"I AM NOT BENEATH YOU BECAUSE I AM FROM A DIFFERENT CONTINENT, I AM ALSO LIKE YOU!": NIGERIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS MAKE MEANING OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION

BY

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Abstract

For college students, academic and social issues play a huge role in their higher education experience. This experience is exceptionally complicated for diverse Black populations, who often have to negotiate their complex racial and ethnic space in the United States. My research investigates underrepresented cultures from Africa - namely Nigeria - whose ethnic background is often considered invisible in the United States.

This research examines how Nigerian college students make meaning of their racial and ethnic identity at a Predominantly White Institution. Detailed interviews were conducted with 20 self-identified Nigerian college students at a Midwestern public research university. Participants varied from international students to U.S. born Nigerian students. This study finds that Nigerian college students embrace their various racial and ethnic identities and utilize terms such as African, African-American, Nigerian, transnational Nigerian, Nigerian-American, 1st generation American, Black, Igbo and Yoruba to describe their racial and ethnic identity. In this sense, students are not trying to gain a monolithic identity; instead they are weighing their options and determining their possibilities based on their lived experiences. Furthermore, their understanding of which term was associated with race or ethnicity varies.

This research aligns with previous studies on Black immigrants and shows that identity is fluid and influenced by the social context. However, it diverges from previous studies by shedding light on the significance of citizenship, native language fluency, accent, and parent education in Nigerian college students' experiences. Recommendations for college personnel and policymakers are offered.

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Preface

"Ife, let me call you right back, my uncle is on the line," Ogochukwu says abruptly.

"Ok, no problem," I reply. From his tone and urgency I can tell the call is from Nigeria.

Ogochukwu is a suave, attractive guy with a particular confidence or swag about himself. He

speaks with an accent that is a blend of Nigeria's and Britain's English. I can tell because he

enunciates words the way Nigerians do that sounds more British than American. He code

switches from English to Pidgin English in a way that tells me he knows Igbo fluently, and

utilizes a regional dialect that signals to me that he lived in western Nigeria.

I met Ogochukwu at a Nigerian restaurant in Houston, Texas summer 2013. I was

visiting Houston with my cousin. We were there to watch the Nigeria vs. Mexico soccer

match. We both pulled into the parking lot at the same time. He was driving a new white

Acura sedan. The car was so new it still had the temporary tag instead of a license plate. It is

common for me to run into Nigerians in a city like Houston. The metropolitan area has a

significant population of Nigerian immigrants and their offspring; therefore I almost expect

to run into someone I know when I go out. Many times the person I see is a relative or family

friend that I grew up with in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Ogochukwu sparked conversation with me and I soon learned that we shared many

things in common, specifically we were both Igbo, and raised Catholic. Ogochukwu was

originally from southeast Nigeria, an area considered a part of Igbo land; but he was raised in

Lagos, a city in the west that has a large Yoruba population. Upon meeting Ogochukwu, I

instantly felt envious of his upbringing. He spoke Igbo fluently, was well traveled and well

educated. I have always admired young Nigerians in the U.S. who spoke their native

language fluently. My American accent left much to be desired when I attempted to

enunciate words in Igbo, and I was equally praised and ridiculed for speaking Igbo like a foreigner. I often wondered why my parents hadn't encouraged me to learn Igbo when I was a child. I later learned that it was a common belief that retaining native language would hurt children's learning outcomes (Akiba, 2007), and I hypothesize that Nigerian parents' reason for not encouraging their children to speak Igbo at a young age was to protect them from ridicule and/ or missed opportunities. I have witnessed that as Nigerian parents get older they regret not teaching their children their native language; this is most evident when I visit Nigeria and find that the language barrier makes it difficult to communicate with other Igbo language speakers.

In a short span of time I had learned that Ogochukwu obtained his undergraduate degree from the University of Lagos, received his Ph.D. from a university in Wales, and was now in Houston living on friends' couches while job searching. In his life he had lived on three continents, knew three languages (English, Pidgin English, Igbo), and had acquired an advanced degree. On paper, Ogochukwu fit a stereotypical African immigrant narrative in the U.S. that imagines him as a successful high academic achieving immigrant with all the potential of upward socioeconomic mobility (Casimir, 2008; Griffin, del Pilar, McIntosh, Griffin, 2012; Kane, 1996).

As I got to know Ogochukwu, his story became more complex and challenging than the narrative sketched above. I observed his confidence turn into anxiety and fear as months went by and he was not able to secure employment, or even call backs for interviews. Our conversations that originally led to him telling me about his exciting trips to different cities in U.S. like New York and Las Vegas soon turned into testimonies of worry about his savings account running dry, and him staying locked up in his buddy's house applying for jobs trying

to avoid spending money. Months passed and we continued to keep in touch with each other, and Ogochukwu informed me that he was thinking about joining the U.S. Navy. For months I did not hear from Ogochukwu, and then all of a sudden I received a text message informing me that he had completed basic training, and had been out of touch because he was not allowed to have his phone.

We turned the texting into a Skype conversation, and I could see on his face and hear in his voice that he was overjoyed. His confidence was restored and the swag that I remember him having the first time we met was back. He told me about how he was given American citizenship in exchange for enlisting in the reserves for 8 years. He speculated that his citizenship paperwork was expedited due to his educational qualifications. At the age of 30, he was one of the oldest amongst his cohort of 18-20 year olds. Smiling from ear to ear, he told me about how his parents traveled from Nigeria to his graduation and his father was proud of how fast it had taken him to get his citizenship. He had come a long way in the last 14 months. Ogochukwu spoke jovially about how he couldn't wait to test out his American passport and travel to Europe. He joked about how he was told that he must forfeit his allegiance to Nigeria. "Forget that place!" he scoffed. The tone of his voice told me that he was being light hearted, but that he also meant every word he said. "How could you say that?!" I snapped back, seriously.

After some reflection I thought about how my response was insensitive. I have the privilege of being a Nigerian and U.S. citizen, something that was afforded to me at birth, before I could understand what it even meant to be an American. My parents migrated to the United States for school, obtained professional degrees, and birthed six Nigerian- American children.

My thoughts quickly shifted to the conditions of Nigeria. A country that can boast about having the biggest economy in Africa, with one of the fastest growing economies in the world (The Economist, 2014), but is stricken with under employment. An inequity that separates the haves from the have-nots. Nigeria is a place where employment is reserved for a select group of people, and folks pray to God to hit the occupation lottery by securing a job in the lucrative sectors of oil/gas and government.

After I got off of Skype with Ogochukwu, I wondered to myself how he was going to negotiate this racially charged society that demonizes Black men in the media and the justice system. In Nigeria, a person like Ogochukwu—the oldest son of an upper middle class family—would have worried about obtaining a job, but not about racial discrimination and racial profiling. I wondered if, along with having to lose his allegiance to Nigeria, Ogochukwu would feel it necessary to erase his cultural distinctiveness (i.e., accents, dialect, food, mannerisms) in order to be accepted.

My curiosity about how Ogochukwu would make meaning of his identity stems from literature and experience that finds Black African immigrants and their offspring often negotiate and code switch into multiple identities (Awokoya, 2012; Balogun, 2011; Clark, 2008). Uzoigwe (2008) argues, "Black Africans navigate three faces (not two as Dubois said) - American, Black American and African" (p. 259). Depending on the context, members, and scenario, I would argue that for people like Ogochukwu and me, this triple consciousness could be further disaggregated into a Nigerian (nationality) and Igbo (ethnic) identity. Uzoigwe (2008) states, "Negotiating these complex relationships that often contradict one another and cut across class and ideological lines is a difficult and frustrating task" (p. 259). Would Ogochukwu erase his ethnic identity in order to be a U.S. citizen, which he felt would

provide him more opportunities than Nigeria? Was his identity a choice or would institutional and social forces impose and assign him a new racial/ethnic identity such as Black-American or African-American?

These questions speak to the focus of my research study. A crucial point is that institutions of higher education, educators and policy makers must offer an inclusive environment by supporting and celebrating histories and cultures from Africa through programming, courses, and policies. In addition, demographic data should expand options to include place of origin or even "African" as a choice on documents. Further, certain risk factors such as delayed matriculation into higher education, working full-time while attending school, and immigration challenges (Awokoya, Coleman-King, Gadsen, & Onyenekwu, 2014; Nwuba, 1999) are often not a part of the dominant narratives regarding Black immigrants. The lack of discussion about the social and educational challenges facing the Black immigrant population stems in part from institutions overlooking the inequities these students experience because they are absorbed under the African-American category, which has become synonymous with Black in the U.S. context.

Literature on Black African immigrants in the United States has existed in the social sciences for years (Bryce-Laporte, 1972; Ogbu, 1992; Rong & Brown, 2002) and is growing in higher education. While these social science studies have brought attention to issues of postcolonialism and contributed to African studies scholarship, what has been missing is a focus on the everyday lived experiences of individuals who are engaging in this transcultural global movement. Most importantly, each situation that arises is context specific. Students burdened with navigating their membership and sacrificing their identity for acceptance face discrimination and are subject to be hyper-marginalized amongst racial/ethnic minority and

majority groups. Educators, programs, and student groups have influence in the promotion of student learning, campus climate, and organizational change (Gumport, 2000). With educators appropriately focusing on student-centered identity and academic growth, prevalent issues of race and racism will inevitably come up. These issues are complex and manifest themselves differently based on a number of factors (i.e. language, geographic regions, gender, social class) (Christian & Zippay, 2012). This study intends to make the connection between higher education and society by investigating how Nigerian college students make meaning of their racial and ethnic identity.

Operational Definitions

This study utilizes sociological terms that are important to the reader. Therefore the following definitions will aid the reader in their understanding. The terms "African American", "Native Black" and "Black immigrant" have distinct conceptual meaning in this study.

Black immigrants: First generation Black immigrants and their children; U.S. born persons who have at least one parent born abroad in an Anglo-speaking Caribbean or Sub-Saharan African country or (Bennett & Lutz, 2009; Massey, Mooney, & Torres, 2007).

African American: a term that's meaning has been used variously in literature to mean individuals who ascended from enslaved Africans and new coming continental Africans (Alex–Assensoh, 2009; Clark, 2008); however, in this dissertation study African American is referring to populations who ascended from enslaved Africans in the United States.

Native Black: a group whose ancestors arrived in the United States involuntarily (Ogbu & Simon, 1998) via the Transatlantic slave trade and whose history is rooted in the American South and the Civil Rights Movement (Akbar 2003; Butterfield, 2004; Djamba, 1999; Swarms 2004). For the sake of this dissertation native Black, Black American, and African American will be used interchangeably.

First (1st) generation: Refers to persons born in Africa who arrived in the United States as adults (Kent, 2007).

1.5 generation: African born persons who reside in the United States, but arrived as children (Awokoya, 2012).

Second (2nd) generation: Referring to individuals who were born in the United States of at least one African immigrant parent (Massey, Mooney, & Torres, 2007)

Intersection: The space in which African immigrants negotiate their status of being an immigrant and a Black person in America (Takyi & Boate, 2006)

Immigrant Narrative: An explanation of how incorporated immigrant groups have facilitated upward mobilization, social mobility, and positive socioeconomic status (Borjas, 2006).

Racial Hierarchy: The disadvantages of minorities (specifically Blacks) due to the positions of power and privilege of whites (Bennett & Lutz, 2009).

Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem

As higher education professionals continue to monitor retention and campus climates, it is appropriate to re-examine policy initiatives that promote matriculation and an inclusive campus environment. At this time when higher education policy appears to be moving away from a social justice rationale towards diversity initiatives that encourage global competitiveness and intellectual exchanges in the classroom (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Bell, 2004; Greene, 2004), I ask with these legacies in mind, how are Black African students making meaning of their racial and ethnic identity in U.S. colleges and universities?

Despite researchers' increased knowledge on the successes and failures experienced by Black students at PWIs (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002), first and second generation Black African students are still understudied (Harimushana & Awokoya, 2011). Understanding more about the diverse academic and social experiences within Black student populations is essential to improving not only their college experience but also their degree attainment rates. Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) add that "equally important are the methods scholars have used to evaluate and study impediments to Black student success" (p. 316). Feagin and Sikes (1995) posit:

> Most assessments of the state of African-American students in predominantly White [and historically Black] colleges and universities have relied heavily on numbers, such as enrollment rates, grade point averages, and graduation rates. Yet a deeper examination of the experiences of Black students in these places requires something more than numbers gathered in school records and surveys or in classroom testing.

We need to listen closely to what Black American students tell us about what happens

to them and how they feel, act, and think (p. 91).

For many Black students navigating their college experience is difficult; it is exceptionally

complicated for Nigerian college students, who often have to negotiate their complex racial

and ethnic uniqueness in the United States. Black African students experience complicated

messages about their identity and feel pressure to assimilate and maintain a multitude of

conflicting identities (Clark, 2008). Awokoya (2012) finds that racial and ethnic identities

are policed by African and non-African peers, family members, administrators, and

institutions. As Nigerian college students continue to graduate and enter the professional

workforce at high rates, it is important to understand their experiences by listening to their

stories closely.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the identity formation of African

students in higher education and highlight the diversity among students of African descent.

This study aims to explore the understudied experiences and identity construction of Nigerian

college students at a predominantly white institution. More specifically, this study examines

Nigerian students at a selective research one institution in the Midwest.

Research Questions

Primary Question

1) How do Nigerian college students articulate and make meaning of their racial and ethnic identities?

Subsidiary Questions

2) How do social and academic networks inform their racial/ethnic identities?

3) Do these experiences vary by generation (1st, 1.5, and 2nd generation)?

Why Nigerians?

"You can be an 'African in America,' where you're grounded in an African experience other than the African American experience." (see Scruggs, 2007).

I chose to study Nigerians because this group is well represented amongst African populations, and are experiencing an African American experience that is unique and distinctive from their native Black American peers. Also, Nigerians are graduating college and entering the workforce at high rates. In fact, Nigeria has the largest population of Africans in the world and the highest degree attainment in the United States (Casimir, 2008). Seventy-four percent of African immigrants are Black (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2012) with a third of this population coming from Nigeria (Kent, 2007); which makes Nigeria the top sender of African international students to the U.S. to study (International Institute of Education [IIE], 2014). Awokoya (2012) posits:

> Nigerians make up the largest West African national population and with this notable influx of first-generation African immigrants, there is also a growing population of their children—the 1.5 and second generations. Contemporary African migration has given rise to a further diversification of an already multiethnic U.S. population (p. 257).

In addition, Nigerians are the most educated ethnic group in the United States (Aziz, 2012; Casmir, 2008). According to 2006 census data, 37 percent of Nigerians in the U.S. had bachelor's degrees, 17 percent held master's degrees and 4 percent had doctorates. In contrast, the same census data showed "only 19 percent of white Americans had bachelor's degrees, 8 percent held master's degrees and only 1 percent held doctorates" (as cited in Casimir, 2008). These statistics demonstrate that Nigerian students are completing college, yet the literature provides little in-depth data about the experiences and challenges of being

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an underrepresented minority student in college. Moreover, few studies (Awokoya, 2012; Balogun, 2011) provide a more complex understanding of how Nigerian college students report their racial and ethnic identity on university documents and the factors that impact their identity formation. Moreover, despite these statistics that exemplify academic achievement, there are countless untold stories of Black immigrants who do not make it to college, stop out, or experience issues regarding their citizenship status (Awokoya, Coleman-King, Gadsden, & Onyenekwu, 2014). Although this dissertation focuses on the racial and ethnic identity of Nigerians, it is appropriate to acknowledge the grave challenges and hardships that immigrant people of color experience trying to succeed in a foreign land. These experiences impact their children and family that they have left at home. College graduation rates do not capture the heartache of losing a loved one thousands of miles away or going from being a middle class college educated individual in your home country to taking a low wage blue collar job, driving taxi cabs in America in order to make a living in the U.S. for your children. The stress of navigating a foreign space while trying to maintain a living is a difficult task (Uzoigwe, 2008). Add being a racial and/or ethnic minority to the formula and it is more challenging to overcome racial discrimination in a host country (Awokoya, 2012). As I explain further in chapter 3 in my reflexivity essay, this work is more than just an academic interest to me. This dissertation is as much inspired by my own experiences as a Nigerian-American or U.S born Nigerian.

