so than many other basic needs. Kenneth further explained that in Kenya, "…our education was not free. Our parents had to pay from primary school all the way to college if you were lucky enough to afford to go to college." These experiences proved to Kenneth and Atieno that education was a worthwhile endeavor, even worth a number of sacrifices and these are messages that they pass on to their children. Sara agrees as well, "Hearing about their [Kenneth's and Atieno's] experiences definitely motivates me with school, and even before coming here [United States], my mom told me how the U.S. was a land of opportunities for education."

The value of education is reflected in some of the "house rules" that the Amolo family engages in, for example "We have a rule that if it's Monday through Thursday, when we have school, we're not allowed to watch TV. On Saturdays, we take Imani to the library and we all check out books." explained Sara. Atieno also expressed,

> I'm a teacher and I know what it takes to have a home environment that supports my kids academically…they knew growing up that if they didn't have homework, I would make up an assignment for them to do and probably grade it harder than their teachers would.

Hannah's perspective on the house rules is that "they keep us in check. My parents aren't super strict, but they are definitely demanding when it comes to school." In asking Hannah to further define demanding, she explained,

> They just don't let anything slide, especially mom. She definitely pushes us to get our education and she reminds us everyday, "Wake up early every morning and be prepared to do you best. You don't want to go to school and fail."

However, while the house rules and parental expectations provide support for the Amolo children's academic success, they can also be a source of contention in the Amolo household. For example, Hannah expressed that during her freshman year of high school, the pressures she was receiving at home along with the pressures she received at school "to be popular" were overwhelming and she became distracted,

> If I could go back to freshman year, I would definitely change things. I started losing my focus because I was new [at school] and I wanted to be popular. So I got distracted with seniors and boys and all of that. So I would definitely change that, like I wish I would have been more focused because my grades suffered and it was a really hard time. But sometimes my parents want too much and I just want to get away from everything.

Hannah explained that during her 9th grade year she started "hanging out with people with zero ambition, like the class clowns and stuff. It wasn't cool to be smart or to try."

Sara also said, “I saw my sister going down the wrong path with her friends, she wasn’t really doing anything bad, but I knew it was just a matter of time.” When Atieno received Hannah’s report card, her GPA was at the lowest it had ever been, and Atieno decided to gather her Akiba group for an “intervention.” Atieno brought Hannah to one of her monthly meetings. She had informed the group that Hannah would be attending and asked that the members “please feel free to talk to her [Hannah] during the meeting because she needs guidance.” Hannah explained that each of the twelve Akiba members

> Talked to me about school and were giving me advice and asking me questions about my goals. At the end of the meeting they prayed for me and my wellbeing. It was overwhelming and I was annoyed the whole time. But then a few weeks later one of my friends was telling me how her parents don’t care about her and I realized that I don’t have that excuse. It’s actually the opposite. How can I complain that my parents care too much or that a whole group of my mom’s friends care enough about me to spend a whole evening trying to get me to do the right thing? So I started to get my act together.

Hannah began to do all of her assignments on time and study. She also joined, the Culinary Arts Club at school, which helped her to develop a new group of friends and “some of my mom’s friends who are teachers offered to tutor me, so I was eventually able to bring my grades up to where they are now, which is a 3.6” Now as a 12th grader, Hannah is poised to enter college and begin a new educational experience.

Amolo Family College Choice Process

The Amolos drew the college choice process with a focus on Hannah and her college pathway (see Appendix L), although Hannah explained, “because [Sara] and I are

so close in age, there are things that really impacted both of us or things that I learned from her going through it." One point in life that impacted both Sara and Hannah was coming to the United States, which the family included as the first step in the college choice process. Atieno explained, "I wanted my kids to grow up here and have the opportunities that are in this country. Giving them a chance to get the opportunities for education, which they might not have been able to get in Kenya." Hannah added, "I think if we were in Kenya we would have gone to college, but it's not as easy of a guarantee as it is in the U.S…once we moved here it was like there was no other option."

Another major accomplishment that occurred early in Hannah's life was when her mother graduated with her master's degree from George Washington University. Hannah was in the 6th grade when

> My mom got her degree and she [Atieno] kept saying, "this [degree] is going to change our lives" and it really did because she was able to get a job as a teacher. Then she was able to be at home with us kids more and just our lives were more stable.

Hannah saw the impact that a college degree could directly have on one's life and this left an impression on her. While she knew even earlier in her life that she was going to go to college, this was the first time that she was able to see the actual benefits of a college degree firsthand.

The next component of the family's college choice process is in Hannah's 9th grade year, when her grades began to drop (illustrated in the diagram by the downward arrow). Kenneth added, "I think this was a turning point year for Hannah because if she had kept going down the path she was on, college might not even be an option. So it's a

good thing we caught it in time." As aforementioned, Atieno and her Akiba women's group provided an intervention with Hannah about her academic performance and both Atieno and Kenneth also heavily restricted Hannah on her daily life as Hannah described,

> My life was pretty much going to school and going home that year. On the weekends, I could go to the library with Sara and Imani and then church on Sunday. That was it, no parties, no sleepovers, and no trips to the mall or the movies. I was on serious house arrest.

However, once Hannah began to show improvement in her grades again, her parents relented on their restrictions. Sara observed, "Once Hannah started focusing on school again, her grades started going back up right away, which just shows that she understood everything, she just wasn't trying." Additionally, Hannah's interest in pursuing a career in the culinary arts grew later that year when she joined the Culinary Arts Club student organization at her school, as she expressed "That was the best decision I could have made. I found my passion for food and learning about restaurants. I knew that this was the path for me." Yet, because of her initial drop in grades and her interest in the culinary arts, Hannah's guidance counselor suggested that she be switched to a non-college preparatory/vocational curriculum for the 10th grade. Atieno explained,

> I took Hannah and went to that school and was very clear with the guidance counselor about what courses Hannah would be taking. I demanded that she be in Honors classes and I told her [guidance counselor], "I'm a teacher and I'm not an idiot. Don't try to shortchange my child."

When I asked Hannah about this experience, she expressed, "It was embarrassing all around. I felt bad for [the guidance counselor], but I knew that I shouldn't really be put in

the lower classes." Atieno's advocacy for Hannah was successful and she was able to continue taking Honors courses in her 10th grade year.

As illustrated in the diagram, Hannah's grades continued to improve into her 11th grade year, which is when Sara began preparing for college,

> I remember last year when [Sara] was a senior and it was pretty exciting, I went on a few college tours with her and got to see her take the SATs. Then when she got into her number one school she was screaming and crying, she was so happy. I was really proud of her.

Sara's college application process inspired Hannah to begin researching colleges as well. Hannah found two institutions that she decided she would apply to in her senior year,

> One was UMD (University of Maryland) Eastern Shore because they are the only state school with a culinary program in Maryland. But my first choice was the Culinary Institute of America in New York. I mean Anthony Bourdain and Duff [Goldman] went there.

Hannah shared her list of colleges with Sarah, her parents, and her guidance counselor. She also told her Culinary Arts Club advisor and the teachers she was closest to at school of her college selections. Kenneth explained that

> I wasn't happy about where Hannah wanted to go to college, but I figured she'd end up at Eastern Shore because tuition is so expensive at the other school [Culinary Institute of America]. As long as she was in state, I think we could guide her to choose a different major and just minor in the cooking program.

However, Hannah's plans for college had to be altered due to circumstances with Sara's college enrollment. As aforementioned, Sara's college plans were derailed when the

family was unable to pay the cost of tuition for her to attend her first choice institution. Therefore, Sara began her first year of college at Howard Community College. Atieno decided that Hannah would also begin at community college because "it's easier on the family financially since we'll have two kids in college. Also, I'll have both girls at home, which is really helpful and best for them too because they aren't used to being away from me." Therefore, Hannah did not apply to either of the colleges that she had originally intended. However, Hannah explained that she did not mind starting at community college as much as Sara did because Howard Community College has a culinary program.

Because Sara applied to Howard Community College only a few weeks before the fall semester started, Hannah thought she would do the same. However,

> Sara started showing my mom all of these programs that she thought I should apply to at HCC like the Honors program and a Freshman First program, so I had to still take the SAT and get recommendations and everything for those programs just like regular college.

While Hannah knows that she will be attend Howard Community College after high school graduation, she will not learn whether she is accepted to the Honors program until March. As she noted, the program requires letters of recommendation, SAT scores, a personal statement/essay and other materials similar to those required at many four-year institutions.

The Amolo family views community college as a step towards an eventual undergraduate and graduate degree. Therefore, their college choice process diagram continues on after Hannah's senior year and also includes enrollment in community

college, eventual transfer to a four-year college, and lastly entrance into a graduate program. Sara explained, "Even though me and [Hannah] are starting at HCC, we already know what we want to do after that and we've already started making plans about where we'll transfer and what we'll study, so it's just a stepping stone." Hannah expressed during the interviews that after she gets an associate's degree at Howard Community College, she would transfer to UMD Eastern Shore or the Culinary Institute of America and then potentially get an MBA in Hospitality Management in the future. Both Kenneth and Atieno hope that Hannah will change her mind about a culinary career, as Atieno explains, "It's only been a few months and [Sara] has already changed her mind about transferring to her other school. So, I think [Hannah] may also change her mind about the culinary thing too. They are still finding themselves."

The Amolo parents and children have each experienced a number of individual successes as well as challenges in their educational experiences and college going journeys. As a family they are now trying to remain both optimistic and realistic about the opportunities that a U.S. college degree can bring, as Sara expressed

> Before we came here [United States], I actually thought the streets were paved with gold. I thought it would be like Disney World, but life here has its ups and downs too. It's just that here you have more options for college or what you want to do, you can change your mind about your major, you can make mistakes and find a way to fix them.

While Sara believes that in the United States, individuals have more choices and can make more mistakes, Atieno summed up the Amolo family by explaining that as each individual makes choices, the family will be there to provide guidance and support,

> I just pray for our family and hope my kids make the right choices for their education and in life. Whatever challenges they face that they are able to make the right choices. And when they succeed or when they fail, we [family/parents] will be there with them, like it or not.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an in-depth profile of each of the four family cases in this study. Each profile included the individual narratives of study participants as well as a family narrative, illustrating the family's culture, structure, academic/college-going ideologies, and engagement in the college choice process. Although each of the families had unique qualities and experiences across their individual and family narratives, there were several similarities across families as well. The next chapter moves from an emphasis on separate family stories to an analysis and discussion of recurrent themes and patterns across cases (Merriam, 2009). I build upon these four case studies/family profiles to consider how the findings are informed by and can inform the conceptual framework and literature. Furthermore, I introduce a new frame, *Baobab Families*, which provides an interpretation of how families conceptualize and navigate the college choice process (Merriam, 2009).

Chapter 6: Analysis and Discussion

Chapter six expands upon the within-case findings presented in chapter five by providing an analysis and discussion of cross-case research findings. However, it is important to note that although the conceptual framework (Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined model of college choice, funds of knowledge, and ecocultural theory) was useful in developing the research design and providing initial guidance in data analysis, as I continued to engage in the data I found the frameworks too restrictive for describing and interpreting the college choice process of the cases in this study, which were rich, complex, integrated and multidimensional. While I incorporated some of the concepts from the frameworks, their limitations led me to present a new frame for understanding the college choice process of the sub-Saharan African immigrant family cases within this study by using the symbol of a baobab tree. Using this symbol, I discuss the primary storyline that emerged across cases, which reflects how families developed a college-going environment or culture in their home and community to engage in college choice. This process interacted with intergenerational, cultural, and social dynamics within families.

This chapter is organized into three main sections. The first reflects my rationale for suggesting a new frame for understanding the college choice process of the families in this study. The second section presents a description of baobab trees and what they represent in many African societies. The final section provides an analysis and discussion of the cross-case findings using the baobab tree as a frame for interpreting the college choice process of the family cases, which I call *Baobab Families.*

Rationale for a New Frame

Higher education literature defines college choice, as a process comprised of several milestones culminating in decisions of whether and where to attend college (Bergerson, 2010). In this study, I used Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined model of college choice as the primary framework to provide structure to the college choice process and guide my understanding of how families move through the process. Participant selection and interview protocols were organized by the three stages of the model: 1) predisposition, 2) search, and 3) choice. However, while Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined model defines the stages of the college choice process, it has been criticized for not acknowledging how diverse groups may navigate the process (Bergerson, 2010; Freeman & Brown, 2005; Hurtado et al., 1997). Hossler and Gallagher's model also focuses on the individual student and not the family, which is the focus of this study. Thus, while I used this model to inform my study design, knowing its limitations I also remained open to how families defined the college choice process for themselves. For example, through participatory diagramming in my data collection, families drew what they perceived to be the steps or components of the college choice process. I used the participatory diagrams to learn how the families conceptualized college choice without giving them prior exposure to a college choice theory or model. The families also described their college choice diagram to me, which allowed them to define the college choice process for their family/college going child.

Across family cases, I found some similarities between Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model and the ways that families diagrammed and described their college choice process. For example, families discussed the development of college aspirations

(predisposition) and engagement in researching colleges and scholarships (search). However, the narratives families provided were more rich and multifaceted than the three stages suggest. For instance, families described the college choice process of a child as being situated within and impacted by the college choice processes of parents, siblings and other family members. Families were also projecting past Hossler and Gallagher's final choice stage of selecting an undergraduate institution by intersecting the graduate school choice process, career choice process, and the choice process involved in transferring from a two- to four-year institution. Additionally, college choice for many of these families was not limited by spatial or time boundaries. They utilized family and community networks both locally and across continents to navigate college choice and conceptualized the process as part of a longer time-span that often included the family's immigration history. For the families in this study, the college choice process was so much more than three college choice stages because it was integrated into other aspects of their lives that Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model does not capture. Families described the process as more of a reflection of developing and sustaining family belief systems and culture around college going and academic success than it was about specific milestones or stages.

Another reason that I viewed Hossler and Gallagher's model as restrictive was because it describes the college choice process of a student, not of a family. Therefore, I turned to funds of knowledge and ecocultural theory, which both focus on family engagement. For example, I believed that funds of knowledge could highlight the "strategic and cultural resources" (Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992) that families used in the college choice process. Funds of knowledge did allow me to emphasize the presence

of families' existing knowledge base and resources that traditionally go unacknowledged in formal school settings (Moll et al., 1992), but that families' perceived as valuable and meaningful to their college choice process. This included the presence of college-going legacies, family/community involvement (rather than solely parental involvement) and the encouragement of college going as part of a cultural/familial identity.

However, while funds of knowledge emphasizes the presence of family funds, it does not explain how families' funds can be activated or utilized to navigate college choice (Kiyama, 2010). Therefore, I turned to ecocultural theory in order to consider how families use their ecocultural context to navigate college choice. Ecocultural theory emphasizes how families make meaning of, adapt to, and navigate various internal and external forces impacting the family unit (Weisner, 1997). Funds of knowledge and ecocultural theory provided powerful lenses for examining family engagement in college choice because these frameworks emphasize using family's assets and existing resources to navigate new environments/circumstances and assumes that families are competent, possessing the practical and intellectual strength to achieve success (Kiyama, 2010; Moll et al., 1992; Weisner, 1997). In the data, I found that families use funds of knowledge and their unique ecocultural context to conceptualize and navigate college choice. Yet, even with the strengths of these additional frameworks, I still felt constricted in fully discussing how families conceptualized and navigated college choice. In part this was because both funds of knowledge and ecocultural theory tend to reflect an asset-focused approach that does not generally give attention to the limitations and limiting factors present within families. However, in conducting this in-depth study, I became aware of a number of challenges and limitations that did exist in the family cases such as lack of

college knowledge and financial resources, which created liabilities and barriers to families' success in the college choice process. In order to provide a holistic understanding of how families engage in this process, I needed to emphasize this side of their stories as well. As the overall storyline emerged from my data analysis, I found my conceptual framework useful, but far too limiting in understanding how the families experienced college choice. While I discuss and integrate components of the conceptual framework and literature in this chapter, ultimately I chose to take a more inductive approach to describing the college choice process of the cases.

The families in this study used a number of metaphors to describe their college choice process and educational experiences. For example, Ruth Obi described college choice as similar to baking a cake; Olaf Magimbi explained his family's academic expectations and support as comparable to putting a poster on a wall; and the Enemari family likened the process of instilling academic discipline in children to bending twigs. Thus, I began to consider how a metaphor could be similarly used to describe the college choice process of the family cases in this study. Arthur (2000) describes African immigrant families as "more than a social unit. It is also a unit of production, harnessing the contributions of its members to help raise their standard of living," (p. 96). Arthur's (2000) quote described the families in this study well, but brought to mind a machine or robot with each family member acting as a cog or a gear. However, as I engaged in the data, comparing themes and narratives I began to see the families differently; not as perfect mechanical robots, but instead as a living, breathing organism that grows and adapts together. I found the baobab tree to reflect many similar characteristics to the families in this study. Thus, rather than conforming or limiting my findings to the original

conceptual framework, I propose the baobab tree to be a more relevant metaphor for describing how the families engaged in college choice and for guiding how the conceptual framework and literature can inform and be informed by the findings.

The Baobab Tree

"The African Baobab" by Angus McBride

The African baobab tree, or *Adansonia Digitata*, is found in over 31 countries throughout western, northeastern, central and southern Africa, primarily in hot, dry savannahs (Sidibe & Williams, 2002). The Kew Royal Botanic Gardens (n.d.) describes this tree as "a defining icon of African bushland" (para. 1). It is known for its massive height and girth, growing up to 60 feet tall and 115 feet wide (Sidibe & Williams, 2002). Baobabs typically grow as solitary trees, although the trunk may split into two when the girth becomes large. Baobab branches are almost always located at the top of the tree growing upward and outward towards the sky (National Research Council, 2008). This resembles a root system, which explains baobab's nickname as the "upside-down tree" (National Research Council, 2008). Part of its scientific name, *Digitata* refers to the fingers of a hand, and each leaf of the African baobab similarly has five leaflets resembling an outstretched hand (Sidibe & Williams, 2002).

This species is found to be among the most effective trees at preventing water loss, having root systems that spread further than the height of the tree (Sidibe & Williams, 2002). This root system contributes to baobabs' ability to survive in dry climates, making maximum use of the scarce resources around it. The baobab trunk swells to store water, and mature trees can hold as much as 32,000 gallons within its wood's spongy tissue (Sidibe & Williams, 2002). African baobabs are very long-lived trees and it is believed that some are thousands of years old (Pakenham, 2004). However, they lack tree rings and therefore, it is difficult to determine their exact age (Pakenham, 2004).

Baobab trees are a provider within their community, having many uses including medicinal, sustenance, and bark fibers that are utilized for a variety of purposes. For

example a baobab tree can create its own ecosystem, providing a physical home to a number of animals including fruit bats, birds, mice, and bush babies (National Research Council, 2008). The baobab can also be used to store water. Nomads in dry areas have used the hollowed trunks to make water reservoirs (Sidibe & Williams, 2002). These have been recorded holding from 200 to 4,000 gallons of potable water (Sidibe & Williams, 2002). Much of the plant parts are edible by humans including the leaves, flowers, fruit, and seeds (National Research Council, 2008). Although the tree provides no timber due to the spongy nature of its wood, the bark serves as food for elephants in times of drought and can be made into rope, roofing material, and clothing (National Research Council, 2008). These large trees' trunks are naturally hollow and thus can provide a variety of shelters and storage spaces for humans and other animals (Sidibe & Williams, 2002). The baobab is known for its longevity and for supporting the communities it is found within. The tree has exceptional vitality and even after an entire tree is cut down or is blown over in a storm it simply regenerates from the root and continues to grow (Sidibe & Williams, 2002).

There are many African myths and legends about the baobab tree. It is a symbol of the strength of Africa and is often referred to as the "tree of life" (National Research Council, 2008). For some African cultures it is the tree under which man was born and it is revered for its healing properties (Pakenham, 2004). Baobabs can experience drought, burning, and other harsh elements, but still continue to endure, heal, and thrive (Sidibe & Williams, 2002). Within communities the baobab's large stature and ability to give shelter often provides a human meeting place for dialogue, sharing stories and debate of

important issues and ideas (Pakenham, 2004). Thus, these enduring giant trees are a symbol of community and a gathering place (Pakenham, 2004).

The baobab tree represents endurance, conservation, creativity, ingenuity and dialogue (Sidibe & Williams, 2002). Recently, Guinea's president, Alpha Condé expressed his admiration for President Nelson Mandela upon his death by saying, "He is comparable to a great baobab, this invincible tree under which everyone shelters" (DiLorenzo, 2013, para. 8). The longevity of the baobab defines it as a living elder "on a continent, which reveres elders" (Pakenham, 2004). For example, in some African countries villagers give a funeral for a baobab when it dies, playing drums typically reserved for chiefs (Sidibe & Williams, 2002). In West Africa, the tree has been used as a tomb and "it is one of the only trees in Africa preserved as repositories for the ancestors; hence it is believed to have spiritual power over its community's welfare" (Sidibe & Williams, 2002, p. 23). The nature of the baobab's branches, which grow straight up, have been said to reflect arms stretching upwards for a number of reasons including a desire to reach heaven, in friendship, for hope, and for ambition (Pakenham, 2004).

Baobab Families

Eventually, the rain stopped, and we found ourselves looking on a barren landscape of gravel and shrub and the occasional baobab tree, its naked, searching branches decorated with the weaverbird's spherical nests. I remembered reading somewhere that the baobab could go for years without flowering, surviving on the sparsest of rainfall; and seeing the trees there in the hazy afternoon light, I understood why men believed they possessed a special power - that they housed ancestral spirits and demons, that humankind first appeared under such a tree. It wasn't merely the oddness of

their shape, their almost prehistoric outline against the stripped down sky. 'They look as if each one could tell a story,' Auma said, and it was true, each tree seemed to possess a character, a character neither benevolent nor cruel but simply enduring, with secrets whose depths I would never plumb, a wisdom I would never pierce. They both disturbed and comforted me, those trees that looked as if they might uproot themselves and simply walk away, were it not for the knowledge that on this earth one place is not so different from another - the knowledge that one moment carries within it all that's gone on before.
--Barack Obama (2004), *Dreams from My Father* (p. 436)

As the son of an African father, President Obama's quote about his encounter with baobab trees in Kenya provides a fitting introduction to understanding the cases within this study as *Baobab Families*. Like the baobab trees in his quote that "look as if each one could tell a story," the families in this study each have a rich story to tell as well. Compiled together, their narratives parallel the wise and enduring nature of the baobab by reflecting families' intentional use of networks, culture, strategies and other resources to develop their own college-going culture and engage in college choice. This part of chapter six includes three sections that shape Baobab Families as a new frame for understanding the college choice process of the cases in this study. The first section introduces the family cases as Baobab Families, the second section explains the resources found within Baobab Families that are used in college choice, and the third section interprets how Baobab Families "grow" through the process of college choice together.

Families as Baobab Trees

I view each of the families in this study as a baobab tree and every tree is unique. Just as each baobab has a different height and girth, the families in this study have their

own distinct structure and characteristics including single-parent and two-parent households, families with multiple children or one child, various household incomes, and different countries of origin. To acknowledge these distinctions among families, in chapter five I provided in-depth case profiles, which illustrated how each family engaged in college choice in their own unique way. Yet, while differences exist, there are also a number of similarities across cases, which will be discussed in this chapter. In this section, I draw some initial connections between the families and baobab trees in order to situate the cases as Baobab Families before moving into deeper discussion about their engagement in college choice.

For example, the baobab tree has a number of components (e.g. roots, leaves, branches, bark, fruit) that have separate uses and distinct functions and likewise the cases in this study are comprised of individuals who each have separate lives and distinct roles in their families. Yet, for both the baobab tree and across the family cases, these separate components/individuals work together as a common unit to navigate and thrive in their environment. The Enemari family calls this coming together a "shared responsibility" and the Amolo family referred to "selflessness" as a means of each individual putting the needs of the family first. Through the contributions of each family member, Baobab Families collectively adapt to various social and economic forces impacting the family (Bernheimer et al., 1990; Gallimore et al., 1989). This is particularly important because as immigrants, these families had to learn how to survive in a new environment in the United States. In fact, baobab trees were once said to represent Africans who emigrate to other continents because like this upside-down tree, "As migrants from Africa, we are in

essence upside down, changing our day to night or our Summer to Winter...turning our souls inside out and adapting...wherever we re-root!" (Hemming, 2012, para. 9).

When the Baobab Families re-rooted in the United States, a common goal that they worked towards was upward mobility through a college education as Adakole Enemari explained, "College is very vital for us, both for our background and for our personal family lives." Like baobab tree branches reaching towards the sky, individuals in Baobab Families each have a responsibility to strive towards academic achievement for the overall success of the family, which Esther Obi expressed, "[Education] was valuable to us when we were in Nigeria. So we cannot come to this country and let it go. Education is something that is who we are and it will make our family successful." Note that in Adakole and Esther's comments they emphasize the family rather than the individual, which was a theme found throughout Baobab Family narratives. In many African societies it is the needs of the collective family, rather than the individual that are prioritized (Swigart, 2001), which is a perspective that remained among Baobab Families as they re-rooted in the United States. For the Baobab Families, the family unit is revered and respected, just as the baobab tree is revered within many African communities. Although each individual family member might represent a branch on his or her Baobab Family tree, each branch is interdependent upon the trunk and roots of the rest of the family unit.

As Baobab Families engaged in the U.S. educational system and college choice, the trunk and roots of their baobab tree could provide support and nourishment throughout this process or limit their growth. Therefore, the tree not only symbolizes the family unit, but also family structure and resources. Similarly the literature states that

family structures have a direct impact on college access, providing advantages and barriers in college access and choice (Bennett & Lutz, 2009; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Massey et al., 2007; Perna, 2006). These include parental level of education, family composition, and socioeconomic status (SES), which affect families' level and type of involvement in college choice (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Assets and limitations were present in the form of structural factors within Baobab Families as well. For example, all of the families discussed the benefits of having a college-educated parent in the family, while across cases families also experienced financial limitations in their ability to pay for college.

Yet, Baobab Families are not only impacted by structural factors in college choice. Akin to the findings of Haynie (2002) and Griffin et al. (2012) on the college choice process of Black immigrants, Baobab Families were impacted by cultural factors as well. Like the baobab tree, which can create its own ecosystem that can survive in extreme environments, these families also developed their own family culture, which played a large role in how they dealt with structural barriers and engaged in the college choice process. Ecocultural theorists such as Bernheimer and colleagues (1990) support this finding, suggesting "What matters is what is real to the family; in other words, the family's social construction of their circumstances" (p. 228). Baobab Families created their own ecocultural niche that balanced two cultures, American and Kenyan or Nigerian. Families sought to adapt or "re-root" to life in the United States, while also maintaining roots in their African heritage. The Magimbi family described this as utilizing the "best of both worlds" and the Amolo family wanted their children to find a balance between being "free and fearless" and "respectful and obedient." In creating this

balance, Baobab Families pulled from both cultures to develop their own family culture within their homes and communities (Weisner, 1997). Across cases this family culture involved an environment that would encourage college going and academic success. Therefore while structural factors and an external environment impacted Baobab Families as they engaged in college choice, their family culture provided a way for conceptualizing and navigating the process. The next section "Inside the Baobab," describes resources that Baobab Families draw upon to create their college-going family culture and engage in college choice.

Inside the Baobab: Familial and Culturally Based Resources

Successfully navigating the college choice process requires a number of resources, knowledge, and skills (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989). Baobab Families possessed diverse resources that they used to navigate college choice as well, which included those brought from Africa, those learned through adapting to U.S. society, and those gained during the college choice process itself. Baobab Families each stored their resources within their tree's hollow trunk, utilizing them throughout the college choice process. While each family possessed its own set of unique resources, there were three types present across cases, which will be described in further depth: college-going legacies, cultural and familial identity, and family and community networks. Each of these resources emphasizes family and culture, which also reflects my ethnographic approach to analyzing the family cases. These familial and culturally based resources helped to sustain and nourish families in the college choice process and in the U.S. education system, much like the stored water of a baobab tree allows it to survive in the severest of droughts.

College-going legacies.

Baobab Families described the goal of going to college as part of a larger family effort towards upward mobility and success that is rooted firmly in education. For example, each of the cases have an immigration history that initiates with a family member choosing to come to the United States in order to pursue an undergraduate or graduate degree. This was not surprising as one of the most common reasons for African immigration to the United States is for a postsecondary education (Arthur, 2000). Adakole Enemari lived apart from his wife and children for nine years while he attained two master's degrees in the United States. Gatwiri Magimbi originally withdrew from her U.S. university to go back to Kenya, but returned to the United States years later with her son as a single mother and no other family members in the country in order to complete her bachelor's degree. Ruth Obi, Atieno Amolo, and Kenneth Amolo also immigrated to the United States to pursue higher education.

These are examples of educational efforts that required a number of sacrifices including leaving one's home country, financial instability, and years spent away from loved ones. Akin to much of the literature on immigrant education, these first-generation immigrants struggled, but remained optimistic with a belief that the "American Dream" was achievable through higher education if one engages in hard work (Baum & Flores, 2011). This optimism that first-generation immigrant participants had about the benefits of education also stemmed from growing up hearing from their own families that education is a worthy investment because it is a means of upward mobility. Kenneth Amolo learned from his parents that education was a way "out of the village," and Gatwiri Magimbi learned that education could be a way for her as a female to become

empowered in a male-dominated society. Therefore, the value of education was something passed on to these first-generation immigrants from their families and likewise as these parents attained college degrees in the United States they could similarly hand down their family's value of education and their own "college-going legacy" to their children.

College going in Baobab Families was not based solely on a desire for individual success, but instead was part of a larger plan to provide a better life for one's family and particularly for one's children. The first generation immigrant parents in this study explained that entering the United States through higher education was a means to achieve that goal. Even when their endeavors became challenging, parents were resilient in ensuring that they could pass on a college-going legacy to their children. For example, Ruth Obi changed her career path after giving birth to her daughter, Priscilla. Ruth could not handle the demands of her biochemistry program, realizing she could,

> Either neglect my studies or neglect my child. But I knew my education could provide the best life for my child, so instead of quitting school, I switched to a more flexible major. I gave up my dream of being a pharmacist.

Atieno Amolo's professional skills as a Kenyan journalist did not transfer to the United States, but she was willing to give up that career, which she loved, to pursue a master's degree in education in the United States because,

> My focus was that I wanted my kids to grow up here and have the opportunities that are in this country [United States]…Maybe I won't ever be able to go back to journalism, but I still accomplished something in my life because my kids are in America.

