Natasha Rivers
PAA Paper (Rough Draft)
September 23, 2011

Entry and selectivity for African immigrants: Assessing motivations for migration and varied views on adjustment in the U.S.

Abstract

This paper evaluates the motivations for migration that were assessed through the interview testimonies from newly arrived, 1.5, and 2nd generation sub-Saharan Africans collected in 2009-2010. Using data from the Department of Homeland Security, this study determined the entry classification of recent immigrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa to help understand, on a larger scale, the motivations for leaving origin countries and provide a comparative analysis of how well these different groups were able to find community, resources, education and employment upon arrival and integration. The interviewees reveal a broad spectrum of adjustment experiences. For instance, in many cases there was a generational component, resource component, and gender component that impacted the process of integration, either speeding it up or slowing it down. In further support of previous research, the sub-Saharan Africans in the 2nd generation classification had an easier time integrating, newly arrived were eager to return upon the completion of their degrees, and the 1.5 generation had responses that fell somewhere in between. Those newly arrived under the immigrant classification tended to have more resources, both financial, and in terms of education attainment. Another interesting observation was the higher enrollment of women in higher education, at the study sites, and the reasons for this gender gap per explanation by interview participants. Female participants believed black women have an easier time pursuing a degree and that black males experience more discrimination; many of the male participants supported their female counterparts' observations.

Introduction

Prior to their emigration to the U.S., Africans partake in internal migration processes as well. The movement from the rural to urban core and outside to more developed countries, within the continent, are common practice to skilled and educated individuals. This process has been referred to as the theory of stepwise migration.[1] Nigeria and South Africa are common locations that continuously attract African migrants due to their relatively stable economies and economic opportunities available. For those that choose or are forced to make the international migration to the U.S., these moves have been made through the help of diversity visas, work and education visas, family reunification, and asylum for refugees.

In the 1960s and 1970s, international migration from Africa to the U.S. was believed to be temporary. This time period marked the political independence of several African nations and citizens of these nations were eager to acquire financial capital to rebuild Africa and maintain the continent's progress. During this time, the migrant pool resembled males of working age who were in pursuit of higher education degrees and were motivated to work. Due to failed economies many of the original African sojourners overstayed their visas remaining in the U.S.[2] In the 1980s, and especially after 1990, international migration from Africa continued to increase and the demographic profile of these migrants was changing as well. The moves were becoming more permanent and the migrant pool was nearly half female.

[1] Konadu-Agyemang (1999) introduced a theory of the stepwise migration process, "which involves a typical immigrant moving from one African country to another which he/she perceives as having a better economy and travel connections and also 'convenient asylum' procedures" (Konadu-Agyemang 1999: 5). People move to places that will maximize their earning potential and where the returns to work and school are greater.
[2] The use of the word sojourner is taken from John Arthur's 2000 book titled *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States*

U.S. immigration law can partially explain these changes in migration overtime. The Hart Cellar Act removed barriers of immigration for Latin America, Asian and African countries. This particular law got rid of the previous national quota system implemented by the 1924 immigration law allowing for an increase of immigration from third world countries.[3] The 1980 Refugee Act also increased the number of refugees entering the U.S., and Africans are substantially represented under this label. Building on the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, the 1990 Immigration Act increased the number of immigrants from Africa by providing 50,000 diversity visas to the region annually. These visas are distributed to persons from countries adversely affected, not allowed to enter, by the 1965 law. African immigrants were offered entrance into the U.S. adding to the foreign-born population already in America, that being of predominantly European stock. The 1990 U.S. Immigration Law diversified the African immigrant population, bringing students and refugees alike from western and eastern African countries, notably from Nigeria and Ethiopia.

Hatton and Williamson (2003) suggested there are four primary push factors surrounding African migration to the U.S.: the population demand on the resource base; wage differentials between receiving and sending countries; economic disparity; and immigration policies in the U.S., also mentioned is the changing demographics resulting from HIV/AIDS. Other contributing factors used to explain immigrant migration out of Africa include economic problems manifested in declining food availability, increasing loan payment defaults, and unemployment in these recently independent nations. These deteriorating conditions were exhausted by a world trading system unfavorable to African exports like coffee and cocoa,

[3] Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act, including the National Origins Act restricted immigration from non-European countries while allowing for the European foreign-born stock to grow in the US due their population numbers in the 1890 Census.

dropping them in price. The world market price for manufactured goods has gone up, but unfortunately Africa consumes rather than produces these goods. (Konadu-Agyemang and Takyi 2007: 15)

Another contributing factor to African migration within and out of Africa has to do with the political instability and social conflicts in country of origin, most often in the form of a military dictatorship. In addition to local political pressures, external political forces contribute to the attraction for migrating aboard. Konadu-Agyemang and Takyi (2007) assert "Africa was a part of the ideological divide between two main superpowers: the U.S. and the Soviet bloc" (Konadu-Agyemang & Takyi 2007: 17). These superpowers were known for supporting African governments who in return also supported their military and financial goals in the region.

These socio-economic and political problems outlined have established the major push factors resulting in the migration behavior of contemporary African immigrants. The United States' economic opportunity is still a major pull factor for new immigrants wanting to accumulate human capital, put it to use, and in many cases give back to their country of origin in the form of remittances. As of now there seem to be multiple factors, economic and non-economic, and no single theory can best explain the reasons behind the steadily increasing presence of African immigrants in the U.S. This current study will fill these gaps in the literature by providing rich testimonies on individual and family moves to the U.S.