Context

Over 3.3 million Black immigrants reside in the United States with the majority coming from African and Caribbean countries (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2012). Over 1.3 million are immigrant children, and these children make up 11 percent of Black children in

America (Kent, 2007). According to Migration Policy Institute, Black African immigrants are one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in the U.S. (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2012). More Africans have migrated to the United States voluntarily than during the transatlantic slave trade (Alex-Assensoh, 2009; Roberts, 2005). Black immigrants in the United States construct a unique concept to ethnicity in a racialized U.S. society (Pierre, 2004), and like many of their peers (i.e., African Americans, Asians, Latinos) Black immigrants in the 1960s found themselves carving out their own ethnic identity at predominantly white institutions.

Now years later diversity at U.S. universities has drastically changed with an increased number of international students and first and second-generation students of color (i.e., Latino, Asian, African) on campus (Altbach, Gumport, & Berdahl, 2012). As for Black immigrants, their identity has been further complicated by the lack of attention to their country of origin, national ethnic diversity, and culture (Alex-Assensoh, 2009). Due to the variety of citizenship statuses (U.S. born, naturalized citizen), migration patterns (refugee, voluntary migration, etc.), and aesthetics (colorism, hair texture, clothes, broad nose, full lips, etc.), this group has the potential to be hyper-marginalized among minority and majority racial and ethnic groups (Awokoya, 2012). The growing number of Black African immigrants warrants some consideration of an African perspective, and signals a new emergence of diversity in higher education.

While there has been a rise of Black African immigrants into the larger Black American society (Arthur, 2000), little is known about Black Africans' ethnic, national, cultural, socioeconomic, and ideological backgrounds. Existing studies and/or reports on Africans in the United States have prompted debate on a variety of topics, including diversity/Affirmative Action (Rimer and Arenson, 2004), internationalization (Altbach &

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Knight, 2007; Jowi, 2009), immigration laws (Johnson, 2000), and brain drain (Hagopian, Thompson, Fordyce, Johnson, & Hart, 2004). The presence of African immigrants also elicits questions regarding the meaning of "Black" and "African-American" in part because African immigrants are both becoming naturalized citizens and raising American-born children (Alex- Assensoh, 2009; Clark, 2008; Uzoigwe, 2008). Clark (2008) writes:

> In America, where ethnicity is conceived of in black and white, African immigrants have to contend with internally and externally imposed identities that can often leave them either embracing multiple identities or distancing themselves from an African-American identity and all of the baggage that comes with it (p. 170).

In this passage, Clark suggests that African immigrants employ strategies (i.e. distancing themselves) to avoid discrimination and racial subordination in unjust structures that subscribe to racial hierarchies that disadvantage Black people. In relation to education, Harishumana and Awokoya (2012) argue that African immigrants are a complex and vulnerable group that is forced to navigate a system that does little to integrate a healthy African presence into its curriculum. African studies scholars add that university students know very little about sub-Saharan African countries and values (Osunde, Tlou & Brown, 1996). African students in the U.S. and Britain have recently shared such sentiments.

Inspired by Black Harvard students[1], African led campaigns have been raising awareness of the experiences of first and second-generation African students on college campuses. On February 14, 2014 CNN published a short piece about Ithaca College in New York African Student Association's photo campaign called *The Real Africa: Fight the*

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[1] According to Voices of Africa "I, too, am Harvard" was inspired by the final ringing line – "I, too, am America" – of a 1926 civil liberties poem (Voices of Africa, March 14, 2014). Retrieved from http://voicesofafrica.co.za/i-too-am-oxford-othered-university/

Stereotype. The student organization aimed to disprove common perceptions by adding quotes, such as "Africans don't need to be saved," to photos (Kermeliotis, 2014). Similar African led campaigns have launched at Oxford University in London, England. *Voices of Africa*, an online news website, reported that students of color developed a photo campaign to demonstrate how comments make them feel excluded, different, and "othered" on campus (Voices of Africa, 2014). These photos also included quotes (published photos are shown on the next page). Most recently, *USA Today* reported a story about high school senior Kwasi Enin, a first generation Ghanaian-American, from New York who was accepted to all 8 Ivy League schools (e.g., Yale, Princeton, Harvard, Dartmouth, Brown, Columbia, Cornell and the University of Pennsylvania) (Bischof, 2014; Toppo, 2014). The article offers the viewpoint of college admissions expert, Katherine Cohen, who reasons that Enin's 2250 SAT score, volunteer work, musical capabilities, 11 advanced placement courses, and being ranked 11th in his class made him a viable candidate for Ivy League universities. Days later, *The Wire*, publishes an article entitled "Why the All Ivy League Story Stirs Up Tensions between African Immigrants and Black Americans?" The writer suggests that the college admissions expert from the *USA Today* article alludes that Enin is not a typical Black American, and believes that such reporting perpetuates a stereotype that envisions Black Americans as lazy. These reports may provide insight to the dynamic between African and African-Americans, but it is appropriate to keep in mind that news reports are trying to sell stories and not necessarily tell them evenly.

Ithaca College in New York, USA

Photo 1

Photo 2
Photo 1-2 from CNN website. Kermeliotis, T. (February 7, 2014). Africa is not a country: Students photo campaign breaks down stereotypes. (African Voices). *CNN World*. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2014/02/07/world/africa/africa-is-not-a-country-campaign/

Oxford University in London, England
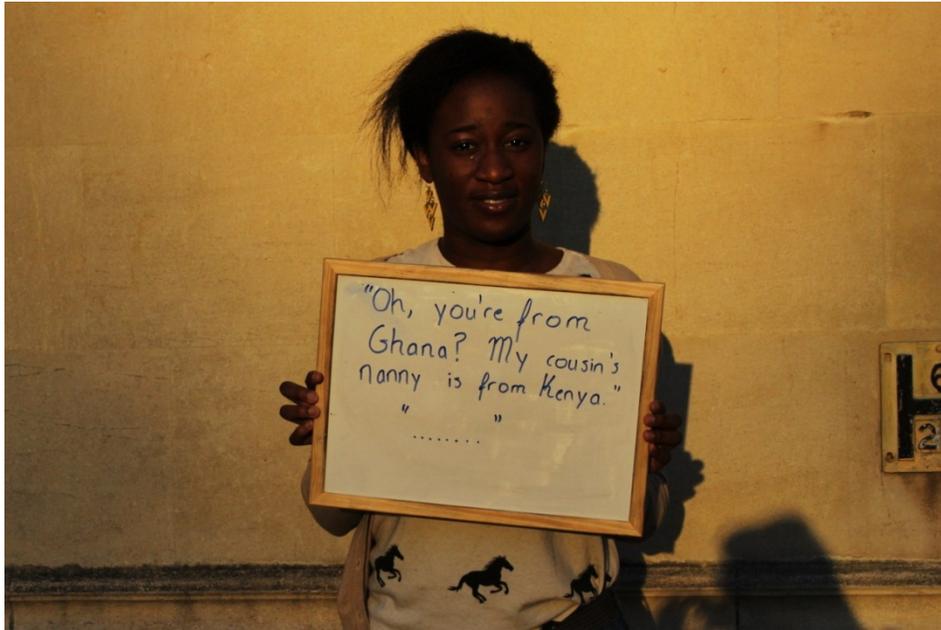
Photo 3

Photo 4

Photo 5

Photo 3-5 from Tumblr blog post. I, too, am Oxford. (March 10, 2014). Retrieved from
http://itooamoxford.tumblr.com/

Kwasi Enin

Photo 6

Photo 6 from USA TODAY website. Toppo, G. (April 2, 2014). He's all Ivy- Accepted to all 8 Ivy schools. Retrieved from http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/03/31/ivy-league-admissions-college-university/7119531/

Photo 7
Photo 7 from nicolasstixuncensoredblogpost. Stix, N. (April 5, 2014). The great Ivy League conspiracy. Retrieved from http://nicholasstixuncensored.blogspot.com/2014/04/the-great-ivy-league-affirmative-action.html

Identity Formation

Identity formation describes, "the process in which individuals develop attitudes and beliefs regarding the meaning and importance of group membership" (Seaton, Scotthaum, Sellers, 2006, p. 1416). Likewise, racial identity development is a process that results in individuals negotiating their personal racial identity (Yip, Sellers, Seaton, 2006, p. 1505). Omi and Winant (2013) posit "we all make our racial identities, though we do not make them under circumstances of our own choosing" (p. 963). Omi and Winant suggest that although individuals have a personal identity there are also social identities being imposed upon us. Personal identity is how individuals identify themselves and social identity refers to how a

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person is regarded by others. To this end, social scientists contend that race is a social construction based on biological phenotype (i.e. color of skin) (Omi & Winant, 2007; 2013). Pierre (2004) argues that race is not only a social construction, but also a rubric that has been used to enforce a racial hierarchy that disadvantages people of color and privileges Whites. She asserts that ethnicity emphasizes an additional identity configuration that includes cultural distinctiveness within an American and global context. Ethnicity and race are often used interchangeably; however, I distinguish between race and ethnicity within different social contexts. For instance, I consider African Americans to belong to the Black racial category within an American context that constructed race within a white supremacist framework. Ethnicity is the cultural distinctiveness that links an individual to a geographical region, language, religion, etc. (Pierre, 2004). In particular, an individual from Nigeria might be considered a part of the Black racial category; however, their country of origin (heritage), native language, and religion may distinguish them from Black Americans in the United States.

Research studies find that college is a space where students develop their racial and ethnic identity (Evans, et al., 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Therefore, college as an institution plays a significant role in imposing and developing students' racial and ethnic identity. For example, students who are moving from another country to attend college in the United States are categorized as "international students" and have different experiences than the domestic (read: American citizen) student population. First their citizenship status introduces them to the world of a multitude of visas and an international student affairs office that most domestic students are not required or encouraged to know about. In addition, international students' are restricted to only working on campus and are limited to particular

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funding sources (i.e., scholarships, fellowships), all which impact their identity. These funding restrictions are markers that indicate to international students that they are not domestic students and are not provided with the same rights and privileges of domestic students. For international students they enter a racialized U.S. society that imposes several identities on them based on their phenotype, accent, and behavior. For Black Africans their experiences are further complicated because of their race and ethnicity. Black African immigrants are a part of an immigrant group that has traditionally experienced successful social mobility. On the other hand they are a part of a Black racial category that is disadvantaged because of institutional and/or structural racism that discriminates against people of color (Bennett & Lutz, 2009). This example emphasizes how social interactions and geographical space influence identity formation. Kaufman and Feldman (2004) explain identity formation as "a particular structural location that fosters the *formation* of particular felt identities as compared with the maintenance of prior or precollege identities" (p. 465); this dissertation study focuses on the ways in which Black Africans and their offspring make meaning of their racial and ethnic identity.

The growth of Black African presence in the U.S. has inspired researchers to explore "how Black immigrants view themselves racially and ethnically and the messages they receive in the construction and maintenance of their identities (Butterfield, 2004; Waters, 1999)" (as cited Awokoya, 2012, p. 256). Literature tells us that Black immigrant youth navigate a multitude of racial and ethnic identities. These identities are imposed and policed by family, peers, educators and media (Balogun, 2011; Clark, 2008; Harushimana & Awokoya, 2011). While identity formation or identity development has been studied (Cross, 1991; Erickson, 1950; Marcia, 1968; Omi & Winant, 1994; Phinney, 1992); fewer studies

focus on Black Africans' day-to-day negotiations of racial and ethnic identity formation at predominantly white institutions.

Race Matters

In recent years scholars and media outlets have discussed the politics surrounding racial and ethnic identity formation. Omi and Winant (2007) posit that racial identity has social, political, and economic determinations. The authors narrate the story of Susie Phipps, a Louisiana resident that lost a lawsuit against Louisiana Bureau of Vital Records in 1983 that designated her race as Black on her birth certificate (San Francisco Chronicle, 14 September 1983). Phipps argued that she was the heir of a White planter and Black slave. In return the court "upheld a state law which qualified racial identity, and in doing so affirmed the legality of assigning individuals to specific racial groupings" (p. 11). Race had been used as a marker to discriminate against non-Whites, particularly those identified as Black. Phipps's case demonstrates the efforts people have taken to fight discrimination, and distance themselves from a racial category that is disadvantaged. This case reveals the political controversy around the meaning of race and how it has evolved over time in U.S. history. Alex-Assensoh (2009) outlines the historical trends of political engagement in the African American community and suggests that African immigrants' political views are sometimes unique because of their political interest in their respective home country. Further, Alex-Assensoh (2009) explains how Africans form associations and religious networks based on their identity. These authors (Alex-Assensoh, 2009; Omi & Winan, 2007) bring attention to the strategies people of color make to avoid discrimination. The aforementioned lawsuit and community organizing efforts demonstrate the difficulty of defining race and understanding its significance on an institutional level. These authors also bring to our attention the way the

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cultural significance of identity politics within African and African American groups attempt to illuminate racial myths. The next paragraph explores the growing media attention that problematically highlights differences between African immigrants and African Americans over municipal politics and resources.

Newspaper and magazine articles have perpetuated racial myths about Black American culture. For example, on May 11, 1996 the *Economist* news magazine printed an article entitled "Race in America: Black Like Me." The article posed the provocative question "Why do black immigrants do so much better than blacks who are born in America?" The article tells us "Attitude makes part of the difference. Immigrants tend to be a highly motivated, self-selected group with a strong will to succeed." The article continues to list cultural values of Black immigrants that make them successful (i.e. high motivation and entrepreneurship). In addition, the article asserts that racism is not an excuse for difficulties experienced by Black Americans. Racism is "a system that structures inequality and works through various institutions and cultural practices to subordinate racialized groups" (Pierre, 2004, p. 155). Following this trend, other media outlets, such as *USA Today, The Baltimore Sun*, *Inside higher Ed*, *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, compared Black immigrant academic achievement to Native Blacks. The articles suggest that deficit cultural values prevent Black Americans from academic achievement; whereas, I maintain that deficit institutional structures have caused a significant opportunity gap that has disproportionately disadvantaged domestic and immigrant people of color in the U.S. (Duncan & Murnane, 2011; Thomas, 2011).

Some social scientists echo similar sentiments and posit that Black immigrants' success is attributed to cultural values including being family oriented, hardworking, and

having highly skilled human capital (Massey, 1995; Kane, 1996; Fulgini, 1998; Thomas, 2011; Waters 1999). These kinds of comparative analyses have the potential to reinforce racial myths that devalue Black American culture; therefore, there is a need for an analysis that acknowledges and contextualizes history.

Western representation of African culture is often depicted as primitive, poor, war stricken, and destitute (Akiba, 2008; Pierre, 2004). McCabe, Capps, and Fix (2011) remind us that overall, African immigrants are a selective group that come to the United States with college experience and advanced degrees. Pierre (2004) argues that comparative analysis of African American and Black African immigrants are made to undermine racist structures that disadvantage African Americans in the United States. Pierre (2004) illuminates this point in the following passage:

> The discursive use of Black/African immigrant "ethnic and cultural distinctiveness" is in fact predicated upon a repackaged "culture of poverty" discourse that serves to perpetuate stereotypical understandings of United States-born Black experiences and identity formations. Because Black immigrant "cultural distinctiveness" is based on an essentialist deployment of culture and is constructed through notions of Black inferiority in general, it perpetuates anti-Black racist ideologies and practices that ironically affect all who are racialized as Black. Social scientists and laypersons often mark Black immigrants' interpellation into this discourse of "ethnicity" as a sign of the diminishing significance of race. I contend, however, that the uneven participation of immigrants in the propagation of ethnic cultural narratives has to be understood within the context of United States racialization processes. A key aspect of these racialization processes is immigration scholars' own construction of a racialist framework of analysis that, by its insistence on comparing the cultural value systems of native-born to foreign-born Blacks, impedes essential discussions about the complex nature of United States racism and the Black immigrant confrontation with United States racial hierarchies (p.144).

Pierre's analysis provides direction on how I will interpret students' experiences, and avoid further comparison of African Americans to Black Africans; but rather recognize and appreciate the diversity of histories, cultures, and identities that exist. Instead, I illuminate the experiences and voices of Nigerian college students. Furthermore, I plan on doing this by

examining these students' articulation of identity formation, while keeping in mind deficit models and culture of poverty discourses that reinforces Black American stereotypes. Both discourses are developed further in the theoretical framework section located in chapter 2.