First-generation immigrant parents pursued a higher education in the United States for the benefit of their families and their children. Therefore, it was natural for parents to view this achievement as a resource or value that they could provide to their children as a legacy. Adakole Enemari explained,

> Education is our [Enemari family] legacy. It is what my parents provided for me and it is what we as parents provide for the children. It is why we [Enemari family] are here [in the United States] and it is how we will succeed here.

Funds of knowledge provides an additional lens for understanding Baobab Families' college-going legacies. Although funds of knowledge is typically used to discuss the adaptive strategies of rural and/or working-class immigrant populations who do not have a family history of (U.S.) college education (Kiyama, 2010; Moll et al., 1992); for Baobab Families, going to college in the United States reflected a survival strategy/adaptive response because it was a means of entering the United States, remaining in the United States, and providing future well-being and economic stability for the family. In addition, these college-going legacies are deeply rooted within the families' immigration/family histories and identity, offering influential messages to 1.5 and second generation children about the importance of going to college as representative of their familial and cultural self. Thus, college-going legacies act as funds of knowledge because through the narratives and storytelling passed on from parents/grandparents and other adults to children about the family's value of education and college going they provide Baobab Families with "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133).

While the Baobab Families described going to college as a family or cultural value, the literature emphasizes additional benefits associated with college-going legacies. For example, research shows that having parents who are college educated puts students at an advantage in achieving access to college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989; Perna, 2000b). At least one parent in all of the Baobab Families was college educated, which Massey et al. (2007), Bennett & Lutz (2009) and Haynie (2002) also identify as a common characteristic and advantage for achieving college access among Black immigrants. Some Baobab Family parents described acting as a role model for college because their child(ren) grew up seeing them attend college in the United States. This gave families the opportunity to talk about college, expose the children to the process of pursing a college degree and often gave children the opportunity to be on a college campus at a young age; all of which can increase the likelihood of pursuing a college education (McDonough & Fann, 2007). Much of the college choice literature would define these factors as cultural capital (Perna, 2000a; Perna, 2006), which illustrates an important point to be made regarding funds of knowledge and cultural capital.

Funds of knowledge and cultural capital are not the same because unlike cultural capital, the worth of funds of knowledge is not such that it would lead to a place in privileged social groups (Bourdieu, 1986; Kiyama, 2010). Yet, funds of knowledge can be converted to cultural (and social) capital if valued and recognized by dominant groups (Kiyama, 2010). For the Baobab Families, the college degrees that parents possess are a valued credential in American society and typically can be used as a means of transmitting cultural capital to their children. Conversely, family practices of

communicating college-going legacies through lessons and storytelling often go unacknowledged in the school environment or other "formal" settings, but can be considered funds of knowledge. Thus, the credential of a college degree is valued as cultural capital, while the means of transmitting awareness and understanding of the sacrifices required to attain the credential are funds of knowledge; yet both play a significant role in families' college choice process. A sole focus on cultural capital might overlook the presence and transmission of college-going legacies. Parents' possession of a college degree creates exposure to opportunities for the family in the college choice process, while their stories of "back home" and narratives of struggle to achieve a college degree were cultural practices of communication and parenting that socialized their children towards college.

Cultural and familial identity.

The first generation immigrant parents in this study did not only re-state messages about their experiences with education, but also reinforced college-going legacies to their children by stressing that education was a part of their family, culture, and heritage. Ruth Obi expressed that she often tells her daughter, Priscilla, "Nigerians as a whole love to go to school, they love education, no matter what it takes for them." Atieno Amolo's view of Kenyans and education was similar, "People, parents believe that children must be educated…so I just knew that it is me, it is my culture to go to college. It's like a culture." These examples illustrate how Baobab Families described college going as part of cultural identity, which are similar to the findings of Haynie (2002) and Griffin et al.'s (2012) studies on the college choice process of Black immigrants.

Yet, while the literature suggests that sub-Saharan African immigrants in the United States do tend to place a high value on college going, particularly because it is a primary means of African entry to the United States (Arthur, 2000; Ogbaa, 2003), the use of college going as a part of cultural identity among Baobab Families appears to reflect what ecocultural theory refers to as "family culture" rather than ethnic culture (Janhonen-Abruquah, 2006; Weisner, 1997). Family culture provides a set of themes, norms, beliefs and values that connect individuals to the family and guide them in engaging with their external environment (Gallimore et al., 1989; Weisner, 1997). Similarly, Baobab Families attribute the value of education to Kenyan or Nigerian culture as a means of linking 1.5 and second-generation children to their family and African heritage. In defining academic success or going to college as a part of one's cultural identity, parents could engage children with their own African values, traditions, and upbringing. For example, getting an education and going to college was something that children in Baobab Families could do that was representative of their cultural self, even if they were unable to connect to their African heritage in other ways such as speaking their parents' native languages or visiting Kenya or Nigeria regularly.

Findings across cases reflect this assessment as Baobab Families expressed the importance of education, particularly achieving education at the college level, as a fundamental family value as well. While literature on the children of immigrants cite that they often feel a responsibility towards performing well in school as repayment for sacrifices their parents have made (Fuligni, 1998; Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007; Tseng, 2004), the children in this study also viewed performing well in school as way to connect to their family. Even when students appeared pressured by or tired of education-based messages,

they often showed a sense of pride in knowing their family legacy and being a part of it. For example, Agaba Enemari, Priscilla Obi, and Olaf Magimbi all expressed a desire to achieve academically as a part of what it meant to them to be a member of their family or ethnic group. For Baobab Families, the value of education became centered on the view that it was not only important to achieve academically, but that it was a value important to one's culture and family.

As with college-going legacies, these messages regarding education as part of cultural and familial identity were often communicated from adult members of the Baobab Families to 1.5 and second generation children through the use of lessons, storytelling, and advice. This form of communication can help build a sense of identity that may have been lost or weakened (Ladson-Billings, 1998) through the process of immigrating and adapting to life in U.S society. Parents told stories to their children about their childhood in Africa such as being at the top of their class in school; attending strict boarding schools that would physically punish children for doing poorly in class; or how getting in trouble at school meant getting in worse trouble at home because the parents and the teachers work together in Africa. Atieno Amolo explained,

> Every time I remind them [her children]. I tell my story of how I would walk so many miles to go to school and how my wish was to go to college, but you had to be the best because… as I always tell them there are fewer opportunities in Kenya.

Delgado Bernal's (2001) work with Latino immigrant families and education led him to suggest that stories and lessons provide families with strategies for success as,

> Community and family knowledge is taught to youth through such ways as legends, corridos, storytelling, and behavior. It is through culturally specific ways of teaching and learning that ancestors and elders share the knowledge…this knowledge that is passed from one generation to the next...can help us survive in everyday life. (p. 624)

Olaf Magimbi illustrates Delgado Bernal's (2001) perspective on cultural ways of teaching and learning as he expressed hearing stories about "…my family's heritage. My grandpa was the first person in his tribe to go to college and to get out of the village." When Olaf goes to Kenya he also explained,

> They [men in his family] give me advice and talk to me about life and give me guidance. The values that I get when I go back, the values that my grandpa and other people tell me help me and I keep them in mind for myself when I'm back in the U.S.

Olaf illustrates that the stories he learned about his family and the advice he was given made an impact on his value system and how he led his life. In talking about her stepfather's stories of struggle in Kenya, Sara similarly explained

> It motivated me definitely. To hear how they [Kenneth's parents in Kenya] struggled to pay for his schooling, something that is free over here [United States] and over there you have to pay for it. So that motivated me to do well and not take school for granted.

Although the adult family members' messages and stories about education were not always congruent with 1.5 and second-generation children's frame of reference or experiences because they were being raised in the United States, they still served as a

resource in guiding how the children viewed the role of education in their lives as part of their cultural and familial identity. These lessons and stories represented strategies for success (Delgado-Bernal, 2001) and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992, Kiyama, 2010) that could be used to foster academic success and college going within Baobab Families.

Family and community networks.

The third resource that emerged across Baobab Families engaging in college choice was family and community networks. Strong extended family and community ties are typical in many African societies (Ogbaa, 2003; Swigart, 2001) and although most of the families that I interviewed solely included parents and children as participants, Baobab Families often defined themselves beyond the nuclear family, emphasizing the importance of extended family and community networks. The funds of knowledge framework supports this finding, defining immigrant families as household clusters that include diverse extensions of families beyond the nuclear household (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 2005). Likewise, family/community networks within each Baobab Family were diverse, including siblings, extended family, other immigrants, church members, parents' former professors and co-workers, children's school staff (teachers, coaches), peers and peers' families. They also often included individuals of different educational attainment levels as well as individuals who lived in the United States and individuals who lived in the home country.

All of the Baobab Families emphasized the importance of maintaining a close-knit family as Gatwiri Magimbi explained "I've had a lot of support from my family even when they're not here [in the United States]. And because we [she and Olaf] stay

connected we're never that far away from them." Similarly, Ruth Obi discussed that her family is like insurance because "in case of emergency, everyone would pull their last resource." Baobab Families relied on their family networks for support and as resources. They also expressed the importance of family working together as a cohesive group for the betterment of the family as a whole. Gatwiri Magimbi described her family as a single unit although many of her family members live in Kenya and similarly Atieno Amolo defined her family as "communal." Furthermore Baobab Families emphasized the importance of family/community as a cultural value or paradigm, which was also reflected in the previously described resources (college-going legacies and cultural and familial identity). Kenneth Amolo explains that in Kenya, "you are part of the whole group, you are not an individual" and similarly Simon Enemari expressed "In Nigeria, community is part of the system, the tradition, the way people do it."

Additionally, creating social networks was particularly critical when Baobab Families first arrived and were adjusting to life in the United States. For example, Adakole Enemari depended upon his church for fellowship and support when he was in the United States and away from his family for nine years. Immigrant social networks were also important for helping one another gain access to resources (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 2005). Gatwiri Magimbi and Atieno Amolo relied heavily upon Kenyan immigrants in the United States to build their social networks and navigate U.S. society. Atieno participates in a Kenyan immigrant women's group (Akiba) that provides financial guidance and Gatwiri received free babysitting from other Kenyan immigrants as she raised her son in the United States as a single mother. Baobab Families also engaged in reciprocity, helping and supporting other immigrant families and international

students as well. Baobab Families were strengthened by their social networks, which provided another form of funds of knowledge that families could utilize in their transition to life in the United States (Moll et al., 1992) and later engagement in the college choice process.

Family and community networks provided an important resource that Baobab Families could tap into for parenting and child rearing as well. For example, findings in this study revealed that Baobab families generally viewed child-rearing as a family/community effort, in which the family/community was responsible for children's well being. Olaf Magimbi explained,

> In the African family when something happens with one person, the entire family will know about it. Like whenever I do something bad, my whole family will know about it within minutes. But I think it's good because then everyone in the family can keep tabs on whatever I'm doing.

Ruth Obi suggested that every child in the Obi family is connected to every Obi adult because they "belong to everyone and are the responsibility of everyone [in the family]."

This responsibility among adults in Baobab Families also included ensuring that children were achieving academically and on a college pathway. According to Hossler and Gallagher (1987), parental encouragement and involvement is vital at each stage of the college choice process. Yet for Baobab Families, college choice was not solely experienced between parents and children, but instead reflected involvement from their larger social networks. Contemporary college choice research is also moving towards expanding the concept of "parental involvement" to include "family and community involvement" as a means of understanding the academic aspirations of underrepresented

and immigrant students (Knight et al., 2004; Tierney & Auerbach, 2005). I discuss the methods in which Baobab Families use their family and community networks as well as other familial and culturally based resources in the college choice process in the subsequent section on "'Growing' through the College Choice Process."

"Growing" through the College Choice Process

This section emphasizes "growing" through college choice not only to link to the baobab tree metaphor, but also because as immigrants, the Baobab Families were learning the U.S. educational system and college choice process together for the first time and adapting as families while they did so. As they engaged in college choice, their conceptualization of the process and how they navigated it also matured and grew. In this section, I describe five themes that emerged in the data, which reflect how Baobab Families grew through college choice. These five themes are: 1) Remaining Rooted 2) Reaching Towards the Sky 3) Experiencing Drought 4) Regenerating from the Root and 5) Sustaining the Tree. These themes also relate to my research questions because they illustrate how families conceptualized college choice, developed and communicated educational ideologies, navigated college choice, and perceived the impact of diverse factors (family, culture, social structures) impacting the process. While there are some similarities between Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three stages and the five Baobab Family themes, the findings illustrate that families were less focused on specific milestones/stages of college choice and more so on creating an environment or college-going culture in the home that would allow them to successfully engage in or "grow through" college choice.

Although I use the term "college-going culture" to reflect Baobab Families' home and community environment, in college access literature this term is typically used in reference to the school environment. For example, McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez (2002) defined college-going culture as a way for "ensuring that the schools devote energy, time, and resources toward college preparation so that all students are prepared for a full range of postsecondary options upon graduation" (p. 5). Corwin and Tierney (2007) suggested that college-going culture "in a high school cultivates aspirations and behaviors conducive to preparing for, applying to and enrolling in college. A strong college culture is tangible, pervasive and beneficial to students" (p. 3). Although this term is primarily used to describe schools, as subsequent findings reveal, Baobab Families similarly engaged in comprehensive college preparation practices within their family and community context, which is why the term "college-going culture" is fitting. Furthermore, Baobab Families often turned to their familial and culturally based resources (e.g. college-going legacies, cultural and familial identity, and family and community networks) to develop their college-going culture and navigate college choice. Thus, for the families in this study, the college choice process also emphasized maintaining and sustaining their family culture, values, ecocultural context – or tree.

Remaining rooted.

Across cases, Baobab Families described the strong value they placed on education and the importance of developing college going aspirations within the family. Baobab Families described the pursuit of a college degree as a requirement in their households and expressed that there was a clear expectation in the family that after high school, the next step is college. Expressions such as "there is no alternative to college;"

“college is very vital to us;” “it’s something we’re expected to do;” and “there’s no other option” were commonly used throughout the interviews by parents, college-going children, and other family members to illustrate the messages used in Baobab Families regarding going to college. A primary role of parents and other adult family members was communicating this college going expectation to 1.5 and second-generation immigrant children. In this way, children in Baobab Families were socialized into their family’s belief system or culture around education and college going (Weisner, 2002). “Remaining rooted” represents families’ socialization into their college-going culture.

Remaining rooted also shares some similarities with the predisposition stage of Hossler and Gallagher’s (1987) college choice framework, which entails students developing educational aspirations, making the decision of whether to go to college instead of pursuing other paths, and acquiring academic qualifications for college. However, while Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) explain that predisposition typically occurs between the 7th – 9th grades, the children in Baobab Families were rooted in college going much earlier. The families’ college choice participatory diagrams illustrated that children often developed a college-going predisposition as early as kindergarten, with some families explaining that there existed a college expectation of the children from birth.

The additional similarity that remaining rooted and the predisposition phase share is the development of occupational aspirations (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). However, Baobab Families perceived that the college choice process not only reflected the selection of an undergraduate institution and career selection, but also graduate school aspirations. All of the families discussed the importance of a graduate education, with a bachelor’s degree being one step towards that ultimate goal. Therefore,

Baobab Families encouraged 1.5 and second-generation children to pursue career paths that required a graduate degree, which led children to the early development of college aspirations for not only undergraduate education, but also for a graduate education. Three of the families were explicit in stating that attaining a graduate degree was the college going expectation in the home and two families explained that the expectation was the attainment of a graduate degree beyond the master's level. Adakole Enemari illustrated this expectation,

> Our end goal for each one of them [Enemari children] is not just to go to college and get a bachelor's degree. It is an end goal that each of them will get a graduate degree or PhD. So they know from the go that it is not a choice, it is something that you have to do. It's just something that you have to go through. We don't just expect them to get the bachelor's degree and say, "oh I've gotten a bachelor's degree, BS, BA, whatever." If I was able to get to a certain level coming from my own background and going to school, then with the opportunities they have here, they [Enemari children] should be able to do much more.

By immigrating to the United States and through education, the first generation immigrant participants achieved a level of upward mobility that superseded their own parents in Africa. Some of the participants, including Adakole Enemari, Ruth Obi and Kenneth Amolo now expect their children to use education as a means of superseding the level of success and education they have achieved.

Parents also believed that education is the only guaranteed pathway towards upward mobility for their children and their families. In bringing their children to the United States, the children now have the opportunity to achieve further success. Atieno

Amolo expressed that she "is not a rich woman" and so she cannot financially support her children as adults; however through a U.S. education and attaining a good career the children will be able to support themselves. Esther Obi similarly explained that she gave her children the opportunity to come to the United States and be educated and "now I expect them to make the most of their education and to have a good life." This perspective reflects research on voluntary African immigrants, which suggests that because they often come to America for economic and educational opportunities, they see U.S. society as a meritocracy and an open mobility environment (Arthur, 2010). In part, because of these beliefs about education as a primary means of upward mobility, Baobab Family members pushed the 1.5 and second-generation children to pursue a college pathway.

Across cases, the Baobab Families also communicated about the importance of determining a career path early in life as a part of remaining rooted in their college-going culture. In fact, all of the 1.5 and second-generation children in the study were expected to have a clear idea of a career pathway before enrolling in college. Typically Baobab Families encouraged students to pursue career paths in STEM fields as Ruth Obi explained, "especially we foreigners, we want our children to do those careers that you know, pays off right away like nursing, pharmacy, engineering." While some children desired a career in STEM, the findings of this study also suggested that familial career aspirations did not always align with the career aspirations of individual 1.5 and second-generation youth. Parents and children at times disagreed with what they each believed to be the purpose of a college education. Parents in part believed that a college education must lead to upward mobility and a stable and lucrative future career. Relatedly, research

has shown that immigrant parents' motivations for wanting their children to attend college are often driven by reasons related to employment and earnings (Fuligni, 1998; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008).

The 1.5 and second-generation children in the study had mixed reactions to these expectations. Some children such as Sara Amolo, Nehemiah Enemari, Helen Enemari, David Enemari, and Olaf Magimbi were interested in pursuing a STEM degree and/or had developed an early interest in a career field that their parents also approved of for them. In these instances, children stated a number of reasons for pursuing these pathways including that he/she had a genuine interest in the career/major, felt an obligation to pursue these aspirations because he/she was the first-born child, or he/she wanted to appease their family's desires. Conversely, some children wanted to pursue non-STEM related passions or interests. For example, children such as Hannah Amolo, Agaba Enemari, Simon Enemari, and Priscilla Obi were interested in non-STEM pathways that other family members did not approve of for them. Children did not disagree with their parents' reasoning about the importance of a lucrative career, but some believed that non-STEM pathways or careers in areas like professional sports or culinary arts could also provide upward mobility. Yet, parent participants often dismissed or tried to dissuade these types of career aspirations. This is significant because a major aspect of parental encouragement in college choice literature relates to the importance of congruence or the balance and match between a parent's aspirations and the child's educational goals (Hossler, Schmit & Vesper, 1999). However, instead of seeking congruence, many parents in Baobab Families appeared to believe that children should be inculcated or rooted towards certain college/career paths.

In all families, norms and values are learned within the familial context and are passed on from one generation to the next (Kamya, 2005; Weisner, 1997). Correspondingly, college-going culture in Baobab Families required transmission from parents or other adult family members to 1.5 and second-generation children. Yet, this transmission can be particularly difficult for immigrant families due to children growing up in a different country context from their parents, which can create, "gaps in shared family history" (Kamya, 2005, p. 103). For example, parents expressed that their children often did not realize the opportunities that they have in the United States because they have not been exposed to other struggles. Parents often struggled with the fact that their frame of reference was very different from their American born or raised children, who are not familiar with or do not remember the struggles they faced growing up in Africa. For example, Owole Enemari expressed about her son Agaba,

> He is like "Whatever."…You know he doesn't know what he has. I feel like I am the one to be like "Oh my God look at what you have" and he's like "Compared to what?" because he doesn't have anything to compare it to…So maybe I look at it differently because I know where I came from and I think, "Oh my God this one is right here [in the United States] and he needs to take advantage of it."

Atieno Amolo also expressed similar frustrations with her daughter, Hannah but has come to realize "my experience will never be her [Hannah's] experience." While the members of Baobab Families live together in the same home and/or interact daily, growing up in different societies creates distinctive understandings and conflicting perspectives of what it means to live and be educated in the United States.

To ensure that 1.5 and second-generation children remained rooted, Baobab Families used a number of strategies to transmit their college-going culture. Ecocultural theory posits that families are proactive in responding to their external environment in a way that makes the environment or process work better for them (Weisner, 1997). Similarly Baobab Families' approach to the process of college choice was to use the familial and culturally based resources stored within their baobab trunk to instill a college-going culture in the home/community. For example, one of the reasons for children's early socialization or rootedness in college was the presence of a college-going legacy within the families, which was explained previously as a resource Baobab Families used to communicate the importance of going to college as part of a larger family effort towards upward mobility and as a main reason for the family immigrating to the United States. Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) cite that immigrants often use family stories of "a respectable past, real or imaginary, in the country of origin" (p. 29) to instill high aspirations and motivation towards upward mobility. Similarly in this study, from an early age, children witnessed and heard stories of their parents and other family members coming from Kenya or Nigeria to the United States to pursue a college education and to provide the children with greater opportunities for education. Thus, remaining rooted in college going is communicated within the Baobab Families as an obligation and responsibility to preserve the college going family legacy, to provide family and community uplift, and to be celebrated as a family success.

Like the baobab trees deep root systems that spread further than the height of the tree (Sidibe & Williams, 2002), college-going culture was also deeply rooted within Baobab Families, meaning it did not typically begin with the first-generation immigrant

parents. Instead, families discussed how the value of education was rooted within previous generations as well. For example, Olaf Magimbi described that his grandfather was the first in his village to go to college and Esther Obi spoke about how although she and her husband only had the U.S. equivalent of a middle school education, they knew the value of education and were adamant that all of their children go to college. This wealth of family narratives about education illustrates the accumulation of funds of knowledge that occur over generations and that can be transmitted from one generation to the next (Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992). For the children in this study, they grew up hearing family communicate consistent messages that college is compulsory, understanding that at least one reason they should go to college was to contribute to their family's longstanding legacy. This communication parallels Perna and Titus' (2005) work, which suggests that through parent-student discussions about college, parents convey norms and standards that promote college enrollment. Likewise, discussions about the college experiences of parents and other family members provided powerful messages that 1.5 and second-generation children in this study could draw upon as they learned about the importance of going to college.

In addition to college going messages, Baobab Families discussed the use of college role models. Many parents attended college while their children were younger and so acted as college-going role models themselves. Attending college while being a parent provided parents the opportunity to talk to their children about college and allowed children to see the process of furthering one's education (McDonough & Fann, 2007). In three of the families, the children attended their parents' college graduations, which provided an opportunity for the families to engage the children in dialogue about the

importance of going to college and being able to one day have their own college graduation. Children also expressed the value of seeing their parents and other members of their family and community network attain college degrees and encourage them to pursue the same goals. For example, seeing the parental expectations and college process of their older siblings triggered children to feel an "automatic" or unspoken expectation for them to go to college as well, such as for Agaba Enemari who at age five decided he wanted to go to college and become a doctor because it was what his older brother Simon was aspiring to do.

However, parents also sought out other role models for their children who could encourage them and model going to college, thus using family and community networks to root children in a college-going culture. One advantage that parents' high level of education gave them was access to a network of individuals who were college-educated and/or who had children that have gone to college (Perna, 2000b; Perna, & Titus, 2005). Baobab Families received advice and guidance from these individuals. Researchers find that students from families familiar with higher education tend to receive information about types of institutions, college admission, and financial aid from a wide range of sources (Bonous-Hammarth & Allen, 2005; Perna, 2000a; Perna, 2006). These individuals also helped to norm college-going in Baobab Families, as Ruth Obi described, "She [Priscilla] was there for her aunts' and her cousins' college graduations. So it has become like the norm, a norm for people around her…everywhere she looks she see someone who is pursuing college." Likewise, Olaf Magimbi stated, "It was from all angles, my mom and different people around me telling me about college." Through the use of family/community networks and specifically role models, children were not just

hearing the message of going to college, but were also seeing the message as individuals around them pursued a higher education, reinforcing the importance of achieving that goal.

However, even members of Baobab Family communities who did not have a college education participated in rooting children in the family's college-going culture. Thus messages about college going were transmitted to students from a number of family and community members living in the United States and in the home country. While parental support was certainly critical (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000), this additional family/community involvement reinforced parental expectations and made a large impact on rooting children in college-going culture. Because some children described parental messages about college as "repetitive" or "redundant," these other family and community members could provide a fresh perspective on the importance of going to college. For example Olaf Magimbi explained,

> Like my mom tells me…"the opportunity you have to go to school, a lot of kids don't have that in Kenya." I hear that constantly and so sometimes I feel like, "I really don't care at this point"…But when we go back to Kenya and I see kids my age in the village or hear my grandpa's stories about his struggles, it's like, "okay, yeah I get it."

Children expressed that they respected and trusted the college going messages they heard from grandparents, older siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, family friends, and other individuals in their familial network.

Overall, across Baobab Families a common objective was to ensure that 1.5 and second-generation children remained rooted in the family's college-going culture. Thus,

children were encouraged to have early development of undergraduate, graduate, and career aspirations and understand that an undergraduate degree was the compulsory next step after high school graduation. While some of these factors parallel Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) predisposition stage of college choice, remaining rooted is more of a socialization process in college-going culture, in which families intentionally attempted to shape how children viewed college going and the purpose of college. Across cases, families used familial and culturally based resources to ensure that their children remained rooted in the goal of family uplift through higher education. These findings are similar to Griffin et al.'s (2012) and Haynie's (2002) research on Black immigrants and college access, which highlights factors such as culture and family educational ideologies as primary drivers in the college choice process of Black immigrant students. This early socialization or predisposition towards college going puts the children in this study at an advantage for eventually enrolling in college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Children were both motivated and pressured by this socialization process, but all expressed a desire to pursue a college degree.

Reaching towards the sky.

Baobab trees are known as the "upside down tree" because its branches reach upwards towards the sky (National Research Council, 2008). Similarly while Baobab Families sought to ensure that their children were deeply rooted in a college-going culture, they also reinforced this college-going culture by emphasizing high academic striving or "reaching towards the sky." Thus, across all of the family cases there was a consistent reference to high academic expectations. Nehemiah Enemari summed this

perspective in stating, "academic success for us is being able to put in your best efforts at whatever you do. Like when you shoot for the moon you can at least get to the stars."

To define the high academic expectations of their families, 1.5 and second-generation children often used their American peers as a comparison. For example, Priscilla Obi explained,

> I have two American friends that don't usually get the best grades, which I consider like straight As. When they get a bunch of Bs and a C their parents think it's a big achievement. So when I get a bunch of Bs, they say "oh that's really good [Priscilla]!" and I'm like "Really? My mom won't see it that way."

Hannah Amolo expressed that compared to other students at her school, she is "doing fine" academically, although her parents believe that her academic performance could be much improved. Similarly Agaba Enemari and Olaf Magimbi stated that their families expect their academic performance to be "above average" or "perfect." Although 1.5 and second generation immigrant children believed their families' academic expectations to be higher than many of their American peers, a number of studies emphasize that immigrant parents' high expectations contributes to academic success and college enrollment (Arthur, 2008; Nicholas et al., 2008; Obeng, 2008; Vernez & Abrahamse, 1996). Regarding grades, Baobab Families generally described that getting As was expected; getting Bs were frowned upon, but were considered acceptable as long as the majority of the grades were As; and getting Cs warranted harsh disciplinary action. The Baobab Families did not talk about Ds and Fs during the interviews. All of the children in Baobab Families had an A or B unweighted grade point average, which likely put them at an advantage in the college choice process as academic achievement also contributes to

whether and where students go to college (Bergerson, 2010; Nora, 2004). None of the college going students in the study had a 4.0 unweighted GPA, although some of the older siblings who participated in the study did. Yet, even those siblings who achieved a 4.0 GPA felt like there was still a family expectation to do better, for example by taking more advanced classes. Therefore, the expectation of academic striving or "reaching towards the sky" was consistently present in their homes.

Additionally, in order to go to college, one has to achieve academic qualifications; and a rigorous academic curriculum increases the likelihood for pursuing college enrollment (Adelman, 2006; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Choy et al., 2000). Similarly Baobab Families not only believed that children's grades should be above average, but that they should also be enrolled in advanced academic classes. All of the children in the study were engaged in a college preparatory curriculum. Some children described feeling pushed by parents or other family members to take additional academic courses at the expense of electives or participation in extracurricular activities.

Children reacted differently to these academic expectations even within the same family as evidenced by Sarah and Hannah Amolo as well as by Agaba Enemari and his four older siblings. Each child was like an individual branch on the baobab tree, although all reaching upwards, they achieved different heights of academic achievement. Still, all of the 1.5 and second-generation immigrant participants expressed that the pressure and encouragement to achieve academically and go to college motivated them to work towards those goals. This finding aligns with numerous research findings, which state that parents' high educational expectations positively impact college-going aspirations (for example Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hamrick & Stage, 2004; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns,

1998). Thus, having high academic expectations from family can be an asset in the college choice process (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Vernez & Abrahamse, 1996). Nicholas et al.'s (2008) research on immigrant families found that strict parenting styles and parents' emphasis on schooling contributed to the success of children throughout high school. However, if students perceive parents' high educational expectations to be extreme pressure, rather than support the consequences can include lowered academic confidence, which has a negative impact on the college choice process (Fuligni et al., 1999; Gloria & Ho, 2003). The 1.5 and second-generation children in this study described being motivated by family expectations, but also feeling pressure and an obligation to achieve academically or choose a certain college/career path in order to please their families and represent their culture. Although some children in this study chose to eventually pursue their own passions instead of those of their families, these children either kept their pursuits a secret or found a viable compromise within the family. Conversely, most children in Baobab Families reacted similarly to other findings in immigrant education literature, in which children pursued academic achievement in large part to fulfill desires of the family rather than themselves (Fuligni et al., 1999; Nicholas et al., 2008). Overall Baobab Family children expressed a desire to meet cultural and familial expectations regarding academic performance and college/career aspirations.

The first generation immigrant parents in the study expressed a number of reasons for pushing their children to perform at a high level academically and for insisting that their children go to college. One reason that I found across cases was family members believing that the children had the talent and capability to get straight As, take advanced coursework and go to college as Gatwiri Magimbi explained,

> If I didn't see that he [Olaf] was capable of it, or like maybe his calling is to be an electrician or something like that, I wouldn't necessarily push as much. But I know what he wants, and I've seen the work he does, he's a smart kid. He's been saying he wants to be an astrophysicist for as long as I can remember and I know he can do it.

Adakole Enemari likewise expressed to his children, "I know each of you are all capable of getting As if you put in your best effort, so why would I be okay with Bs?" Parents often described having a level of confidence and belief in their children's academic abilities that was higher than the children's belief in their own abilities. Baobab Family parents often reasoned that their children lacked academic discipline, focus, and interest in their coursework; all factors that the parents believed could be remedied if the children put forth additional effort.