Methodology

The qualitative data is collected through in-depth interviews, structured focus groups and a survey questionnaire. This geographical fieldwork research took place over the course of eight months in 2009-2010. The sources include historical and contemporary changes to U.S.

immigration laws, 30 structured in-depth interviews, three structured focus groups containing 3-5 people, the online distribution of a survey questionnaire containing six open-ended questions, and participant observation at African Student Associations meetings as well as African cultural events and festivities.

Study participants were first recruited at a university in southern California and academic institutions in Seattle, Washington. An e-mail of my project description was sent to all enrolled students with matching criteria: African American or black and over the age of 18 years. From this e-mail students could check their eligibility by answering a short questionnaire consisting of six questions. The questions were: (1) Are you or your family from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, Somalia or another sub-Saharan African country not listed (2) Would you classify yourself as 1st generation (not born or raised in the U.S., but live here now), 1.5 generation (not born in the U.S., but arrived by age 7) or 2nd generation (you were born in the U.S., but are a direct descendent of one of the above listed African origin groups)? (3) Are you the first in your family to go to college? (4) Do you believe that the cultural attributes linked to your ethnic background help you to succeed in school or in the labor market? (5) Do you identify as being an ethnicity other than African American, but identify as black? (6) Do you speak more than one language, African dialect or language? Originally, there were 22 students scheduled for interviews but through referrals from focus group, interview participants and personal contacts, 30 eligible volunteers were interviewed for this study.

Sample

The data is drawn from a random set. Results from this study may be viewed as biased because they depict one sub-population of African immigrants, and perhaps not refugees,

although many participants are children of political refugees and discussed these experiences heavily in the interviewing process. This selected group of participants from the university in southern California and academic institutions located in Seattle, Washington is highly educated and skilled. According to 2000 Census Bureau data, 26 percent of sub-Saharan African immigrants over the age of twenty-five years received a bachelor's degree or higher, while 79 percent completed high school and higher. Presumably and roughly nine years later, some of these high school graduates would have gone on to pursue advanced degrees. From this study of 30 volunteers, 22 were female and 8 were male. Participants ranged in age from 17-32 years. Their ethnicities are representative of sub-Saharan African ancestry and countries including Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo formerly known as Zaire, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, and Somalia. The most populous and representative of the sample were individuals from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Nigeria. Overall, the individuals had varying times of arrival. I purposefully divided these times into three categories: newly arriving/1st generation, 1.5 generation and 2nd generation[4]. During the interview, participants were asked questions about: their ethnic community involvement, whether or not they believed there were cultural attributes linked to their successes or failures; their plans to stay in the U.S. or return to Africa; their experiences with discrimination (racial or immigrant status), identity formation; and how they give back to Africa when in the U.S. (for e.g. sending remittances).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data was collected from questionnaire, interviews and focus group sessions. Questionnaires were used to establish eligibility of participants. All interviews and focus group sessions were fully transcribed. The interview transcriptions were assessed and participants'

[4] Following the classification used in Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut (2006) *Immigrant America*, Berkeley: University of California Press

responses were divided into three categories: newly arriving/1st generation, 1.5 generation and 2nd generation. They were divided across generation to provide evidence that over time African immigrant and refugee women and female descendants of these populations will match or outperform their male counterparts. Dividing the respondents into these categories strengthened the analyses on the assessment of differences for views on education, identity, remittances, returning to Africa, and the experiences of discrimination (racial vs. length of stay in the U.S.). Length of stay refers to time in the U.S. and also speaks to the differences of experiences for newly arriving immigrants in particular their legal status and familiarity with the English language. There was a heavily female respondent pool, which may be attributed to my identity as an African American female scholar that drew participants with the same characteristics. In addition, there is an increase in African female immigration and a higher black female enrollment in colleges and universities across the U.S. when compared to their male counterparts.

This study employs a qualitative methodological approach to address underlying motivations for migration to the U.S. and varied views on adjustment once living here. These individual testimonies provide insight into the daily lives, culture, perceptions and attitudes of the people being studied. Obeng (2009) asserts "using this research method will help [me] to refrain from imposing [my] ideas on the respondents" (249). This method allows for the use of the interviewee's voice, that which can also provide an in-depth understanding of their individual experiences.

Testing the Research Objectives

This study is designed to examine the motivation behind moving to the U.S. and sub-Saharan African socialization in a new country by using the following research objections: (a)

determine sub-Saharan Africans' reasons and their family's reasons for coming to the U.S., (b) to assess how well they are doing in the U.S., and (c) to evaluate how they find community (ethnic or racial), and identify and interact with other black groups (foreign-born and native-born) in the U.S. To explore these inquiries further, I conducted an ethnographic study that took place in Los Angeles, California and Seattle, Washington. The findings from in-depth interviews, focus group sessions, and participant observation at African student associations, community events, and local festivities were used to support quantitative data findings. These findings reveal key insights into sub-Saharan Africans in five areas: (1) reasons for migration, (2) how well they are doing in the U.S., (3) their interactions with community, (4) identity formation, and (5) choice to stay in the U.S. or return to respective African country of origin.

In Table 1 and 1.1, I display the interview and focus group session sample data. The respondents ranged in age between 17 and 38 years old. The average age was 23 years. There were 22 female and 8 male respondents. There were more respondents with Nigerian, Ethiopian and Eritrean ancestry than any other ancestry group. Most of the respondents were second generation, but there was also a substantial amount of newly arrived immigrants from Kenya, and The Democratic Republic of Congo. There was one respondent from Botswana. Four out of eight males and 21 out of 22 females said they experienced discrimination, either due to their racial-ethnic identity or immigrant status. Seven men and 20 women send remittances to their respective countries in Africa. Note that some of these remittances may have been sent by the respondents' parents. Six of the female respondents identified as African American, five identified with their African ethnic group, and 11 identified with both. Two of the male respondents identified as African American, five identified with their African ethnic group and one identified as both. There were 15 female respondents and one male respondent planning to

stay in the U.S. Six out of seven foreign-born males and five out of seven female respondents had plans to return to their respective countries in Africa. While two out of seven females and one out of seven expatriates plan to return to Africa, maybe not to live, but construct a life that involves migrating back and forth. Twenty one out of 22 female and seven out of eight male respondents were actively involved in cultural organizations, either on or off campus.