Significance of Study

Research studies on campus climate and student retention suggest that being knowledgeable about ethnic and racial identity formation can help support racial/ethnic minority college students at predominantly White institutions (PWI) (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, Cooper, 2012; Evans, et. al, 2010). Educators, student affairs administrators, and residential staff are encouraged to be knowledgeable of identity development theory. As diverse Black immigrants continue to carve out a space in the U.S. racial categories, it is important for educators and practitioners to understand the experiences and challenges that impact their academic achievement and educational outcomes. This study extends the existing body of knowledge pertaining to African students in higher education, and helps inform educators, policymakers, and practitioners on how to better serve this population. In doing so, Nigerian college students' experiences will be used to critique diversity and internationalization initiatives.

Dissertation Organization

This dissertation consists of six chapters. To set the foundation of this work, in chapter one I presented the problem statement, three guiding research questions, and the significance to this research study. The three major questions guiding the research are: 1) How do Nigerian college students articulate and make meaning of their racial and ethnic identities? 2) How do social and academic networks inform their racial/ethnic identities? 3) Do these experience vary by generation (1st, 1.5, and 2nd generation)?

Subsequently, in chapter two I provide a review of relevant literature on Black immigrants in the U.S. and in higher education. Following a critical analysis of the gap in literature, in chapter three, I introduce the qualitative methods for this work that included information about participant recruitment, site of this investigation, data collection and analysis, and techniques for assuring reliability and credibility. Therefore, chapter four includes detailed information regarding participants' profiles. In chapter five I share findings from participants' experiences through assimilation theory and segmented assimilation theory. Finally, chapter 6 provides a summary of the findings to the questions guiding this study, discusses the significance of the findings to higher education, and concludes with recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of literature that has informed the direction of this study. Since the research questions focus on how Nigerian college students articulate and make meaning of their racial and ethnic identity, a review of research addressing the experiences of first and second generation people of African descent experiences is discussed. This section begins with a brief historical background, followed by literature in immigrant studies that discusses the integration of immigrants into the United States. Next, there is a review of literature about Black immigrants in general and in higher education. Then, there is a discussion on African immigrants and their children in particular. African immigrants, African, Black immigrant, immigrant were the key search words in EBSCO database used to find articles. I limited the search to peer reviewed articles that were published within 2000-2013. I then reviewed the reference pages and discovered text that provided insight into the experiences of Black immigrants in the United States.

Based on literature that introduces the challenges and success of first and second generation Black immigrants, I argue that recent research studies (Bennett & Lutz, 2009; Massey et al., 2007) reify socially constructed racial hierarchies (Omi & Winant, 2007) that problematically homogenize the Black community. The following questions will be addressed in this chapter: (a) What distinguishes Black immigrants from African immigrants? (b) How does literature distinguish between African Americans, Black immigrants, and Nigerian students?

Brief Historical Background

"The history of Africans in the Americas and in the Caribbean Islands is incomplete without an examination of the African past" (Clarke, 1993, p.11).

- John Henrik Clarke

Thomas (2011) asserts "with the ending of slavery and the slave trade in the late 1800s and subsequent severe restrictions on flows from Africa, there was little migration from Africa to the United States until the end of the 20th century" (as cited in Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2012, p.2). A combination of the independence of African colonies and the passing of the Cellar Hart Act of 1965 attributed to the increased number of African immigrants in the United States and subsequently higher education (Balogun, 2011; Clark, 2008; Kent, 2007). In fact, the 1960s was a significant decade for continental Africans and African Americans. Most African countries experienced independence from their European colonizers in the early 1960s (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2012), while African Americans were making progress in the Civil Rights Movement. For instance, Nigeria—a British colonized country regained independence on October 1, 1960; while the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted and outlawed discrimination based on race, sex, and national origin (Green, 2004). The Civil Rights Act also ended unequal application of voter registration requirements and racial segregation in schools (Whitehead, 2013). In addition, "the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 unintentionally reversed a trend in the history of U.S. immigration laws that routinely discriminated against groups seeking entry into the United States based on race and ethnicity" (as cited in Awokoya, 2009, p.25). This shift in U.S. immigration policies led to a radical increase of new people from primarily non-western, developing societies (Harishumana & Awokoya, 2011). While a significant number of these new immigrants came from Asia, Latin America and all islands of the Caribbean, an

impressive number of immigrants have come and continue to come from various African nations including Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone (Kent, 2007).

While the Immigration and Nationality Act (also known as Cellar Hart Act of 1965) helped increase the number of sub-Saharan African immigrants from English speaking countries (Alex-Assensoh, 2009), arguably the two most prominent political figures and beneficiaries of these laws have been Present Barack Obama and Former Secretary of State, Colin Powell. Son of a Kenyan father and White America mother, Barack Obama, (Obama, 2004) and Colin Powell a man of Jamaican heritage (Powell, 1996) demonstrate the ways in which Black immigrants have made significant contributions to the fabric of American history.

Considered the first African American president of the United States, Barack Obama, was born in Hawaii and spent many of his formative years in Chicago, Illinois (Obama, 2004). Colin Powell attended community college in New York and served in the military (Powell, 1996). After his service in the armed forces he worked under George W. Bush's administration. In his retirement he was constantly probed about his nomination bid for the 2008 presidential ticket. At first he was hesitant to announce his nomination bid, but eventually he publicly announced his support for Barack Obama, his backing signified a multitude of meanings for different people- one of them being Black unity (Bonilla-Silva & Ray, 2009).

More recently Haitian American and republican female, Mia Love, has garnered mainstream political attention. Married to a White Mormon, Love, became Mayor of Saratoga, Utah in 2010 (Foy & Miga, 2012). Her speech at the 2012 Republican National Convention about personal responsibility received mixed reviews. The speech explained that

through hard work anyone in American could do well, and suggested that all individuals

need is self-determination and anyone can experience the American Dream (Thompson,

2012). Republicans appreciated her conservative values, and Love was able to provide

diversity to a party that reflects an old White boys club; whereas, Black critics felt as though

her speech about personal responsibility was a re-articulation of the 'immigrant analogy' and

'culture of poverty' theses. These discourses propagate the notion of upward mobility as if it

is only a choice, and ignores the structural and institutional forces (such as residential

segregation, unfair pay, prison industrial complex, 'good ole boy' networks disguised as

social capital, unequal distribution of wealth, unemployment, stereotype threat,

discrimination and environmental racism) that limit people of color from opportunities.

President Barack Obama, Colin Powell, and Mia Love disrupt the traditional Black

political unity as discussed by Alex-Assensoh (2009) that imagines Black people as

democratic liberals fighting for the same cause with the same ideologies. Although the

political ideologies of immigrant and native Black people are diverse, it is important to note

that there is also a longstanding pattern of Black unity that has involved immigrant and

native Blacks working together for the same causes domestically and abroad (Nyamnjoh &

Shoro, 2011; Shivji, 2011). For example, post independence from European colonies many

skilled and educated Africans in the 1960s migrated to the United States looking for

opportunities. While in the United States many engaged and contributed to domestic and

international political movements (Shivji, 2011). African students had hopes to return home

and contribute in rebuilding their nation state (Arthur, 2000). This is evidenced by a 1961

preamble, found in the archives, written by African students at the University of Illinois

asking to become a registered student organization:

We, the African students at the University of Illinois, assembled here in Urbana, in this first meeting of our General Assembly, conscious of our responsibilities to the problems facing our continent and its people, and desiring to disseminate true and adequate information about the African people- their history, culture, traditions, problems, and aspirations- hereby proclaim and solemnly reaffirm our unswerving loyalty to this constitution and to the realization of its objectives.

We further assert and proclaim the unity among ourselves and our solidarity to mobilize collective organized effort necessary to the realization of our common objectives hereunder enunciated in the Constitution. We therefore affirm our dedication to the cause which we have proclaimed.

This document offers insight to the purpose and intentions of African college students in the United States. It also supports claims that suggest African people pursued American higher education with the objective of returning and develop their home country after independence. Although, the document does not reveal the ages of the African students it is appropriate to believe that they were men who felt immense responsibility and pressure to become political leaders. American educated African students in the 1960s lived during a time where educating future leaders who could develop nations was a high priority. Elite Africans like Nigerian Nnamdi Azikiwe and Ghanaian Kwame Nkrumah both studied in the U.S. and became some of the first democratically elected presidents in Africa.

Kwame Nkrumah

Clarke (1974) writes about the life of Ghanaian student-- Kwame Nkrumah. In 1935, he landed in America ready to embark on his collegiate career at Lincoln University. Nkrumah obtained a bachelors degree in sociology and master's degree in theology at Lincoln University. After receiving two degrees, Nkrumah attended the University of Pennsylvania. He secured funding through scholarships and menial jobs in Philadelphia. During his summers off from school Nkrumah went to Harlem and engaged in discussion, forums, and organizations with Africans and African Americans that focused on Pan-

Africanism. It was between the years 1935-1945 that Nkrumah studied and worked in America. During this period Nkrumah learned from African Americans about the shared political struggles that united people of African descent. In one publication Nkrumah expresses his views on colonialism. He writes:

> The growth of the national liberation movement in the colonies reveals that the contradiction among the various foreign groups and the colonial imperialist powers in their struggle for sources of raw materials and for territories. In this sense imperialism and colonialism become the export of capital to sources of raw materials, the frenzied and heartless struggle waged with particular fury by new financial groups and powers seeking new territories and colonies against the old groups and powers which cling tightly to that which they have grabbed. After a short stay in London, Nkrumah returned to Ghana   (as cited in Clarke, 1974, p. 13).

In this passage we are invited to the philosophical ideologies of a future president. In these words, Nkrumah lays out his contempt and frustrations with colonialism. Nkrumah's understanding about colonialism further developed in the United States. This is exemplified in the following quote, "The duty of any worthwhile colonial movement for national liberation, however, must be the organization of labor and youth; and the abolition of political illiteracy" (as cited in Clarke, 1974, p.13). This excerpt exemplifies the appreciation and importance of his educational experience. During Nkrumah's time in university he went to school with the future Nigerian president and Harvard graduate—Nnamdi Azikiwe.

Harvard

Higher education historian Rudolph (1990) tells us "Higher education began with Harvard" (p.3). He posits that Harvard College produced and was a resource for political leaders. Although, Rudolph was referring to colonial times, such was the case for Africans who attended Harvard in the 20th century. The son of the first Nigerian president, Chukwuma

Azikiwe, graduated from Harvard University. Gordon (1960) describes the experience of

Chukwuma Azikiwe in Harvard's school newspaper. He writes:

> Chukwuma Azikiwe '63…is typical of the Nigerian students in America. The son of Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Governor- General who is responsible for many of Nigeria's expanding educational facilities; he is of many students enrolled in foreign universities to learn the skills needed for their country's development.
>
> He believes…that financing communication and education is more important than building cities…Azikiwe is worried about the lack of capital and "know how" that Nigeria suffers, but fears too much foreign investment…Nigeria should not be arrogant about its independence.

The article continues to discuss Azikiwe as a man who was focused on the development of

his country. Gordon (1960) writes that Azikiwe was optimistic about higher education in

Africa, and he had dreams of providing training to African students in Africa. Also, Gordon

describes the Nigerian-American Scholarship program. This funding source was responsible

for bringing about 24 students to Harvard University its first year. Out of 1000 applicants, 24

Nigerians were selected to attend Harvard. The Nigerian government sponsored the

scholarship.

More recently, Mirviss (2010) describes the contribution of Nigerian students to

Harvard University. The author posits that several Nigerian rising stars were students at

Harvard. Some of the more notable students were athletes. Christian Ohiri played varsity

soccer and has a stadium named after him at Harvard. He participated in the African

Scholarship Program of American Universities. The program offered over 1,600 scholarships

to African students. Most of the aforementioned African students' enrollment occurred

during the civil rights movement era. How did African students feel about going to college

in the United States? What was their contribution to the civil rights movement? At a time

where many Black Americans were not allowed access to predominantly white institutions

let alone an Ivy League school like Harvard, collaborations were forged and scholarships programs were created for African students.

While policies such as affirmative action were in its infancy stages and its implementation was slow to ensure access to Black Americans, Harvard was enrolling and collaborating with the Nigerian government to bring students in the 1960s. On one hand, Harvard educated some of the most prominent African leaders post Ghana and Nigeria's independence. Harvard's African alumni roster provides access to the most elite African leadership and societies. I can only speculate about the intentions of Harvard at the time. However, what we do know is that Harvard was progressive and beyond its years with it is recruiting and maintaining of African international students. How did Black immigrants integrate into American society?

Immigrant Theories

Although several theories discuss the adaptation process of immigrants, this section focuses on: a) assimilation theory; b) segmented assimilation theory; and c) cultural ecological theory. These theories propose approaches of understanding immigrant incorporation. These theories suggest that in order for an individual to acquire social mobility they must erase their ethnic distinction and absorb the cultural competencies defined by mainstream America. Conversely, social scientists recommend that Black immigrants maintain their ethnic distinction in order to avoid the disadvantages of Black Americans (Waters, 1999; Vickerman, 1999). This recommendation suggests that Black immigrants cannot integrate into mainstream American (read: White) society due to their race. However, what is lacking from explanations of social integration is the sociohistorical context that

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explains and recognizes structural and institutional practices that impact people of color's life outcome.

Culture of poverty and deficit models posit that poor values, attitudes and behaviors explain why Black people disproportionately have a lower socioeconomic class than their White counterparts (Gorski, 2008). This discourse does not recognize the long pattern and tradition of legal discriminatory practices (e.g., slavery, Jim Crow) that have impacted people of color in America. Based on Pierre (2004), I argue that it is important to provide historical context when understanding the aforementioned theories. While assimilation theory lays the groundwork for understanding immigrants in the U.S. it also overlooks the significance context and history plays in the integration of Black immigrants. Figure 1 illustrates assimilation theory and segmented assimilation theory. Whereas assimilation theory proposes the adaptation process for adult immigrant groups, segmented assimilations theory estimates different trajectories for immigrants' offspring also known as second-generation immigrants.

Assimilation Theory

According to Alba and Nee (1997) assimilation theory was inspired by a large increase of immigrants in the early twentieth century. Park and Burgess (1969) proposed that assimilation describes a social process of integration where groups gain beliefs by sharing knowledge and history into a cultural solidarity. Assimilation theory posits that when individuals migrate to the United States they eventually become American, and erase any ethnic distinctive beliefs, traditions, and values that would differentiate them from the host society (Pierre, 2004). The theory proposes that individuals process and absorb a dominant culture in order to live a more harmonious life (Borjas, 2006). Gordon (1964) adds that assimilation encourages immigrants to neglect their culture in order to absorb mainstream

American principles. Thomas (2009) reasons that assimilation was encouraged by America in an attempt to remove the European cultural distinctiveness and national allegiance that immigrants may have maintained in an American society; therefore, assimilation theory was constructed with White immigrants in mind. As such, assimilation theory pertains to the process in which White immigrants became American (Bashi & McDaniel, 1997). According to Pierre (2004) scholars soon became focused on connecting the assimilation process to immigrant success, which "centered on the need for racialized non-white groups (particularly African Americans) to emulate the cultural practices of successfully incorporated European immigrants" (p. 147). When an increased number of Black/African immigrants began migrating to the U.S. in the 20th century, social scientists opined that assimilation theory was a general ethnic theory that did not reflect Black immigrants' integration into to American society (Myrdal, 1962). While assimilation stemmed from the concern of erasing cultural distinctiveness, Black immigrants were unable to become Americanized (read: White) because of their race; instead, they would be absorbed into the Black American society (Pierre, 2004). Whereas assimilation was a strategy encouraged for Whites to become Americans, Black immigrants were encouraged to retain their ethnic distinctiveness in order to avoid the Black American disadvantages (Clark, 2008). Subsequent theories such as segmented assimilation theory attempt to explain the outcomes of second-generation immigrants or American-born offspring (Portes & Zhou, 1993).