Baobab Families engaged in a number of practices to develop an environment that reflected high academic expectations and academic discipline, which often included the use of familial and culturally based resources. For example, Baobab Families communicated the belief that their children have a responsibility to their family to perform well in school. Some parents such as Ruth Obi related being a student to a job, "she [Priscilla] doesn't have to work [while in high school]. Your job at this point is to be a child and a student." Similarly some parents expressed that each person in the family has a role or position that they must fill and for the children this role/position is to be a student. Furthermore, in fulfilling one's job or role as a student, putting forth the best effort is expected. In the Enemari family, performing poorly in school was seen as disgracing the family name. In the Magimbi home, when Olaf's academic performance

was not satisfactory, his mother as well as other family members in Kenya told him that he is not living up to his responsibilities as a first-born child or as a man. These examples illustrate that performing poorly at school is linked to the belief that the child is not fulfilling family obligations and/or is hurting the family's reputation.

Baobab Families also emphasized cultural identity to encourage academic success. While many parents discussed benefits of their children growing up in America, they also saw advantages to maintaining African value systems. For example, Baobab Families described their [Kenyan or Nigerian] home environments as more strict and disciplined regarding academic performance, while American households and schools as being more permissive and praiseful. When children performed poorly academically or were not showing academic discipline they were chided by family members for being "too American." Children in this study were socialized to believe that being Kenyan or Nigerian meant attaining above average grades and going to college.

Baobab Families emphasized active home-based/community-based parenting as a means of encouraging children to "reach towards the sky," and they perceived this parenting style as a cultural value as well. In addition to using cultural and familial obligation as aforementioned, this parenting style included a high level of parental involvement/control, academic pressure, and involvement from family and community networks to reinforce expectations. Many of these methods resembled findings from education research on African immigrants, which describe them as more strict and authoritative as compared to American parenting (Arthur, 2008; Obeng, 2008). These methods also resemble the findings of some studies on Chinese immigrant parenting and education. For example, in Louie's (2004) study on Chinese immigrant families and

college choice, she found that many of the households demonstrated "achievement socialization" in which children's academic achievement was mandated by parents similarly to Baobab Family expectations of "reaching towards the sky." Additionally, Pearce (2006) found that Chinese parents are more likely than White parents to ensure that their child's homework was completed, assign additional schoolwork, have a designated study space in the home, and control their child's free time, which were all methods used within Baobab Families. Across cases, participants in Baobab Families described the important role of family in ensuring that children received high academic expectations, academic encouragement and support in the home. Therefore within Baobab Families, adults worked to create an environment that stressed educational achievement to ensure that their children put forth their best potential academically. Like the upside down baobab tree that has strong roots reaching deeply downward and tall branches reaching upwards, these families engaged in a family culture (Weisner, 1997) that emphasized both remaining rooted (college going) and reaching towards the sky (academic striving).

Experiencing drought.

Baobab Families actively navigated college choice using their college-going culture as a guide. These cultures provided an environment in which college going and academic achievement were perceived as mandatory. Baobab Families' sustained this culture through their familial and culturally based resources or funds of knowledge. Children committed to a college pathway in early childhood (remaining rooted) and endeavored to attain their family's high academic expectations (reaching towards the sky), which would provide them with the academic qualifications to go to college.

However, Baobab Families experienced a number of barriers and limiting factors as they engaged in the college choice process as well. Although these obstacles occurred at different points throughout the choice process, they most often occurred during a child's high school years. In some ways this timeframe aligns with Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) search stage, which also typically occurs in high school.[10] While Baobab Families described high school as a time when they were most fully engaged in college preparation, this was also a time when they experienced the most familial tension and misunderstandings about the college choice process. Across cases, Baobab Families experienced four specific challenges, which are described in detail next: lack of U.S.-based college knowledge, college costs, role of schools, and intergenerational tension.

Researchers suggest that while parental involvement is important in the search stage, this impact is decreased relative to predisposition (Galotti & Mark, 1994; Hossler et al., 1999). Similarly within Baobab Families, "experiencing drought," reflected periods when parents and other adult family members struggled in their involvement in college choice and when children questioned the legitimacy of their family's college-going culture. Experiencing drought was also a time when Baobab Families' college choice process seemed to be most impacted by factors external to the family/community context. Like drought experienced by baobab trees in the African savannah, these challenges were harmful to Baobab Families as they sought to navigate college choice.

U.S.-based college knowledge.

Each of the families discussed the challenge of navigating the U.S. education system and college-going process, which often stemmed from a lack of knowledge or experience. For example, none of the parents in Baobab Families had gone through the

[10] The search stage occurs between the 10th and 12th grades (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000).

K-12 education system in the United States, which they had to learn in order to be an academic resource and advocate for their 1.5 and second-generation children. In describing the process of navigating college preparation with her child, Gatwiri Magimbi stated, "It's still a jungle for me. There are so many different possibilities." Ruth Obi found the curriculum structure in the United States confusing because it did not seem to her that Priscilla's courses are connected from year to year in school. Ruth's experience in Nigeria was that everything you learn in your courses culminates into cumulative examinations taken in order to transition from the U.S. equivalent of middle school to high school and then from high school to college, but "Here [United States] its like once you finish a grade, then that's it. You might not have to even look at that information you learned again. Maybe she [Priscilla] will need it for the SAT? I'm not sure." Even Atieno Amolo and Adakole Enemari, who are both educators in the United States, cited struggles with navigating the college choice process with their children. Adakole explained, "Particularly with [Simon, oldest child] I was not 100% sure of what he needed to do. I knew how to help him be a strong student, but the process of getting into college here is much different from Nigeria." Sara Amolo also expressed,

> My mom [Atieno] is a high school teacher, but she does special education…she wasn't trained on college stuff or anything. She knew some of what to do and she has people she can ask…But, I had to help them [Atieno and Kenneth] figure out a lot too.

Families in this study often lacked what emerged as "U.S.-based college knowledge," which impacted their experience with the college choice process. "College knowledge" reflects "familiarity with the ways, purposes, and pathways that expose

students and families to the social, psychological, economic, and experiential tools for accessing and achieving success in our [U.S.] higher education system" (Smith, 2009, p. 176). I refer to college knowledge in this section as "U.S.-based" because although all of the first generation immigrant parents attended college at the undergraduate and/or graduate level in the United States, they attended either as international students and/or as adult learners. Therefore, they knew about college choice processes, but their frame of reference was from a different context.

Parents expressed less familiarity with accessing college through a U.S. K-12 education system; particularly lacking familiarity with factors such as college standardized test (e.g. PSAT, SAT and ACT), academic tracking systems (e.g. the differences between the curricula of different academic tracks), various types of postsecondary institutions and the cost of college and financial aid. Researchers note that an understanding of these factors is critical to college entry (Bergerson, 2010; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1999; McDonough, 1997). Gatwiri Magimbi explained about the academic tracks at Olaf's school, "It's certainly different from what I went through…I think he just qualified for some AP classes. I honestly don't know and I don't know how much I care as long as he's in the advanced classes." Owole Enemari also explained, "I didn't know what was on the SAT test when my first child was going through [Simon], I thought it was like subject tests, but it nothing like that really. No science, no history, just math and vocabulary." Kenneth and Atieno Amolo had very little knowledge about community colleges initially and Priscilla Obi complained that her mother, "Only knows about colleges in Maryland and Ivy League colleges, there are a million other schools out there, but those are the only ones that exist for her."

For the 1.5 and second-generation children, they are among the first members of their household (and in some cases their extended family) to pursue a U.S. college education via the U.S. K-12 education system. Parents' understanding of the college choice process stemmed in part from what they experienced in selecting a college in their home country or as an international student, which was not completely relevant to their children. Simon and Nehemiah Enemari both expressed that their parents "just didn't understand" all of the elements required to be a viable college candidate in the United States. Simon explained, "they [Adakole and Owole, parents] think it's all about academics like in Nigeria, but colleges in America look at lots of other factors." Thus, while these children had college-educated parents, there existed knowledge gaps about college in these families that resembled the experiences of students who were first generation to college. First generation students and their parents are less likely to be knowledgeable of how to prepare for college, distinguish between institution types, and find reliable information needed to choose and apply to institutions that are a good fit (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1999; MacAllum, Glover, Queen, & Riggs, 2007; Perna, 2000), which were issues the families in this study experienced as well. While there are outreach programs and resources that exist to help first generation students/families access college (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005) none of the Baobab Families expressed being targeted for these programs or participated.

College cost.

College cost and financial aid were common themes that emerged across cases. All of the families discussed the importance of considering how to pay for college. Kenneth Amolo shared, "We [African families] get so used to having a free education

here [United States] such that when it comes to college going time it really hits us hard, so it is important to start setting aside money early because college is really expensive." Kenneth made this statement as part of advice he would give to other African families preparing to send their children to college; however, neither the Amolo family nor any of the other Baobab Families in this study had saved funds ahead of time to pay for their children's college tuition.

Additionally, the findings illustrate that all of the families perceived that their economic circumstances would negatively impact their ability to pay for college. Families often explained that much of their discretionary income did not go into savings for the household in the United States, but instead was sent back to Kenya or Nigeria to assist family members still there, which is not an unusual practice in African immigrant households (Kaba, 2009; Nyang, 2011). Adakole Enemari explained, "We have a house in Nigeria and so I have to send money back home for upkeep as well as go back [to Nigeria] to check on it occasionally." Atieno Amolo sends money back to Kenya to help her father who has Alzheimer's disease. Gatwiri Magimbi regularly sends money to Kenya as well to help pay for her nieces and nephews school fees. Ruth Obi expressed,

> You have to do this. When people at home call and are in need, you feel like 'I cannot do this anymore. I don't have the money to send.' You complain and you frustrate, but you still do something. You end up making something to help them to get by for today.

Families cited having to send money "back home" due to family obligation and reputation. Owole explained, "We can't live in America and then let our family in Nigeria live bad. Everybody would talk. They think because you are in America you are

rich and the money just flows, but the truth is we are all struggling." Financial investment in family and property in the home country means in part that there is less financial investment in the family in the United States, which includes saving for college.

Parents communicated clear messages to their children about the lack of savings for college, which Ruth Obi explained to Priscilla in stating "that I don't have any kind of trust fund for her [Priscilla] or anything saved up for her education." Some of the 1.5 and second-generation children also see older siblings helping to pay for household costs or they themselves assist. For example, Olaf Magimbi, Nehemiah Enemari and Sara Amolo have part-time jobs and give some or all of their earnings to their families. Therefore, the children see that their families are experiencing some financial challenges and are not surprised that they have to consider the cost of college in their college choice process and/or consider alternative means of funding their college education rather than solely relying on parents or other family members.

Thus, cost was a major factor driving the college choice process of most Baobab Families in the study, which creates a limitation during college choice (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1999). To alleviate this limitation all of the families perceived that applying for financial aid and/or scholarships was a necessary component of the college choice process in order to subsidize the cost of college. Ruth Obi expressed, "The cost is a number one factor to talk about, the cost of education. The way it is kind of skyrocketing. When they do the financial aid assessment, then she [Priscilla] may be able to qualify for that [financial aid]." One reason that families wanted the 1.5 and second-generation children to grow up in the United States was that the cost of college can be subsidized by the government or other organizations, whereas in the families' home

countries this external financial assistance was limited or nonexistent. Owole Enemari explained, “The good thing in America is that the government came in to help in some little way or the other. Like we’ve signed up for some loans and then the FAFSA, some grants and then they [four eldest Enemari children] received some scholarships.” However, some of the gaps in knowledge about financing a college degree that seemed prevalent among families included what the full cost of college was (e.g. tuition as well as indirect costs like additional fees and expenses), how much they would qualify for in terms of grants versus loans for financial aid, and how viable receiving a scholarship would be. Some Baobab Families described attending financial aid workshops held at the children’s high school and researching financial aid and scholarships on the Internet. Yet, even with this information, the families sending their first child to college expressed not having a clear or concrete idea of how much college would cost for their child nor how much they would be able to subsidize through financial aid and scholarships. Therefore, there were still inconsistencies or a disconnect between what families perceived as the cost of college, their ability to pay, and availability of financial aid/scholarships; all of which create barriers to financing college and ultimately barriers to college access (Bergerson, 2010; Paulsen & St. John, 2002).

Both parents and children spoke generally about the importance of applying for as many scholarships as possible, but were not clear in describing the types of scholarships they would apply to, how competitive the scholarships were, or how much tuition the scholarships would cover. In speaking about her daughter’s plans Ruth Obi expressed,

> Her [Priscilla] own plan is getting scholarships, to be able to pull herself through it [college]. And I'm hoping the scholarship will be there. So, I’m hoping for her

> grades, that she keeps them high. So, maintaining and preparing yourself for that scholarship.

However, Priscilla states that her mother's understanding of scholarships is that you have to get one full scholarship to pay for college, but,

> Honestly, if a full scholarship doesn't work out, then just let me apply to all these little bitsy ones. They can all work together and pay for 90 percent of tuition, that's going to be really good for her. It's not going to be what she [Ruth] wanted because what she wants is a full ride.

Families discussed receiving scholarships for academics and/or athletics more generally and/or as if they were guaranteed. Agaba Enemari explained, "I can get a scholarship, like a lot of scholarships. Like, academic scholarships, sports scholarships and that can take me to college." Gatwiri Magimbi expressed, "We'll put in the work to make sure that we've applied for whatever scholarships are out there, whatever support is out there, and if he [Olaf] shows that he's academically capable, then he doesn't have anything to worry about." However, for the families who already had a child or children in college, they found that they were naïve in thinking that they could fully fund college through scholarships and had been caught off guard by the final cost of college for their children. Both the Enemari family and the Amolo family experienced having to fund some of their children's tuition themselves or through loans, although the children received scholarships as well.

In addition to financial aid and scholarships, families engaged in other strategies to help defray the cost of college. Two families used community college as a strategy to keep tuition costs down for at least the first two years of college. Three of the families

limited their children's college choice set to in-state colleges and universities, primarily public institutions, in order to benefit from the lower rate of in-state tuition. Having the 1.5 and second-generation children commute to college from home is another strategy that families used to alleviate the cost of college by eliminating room and board fees. Yet, these decisions had a tendency to cause strain between adults and children in Baobab Families as Owole Enemari expressed that her son David, "fought so much to go out of state." Priscilla Obi and Hannah Amolo are also interested in attending college out of state. While many of the children wanted the opportunity to go to college out of state or further away from home, most parents thought this was an unnecessarily costly decision. The one family who differed in terms of handling college costs was the Magimbis. Olaf and Gatwiri are primarily interested in out-of-state universities, both Ivy League institutions and public flagship universities. Gatwiri believes that if Olaf is unable to receive an athletic or academic scholarship to completely pay for college, she will seek out help from family and community in Kenya to raise money for any balance in tuition. She explained, "So I think pretty much the whole family has to pitch in for him to go to college. That's what we're going to do."

All of the Baobab Families were averse to having their children take out loans for college. Sara Amolo's parents refused to allow her to take out loans to help finance her first choice institution because of concern for her being in a high level of debt at a young age. Ruth Obi incurred debt through loans as a college student herself and explained,

> I do hate having student loans. And that's why I'm praying by God's grace with [Priscilla] we're going to avoid it. But the thing is I was living off of student loans

> literally [as an international undergraduate student]. I wish some of the things I knew now, I had known then.

While high-income students place more importance on college selectivity/quality, low-income students are more cost sensitive and loan averse (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1999). Baobab Families appear to intersect these characteristics, because although they were loan averse/cost sensitive, they also described the importance of college quality. Three Baobab Families perceived public universities in the state of Maryland to be prestigious or high quality, particularly the honors university (University of Maryland, Baltimore County) and the flagship institution (University of Maryland, College Park), which is where four of the Enemari children attend college. Most of the other children in Baobab Families had at least one of these two universities on their choice set of colleges as well. For Baobab Families, these institutions were ideal because they provided both prestige and low-cost, which Hossler et al. (1999) describe as a desire for colleges that have the "best value with the greatest benefits" (p. 150).

However, Baobab Families still seemed to prioritize cost over quality. Adakole Enemari explained his stance on college quality and cost,

> We think about first of all, what program of study do you want to pursue? And if that program is obtainable in a reputable school like College Park or UMBC or Howard, or Towson or Johns Hopkins or Georgetown or Bowie State, Catholic University. All of these good schools around you here and if you can get the same thing, why do you have to go all the way [out of state] and then you have to consider the cost too.

Similarly Ruth Obi expressed,

> Why would I want you [Priscilla] to leave a good school here like UMBC [University of Maryland, Baltimore, County] to go to Harvard and expect me to pay the tuition there when I can pay the tuition here confidently with no problem…I'm not going to do that. That is penny-wise pound-foolish.

Additionally, both the Amolo and Obi families believed that community college could be used as a stepping-stone for making more prestigious four-year college options financially feasible. Thus, while Baobab Families discussed college quality, these examples illustrate that cost still appeared to have the larger impact on developing a choice set of colleges and making the final college decision in most of the families (Hossler et al., 1999). This can be disadvantageous to families in the long run because where a student chooses to go to college and the quality of that institution matters (Bergerson, 2010). For example, while the students in this study tended to have high academic indicators (e.g. high GPA, college preparatory curriculum, high college entrance exam scores), the influence of cost may cause some students to undermatch (e.g. choosing an institution with academic indicators below their own), which makes them more susceptible to attrition in college (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009).

The role of schools.

Schools can be a resource in navigating the college choice process, and across cases, Baobab Families expressed believing that their children's schools were providing the information that they needed about colleges through diverse methods such as having college recruiters visit the school, allowing time for the children to speak with a guidance counselor about college, and offering free preparatory classes for the PSAT and/or SAT. "The high schools are helpful, they have advisors who help you figure it out, fill out the

FAFSA and all of that," Gatwiri Magimbi explained. Atieno Amolo also stated, "We started attending different workshops that helped a whole lot because I didn't know the process here…where I was exposed to financial aid, planning as far as getting into college…" Therefore schools provided families the opportunity to strengthen their U.S.-based college knowledge and better navigate the college choice process.

Yet, Baobab Families also perceived a number of factors that limited their engagement with schools, thus limiting their ability to receive these additional resources in the college choice process. For example, all of the parent participants expressed that they did not have a strong relationship with their child's school. They regularly attended parent-teacher meetings and occasionally attended their child's school-related events (e.g. athletic events, music recitals) and major school events such as back-to-school orientation and college preparation workshops. However, none participated in the Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) or other voluntary school activities for parents such as chaperoning field trips, which appeared to require more active or consistent participation.

Some parents cited that that they would be more involved, but that events conflict with their work schedules. Adakole Enemari explained,

> We wish we [he and Owole] could attend more. Most of the time when they have programs because I'm a teacher, it coincides with my own programs in school. My wife doesn't drive much in the night, so we wish we can attend more than we do.

Parents also expressed being made to feel "different" by school staff, which negatively impacts their desire to build relationships with schools. For example, Ruth Obi experienced feeling embarrassed at her child's school by teachers, which made her uncomfortable in terms of getting more involved. Ruth explained,

> Last year, one of the teachers was asking me in front of a group of parents, "Do you speak English at home?" I said, "Do I speak English at home? I'm speaking English to you now." I guess with my accent they're like, "Well, I just want to know if the child speaks any other language." I try to correct people that in Nigeria, English is not our second language. It is actually the primary language. The teachers should know some of this stuff. It's frustrating. That's why with the parent-teacher meetings I just try to get in and get out as quick as I can.

Owole Enemari, Adakole Enemari, and Gatwiri Magimbi all cited similar experiences with being made to feel different by school staff because of challenges with teachers understanding their accent or having negative stereotypes about Africa. These experiences made parents feel less motivated to get involved in their child's school or build relationships with school staff. Some researchers have suggested that parents of color and low-SES parents are also less likely to participate in formal school activities due to similar reasons as those of the parents in Baobab Families (e.g. lack of time, feeling "othered" by the school) (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Fordham, 1996; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008). These studies concluded that teachers and other school staff often wrongly perceived these parents' lack of involvement as disinterest in students' education. While I did not interview Baobab Families' school staff, the findings of these other studies indicate the possibility of a similar outcome for Baobab Families (e.g. teachers presupposing that parents are disinterested).

However, parents in Baobab Families were interested and invested in their children's education, but both parents and children expressed that outside of formal school programs, they only felt that the parents needed to be in communication with the

school if something was “wrong” with the child. Families defined “wrong” as an academic or behavioral problem. For example, Atieno Amolo went to speak with Hannah’s guidance counselor when she found out that Hannah was being switched to a vocational academic track. Ruth Obi has also reached out to Priscilla’s teachers when Priscilla performed poorly on a test, “I wrote [emailed] the chemistry teacher and I said, “She [Priscilla] didn’t do very well in this test and I want to help but I don’t know what she’ll be doing next in class. I need something to work with her like a syllabus or textbook.” Literature on parental involvement in college choice reflects a mixed assessment of these parents’ behavior. The examples show that during Baobab Family parents’ brief engagements with their child’s school they are acting as an educational advocate for their child, increasing the likelihood that the child will received the resources needed from their school (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Yet, Hossler and Gallagher’s (1987) framework alludes that only engaging with schools when something is “wrong” could have a negative impact on college choice and suggests that parents be involved with their child’s school and engage in regular communication with teachers and guidance counselors. Similarly Perna & Titus (2005) found that strong parental involvement with schools is an indicator of future college enrollment.

Baobab Family weak parents’ relationships with their children’s schools may also have been a result of their level of trust in the school. Researchers have suggested that voluntary immigrants such as Baobab Families generally have a positive attitude and high level of trust in the U.S. public school system (Ogbu, 1987; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). However, Baobab Families described that while they trusted schools to provide resources for college, they did not trust them to encourage a level of academic performance of their

children that would make them college bound. For example, while families across cases had high expectations for academic performance, they often found that these expectations exceeded those of the child's teachers and guidance counselors. This was incongruous for some parents, who had a much different experience within the school systems in their home countries. For Atieno Amolo, her experience in school in Kenya was that "teachers took my success personally and they took my participation seriously. But in the U.S. it's your responsibility, if you don't want to go to school, that's your problem." Owole Enemari shared a similar experience growing up in Nigeria,

> In Nigeria there was motivation and the parents kind of give their children over to the teachers to teach them, to discipline them, to mold them, to build them up. Everybody is working towards that goal. But here in America, you don't feel there is that community investment. The parents blame the teachers and the teachers blame the parents.

Gatwiri Magimbi and Ruth Obi also expressed that their children's teachers did not challenge the children or encourage the children to perform at their best. These parents expressed that their children likely received less attention because the teachers' attention is placed on helping low performing students, rather than challenging average to high performing students. Thus, Baobab Families engaged in active-home based academic practices in part to augment the lack of attention or expectations children received in school.

Intergenerational tension.

Baobab Families experienced a number of intergenerational tensions that could weaken their college-going culture and create challenges in the college choice process. A

major source of this tension was what families perceived as mixed messages about academic performance and expectations. For example, Baobab Families spoke about the differences between home and school regarding responses to academic performance. Most students expressed that their parents focused more on negative aspects of their academic performance rather than the positive, which was different from their school experiences. Agaba Enemari explained that he gets more praise at school for his academic accomplishments than he does at home and conversely is reprimanded more at home for poor academic performance than at school. Priscilla Obi and Hannah Amolo cited similar experiences. This led some students to question their academic performance, not knowing if they were performing well or not. During an individual interview when I asked Priscilla about her GPA, she responded, "Report card said it was 3.75 unweighted. Is that a good GPA? I'm not so sure. My [guidance] counselor says its fine, but my mom thinks it isn't that good." Other 1.5 and second-generation students similarly struggled with knowing whether or not their family members were overreacting to grades that were less than an A. As 1.5 and second generation children struggle to reconcile their parents' and schools' expectations they may eventually feel a need to "pick a side" if they cannot navigate and integrate the two or find that they are not fully meeting the expectations within either context (home or school) (Adams & Kirova, 2007; Yenika-Agbaw, 2009).

Literature on immigrant education has found that immigrant parents often have different beliefs to the American mainstream regarding student learning (Adams & Kirova, 2007; Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007), which may account for their differing academic expectations. Parents in Baobab Families were raised in societies with different educational norms (Fuligni, 1998; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008) and also struggled

with what they perceived as mixed messages that children received between home and school about what is acceptable behavior. For example, Adakole Enemari expressed,

> I think one of the problems we have raising children here [United States] is that in your home you have your own set of values and norms and principles that you want your children to go by. And you do that. But when they go to school, the school system has their own way that is different from your home. For example, if you have established some discipline in your home, the school does not believe in your system of values. So they are in conflict. And the curriculum, they teach them [children] some things that you don't really want them to be exposed to. But you have no control. Mixed messages. So, you tell them one thing at home and then they go to school and the school tells them something different or they teach them something different.

Similarly Ruth Obi suggests,

> People think it's the kids, but it is harder for the parents… …you [African immigrant parent] are living in two different worlds, the way you are used to knowing it and the way it is right here are different. When you remember the things your parents were telling you it was different because you were in a different environment and culture, so you have these things that you want to pass down to your kid, but the kid also has this [United States] society…so it is like a tug-of-war.

These different academic expectations between school and home often led to disagreements between children and parents in Baobab Families. While all families deal with generation gaps between parents and children, in immigrant families this

generational dissonance is further compounded by the fact that parents and children were socialized in different country contexts (Leung, 1997). This can result in parents lacking the ability to help their children navigate the U.S. educational system as well as cause intergenerational tension (Dennis et al., 2009; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Rumbaut, 2005; Zhou, 1997).

In addition to differing academic expectations, another tension that emerged in regards to mixed messages between school and home was extracurricular involvement. Research generally finds that extracurricular involvement has a positive impact on students' academic achievement and college attendance (Hearn & Holdsworth, 2005; Horn, 1997). Parents in Baobab Families expressed a similar belief and generally liked the resources and extracurricular activities available in their children's schools. However, they also saw children's extracurricular involvement as being a potential distraction from their academic work. While these parents generally encouraged their children to participate in activities such as athletics, student organizations, music/arts, they believed that their children should be able to both participate in extracurricular activities and get As in their classes, as Ruth Obi expressed,

> She [daughter Priscilla] plays the instrument, she has other things she does at the school and at the church and sports things. So she is busy at that, but I tell her that all of this is a privilege; it is extra as long as your grades are good. In fact, your grades should be higher to prove to me you can handle everything.

However, the children often tell their parents that teachers or other school staff (e.g. coaches) feels that it is acceptable for them to have slightly lower grades if they are involved in extracurricular activities because it is not possible to balance both perfectly.

For example, Olaf Magimbi told his mother that college admissions counselors would prefer a 3.0 GPA student with extracurricular activities than a 4.0 GPA student who is not involved. Students struggled with achieving the academic expectations of their parents, while also engaging in non-academic activities that they enjoyed and were encouraged to engage in by their schools. For Priscilla Obi, this passion is pursuing music. For example, her mother, Ruth would prefer her to take academic classes rather than a music elective in school; however, Priscilla explained during an individual interview,

> I'm doing a music elective next year whether she [Priscilla] likes it or not because I miss music. I'm going to go back to piano and then try out for chorus and all that. But I'll probably have to give up volleyball because I know my mom won't let me do both.

Olaf Magimbi and Agaba Enemari have a passion for playing soccer, which they believe will provide access to a college scholarship or a professional career; although their parents would rather they focus on academics. For Hannah Amolo her passion is participating in a Culinary Arts club that her parents do not approve of because they believe it is leading her towards a vocational career. Intergenerational tension was created as children and parents disagreed on academic performance, extracurricular involvement and career pathways.

In Baobab Families, when information between home and school became incongruent, some children questioned whether their families were correct or whether their schools were correct regarding academic expectations and college going. For example when children saw parents lacked knowledge about colleges, college entrance exams or college cost, they often began to generally question their parents' advice and

decision-making in the college choice process, which created tension in the parent-child relationship. Gatwiri Magimbi explained, "I think he [Olaf] thinks I'm dumb, anyway. So he says things like, 'No. That's okay. I'll ask my teacher.'" Parents and children also got into disagreements about the value of certain college majors, institutional types (e.g. community colleges, Ivy League institutions), and going to college in state versus out-of-state.

Although some parents in the study expressed that they appreciated their children having the opportunity to be more vocal and opinionated in the United States, they also expected a high level of respect from the children. Thus, families emphasized that in African homes, there are clear cultural boundaries about the role of the parent and child, which were being pushed or strained during the college choice process. In terms of educational issues, immigrant families often experience parent-child role reversal or children acting as "cultural brokers" between school and parents (Swigart, 2001; Yenika-Agbaw, 2009). Children in Baobab Families saw that they had some power and independence in the college choice process because they often had to communicate college-related information that they received at school to parents and other family members. They informed parents of school events about college and financial aid, met with college recruiters at school, and could engage with school staff about the college choice process. Thus, in high school children became more active participants in college choice and not just a receiver of their family's college-going culture.

Additionally, the children did not encourage a relationship between their parents and their school, believing that their families did not need to be very involved. Priscilla Obi admitted, "I don't tell her [Ruth] as much about school and she [Ruth] knows that,

sometimes it's just easier to keep the two [Ruth and school] separate and handle things on my own." Hannah Amolo similarly explained, "At the high school level they [parents] should be involved, but let it be more individual. Taper it off." Due to intergenerational tension or lack of confidence in parents as a resource, some Baobab Family children began to disengage from family or involve their parents less in their school affairs and college choice process. Yet, children's desire for a separation between school and home can be detrimental because parental/family involvement with children and with schools is critical to college choice (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Regenerating from the root.

Lack of U.S.-based college knowledge, costs of college, schools, and intergenerational tension all created drought as Baobab Families sought to grow through college choice. Yet as Baobab Families experienced challenges to their college-going culture and college choice process, they remained steadfast in pursuing college enrollment. I found this behavior similar to the baobab tree, which can survive harsh environments and regenerate from the root even if knocked down or damaged. Each of the Baobab Families engaged in a number of intentional and proactive strategies in an attempt to learn about and effectively navigate the college going process. These strategies reflected the use of pre-existing familial and culturally based resources as funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). College going was major reason for immigrating to the United States for the Baobab Families and thus for both generations, the ability to successfully enroll in college is not accidental. Baobab Families learned to overcome their challenges and turned to their strengths to regenerate from the root and continue to thrive.