Table 1: Demographic Aspects of Migrants

Participants: Country of origin	**Classification**	**Sex**	**Age**	**Type**
Botswana	Newly Arriving	M	31	Interview
Nigeria	2nd generation	M	22	Focus Group
Nigeria	Newly Arriving	M	30s	Interview
Kenya	Newly Arriving	M	38	Focus Group
Ethiopia	Newly Arriving	M	20	Interview
Ethiopia	Newly Arriving	M	26	Interview
Ethiopia	2nd generation	M	33	Interview
Ghana	Newly arriving	M	27	Interview
Liberia	1.5 generation	F	22	Interview
Congo	2nd generation	F	24	Focus Group
Congo	Newly Arriving	F	19	Interview
Nigeria	Newly Arriving	F	20	Interview
Nigeria	2nd generation	F	27	Interview
Nigeria	2nd generation	F	28	Focus Group
Nigeria	2nd generation	F	32	Focus Group
Nigeria	2nd generation	F	31	Interview
Ghana	2nd generation	F	26	Interview
Ghana	2nd generation	F	20s	Interview
Eritrea	2nd generation	F	19	Interview
Eritrea	2nd generation	F	22	Focus Group
Eritrea	1.5 generation	F	25	Interview
Eritrea	2nd generation	F	25	Interview
Eritrea	Newly Arriving	F	24	Interview
Ethiopia	2nd generation	F	26	Interview
Ethiopia	1.5 generation	F	25	Interview
NA (Afro-Caribbean)	Newly Arriving	F	28	Interview
Somali	Newly Arriving	F	24	Interview
Oromo	1.5 generation	F	26	Interview
Kenya	Newly Arriving	F	24	Interview
Kenya	Newly Arriving	F	17	Interview

Table 1.1: Adjustment in the U.S. and Ties to Africa

Selected Variables	Male	Female
Country of Origin		
Botswana	1	0
DR of Congo	0	2
Ethiopia	3	2
Eritrea	0	5
Ghana	1	2
Kenya	1	2
Nigeria	2	5
Oromo	0	1
Somalia	0	1
Generation		
Newly Arriving	6	6
1.5	0	4
Second	2	11
Plan to Return		
Ethnic Origin	6 out of 7	5 out of 7
Expatriate	1 out of 7	2 out of 7
Stay in the U.S.	1	15
Identity		
African American	2	6
Country of Origin	5	5
Both	1	11
Experienced Discrimination (racial or immigrant status)	4 out of 8	21 out of 22
Involved in Cultural Organizations	7 out of 8	21 out of 22
Send Remittances		
Yes (Includes parents)	7	20
No	1	2
N (Sample Size)	8	22

Discussion of Focus Group Findings

In this qualitative findings section, the results from the 30 in-depth interviews are discussed to support the quantitative data. The quantitative data demonstrate that there has been an increase in African migration since 1980, and is especially evident after 1990 which signaled a second major wave of migration. For the second generation interviewees, they discuss their

parents' migration to the U.S. during the 1960s and 1970s to pursue higher education goals. During this time period, the political independence of African nations encouraged motivated Africans to travel abroad and obtain human capital with plans to return and rebuild their respective homelands. Met with further political turmoil and failed economies in their home countries, some of these early sojourners never returned, but rather maintained a transnational relationship between Africa and the U.S., and raised their families in the U.S. In the process, some have been known to overstay their visas, apply for green cards as well as citizenship rights to maintain permanent residency.

In this study, participants were asked: (1) to discuss their own and their families' migration stories, (2) settlement in the U.S., and (3) overall views on adjustment. Given the ethnicity breakdown, roughly one third of this sample will be used as representative and to highlight the diversity of the total interview and focus group findings. Many of the participants were born in another country and came to the U.S., sometimes earlier and at times later in life. The first questions asked to participants were: Are you a citizen, first generation, 1.5, 2nd generation or has your family lived in the U.S. for many generations? What were/are the main reasons for your move and or your family's choice to live in the U.S.?

Reasons for Migration

Collecting respondent testimonies about their and their family's year of migration and class of admission into the U.S. provided valuable evidence that international migration from sub-Saharan Africa is on the steady rise. These responses challenge reports that Africa sends more refugees than immigrants and further supports claims that female immigration is increasing, and these female migrants are highly educated and skilled. At the same time, although many of the respondents arrived when they were too young to remember fully the

circumstances for their departures, many recalled fleeing their countries of origin for survival and the opportunity for a safer and better life abroad. Despite the success stories of motivated immigrants entering the U.S. on their own work or education related credentials, some respondents, mostly those with more recent arrival times, recalled being political refugees with little access to education and safe haven. For these respondents the opportunity to come to live in the U.S., usually as a result of a diversity visa, was their chance to achieve the American dream and they are determined not to let anything stand in their way.

When one reviews the responses, it is clear that education dominates the stacks of reasons for migrating. Sarah, a 24 year old Eritrean woman said,

> I was born and raised in Kenya, Africa. My parents are originally from Eritrea, and they migrated to Kenya. So that's where all my siblings were born and raised until we moved here to the U.S. in October of 2006.