Segmented Assimilation Theory

Segmented assimilation theory proposes that post 1965 immigrant's children may not have the same trajectory as first generation immigrants. Traditionally, immigrants have experienced upward socioeconomic mobility; however, non-White second generation

populations encounter challenges because of racial discrimination (Neckerman, Carter, & Lee, 1999). Segmented assimilation theory complicates assimilation theory by suggesting that Black African immigrants' outcomes vary from their White immigrant counterparts (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Second generation immigrant outcomes are "based on immigrant groups reception in the host country, the strength of the immigrant community, and the dynamics within an immigrant family" (Pierre, 2004, p.150). Segmented assimilation theory postulates that immigrant youth benefit from ethnic retention (Balogun, 2011; Thomas, 2009; Waters, 1999). This theory insinuates that children of immigrants will live a more harmonious life if they maintain their "ethnic" orientation rather than absorbing the values and behaviors of their African American neighbors (Bennett & Lutz, 2009). Segmented assimilation problematically assumes that African Americans do not possess the values or cultural norms to be successful in America. The theory does not provide insight into the institutional structures that disproportionately disadvantages people of color in America, especially Black Americans. Although segmented assimilation attempts to reformulate assimilation theory to account for immigrant children, the theory only proposes African American experiences as a lower socioeconomic class not accounting for middle class success stories (Neckerman, Carter, & Lee, 1999; Pierre, 2004).

Related Literature on Black Immigrants

Milton Vickerman (1999) book *Crosscurrents: West Indian Immigrants* and Race and Mary Waters (1999) book *Black Identities* bring attention to the growing presence of Black immigrants from Caribbean English speaking countries. Both texts utilize survey data and in depth interviews to examine racial identity construction. The authors also suggest that racial

discrimination is experienced less by Black immigrants and find that they explore many identity options such as ethnicity and/or nationality.

By using assimilation theory as a conceptual lens, Waters (1999) extrapolates that not assimilating into Black American life would be beneficial for people from the West Indies. Both books could benefit from being more critical of assimilation theory. It is disappointing to read how comfortable the authors were with characterizing Black American culture as "ghetto" and oppositional to mainstream culture. Vickerman (1999) concludes that Black immigrants have the potential of choosing many identity options that help them be successful in America. Both studies could have benefited from being more critical of the role history, power, and racism plays in the outcomes of individuals living in a constructed racial hierarchy. The Vickerman (1999) and Waters (1999) research are both important studies that laid great foundation and theory of Black immigrants in the United States. Future studies should take into consideration power relations and institutional discrimination when analyzing Black immigrants and their outcomes. Such conversations have also been explored in higher education institutions.

Black Immigrants in Higher Education

Over the last two decades, voluntary immigration has introduced hundreds of different African ethnic groups into the so-called "Black" American racial category (Scopilliti & Iceland, 2008). According to some scholars, Black immigrants encompass an intersectionality that influences their experience in higher education (Takyi & Kwame, 2006). It is important to take into consideration that this population occupies social space that is not only confined by their phenotype but their immigrant status (Pierre, 2004). Black immigrants in the U.S. have historically facilitated achievement in ways of positive

socioeconomic mobility (Bennett & Lutz, 2009; Kent, 2007). Yet, some argue racial

hierarchy within the United States is still prevalent and therefore Black immigrants are in

some ways disadvantaged by their Black racial category (Bennett & Lutz, 2009).

Within the academic community, one of the more delicate topics in conversation

regarding admissions and affirmative action in recent years has been the accomplishments of

immigrant Blacks compared to African Americans in the United States (Anna, 2007).

Reports explain that Black immigrants are significantly more likely than other ethnic groups

to attend selective colleges and have the most degrees amongst all other ethnic groups

(Jaschik, 2009). One of the problems Black immigrants encounter is the heightened tensions

surrounding issues of scarce resources such as education and affirmative action policies for

minorities, in particular African Americans (Glenn, 2007). African Americans often view

African immigrants as another group challenging them for resources; even more troubling is

the fact that African immigrants seem not to be attentive of the state of "Blackness" as it

pertains to racism and discrimination in America (Cunningham, 2005; Robinson, 2009).

Despite the tensions between these two groups they tend to come together around issues

affecting the greater community of Blacks in America (Alex-Assensoh, 2009). These

observations motivate me to further analyze the experiences of African immigrants and their

offspring. The relevant literature that follows updates the reader on the state of the research.

A growing number of scholars, researchers, and media outlets have taken note of

Black immigrants' academic achievement in higher education (Anna, 2007; Bennett & Lutz,

2009; Glenn, 2007; Massey et al., 2007; Rimer & Arenson, 2004). Massey, Mooney, and

Torres (2007) utilize data from the 1999 National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen to

analyze Black immigrants and African Americans enrolled in elite institutions in the United

States. The authors report that African immigrants are overrepresented in selective private and public institutions. The authors note that Black immigrants only account for 13 percent of the Black population; yet, make up 27 percent of Blacks in elite colleges. Furthermore, Massey et al. (2007) report that the ratio of Black immigrants to domestic Black students surprised many observers and stirred a controversial debate about whether Affirmative Action was intended for Black immigrants. The implementation of this policy was initially intended to ensure an increase in African American enrollment (Bowen & Bok, 1998). Scholars maintain that selective universities have the potential to provide social capital and upward economic mobility (Jencks & Phillip, 1998).

Massey, Mooney, and Torres (2007) contribute to the ongoing conversation about access and diversity in selective colleges. In one camp, the purpose of recruiting African American students into America's elite colleges and universities was justified to make up for past discriminatory practices that kept Black students out of higher education (Massey et al., 2007). As expressed by Anthony Marx, the president of Amherst College, "colleges should take into account the ethnicity of Black students because in overlooking those with predominantly American roots, colleges are missing an opportunity to correct past injustice and depriving their campus of voices that are particular to being African American, with all the historical disadvantages that it entails" (see Rimer & Arenson, 2004). Others argue that Affirmative Action should benefit people based on race not ethnicity due to institutional racism that excludes Black people from higher education (Jaschik, 2009). This outlook was presented by Lee Bollinger, president of Colombia University, who as president of the University of Michigan strongly advocated for the use of Affirmative Action. He states "the issue is not so much about origin, but social practices. It matters in American society

whether you grow up Black or White. It is that differential effect that is the basis of affirmative action" (Rimer & Arenson, 2004). These two arguments exemplify the complexity of racial politics regarding access and education policy.

Massey, Mooney, and Torres (2007) successfully provide a solid foundation for conversations regarding the complexity of how race, diversity, and access play key roles in students' entry to selective colleges and universities. According to Google Scholar this article has been cited 70 times and 35 times by the Web of Science; therefore, its findings are impacting the discourse around black immigrant in higher education. Massey Mooney and Torres (2007) utilized quantitative methods to find that Black immigrants are overrepresented in selective colleges. Massey and associates claim that their study proves this finding; however, I find the criteria the researchers use to define Black immigrants to be problematic. The definition includes bi- and multi-racial students, U.S. born citizens, naturalized citizens, and international students. The significance of growing up in an immigrant household was referenced as a quality that helped characterize Black immigrants; however, the definition does not take into account the significant political differences and rights of international students, naturalized citizens, and U.S. born Americans. It is important to note that U.S. law does not recognize international students or American born citizens as immigrants, and the political implications of defining Black immigrants as such should be interrogated and scrutinized. For data analysis purposes Massey et al. (2007) categorized a group of people as Black immigrants whether they were immigrant or not clear; however, who gets the authority to define new coming people of African descent is a question that should be reviewed with much sensitivity to the history of America and the students' country

of origin. The people or institutions that attempt to answer these questions are asserting a level of power that can help or hurt people of African descent.

Bennett and Lutz (2009) utilize data from National Education Longitudinal Study (1988) (NELS) and immigrant literature to reanalyze previous reports about Black immigrants. The authors find that Black immigrants' attendance in elite colleges and universities can be attributed to two parent households and private school education. The authors also address the comments introduced by Gates and Guiner about the number of Black immigrants at Harvard University. Gates and Guiner, both Harvard professors, expressed that the majority of Black students at Harvard were of African and Caribbean origin. Their announcement raised awareness of the issue of whether affirmative action was intended for Africans and their children or native Blacks. This is a debate educators continue to conduct in clandestine corners in the academic arena (Rimer & Arenson, 2004). However, these conversations neglect to give responsibility to institutions and institutional racism that has and continues to limit access for people of color. Furthermore, questions and speculation about enrollment of Black immigrants seem to stem from a fear that Black immigrants are taking the spots of Black Americans. Meanwhile diversity and internationalization initiatives in higher education support and encourage the positive intellectual engagement and critical thinking of international students and immigrants. Whereas, the United States historical and current injustices spread and promote a "crabs in the bucket" mentally or message that tells us that there is only a certain amount of seats for Black people to attend college. These messages also create unnecessary tension within the Black community leading us to believe that native and immigrant Blacks must fight each other for race based admission spots in higher education.

Noting findings from Massey et al. (2007) that distinguishes between Black people of immigrant background and native Blacks, Bennett and Lutz (2009) utilized NELS 1988 data to examine whether the net black advantage[2] refers to Black immigrants or native Blacks. The study finds that Black immigrants are only more likely to attend selective colleges, whereas native Blacks are more likely to attend a wider range of institutional types compared to their White counterparts. The authors also explore theoretical and social implications of their study, and warn against highlighting immigrant-native differences in academic outcomes.

The authors' study adds to the body of knowledge about Black immigrants and finds that external factors outside of cultural attribute contribute to the increased chances of Black immigrants going to a selective colleges and universities. The authors note the impact family resources have on a student's educational trajectory. For instance, this study finds that students with degree holding fathers, two parent households, and a private school education are more likely to attend selective colleges. However, the problem with the Bennett and Lutz (2009) article is that it continues to utilize the criteria put forth by Massey et al. 2007 to define Black immigrants as students who have at least one parent born abroad in an African or Caribbean country. This broad definition only limits the data to Black/native-immigrant comparison and ignores the different nationalities and citizenship statuses that could be included. In addition, the studies reviewed did not make the distinction between generations or regions of African students or Caribbean students. Whether the immigrants are White or Black from Nigeria or Sweden, children of immigrants have historically experienced upward

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[2] Net black advantage explains that when Blacks' and Whites' socioeconomic background and academic performance are equal, then Blacks are more likely to attend college than their White counterparts (Bennett & Lutz, 2009).

social mobility and fared better than native-Americans of any race (e.g. White, Black, Latino, Asian). Scholars believe that push from parents who see America as a land with opportunities, and socioeconomic resources are responsible for these academic achievements (Fuligni, 1998). A comparison of the rate of admission of Black immigrants to other immigrant children would be a more interesting study, and illuminate that fact that Black immigrants are outperforming their White Asian and Latino peers as well.

Griffin, del Pilar, McIntosh, and Griffin (2012) examine the role habitus plays in Black immigrant student college choice. By employing an interpretative multi-case study methodology and investigating 23 Black immigrant students at a large public research university, the authors found that students define success by one's educational attainment and finances, and these perceptions play a significant role in students' choice. While parents encouraged and emphasized the importance of an education, students expressed concern about accumulating large debt to finance school and as a result sometimes rejected offers from prestigious schools. The study also found that students with immigrant parents were provided with opportunities that would better equip them for college. For instance, parents moved to better neighborhoods and enrolled children into college prep courses in magnet schools while emphasizing the importance of maintaining and understanding values and practices in their country of origin. The authors suggest that policymakers should take into consideration affordability and access for students of immigrant backgrounds. They highlight "the need for policy- makers to continue to consider ways to make college financially accessible generally, but particularly for students from immigrant backgrounds whose parents can encourage their desire to attend college but cannot afford financial support" (p. 109). This article illuminates the challenges with affordability of high achieving Black

immigrant children. It is also important to note that these students were American citizens with immigrant parents. Noting this, the next section reviews relevant research on African Students.

African College Students

Consistent with literature on other ethnic minorities (i.e. Latinos, Asians), African students experience challenges adjusting to American society and American universities as well. Student affairs professionals have noted these challenges and argue that African students' issues have been under researched. Stebleton (2012), a campus career counselor, collected narratives and explored the meaning of work for 7 Black sub-Saharan African students at an urban 4-year university located in the Midwest. After noticing the cultural differences between him and this population, he noticed the need for academic professionals to use cultural responsive methods to provide African students with services. He observed that counselors are not aware of African cultures nor do they stay up to date with the experiences of African people. He also notes prevailing myths about African immigrants that may misguide professionals. Stebleton writes:

> Counselors are encouraged to learn more about African history, culture, and the immigrant experience so that they are better prepared to deal with immigrant students' issues. Moreover, counselors can create environments that welcome African immigrant students. These perceptions may include at least three myths that many counselors have regarding African immigrant clients. First, a common myth is that life for Africans must be easier in the United States compared with life in Africa; this is not necessarily true. Second, there is often a misperception that Africans want to fully assimilate into the culture of their new home and break away from their past traditions and community systems. The reality is that most African students find life to be extremely difficult in the United States, and they miss the familiar and tight-knit communities back home ("American Dreams," 2004). A third myth focuses on the concept of the American dream. Some career counselors may assume that African immigrants want to pursue the American dream as it has been defined historically. The reality is that most Africans have their own dreams, and they want these dreams to be acknowledged and fostered. Career counselors should be cautious about making assumptions about their clients' needs, issues, and aspirations. (pp. 304-305)

This excerpt summarizes major misconceptions about people from Africa and developing

nations in general. America's ethnocentric ideologies and pervasive negative images can

misguide students and professionals on how to engage African students. As suggested by

Stebleton it would be beneficial educators, faculty, and staff to learn about African history

and contemporary Africa. Consistent with Stebleton (2007), Essandoh (1995) argues that

little research has focused on the counseling needs of African students. He contends that

African students are unique because they come from one of the most diverse places in the

world as it pertains to language, ethnicities, and customs. Despite the diversity he argues that

there are some shared similarities among Africans. Essandoh shares that African students

underutilize the counseling center. He suggests that counseling centers should expand their

counseling methods to appeal to Africans, and practitioners should work with other

departments and units to refer students to the counseling center.

   Adelegan and Parks (1985) interviewed 33 Africans at a U.S. university about

demographic information and transition problems. The authors found that Black Africans

were experiencing difficulty negotiating two cultures. These students expressed that they felt

as though they had to adapt to American culture and abandon their African way of life in

order to transition in the University. Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell, and Utsey

(2005) investigated 12 African international college students' adjustment experiences. The

authors employed semi structured interviews and found that these students responded to

prejudice and discriminatory treatment, dealt with being away from friends and family, and

acquired coping strategies that could help with their cultural adjustment. Stebleton (2012)

suggests African students would benefit from American universities acquiring competencies

specifically for African students. Although Africans are a diverse group they share some

similarities such as a respect for elders and being family oriented. Stebleton adds that academic professionals should "challenge personal assumptions, use a team approach to treatment, use interpreters, and create workshops and structure groups so that clients assume affiliation with other immigrant students who might experience comparable transitions" (p. 68). Stebleton analysis and recommendations are useful and practical for student affairs professionals.

Overall African students encounter difficulty adjusting to a number of issues such as weather, food, and social inclusion when enrolling at American universities (Eddansoh, 1995; Stebleton, 2012). As African students continue to penetrate the American education system, it is imperative that colleges pay close attention to their needs. These students have the potential to be hyper-marginalized amongst majority and minority students. It is important for educators to understand the experiences of contemporary Africans. Practitioners should consider utilizing African resources to help serve African students. Future research should explore how African students cope and persistent through difficult times, and employ African scholarship to help inform theory and studies. Findings that disaggregate Africans by region, language, gender, and generational status would be beneficial. By identifying and acknowledging the diversity and similarity in African students and/or people of African descent; practitioners gain a more rich and in depth understanding of the complexity within African nations and their respective ethnic groups. Also, African international students and their offspring's experiences vary by citizenship status, education, and language proficiency. Oftentimes, their experiences are homogenized with their African American counterparts.