One way that Baobab Families worked to regenerate during drought was to combat a lack of "U.S-based college knowledge" by drawing from their college-going legacies. While families lacked U.S.-based college knowledge, they did not lack college knowledge completely because each family did have parents or other family members who possessed a college degree. Therefore, families were able to use their previous experiences with college going (college-going legacies) as a resource in their child's college choice process as well. Though this form of college knowledge was not always fully relevant to the U.S. context or for children accessing college via the U.S. K-12 system, it still proved resourceful.

For example, a major lesson learned from the first-generation immigrant parents as international students was resilience in the face of challenges. Due to the unstable Nigerian postsecondary environment, Ruth Obi chose to pursue a college education in the United States. Adakole and Owole Enemari lived separately for nearly a decade while Adakole pursued education abroad. Both Atieno Amolo's and Gatwiri Magimbi's original college and career plans in the United States did not turn out the way expected. All of the parents experienced setbacks in their pursuit of a college degree in the United States, but did not let these setbacks deter them from their goal of degree attainment. Children often saw or heard stories of their parents' struggles to adjust to life in the United States and pursue a college degree. Priscilla Obi expressed that she respected her mother "Because she was a full-time student and a full-time mom and she was still able to get us a house and all this stuff." Agaba Enemari explained that his mother chose not to go to college so that his father was able to come to the United States for a graduate education. Similarly educational resiliency learned through the family context has been

confirmed in literature on Latina/o immigrants to positively impact college-going. (Ceja, 2006; Trueba, 2002).

These experiences that Baobab Family children witnessed was not just exposure to parents' planning, sacrifices, and resilience, but are also forms of knowledge and skills that can be transmitted as funds of knowledge and used in the college choice process (Kiyama, 2010). For example, in the Amolo household, the family was initially unprepared when Sara's original college plans were derailed due to finances. This was devastating to Sara who felt "I did what I was supposed to do" in terms of preparing for college. However, Sara was able to draw from her experiences as an immigrant and the sacrifices she saw her mother make in her journalism career to know that, "you can't have everything, I guess once you accept it…you can kind of move on knowing you won't have it and that kind of helps you see what you do have." Instead of giving up on going to college, Sara and her family found an alternative strategy through community college to help Sara achieve her college goals. The Amolo family used their funds of knowledge, including resilience and educational strategizing, to overcome their challenge and regenerate from the root.

Another major lesson that Baobab Families learned from was the importance of developing concrete plans for college. This lesson is critical to college choice, because college enrollment requires not only aspirations, but also college planning (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Families spent years strategizing how to enter or return to the United States in order to further their education and career ambitions. For these first-generation immigrant parents, being intentional about developing concrete plans for education, immigration, and a career was necessary in being able to pursue life in another country.

Thus 1.5 and second-generation children learned from their parents the importance of early planning for college beyond the just the desire or aspiration to attend as Nehemiah Enemari expressed,

> My parents tell us [Enemari children] "With education you have to at least have a plan – Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, Plan D" in case the first plan doesn't work out or you get into something and then you realize this is not what I really wanted.

Both adults and children in Baobab Families knew that they could not be successful in the college choice process as passive participants. Instead, they worked to be proactive participants in the college choice process, engage in college planning and "regenerate from the root."

Additionally, some 1.5 and second-generation college going children played an active role in college planning by helping parents and other family members gain a better understanding of what the college choice process entails. Even with the presence of intergenerational tension, Baobab Families always described their commitment to helping one another and learning or growing through the process together. Sara Amolo expressed having to help her parents "figure out a lot" about college choice. Additionally, Sara Amolo, Simon Enemari, and Olaf Magimbi all expressed initiating conversations with parents about topics such as filling out the FAFSA, preparing for college entrance exams, developing a choice set of colleges, and scheduling college visits. This process reflects some similarities to Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) search stage, a period when students receive and sort through information about college and financial aid, using the information to develop a "choice set" of institutions that they will apply to in their senior year of high school. Baobab Family members worked individually and together to engage

in college planning by developing spreadsheets to organize their college choice set, visiting colleges, and doing research on the internet to collect additional information about college and engage in dialogue about college options.

Baobab Families also attempted to regenerate from the root by bolstering their high academic expectations and college-going culture (remaining rooted and reaching towards the sky). For example, research illustrates that some families engage in alternative "invisible strategies" that are non-traditional ways of supporting and encouraging their children (Auerbach, 2004; Lopez, 2001; Villanueva & Hubbard, 1994). I found that Baobab Families' active home-based academic practices and college-going culture act similarly as "invisible strategies." In fact, Baobab Families described using high academic expectations in the home as a way to combat the lower academic expectations children received in school. Additionally, some parents tried to buffer their children's exposure to what they deemed as unacceptable information or activities received at school by involving the children in a church or immigrant community that shared similar values to the family. Children were provided constant messages about the importance of an education from nuclear and extended family members, which was reinforced by actions in the home that also supported these messages. For example, in the Enemari and Amolo home, television watching and/or playing video games were not permitted during the school week. Another example is of Priscilla Obi and her family making "deals," in which she was rewarded for her academic achievements. Across all of the cases, 1.5 and second-generation children have a designated space in the home to complete schoolwork. Additionally, through technology, the parents in Baobab Families were able to track their children's academic progress because teachers posted the

children's grades to an online grading system that the parents could access. All of the parents regularly checked their children's grades through the online grading system, which kept them consistently up-to-date on not only report cards/final grades, but also individual assignment and test grades. For example as Priscilla Obi explains,

> My school has Edline [online grading system], so anytime my teacher puts a grade online it updates and my mom [Ruth] gets an email. So, I feel like there's that automatic communication that when she sees something going the wrong way with my grades, she'll sit me down and start talking about it with me right away.

With access to the online grading system, families could engage in regular dialogue about improving academic performance and expectations, which the families saw as a critical component to being a competitive college applicant. Thus, rules, reward systems, and other home-based practices were developed to further instill academic discipline, achievement and college going as part of Baobab Families' college-going culture.

Although Baobab Families' relationships with schools were at times strained, parents ensured that their children were in high-resourced schools/magnets programs and on college preparatory academic tracks. Schools can act as a structural advantage or barrier in the college choice process (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; McDonough & Fann, 2007; Perna, 2006) and the families in this study were all aware of the importance of school quality on an academic trajectory. Families were intentional about the quality of schools the 1.5 and second-generation children attend, purposefully living in counties with high-rated school districts even if it meant a longer commute to work or sacrificing home size. Gatwiri Magimbi explained,

> I could have lived in a bigger house, but I chose to live here [Howard County] because of the schools for [Olaf] and you don't find a lot of schools in the states that offer the things that he's being offered in Howard County, so it's worth it.

While Atieno Amolo works in an urban school district, she and Kenneth also live in Howard County because of the schools. Furthermore, both the Obi and Enemari parents encouraged their children to apply for magnets programs focused on health careers or the sciences to provide a more rigorous academic curriculum. Thus, while parents wanted to benefit from a free public education for their children in the United States, they also wanted to ensure that the schools provided a quality education. Because of this strategy, families believed that their children were receiving the resources and information from the schools that were needed to enter college even if they did not receive high academic expectations from school staff.

Baobab Families also returned to their family and community networks as funds of knowledge to regenerate from a limited knowledge base and lack of experience with U.S. college choice, again reflecting that college choice is a family/community effort within these families. Having siblings or other family relatives enrolled in college; engaging with an athletic coach about playing a sport in college; and speaking with a co-worker about where he or she sent a child to college were all examples of catalysts for Baobab Families to consider different college options and determine which institutions would be the best fit. This finding is consistent with the literature, which suggests that individuals benefit from receiving information about types of universities, college admission, and financial aid from a wide range of sources (Bonous-Hammarth & Allen, 2005; Perna, 2000a; Perna, 2006).

Within the family, older siblings or U.S.-born family members (e.g. children's cousins) were particularly helpful because they had gone through the college choice process via a U.S. K-12 education system. In the Obi household, Priscilla and Ruth turn to Ruth's niece who is a second-generation immigrant and was the first person in their family "who has done education here from K through 12th grade in this country and through college as well." Agaba Enemari could also look to his older siblings who had all completed the majority of their schooling in the United States and were now college students. Similarly, Hannah Amolo explained, "They [parents] went through it with my older sister [Sara] and so I knew what they were expecting and I figured they expected the same thing of me as they did for her regarding college selection." Similarly, research by Ceja (2006) on first-generation Chicana students found that having an older sibling who went to or was in college created a college-going tradition and expectation in the household, which encouraged younger siblings to believe that going to college was an attainable goal. Both Agaba and Hannah began their own searches for college options as they watched or assisted their older siblings engage in the college choice process. Thus, while Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) cite that Hossler and Gallagher's search stage typically occurs between the 10th – 12th grades, because of their older siblings these Baobab Family children began searching for colleges much earlier.

Families sought out guidance, support, and involvement from extended family members both in the United States and in their home country to regenerate from the root. Thus familial support in the college choice process is not spatially bound among the four family cases. However, the type of involvement differed between those family members in the United States and abroad. Family members abroad were often unfamiliar with

specific details of the U.S. college choice process, such as college entrance exams, different institutional types, the college application process or U.S. grading systems. Gatwiri Magimbi explained of her family in Kenya,

> I just want to say that the reason that they [family in Kenya] can't participate more is obviously because they haven't lived here [United States], they don't know. But please believe that if they knew anything to add, they would be very involved…They'll definitely be involved in terms of helping brainstorm, but they've never lived here, they've never been here, they don't know the education system, they don't know anything about this place [United States].

Family members abroad typically participated in the college choice process by reinforcing messages about the importance of academic achievement and college going. Children across family cases described how their families back in the home country consistently asked questions about their academic performance and college plans. Additionally, these family members were kept informed of the children's academic progress, particularly by parents when the performance was not meeting family expectations. Family members in the United States also reinforced messages about college going, but also had a greater likelihood of being able to provide specific information or resources regarding the U.S. college choice process than were family members abroad.

First-generation immigrant parents and 1.5 and second-generation immigrant children had their own individual social networks in the United States that they could tap into for assistance. For parents, this often included other immigrants, the church, former professors, and co-workers who could to help navigate the process. These individuals

often acted as mentors to parents and could assist children in developing educational aspirations and engaging in college choice. Ruth Obi expressed, “One or two coworkers on my job who believe in education…they give me tips as to how to go about seeking more help, they even tell me how to help my child plan her career.” Gatwiri Magimbi expressed,

> Having people who you can bounce off ideas with and who can educate you on the system here is critical. Because like I said I didn't grow up here and a lot of things I had to learn on my own. So, just being able to get or to have access to information, being able to do your homework and make connections enough so that you're really informed about and ready to make the best possible decision.

Other African immigrants could also be a source of support for parents, as Atieno Amolo advised, “Have a support group of women who come from your country who share the same culture so they can advise you on how they went through it.” These parents’ social networks helped them to become more knowledgeable about the college choice process so that they could in turn be a stronger source of support to their children (Ceja, 2006; Kiyama, 2011).

Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) similarly describe the importance of a “really significant other” in immigrant children’s lives outside of parents that can provide guidance, encouragement and support in the college choice process. Likewise Baobab Family 1.5 and second-generation immigrant children could turn to their school staff, coaches, peers and peers’ families for guidance in the college choice process. For example, both Agaba Enemari and Olaf Magimbi discussed getting advice from their soccer coaches about developing better study habits and the importance of getting good

grades. These individuals could also often provided support and counsel to children about college-related issues that children felt less comfortable discussing with their families. Olaf explained, "I've talked to my soccer coach about college and he wants me to apply to certain schools that have a good soccer team so that I don't waste my talent." Hannah Amolo receives advice from her Culinary Arts Club advisor, who is also a teacher at her high school because,

> She [advisor] understands what I envision for myself and gives me advice on how to pursue it…they're [parents, Kenneth and Atieno] not really supportive, well they don't really understand where I'm coming from with culinary arts, so it's more of like a foreign idea for them.

While children in Baobab Families mentioned school staff such as coaches, teachers, and organization advisors as individuals who provided them with help during the college choice process, none mentioned having a close relationship with their guidance counselor. Ruth Obi and Olaf Magimbi stated that they planned to speak with a guidance counselor in the future about their college plans, but did not have a current relationship with their counselor. Additionally, Hannah Amolo explained that she showed her guidance counselor a list of colleges she was interested in applying to, but did not state that the guidance counselor worked with her to develop the list or gave her specific advice or assistance. This was atypical from college choice literature, which cites that guidance counselors often serve as a primary resource in the college going process, particularly as students search for colleges during high school (Hossler et al., 1999). However, all of the Baobab Family children attended large, public high schools, which may have had high student-to-school counselor ratios or counselors with a number of

responsibilities outside of college advising (e.g. student behavioral issues, standardized test monitoring) (McDonough, 2005). Therefore, it was advantageous to children in Baobab Families that they had other sources of support in their family and community networks.

Although Baobab Families often described a large network of individuals who could provide support and resources during the college choice process, not all of the assistance from family and community members was useful or constructive. Most of the individuals who were providing guidance and advice about the college going process were not professionals in this area, nor had expertise in the college choice process. Instead, the information being provided was typically based on the individual's personal experiences or anecdotal understandings, which could be incorrect, biased, or irrelevant to the family (Holland, 2010; Martinez, 2012; Pérez & McDonough, 2008). Thus, while family/community networks could provide greater access to U.S.-based college knowledge and opportunities, they also had the ability to constrain college options because families often trusted and listened to their advice and guidance whether it was relevant to them or not. For example, in the Amolo family, many individuals discouraged Atieno and Kenneth from sending Sara to a community college, although it appeared to be the most financially feasible choice and one that satisfied both Sara's and her parents' needs. Atieno explained, "I was so stupid for listening to them [family/community network} at first because this [community college] was the best thing for us." Just as family and community advice could help to expand families' college knowledge, their networks could also serve to limit or restrict their knowledge and options in the college choice process. However, across all of the families the general

perception was that their family/community involvement provided more benefits than limitations.

Sustaining the tree.

The findings in this study reveal that Baobab Families employ a number of strategies to engage in the college choice process, with a primary emphasis on creating a college-going culture within the family. Baobab Families use familial and culturally based resources as funds of knowledge to develop and strengthen their college-going culture and navigate the challenges of the college choice process. This final section reflects Baobab Families' approach to the college choice process as means of strengthening their family and community unit.

Baobab trees are known as providers within their communities and they help their communities to thrive. Likewise Baobab Families approach college choice as a family process and their engagement in the process reflects behaviors and decisions that will best sustain the family in the long run. Therefore, Baobab Families sustain their tree by making final enrollment decisions that benefit the family; transmitting family and cultural values to 1.5 and second-generation children; continuing to help others within their network that are engaging in college choice; and remaining focused on family even after college enrollment.

Sustaining the tree involves college application/selection and enrollment decisions, which parallel Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) final choice stage. Baobab Families discussed the college enrollment and attainment of one family member as an overall family investment and family success. All of the children who were in college or in the process of applying to college indicated that family members influenced them to

apply to a specific school or schools (Hossler et al., 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). While the individual child would ultimately apply to college, families in this study believed it was their role to participate in deciding which colleges would be the best option. Family members sent "signals" about a number of college characteristics as they engaged in the search process that they encouraged their child(ren) to consider including expectations about cost of tuition, programs of study, and institutional reputation (Hossler et al., 1999). Thus, they added to as well as restricted the college choice set. For example, some parents encouraged children to consider institutions that they had not thought of on their own, such as community colleges because they were a less expensive option or Ivy League institutions because they had a strong reputation. Across cases, participants explained that the final choice set of colleges was clearly communicated through a family discussion or physical list that was developed and agreed upon by the family. In the Amolo family, Hannah only applied to a community college because the family agreed that this would be the best option for the family. However, in other Baobab Families, students applied or planned to apply to a mix of schools that included their own interests and the interests of other family members. Parents, siblings, extended family members, coaches, teachers, and coworkers were cited as primary influencers on where to apply to college. However, parents had the most influence on the final choice set, reflecting research that suggests parental expectations have a significant impact on college-related outcomes (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1999; Perna & Titus, 2005).

The five siblings in the study who were already enrolled in college were each accepted to more than one college or university and therefore had to determine which would be the best fit. However, these students did not make the final decision of where to

enroll in college on their own. Baobab Families discussed college enrollment and attainment of one family member as an overall family investment and family success. Therefore, decisions around where to go to college are ultimately family decisions, based on what is the best decision for the family as whole and what the family felt was the best option for the college going child. Adakole Enemari explained,

> We have five children, so they have to make sacrifices too. Otherwise it will be, "who do you send to college and who do you leave behind?" If you are going to give each one an equal opportunity and equal shot at the university, you to tell them, "okay, even though you want to go to MIT or something like that, what will doing that take away from your siblings? What money will be left to give for their college education?" We all have to work together as a team.

Even in the single child homes, families often discussed the importance of "putting family first" in decision making about academics and college as Olaf Magimbi described, "I know my success isn't all about me, I want it, but I want to do it for them [family] too." Thus, the college choice process is a family effort and final enrollment is a family achievement adding to Baobab Families' college-going legacies.

Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model closes with college application, selection, and enrollment, but sustaining the tree in Baobab Families includes other factors as well. For example, while this study focuses specifically on college choice, for the Baobab Families this process was not a standalone part of their lives. The goal and process of going to college was integrated into their family history and cultural/family identity and was integral to their family and community success. The familial and culturally-based resources that Baobab Families used to conceptualize and navigate college choice

reflected funds of knowledge and family culture because they were pre-existing norms and values that were part of the families' everyday lives even beyond the college choice process, providing guidance for how they interact with each other and adapt in U.S. society (Moll et al., 1992; Weisner, 1997). Therefore, these resources are not only stored in the baobab tree, but also become part of the tree like water being absorbed into its spongy tissue. Baobab Families use their familial and culturally-based resources for support in college choice, but also as a value system and worldview about family, culture and education that then impacts family development and engagement with one another and their external environment (Weisner, 2002).

Baobab Families also saw college choice and particularly college-going culture as a way to transmit their family and cultural values to children and sustain this value system within their families across generations (Moll et al., 1992). Baobab Family children drew from their African heritage to develop specific college aspirations/plans and yet also learned how to navigate the U.S. college choice process. The 1.5 and second-generation children saw value in having both an African heritage and growing up in America, which parallels what Kasinitz and colleagues (2008) describe as a "second-generation immigrant advantage." Olaf Magimbi shared this perspective, "I benefit from being both African and American because my family is instilling their African beliefs and their culture into me. But at the same time I know what's out there in America, so I'm learning from both sides." Although balancing expectations from American/school culture as well as their own home/ethnic culture could create challenges at times, the overall impact, particularly on the children's college choice process, appeared to be positive.

Additionally, throughout the college choice process Baobab Families emphasized the responsibility that the children had in taking advantage of opportunities afforded to them in America that were not as accessible in Africa. Each first generation immigrant participant in the study used the phrase, "land of opportunity" to describe the United States and the 1.5 and second generation participants often repeated this phrase in their interviews to express what their family has told them about the importance of getting good grades in school so that they could go to college in the United States. These children are now the first generation within their families to be raised in the United States and to be afforded the educational opportunities for which the previous generation sacrificed (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007; Griffin et al., 2012; Haynie, 2002). Olaf Magimbi, Agaba Enemari, and Simon Enemari spoke of wanting to get a college education in part to have a career that allows them to "give back" to their families for their sacrifices and to help family back in Africa. These children are aware that their educational achievements are not only for individual gain, but are goals that are also linked to a legacy of other family members whose academic success and college going in the United States has led to upward mobility for the family and sustaining the tree.

Baobab Families also sustain the tree by engaging in reciprocity within their social networks. Participants described how they are now acting as sources of support, guidance, and role modeling for other family and community members who are also engaging in college choice. As Gatwiri Magimbi explained, "For most of us [African immigrants], coming to the States is like baptism by fire, so now that we are here we try to help make it easier for the ones who come after us." For Atieno Amolo, she is now giving advice to other Kenyan immigrant women in her Akiba group about the benefits of

sending their children to community college. The four oldest Enemari children are often asked to give advice about college to children in their church. Baobab Families are exchanging and reinvesting their funds of knowledge within their family and community networks (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992), which extends college-going culture beyond their household and helps other families in navigating college choice. Therefore Baobab Families are consistently surrounded by college going and involved in college choice, as either they themselves are engaged in the process or they are assisting someone else in their family/community who is engaging in the process.

Finally, Baobab Families sustain their tree by continuing to remain (or desiring to remain) heavily connected as a family even after a child's college enrollment. One strategy for this was having children attend a college close to home. For example, example, the majority of Baobab Family children who are already in college live at home and families also considered this to be a good option for children that were preparing to go to college. Lopez-Turley (2006) found that parents who want their children to live at home for college (college-at-home parents) can disadvantage children in the college choice process, making them less likely to apply to college than children whose parents have an "anywhere" orientation, meaning that they are open to children living away from home. Additionally, Ceja (2006) found that Latina/o children apply to colleges within close proximity of their household due to a sense of family obligation. Researchers are mixed in their conclusions of whether preferences for applying to a college close to home is beneficial or a hindrance (Ceja, 2006; Lopez-Turley, 2006); however, because of the large number of local colleges in the DC metro area, living at or close to home may not

drastically limit Baobab Families choice set in the way it would families living in regions with fewer local college options.

Although parents in Baobab Families explained that an out-of-state college was not a possible option due to the high cost of college tuition, they also seemed averse to having their children attend college further from home. Many families discussed that even when a child goes to college, they see the family continuing to play a large role in the life of the child by providing guidance and monitoring. The parents in the Amolo, Enemari, and Obi families all ascribed to this belief, explaining that through continued family involvement in the college experiences of their children, the children would not only enter college, but would also receive the familial support necessary to achieve a college degree. Additionally, this gave families the opportunity to remain involved as children continued to make future college and occupational choices such as transferring to a four-year institution, going to graduate school, and making career decisions. All of the children who are already in college are still heavily engaging in Baobab Family life by helping with household expenses, babysitting younger siblings, and going to church together every Sunday. Older siblings are also playing a role in helping younger siblings with academic work and navigating the college choice process. Baobab Family children are giving back to the family in a number of ways, while parents and other family members are also remaining rooted in the children's lives. Participants' viewed this reciprocal and continuous family engagement as a means of strengthening the family and helping one another to achieve educational and other family goals, thus sustaining their Baobab Family tree.

Summary of Key Findings

This chapter provided an analysis and discussion of the cross-case findings that emerged from the data. I explained my development and rationale for offering a new frame, *Baobab Families,* for understanding the college choice process of the family cases. I also included an overview of the baobab tree, which is used as a metaphor to describe this new frame. Next, I presented the Baobab Families frame by first situating the families within the context of the baobab tree metaphor. Next, I reviewed three familial and culturally based resources that families used to conceptualize and navigate college choice: 1) college-going legacies 2) family and cultural identity 3) family and community networks. Finally, I presented five themes addressing how Baobab families engage in or "grow" through the college choice process: 1) remaining rooted 2) reaching towards the sky 3) experiencing drought 4) regenerating from the root 5) sustaining the tree. To summarize this chapter, I now briefly review key findings from the cross-case analysis through a direct response to each of my research questions.

How do African immigrant families conceptualize the process of college choice?

Baobab Families conceptualize college choice as a family process and therefore I use the baobab tree to represent the family as a single entity engaging in the process of college choice. Although the individual college going student will eventually enroll in college, families perceive this milestone as a family decision, pathway and success. Family is respected and revered in Baobab Families akin to the respect the baobab tree is given in many African societies Therefore, Baobab Families conceptualize the college choice process as an opportunity for family uplift and one in which the needs of the family unit are prioritized above the individual.

Baobab Families also conceptualize college choice as a process of developing a college-going culture within the home and community. While Baobab Families are aware of the steps or milestones involved in achieving access to college (e.g. taking the SAT), they place less emphasis on these steps and more emphasis on developing an environment in the home/ community that will motivate children towards going to college. Akin to the sustenance baobab trees provide for their communities, Baobab Families also provide support and resources throughout the college choice process. Familial and culturally based resources such as college-going legacies, cultural/familial identity and family/community networks are stored within the baobab trunk as a means to support the creation and reinforcement of a college-going culture within Baobab Families.

Baobab Families also view college choice as a longstanding process. For example, families often described beginning the process at birth or at the latest elementary school. Furthermore, Baobab Families often saw the college choice process as going beyond the choice of an undergraduate degree to also encompass consideration of graduate school and a professional career.

How do African immigrant families develop and communicate educational ideologies about college going?

Baobab Families conceptualize college choice as an integral part of their existence in the United States. College going is heavily integrated into each family's immigration history and goals for family success. Therefore educational ideologies about college going are socialized early on in children's lives. They communicate educational ideologies through family discussions, family/community networks, daily academic

practices (e.g. no TV watching during the week), major events (e.g. graduations) and role modeling. Children receive consistent messages about the importance of academic success and going to college through diverse means and from a variety of individuals within their family and community network.

Furthermore, Baobab Families develop educational ideologies as part of their family history and cultural heritage. Adult family members pass down these ideologies to 1.5 and second-generation children through college-going legacies. The use of lessons and storytelling about family history, struggles, and success are a typical way that families communicated educational ideologies and legacies about college going. Situating educational ideologies within family and cultural identity reinforces the presence of a family culture of college going (or college-going culture) in Baobab Families. For the families, this meant that there was no alternative to going to college because it was a part of each individual's cultural and familial identity and connection. Going to college and attaining a degree meant committing to and contributing to the family's college-going legacy and family uplift.

How do African immigrant families actively navigate the college choice process?

Baobab Families actively navigate college choice by socializing their children within a college culture that "remains rooted" in their immigration history, family legacies and African heritage. This socialization begins in early childhood and encourages children to commit to a college going pathway. To ensure that children are competitive college applicants, Baobab Families set high academic expectations, pushing their children to "reach towards the sky" academically. Families also expose their children to people, activities, and schools that will provide the greatest number of

opportunities for them to achieve success. Both “remaining rooted” and “reaching towards the sky” promote a college-going culture within Baobab Families by communicating the importance of going to college, surrounding children with a network of individuals who reinforce this, and providing high academic expectations and discipline in the home.

Baobab Families experience a number of challenges or “drought” in the college choice process including financial barriers to the cost of college, weak parent-school relationships, and lack of U.S.-based college knowledge. Another major challenge is intergenerational tensions particularly between parents and children regarding academic expectations, extracurricular involvement and career pathways. When Baobab Families experienced drought in the college choice process, they attempted to “regenerate from the root” by finding ways to overcome barriers to the process. Families regenerated by engaging in college planning together, having educational resilience, and reinforcing college-going culture and academic expectations. Baobab Families also turn to their family/community network for support in navigating the process. While each of these strategies was useful in overcoming challenges, they were not always fully effective or provided expected results. For example, receiving anecdotal advice about college options from social networks did not always align with the needs of the family/college-going student.

“Sustaining the tree” is another important factor in how Baobab Families actively navigate college choice. These families approach college choice as a means of strengthening their family and community unit. Therefore the family makes final decisions regarding college enrollment together, focusing on the best option for both the

college-going child and the family. Baobab Families considered college choice as a means of transmitting cultural and familial values to children and sustaining these values within the family. Families then used these values to navigate the college choice process and to adjust to life in the United States. Baobab Families also navigate college choice within their family and community context. Participants were constantly linked to a college choice process as either they or someone in their family/community was involved in pursuing a college degree. Thus, participants were either engaged in the process themselves as the college going individual who received assistance from their family and community or were assisting someone else in their network that is engaging in the process. Lastly, Baobab Families sustained their tree by continuing to remain heavily engaged in each other's lives even after a family member's college enrollment.

In what ways do African immigrant families perceive the role of family, culture and social structures impacting their college choice process?

Baobab Families view the role of family as central to college choice and perceive the college choice process as one in which the family unit navigates together. Parents had a major impact on developing a college-going culture within each family. However, participants also perceived that siblings as well as extended family and community networks played a major role in reinforcing the college-going culture (e.g. messages, communication), assisting in the college choice process (e.g. providing college knowledge) and serving as college-going role models. The family was responsible for developing a college-going culture in the home/community and setting high academic expectations. The family could also expand children's college options and choice set or

limit them depending upon the types of messages and assistance they were able to provide about college going.

Baobab Families referred to culture's impact on college choice in a number of ways. Families communicated college going and academic achievement as a cultural value. Therefore children grew up believing that going to college and performing well academically was reflective of their Kenyan or Nigerian culture. Baobab Families perceived their view of college choice as a family process and effort reflecting their ethnic heritage. For example they described their values of community engagement, collectivism, and prioritizing the family over the individual as a reflection of an African worldview or value system. Families also developed a family culture and college-going culture, which reflected norms and values about the importance of family and college. They used these cultures as a guide throughout the college choice process. Culture could also negatively impact the college choice process. For example, Baobab Families' college-going culture at times did not align with school expectations/culture, which caused intergenerational tension and incongruence regarding academic expectations and college preparation for the children.

Baobab Families perceived social structures as both advantageous and disadvantageous to their college choice process. When social structures created limitations, families remained resilient and often turned to their familial and culturally based resources in an attempt to overcome the limitation. There were three types of social structures that Baobab Families discussed most often in relation to college choice. One was parental level of education, which they perceived as both an asset and a barrier. Each Baobab Family had at least one college educated parent, which was an asset because it

allowed families to develop college-going legacies; gave families access to a network of other individuals who were college-educated and could provide guidance in the college choice process; and provided children with an opportunity for early exposure to college going. However, because most Baobab Family parents attended college in the United States as international students, they lacked knowledge about how to access college through a U.S. K-12 education system. Baobab Families lacked U.S.-based college knowledge and thus experienced some of the challenges that are similar to those of first-generation to college families.

Another social structure that families discussed was socioeconomic status, particularly related to its impact on college cost. All of the families discussed their financial limitations in paying for college. Although Baobab Families reflected a middle class background, much of their discretionary income was sent abroad to support family in Kenya or Nigeria. All of the families described the need for their children to attain financial aid and scholarships for college, but were averse to student loans. Cost of college and receipt of scholarships/financial aid were major deciding factors for families in their college choice set and final college decisions.

Families also discussed the role of school in college choice. Parents were intentional in ensuring their child went to what they perceived as a high quality public school and was enrolled on a college preparatory academic track. Baobab Families believed this would give their child(ren) an advantage in academic preparation for college. Families also saw the schools as helpful in navigating certain milestones within college choice such as providing preparation classes for the SAT and financial aid workshops. However, schools also challenged families' college choice process by not

engaging families in relationships, nor providing high academic expectations of children within Baobab Families.

Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusions

This final chapter presents a summary of the study as well as a number of major conclusions and implications drawn from the findings and analysis. The first section provides a review of the study's purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, and methodology. Next I present a summary of the study's key findings. The third section includes study implications for research/theory, practice, and policy. I follow this with limitations of the current study and recommendations for future research. Lastly, I present final reflections and conclusions.