She arrived three and half years ago and has already received her citizenship and is enrolled at a research one university as a full-time student studying Microbiology. Her family came in with green cards allotted to them after winning the diversity visa lottery. She says, "so we were one of the lucky ones. We came in with a green card and it only took five years before we could apply for the citizenship."

Another woman, Naima, an 25 year old Ethiopian woman was born in Ethiopia but came to the U.S. to be reunited with her father, a political asylee, in 1991. Naima further stated that, "we left Ethiopia in 1988 due to civil war." A thirty-one year old Botswana man, Kenneth, arrived September 2009 to pursue education. Education seemed to be a primary concern and reason for migration for many of the participants and their families.

Education was the main reason for Wesley to migrate. He is also a newly arriving immigrant from Kenya. Wesley has been in the U.S. for a couple of years and brought his family

with him. Even those that are not categorized as new arrivals, their reason for migration were centered on their family's choice to move. Wesley, being the head of his household was given the opportunity to study aboard and his move meant his family would join him in the U.S. Jane is a Liberian woman, born there but arrived to the U.S. when she was five years old. She is a naturalized citizen and of the 1.5 generation. She and her family migrated to the U.S. after her father. Ashley, a 2nd generation Ghanaian woman, has a similar situation to Jane. She is also a naturalized citizen but received her citizenship by being the only one in her family born in the U.S. Ashley's father was the first one to migrate and her family left Ghana soon after.

A 19 year old Congolese woman, Hadassah, said she spoke more than just African languages. She spoke Lingala; a language spoken in the Congo formerly known as Zaire but was also fluent in French and English. Hadassah went on to explain these are also languages spoken and taught in her country due to past colonial rulers and the prevalence to which they are spoken around the world, especially in developed countries. She arrived to the U.S. in 2003 with her family after her father sent for them. Her father was pursuing his education at the University of Washington.

To explore reasons for migrating, either to a neighboring African country or eventually to the U.S., here are some more testimonies shedding light on this increasingly common phenomenon. Sarah explains why her family wanted out of Kenya:

> Well, compared to Kenya, the U.S. has more opportunities, schools, education. Everything is just great over here. And in Kenya we were considered refugees because we were from Eritrea, so the life there was kind of hard for my parents. And the move to the U.S. was kind of by chance. They entered into a lottery and our family was like one out of ten that got picked out of like, I don't know, 100,000 applicants.

In this instance, Sarah and her family migrated to the U.S. for safety reasons and arguably had no other option. Jane shares,

> When I was about 5 years old they had a Liberian civil war. That was the main reason. My father originally came here for school. He went to USC[5]. He was getting an engineering degree. And then when the war broke out we had to get out of there, because it was very dangerous. And so we, we came here out of survival.

Like Sarah, Jane's family fled to save their lives and take advantage of the opportunities in the U.S. Some feel they were chosen to be in the U.S. take Kenneth's response for example. Kenneth explains,

> Well, yes, the main reason for coming here was to further my studies, do the master's and PhD. So, I, well I won't say I chose the U.S. I was chosen to come to the U.S.

Kenneth's situation is very different to Sarah. He arrived to the U.S. by choice and was granted entry based on his education potential and research skills. Before coming to the U.S., he worked for the Department of Forestry under the government. He states,

> I was in the division of research. I came to know researchers from all over the world. We worked together for a few years. One of the proposals got funded. I was chosen to come to the U.S.

Hana's family echoed similar reasons for wanting to migrate previously discussed. Fortunately, her family, like Sarah's family, received lottery visas[6]. She states,

> The reason my parents moved to the states was basically to better search for opportunity and freedom and pursuit of life. My parents worked for the Saudi government for almost 20 years and in Saudi Arabia they have a law that if you're a foreign worker your contract's terminated and you have to move out of the country and go back to a foreign country. And since my country back then, back in the '90s, there was war going on in Somalia, a civil war, my parents' only choice was to move to either Europe or North America.

The civil war in Somalia during the 1990s displaced hundreds of thousands of Somalis and after 1990s migration from this region to the U.S. has steadily increased. In the end, her parents wanted for her to have the option to go to college and make a better life for herself. This example

[5] University of Southern California
[6] Diversity Visa Lottery, under U.S. Immigration Law 1990

is not necessarily representative of broader migration patterns as majority of Africans arriving to the U.S. are not refugees.

How well are they doing?

As stated earlier, the focus group and interview participants were selected from a highly motivated and educated population. To gain a more complete picture of their and their family's experience with integration, successes and failures in areas of education and employment, respondents were asked to talk about pressures to succeed and the role gender plays--if it does at all--in how well they are doing in those areas. Many of the respondents talked about the cultural attributes linked to their ethnic group, the pressure to succeed, and setting an example for those without the same educational opportunities, in particular the family members still living in Africa. Family and community support were fundamental in the successful outcomes for the interview participants.

Pressure to Succeed

Sarah talked about the pressure to succeed in the face of adversity. She and her family fled Eritrea during the war to seek refuge in Kenya. They arrived as political refugees to the U.S., and have all recently became citizens. Relatives and a close-knit Eritrean community in San Diego provided shelter and other resources until her family could provide their own. Despite their arrival status, community members often ask her parents to share information on her college admission and high standardized test scores. She insisted that her brothers had a difficult time to trying to fit in, and were often critiqued on their accents as well as the type of clothing they wore outside.