Nigerian youth

More recently, Black American and Nigerian scholars have published research about Nigerian identity formation. Using qualitative methods Awokoya (2009; 2012) interviewed 1.5 and 2nd generation Nigerian youth, and finds that family, school, peers, and media play a role in their identity construction. The author argues that context is a major factor in Nigerian immigrant youth identity construction. The author posits "African American peers were central in creating, enforcing, and policing the meaning of Blackness in various social contexts" (p. 271). Awokoya explains that Nigerian youth experience challenges due to their constant expectations of conforming to a multitude of identities including but not limited to-Nigerian, African, African American, and Black. The author's study found that her participants experienced anxiety because they felt the pressure of having to positively display and "enact both an African identity and Black identity" (p.275). Awokoya adds that Nigerian youth are constantly trying to gain acceptance from their co-ethnic groups and African American counterparts. She recommends that professionals should actively make attempts and foster positive relationship among Black immigrants and African Americans. Awokoya recommends employing culturally responsive pedagogy and implementing identity development theories that expand and challenge the long held assumption that Black strictly refers to African American in the U.S. context. She concludes that Nigerian youth hold multiple, evolving, and impermanent identities, and are not striving for a singular identity but rather they are negotiating multiple identity possibilities. Nigerian youth learn how to implement different social performances and interact with others based on contexts. The desire to feel a sense of belonging and to be accepted by others played a huge role in the way her participants interacted with others.

Similarly, Balogun (2011) explores the identity formation of 25 second generation Nigerians in the San Francisco Bay, California area. Using semi-structured interviews the author finds that Nigerians' identities are fluid and fluctuate depending on context and environment. Balogun (2011) argues that her study opposes previous research (Waters, 1999) posits that Black immigrants preserve their ethnic identity in order to distance themselves from Black Americans who experience downward mobility. To the contrary, Balogun finds that second generation Nigerians consider themselves a part of the Black racial identity that is "neither oppositional nor associated with a downward trajectory, lending empirical support for the minority cultures of mobility that the minority middle class shares a culture of upward mobility" (p. 436).

Baber (2012) encourages future studies to explore second generation Black immigrants from different African and Caribbean countries. His study explores the identity development of 3 students of Nigeria and Trinidadian descent at a predominantly white institution (PWI). Baber argues that parents and context play a role in a bicultural identity development. The participants' experience in their nation of origin and parental influence provide these students with a strong sense of identity. Additionally, the participants found a support system in Black Americans at college. Their interactions with Black Americans also contributed to their bicultural perspective. Second generation Black immigrants relied on their Black American counterparts to help negotiate the racist and discriminatory practices that occurred on campus. On one hand, Baber's study is consistent with research on Nigerian youth. He finds that Nigerian racial and ethnic identity is influenced by parents and peers. On the other hand, this study offers a bicultural perspective and does not fully capture the complexity and fluidity of identity as the previous articles mentioned. Overall, this study

highlights the importance of the education system encouraging healthy development among diverse Black populations.

Summary

The literature presented in this review was chosen because it best reflects the on-going conversations about Black immigrants in the academic community. The growing number of immigrants in the United States correlates very highly with the increasing number of Black immigrants in higher education (Djamaba, 1999; Kent, 2007). My research seeks to respond to the gaps in literature by studying the experiences of Nigerian students in American post-secondary education. Given the historical background of educational inequity and discriminatory practices, it is important to address the complex racial and ethnic identity experiences of one of the fastest growing segments of the diverse Black population. Also, the studies presented in this literature review include immigrant and native comparisons to Nigerian students' identity formation. My research aims to add to the body of knowledge regarding how Nigerians or Black Africans in general make meaning of racial and ethnic identity. Also, my research explores the experiences of international students and citizenship holding Nigerian students. This study offers an understanding of the role political importance citizenship and generation (i.e., 1.0, 1.5, 2.0) status plays in how Nigerian college students experience their identity.

The lack of understanding about the diversity within the Black community in higher education and the absence of African voices in education scholarship prevent policymakers and education practitioners of the opportunity to recognize and better serve African cultures in the western world. Therefore, my study is a response to the minimal reports on African students' experiences in higher education.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a collection of interrelated concepts that guides research determining what things will be measured, and what statistical relationships need to be researched (Stake, 2010). In education, theories are logical interpretations and explanations that help us make sense of the world around us (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2008) because it is unclear what is going on, and the researcher is trying to learn more about the phenomena (Schwandt, 2007). Using my own experience and research with Nigerian college students as a reference point, I utilize ethnicity theories to examine and frame how Nigerian college students' articulate their race and ethnicity. In addition, I accept that identity formation is a fluid and constant negotiation that depends on context (Awokoya, 2012; Balogun, 2011). While previous studies (Awokoya, 2012; Balogun, 2011) have explored the identity formation among Nigerians, my study a) focuses on college students at a selective research one PWI in the Midwest; b) examines and compares first and second generation students; and c) aims to understand my participants responses adequately within a sociohistorical and political context that reveals the re articulation of the culture of poverty thesis and deficit logic models (Gorski, 2008; Pierre, 2004).

With this in mind I employ assimilation theory and segmented assimilation theory help frame interpretations of Nigerian college student identity constructions. I argue that the outdated characterization of Black immigrants experience as model minorities with high socioeconomic status that matriculate college with virtually little to no challenges (Glenn, 2007; Waters, 1999) predetermines the nature that shapes the boundaries of theoretical inquiry. I assert that the reviewed ethnic studies literature is divorced from the rich fields that discuss the contemporary African diaspora movements, which offers important insights about

overlapping diaspora (Lewis, 2000), transnationalism (Levitt & Schiller, 2004) and Pan-Africanism (Nyamnjoh & Shoro, 2011). In accordance with Gregory (1993), I suggest that there is a need to frame understandings of Black diversity within analysis of power and oppression.

Although I acknowledge the contribution of assimilation theory, segmented assimilation theory, and CET; these theoretical traditions lack an in-depth explanation of the diversity among African minorities. Lacking is an understanding that aims to concurrently recognize the complexities and impact of identity as it pertains to class, social status, generation, language proficiency, accent, name, family, home culture, religion, aesthetic, race has on Black immigrants. In addition, absent from these frameworks is an explanation of the identities of African people before they arrive in America. The theories also lack a contemporary understanding of how race and racism plays a role in racial hierarchy in the United States.

It is equally important to recognize the concurrent history of Black unity that united people who shared common experiences of oppression through various systems such as colonization, slavery, and Jim Crow. Implementing a Pan-African ideology would be helpful in contextualizing scholarship that speaks to the efforts of Black people writing about their common experiences of oppression, segregation, colonization etc. Therefore, again this study does not intend to compare native Black Americans, but celebrate the cultural history of marginalized racial and ethnic minority groups.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter addresses the methodological approach employed to answer the proposed research questions. Organizationally, this chapter divides into five sections: a) research methodology; b) research design; c) data collection; d) data analysis; and e) reflexivity. The first section describes the research methodology including a discussion of why a qualitative inquiry approach was selected. The next section presents data collection strategies focusing on how participants were selected for the study. Following this explanation is a description of the data analysis. Finally, I end this section with a reflexivity narratives that provides information about my position to the subject of study. I first present the research question, and then discuss why a qualitative inquiry is the most appropriate approach for this research. This study addresses three research questions: 1) How do Nigerian college students articulate and make meaning of their racial and ethnic identities? 2) How do social and academic networks inform their racial/ethnic identities? 3) Do these experiences vary by generation (1st, 1.5, and 2nd generation)?

Research Methodology

This dissertation employed qualitative research methods. According to Polkinghorne (1995) qualitative methods are imperative in the "generation of categories for understanding human phenomena and the investigation of interpretation and meaning that people give to events they experience" (p. 112). Thus, I will be utilizing qualitative methods because I am seeking a more in-depth understanding of how Nigerian college students form racial/ethnic identity at a predominantly White institution. This is consistent with LeCompte and Preissle's (1993); explanation that the main objective of qualitative research is to

comprehend individuals' and groups' experiences, and their interpretation of the experiences. Overall, qualitative research allows the participant to tell their story and gives voice to underrepresented and under researched populations (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013).

Since this study seeks to understand identity formation among Nigerian college students, the most appropriate way to conduct this study is by interviewing participants (Siedman, 2012). This type of approach is consistent with qualitative research. Qualitative methodology is essential to understanding human phenomena and the interrogation of the interpretation that people give to events they have experienced. Koyama (2007) expands on this idea by arguing that qualitative research methods in educational studies present theoretical insight that can help inform educators about students' schooling experiences. Additionally, Koyama asserts that qualitative evidence describes the challenges minority students have transitioning to college by exploring family, social capital, and persistence of minority students. To this end, the current study is consistent with Koyama's (2007) reasoning for qualitative research as it strives to explore the lived experiences of a minority subgroup in higher education in their transition to college by exploring family, social capital, and persistence dynamics. Furthermore, qualitative research is the most appropriate approach for this investigation because previous studies (Bennett & Lutz, 2009; Massey et al., 2007) have relied on information from data sources that do not provide detailed accounts from students about their experiences in higher education.

Research Design

Phenomenological Inquiry

This dissertation is based on a qualitative phenomenological inquiry design. Stark and Trinidad (2007) explain that phenomenology helps researchers gain an in-depth

understanding of a lived experience. The authors add, "that through close examination of individual experiences, phenomenological analysts seek to capture the meaning and common features, or essences, of an experience or event" (p. 1373). Moran (2000) posits that phenomenology refers to anything that emerges to an individuals' conscious experience. Phenomenological philosophy has informed a variety of prominent concepts including social construction. Rapport and Wainwright (2006) note that phenomenological methodology has traditionally been divided into two formats: descriptive and interpretive. Descriptive calls for a suspension of assumption and pre-supposition about a phenomenon. Gill (2014) asserts that a tenant of the descriptive format is search for essence, where this occurs through free variation.

On the other hand, interpretative approach contests the belief that researcher's are capable of suspending their assumptions (Dreffus, 1991). Heideggar (1996) argues "interpretative is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something to us'' (p. 141). Heidegger (1988) suggested that individuals are ''always already in an environing world'' (p. 164). Heidegger acknowledges an individual's cannot detach from their culture and historical background, which plays a significant role in their interpretation and contextualized experience. Meaning, an individual's culture and customs impact their understanding of an experience. Noting this, phenomenological methodological approach is suitable for this study because this method acknowledges the importance of the individual's interpretation of their personal and social identity (Patton, 2002).

Site Selection

This study was conducted at a large research university. Big Research University[3] (BRU) is a large, public, four-year selective institution located in the Midwest region of the United States in two rural cities; with an approximate population of 180,000. There are over 40,000 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled each semester, and the university is a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) with a large international student population. Demographic information indicates that during the 2012-2013 academic year, the student population consisted of: 55% men, 45% women, 5% African-American, 7% Latino/a, 14% Asian American, 2% Multiracial and 14% International. BRU is in Division I for NCAA sports due to the campus size and resources.

Participant Recruitment

After securing Institutional Review Board approval, potential participants were recruited from the membership of two African centered student organizations: Big Culturally Centered Organization (BCCO) and Small Culturally Centered Organization (pseudonyms). BCCO is an organization that meets once a month, and consists of mostly doctoral level graduate students. SCCO is an active student organization and the majority of the members are undergraduate students with West African heritage. The general body meetings are well attended with up to 70 attendees a meeting. SCCO is popularly known for their reggae parties and fashion shows.

Miles and Huberman (1994) posit that qualitative sampling is a process that has a purpose supported by theory. My rationale for studying this population is multifaceted. While research literature increasingly brings attention to racial and ethnic identity negotiations

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[3] Pseudonym

among Black immigrants (Griffin, et al., 2012; Waters, 1999), few studies focus on specific

Black African immigrant subgroups that are attending college at PWIs. Recruiting for

participants included purposeful and snowball sampling. Students with Nigerian heritage

who self identified as Nigerian met the criteria for this study. Through informal conversation

with two female Nigerian undergraduate students, I was able to learn the date and time of

SCCO's general body meetings. The two female Nigerian undergraduate students' insider

knowledge proved to be helpful during the recruitment process. My informal conversations

with them helped me gain access to people that I would not have regularly met. However,

due to my supervisor relationship with the two Nigerian undergraduate students, I did not

interview them for my study. Through snowball sampling additional students were recruited.

With permission from the SCCO executive board I attended a meeting and informed

those in attendance about my study. This was my first time ever attending a SCCO meeting.

The day I spoke to the organization, I was pleasantly surprised to see that the room was

crowded with students. (I later learned that day that the executive board was also passing out

pre-sale reggae party tickets.) In addition to connecting with SCCO, I also knew some

graduate students from different BCCO events. Although, I was Vice President of the

organization at the time; none of my participants were members of the organization at the

time of this study. In fact, most of the members of BCCO are not Nigerian students.

Participant Selection

Twenty Nigerian college students ranging from 18-35 years of age agreed to

participate in this study. The students ranged from U.S. born, naturalized citizens, and

international students. All participants were full time students. They all were given a consent

form that notified the students' of the voluntary nature of their participation. Overall, seven

women and thirteenn men were interviewed. Additionally, five were pursuing an

undergraduate degree and fiftteen were pursuing graduate degrees. Some of the participants

were friends and/or colleagues of mine that I have met as a graduate student. My first three

interviews were secured through my personal relationships with Nigerians on campus.

Although all participants self-identified as Nigerian, differences existed in several

other areas, including age, level of education (graduate and undergraduate) generational

status in school, and citizenship status. For example, a female Nigerian undergraduate

student born in the United States will not share the same narrative as a male Nigerian

doctoral student born in Nigeria. Although the participants do possess similarities such as

navigating the same collegiate environment and Nigerian heritage no two individuals are the

same, and neither are their experiences in college. Furthermore, the ways in which these

participants understand and negotiate their identity on campus is what this study examines.

Data Collection

The primary data sources were a face-to-face; semi-structured interview and a

questionnaire; however this study also utilized my journaling of reflections and impressions

of interviews and campus events. Data were collected spring 2013. Table 1 contains the data

collection matrix including the research questions, and data collection resources.

Interviews

Data were collected through audio-recorded semi structured interviews. After

participants agreed to participate in the study, they received the voluntary consent form and

scheduled an interview date. The interviews were conducted at a place that was convenient

for the participant. Therefore, some interviews were conducted in college department

building in the lobby and others were conducted in coffee shops. The interviews lasted on

average an hour fifteen minutes, with some interviews lasting 2 hours. Each participant was

interviewed one time. The interview protocol is in Appendix C.

Table 1

Data Collection Matrix

Research Questions	Data Collection Sources
Primary Question	
1.) How do Nigerian students articulate their racial and ethnic identity formation?	• Semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of Nigerian college students.
Subsidiary Questions	
2.) How do social and academic networks inform their racial and ethnic identity?	• Semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of Nigerian college students.
3.) Do these experiences vary by generation (1st, 1.5, and 2nd generation)?	• Semi-structured interviews, questionnaire, and journaling of impressions.

Questionnaire

In addition to filling out the consent form, participants were asked to complete a

questionnaire. The participants had a choice whether they wanted to receive the

questionnaire electronically via email or be hand delivered a hard copy. The questionnaire

provided me with descriptive and demographic data (see Appendix B) including education

background, ethnic group (i.e. Igbo, Yoruba), age, citizenship status, language ability, and

campus life activity. Immigrant youth studies (Balogun, 2011; Clark, 2006; Robinson, 2006)

informed the development of the items for this questionnaire. For instance, the following

questions are sample items:

Do you consider yourself Black? ___ yes ___ no

Do you consider yourself African American ___ yes __ no

If no, how do you identify yourself?

In Robinson's (2006) article, *Black Like Whom?* the author shares that some Africans do not

see race (i.e. Black) as an identity. She suggests that African immigrants do not understand

race as an identity, and are more familiar with being identified with their respective ethnic

group, geographic region, and language. Additionally, she proposes that African immigrants

have minimal awareness of the racial hierarchies/constructions in the United States and

associate the term *Black* to mean Black American. To this end, the aforementioned questions

provided a foundation from which I aimed at understanding how participants negotiate their

racial discourse in the United States.

The questionnaire was created in consultation with my advisor. In addition, I

administered the questionnaire to family members and Nigerian friends who did not

participate in the study to solicit feedback. The pilot sample provided suggestions on what

should be changed to the questionnaire and the language structure of the questions. Based on

this feedback the questionnaire was revised. An additional section was added with questions

that asked specifically about mother and father's educational background instead of parents'

educational background. In addition, feedback from the pilot led to adding information about

the participants the funding sources. After making revisions the questionnaire consisted of 44

items. These questions provided foundation that helped in the formation of individual

research questions. Specifically, the questionnaire helped me identify participants that were born in the United States or abroad.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurs when the researcher identifies and interprets text from interviews that answer the research questions (Creswell, 2009). Upon transcribing all of the voice recordings from interviews, I analyzed the transcriptions, and I developed a general sense of the interviews by reading the transcripts. Next, the information was coded in order to align text with the description of themes. This process aided in the understanding of themes regarding the central phenomena. For example, if students reported that joining a culturally oriented organization was crucial to their social adaptation in college, "student groups" was a theme.