Overview of Study

Sub-Saharan African immigrants are one of the fastest growing immigrant populations in the United States (Hernandez, 2012). While a significant proportion of these immigrants entered and successfully completed college pathways in the United States as international student visitors, many are attaining pathways to U.S. citizenship and have children that are now in the U.S. K-12 educational system (Capps et al., 2011). Yet, there is little research about African immigrant families and their educational experiences, nor about the children of these immigrants who are experiencing an American education (Takyi, 2009). Often the educational outcomes of this population are "invisible" because they are unacknowledged or subsumed within African American education data (Massey et al., 2007). This is problematic because immigration literature states that an immigrant background makes an impact on individuals' worldviews and experiences (Alba & Nee, 2003; Kasinitz et al., 2008; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Even when African immigrants are acknowledged they are often described through one of two contrasting stereotypes. One is as a population that comes from a "primitive continent"

(Zeleza, 2009). This stereotype devalues African immigrants' homeland and culture, and wrongly labels this population as backwards or uneducated. The other stereotype is the new "model minority," which labels these immigrants as all academically successful, possessing every cultural and/or structural resource needed (Page, 2007). Yet, the "model minority" label wrongly obscures this population as one without challenges in maneuvering through the U.S. education system.

Lack of acknowledgement and labeling impedes researchers, policymakers and practitioners from understanding the unique challenges, assets and needs these sub-Saharan African immigrant students and their families bring to their educational experiences. The growth of this population in the United States and particularly the increased presence of the children of African immigrants in the U.S. school system warrant greater attention. To this end, the current study sought to extend the understanding of African immigrants in the U.S. education pipeline by exploring how multigenerational sub-Saharan African immigrant families in the United States engage in the college choice process. Behaviors and perceptions within the familial context have a direct impact on students' college choice process (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989). The literature has solidified the important role that parents/family have in college choice, yet there is little published in higher education research that focuses on and includes the family unit as research participants. To fully emphasize the familial context, this study examines the postsecondary aspirations, expectations, and access strategies of sub-Saharan African immigrant families, rather than solely focusing on the individual student. The research questions and sub-questions guiding this study are:

1. How do African immigrant families conceptualize the process of college choice?

- How do African immigrant families develop and communicate educational ideologies about college going?

2. How do African immigrant families actively navigate the college choice process?
   - In what ways do African immigrant families perceive the role of family, culture and social structures impacting their college choice process?

I selected three frameworks to guide this study conceptually: Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) combined model of college choice, funds of knowledge and ecocultural theory. I used these frameworks to design my study and inform my initial analysis of how African immigrant families engage in the college choice process, particularly in examining the structure of the process; the resources, beliefs, and values families bring to the process; and how families navigate the process. In addition, this study was informed by an extensive review of the literature on the experiences of sub-Saharan African immigrants living in the United States; the role of parents/families in the college choice process (e.g. role of parental involvement and the process of college choice in immigrant families); and the cultural and social structural factors impacting the educational outcomes and college access of Black immigrants in the United States.

This study incorporated an ethnographic case study approach to examine the college choice process of sub-Saharan African immigrant families. I used an interpretive, multiple case design (Merriam, 2009), defining each case as an African immigrant family with family members (e.g. parents, children) as embedded units within the cases. Using purposeful sampling I recruited a sample of four families (cases), which included a total of 16 individuals. I extended the notion of family beyond the "nuclear family" to include broader kinship networks (e.g. immediate/extended family, family friends and

community members involved in the college choice process). Recruitment was conducted in three ways: 1) through pilot study participants who acted as informants 2) the Office on African Affairs, a government agency that works with African immigrant families in the DC metro region 3) and snowball sampling (Daly, 2007; Small, 2009).

Families selected for the study needed to meet five criterion: 1) Black sub-Saharan African immigrants from an Anglophone country. These families must be comprised of voluntary immigrants (e.g. not refugees or asylees). 2) Parents in the family must be first-generation immigrants (immigrants to the United States who were born in a different country) and at least one of their children must be a 1.5 or second-generation immigrant (a child of first-generation immigrants who was born abroad, but immigrated to the United States before age 12 or a U.S.-born child of first-generation immigrants). 3) The 1.5 or second-generation immigrant child must be a college going individual. I define college going as an individual currently in grades 7 – 12, who is engaged or preparing to engage in the process of enrolling in an undergraduate institution. 4) Reside in the DC/MD/VA metropolitan area. 5) Allow me to conduct data collection in their home.

I utilized a case screening process and four forms of data collection: demographic questionnaire, in-depth interviews, participatory diagramming, and participant observation. To ensure families met the sampling criterion, I engaged an adult member of each family in a screening interview. Once a family was selected, they completed a demographic questionnaire. I did three interview sessions with each family. During each session I conducted an interview with the family together as a group (family interview) and 1:1 interviews with individual family members. The first interview session focused

on gathering data about the family unit such as familial roles and responsibilities; family traditions, dynamics, and communication; family history and immigration; and family experiences with education. The second and third interview sessions focused on the college going process such as participants' experiences with the college choice process and reflections on the meaning of the college going experience to the family. Over the course of the study, I completed twelve group interviews and 48 individual interviews, spending between 10 to 21 hours interviewing each family case. Furthermore, during each data collection session, I spent an additional 30 minutes to two hours with the families outside of the formal interview time engaging in conversation and building rapport.

I used participatory diagramming in the family (group) interviews. For example, during the first family interview, participants drew an eco-map of their familial network. In the second family interview, participants diagramed their conceptualization of the steps/components of the college choice process. I used these diagrams to learn how families conceptualize their family structure as well as their college choice process; to observe the families' dynamics as they created and described the diagrams; and to help stimulate additional discussion during the family interviews and individual interviews. I also engaged in participant observation, focusing on how families interacted with each other during interviews and participatory diagramming as well as insights participants made about education/college going. I recorded field notes using a modified version of Schatzman and Strauss' (1973) field note technique to document my observations.

I used Merriam's (2009) constant comparative method of case study analysis to shape the data analysis. My data analysis was completed in several iterative stages

beginning with data management and preliminary analysis/analytic memoing. NVIVO 10 software was utilized to organize and manage all of my data as a case study database (Merriam, 2009). I developed a codebook and engaged in open and axial coding within cases. After organizing the data and coding interview transcripts and other documents, I created case profiles for each family. These descriptive profiles included the experiences and educational pathways of each family member that was interviewed; the family's structure and culture; the family's academic and college going ideologies; and the family's college choice process. Next, in reference to the research questions, I engaged in my cross-case analysis through selective coding to identify the prominent themes that cut across the cases and the core category (Merriam, 2009). During this process, I developed a new frame for understanding the college choice process of the sub-Saharan African immigrant family cases within this study. Specifically, I used baobab trees as a metaphor to illustrate how the families in this study engaged in college choice as *Baobab Families*.

Summary and Discussion of Key Findings

This study demonstrates that Baobab Families' college choice process is situated within a college-going culture developed in the family/community environment. Using the *Baobab Families* frame and my primary research questions, I review and discuss this study's key findings. Together these findings explain the experiences of African immigrant families engaging in the U.S. college choice process; college choice as a family process; and college-going cultures within families and communities.

Conceptualizing College Choice

Baobab Families conceptualize college choice as a family process that they engage in as a family unit.

Due to this perspective, Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) framework presented limitations for application because it is a student-centered model. Conversely, my data illustrated that although an individual college going student in the family enrolls in college, Baobab Families perceived this milestone as a family process, decision, and success. This was not surprising, as many African societies value collectivism and familism over individualism (Swigart, 2001). The findings reflect this worldview as Baobab Families conceptualize the college choice process as an opportunity for family uplift and one in which the needs of the family unit are prioritized above the individual college going student. The pursuit of higher education in the United States was a shared family goal and commitment for both first-generation immigrant parents and their children.

To reflect these families and their conceptualization of college choice, I used the symbol of a baobab tree to represent the families (*Baobab Families)*. Baobab Families often described their experiences through stories and metaphors and so the use of a metaphor to interpret their college choice process aligns with their mode of communication and meaning making. Using the baobab tree metaphor was fitting for a number of reasons. It represented the family as a single entity (tree) engaging in the process of college choice together. Second, Baobab Families conceptualize the college choice process as an opportunity for upward mobility for the family and community. The baobab tree is similarly a symbol of community in many African societies. Furthermore, the baobab tree is a symbol of resilience and strength as it thrives in an extreme climate and likewise Baobab Families seek ways to thrive in a new society, education system, and college choice process as immigrants in the United States.

Baobab Families conceptualize college choice as a process of developing a college-going culture within their home and community.

Baobab trees can create their own self-sustaining ecosystem (National Research Council, 2008) and similarly, all families construct their own ecocultural niche or home environment (Weisner, 2002). In Baobab families this ecosystem or niche is highly impacted by college-going culture. College-going cultures are often addressed in the literature as an important characteristic that schools should possess in order to create comprehensive strategies for college preparation and access for students (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; McClafferty et al., 2002). However the findings of this study reveal Baobab Families similarly engaging in comprehensive college preparation practices within their family and community context, which is why the term "college-going culture" is fitting for describing their practices.

Baobab Families expressed awareness of the stages or milestones involved in achieving access to college in the United States (e.g. taking the SAT, completing college applications) (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989) and many drew some of these milestones in their college choice participatory diagrams. However, when asked to describe their diagrams and how they viewed the college choice process, Baobab Families tended to place less emphasis on these specific steps and more emphasis on creating an environment that values college going and guides children onto a college pathway. Baobab Family 1.5 and second-generation children were consistently surrounded by messages, people, and academic practices in the home that supported and encouraged going to college. This active involvement from family and community puts children at an advantage in the college choice process (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Perna

& Titus, 2005; Tierney & Auerbach, 2005) and reflected the development of a college-going culture in Baobab Families' home and community.

Baobab Families conceptualize college choice as integral to their family and cultural context.

Findings revealed that Baobab Families perceived familial and culturally based resources as important to engaging in college choice, which illustrated the intersections of college choice with their family and cultural context. Across cases, families discussed college-going legacies, cultural/familial identity and family/community networks as resources, which I likened to being stored within the baobab trunk as a means to support the creation and reinforcement of a college-going culture in Baobab Families.

College-going legacies reflect Baobab Families' achievements in higher education as part of a larger family effort towards upward mobility and as a main reason for the family immigrating to the United States. Adult members of Baobab Families used lessons and storytelling about family history, struggles, and success to connect these college-going legacies and educational ideologies to 1.5 and second-generation children. Research on underrepresented minority students and Latina/o immigrants define this form of communication as important for developing strategies for success within the family and building a sense of identity (Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Baobab Families similarly use college-going legacies to communicate to children the value of higher education within the family.

Baobab Families also describe the importance of college going as part of cultural and familial identity. Thus, the college-going culture that Baobab Families developed is situated within the ecocultural concept of family culture, which provides a set of themes,

norms, beliefs and values that connect individuals to the family (Gallimore et al., 1989; Weisner, 1997). For example, parents often expressed to children the importance of education to both their ethnic culture and family value system. Communicating educational ideologies in this way reinforces a family culture of college going (or college-going culture) in Baobab Families because it creates a belief that college going is a part of one's cultural and familial identity.

Family and community networks serve as an additional resource for Baobab Families. Participants often described their family unit within a larger extended family and community context. Baobab Families described these networks as important support systems. Additionally these social networks provided information and resources as Baobab Families navigated college choice, which reflects the movement in contemporary college choice literature from a sole focus on parental involvement to an emphasis on "family involvement" (Knight et al., 2004; Tierney & Auerbach, 2005).

Baobab Families' familial and culturally based resources can also be defined as funds of knowledge. For example, college-going legacies provided a means of transmitting the families' immigration/family histories, family identity, and family knowledge across generations (Moll et al., 1992). As funds of knowledge these legacies "contain rich cultural and cognitive resources" (Moll et al., 1992) that help Baobab Families adapt to the U.S. educational system and particularly to the college choice process. Additionally, the funds of knowledge framework emphasizes the importance of extended family networks beyond the nuclear household akin to how Baobab Families often define their family structure as inclusive of extended family and community members. Baobab Families engaged in reciprocal relationships within these networks,

helping one another gain access to resources and transition to life in the United States (Moll et al., 1992; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 2005) as well as to navigate college choice.

Navigating College Choice

Baobab Families actively navigate college choice by socializing children into a college-going culture.

Baobab Families sought to ensure that children "remained rooted" in their families' college-going culture. Therefore, children were socialized to believe that there was no alternative to a college pathway after high school. Baobab Families also believed that children should surpass the educational attainment and success of the parents through a college education. Families described higher education as the primary means of upward mobility and success in the United States and were confident that their children could achieve this, which Baum and Flores (2011) define as "immigrant optimism." Baum and Flores (2011) suggest that immigrant optimism is a factor that provides advantages to immigrants in their college attainment.

As part of remaining rooted, family members teach educational ideologies about college going early on in children's lives. Baobab Families describe this socialization process beginning at birth or at the latest elementary school. Thus, remaining rooted shared similarities with the predisposition stage of Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) college choice model. This included the development of college aspirations and commitment to a college pathway as well as development of occupational aspirations (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Baobab Families encouraged children to pursue STEM career pathways and careers that required a graduate school education. Remaining rooted

reflected more of a socialization or inculcation process than the predisposition stage suggests. Baobab Families intentionally attempted to shape how children viewed college going and the purpose of college without heavy regard for congruence with children's aspirations when they conflicted (Hossler et al., 1998).

Baobab Families used their familial and culturally based resources to root the family within a college-going culture. Ecocultural theory supports this finding as it suggests that families are proactive in responding to their external environment in a way that makes the environment or process work better for them (Weisner, 1997). For example, Baobab Families used stories and lessons about college-going legacies to transmit family norms and values about the importance of a college education (Griffin et al., 2012; Haynie, 2002; Kamya, 2005; Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992; Weisner, 1997). This communication parallels Perna and Titus' (2005) work, which suggests that through parent-student discussions about college, parents convey norms and standards that promote college enrollment. Baobab Families also turned to their family and community networks to reinforce messages about college going and act as college going role models.

Baobab Families actively navigate college choice by setting high academic expectations.

Baobab Families reinforced their college-going cultures by encouraging children to "reach towards the sky," meaning strive for academic success. Families saw this as a strategy for ensuring that children were competitive college applicants and academically prepared for college. Across cases, families described the presence of high academic expectations within their home and community. Children were expected to attain high

grades and participate in a rigorous academic curriculum/college preparatory academic track. Families' belief in the importance of these expectations aligns with the literature, which suggests that a rigorous academic curriculum and high grades increases the likelihood for pursuing college enrollment (Adelman, 2006; Bergerson, 2010; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Choy et al., 2000; Nora, 2004).

Baobab Family 1.5 and second-generation children often found their family's academic expectations to be higher than those of their American peers' families. Although the children often found these expectations to be different from their American peers, a number of studies find that parents' high expectations positively contributes to academic success, the development of college aspirations, and future college enrollment (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Nicholas et al., 2008; Hamrick & Stage, 2004; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Vernez & Abrahamse, 1996). In Baobab Families, parents expressed confidence that their children could reach their highest potential if they put forth a greater effort in their academic work.

Baobab Families discussed using their familial and culturally based resources to encourage academic achievement. For example, telling children that high academic performance is linked to Kenyan/Nigerian culture or to family reputation. Additionally, parents in Baobab Families engaged in active-home based practices to instill academic discipline within their children. These practices had similarities to the findings of parenting practices among African immigrants and Chinese immigrants in the United States (Arthur, 2008; Louie, 2004; Obeng, 2008; Pearce, 2006). While children expressed striving to attain their families' expectations, the literature warns that if high expectations

begin to be perceived as extreme pressure, it can have an adverse effect on students' academic performance (Fuligni et al., 1999; Gloria & Ho, 2003).

Baobab Families encounter a number of social structural and family-related barriers as they actively navigate college choice.

Baobab Families experienced four major barriers to their college choice process across cases, which I identified as "experiencing drought." These barriers included U.S.-based college knowledge, college cost, the role of schools, and intergenerational tensions.

Although most of the parents in the Baobab Families had a college degree from a U.S. college or university, they attained these degrees as international students. Therefore, they lacked knowledge about navigating and achieving access to college through a U.S. K-12 education system. I referred to this barrier as a lack of U.S.-based college knowledge. Because of this barrier, many of the families experienced challenges to the college choice process reflecting those of first-generation to college families (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1999; MacAllum et al., 2007; Perna, 2000),

College cost was another major barrier for Baobab Families. None of the families had saved for their child's college tuition and most discretionary income was being sent back to the home country as remittances. Therefore, all of the families described a need for the children to receive financial aid and scholarships to go to college. Baobab Families also discussed being averse to student loans. However, many of the families lacked a clear understanding of the cost of college, eligibility for financial aid, or competitiveness of scholarships. Baobab Families expressed that college quality was important in their college choice process. Yet, college cost often became the primary driver in how most families developed their college choice set and made final decisions

about college enrollment, which can be disadvantageous to future college outcomes if students disregard colleges that are the best fit due to cost (Bergerson, 2010; Bowen et al., 2009).

Baobab Families had mixed reactions to children's schools. They found that schools provided resources that helped to navigate college choice such as SAT preparation classes and financial aid workshops. However, parents were often unable to attend school events or did not feel comfortable participating because of prejudicial treatment from school staff. This lack of parental engagement with schools can be detrimental to the college choice process (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Perna & Titus, 2005). It may also lead school staff to wrongly believe that parents are uninterested in their child's education (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Fordham, 1996; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008). Additionally, Baobab Families found that teachers and school staff had lower academic expectations of their children as compared to the family's academic expectations of their children, which served to weaken families' college-going culture.

Intergenerational tensions were another barrier that Baobab Families faced. Children often expressed being confused by different sets of expectations between school and home about academics and extracurricular involvement. If students cannot reconcile their environments, they become at greater risk for academic withdrawal or failure (Adams & Kirova, 2007). In Baobab Families, these tensions led some children to argue with their parents, withdraw from their families or involve their families less in the college choice process.

Baobab Families actively navigate college choice together by engaging in intentional and proactive college going strategies.

Although all Baobab Families experienced drought in their college choice process, they were committed to finding ways to overcome these challenges. Therefore, families "regenerated from the root," by revisiting their pre-existing familial and culturally based resources to navigate college choice. Families "regenerated" by engaging in college planning together, demonstrating resilience and reinforcing college-going culture and academic expectations. For example, although parents in Baobab Families lacked U.S.-based college knowledge, they were still able to transmit lessons they learned from their international student experiences to their children as funds of knowledge (Kiyama, 2010). This included the importance of early college planning and remaining resilient in one's college aspirations in order to see them realized.

Baobab Families also relied heavily upon their family/community network for support in overcoming drought and regenerating from the root. This finding is consistent with the literature, which suggests that individuals benefit from receiving information about types of universities, college admission, and financial aid from a wide range of sources (Bonous-Hammarth & Allen, 2005; Perna, 2000a; Perna, 2006). Older siblings and family members who enrolled in college via a U.S. K-12 system could provide guidance to families about the U.S. college choice process. Baobab Families also sought support and encouragement from networks both within and outside of the U.S. Individual members of Baobab Families also had personal networks that they could seek assistance from for the benefit of the entire family engaging in college choice.

While each of these strategies was useful in overcoming challenges, they were not always effective or provided expected results for Baobab Families. For example, family and community networks often provided college information based on their own personal experiences, which were not always relevant or useful to the needs of families (Holland, 2010; Martinez, 2012; Pérez & McDonough, 2008). Still, Baobab Families were not passive participants in the college choice process and their proactive behavior allowed them to take advantage of a number of resources that could help them navigate the U.S. education system and college preparation process.

Baobab Families actively navigate college choice by focusing on family.

Baobab Families approach college choice as a family process and their engagement in the process reflects behaviors and decisions that will best sustain the family in the long run. I called this practice "sustaining the tree." Baobab Families described the family having a heavy role in developing a college choice set and making a final enrollment decision (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). They saw these decisions as a family investment and family success; therefore, they based their decisions on what is the best option for the family as whole and what the family felt was the best option for the college going child.

Baobab Families also perceived the college choice process as an opportunity for cultural transmission across generations (Moll et al., 1992). The goal and process of going to college was integrated into their family history and cultural/family identity and was integral to their family and community success. The familial and culturally-based resources that Baobab Families used to conceptualize and navigate college choice reflected funds of knowledge and family culture because they were pre-existing norms

and values that were part of the families' everyday lives even beyond the college choice process, providing guidance for how they interact with each other and adapt in U.S. society (Moll et al., 1992; Weisner, 1997).

Baobab Families also sustain their tree by engaging in reciprocity within their social networks. Participants described how they are now acting as sources of support, guidance, and role models for other family and community members who are also engaging in college choice. Thus, these families are consistently surrounded by college going and involved in college choice, as either they themselves are engaged in the process or they are assisting someone else in the family/community who is engaging in the process.

Lastly, Baobab Families described the importance of maintaining close family ties and engagement after a child's college enrollment. Parents often encouraged children to go to college in close proximity to home or live at home as a way of sustaining family relationships and providing continued guidance in their children's lives. Literature on the college choice of Latino immigrants have found similar outcomes, but there are mixed conclusions about whether this behavior has a positive or negative impact on students' college outcomes (Ceja, 2006; Lopez-Turley, 2006). All of the children in Baobab Families who are already in college are still deeply involved in their family life and most of the children who are still engaged in the college choice process are heavily considering the option of going to college close to home and/or commuting.

Study Implications

Using the study's findings, this section reviews implications for research/theory, practice and policy. First, I consider theoretical implications for engaging in family-based

higher education research as well as research on immigrants and college choice. Next, I provide implications for practice at both the K-12 and postsecondary levels. Lastly, I describe implications for education and immigration policy.

Research and Theory

Research on student college choice is well established within higher education literature (Bergerson, 2010) and though researchers cite that family members, such as parents, play a critical role in the process (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989), there is little family-based research in college choice scholarship. Both quantitative and qualitative researchers typically focus on the student as the unit of analysis in college choice studies, which may stem from dominant cultural norms in America that often emphasize individualism and adolescent autonomy (Fuligni et al., 1999). Even with contemporary researchers arguing for greater focus on family in college access, particularly for underrepresented students (Knight et al., 2004; Tierney & Auerbach, 2005); there is still little empirical research that use families as the unit of analysis. The current study advances approaches to college access and choice research by emphasizing the familial context and family as the unit of analysis. Additionally, it extends literature on the influence of family in college choice beyond the role of parents by using a more inclusive and culturally relevant approach. This approach included participants defining and diagramming their own family unit, which often encompassed extended family and community networks that might otherwise have gone unacknowledged in the study. Presenting the voices and narratives of parents, siblings, grandparents, and college going students both as individuals and as a family unit provided an in-depth understanding of the college choice process and its impact on

families. This approach is critical to higher education research as today's students reflect increasingly diverse family structures and community backgrounds (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005) and understanding how students' family and community context support and/or challenge their pathways to college is crucial to their overall success.

In addition to examining college choice using a family-based approach, this study illustrates the importance of acknowledging the diverse ways in which families are involved in the college choice process. Definitions of family involvement in higher education research are often limited; focused primarily on parental involvement and/or measured by cultural capital indicators based upon middle and upper class, White American norms (Kiyama, 2010; Perna, 2006). Yet, this study illustrated how Baobab Families often used social networks, resources, and cultural knowledge that have been traditionally unexamined in college choice literature (e.g. college-going legacies, cultural and family identity, family/community networks). Incorporating alternative frameworks such as funds of knowledge and ecocultural theory were useful in exploring these themes as they emerged in the data. These combined frameworks provide opportunities to expand college choice theory and literature beyond its current capacity, particularly regarding family involvement and the use of culture, family and community as resources for academic achievement and college choice. Furthermore, they provide a powerful anti-deficit lens for understanding the experiences of underrepresented and immigrant groups in education research because they emphasize familial assets, resilience, and proactive strategies.

Yet, it is also important to recognize that while the Baobab Families possessed a number of resources that helped them to navigate the college choice process, they often

experienced challenges and had unrealistic expectations regarding the process as well. Families can both value a college education and still not understand the entire process of college choice, thus manifesting certain limitations and barriers. Therefore, while an anti-deficit framework is important in understanding the experiences of underrepresented and immigrant populations, solely focusing on their assets can overlook their needs and challenges. Researchers should find balance between an asset-based approach and acknowledging family limitations/challenges. Doing so can contribute to a more holistic expansion and application of funds of knowledge and ecocultural theories in higher education research.

Lastly, I used a traditional college choice model (Hossler and Gallagher's model) as the primary conceptual framework for developing my study and analyzing the data. While the model was useful in grounding the study in the college choice process, I found it too limiting in explaining college choice for the family cases. This was primarily because as a student-centered model, it does not inform how families navigate college choice. Furthermore, the three stages of the model depict college choice as a standalone process; however, the college choice experiences of the Baobab Families were much more complex and integrated into other aspects of their lives such as their family history and culture. Therefore, analyzing the data required the use and development of more relevant frameworks. I integrated funds of knowledge and ecocultural theory into my conceptual framework to reduce some of the limitations found in Hossler and Gallagher's model. I also suggested *Baobab Families* as a frame for understanding the college choice process of the family cases. These frameworks focus on family engagement and development through college choice, which has been given less attention in college

access and choice theory. With greater emphasis on the family in college access and choice research, family-centered models and frameworks can be developed in order to consider how families and their communities navigate college choice. For example, the findings of this study describe and interpret how families develop college-going cultures within the home and community environment. Similarly college choice models should acknowledge the experiences, meaning making, and engagement of families in the process of college choice, rather than solely emphasizing the individual student, stages or external context of the process. With greater frameworks and research examining families' perceptions of and participation in college choice, educational institutions along the P-20 pipeline can be more intentional in their efforts to increase access to college through family outreach and engagement.

Practice

Schools in the United States are increasingly impacted by globalization and this study highlights an outcome of this phenomenon by examining the experiences of students who are the first in their family to go to college via a U.S. K-12 education system. Although there are pre-college outreach programs and resources that exist to help first generation students/families access college (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005) none of the Baobab Families participated in these programs. They might not have qualified or believed that they needed this assistance because they had at least one college-educated parent in the home. Yet, while the children in Baobab Families were not first-generation to college in a traditional sense, they experienced many of the same challenges as this demographic. First generation students and their parents are less likely to be knowledgeable of how to prepare for college, distinguish between institution types, and

find reliable information needed to choose and apply to institutions that are a good fit (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989; MacAllum et al., 2007; Perna, 2000), which were issues that Baobab Families experienced as well. Although Baobab Families experience these challenges, education practitioners and outreach organizations may not target them for intervention strategies that assist first-generation to college students. Schools and outreach programs should not assume that because African immigrant parents are college-educated, that they know how to navigate the U.S. P-20 pipeline. Instead it is important to extend the definitions of a first-generation student and college-knowledge to encompass students who are the first in their families to move through the U.S. K-12 system and who lack U.S.-based college knowledge. Doing so would create more inclusive practices around college access strategies that acknowledges the increasingly globalized U.S. education system and experiences of immigrants in the U.S. education pipeline.

Ogbu (1987) cites that voluntary African immigrants typically have high trust in the U.S. education system, yet the findings in this study do not support this claim. Across cases, parents described weak and sometimes adversarial relationships with their children's schools, explaining that teachers did not have high enough expectations of their children or challenge them to reach their highest potential. Therefore, Baobab Families often engaged in active home-based parenting strategies to help supplement or overcome what they perceived as the school's low academic expectations and to ensure that their children were competitive college applicants. Although it is valuable that Baobab Families engaged in proactive strategies to help their children, schools are not necessarily aware of these home-based strategies and they may clash with traditional

methods of instruction used in the schools. Furthermore, because family involvement in school can have direct impact on students' access to college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000), it is important that schools work to engage these families. Schools can learn from sub-Saharan African immigrant families regarding how they are developing college-going practices/cultures in their homes and communities. Many schools are attempting develop their own college-going cultures and then are expecting families to align with the school's culture (Nakagawa, 2000). Schools should instead focus on building college going communities that align family practices/culture with school practices/culture so that children are receiving consistent messages and expectations about academics and the college choice process across home and school environments.

Furthermore, children in Baobab Families often act as bridges between school and home, which is a heavy responsibility that can also result in conflicting academic messages between the two environments as well as intergenerational tension. This is a finding consistent with other education research on the children of immigrants (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007; Fuligni et al., 1999). To alleviate this responsibility from students, schools should provide immigrant families with formal opportunities to engage with schools, pre-college outreach programs, and universities through targeted and collaborative programming (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). For example, school learning communities can be established to provide opportunities for schools, parents, and community members to come together as allies to assist students as they prepare for college (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). In doing so, students can receive congruent messages between school and home about academics and college going. Additionally, these efforts would allow K-12 and university practitioners to tap into families' pre-existing social networks and resources.

These family and community networks have a wide-ranging level of involvement in students' lives that can help to open or close doors to college options and pathways. Thus, providing outreach and education to family and community members about colleges and the college-going process is critical to ensuring that the support these networks provide enhances students' access to college. Although this may require time and resources in the short-term, in the long-term schools (both K-12 and colleges and universities) can work with families' pre-existing networks as partners in helping to provide greater access to students within the education pipeline.

The findings in this study also illustrate that parents were interested in becoming more involved in their children's school and building better relationships. Yet, in order to build these relationships, it will be important for practitioners to use culturally inclusive and responsive practices. Many parents in the study stated feeling unwelcomed by school staff because of an accent or negative stereotypes. Students in the study also experienced being teased at school regarding their African heritage, which is unfortunate as their heritage is a primary means of communicating the importance of academics and college going among Baobab Families. The United States education system teaches little about sub-Saharan Africa formally in school and what is portrayed in the media often presents a limited view of African countries (Awokoya, 2012; Zeleza, 2009). Professional development and training for teachers and school staff are necessary to help them challenge African stereotypes in the curriculum and in the classroom and to work with African immigrant families in culturally responsive ways (Awokoya, 2012; Harushimana & Awokoya, 2011). These practices can provide an environment that makes African immigrant families more comfortable in building partnerships with schools and seeing

the school as a resource in navigating college choice. Furthermore, teacher and counselor preparation programs should train practitioners in how to engage in action research and a funds of knowledge approach to pedagogy, which can provide tools that can be used by practitioners as they seek to better understand their students' families, education and immigration histories, and home-based academic support strategies and resources.