Sarah's determination impressed the members of her family and the larger Eritrean community. She could now feel the pressure to go as far as she could in terms of education. She explains how important education is,

> So definitely it's really important. I mean, just coming – in Kenya education is really hard because even though it is really expensive and my parents had to work extra hard to keep us in school…I mean, definitely coming here I felt like, wow, I have this free education. I'm going to take the most out of it, and, plus, I'm the first one – I was the first one to go to college from my family…

As stated earlier, Sarah's family were refugees in Kenya and had very little access to education. Most of what Sarah learned about pursuing education came out of her own initiative. She even figured out the college application process on her own and taught the kids in her community in San Diego. Even though the pressure can seem much at times, she insists, "yes, it can be a lot of pressure, but then sometimes you need the pressure to keep going."

Naima received the motivation to continue her education mostly from her parents. She explains,

> The hard work I think my parents instilled in me. Really, so hard work I've always been a huge – been pushed pretty far by my parents. Hard work and sense of family, like knowing where you come from, but even if you're in a new country, that doesn't necessarily automatically make you American, so don't forget where you come from. And I think also just putting school first. My parents always kind of said school is first. Everything else there's always a time for it, and I kind of never forgot that.

Many of the respondents believe the support from family helps them to succeed in all areas of their lives, especially education.

Hadassah discusses how her pressure is connected to wanting a better life in the U.S. and in the Congo. She explains,

> I feel like our life kind of changed a little bit because I used to experience like a lot of argument and stuff in my dad, just financial stuff, you know. He was always unhealthy. I feel like if I get a better education, I'll be able to live maybe a life I would like to support my family or help. I always think like I can go back in

> Congo and help build some hospitals to help some kids who are sick and stuff like that.

Hadassah sees the costs and benefits associated with pursuing higher education. Her discussion on her dad conveys that he was unhappy and the type of work he was getting, before receiving his degree, was not enough to support a growing family. She believes her education will open many doors and she can create a life for herself in the U.S., but also give back to the Congo as well.

Education is important in the Congo and also in Botswana. Kenneth explains why he is so determined to succeed,

> Yes, education is very important in Botswana. Since 1970s, it has been free, so it is free until first degree. I think in that way it shows how important it is that the government has subsidized it. It is very, very important in terms of development because in the 1960s, we got our independence in 1966 [and] during that time we got a lot of posts held by Europeans, the British…

Kenneth really sees the benefits of education as being linked to outside approval, especially in terms of staying competitive to the outside world, in particular to developed countries. Wesley mirrors this point of view and said his father always encouraged him, he states, "growing up he [his father] emphasized that as a way of maybe competing in the world." From their standpoint and many others, a free education that is not utilized or taken advantage of is a wasted one. Many of the respondents were shocked to see how education is treated in the U.S., and perceive it to be taken advantage of by some, but not by others.

Ashley believes that immigrant culture is heavily linked to success in education. She explains,

> Yes. I think culturally in a lot of African groups, particularly mine, but I would extend that to most Nigerians, East Africans, education is very important. It's stressed even more than any other probably personal skills or resources one should have. Education is very important, and I think it's because it's kind of an immigrant mentality…America isn't the end point. You're most likely going

> back, which my parents have done and have built houses and really aren't even, you know, settling on staying out here. There's a lot of them, you come here and you have to succeed because compared to their country of origin, you don't have – the resources aren't laid out for you easily. So you come here, going to school should be such an easy task. You should go and make it happen.

Even though Ashley is a second generation, she sees the importance of returning and giving back to Ghana in some way. She insists that education is the best way to do that. Ashley also contends that compared to situations back home, any immigrant in the U.S. should strive to obtain a higher education degree, because she feels the resources are there to succeed with hard work and determination.

Ashley also believes there is no alternative to succeeding and that she has to do well in everything. She states,

> So there was never a choice, and so that's a positive, and it can be a negative thing too, because a lot of immigrant children kind of face that type of pressure, extra pressure to do, become, like it's about three categories, especially for African parents for you to do, which is a lawyer, doctor and nurse. If you don't become one of those, sometimes there's this negative perception of you.

She is pursuing a master's degree in public health and expects to use her research to educate others about health disparities in black populations, especially with or for Africans in Africa and America.

Hana also believes that when the opportunity present itself to go further in education, then one should take it. She explains,

> Yeah, I think a lot of things that helped me was that a lot of the Somali women – my mom was lucky because she actually went to Institute School and she worked pretty much throughout her life, the same thing as my dad. But a lot of women don't have the basic education backgrounds, so my mom is very adamant about education especially – her mother [who] never had the education, so she kind of – my grandmother forced my mom to go to school, and finish high school, and go to college. She actually did apply for schools and she got into Cambridge, but she didn't go to Cambridge. She had me [instead]. So, education was a big thing in our family. And my grandfather was a doctor.

Hana explained further that her grandfather received his medical degree at a school in Italy when Somalia was colonized by Italians.

In Hana's family, education has always been important wherever they live. She reflects back on her experience as a student at a school in Saudi Arabia. She says,

> The only thing I had a problem with was speaking the language because I, you know, in Saudi Arabia you don't interact with a lot of people because of the whole culture, there's so much segregation with foreigners from the natives.

This passage implies why Hana could read and write Arabic well but is less comfortable with speaking it. As an outsider in Saudi Arabia, she and her family rarely communicated with many Saudis. Once coming to the U.S., Hana experienced a similar language barrier and was often judged by American students about her poor English-speaking abilities. She explains,

> [I] went to the States and I started freshman in high school, you know, I had to learn English. English was a little bit difficult for me because I wasn't fluent in English. I was only fluent in Arabic.