Member checking and credibility was employed in this study to ensure trustworthiness (Stake, 2010). This can be done both formally and informally as opportunities for member checks may arise during the normal course of observation and conversation (Carlson, 2010). Typically, member checking is viewed as a technique that provides validity (Stake, 2010). In addition to member checking, I reflected on the experience with the participants and assessed my personal biases that might interfere with the collected data. Ongoing conversations about my analysis were reviewed with my advisor and peers in order to gain additional input on how I am making meaning of the participants' experiences. This is called debriefing and this procedure is employed to assure validity. The next section discusses strategies taken to ensure validity in more detail.

Credibility and Confirmability

Confirmability strengthens the validity of qualitative research (Guba, 1981). Creswell and Miller (2000) posit that confusion between how to establish reliability and validity plagues qualitative literature; and in return makes it hard for novice researcher to tell the difference. Schwandt (2007) attempts to clarify and define validity and describes it "as how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them" (as cited in Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 124-125). Several scholars have written on strategies to ensure validity and much of the literature encourages employing valid procedures to ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). As such, credibility is something that is demonstrated by an external individual; whereas, validity is a procedure that aims to establish trustworthiness (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

This study employed the following techniques to ensure credibility: a) triangulation; b) peer review; and c) reflexivity. Triangulation is a common practice that organizes data into themes or categories in a study. Utilizing the researcher as an instrument of study, this practice provides evidence through a multitude of strategies such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, and documents. Aforementioned this dissertation study utilizes interviews and observations. Another popular procedure used to ensure credibility is member checking. Member checking allows the participants to collaborate with the researcher and confirm their narrative account. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that member checking is an essential technique in qualitative inquiry. This procedure provides the opportunity to shift the validity procedure from the researcher to the participant. This study utilized member checking in order to secure credibility of the interpretations being made. Carlson (2010)

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argues that member checking can be accomplished a number of ways. Participants can read their transcripts, or the researcher can collaborate with the participant throughout the study. During the interview I paraphrased the participant's responses to provide an opportunity for participants to confirm or clarify themselves.

I continued to debrief my analysis and interpretations with colleagues, my advisor, and family members. Literature explains an external review of the data secures validity. Creswell and Miller (2009) assert that a peer reviewer "provides support, plays devil's advocate, challenges the researchers assumptions, pushes the researchers to the next step methodologically and asks hard questions about the methods and interpretation" (p. 129). To this end, I allowed peers to review my interpretations in hopes to gain additional perspectives that may challenge my assumptions and increase the credibility of my study. Moustakas (1994) explains that a researcher's positionality to the research phenomenon impacts the study. Therefore, in the reflexive essay below, I reveal my bias and predispositions.

Reflexivity

Organizationally, this section a) examines the definition of reflexivity; b) situates myself within my research; and c) explains my relative insider and outsider perspective. Reflexivity serves several purposes in qualitative research. According to Emirbayer and Desmond (2012) reflexivity is employed to secure scientific truth. By recognizing one's social location and viewpoints, the researcher enriches the report. Also, reflexivity demonstrates that findings are a human construction that needs validation. Furthermore, Schwandt (2007) suggests that reflexivity is a strategy used by researchers to provide validity. Stake (2010) supports this claim by asserting that the quality of research in

education is based on a researcher's interpretation of evidence. To this end, the researcher is trying to persuade the reader that their methodological approach will produce authentic work.

Situating Myself

This research study about Nigerian college students' identity formation is a personal study for me and stems from my own experiences as a U.S. born Nigerian, a Black American, an African American, an African, a Nigerian, an Igbo (ethnicity), a U.S. citizen, and now as a graduate student studying higher education—understanding that I am not one of these identities exclusively but everything all at once to different people at different times. My parents emigrated to the United Sates from Nigeria in order to pursue academic opportunities with the intention of maintaining their cultural identity. My parents came from a country where everyone was Black and it did not register to them that the color of their skin would play a role in America. Consequently, I grew up in a household that emphasized culture, religion, and education. As a child of Nigerian parents, I embraced my Igbo-Nigerian culture and was often irritated by negative images of Nigeria or Africa and the way Africa was discussed. I noticed that my awareness to this problem was because of my counter narrative. I knew Africa as a place that my parents referred to as home. Nigeria was a place that I would visit to see family and feel closer to getting to know who I am. The negative images were harmful to my self-esteem.

Despite the negative portrayal of Africa in the media and throughout my education, I have always related to my African heritage. However, I have made more open strides towards understanding and appreciating my Nigerian heritage during my adult years. As an undergraduate student I became a member of the African Student Organization. As a member I was able to express my Nigerian culture through clothes and accents that I never

had a proper opportunity to use outside of my household. However, my United States upbringing sometimes "othered" me with African international students. I had to learn how to embrace my unique life as an American citizen; whereas, as an adolescent I think interacting with African international students made me feel uncomfortable because I noticed that sometime Africans made me feel like I had to prove my "Africanness." I later realized that my upbringing as a Nigerian American made me unique, and I did not have to compromise myself or my identity in order to feel included. I came to this conclusion after years of feeling uncomfortable and invisible. Fortunately, my development came with the support of friends, family, and sometimes administrators.

Growing up I felt uncomfortable when African and non-African people asked me questions about my identity. It was easier to identify myself as Black than describe Nigerian heritage. I spent many of my adolescent years exploring and negotiating conversations relating to my identity. The question "where are you from?" was one that had many different responses depending on context. For instance, as an undergraduate student at Louisiana State University, I often told people I was raised in New Orleans. However, New Orleans natives challenged me on that answer. New Orleans people would tell me I did not sound like I was from New Orleans. To be fair, they were right. I was born in Norman, Oklahoma--a small college town that was home to my father's alma mater, and I was raised in a Nigerian household. My only constant experience, when it came to my identity, was my Nigerian heritage. I left Oklahoma when I was seven, I left New Orleans when I was eighteen, and I left Baton Rouge when I was twenty-four. Therefore, my Nigerian identity is the most salient and consistent aspect of my identity.

Insider

Merton (1972) defined an insider as "an individual who possesses *a priori* intimate knowledge of the community and its members" (as cited in Embirayer & Desmond, 2012, p. 9). Hodder (2003) claims that an insider is one who shares a point of identification with the participant. An insider also refers to a person who is studying in his or her own social space or geographic background of the research area (Lance, 1990). Based on this definition, being an insider does have its limitations. Kennedy (2010) argues that an insider may hold back or choose not to address issues that are not favorable or be selective in addressing sensitive topics. Insiders may also "ignore evidence that appears to be commonplace in her culture, but nevertheless, relevant to understanding its history" (Achebe, 2002, p.13). Insiders are also in danger of over-identifying with the participants and hide information that may be uncomplimentary to the researcher (Achebe, 2002). Also, many scholars argue that all authors engage in some level of editing and data selection (Achebe, 2002; Ragin & Amorosa, 2007; Stake, 2010).

As a graduate student I have become more aware that qualitative inquiry is a human construction and research studies are edited to create a story. "Research is an argument made to persuade" I was told during my first research methods lecture. I have also become more aware of who is telling the story, and who has the authority, license, and rights to the truth and representation. As a result, I have learned to be more cognizant of the way literature, research studies, and sociological observations have real life policy implications. Also, I have a better understanding of how people construct, frame, and contextualize research. Moreover, I am aware of the ways research can hurt, distort, and misinform communities.

I recognized early on that my positionality would play a role in my perspective and interpretation. As an insider I may unintentionally hold back or choose not to address issues that are not favorable. Also, I may be selective in addressing sensitive topics, and ignore evidence that appears to be commonplace in my culture, but nevertheless relevant. Further, I am aware that I may unconsciously over-identify with the participants that may lead to hiding information that is unfavorable. However, I am cognizant of these potential limitations and ethical dilemmas and employed reflective introspection throughout my study. Furthermore, my research affirmed for me the need for this study and similar works.

Outsider

An outsider is defined as a researcher who does not belong to the social norms or space of their informants (Lance, 1990). Outsiders sometimes are challenged when collecting data or doing fieldwork because it might be hard for them to gain rapport as an outsider. Lance wrote about his experiences being a white researcher in Ghana. He describes his frustrations and how he felt excluded from the Ghanian people. To a certain extent, I am a relative outsider to some of my participants because I was born in the United States.

<center>**Limitations**</center>

As is the case with all research, this study has limitations that should be mentioned. Further, the participants are students at a selective research institution in the Midwest. The sample was designed to establish an enriched understanding of the experiences and interpretations of Nigerian students at the Big Research University. The information provided is self-reported and therefore it is a possibility that some participants could have not provided truthful or accurate information. Also, my status as a U.S. born Nigerian graduate student might influence the respondents' answers. The participants might provide

information that they feel I would like to hear based on how they feel this project will portray them. In addition, it is possible that participants might not want to reveal or expose certain aspects of their post-secondary experiences with a researcher.

Chapter 4

Participant Profiles

This chapter begins with a brief overview of Nigeria and Nigerians in the United States. Next is a description of the participants in this study focusing specifically on their lives and experiences before and during their stay at Big Research University (BRU). I begin with a description of international students, transnational students, and second generation Nigerians. Finally, this chapter concludes with a summary and brief overture to the next chapter.

Nigeria

Nigeria, officially known as the Federal Republic of Nigeria, is the most populous Black nation in the world and Africa's most populated country (World Book, 2014). Located on the shores of the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa and nestled directly above the earth's equator, Nigeria is estimated to be home to over 170 million people. Nigeria is surrounded by Niger in the north, Chad to the northeast, Cameroon in the east and southeast, and Benin to the west. With an area of 356,669 square miles (923,768 square kilometers), Nigeria's size approximately equals the combined areas of New Mexico, Arizona and California (World Book, 2014).

An ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse country, Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups and languages (Okebukola, Owolabi, & Okebukola, 2013). These groups differ from one another in terms of customs, traditions, and beliefs. The largest three ethnic groups - Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo - account for three fifths of the total population of Nigeria (World Book, 2014, p. 411). The Hausa live in the Northern Nigeria, and select areas of

Niger and Chad. Yoruba people reside mostly in the southwest region of Nigeria, and parts of Togo and Benin. Igbo people live in the southeast region of Nigeria.

Half of Nigerians are Muslim and about 40 percent are Christians with people across the country mixing traditional beliefs and customs (World Book, 2014). The majority of Igbos practice Christianity, Yoruba people are known for adhering to both the Christian and Islamic faith; whereas, Hausa people predominantly practice Islam. As a result, many Hausa people use Arabic to participate in religious activities. However, due to British colonial rule, English is Nigeria's national language. Consequently, many Nigerians know more than one language.

According to Falola (2001) Britain's initial interest in Nigeria was through the slave trade business and later seized control of Lagos to capitalize and expand into trade of natural resources. After the banning of slave trade, Britain sent Christian missionaries to convert people and help colonize Nigeria. During the late 1800s, the United Kingdom established protectorates in southern parts of Nigeria. Following British invasion and occupation of Nigeria, many Nigerians resisted colonization unsuccessfully until October 1, 1960 when Nigeria was granted independence from Britain. Post independence Nigeria struggled to find leadership and govern its nation state. The concept of one Nigeria is relatively new. Prior to British rule people united within their respective ethnic groups.

Political unrest, need for educated and trained leaders, better economic opportunities, and development of workforce skilled and trained leaders led to many Nigerians migrating to Anglophone countries in North America and Europe (Kent, 2007; Taylor, 2007). Although many returned to Nigeria to help develop the country others stayed abroad permanently and only come back to visit Nigeria. Due to this situation American universities are filled with

Nigerian students. Therefore, Nigerians are graduating college and entering the workforce at high rates. As you may recall, I described in Chapter 1 Nigerians have the highest degree attainment in the United States. The next section describes twenty Nigerian students studying at BRU. Refer to table 2 for the profile of participants. Included in the table are the pseudonym, age, gender, birthplace, generational status, Nigerian ethnicity, and academic classification.

Table 2

Profile of Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Birthplace	Generational Status	Ethnicity	Academic Classification
Chike	31	Male	U.S.	International	Igbo	Graduate
Dayo	35	Male	U.S.	International	Yoruba	Graduate
Kenechukwu	29	Male	U.S.	International	Igbo	Graduate
Lalou	28	Male	Nigeria	International	Yoruba	Graduate
Nnamdi	23	Male	U.S.	International	Igbo	Graduate
Taiwo	25	Male	Nigeria	International	Yoruba	Graduate
Ugoo	29	Female	Nigeria	International	Igbo	Graduate
Bosola	26	Female	U.S.	Transnational	Yoruba	Graduate
Chidi	23	Male	U.S.	Transnational	Igbo	Graduate
Mark	28	Male	Nigeria	Transnational	Yoruba	Graduate
Tunde	24	Male	Nigeria	Transnational	Yoruba	Graduate
Ngozi	18	Female	Nigeria	1.5 generation	Igbo	Undergraduate
Abiola	20	Female	U.S.	2nd generation	Yoruba	Undergraduate
Blessing	19	Female	Nigeria	2nd generation	Yoruba	Undergraduate
Chinedu	19	Male	U.S.	2nd generation	Igbo	Undergraduate
Emi	29	Male	Nigeria	2nd generation	Yoruba	Graduate
Femi	24	Male	U.S.	2nd generation	Yoruba	Graduate
Ike	27	Male	U.S.	2nd generation	Igbo	Graduate
Jessica	19	Female	Nigeria	2nd generation	Igbo	Undergraduate
Peace	22	Female	Nigeria	2nd generation	Igbo	Graduate

Transnational: This term refers to individuals who lived in other countries or continents, had close relatives (e.g., parents, sisters, and brothers) abroad, and traveled regularly back to Nigeria.

International: This term describes individuals who hold F and/or J visas and are registered as an international student with the university.

International Students

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) (2014) international students are people who come to the United States to study in a college or university. This section describes the participants that are considered international students by IIE standards. The semester these data were collected, Big Research University (BRU) reported 24 Nigerian international students were enrolled at the university. This section offers the profiles of six of those twenty-four students. Figure 1 illustrates the number of Nigerian international students by gender and degree classification.

Figure 1
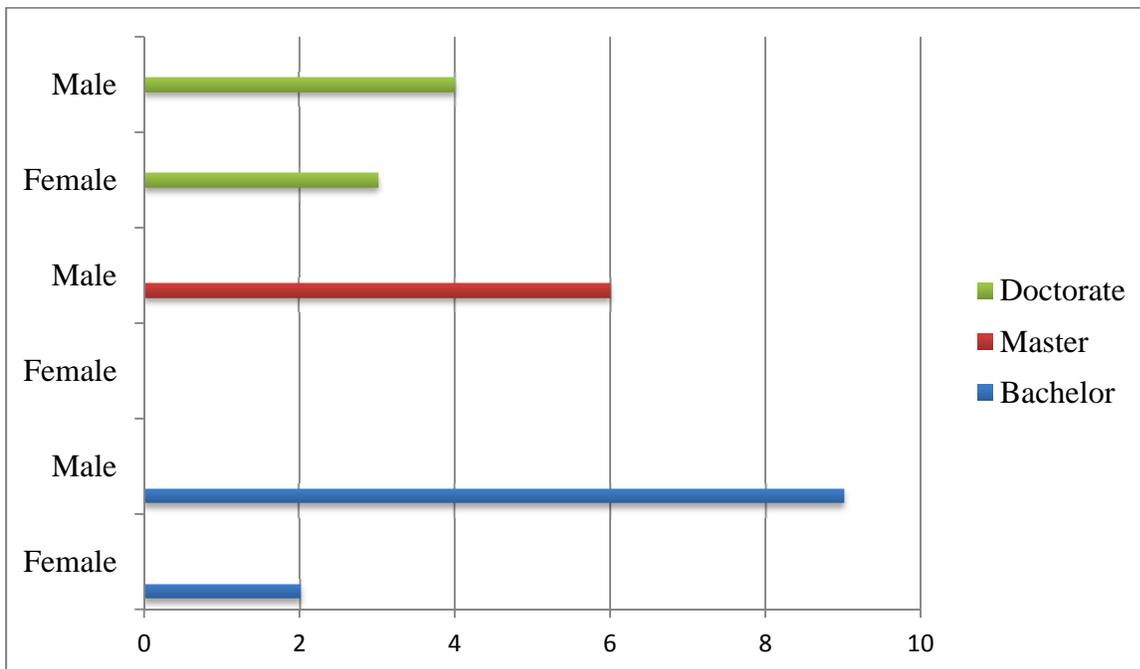
Spring 2013

Nigerian international student enrollment at BRU by degree classification and gender

Chike. Chike is tall and handsome 31-year-old athlete who enjoys playing soccer. As one of the older participants in this study, Chike takes on the responsibility of being an elder and offers himself as a role model to younger Nigerian males interested in building community on campus. He is an advanced doctoral student in sports management. During his time as a doctoral student, he created a Nigerian football league. He is the middle child of 3 biological siblings. His mother adopted and fostered 23 siblings who are related to him by blood whether distant cousin or next of kin.