Although this study focuses on pre-college experiences, the families' involvement in their children's lives does not end once they go to college. Baobab Families discussed the importance of remaining connected to children once in college and the children in these families will bring their familial and community values and experiences to college as well. This continued family involvement is important as research shows that involving parents increases the likelihood of students' successful degree completion (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008). Instead of expecting students to sever ties with their communities, colleges and universities should play an active role in strengthening familial bonds for the betterment of students, families, local communities, and college campuses. Some universities have created opportunities for family engagement in first-year student programming; yet, colleges should make it a priority to integrate and embrace families as well as strengthen ties between students and their communities (Jenkins, 2013). As this study illustrates, students' families are their first teachers, providing some of the most important lessons, which should be integrated beyond K-12 and into the college experience to improve college student achievement and persistence.

Policy

There are two major implications that this study has for higher education policy related to college access and choice: affordability and accountability. Baobab Families

were highly impacted by the cost of college. While they did not let cost deter them from college, it became the primary decision driver in their ultimate college choice. Thus, because of cost families may not be selecting the best college fit, which can have detrimental effects on students' future college persistence and success (Bowen et al., 2009). College costs continue to be on the rise, which makes it challenging for Baobab Families to afford to send their children to college. However, policies can help to alleviate some of this financial pressure and better position families to make college choices that are both financially feasible and provide fit.

For example, none of the families saved money in advance for their children's college tuition. Instead families believed that their children would receive scholarships that would pay for the majority of college costs. Though this is possible, it would be better for families to not take this unknown risk. Instead policymakers can develop state-level college savings programs and prepaid tuition that allow parents to begin saving for their children's college tuition in advance (Olivas, 2003; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008). Yet, creating these programs are not enough because they exist in the state of Maryland where all of the Baobab Families reside, but none participate. Therefore, these programs must be effectively marketed and organized. For example, while the families did not have large amounts of disposable income due to sending money to family abroad or having other financial responsibilities, families might be willing to participate in a savings program if the payment was automatically withdrawn from their paycheck similar to insurance or other benefits. Additionally, a more culturally responsive and community-oriented practice would allow families (e.g. extended family) or community organizations the ability to participate in the savings program as well, not just parents. In this way

family members, church members, African community organization members (e.g. Akiba*)* and others within a family's social network could also contribute to the child's college savings fund.

A high tuition-high aid model has dominated financial aid policy for the last few decades (Bergerson, 2010). This is challenging for Baobab Families who were predominantly loan-averse because even when students qualify for financial aid, student loans are increasingly a major component of financial aid packages (Bergerson, 2010). Therefore, unless children qualify for scholarships, they may remove colleges from the choice set that are otherwise a good fit because they cannot afford the high tuition cost or because they refuse to take out student loans. There are a number of ways to address this issue from a policy standpoint. One is to develop a low-tuition model at the state-level, which can help keep the cost of tuition at state institutions manageable for families (Bergerson, 2010; Perna & Titus, 2004). Another possibility is to pay need-based aid directly to the student from both the state and institutions, which can give families more options in their choice set by creating greater access to private colleges and universities (Perna & Titus, 2004). A third option is to shift federal aid from an emphasis on loans to an emphasis on grants and work-study programs (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Bergerson, 2010).

For Baobab Families, affordability was linked to accountability, particularly related to availability of consumer information about college cost/value and return on investment. Baobab Families' perceptions of the value of different types of career paths/college majors as well as institutional types (e.g. Ivy Leagues, community colleges) were often based on anecdotal information. Furthermore, Baobab Families cited not

being fully familiar with the cost of college, indirect costs of college (e.g. fees, books), or how much they would be expected to pay for college. Thus families may overestimate the cost of a college and discount it from the choice set or underestimate the cost of college and later learn that it is not financially feasible. Instead, accurate information needs to be available to families regarding the direct and indirect costs of college as well as average financial awards/cost of college for families in their income bracket and household structure at different colleges and universities.

There are online databases that exist which provide some of this information (e.g. net price calculator), but policymakers must ensure that families have access to these databases and that the information is easy to understand. Additionally, although resources such as the net-price calculator could be useful to families in determining college cost, according to the findings in this study these resources only begin to scratch the surface of the types of information families need to make the best decisions regarding college choice. For example, because Baobab Families are typically thinking about college attainment beyond a bachelor's degree, it is important that they understand the kind of timeframe and costs they will occur over the full course of their college pathway as well as the likelihood for financial assistance along the way. Families need to be able to access easy to understand and current information about what is the average amount and types of financial assistance awarded to students by university and major, the average year to degree of different majors, and the career/graduate school placement and salaries of graduates by university and major. This type of information will help families make better decisions over the course of their college pathway such as determining whether it is

worth a student starting at a community college instead of at a four-year institution or pursuing a STEM degree over a different program of study.

Lastly, this study has implications for immigration policy. Many of the ways in which African immigrants such as the Baobab Families are able to enter and remain in the United States are in decline. For example, parents in Baobab Families often came to the United States as international students, which is a temporary visa status. Yet, most had the desire to work in the United States after graduation. Today, companies are becoming less and less incentivized to sponsor international students for work in the United States due to restrictive work visa (H-1B visa) policies (Stonawski, 2013). H-1B visas are limited in number[11] and require companies to pay costly fees (Stonawski, 2013). Therefore, even when international students are highly qualified for positions, they may be turned down by employers due to these barriers (Stonawski, 2013).

Additionally, programs like the Diversity Visa Lottery program are being targeted for heavy modifications or termination (Capps et al., 2011). The Diversity Visa Lottery program is one of the primary modes of African immigration to the United States and is a major driver in their pathway to U.S. citizenship because those who "win" the Diversity Visa Lottery are provided legal permanent residency status in the United States (Capps et al., 2011). Yet, some policymakers argue against the value of the program, stating it attracts primarily low-skilled immigrants (Kremer, 2014). Although data show that this argument is inaccurate (Kremer, 2014), there have been a number of attempts by policymakers to curtail the program, which could negatively impact the ability for sub-Saharan African immigrants to come to the United States (Capps et al., 2011).

[11] In 2013, 39,000 requests for H-1B visas were denied (Stonawski, 2013).

Although the numbers of sub-Saharan African immigrants in the United States are small compared to Asian and Latino immigrants, this population has made significant strides in U.S. society as evidenced in this study and other research (for example Capps et al., 2011; Kent, 2007; Mason & Austin, 2011) They help the United States to achieve many of their top immigration policy objectives related to economic, social, cultural and moral goals (Capps et al., 2011). They also make heavy contributions back into their countries of origin through financial remittances and leadership initiatives (Arthur, 201; Kent, 2007), which benefits the United States' position within the global community. Thus it is important that policymakers ensure that African immigrants are fairly represented in the U.S. immigration agenda and that policies and programs which provide access to this population are not terminated or altered in such a way that prevents their entry to the United States.

Study Limitations

A common critique of case study research is that it provides limited generalizability (Merriam, 2009). However, qualitative research with small samples is not necessarily meant to be generalized across populations, but to build theory and have transferability (also called analytic generalizability) (Yin, 1993). Therefore, I do not suggest that this study's findings will be generalizable to the college choice process of all African immigrant families. Instead, my objective was to achieve an in-depth understanding of the context, concepts, and processes found in the cases (Creswell, 2007; La Rossa, 2005, Small, 2009). Ethnographic research provides opportunities for understanding participants from a cultural perspective and based on the participants' experiences that shape them (Yin, 2003). My methodological approach thus allowed me

to interpret families' experiences and compare across experiences at a level of depth I could not otherwise have achieved with a larger sample. I sought to increase the transferability of the study through the use of thick description and detailed documentation of data collection and analysis procedures (Krefting, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

These findings may be applicable to families with similar characteristics (Merriam, 2009), but care must be taken in the interpretation of the findings. For example, while I purposefully sampled from the Washington DC metro area, this region has one of the highest populations of African immigrants in the United States and a number of local college options. Therefore, these immigrants may have different experiences than those living in a region with a smaller population of African immigrants (e.g. ability to attend an African church or participate in an African community organization) or fewer college options in the state/region. Furthermore, although I was open to collecting data from families originating from any Anglophone sub-Saharan African countries, I only netted participants originating from Kenya and Nigeria. It is possible that the experiences of families originating from other countries within Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa may be different from those experienced by the Baobab Families as well.

Additionally, while my use of the family as the unit of analysis contributes a new approach to college choice research, it also presented limitations. For example, my individual participants reflect a wide range of background characteristics including diversity in country of origin, level of education, family structure, age, gender and socioeconomic status. While these and other background characteristics were

acknowledged to some extent in the within-case family profiles, these characteristics may have impacted individuals' experiences in ways that were beyond the scope of this study to examine due to my emphasis on family as the unit of analysis. Furthermore, due to my small sample size, I did not attempt to disaggregate the data by different family characteristics. For example, by comparing and contrasting the experiences of Nigerian and Kenyan homes or single parent and two parent homes. As with the individual characteristics, these family background characteristics may have also impacted the families in unique ways that were beyond the scope of this study to explore.

In qualitative research, participants may see the researcher as an intruder (Creswell, 2007). This issue presents a limitation as participants may not share as openly about their experiences and/or feel they have to answer in certain ways to provide a "correct" answer (respondent bias). It was not possible to guarantee that participants would not view me as an intruder in their family life. However, to minimize this limitation, I developed a research design that focused on gaining trust and building rapport with the families. For example, meeting with families in their own home environment and engaging in multiple visits with families over time.

Lastly, while I engaged with families over a two to three month period of time, this still only provided a snapshot of their college choice process. None of the families had completed the process with their college going child (although some families had completed the process with their older children). I purposefully designed the study to collect data from participants who were currently engaged in the college choice process in order to gain the most lucid and detailed narratives from participants (McCurdy et al., 2005). Had I interviewed families who had already completed the process, they may have

forgotten important details. Still, my approach made it impossible to capture the full college choice process of each family because they continued to be engaged in the process after data collection was complete.

Directions for Future Research

This study's findings suggest several directions for future research. Baobab Families viewed and engaged in college choice as a family unit. Similarly many immigrant and underrepresented communities emphasize familial interdependence and community-based orientations (Fuligni et al., 1999). This suggests a need for college access and success research that emphasizes the family context. For example, future studies can examine the role of family in college access, transitions, and persistence. Another direction is considering family development, particularly how the college choice process impacts families and how families impact or are impacted by a family member who is enrolled in college. Understanding how families engage in college processes and how this engagement evolves over time can provide further insights into this very important influence in students' lives.

Baobab Families perceived college choice as a family/community process that reflects reciprocity, relationship building, and commitment to family/community uplift. Family and community members contributed and redistributed the college information and experiences they gained back into their families and communities. I recommend that researchers and practitioners explore the role of reciprocity and mutual aid between students, parents and other family/community members in college access and choice. For example, examining how a community builds and redistributes college knowledge among community members or exploring how families/communities develop and sustain

college-going cultures. This line of research can help to develop best practices for holistically engaging families/communities in the college access and choice process and in the development of community college-going cultures.

Additionally, I recommend future researchers examine the experiences of children with college-educated parents, but who are the first in their family to go to college via a U.S. K-12 system. All of the children in Baobab Families had college-educated parents, which provided a number of cultural and social structural advantages. However, families experienced disadvantages as well because parents were unfamiliar with the U.S. K-12 system, U.S.-based college knowledge and the college choice process in a U.S. context. Future research can examine the college access/choice experiences of children of immigrants who share this background and also compare their experiences to traditional first-generation to college students. Additionally, many of the children in the Baobab Families saw their parents attend and graduate from college, which impacted their own college aspirations. Therefore, another line of study would be to explore the impact of parents' college going on students' college aspirations and academic achievement.

Rather than solely emphasizing student perspectives, I recommend that researchers be inclusive of family members as study participants, which can provide a more rounded view of family involvement. Additionally, I recommend future researchers who are interested in family involvement in college to pursue longitudinal qualitative studies beginning in early childhood through college completion or even through graduate school to more fully understand how the dynamics within families evolve throughout college going. This approach would better highlight the education pipeline, which is necessary to advance student and family development frameworks, access and

retention theories, and will help to connect theory to practice through a better understanding of family engagement in education.

I recommend future education research focus on the experiences of sub-Saharan African students and their families. There are a number of areas for research on this population. For example, it is important that researchers examine this population's engagement with and in schools. Baobab Families did not believe teachers were compelling their children to perform at their best academically. Traditionally, much of the academic underperformance of Black students can be traced to negative racial perceptions and stereotypes by teachers and school staff surrounding their academic ability (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; 2006; Massey et. al, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995). However, the source of these low school expectations may be even more complex for sub-Saharan African immigrants who are racially Black, but also possess other forms of difference (e.g. language/accent, socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, or culturally based behaviors). Examining this issue along with other topics such as student-teacher relationships and family-school relationships can better elucidate findings within this study regarding school engagement.

Another topic for future research is exploring the intergenerational dynamics between African parents and children and how this impacts academic pursuits. For example, Baobab Families experienced a number of intergenerational tensions between parents and children that were disadvantageous to the college choice process. Thus it is important to understand how these family relationships impact or are impacted by the U.S. education system/processes. This study alludes to factors such racial/ethnic identity,

nativity, school, peers and culture impacting this intergenerational dynamic, which can be explored in greater detail in a future study.

While the narratives of the Baobab Families add to our understanding of sub-Saharan African immigrants within the U.S. education system, there are many additional narratives within this population left to tell. Therefore, researchers must continue to engage in work that elucidates and disaggregates the educational experiences of sub-Saharan African immigrants. I recommend a future focus on the experiences sub-Saharan African immigrant populations beyond those included in this study. For example, considering African immigrants from Francophone countries of origin or refugee/asylee populations. These groups may have different experiences than the families in my study due to factors such as language barriers and trauma experienced in the home country. Additionally, sub-Saharan African immigrants living in different geographic regions or types of environments (e.g. rural, suburban, urban) in the United States may experience the educational system differently as well. Research on sub-Saharan African immigrant families should also be further disaggregated by factors such as country of origin, mode of entry to the United States (e.g. family reunification, international student visa, refugee/asylee), and socioeconomic status both pre- and post-immigration to glean a more nuanced understanding of their experiences in the United States and ways in which they engage in the U.S. education system. At the individual/student level, disaggregating data by factors such as gender, age, generation status, religion and racial/ethnic self-identity could also provide richer understandings of the educational experiences of sub-Saharan African immigrants in the United States.

Conclusion

I began this study with the intention of examining how sub-Saharan African immigrant families engage in the U.S. college choice process. Referring back to the comments made by Dr. Gates in the Harvard University vignette that I used in chapter one, I wanted to learn about what sub-Saharan African immigrant families "have so we can bottle it" (Rimer & Arenson, 2004, para. 29). I hoped to elucidate the educational experiences of a demographic that has generally achieved many successes in the U.S. education system, but has received little acknowledgement in education research. Therefore, I created a conceptual framework that emphasized not only stages of college choice, but also family assets and proactive strategies in order to focus on the beliefs, resources and processes developed within these families to conceptualize and navigate college choice.

In many ways I have accomplished this initial objective, finding that the family cases possessed a number inherent resources and strategies that they used in the college choice process. Many of these were familial and culturally based resources that emphasized the strong role that family heritage, ethnic culture, and family culture played in how they engaged in college choice. This study offered new insight into college choice as a family process in which families sought to develop a college-going culture in the home and community environment. The narratives of the participants and my subsequent analysis led me to develop a new frame, *Baobab Families*, for understanding their experiences, which provides one of few frameworks that exist for examining sub-Saharan African immigrants' experiences in higher education research.

Yet, as I engaged with these families over time and delved deeper into my data I found that they experienced a number of barriers and limitations to college access, which an emphasis on solely "bottling" their strengths might have missed. Baobab Families experienced intergenerational tensions within the home regarding academic expectations and college choice, were challenged by financial barriers and the cost of college, lacked U.S.-based college knowledge, and struggled in working with their children's schools. Although the resources they possessed were powerful in helping them to navigate college choice, they could also restrict this process or prove not enough to achieve the outcomes that families had hoped for.

Therefore, these families provide a number of lessons that researchers, education practitioners, and policymakers can learn from about the experiences of sub-Saharan African immigrant families and college choice. Baobab Families illustrate that there are many assets that families have to draw upon which have been traditionally unexamined in college access literature and practice. Baobab Families are creating their own strategies, networks, and resources that are situated within a cultural, familial and community environment that is often in isolation from the school context. These strategies, networks, and resources must be examined in research and tapped into by practitioners in order to better engage with these families in the U.S. education system. Furthermore, by better understanding the needs of these families, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers can partner with them to alleviate some of their challenges or provide additional tools that families can utilize in order to further strengthen their pre-existing strategies for academic success and college choice.

Appendix A
Recruitment Flyer

University of Maryland, College Park

A Family Affair: African Immigrant Families Conceptualizing and Navigating College Choice

- **Are you an African immigrant with a child preparing to go to college?**

OR

- **Are you preparing to go to college and the child of an African immigrant?**

This research study examines the postsecondary educational expectations, perceptions, and aspirations of African immigrant families. We want to learn in how these families view and engage in schooling and college choice.

Families will be asked to engage in three interview sessions. During these sessions you will have the opportunity to share your family's culture and heritage, experiences with the U.S. educational system, and expectations about going to college.

Each interview session will include a 60 to 90 minute group interview with your family as well as individual interviews with family members for 45 – 60 minutes each. I will work to schedule an interview location and time that is most convenient for your family. All information will be kept confidential.

If you or someone you know may be interested, please contact
Chrystal A. George Mwangi, PhD Candidate
College of Education
3214 Benjamin Building
University of Maryland
443-240-4941
chrystal@umd.edu

IRB Approval # 45 1988-1

Appendix B
Follow-Up Email

Follow-up email with potential participants who initiate contact

Good morning/afternoon _____,

Thank you for your interest in this research study! In order to ensure that you meet the criteria outlined for the study, I would like to set up a time to speak by phone to ask you a few qualifying questions as well as provide further information about my dissertation research. Our conversation should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Please see my availability below and let me know of two possible times that you could speak by phone. I would like to set up a time to speak that is most convenient for you and so if my availability does not work with your schedule, please provide two alternative days/times. Once I receive this information, I will confirm the phone screening with you.

Please let me know if you have any questions at this time. I can be reached at 443-240-4941 or chrystal@umd.edu

Best,

Chrystal A. George Mwangi
PhD student, Higher Education
College of Education
University of Maryland, College Park

Appendix C
Case Screening Protocol

Hello, my name is Chrystal George Mwangi, a PhD student at the University of Maryland, College Park. You expressed interest in participating in my study, A Family Affair: African Immigrant Families Conceptualizing and Navigating College Choice and agreed to participate in a case screening to determine whether you qualify for participation in the study.

As stated on the recruitment flyer, the purpose of this research project is to examine how African immigrant families define and navigate the process of college going. Today you will be participating in a case screening, which should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Before beginning this screening, I would like to review the informed consent process with you. You are being asked participate in this case screening because you a part of an African immigrant family engaged in the college going process. This case screening will ask you to provide responses to a series of questions regarding your family characteristics and level of engagement in the college choice process. Any risk involved in participating in this case screening is unlikely and you do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. There are also no tangible benefits for participating in this screening, but you may feel rewarded in contributing to an emerging body of literature on African immigrant educational experiences.

Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, you may stop at any time. Additionally, you may ask me to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Sharon Fries-Britt at 3113 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, 20742 or by phone at 301-405-0186 or sfries@umd.edu.

Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by keeping all case screening data on a password-protected computer. Your name will not appear anywhere in the final write up of this research. If you do not qualify for the study, your contact information will be destroyed once this interview has ended. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law. If you would like a copy of this informed consent statement for your records, please let me know and I will email or mail it to you. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: University of Maryland College Park, Institutional Review Board Office, 0101 Lee Building College Park, Maryland, 20742, E-mail: irb@umd.edu, Telephone: 301-405-0678.

This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this screening. If you are under 18, please let me know before we begin. Do you need me to repeat any of this information? Okay, thank you. Taking part in this case screening is your agreement to voluntarily participate.

Criterion	Questions	Qualifying responses
1. The family must be Black sub-Saharan African immigrants from an Anglophone country.	In what country were you born?	Botswana, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, or Zimbabwe
	What is your race?	Black or African American
2. Parents in the family must be first-generation immigrants and at least one of their children must be a second-generation immigrant.	At what age did you move to the U.S.?	18 years or older to be considered first generation
	In what country was your child(ren) born?	At least one child must have been born in the U.S.
3. The second-generation immigrant child must be a college going individual. I define college going as a an individual currently in grades 7 – 12, who is engaged or preparing to engage in the process of enrolling in an undergraduate institution.	What grade(s) is your child(ren) in currently?	At least one child must be in a grade 7 – 12. *Focus on this child or children for the remainder of the screening.*
	Does your child(ren) intend to attend college?	Yes *This may indicate that the child is in the predisposition stage.*
	Has your child(ren) begun searching for colleges to attend and/or preparing to attend college? Explain how.	*Answering no is acceptable if they answered yes to the previous question. Yes, may indicate the child is engaged in the Search stage and examples may include visiting colleges, searching on the internet, taking a college entrance exam, applying for scholarships.*
	Has your child been accepted to any colleges?	*Ask this question only if they have responded yes to the previous question. Answering no is acceptable. If yes, this may indicate that the child is in the choice stage.*
4. The family must reside in the DC/MD/VA metro area.	In what city and state does your family reside?	The family must reside in the DC/MD/VA metropolitan area.
5. The family must be willing to allow me to conduct data collection in their home or other location where they naturally gather as a family such as a church or community center.	Would you be willing to let me conduct two visits to your home for interviewing?	Yes. *Answering no is acceptable if they answer yes to the following question.*
	Is there another place your family gathers together as an alternative (e.g. church, community center, home of another family friend)?	Yes. *Ask this question only if he or she responded no to the previous question.*

Appendix D
Demographic Questionnaire

Household Demographic Questionnaire

Please complete this questionnaire. If you are uncomfortable responding to a question please leave it blank.

General Household Information

What is the number of individuals under the age of 18 living in the home? _____

What is the number of individuals over the age of 18 living in the home? _____

What is your annual household income? *(circle one)*

Less than $20,000 $20,000 - $39,999 $40,000 - $69,999 $70,000 - $99,999 More than $100,000

Please write down a pseudonym last name that you would like me to use to identify your family for the purpose of this study (this can be any last name that is not affiliated in any way with your family) _____

College Going Student

Age _____ Gender _____

Year in school _____ Type of school (private, public, parochial, other) _____

Country of birth _____ Pseudonym _____

Family Member

Age _____ Gender _____

Country of Birth _____ Year of immigration to U.S. (if applicable)_____

Highest level of education _____ Occupation _____

Pseudonym _____ Relationship to college going student _____

Family Member

Age _____ Gender _____

Country of Birth _____ Year of immigration to U.S. (if applicable)_____

Highest level of education _____ Occupation _____

Pseudonym _____ Relationship to college going student _____

****If there are additional family members participating in this study, please use the back of this form to provide their information.

Appendix E
Group/Family Interview Guides

Family Group Interview #1

Focal Categories: ***Ecocultural Theory*** **–** daily activity settings (routines); family themes and culture; ecocultural niche and niche features (family characteristics and roles); family action and accommodation ***Funds of Knowledge*** **–** Household cluster and kinship network (family structure and characteristics); family rituals (traditions); funds of knowledge (cultural heritage and practices)

Purpose of Interview: The purpose of this interview is to gain an in-depth understanding of the contextual conditions that might be critical to the phenomenon of study (Yin, 2003). Through this interview I will explore the familial context of each case as well as construct the boundaries of the case (family) through participatory diagramming and probing questions. This interview will be used to describe the culture-sharing group (family) (Spradley, 1979) and will provide information about the family that may impact the context of their college choice process.

Introduction: Thank you for participating today. As we reviewed during the consent process, I will be conducting three interview sessions with your family in order to learn how African immigrant families navigate the process of going to college. Today's interview will primarily focus on getting to know your family. I will ask you questions pertaining to your family structure, characteristics, heritage and dynamics. I will also ask you to develop a visual diagram of your family, which will be explained later on in the interview. There are no wrong answers and you should feel free to ask if you need clarification on any of the questions. I would like to remind you that information shared in this family interview session should not be shared with anyone outside of the group. The interview will likely last approximately 60 to 90 minutes and will be recorded to make sure I accurately document all of your responses. I also will take notes while you are talking because it will help me keep track of something you have mentioned that I might want to come back to, rather than interrupting. Do you have questions before we begin?

Guiding Questions

Warm up

1. How would you define the word "family?"
    - What characteristics would qualify someone to be part of a family?
    - What does family mean to your African/ethnic culture? What is the value of family?
    - What is your perception of what family means in America?
    - How do you compare the meaning of family in America with the meaning of family in your ethnic culture?

Funds of knowledge and family rituals

2. Tell me about your country of origin.
    - What do you think are the most important factors for someone not from your country to know about it?

- What historical and cultural factors make it unique?

3. Tell me about your ethnic group/tribe.
   - What do you think are the most important factors for someone who is not a member to know about it?
   - What historical and cultural factors make it unique?
4. Do you remain connected to any family back in *[insert name of country of origin]?*
   - If so, how do you maintain those connections?
   - How do you maintain a connection to your ethnic culture while in the U.S.?
   - How is your ethnic heritage represented in your home?
5. What traditional cultural activities and traditions do you engage in here in the U.S?
   - Do you have any other family traditions? Please describe.

Family themes and culture

6. What are your three most important family values?
   - Why are these values important?
   - How does your family demonstrate these values?
7. Does your household identify more with African culture or American culture or both?

Daily activity settings

8. Where in the home do you spend the most time together?
   - What activities do you do together as a family in that space?
   - How do you most enjoy spending time together as a family?

Family action and accommodation

9. As a family, how do you tend to communicate and make decisions?
   - How does your family work through challenging situations?

Household cluster/kinship network; ecocultural niche/niche features

Ecomapping Protocol

I would like to have you now draw an eco-map. An eco-map is a diagram of your family - anyone who you consider family should be represented here. The purpose of the eco-map is to understand how your family is structured and the connections within your family. I want to understand your family based on how you define it, rather than me making assumptions about how your family is structured. Here are three examples of an ecomap *[show and describe examples]*. You can use the examples as a guide or develop a completely different type of ecomap. Here is a blank sheet of paper. You can include words, pictures, or anything else that you think will help me to understand your family. Again, there is no wrong answer; however, everyone here must have some part in producing your family ecomap. I will give you approximately 20 minutes to develop the eco-map. Once you have completed it, I will ask you to present it to me as well as engage you in a few follow up questions about it. Do you have any questions about this task?

10. Please tell me about your ecomap.
    - Describe the structure of your ecomap.
    - Describe the people you included in the ecomap. What is your relationship to them? What role do they have in your family? In what ways do they contribute to your family? If they do not live in the home, how often do you communicate with them and in what ways?
    - What was this process of drawing the eco-map like? What did you enjoy about it? What was most challenging? What roles did you each take on in completing the task?

Closing: Thank you all again for participating in this family interview. I will forward you a copy of the themes that emerge from this interview so that you have the opportunity to clarify or elaborate on any of the topics we discussed. We will next move to the individual interviews. Before doing so, are there any questions or concerns that you have for me?

Family Group Interview #2

Focal Categories: ***Research question themes*** **–** Conceptualizing college choice; navigating college choice; educational ideologies; impact of family, social structures and culture on college choice process

Purpose of Interview: The purpose of this interview is to examine the college going process, specifically families' experiences with the college going process and perceptions on the meaning of college choice. Each set of interview questions is shaped to explore the research questions. This session's participatory diagramming will focus on how families' define/conceptualize the college choice process. Interview questions will focus on how participants' develop expectations and communicate about education and college going; conceptualize and navigate college choice; and perceive factors impacting the choice process.

Introduction: Thank you for participating today. This is our second of three interview sessions on my study of how African immigrant families navigate the process of going to college. During today's interview I will ask you questions pertaining to how your family defines the process of preparing for college as well as your family is navigating the process. I will also ask you to develop a visual diagram of the stages of college going, which will be explained later on in the interview. There are no wrong answers and you should feel free to ask if you need clarification on any of the questions. I would like to remind you that information shared in this family interview session should not be shared with anyone outside of the group. The interview will likely last approximately 60 to 90 minutes and will be recorded to make sure I accurately document all of your responses. I also will take notes while you are talking because it will help me keep track of something you have mentioned that I might want to come back to, rather than interrupting. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Guiding Questions

Developing and Communicating Educational Ideologies

1. What role does education play in your family?
   - What factors from your family background or culture supports the importance of getting a good education?
2. How do you define academic success?
   - What are the most crucial factors for success in school?
   - In what ways does the family support and encourage academic success?
3. As a family, when you discuss education what topics do you tend to talk about?
   - In what ways are expectations communicated about academic achievement in this family?

Conceptualizing College Choice

College Choice Process Diagramming Protocol

Research shows that college choice isn't just about deciding to go to college, but that it takes extensive preparation, knowledge, and resources that are developed over time. I would like to have you now draw a visual representation of this process of college choice. I want you to include all of the steps that are needed. As you do this, I also want you to think about what activities you need to complete, what resources you need to have, what

people need to be involved and what requirements you need to possess. I want to understand how your family conceptualizes the college choice process. Your family doesn't necessarily have to have completed all of the steps and processes, I just want to know what you believe needs to happen for a person to successfully become enrolled at a college. Here is a blank sheet of paper. You can include words, pictures, lists, timelines, or anything else that you think will help me to understand the college choice process. Again, there is no wrong answer; however, everyone here must have some part in producing the visual. I will give you approximately 20 minutes to develop it. Once you have completed it, I will ask you to present it to me as well as engage you in a few follow up questions about it. Do you have any questions about this task?

4. Please tell me about your diagram.
5. Describe the structure of your diagram.
   - How did you come up with this structure?
   - For each component of the process, at what point in time should the component be completed?

Navigating College Choice

6. What parts of the process has your family completed thus far? Describe these experiences.
   - What has been or do you anticipate being the most difficult part of the process?
   - What has been or do you anticipate being the easiest part of the process?

Impact of family, social structures, and culture on college choice

7. What are the types of resources and information you need to successfully complete the components of the process?
   - How have you or will you obtain those resources and information?
   - What factors might act (or have acted) as barriers to successfully completing the components of the process?
8. What do you view as the role of *[insert name of college-going student]* school in his/her process of going to college? Has this expectation been met?
9. What do you view as the role of your family in *[insert name of college-going student]* process of going to college?
   - During our last session, you developed an ecomap. Who on this map is involved or will be involved in the college choice process?
   - What is the nature of their involvement?
   - Is there anyone not on this ecomap who has played a significant role in the college choice process?

Closing Questions

10. What was this process of drawing the diagram like? What did you enjoy about it? What was most challenging? What roles did you each take on in completing the task?