Despite the learning curve, Hana studied English and was accepted into the University of Washington and Seattle University, two top ranked universities in Washington State.

Gender Difference

The research sample included thirty respondents, of which twenty-two out of thirty respondents were women pursuing higher education degrees. This female-dominated sample may be related to the increase in female migration and the human capital brought with them to the U.S. Both male and female respondents commented on the perceived reality that more black or African females are enrolled at their university than black or African males. Wesley, the oldest of the interviewees, asked himself, "Where are the men?" and follows up this comment by saying, "Not that I've paid much attention to it, but yes, there is more females than men students. I don't know exactly if it's by chance or what."

Wesley voluntarily left Kenya to pursue educational opportunities in the U.S. He is married with one child born in Kenya, and a son born in the U.S.; nevertheless plans to return after receiving his degree. Some respondents attribute these perceived differences in enrollment to forms of racial discrimination and problems related to adjustment and integration. Female respondents believed there to be less stigma associated with doing well in school, and felt responsible for achieving their own and their family's goals of higher education. Male respondents mentioned feeling some pressure from peers to reject school and that they experienced more discrimination than their female counterparts. The way in which each respondent addressed the discrimination and gender questions varied across ethnic group, generation, and sex of participant. There were no concrete conclusions, however, I allowed the respondents to explain in their own words how they felt about perceived discrimination, and then their perceptions about who experiences it more, men or women.

I asked, "Okay so I just want to touch really quickly on one point that you mentioned about a gendered kind of racism. Do you feel that Black men are more discriminated against than a Black woman would be?" The reply from Alana, a second generation Nigerian woman, said

> I think theirs is just more visible, um, nowadays. Um, I think Black men definitely experience the more overt forms of racism more than women do. Um, women tend to experience structural discrimination a little bit more. Although, obviously, there's like an interaction between the two, but men are always getting pulled over. Men are always getting arrested. Things like that.

I asked if Jason, a second generation Nigerian male wanted to add to Alana's comments, to which he replies,

> I would kind of agree with her – with sexism and stuff. I think that with Black women, and all women in general, there's kind of like – you know what the sexist views are, and I think that all women fall under those views or whatever. But I would agree, I guess it's more you know. It's more directly felt with Black males than anything like, so – it's like directly experienced with us more than anything.

When I asked him to expand on his answer, he explained that he felt black women suffer from things more than white women do and women, in general, have to deal with being sexual objects and not taken seriously, for example being paid less than men for the same jobs.

Like Jane, Naima also felt black men experience discrimination more than black women or at least experience it in different ways. Naima says,

> I think it's harder for men. I know that in some sense success you feel that men have a harder time fitting in and it creates an even more identity angst than it does for us. I think we've been able to use it so that we can succeed, for the most part.

Many of the female respondents felt their ethnic identity helped them succeed and while aware of the pressures on them were still able to ignore any stigma associated with doing well in school and have been excelling at greater rates than their male counterparts, who many women felt suffered from harsher outside discrimination and barriers to succeed.

Interaction with community

To gain understanding about the adjustment experiences of these contemporary sub-Saharan African migrants, I needed to understand the acceptance of these groups by their own ethnic group already living in the U.S., and in comparison, by their racial group, African Americans. To further empathize with these migrants' experience with adjustment, I asked them to discuss their encounters with discrimination, either based on their immigrant or racial status. If these respondents had experienced discrimination they were then asked to talk about how they overcame such experiences or feelings of being ostracized. At this point, many talked about their involvement in cultural organizations and the role that these types of organizations had on overcoming adversity and inequality in their lives.

Discrimination (Immigrant status and racial)

A majority of the respondents (twenty-seven out of thirty) believed that black or African males have it worse when it comes to experiences with discrimination. A few of the female respondents believed that black or African women had it worse, and went on to describe their personal experience. Ashley, a second generation Ghanaian woman, and the only one in her family born in the U.S., mentioned being the only black student in her public health class. A white male professor made generalizations about black women being uneducated and having lots of children. At that moment, she felt she had no social support in this academic setting, thus having to endure blatantly racist comments. Being a single mother herself, she felt ashamed when the news spread throughout her cohort. She felt judged and lumped into a negative stereotype associated with black single mothers abusing the welfare system. This upset her because she felt it was unfair to group her, and furthermore to group all blacks as being African American. She acknowledged it was an unfair stereotype to associate with African Americans; nevertheless she wanted to be seen as distinctly different.

Another female respondent, Makda, a 2nd generation Eritrean woman, is often offended by people assuming her mother cannot speak English well enough to communicate with them, and address their questions to her to translate for her competent mother. Her parents arrived in the 1980s and were fleeing the war in Ethiopia over their country's fight for independence. She discusses how her parents wanted for their children to have more opportunity than they had. This particular woman identifies more as African American because of what she believes is a shared struggle of racial oppression. She admitted that her brothers experienced what they believed to be racial profiling when repeatedly pulled over in their cars by police officers.

Sarah discussed her experience with discrimination in terms of different school settings first, in graduate school, and later in high school. She even mentions conversations on race in her Eritrean community in San Diego. Sarah begins,

> I don't know if it's related to this, but I was having lunch with some of my classmates, and one of my classmate's wife came to join us, and she was like European white. So we were talking and her husband, my classmate, was like, "Oh, you know, Sarah was born in Kenya." And the wife was like, "Oh, really? Oh my gosh, that's so cool. I knew there was something different about you." I was like, "What do you mean something different about you?" [To which the wife of the classmate replies] "Just the way you talk, you know? Black people talk like 'yo mama,' and you don't say 'yo mama.