Both of his parents are college educated. His mother, a businesswoman, attended the University of Lagos, a world-class institution in Nigeria. His father, who is deceased, was a politician and attended a small liberal arts college in Illinois. Chike followed in his father's footsteps and attended the same university for undergrad as a legacy scholar. Chike was born and raised in Lagos Nigeria; however, his family is originally from the eastern part of Nigeria in Delta.

*Dayo***.** Dayo is a 35-year-old Yoruba graduate student. Born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria, Dayo was the only participant with children. Dayo grew up in Lagos, Nigeria and has siblings that live in the United States and Canada. His father is from Kwara, which is located in the western central region of Nigeria. His mother is from Ekiti, a state located in the west of Nigeria. His father holds two masters degrees and a doctoral degree from prestigious U.S. universities. He works as a university professor and architect. His mother attended university in Nigeria and works as a nurse.

Dayo was encouraging and interested in my research project. He informed me that he wanted to help me. On the day of the interview, Dayo was wearing a striped red and blue polo shirt, slacks, and Sperry shoes. His style was an even mix between preppy and business

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casual. His style matched his demeanor. Dayo spoke in a low, soft, and calm tone. Externally, Dayo had a polished, sophisticated posture and a professional presence.

Kenechukwu. Kenechukwu is a 28-year-old Igbo graduate student finishing up his first year in graduate school. Kenechukwu was raised in Calabar, a city located in the southeastern region of Nigeria. Kenechukwu is the youngest and only boy of four siblings. His father is from Imo State, Nigeria and his mother is from Port Harcourt, River State. Kenechukwu's father works as a university professor and his mother is a retired nursing administrator. Both of his parents were college educated and trained in Canada. During the interview, Kenechukwu shared that he has a sister in Canada and all of his siblings studied in North America.

Kenechukwu expressed the most concern about securing employment in the United States after graduating from his graduate program. He was uninterested and distracted throughout the interview. We met in a classroom where he decided to play computer games in the middle of the interview. He assured me that he could multi-task and was paying attention. A handsome tall man, Kenechukwu had a carefree nonchalant attitude throughout the interview.

Lalou. Lalou is a 27-year-old Yoruba advanced level graduate student studying engineering. Short in stature, Lalou presented himself as a self-assured confident intellectual. He spent most of his childhood years in Lagos, Nigeria where both his parents were born and raised. His mother received her Master of Social Work from Ahmadu Bello University, and his father holds a bachelor's degree from University of Ibadan. Lalou speaks Yoruba fluently, and shifted between broken to Pidgin English during the interview. Lalou has been in America since 2008 and was very popular among the Nigerian community. He is an active

member of a predominantly Nigerian church, plays club soccer, and played an informal leadership role among younger Nigerian students coming from the African continent. Lalou has a certain charm and charisma that people gravitated towards.

Nnamdi. Nnamdi is a 23-year-old Igbo graduate student from Port Harcourt, Rivers State, a large urban city located in the southeastern region of Nigeria. He is the oldest of three siblings and spent his childhood split between Port Harcourt and boarding schools in Lagos, Nigeria. His father, an Igbo man, was born in Ibadan, a predominantly Yoruba area located in the southwestern region of Nigeria. Both parents hold bachelor's degrees in accounting. His father attended University of Nigeria, Nsukka and his mother attended University of Lagos.

During the interview, Nnamdi shared that he lived in a neighborhood where most people's homes were fenced with security guards. He recollected fond childhood memories of him playing football with neighborhood kids and their security guards. Nnamdi is well over six feet tall, with a slim athletic muscular body frame. Contradictory to his tall muscular frame, Nnamdi is a laid back, mellow guy, with little athletic ambition. During the interview he told me that he enjoys photography and music more than football and exercise. Nnamdi describes himself as a social person and expressed that he maintains two sets of friends—his Nigerian friends and friends from his academic department. Nnamdi expressed that he enjoys being in multicultural environments.

Taiwo. Taiwo is a 25-year-old slim, Yoruba graduate student from Lagos, Nigeria. A doctoral student in engineering, Taiwo was finishing his second year. Both of his parents are from Lagos, Nigeria where he spent most of his childhood in a middle class neighborhood. His mother works with business contracts and completed some college while his father holds

a master's degree in accounting and works for an insurance business. During the interview, Taiwo informed me that he has close relatives that have lived in Ghana and the United States. He also has an aunt who lives in the neighboring metropolitan city two hours away. Having family nearby has been instrumental to his transition to the United States. He explained that he appreciated when his aunty greeted him at the airport and helped him get settled at the university. He also mentioned that he stays with his relatives during holiday breaks.

Taiwo has one sibling and speaks Yoruba fluently. He explained that he left a well paying job at a consulting firm in Lagos before starting his Ph.D. in engineering. He provided clear and detailed examples about his experiences. My interview with Taiwo was the longest of all the participants, but also the most enjoyable interview. He shared his impressions of how he has been perceived on campus.

Ugoo. Ugoo is 29 years of age and an advanced level doctoral student in engineering. One of the few African female engineers in her program, Ugoo regularly discusses issues concerning Nigeria and Nigeria's future. She is a slim, petite woman and wears a huge smile when she speaks. Her father is a retired businessman and her mother worked as a laboratory scientist. Although Ugoo's father was born and raised in the eastern region of Imo State, Nigeria, Ugoo was born in Lagos and considers herself a Lagosian. Ugoo is one of the few participants interviewed that did not have either parent study in the United States.

Ugoo was an executive member of a culturally centered student organization. Due to her desire for a sense of belonging and community, she became a member and later an executive member. Similar to other participants, Ugoo has relatives that reside in the United States; however, they live in coastal region of the country. Therefore, her interaction with them is not as frequent.

Transnational Students

Bosola. Bosola is a 28-year-old first year Yoruba graduate student in business. Externally, she presents herself as fashionable and well put together. We conducted our interview in a private study area in the College of Business. She was next door to the study area of her friends. One was a Yoruba student who I already interviewed and the other person was a student from Tanzania. I found Bosola's upbringing to be fascinating. As a young woman she had already lived on three different continents and obtained a law degree before pursuing her graduate studies in the United States.

Bosola is a petite woman with a strong and confident personality. During the interview, she expressed her opinions passionately which was evidenced by her sometimes raised voice. Specifically, she raised her voice when she was explaining the difficulties she experienced navigating her Nigerian female identity in an American male dominated business space. Bosola was born in New York and her family moved back to Nigeria was she was two years old. According to her parents, they left America because they did not have any family in United States and they valued being around family and friends in Nigeria. Years later, Bosola followed in her dad's footstep and received her law degree in Nigeria after studying in the United Kingdom.

Chidi. Chidi is a 23-year-old Igbo graduate student studying community health. His very deep dimples are uncovered when he smiles. He answered the interview questions with great detail and confidence. I could tell he had thought about his identity before. He later revealed that he was studying Nigerians' health practices.

Chidi is the oldest of three siblings. His father is Igbo and his mother is Ghanaian. Born in Nigeria, Chidi has lived the U.S., Ghana, and Nigeria. His parents are divorced. His

mother lives in the U.S. and his dad is a retired Navy officer living in Nigeria. A medical doctor by profession, Chidi's dad was born in Imo state and raised his children in Lagos, a metropolitan of Nigeria.

Mark. Mark is a 28-year-old doctoral student in engineering. He is married and attended undergraduate school in the United States. He grew up in Lagos, Nigeria where he met his wife. Both of his parents were educated in the United States. His mother attended New York University and his father attended Pennsylvania State University. His mother owns and runs a private school for hearing-impaired students. His father is a businessman. Mark was born in Nigeria.

Mark's dad left his family in Nigeria and obtained his U.S. citizenship before filing for Mark to come to the United States. Mark joined his dad in the U.S. when he was a teenager. During this time Mark obtained his green card. Following that, he applied and secured American citizenship.

Mark was very interested in being interviewed. Midway through the interview he had to leave for another appointment, so we eventually rescheduled. I appreciated his flexibility and willingness to come back and answer all the interview questions. Mark is a tall slim gentleman that wears large bifocal glasses.

Tunde. Tunde is a 25-year-old Yoruba graduate student. He is finishing his first year of business school and currently rooming with a Nigerian graduate student in an off- campus apartment. Both of his parents are from Lagos, Nigeria. Tunde's mother works in retail and has some college education. His father is a politician. Both of his parents attended college in the United States.

Tunde's life story encouraged me to extend the categories of Nigerian participants beyond first and second-generation students. He was born in New York City, and at seven years old moved to Nigeria after his father accepted an architecture job in Lagos. He then lived in Nigeria until he was a teenager and then moved back to New York. At this time he attended a community college in the Bronx, and lived in low- income housing.

Tunde was charming and personable during the interview, code switching between a broken and American English accent. Tunde was an open, ambitious, and opinionated participant. On the day of the interview he was wearing a newsboy hat over a small Afro hairstyle. He answered each question carefully and cautiously as if he wanted to provide the correct answer.

1.5 Generation

Ngozi. Ngozi is an 18-year-old outgoing Igbo undergraduate student currently residing in an on-campus residence hall. She is finishing the second year of her studies. She is the youngest of four siblings and spent her early childhood years in Nigeria before moving to the United States. She arrived in the U.S. at the age of nine. Her mother is from Owerri, the capital city of Imo State, Nigeria and her father is from Abia, a city in Aba State, Nigeria. Both cities are located in the southeast region of Nigeria. Ngozi's parents are college graduates from Nigerian universities. Her mother is a nurse and her dad works as a cab driver. During the interview, Ngozi shared that her parents are now divorced, and her siblings live with her mother.

Intelligent, beautiful, respectful, and kind, Ngozi was one of my favorite participants to interview. Adorned with box braids and an accessorized (i.e. earrings, necklace) outfit, Ngozi answered every question with energy and detail. She took interest in my research topic

and reaffirmed to me the importance of my study. She shared that she admired my ability to research Nigerian students in a formal academic setting.

Ngozi has lived in the United States for about ten years, and has been able to maintain her Nigerian accent. She had much to say about growing up in the United States. Specifically, she described in great detail how she was treated poorly and teased by her peers in high school for being from an African country. She explained that during this time she avoided telling students that she was from an African country. Due to teasing and harsh ridicule, Ngozi hid her identity and tried to conform to the way her peers dressed and looked in order to avoid such treatment. On the other hand, her experience in college has been much better. She credits this positive experience to her close-knit community of African friends and has found comfort in the large Nigerian student population.

2nd Generation

This section describes the participants that were born and raised in the United States. The participants range in experiences and have at least one parent who was born in Nigeria. Some have never traveled to Nigeria and others have been several times. However, none of the participants have lived or stayed in Nigeria for a substantial amount of time. Interestingly, some speak and/or understand their respective native language.

Abiola. Abiola is a 20-year-old Yoruba undergraduate student studying chemistry. She has 4 siblings and was raised in a multi-racial and multi-ethnic neighborhood in a Midwestern metropolitan suburb. Both of her parents were born in Iswo, a city in Ogun State, Nigeria. The city is located in the southwestern Nigeria.

Abiola presents herself as shy and reserved. She speaks in a low monotone voice. She is casually and nicely dressed, and accessorized with a large oversized hobo bag and large

earrings. Although born and raised in the United States, Abiola explains that her closest friends are other students from African countries, mainly Nigeria. She enjoyed answering the interview questions and provided clear examples about her racial (Black American) and ethnic (Nigerian American) experience.

Blessing. Blessing is a 19-year-old Yoruba undergraduate student majoring in nursing. She spent most of her childhood in a multiracial neighborhood located in a Midwestern suburb. Both of her parents were born and raised in Lagos, the capital of Lagos State, Nigeria. Her mother holds an associate degree from an American university and works as a registered nurse. Her father, a cab driver, did not attend college.

Blessing was very shy and reserved during the interviews and required a great deal of prodding to answer questions. She informed me that visiting Nigeria contributed to her strong sense of identity and culture. She expressed that at times she can be self- conscious around her Nigerian peers that were born and raised in Nigeria, but accepts her Nigerian American identity as an adult.

Chinedu. Chinedu is a 19-year-old Igbo undergraduate student currently residing in a residence hall on campus. He is a student leader and is very well known in his residence hall. Due to his hectic work and school schedule, Chinedu was the hardest participant to schedule an interview with. Chinedu is finishing his second year as finance major. He spent his childhood in predominantly Hispanic and African American neighborhood. His mother is from Asaba, Nigeria and his father is from Okobala, Nigeria. Both of his parents hold college degrees from American universities. His mother has a master's degree in nursing and his father is a registered nurse.

Chinedu presents himself as a confident, witty, and humorous guy. We conducted the interview in the lobby of his residence hall and it took about ten minutes for us to start the interview because a lot of people interrupted the interview to say hello. Despite the interruptions, Chinedu's interview was very interesting filled with stories about his parents and his strict upbringing.

Emi. Emi is a 28-year-old Yoruba graduate student from a large metropolitan city. He is currently finishing his first year in the business administration program. He was raised in predominantly white neighborhoods and attended predominantly white institutions. Both of his parents are college degree holders and were born in the western region of Nigeria. His mother is a retired social worker and his father is a retired principal.

Emi shared that he had mostly white friends before attending graduate school. It has been during his time at Illinois that Emi has been introduced to an African cohort, one of the largest African cohorts in the program's history. He was very eager to answer all of the interview questions and did so providing clear examples of his experiences as a Nigerian and Black person in the United States.

Femi. Femi is a 22-year-old Yoruba-American graduate student. He spent his childhood living in both a rural Midwest town and a major metropolitan suburb. The son of a white American mother and Yoruba father, Femi was the only biracial participant that was interviewed. His father is from Ibadan, Nigeria, and his mother was born in a small Midwest town. His father holds a law degree and his mother holds a master's degree in counseling.

One of three siblings, Femi presents himself as an outgoing and gregarious person. Femi's interview was one of the longest interviews lasting about 2.5 hours. He was very eager to answer all of the interview questions and did so providing clear examples of his

experiences as a Black man in the United States. Femi emphasized that Black was his salient identity several times during the interview. Femi also self identified as Nigerian and provided detailed examples about the trials and tribulations of growing up and not feeling Black American enough or Nigerian enough. During his interview, Femi shared very strong opinions about race and racism in America.

Ike. Ike is a 27-year-old Igbo graduate student studying business administration. He spent the majority of life playing sports in Georgia. An accomplished athlete, Ike played semi-professional American football before attending graduate school. Both of his parents hold college degrees from American universities. His father worked as a teacher and his mother is a nurse. He was raised in a multi-racial/ethnic neighborhood in the south. During the interview, Ike informed me that his parents are divorced and his mother raised him and his two brothers.

Ike was recruited to be a participant by another participant. I was introduced to him while he was studying alone in a corner of the business school. Ike was very reserved during the interview and provided short answers for most questions.