Closing: Thank you all again for participating in this family interview. I will forward you a copy of the themes that emerge from this interview so that you have the opportunity to clarify or elaborate on any of the topics we discussed. We will next move to the individual interviews. Before doing so, are there any questions or concerns that you have for me?

Family Group Interview #3

Focal Categories: ***Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three stages***: Predisposition, Search, Choice; navigating college choice; impact of family, social structures and culture on college choice process; communicating about college choice

Purpose of Interview: The purpose of this interview is to further examine families' experiences with the college going process. While the previous interview focused on how families conceptualized the choice process based on their own perceptions and experiences; this interview is more heavily informed by factors identified as important in college choice literature such as academic preparation, role of family, educational expectations and aspirations (for example, Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989; Perna, 2006) and the stages of college choice as outlined by Hossler and Gallagher (1987).

Introduction: Thank you for participating today. This is our final interview for my study on how African immigrant families navigate the process of going to college. During today's interview, I will extend our last session's conversations by continuing to ask questions about how your family is navigating the college choice process. Questions will focus on how college-going expectations are developed; how your family gains information about colleges and the application process; and factors that will impact the ultimate decision of where to go to college. There are no wrong answers and you should feel free to ask if you need clarification on any of the questions. I would like to remind you that information shared in this family interview session should not be shared with anyone outside of the group. The interview will likely last approximately 60 to 90 minutes and will be recorded to make sure I accurately document all of your responses. I also will take notes while you are talking because it will help me keep track of something you have mentioned that I might want to come back to, rather than interrupting. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Guiding Questions

Predisposition

1. What do you see as the advantages of going to college for *[insert name of college-going student]* and for your family? What are the disadvantages?
2. How is the family involved in providing support to *[insert name of college-going student]* college endeavors? In what ways could the family provide additional support?
3. As a family, do you talk about college?
   - What are the topics of discussion?
   - When did these discussions about college begin in your family?

Search

4. Do you feel as if your family has enough knowledge about the process of going to college?
   - What could make you more prepared?
   - How proactive has your family been in trying to obtain information about college?
5. How do you obtain information about college opportunities?

- Referring back to your ecomap, how have your networks helped you find out more information about college?
- What information has *[insert name of college-going student]* school provided about colleges and preparing to go to college?
- Have you been in contact with any colleges and universities? For example, visiting a campus or exploring a college website.

6. Has your family discussed what would be the best type of college for *[insert name of college-going student]* to attend?
   - Describe the colleges or characteristics that would be the best fit.
   - How did your family come to determine that these college characteristics are the best fit?
7. Were there any differences of opinion in what type of college *[insert name of college-going student]* should attend? If so, how were these resolved?

Choice

8. What are the three most influential factors that will determine your college selection?
9. Who will be involved in the decision of where *[insert name of college-going student]* ultimately goes to college?

Closing question

10. What are lessons you all have learned through your college choice process thus far that could help others engaged in the process?

Closing: Thank you all again for participating in this family interview. I will forward you a copy of the themes that emerge from this interview so that you have the opportunity to clarify or elaborate on any of the topics we discussed. We will next move to the individual interviews. Before doing so, are there any questions or concerns that you have for me?

Appendix F
Individual Interview Guides

Individual Interviews #1

Focal Categories: ***Ecocultural Theory*** **–** daily activity settings (routines); family themes and culture; ecocultural niche and niche features (family characteristics and roles); family action and accommodation ***Funds of Knowledge*** **–** Household cluster and kinship network (family structure and characteristics); family rituals (traditions, community involvement); funds of knowledge (family history and immigrant experience; language use) and transmission of funds of knowledge

Purpose of Interviews: The purpose is to gain an in-depth understanding of the contextual conditions that might be critical to the phenomenon of study (Yin, 2003). I will explore the familial context of each case as well as construct the boundaries of the case (family) by exploring how participants define and characterize their family. Additionally, I will examine family routines, practices/traditions, and dynamics. These interviews will be used to describe the culture-sharing group (family) (Spradley, 1979) and will provide information about the family that may impact their engagement in the college choice process.

Introduction: This individual interview will extend our conversation from the family interview as I continue to get to know and learn about your family. During this interview, I will ask you questions pertaining to your family's daily routines, familial dynamics and communication, and your family's experiences as immigrants. As I mentioned during the family interview, there are no wrong answers and you should feel free to ask if you need clarification on any of the questions. This interview will likely last approximately 45 to 60 minutes and will be recorded to make sure I accurately document all of your responses. I will also take notes. The information you provide in this interview will not be shared with other family members without your permission. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Student Interview Guiding Questions

Household cluster/kinship network; Ecocultural niche/niche features

1. Let's go back to the ecomap that you created earlier with your family.
   - Which components of the diagram did you contribute to the most?
   - Who on the map are you closest to? What are those relationships like? What impact do they have on your life?
   - Are there other relatives or family friends in your life that provide you with advice or guidance that are not on the eco map?
   - If I asked you to draw an ecomap of your family on your own, what would you do differently from this ecomap?
2. What do you see as your role or position within your family?
   - How would your family describe you?
   - How does this compare to how you see yourself?

Family rituals

3. Do you have regular contact with other immigrant families that are not blood relatives? What types of activities or contact do you have with them? Are they represented on the ecomap?
4. What type of community organizations are you and/or your family involved in (e.g. church, sports, etc.)? Describe the nature of your involvement.

Funds of knowledge and transmission of funds

5. Were you taught your parents' native language?
   - Do you use it regularly?
   - What language(s) is spoken in the home?
6. Have you visited your parents' country of origin?
   - If so, what was that experience like? If not, would you like to visit?
7. Tell me about what you know of your parents' lives in Africa before coming to the U.S.
   - Tell me about what you know of your parents' decision to move to the U.S. and their experience moving here.
8. What are the most important lessons your parents have taught you?
   - Why are these important?

Family themes and culture

9. During the family interview your family identified their three most important values as *[name the values]*.
   - Are these your top three values as well?
   - What other values are important to your family?
10. During the family interview I asked whether your family identifies more with African culture or American culture or both. However, what culture(s) do you personally most identify with?
    - How does this impact your relationship with your parents or other family members?

Family action and accommodation

11. Describe your parents' parenting style.
    - Describe your relationship with your parents.
    - To your knowledge, how does your relationship with your parents and their parenting style compare to that of your American peers?
12. Can you talk about your experience being raised by African parents?
    - What do you find beneficial about being raised by parents from Africa?
    - What do you find difficult about being raised by parents from Africa?

Daily activity settings

13. Can you describe your daily routines with your family during the week? For example, eating dinner together.
    - Describe your daily routines with your family during the weekend.

Closing Question

14. What other experiences or information would you like to share that might be helpful in furthering my understanding of your family's dynamics, culture, and/or values?

<u>Parent Interview Guiding Questions</u>

Household cluster/kinship network; Ecocultural niche/niche features

1. Let's go back to the ecomap that you created earlier with your family.
   - Which components of the diagram did you contribute to the most?

- Who on the map are you closest to? What are those relationships like? What impact do they have on your life?
- Are there other relatives or family friends in your life that provide you with advice or guidance that are not on the eco map?
- If I asked you to draw an ecomap of your family on your own, what would you do differently from this ecomap?

2. What do you see as your role or position in your family?
   - How would your family describe you?
   - How does this compare to how you see yourself?

Family rituals

3. Do you have regular contact with other immigrant families that are not blood relatives? What types of activities or contact do you have with them? Are they represented on the ecomap?
4. Do you engage in helping your relatives or friends with their children? If so, in what ways? For example, taking care of their children, offering advice about jobs or school.
   - Do they help you? If so, in what ways?
5. What type of community organizations are you and/or your family involved in? (e.g. church, sports, etc.)? Describe the nature of your involvement.

Funds of knowledge and transmission of funds

6. How long have you lived in the U.S.?
   - Why did you decide to move to the U.S.?
   - Did any other members of your family come to the U.S. before or after you?
   - What was your experience like in adapting to life in the U.S.?
   - Who provided assistance or support to you during this process?
7. Where do you consider your home, the U.S. or your country or origin?
   - How often do you visit your country of origin?
   - What feelings do you experience when visiting?
8. If bilingual, what language is spoken here in your household?
   - How did this become the norm for the household?
9. What do you think are the most important lessons you've taught your children?
   - Why are these important?

Family themes and culture

10. During the family interview your family identified their three most important values as *[name the values]*.
    - Are these your top three values as well?
    - What other values are important to your family?
11. During the family interview I asked whether your family identifies more with African culture or American culture or both. However, what culture(s) do you personally most identify with?
    - How does this impact your relationship with your child(ren)?

Family action and accommodation

12. Describe your parenting style.
    - How does your parenting style compare to the way you were raised?

- To your knowledge, how does your parenting style compare to American parenting styles?

13. Can you talk about your experience as a parent raising a child in the U.S.?
    - What do you find beneficial about raising a child in the U.S.?
    - What do you find challenging about raising a child in the U.S.?

Daily activity settings

14. Can you describe your daily routines with your family during the week? For example, eating dinner together.
    - Describe your daily routines with your family during the weekend.

Closing Question

15. What other experiences or information would you like to share that might be helpful in furthering my understanding of your family's dynamics, culture, and/or values?

General Interview Questions for Any Additional Family Members

Household cluster/kinship network; Ecocultural niche/niche features

1. Let's go back to the ecomap that you created earlier with your family.
    - Which components of the diagram did you contribute to the most?
    - Who on the map are you closest to? What are those relationships like? What impact do they have on your life?
    - Are there other relatives or family friends in your life that provide you with advice or guidance that are not on the eco map?
    - If I asked you to draw an ecomap of your family on your own, what would you do differently from this ecomap?
2. What do you see as your role or position in this family?
    - How would this family describe you?
    - How does this compare to how you see yourself?

Family rituals

3. Do you have regular contact with other immigrant families that are not blood relatives? What types of activities or contact do you have with them? Are they represented on the ecomap?
4. *(If an adult)* Do you engage in helping your relatives or friends with their children? If so, in what ways? For example, taking care of their children, offering advice about jobs or school.
    - Do they help you? If so, in what ways?
5. What type of community organizations are you and/or your family involved in? (e.g. church, sports, etc.)? Describe the nature of your involvement.

Funds of knowledge and transmission of funds

6. *(If participant is a first generation immigrant)*

- How long have you lived in the U.S.?
    - Why did you decide to move to the U.S.?
    - Did any other members of your family come to the U.S. before or after you?
- What was your experience like in adapting to life in the U.S.?
    - Who provided assistance or support to you during this process?
- Where do you consider your home, the U.S. or your country or origin?
    - How often do you visit your country of origin?
    - What feelings do you experience when visiting?

(If participant is not a first generation immigrant)

- Have you visited your family's country of origin?
  - If so, what was that experience like? If not, would you like to visit?
- Tell me about what you know of your family's life in Africa before coming to the U.S.
  - Tell me about what you know of your family's decision to move to the U.S. and their experience moving here.

7. If bilingual, what language is spoken here in your household?
   - How did this become the norm for the household?
8. What do you think are the most important lessons this family has taught you?
   - Why are these important?

Family themes and culture

9. During the family interview your family identified their three most important values as *[name the values]*.
   - Are these your top three values as well?
   - What other values are important to your family?
10. During the family interview I asked whether your family identifies more with African culture or American culture or both. However, what culture(s) do you personally most identify with?
    - How does this impact your relationship with your family?

Family action and accommodation

11. Describe your family's parenting style.
    - To your knowledge, how does this parenting style compare to American parenting styles?
12. Can you talk about your experience being in an African immigrant family?
    - What is beneficial about having an African background, while living in the U.S.?
    - What is challenging about having an African background, while living in the U.S.?

Daily activity settings

13. Can you describe your daily routines with your family during the week? For example, eating dinner together.
    - Describe your daily routines with your family during the weekend.

Closing Question

14. What other experiences or information would you like to share that might be helpful in furthering my understanding of your family's dynamics, culture, and/or values?

Closing: I will forward you a copy of the transcript from this interview with emerging themes so that you have the opportunity to clarify or elaborate on any of the topics we discussed. Additionally, I may follow up with you if I need further clarification on any of your responses. Lastly, I am recruiting families for participation in this study and would appreciate your help in identifying others who you think may be open to participating. Here is a recruitment flyer *[give flyer]* that describes the study and has my contact information. I will also send you an electronic version of the flyer that you can email to other potential participants. If you find others that are interested please connect them to me via email or have them contact me via phone or email. Thank you again for participating in this interview. Are there any questions or concerns that you have for me?

Individual Interviews #2

Focal Categories: ***Research question themes*** **–** Conceptualizing college choice; navigating college choice; educational ideologies; impact of family, social structures and culture on college choice process

Purpose of Interviews: The purpose of this interview is to examine the college going process, specifically participants' experiences with the college going process and perceptions on the meaning of the college choice. Each set of interview questions is shaped to explore the themes of the research questions. This session will focus on how participants' develop expectations and communicate about education and college going; conceptualize and navigate college choice; and perceive factors impacting the choice process.

Introduction: This individual interview will extend our conversation from the family interview as I continue to get to know about your perspectives on preparing to go to college. During this interview, I will ask you questions pertaining to how you define and navigate the college going process. As I mentioned during the family interview, there are no wrong answers and you should feel free to ask if you need clarification on any of the questions. This interview will likely last approximately 45 to 60 minutes and will be recorded to make sure I accurately document all of your responses. I will also take notes. The information you provide in this interview will not be shared with other family members without your permission. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Student Interview Guiding Questions

Developing and Communicating Educational Ideologies

1. Describe to me a time when you and your family member discussed his/her academic performance. What did you discuss? How did the conversation make you feel? What was the outcome of the discussion?
2. Describe to me a time when you and your parents (or other family member) talked about you going to college. What did you discuss? How did the conversation make you feel? What was the outcome of the discussion?
3. What is the most important piece of advice about going to college that you have received from a family member?
   - Which family member gave you this piece of advice?
4. Are there any pieces of advice or information that your parents or other family members have given you about going to college that you do not feel are relevant to your experience?

Conceptualizing College Choice

5. Let's go back to the diagram that you created earlier with your family.
   - Which components of the diagram did you contribute to the most?
   - If I asked you to draw this diagram on your own, what would be different?

Navigating College Choice

6. What part of the process represented in this diagram are you personally most concerned about going through?
7. Do you feel as if you are prepared to navigate this process successfully? Describe why or why not.

Impact of family, social structures, and culture on college choice

8. What are the most important forms of support that you need from your family as you navigate this process?
   - Have those needs been met?
   - Does you family ever make it more challenging to navigate this process?
9. What are the most important forms of support you need from your school as you navigate this process?
   - Have those needs been met?
   - Does your school ever make it more challenging to navigate this process?
10. How do you view the role and value of going to college within your ethnic culture?
    - Are there any differences between how Americans and Africans view going to college?
    - Are there any differences between how Americans and Africans view the process of getting prepared to go to college?

Closing Question

11. What advice would you give to other children of African immigrants going through the college choice process?
12. What other experiences or information would you like to share that might be helpful in furthering my understanding of your family's expectations around education and going to college?

Parent Interview Guiding Questions

Developing and Communicating Educational Ideologies

1. Describe to me some of your childhood memories regarding your education.
2. Who encouraged your educational endeavors?
3. How would you compare *[insert name of country of origin's]* educational system to the American system of education?
4. Describe to me a time when you and your child talked about his/her academic performance. What did you discuss? How did the conversation make you feel? What was the outcome of the discussion?
5. Describe to me a time when you and your child talked about he/she going to college. What did you discuss? How did the conversation make you feel? What was the outcome of the discussion?
6. What is the most important piece of advice about education that you have given your child?
7. Are there any pieces of advice or information that you have given your child about education that he/she does not view as relevant to his/her schooling experience?

Conceptualizing College Choice

8. Let's go back to the diagram that you created earlier with your family.
   - Which components of the diagram did you contribute to the most?
   - If I asked you to draw this diagram on your own, what would be different?

Navigating College Choice

9. What part of the process in this diagram are you most concerned about as a parent?
10. Do you feel that your child is prepared to navigate this process successfully? Describe why or why not.

Impact of family, social structures, and culture on college choice

11. What role do you currently play or will you play as your child navigates this process?

- Does you family ever make it more challenging for your child to navigate this process?

12. Do you believe that your child's school is adequately preparing him/her to get into and succeed in college?
    - Does his/her school ever make it more challenging to navigate the college going process?
    - Do you provide anything to supplement the education or information about college going that your child receives in school?
13. How do you view the role and value of going to college within your ethnic culture?
    - In your opinion, are there any differences between how Americans and Africans view going to college?
    - In your opinion, are there any differences between how Americans and Africans view the process of getting prepared to go to college?

Closing Question

14. What advice would you give to other Africans immigrant parents going through the college choice process with their children?
15. What other experiences or information would you like to share that might be helpful in furthering my understanding of your family's expectations around education and going to college?

General Interview Questions for Any Additional Family Members

Developing and Communicating Educational Ideologies

1. Describe to me a time when you and your family member talked about his/her academic performance. What did you discuss? How did the conversation make you feel? What was the outcome of the discussion?
2. Describe to me a time when you and your family member talked about he/she going to college. What did you discuss? How did the conversation make you feel? What was the outcome of the discussion?
3. What is the most important piece of advice about education that you have given your family member?
4. Are there any pieces of advice or information that you have given your family member about education that he/she does not view as relevant to his/her schooling experience?

Conceptualizing College Choice

1. Let's go back to the diagram that you created earlier with your family.
    - Which components of the diagram did you contribute to the most?
    - If I asked you to draw this diagram on your own, what would be different?

Navigating College Choice

2. What part of the process in this diagram are you most concerned about as a parent?
3. Do you feel that your child is prepared to navigate this process successfully? Describe why or why not.

Impact of family, social structures, and culture on college choice

4. What role do you currently play or will you play as your family member navigates this process?
    - Does you family ever make it more challenging for your family member to navigate this process?

5. Do you believe that your family member's school is adequately preparing him/her to get into and succeed in college?
    - Does his/her school ever make it more challenging to navigate the college going process?
6. How do you view the role and value of going to college within your ethnic culture?
    - In your opinion, are there any differences between how Americans and Africans view going to college?
    - In your opinion, are there any differences between how Americans and Africans view the process of getting prepared to go to college?

Closing Question

7. What advice would you give to other African immigrant families going through the college choice process?
8. What other experiences or information would you like to share that might be helpful in furthering my understanding of your family's expectations around education and going to college?

Closing: I will forward you a copy of the transcript from this interview with emerging themes so that you have the opportunity to clarify or elaborate on any of the topics we discussed. Additionally, I may follow up with you if I need further clarification on any of your responses. I mentioned this at are last meeting, but as a reminder I am recruiting additional families for participation in this study and would appreciate your help in identifying others who you think may be open to participating. If you find others that are interested please connect them to me via email or have them contact me via phone or email. I also have additional hard copies of the recruitment flyer or can send you another electronic copy if needed. Thank you again for participating in this interview. Are there any questions or concerns that you have for me?

Individual Interview #3

Focal Categories: ***Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three stages***: Predisposition, Search, Choice; navigating college choice; impact of family, social structures and culture on college choice process; communicating about college choice

Purpose of Interview: The purpose of this interview is to further examine participants' experiences with the college going process. Each set of interview questions is shaped to explore the primary research questions. While the previous interview focused on how families conceptualized the choice process based on their own perceptions and experiences; this interview is more heavily informed by factors identified as important in college choice literature such as academic preparation, role of family, educational expectations and aspirations (for example, Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989; Perna, 2006) and the stages of college choice as outlined by Hossler and Gallagher (1987).

Introduction: During this interview, I will focus on how college-going expectations are developed; how your family gains information about college and the application process; and factors that will impact the ultimate decision of where to go to college. As I mentioned during the family interview, there are no wrong answers and you should feel free to ask if you need clarification on any of the questions. This interview will likely last approximately 45 to 60 minutes and will be recorded to make sure I accurately document all of your responses. I will also take notes. The information you provide in this interview will not be shared with other family members without your permission. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Student Interview Guiding Questions

Predisposition

1. When did you know for yourself that you were going to go to college?
2. What are your family's expectations about your academic performance in school?
   - Do you feel that these expectations are culturally related?
   - Did you think about your parents' expectations and/or cultural expectations while engaging in academic activities like preparing for a test?
3. Going to college requires academic preparation. How important is it to you that you perform well in school?
   - What types of academic courses are you taking that would prepare you to be competitive for college? For example, GATE program, AP or IB courses. What is your academic GPA? Are you happy with your GPA?
   - Are you preparing or have you prepared for college entrance exams such as the SAT?
4. What is your routine like at home regarding your academics? For example, do you study or do homework in a certain place at home?
   - Do you parents' provide rules regarding your academics such as when you need to have finished your homework?
   - What is your routine like when you come home from school?

5. Do you think parents/family should be involved in their child's school or participate in different types of school events? Which ones are most important? Do your parents/family participate?

Search

6. Describe the college you would most ideally like to attend.
   - For example, where would you want to attend college? Is there a specific college you would like to attend? What do you want to study?
7. What activities have you done that have helped you to narrow down what type of college you would want to attend. For example, searching college websites or visiting colleges.
8. Has your family discouraged you from considering certain colleges? Has your school discouraged you from considering certain colleges?
9. Has your family or school encouraged you to look into certain colleges that you had not considered on your own?
10. How does cost factor in to which colleges you are considering?

Choice

11. How many colleges did you or do you plan to apply to?
12. During the family interview I asked what were the three most influential factors that will determine your college selection. Are there other important factors that will determine your selection?
13. Are you happy with your family's level of involvement in your college choice process? Would you rather they were more or less involved?

Parent Interview Guiding Questions

Predisposition

1. When did you know that your child going to go to college?
2. Going to college requires academic preparation. What are your expectations regarding your child's academic performance?
   - Do these align with your child's expectations about his/her academic performance?
   - What is your child's GPA? Are you happy with their GPA? Why/why not?
   - What are your main responsibilities as a parent regarding your child's education?
3. Is your child in a particular program or group within their school (e.g. a GATE program, or receiving tutoring, or in a high level math group, pre-college program, AP/IB)? How did that come about?
4. What do you know about the standardized tests that you child will need to take to get into college? Do you think there's anything you can do to help your children get ready for and do well on such tests?
5. Where do you do to get information about your child's school or education in general? (For example, do you get information from your children, other parents, family members, school personnel directly or indirectly)?
   - Do you talk with other family members or friends about your child's school or education?
   - What sorts of things do you talk about?
6. Who takes care, the most often, of your child(ren) after school? What is your child's/children's routine when they come home from school?

- What are your child's academic activities like at home? For example, do they have a designated space to study or do homework?
- Do you ask about or help them with their schoolwork?

7. Do you think parents/guardians should be involved with their child's school and participate in different types of school events?
   - Which ones are most important, do you think?
   - Are you able to participate? (If not, is there anything the school could do that would make it more likely or possible for you to participate?)

Search

8. Describe the college you would most ideally like your child to attend.
   - For example, where would you want your child to attend college? Is there a specific college you would like him/her to attend? What do you want him/her to study?
9. What activities have you done to help your child to narrow down their list of potential colleges? For example, searching college websites or visiting colleges.
10. Have you discouraged your child from considering certain colleges?
11. Have you encouraged your child to look into certain colleges that he/she had not considered on his/her own?
12. How does cost factor in to which colleges your child is considering?

Choice

13. How many colleges do you believe your child should apply to?
14. During the family interview I asked what were the three most influential factors that will determine your child's college selection. Are there other important factors that you feel should determine his/her selection?
15. Are you happy with your family's level of involvement in your child's college choice process? Would you rather they were more or less involved?

General Interview Questions for Any Additional Family Members

Predisposition

1. When did you know that your family was going to go to college?
2. Going to college requires academic preparation. What are your expectations regarding your family member's academic performance?
   - Do these align with your family member's expectations about his/her academic performance?
   - What are your main responsibilities regarding your family member's education?
3. Do you think family should be involved with their *[insert college-going student's name]* school and participate in different types of school events?
   - Which ones are most important, do you think?
   - Are you able to participate? (If not, is there anything the school could do that would make it more likely or possible for you to participate?)

Search

4. Describe the college you would most ideally like your family member to attend.
   - For example, where would you want your family member to attend college? Is there a specific college you would like him/her to attend? What do you want him/her to study?
5. What activities have you done to help your family member to narrow down their list of potential colleges? For example, searching college websites or visiting colleges.

6. Have you discouraged your family member from considering certain colleges?
7. Have you encouraged your family member to look into certain colleges that he/she had not considered on his/her own?

Choice

8. How many colleges do you believe your family member should apply to?
9. During the family interview I asked what were the three most influential factors that will determine your family member's college selection. Are there other important factors that you feel should determine his/her selection?
10. Are you happy with your family's level of involvement in your *[insert college-going student's name]* college choice process? Would you rather be more or less involved?

Closing: Thank you again for participating in this interview. I will forward you a copy of the transcript from this interview with emerging themes so that you have the opportunity to clarify or elaborate on any of the topics we discussed. Additionally, I may follow up with you if I need further clarification on any of your responses. Are there any questions or concerns that you have for me?

Appendix G
Participant Observation/Field Notes Form

Data Collection Setting:
OBN - Observation notes that are purely descriptive:
THN - Theoretical notes based on conceptual development and/or tied to conceptual framework:
MTN - Methodological notes which reflect on the methods used:
OBC - Observer comments as personal reflections:

Adapted from Schatzman and Strauss (1973) as cited in Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2001)

Appendix H
Consent Forms

Adult Consent Form

Project Title	A Family Affair: African Immigrant Families Conceptualizing and Navigating College Choice
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Dr. Sharon Fries-Britt, Associate Professor at the University of Maryland, College Park and Mrs. Chrystal George Mwangi, doctoral student at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are 1) a first generation African immigrant and the parent of a college-going individual 2) a family member of a second-generation African immigrant college-going individual or 3) a second-generation African immigrant college-going individual. The purpose of this research project is to examine how African immigrant families define and navigate the process of college going. We are seeking this information in order to understand how families view and communicate to each other about college choice and college achievement.
Procedures	There will be three data collection sessions. The procedures for each session involve reviewing the consent form document followed by a family (group) interview and an individual interview. If a parent, the individual interview will include questions about your educational experiences, your expectations about higher education for your child, and your involvement with your child in their college choice process. If a non-parent family member, the individual interview will include questions about your educational experiences, your expectations about higher education for your college going relative, and your involvement with your relative's college choice process If a college-going individual, the individual interview will include questions about your college choice process and the role of your family in this process. The family interviews will include questions about family values and educational activities. Additionally the family will be asked to engage in participatory diagramming, which will entail creating a drawing of their family structure and college going process. The total duration of your individual and family interview will be approximately two and a half hours per session The interviews will occur in your home or alternatively in a location mutually agreed upon by you and the principal investigator. The interviews will be audio-recorded.
Potential Risks and	There are no known risks for participating in the individual interviews. There is a potential risk might exist that during the family interviews (group) a participant would discuss information outside of the group that could be traced back to you. However, before beginning each family

Discomforts	interview, I will inform participants that information shared in the family interview session should not be shared with anyone outside of the group.
Potential Benefits	Participants will be offered a free workshop on college choice and college success conducted by the student researcher. This workshop would be held after all research data is collected. Additionally, w hope that in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of African immigrant families' communication about college.
Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized. To protect your identity, you will be able to select a pseudonym for this project. If you do not select a pseudonym, one will be created for you. Your true name, contact information or other identifying information will not be linked in any way to your audio files and transcripts. Your contact information will only be maintained to follow-up interview sessions, and will be saved as a separate file with the student investigator, Mrs. George Mwangi in her home office. All audio files, interview transcripts, and participatory diagrams will be uploaded to the principal investigator's personal and password-protected computer within one week of each interview. The visual illustrations created by your family will also be scanned and uploaded onto the investigator's personal and password-protected computer within one week of each interview. Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by keeping all research data on the student investigator's password-protected computer. Access to contact information, audio files, interview transcriptions, and participatory diagrams will be limited to Dr. Fries-Britt and Mrs. George Mwangi. Contact information, electronic audio files, interview transcription records, and participatory diagrams will be deleted/destroyed once the research is completed. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you are a UMD employee or student, your employment status or academic standing at UMD will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study.