This incident offended Sarah and she was shocked to see that no one else was as offended as she was, except for her friend who is also a racial minority. She started to think more people thought this way and that this situation was not unusual given the reaction of others there.

When Sarah first arrived to the U.S. she needed to complete one more year of high school before pursuing college. She says,

> So I experienced it like the beginning years that I was here, like the first two years. My accent was thick. I wasn't able to – okay, so it's all – I remember my first discrimination was when we're – I was trying to enroll in the high school, and we had to take the placement test to see what grade I was going to fit in. And I did the math, the English stuff. It was really straightforward, really easy material, and I aced it. But they probably thought I cheated because they made me retake the test with somebody, like, proctoring me right next to me, and they still ended up.

Even though Sarah studied English in Kenya her accent caused some teachers to misjudge her scholastic abilities and mistrust ensued. In recalling this story, it was clear the impact this left on Sarah. Her determination is not only to succeed for herself and her family, but to prove to others that she can do it, and that she is going to do well regardless of the assumptions made about her people or other African people in the U.S. From her community, Sarah was getting a different

kind of education one that was meant to mentally prepare herself against other blacks, especially African Americans. She explains,

> The Eritrean community [members] that came to talk to parents and stuff trying to help us ease into the culture, they'll tell us stuff like, okay, be aware of like African-Americans, like blacks, and then you come and meet African-Americans, some blacks will like discriminate because you're African, from African descent, especially if you don't talk the same way they talk. They give you like, oh, you're fresh from the boat. I don't know. It's like some names and stuff. So it was a little hard, because you don't know who to associate yourself. You feel like everybody thinks you're African-American, but then the African-American community doesn't identify you as an African-American. You're just this African. So it was a little harsh. So you tend to just go and try to find your own Africans to kind of group up with and help each other ease into.

Similar to Hana's experience with trying to adjust in American schools, Sarah was met with a surprising reaction from native-born blacks. She did not fit in and had to find her own support group amongst other Africans. Sarah admitted that she and her brothers were made fun of because of their speaking abilities and clothing often.

Naima also spoke about discrimination taking place at school. In her response she describes being in law school. She says,

> I think just being in law school, like when there's so little of you, you end up being the person that represents everybody, and there's a sense of responsibility but because those people, some of them that maybe have never been exposed to black people, yeah, I think there's isolation but there's also ignorance, and it's ignorance by people that should know better but they don't for whatever reason. And so for me it's been this idea that race doesn't really matter. Like, race doesn't really have a huge role within the law, and it's a huge, fat lie, but we never really talk about it within the classroom. And I think that in itself is also part of racial discrimination. It's less direct, but it gives the illusion that it's passé when it's this constant sense of tension in a society.

In terms of her law school education, Naima reflects and believes racism still exist but has taken a less overt and more subtle form.

Hana explained,

> I don't think I experienced any. The only thing -- was beginning back at 9/11, I remember it was during my junior year and when the news got out, it was a big thing, and a lot of people were being -- and I remember in my English class my teacher, her daughter, lived in lower Manhattan that day, but she got out safely, and she was Italian, she was telling us this story, and one of the students, he was actually African-American and he was like, you know what? We should just bomb all the Muslims. So it was me and there's this other girl who was Pakistani in the class, and we just looked at him like you've got to be kidding.

Hana was shocked by the African American or arguably American mentality toward the Muslim community. She did not understand how the African American student could generalize a whole group when his racial group endured similar treatment in historical periods preceding September 11, 2001.

These instances speak to the battles with stereotypes that take place, situations that may have deterred early migration from Africa to the U.S. Prior to the civil rights movements, native-born blacks had to deal with, and arguably still deal with, barriers of racial discrimination. The quality of life for blacks in America, from an outsider's perspective during this time period, may have seemed unfavorable for blacks in Africa to enter into. These respondents and many others discussed their similar experiences with discrimination and difficulties with identity formation, especially in terms of U.S. racial categories and wanting to remain true to their ethnic/cultural heritages. Some respondents were annoyed they had to click a box for race, because it is a reminder of their minority status.

Cultural/Ethnic Community Involvement

Most of the respondents (twenty-seven out of thirty) joined cultural groups to avoid feeling homesick by seeking out people who speak the same languages and eat the same foods to stay connected to Africa, and maintain their own sense of culture. These organizations are usually formed by parents or community leaders who were original sojourners and students try to

duplicate them in school settings. Respondents were asked: In what ways has your connection or affiliation to these organizations helped you deal with school and other areas of your life?

Naima explains that her parents sacrificed so much for her to be in the U.S. and they keep her involved in the community, happenings in the country Ethiopia, which all help to preserve a strong community. She says,

> I think I was more [involved in] organizations that had like a predominantly Ethiopian or just African population in undergrad. I think in law school there isn't really any so it's less so. I'd say that within – prior to law school, I'd say that my family and the organizations that I was part of in school were the networks where there was a lot of like Ethiopians.

Now she says it is really her parents that keep her motivated and connected to the larger Ethiopian community,

> But mostly my parents and their experience is how I knew that they had sacrificed so much that I would get these opportunities, and so I would say that's been the driving force for wanting to work hard in school – like that's my motivation.

Hadassah says,

> I don't know. My parents always talk about it. They're like members of it [it referring to cultural organizations]. They're trying to get us like young kids from now so we can [become] include[d]. We're trying to have, like, an election in 2011, so they need like all the young people like to vote and stuff because they think that this is our generation.

She is aware of the importance for younger generations to carry on the political agenda of their parent's generations. African parents want their children to remember where they come from and to care about Africa because nobody has to.