	If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Sharon Fries-Britt at 3113 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, 20742. Or by phone at 301-405-0186 or sfries@umd.edu.
Participant Rights	If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: **University of Maryland College Park** **Institutional Review Board Office** **1204 Marie Mount Hall** **College Park, Maryland, 20742** **E-mail: irb@umd.edu** **Telephone: 301-405-0678** This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.
Statement of Consent	Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You agree to be audio-taped. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form. If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.
Signature and Date	**PARTICIPANT NAME** **[Please Print]**
	PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE
	DATE

Minor Assent & Parental Consent Form

Project Title	A Family Affair: African Immigrant Families Conceptualizing and Navigating College Choice
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Dr. Sharon Fries-Britt, Associate Professor at the University of Maryland, College Park and Mrs. Chrystal George Mwangi, doctoral student at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are 1) a first generation African immigrant and the parent of a college-going individual 2) a family member of a second-generation African immigrant college-going

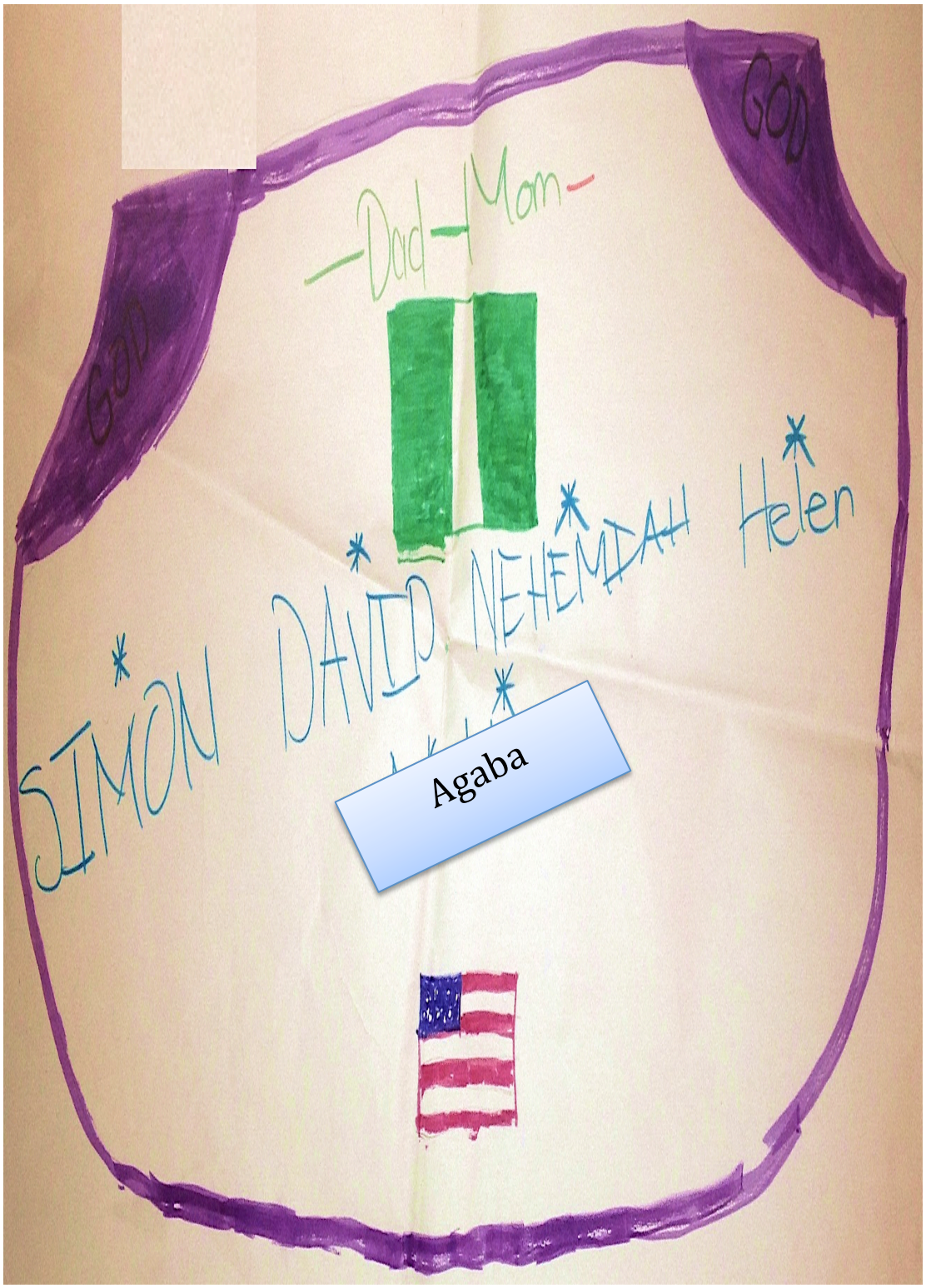
	individual or 3) a second-generation African immigrant college-going individual. The purpose of this research project is to examine how African immigrant families define and navigate the process of college going. We are seeking this information in order to understand how families view and communicate to each other about college choice and college achievement.
Procedures	There will be three data collection sessions. The procedures for each session involve reviewing the consent form document followed by a family (group) interview and an individual interview. If a parent, the individual interview will include questions about your educational experiences, your expectations about higher education for your child, and your involvement with your child in their college choice process. If a non-parent family member, the individual interview will include questions about your educational experiences, your expectations about higher education for your college going relative, and your involvement with your relative's college choice process If a college-going individual, the individual interview will include questions about your college choice process and the role of your family in this process. The family interviews will include questions about family values and educational activities. Additionally the family will be asked to engage in participatory diagramming, which will entail creating a drawing of their family structure and college going process. The total duration of your individual and family interview will be approximately two and a half hours per session The interviews will occur in your home or alternatively in a location mutually agreed upon by you and the principal investigator. The interviews will be audio-recorded.
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There are no known risks for participating in the individual interviews. There is a potential risk might exist that during the family interviews (group) a participant would discuss information outside of the group that could be traced back to you. However, before beginning each family interview, I will inform participants that information shared in the family interview session should not be shared with anyone outside of the group.
Potential Benefits	Participants will be offered a free workshop on college choice and college success conducted by the student researcher. This workshop would be held after all research data is collected. Additionally, w hope that in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of African immigrant families' communication about college.

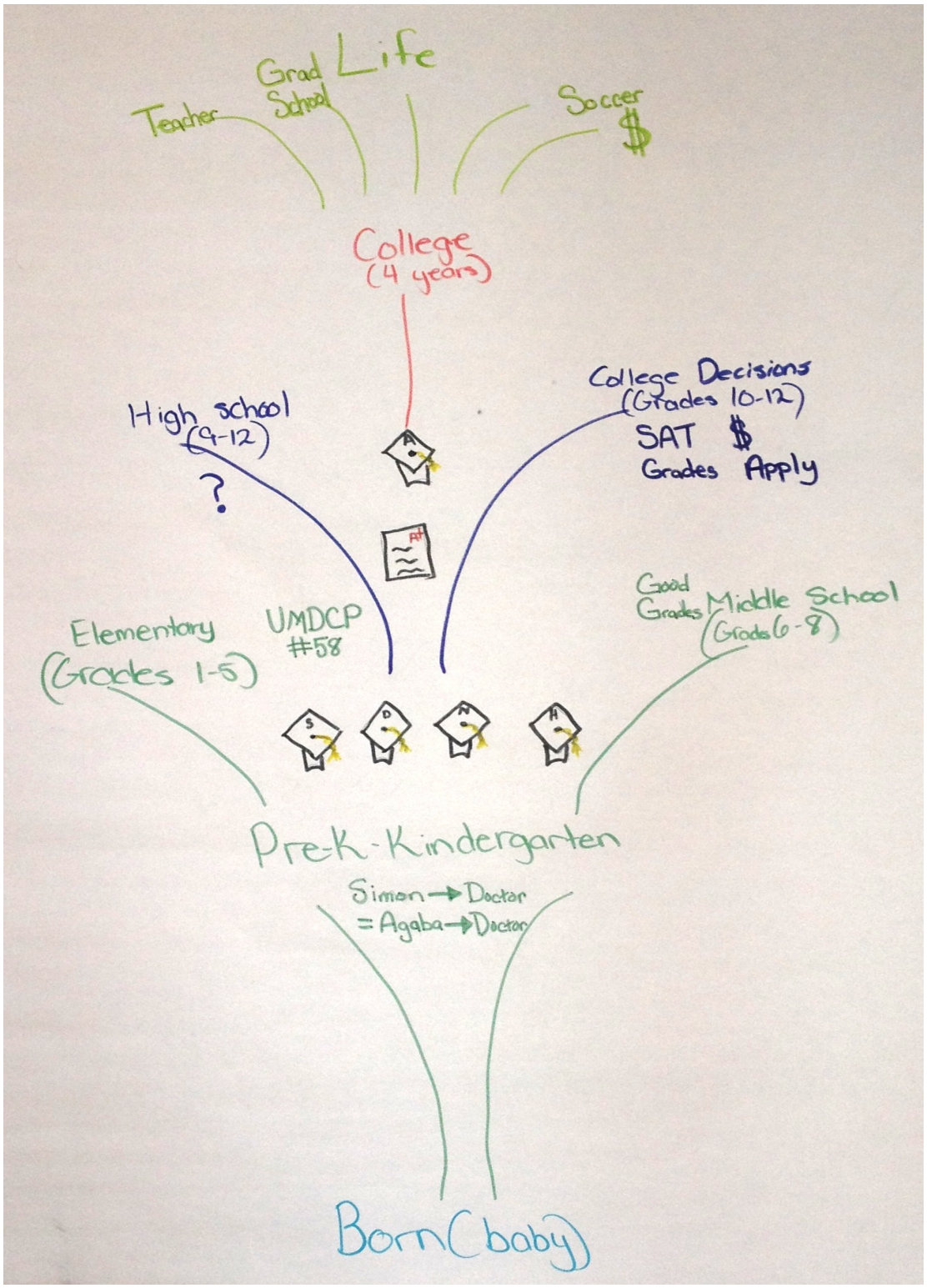
Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized. To protect your identity, you will be able to select a pseudonym for this project. If you do not select a pseudonym, one will be created for you. Your true name, contact information or other identifying information will not be linked in any way to your audio files and transcripts. Your contact information will only be maintained to follow-up interview sessions, and will be saved as a separate file with the student investigator, Mrs. George Mwangi in her home office. All audio files, interview transcripts, and participatory diagrams will be uploaded to the principal investigator's personal and password-protected computer within one week of each interview. The visual illustrations created by your family will also be scanned and uploaded onto the investigator's personal and password-protected computer within one week of each interview. Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by keeping all research data on the student investigator's password-protected computer. Access to contact information, audio files, interview transcriptions, and participatory diagrams will be limited to Dr. Fries-Britt and Mrs. George Mwangi. Contact information, electronic audio files, interview transcription records, and participatory diagrams will be deleted/destroyed once the research is completed. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you are a UMD employee or student, your employment status or academic standing at UMD will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Sharon Fries-Britt at 3113 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, 20742. Or by phone at 301-405-0186 or sfries@umd.edu.

Participant Rights	If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: **University of Maryland College Park** **Institutional Review Board Office** **1204 Marie Mount Hall** **College Park, Maryland, 20742** **E-mail: irb@umd.edu** **Telephone: 301-405-0678** This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.	
Statement of Minor Assent	Your signature indicates that you under 18 years of age; you have read this minor assent and parental consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You agree to be audio-taped. You will receive a copy of this signed minor assent and parental consent form. If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.	
Signature of Minor and Date	**NAME of MINOR PARTCIPANT** **[Please Print]**	
	SIGNATURE OF MINOR	
	DATE	
Statement of Parental Consent	Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this minor assent and parental consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to have your minor participate in this research study and be audio-taped. You will receive a copy of this signed minor assent and parental consent form. If you agree to consent to your child (minor) participating in this study, please sign your name below.	
Signature of Parent and Date	**NAME of PARENT** **[Please Print]**	

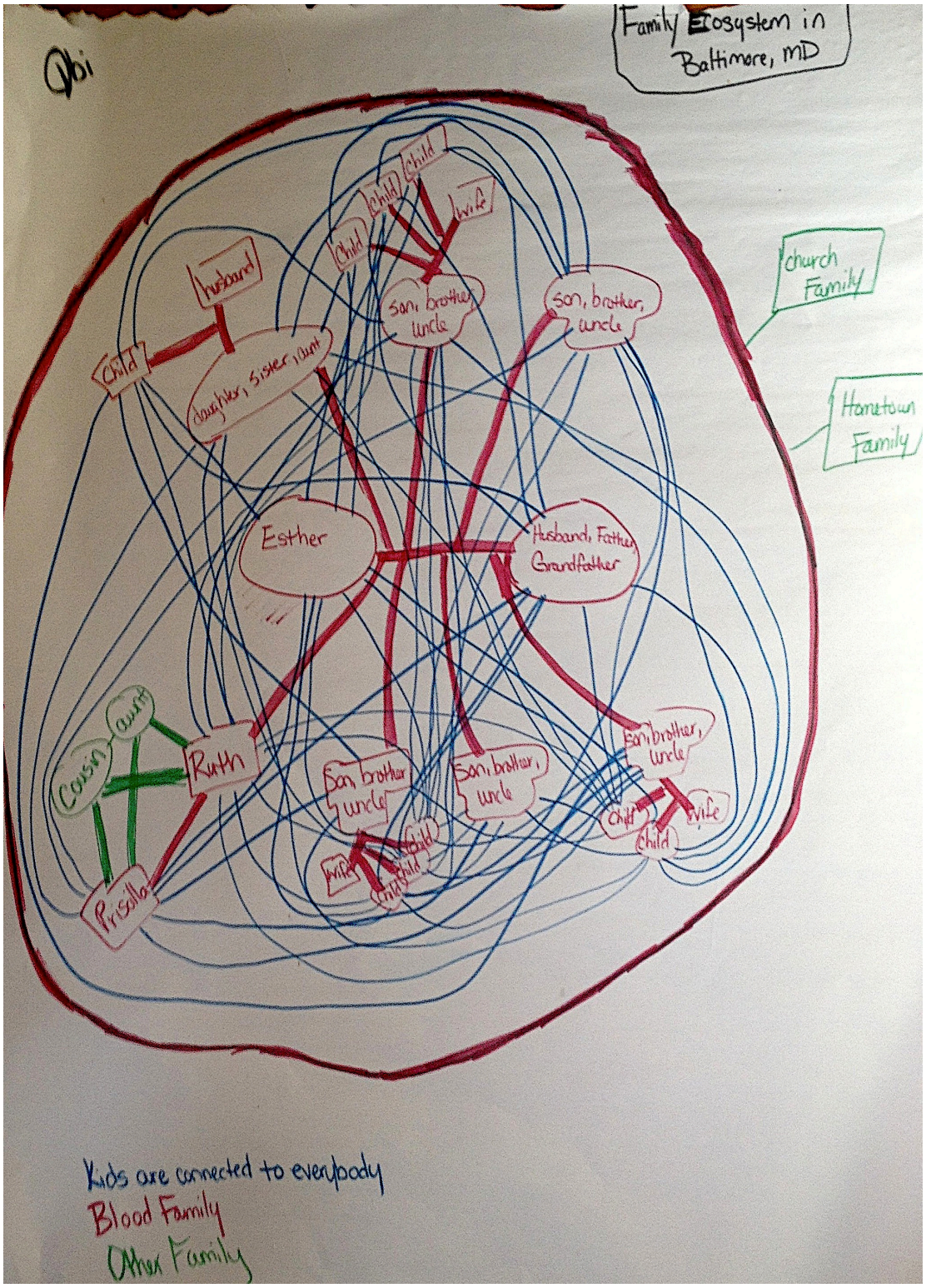
	SIGNATURE OF PARENT	
	DATE	

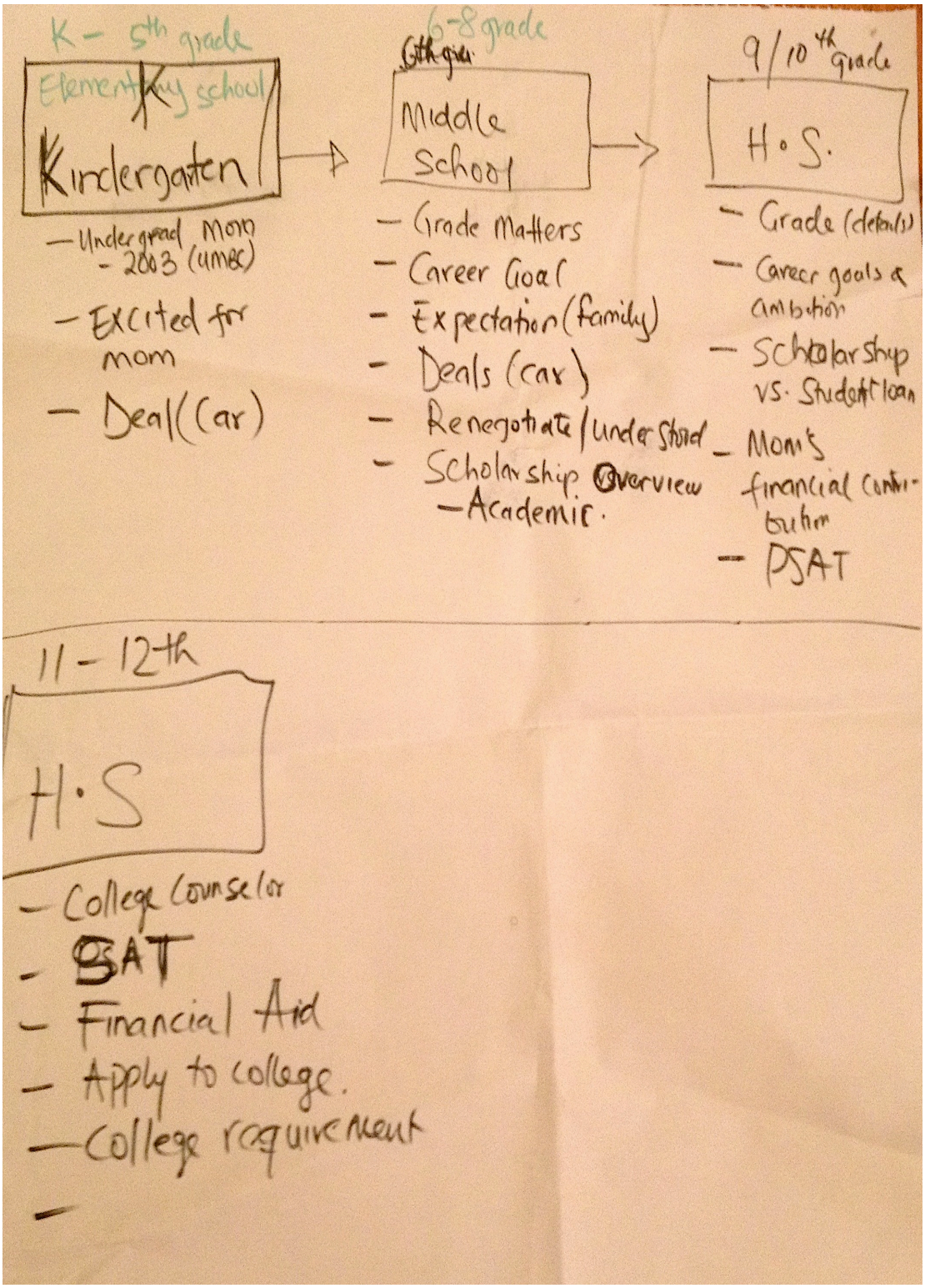
Appendix I
Enemari Family Participatory Diagrams



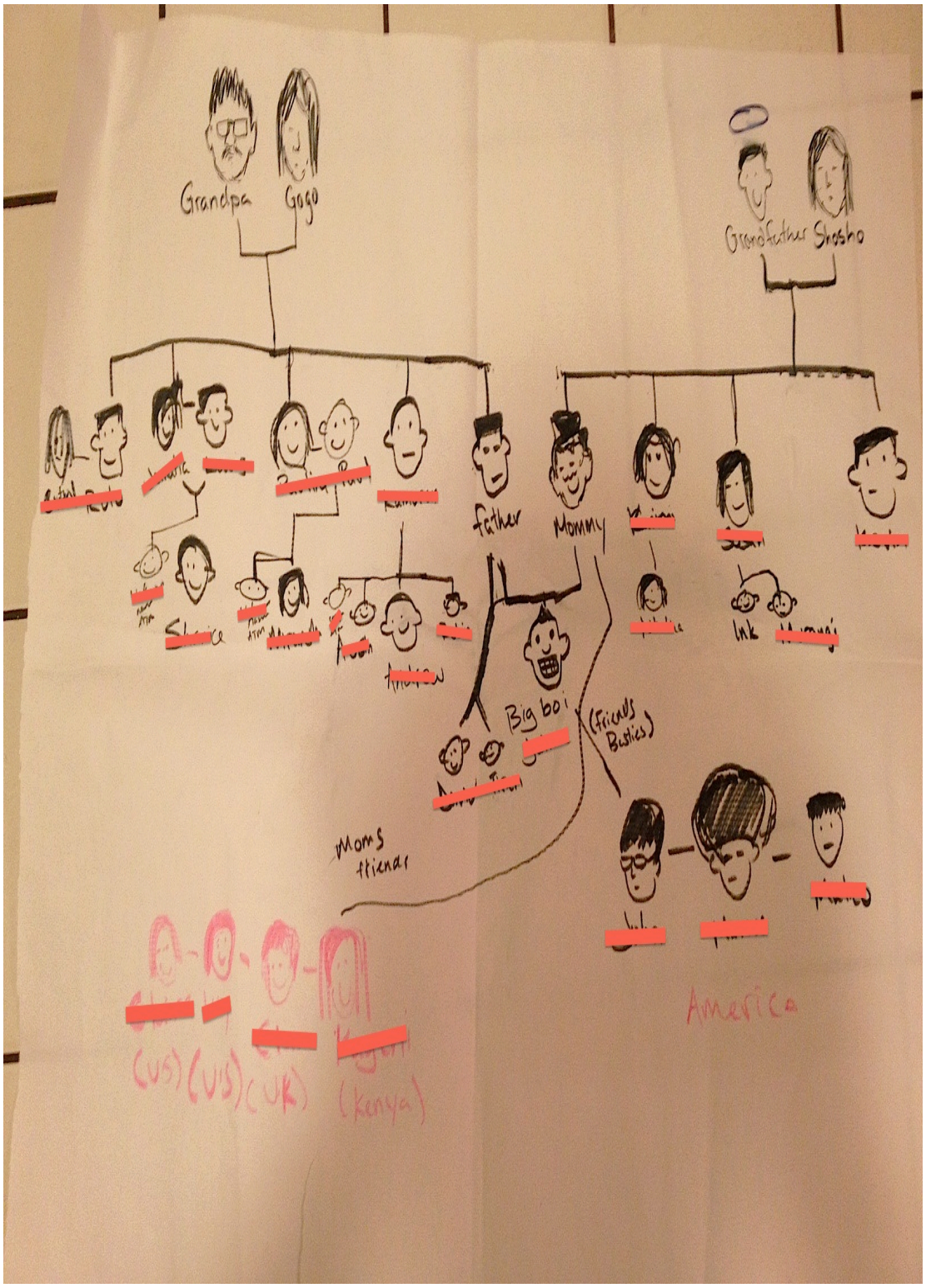

Life
Grad School
Teacher
Soccer
$
College
(4 years)
College Decisions
(Grades 10-12)
SAT $
Grades Apply
High school
(9-12)
?
Good Grades
Middle School
(Grades 6-8)
Elementary
(Grades 1-5)
UMDCP
#58
Pre-K-Kindergarten
Simon → Doctor
= Agaba → Doctor
Born (baby)

Appendix J
Obi Family Participatory Diagrams




K – 5th grade
Elementary school
Kindergarten
– Undergrad Mom - 2003 (umsc)
– Excited for mom
– Deal (Car)
6-8 grade
6th grade
Middle School
– Grade Matters
– Career Goal
– Expectation (family)
– Deals (car)
– Renegotiate / understand
– Scholarship Overview
– Academic.
9/10th grade
H.S.
– Grade (details)
– Career goals & ambition
– Scholarship vs. Student loan
– Mom's financial contribution
– PSAT
11 – 12th
H.S
– College Counselor
– SAT
– Financial Aid
– Apply to college.
– College requirement
–

Appendix K
Magimbi Family Participatory Diagrams



High School

* College research and selection → Junior Year
  Improve GPA
* College tours → Junior Year
* College Application → Senior Year
* SAT Scores / Good GPA → Senior Year
* Search for scholarships → Senior Year
* Talk with College Counselors (High sch.)

Junior Year

1. Research schools find out info like money, programs, athletics
2. Visit them
3. Narrow which ones you like
4. Get essays started
5. Prepare for SAT next

Start Senior Year

1. SATS
2. Finish essays
3. Start applying
4. Get recommendations and such

Middle-End Senior Year

1. Contact the college

2. Apply (if accepted)

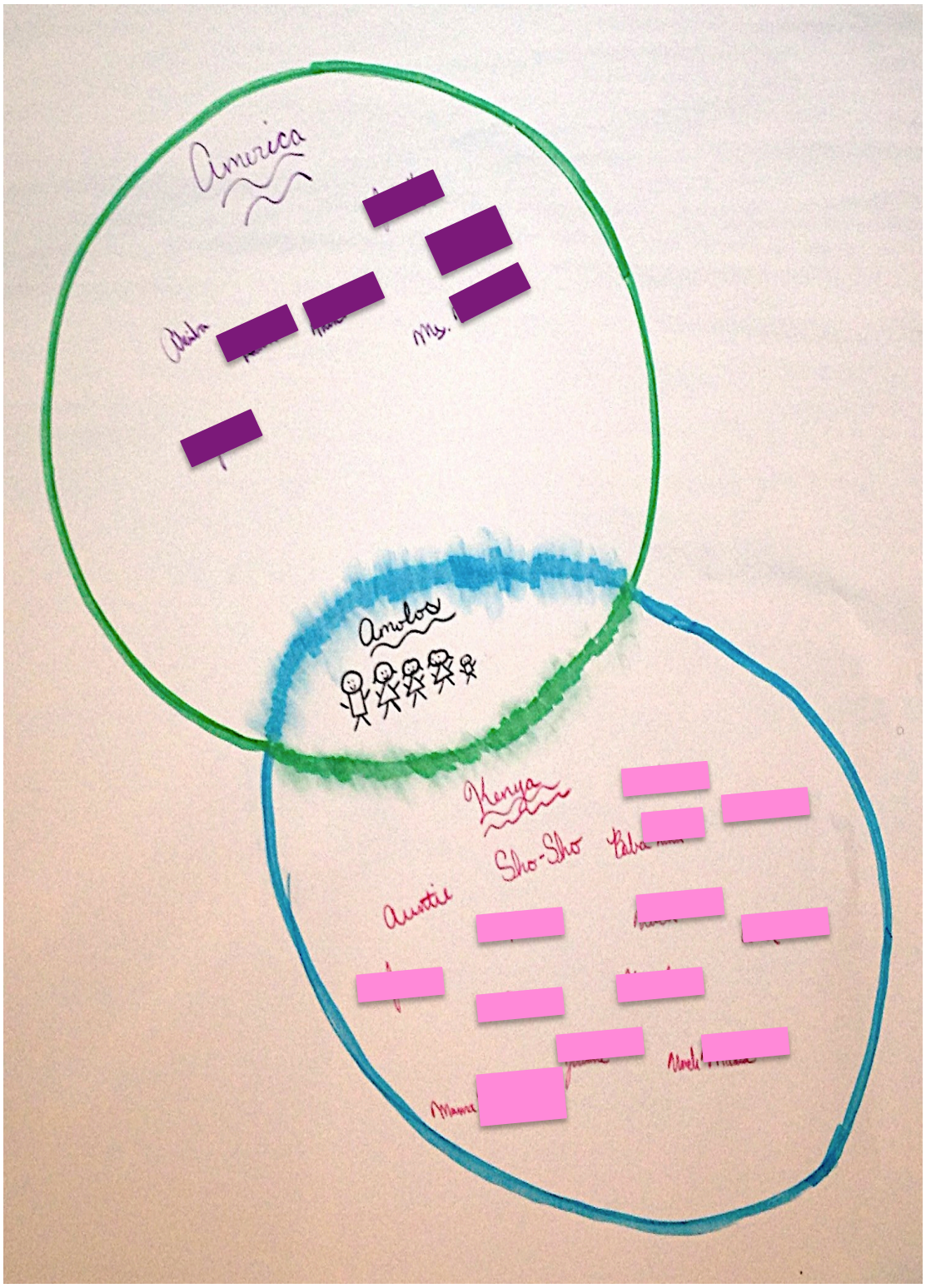
3. Get stuff you need (recommendations, SAT scores, GPA, essays)

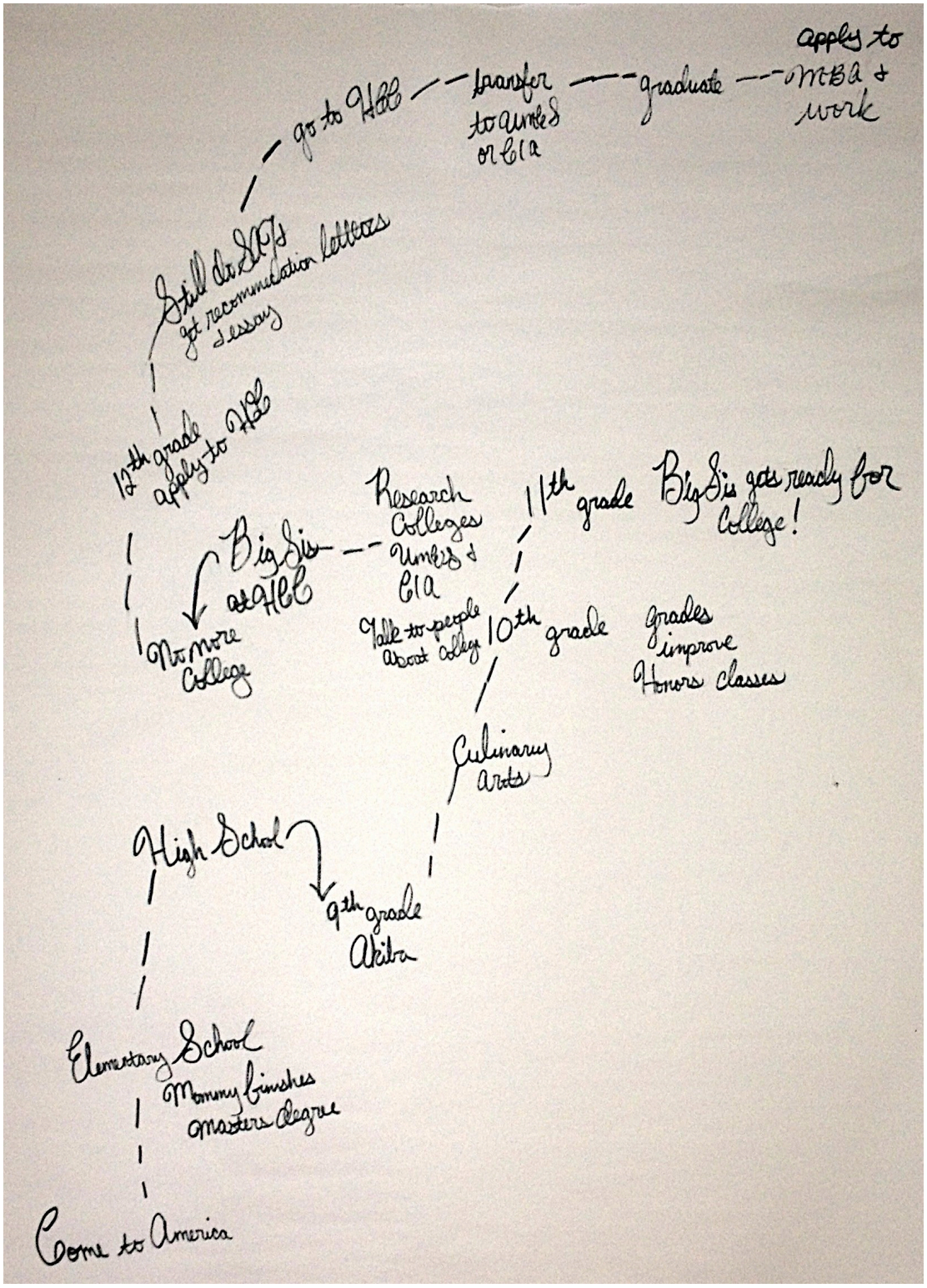
4. Meet with the admissions

5. Get ready for college (food and books and such)

6. Go to college

Appendix L
Amolo Family Participatory Diagrams




apply to MBA & work
graduate
transfer to UMES or CIA
go to HCC
Still do SATs
get recommendation letters & essay
12th grade
apply to HCC
Big Sis gets ready for College!
11th grade
Research Colleges UMES & CIA
Talk to people about college
Big Sis at HCC
No more College
10th grade
grades improve
Honors classes
Culinary Arts
High School
9th grade
Akiba
Elementary School
Mommy finishes masters degree
Come to America

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