Kenneth discussed how he finds community and cultural organizations. He says, "What I am trying to avoid is to solely associate myself with only Africans. I want to be open." Kenneth does not want to limit his interaction experiences to only Africans. He wants his time in the U.S. to reflect meeting and becoming friends with a diverse group of people and cultures. Although he

misses home, he feels the U.S. provides the experience of getting know different cultures and diverse populations.

Jane replies, "I think it just gives you a strong sense of pride about who you are. I think that's what they really instilled in me, like I am or I say I am a Liberian woman." She believes these organizations give its members a sense of pride and belonging. Jane explains further, "I think just forming relationships with people who are immigrants and just having parents who are proud of their ethnicity just – it instills in you for later on when you're older." She feels what she has learned will help later in life. To her, these organizations instill confidence with the labels you set for yourself.

Ashley feels her situation is a bit different. She did not have an easy time fitting into these cultural organizations meant to provide support for African students. She explains,

> So even the African kids or students I've met in school, even in undergraduate and now even graduate school, there's kind of a skepticism between me and them 'cause maybe I don't have the actual accent, or maybe I come across as, you know – I don't know what that means, but I get told that a lot, that I don't come across as African.

It seems as though other Africans view second generation American-born African children as less African. Ashley has just provided an example of this occurrence. She feels this set off a lot of different reactions from people. African Americans tell her

> You don't seem that" implying Africans look and act one way. She says that her friends help because they too have a similar standing in the U.S.—not fully American and not fully African. She explains, "My friends are like Tunisian or Nigerian, so, yeah, they're mostly like maybe from somewhere else and they're like similar to me, like first generation or second generation. So, we have some of the same issues, and we can kind of laugh on some of the same things, but I haven't really been able to access that in a school setting as much.

Wesley was able to find Kenyans in church. He says, "I met people in churches. I mean that [not] all Kenyans go there. I've met a few Kenyans in church or after church." He says it is

hard to find Kenyans in Los Angeles, but mentioned that it could be a result of where he lives and that he has not developed much a social life outside of his studies. As a student, he feels that he spends so much time in school that he identifies more with the campus community and then goes home to his Kenyan wife and children. He joined the African Activist Association, an organization for students invested in Africa, to meet students with similar interests. Wesley expresses how he feels about the organization and the impact it has on him,

> Just that feeling of cultural belonging in some sense when those [around you] are different. But it [the organization] does have some emotional – I guess, emotional kind of attachment. And, of course, it's scholarly too.

Hana had a different approach. She felt there were no organizations for Somali students so she started one herself. She explains, "Beginning of my freshman year a couple of Somali students at the U-DEF started Somali Student Association, and I was actually a part of that. I was one of the founders." The purpose of forming such an organization was to create a space to address the needs of the Somali community on campus. She insists it was to, "get active with my community." Hana helped many Somali students learn about college opportunities, attend lectures put on at the university, and learn the importance of education.

One woman, a 1.5 generation Nigerian spoke about her involvement with the Nigerian Student Association and stated, "We are able to have a safe space for Nigerians to talk about Nigerian issues, talk about our languages, what divides us and what brings us closer together as well." A 2nd generation Nigerian woman commented,

> We come here, we crack jokes, we kind of make fun of our parents…[a] lot of us grew up in Nigeria and only been here for a few years, so they have kind of like the culture more ingrained in them.

Role of Cultural Organizations

Through these testimonies it has been made evident how important cultural organizations are and the role they play in helping newly arriving as well as first and second generation Africans adjust to life in the U.S., while staying connected to their respective countries in Africa.

These organizations often reflect the emerging needs and aspirations of immigrant groups. They preserve an ethnic economy, usually in the form of community support for self-employed members of those ethnic communities. These organizations are also known to help with immediate concerns such as housing, food, employment and finances.

When African groups become scattered Diasporic communities, help is essential and less so for concentrated communities (Chacko 2009: 247). Religious institutions are usually there to help address these needs and concerns. Religious institutions have always been central and often times provide a link between newcomers and the host society (Chacko 2009)

Abbott (2007) discusses the role and need for cultural organizations in the lives of newly arriving African immigrants. These organizations should include what he referred to as a cultural endowment, which refers to "not simply language, folkways, and sensibilities but it also includes pre-existing patterns of social organization" (Abbott 2007: 141). Migrant associations are not a new phenomenon for Africans. According to Abbott (2007) migrant associations were developed in Nigeria during the 1920s prior to the political and social independence of many African nations. Nigerian hometown associations possessed structural attributes that help them to combine two activities 1) mutual aid abroad, and 2) investment in public assets at home (Abbott 2007).

To assist with adjustment in a new country, newly arriving immigrants often seek out other immigrants, but more importantly those that have similar cultural attributes namely language and country of origin. Often times these newly arriving immigrants join local social

organizations such as a church, community centers and hometown associations. Arthur (2007) discusses how cultural associations help link Africans to Africa while living in the U.S. To explain further, the need for these organizations are "motivated by a combination of factors: enlightened self-interest, desire to help one's larger group, and access to ritual services" (Abbott 2007: 150). Most of these organizations can be located on the internet. Abbott (2007) observes "the internet has facilitated formation of the contemporary Nigerian associations, which purport to unite and represent all of their members in North America" (Abbott 2007: 153). The cost of communicating over the internet is low compared to other forms of communication like expensive phone cards and postal mail. Most schools, internet cafes or internet companies provide annual services for standard costs. With the increase of Nigerians in the U.S. since the 1980s, the need to connect to both Africa and locate Nigerians in the U.S. will remain vital to this group's adjustment and integration.

[Will add a discussion + Conclusion section]