Jessica. Jessica is a 19-year-old Igbo undergraduate student studying biology. She spent the majority of her childhood in a multiracial neighborhood in the suburbs of a large Midwestern city and attended predominantly white schools. Both of her parents are from Anambra State, which is located in the southeastern region of Nigeria. Jessica's parents are college graduates and hold degrees from U.S. universities. Her mother is a schoolteacher and her father is a businessman. During the interview she shared that her mother is pursuing her PhD in adult education.

Jessica describes herself as an outgoing and popular person. She is a very witty, articulate, and expressive participant. Jessica took interest in the interview and research project and answered all the questions with clear examples. She presented herself maturely, answering each question with confidence and conviction. I found my interview with Jessica to be particularly interesting. Jessica had never lived or visited Nigeria, yet she understood Igbo fluently. She credited her fluency to her parents and grandmother who spoke Igbo in the household.

Peace. Peace is a 22-year-old Igbo graduate student from the suburbs of a metropolitan city in the Midwest. She is finishing up her first year of law school and spent most of her childhood in predominantly white neighborhoods. Her late Nigerian father was born in London, England. Her mother was born in Owerri, the capital city of Imo State, Nigeria. Both of Peace's parents are college educated. Her mother holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) and a nursing degree. Her father worked as an engineer and graduated from Harvard University.

The oldest of three siblings, Peace was an extremely animated and articulate participant. She had very strong sentiments about racial and ethnic identity. Specifically, she expressed the difficulty of navigating a Nigerian and Black American identity in both communities. She was eager to answer the interview questions and recruited her boyfriend Femi to participate in the study.

Summary

The information shared by participants in this study helps to link this inquiry with the central questions that guide this study. In order to understand how Nigerian students make meaning of their racial and ethnic identity, we must possess an understanding of the

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individuals who enter predominantly white institutions, including their backgrounds. The majority of the participants in this study come from an educated background, most of their parents with at least some college education. Although all reached higher education, their collegiate experiences are diverse. Some of this diversity includes their upbringing, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and birthplace.

Some were raised speaking a Nigerian language in the home and others did not. The diversity of participants (including their experiences) shared in this chapter serve as a prelude to the assortment of ways in which they described how their collegiate experience influenced aspects of their racial and ethnic identity. The next chapter presents findings and analyses of this study.

Chapter 5

Findings

In Chapter four I presented participant profiles, and found grouping participants by generational status to be challenging and complex. As a result, in this chapter I offer additional findings that unpack *international* and *transnational* as important categories to this study. Furthermore, this chapter includes the results for the guiding research questions, which are grounded in assimilation theory and segmented assimilation theory. These dominant theories are used to explain immigrant success. Assimilation theory proposes that immigrants process and absorb dominant culture in order to live a more harmonious life (Alba & Nee, 1997; Borjas, 2006), whereas segmented assimilation theory, is used to explain the outcomes of second-generation Black immigrants.

The following tenets posit that second generation Black immigrants can adopt one of three cultural identities which will result in the following socioeconomic trajectories: (1) culturally identify as American and integrate into a middle class society; (2) maintain a bicultural lifestyle and experience upward socioeconomic mobility; and (3) identify with the racial identity and inner-city youth and experience downward socioeconomic mobility (Balogun, 2011; Thomas, 2009; Waters, 1999). By employing the aforementioned theories, I was able to delve deeply into the experiences of Nigerian college students that attend a large, research, and public university.

The findings presented in this chapter are organized into the following themes and sub-themes:

1. International Backgrounds: Beyond First and Second Generation

    a. Terms Uncovered: (Re) thinking categorization

    b. Ethnic Black diversity in higher education

    c. Households and Parents' Educational Level

    d. Nigerian Returnees

    e. Socioeconomic Jumping

2. Identity Construction

    a. Personal Identity

    b. Labels have currency

    c. *"Identity doesn't change"*

    d. Language Fluency

3. Group Interactions

    a. Peer Group Interactions

    b. Student Groups

    c. Classroom interactions

Theme One: International Backgrounds-Beyond First and Second Generation

The ensuing section presents findings identified from the data analysis process described in chapter three. First, I discuss how some participants' backgrounds reflected more of a transnational and international student experience than a first or second-generation immigrant narrative. Then, I provide questionnaire data that reveal a large number of participants' parents obtained degrees in America. Next, I present information on parents' human capital and resources, and describe how data from my sample shows that participants parents voluntarily

returned home after obtaining an American education. Finally, students reported fluid socioeconomic experiences, where positive and negative socioeconomic mobility was reported.

Terms Uncovered: (Re) thinking categorization

In chapter four I discovered that "first and second generation immigrant" were not fitting terms for some participants. Some held student visas and were considered international students by the university. International students are people who come to the United States to study in a college or university (IIE, 2014). Another group of participants were not international students by university standards but had strong international ties. Therefore, I classified them as transnational, which refers to an individual who has resided in different countries or has close family members who are extended across national borders (Haagsman & Mazzucato, 2014; Levitt & Schiller, 2004). Transnational participants reported that they lived in other countries or continents, had close relatives (e.g., parents, sisters, and brothers) abroad, and traveled regularly back to Nigeria.

Participants' descriptions of their pre-BRU experiences provided clear examples of transnationalism. For example, Tunde, a 25-year-old graduate student, shared that he was born in the United States and moved back to Nigeria with his family when he was seven years old because his father obtained a job in Nigeria. As a teenager, Tunde joined his sister and returned to the United States. He first enrolled into a community college before earning a bachelor's degree in engineering from a four-year university. He recalls:

> Before Big Research University (BRU)… I will start with I was born in Brooklyn, NY United States, but my family moved back to Nigeria when I was 7. I think my father had a project he had to do there. I finished primary and high school in Lagos, Nigeria. We lived in a neighborhood in Ikeja. My earliest childhood memory come from [local area]…that's somewhere in Ikeja. And I enjoyed my childhood and then finished high school, and then came back [to the United States] for college. In about 2004, no I finished 2003, and I stayed an additional year studying for SATs post graduation from high school

and then uh came back up for college. I attended community college in Bronx and I stayed with my aunt (a family friend).

Tunde continues to state that although his sister was already in the U.S., the rest of his family did not join him and stayed in Nigeria. He stated,

No, I have family all over the place and my sister was already here. My sister um, she graduated before me of course. So she went to college a year ahead of me…so we stayed in the Bronx together, went to Bronx Community College together and that was for two years, um, but we did stay with my aunt for that duration. We later got a place in Queens. I was about 17/18 years of age at this time.

Tunde shares that he returned to the United States without his parents to attend college. Although he is not geographically close to the majority of his relatives, he reunited with his sister. Tunde is a part of a heterogeneous African group that travels to the United States seeking education, economic gains, and family reunification (Arthur, 2000; Kent, 2007; Konadu-Agyemang & Takyi, 2006). Tunde expressed that he plans on returning to Nigeria to do business. For him, it is important that he stays up to date with his family and country's affairs.

I try to go back every year. Like three years ago I started going back each year. Yeah and I already bought my tickets to go back this year. So, I kinda buy a ticket a year in advance. So I plan on going back every year like I said...I want to get back in tuned… going back and see what they are saying. And find maybe opportunities where I can start business and support. And that's the main reason I go back to re accustom myself. Position myself so I can go back in the future.

Similarly, Mark, a 28-year-old graduate student, joined his father in America when he was a teenager. Mark, the only son, was the first of his siblings for whom his father filed papers for him to come to America. Since then Mark has filed papers and is a naturalized U.S. citizen. Chidi, 23-year-old graduate student and the only participant to self-identify as transnational remarked, "I mean I know what I am and if anyone sat down and asked me what I think I am or what I identify myself as I say I'm transnational Nigerian and I am a Black man."

Most empirical research devoted to the study of the diversity of Black students flattens the difference between international and transnational, categorizing most students as Black immigrants. For example Massey et al.'s (2007) characterizes Black immigrants as students that have at least one parent born abroad in an African and/or Caribbean country. This definition of Black immigrant does not allow for a proper understanding of Black international/transnational students experiences. Categorizing all first and second generation Black African students in U.S. higher education as Black immigrants ignores the different rights, privileges, and experiences of Black African [as well as Caribbean] students and U.S. born students. For example, while some Black immigrants and transnational students may be able to work anywhere, international students are restricted to where they can work and for the most part not allowed to work off campus. In addition, international students are excluded from many financial aid opportunities such as fellowships, scholarships, and student loans.

Ethnic Black diversity in higher education

While the growing body of research (Bennett & Lutz, 2009; Griffin, et al., 2012; Massey et al., 2007) on Black immigrants in higher education is focused on the characterization of Black immigrants within the racial/ethnic climate of America, these studies do not take into account how transnational and international students identify themselves on government documents. In this study international and transnational students expressed (concern about the ways that the university setting imposed American racial/ethnic categories on them. Nnamdi, a 23-year-old international graduate student describes his experience with filling out documents that ask for race and ethnicity at BRU. He stated,

> What would I put? Because sometimes they kind of clamp categories together. I don't like forms that have African American only. I think if they have Black / African American its okay, but if they just have African American I go other. So yeah Black is okay with me. If they only have African American I go other. Sometimes it's a form I get

to see then I can see that the administrators actually changed it back. When it passes bureaucracy one secretary will change it to African American. What is that guy talking about?

Interviewer: What do you feel about that?

Nnamdi: I really don't feel anyway about that I understand they have a system.

Nnamdi expressed that he writes Black and/or African on school documents that ask for his race/ethnicity. He stated that he characterizes himself as Black but not African American. He described that he noticed that administrators changed his choice on a form. This serves is an example of the ways in which administrators or institutions impose American racial and ethnic categories on African students. This is just one possible way Black immigrants are absorbed into an African American category. In this scenario the administrator fails to acknowledge Black ethnic diversity and inappropriately imposes an American label (re: African-American) on an international student. Nnamdi reasons that there is an institutionalized structure that is in place. Likewise, Kenechukwu, a 28-year-old international graduate student, described how he noticed the MBA program preferred using his Christian name in place of his Igbo name. During the interview, Kenechukwu tells me that he is more comfortable being called by his Igbo name.

> Kenechukwu: The story of how I ended up using Elijah. I got here, my first name is Elijah but everybody calls me Kenechukwu so when I got here they had automatically taken my first name and put it on everything.
>
> Interviewer: Who is they?
>
> Kenechukwu: The MBA.
>
> Interviewer: Where they supposed to do something else?
>
> Kenechukwu: Sometimes they would ask what name is more comfortable and I would put Kenechukwu. I then realize some place they had Elijah and some place Kenechukwu. I said let me make this easy for all of them. Like my nametag had Kenechukwu, but the one that was printed for me had Elijah. So I had to make everything easy. Elijah is the first name so Elijah it is.

Kenechukwu stresses to his academic department on documentation and in conversation that he prefers to be called by his Igbo name; yet his request was overlooked. During the interview

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Kenechukwu informs me that professors and classmates continue to call him Elijah. His attempt to be called by his Igbo name was undermined by administrators who may have thought that his name was too difficult to pronounce. I related to Kenechukwu's plight because I, too, have experienced being a student in a new class and observed a professor review a class enrollment list and call me by my middle name [Cindy]. As I let teachers mispronounce and mangle my name, I sat idle as classmates adopted their mispronunciation. I felt "othered" in the classroom. Coming of age I dreaded the first day of class. I knew because of my name I was going to be singled out, and being a shy adolescent the experience was distressing.

Nigerian actress, Uzoamaka Azuba, shared similar sentiments in an interview with *The Improper Bostonian*. The actress who plays Suzanne "Crazy Eyes" in the show *Orange Is the New Black*, talks about why she never felt compelled to change her Nigerian name in Hollywood.

> When I started as an actor? No, and I'll tell you why. I had already gone through that. My family is from Nigeria, and my full name is Uzoamaka, which means "The road is good." Quick lesson: My tribe is Igbo, and you name your kid something that tells your history and hopefully predicts your future. So anyway, in grade school, because my last name started with an A, I was the first in roll call, and nobody ever knew how to pronounce it. So I went home and asked my mother if I could be called Zoe. I remember she was cooking, and in her Nigerian accent she said, "Why?" I said, "Nobody can pronounce it." Without missing a beat, she said, "If they can learn to say Tchaikovsky and Michelangelo and Dostoyevsky, they can learn to say Uzoamaka (Soroff, n.d.).

As Uzo mentioned Igbo names have meaning and the process of naming is significant. Although I, too, have mispronounced names before, I take the time to learn and show the person that I am attempting to say it correctly. In my effort I hope to show respect and appreciation for their culture and name. By ignoring and unapologetically mispronouncing unfamiliar African names peers, faculty, and staff miss out on an opportunity to expand their understanding of Black ethnic diversity. In the case of Kenechukwu, the MBA program regulated and imposed the name they

preferred, and subsequently others followed. Kenechukwu accepted being called Elijah because it was easier for him to go along with what university personnel preferred and not risk them perceiving him as difficult, which is consistent with assimilation theory that proposes that immigrants process the dominant culture's way of doing things in order to have a more harmonious life (Borjas, 2006).

The next section presents results from participants' parents' educational attainment. Findings give insight on the historical presence of African students in American universities, and as the number of African students continues to grow and contribute to the diversity of U.S. higher education faculty, staff, and students must be more inclusive and embrace Black ethnic diversity on campus. Results from this study about participants' parents' information adds to research that shows African students have been attending U.S. institutions for decades (Laosebikan, 2012).

Households and Parents' Educational Level

Most respondents revealed that they were raised in a 2-parent household and their parents received at least some college education. Table 3 shows that 15 (75%) of the participants grew up in a 2-parent household, and 18 (90%) participants have parents that hold college degrees. In addition, 13 participants reported that their parents' received their education in North America, and 14 hold graduate degrees. Therefore, all participants were at least second-generation college going students and two participants shared that they were legacy student at the university. In higher education a legacy students is an individual who attended the same university of their parent (Argetsinger, 2003). For his undergraduate studies, Chike attended his father's alma mater and Emi's father attended BRU. Emi, a 29-year-old graduate student, shares the following:

> Uh, I will give you the background of how I got here. My dad went to school here. He is from Nigeria born and raised and went to BRU undergrad in the late 50s then moved to

Chicago. My mom moved to Chicago from Nigeria to be with him here. They had me 1984 on the south side of Chicago.

Emi followed in his father's footsteps by attending BRU for undergraduate and graduate school. He credits his father's college choice to his enrollment at BRU. Bennett and Lutz (2009) found that "being raised in a two-parent household and a college-educated father significantly raises the likelihood of college enrollment" (p.89). Emi and Chike's college choice was influenced by their father's legacy.

Table 3

Demographic Information, By Participant

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Household Type	Parental Highest Educational Level	Parents with North American Degrees
International					
Chike	31	Male	Single Mother (Father Deceased)	College +	Yes
Dayo	35	Male	2 Parent	College +	Yes
Kenechukwu	29	Male	2 Parent	College +	Yes
Lalou	28	Male	2 Parent	College +	Yes
Nnamdi	23	Male	2 Parent	College	No
Taiwo	25	Male	2 Parent	College +	No
Ugoo	29	Female	2 Parent	College	No
Transnational					
Bosola	26	Female	2 Parent	College +	Yes
Chidi	23	Male	2 Parent	College +	No
Mark	28	Male	2 Parent	College +	Yes
Tunde	24	Male	2 Parent	College +	Yes
1.5 Generation					
Ngozi	18	Female	Single Mother (Parents Divorced)	College	No
2.0 Generation					
Abiola	20	Female	2 parent	Some College	Yes
Blessing	19	Female	Single Mother	Some College	Yes
Chinedu	19	Male	2 Parent	College +	Yes
Emi	29	Male	2 Parent	College +	Yes
Femi	24	Male	2 Parent	College +	Yes
Ike	19	Male	2 Parent	College +	Yes
Jessica	19	Female	2 Parent	Some College	Yes
Peace	22	Female	Single Mother (Father Deceased)	College +	Yes

Note: College + means at least one parents holds a graduate degree

Nigerian Returnees

Political stability, economic mobility, and educational opportunities are some of the reasons why Nigerians immigrate (Apraku, 1991; Takyi, 2009). Literature posits that Nigerian immigrants are a selective group and arrive with resources and human capital (Fordham & Ogbu, 1992; Kent, 2007). Additionally, African immigrant parents are much more educated than American parents of any racial/ethnic group and, specifically, Nigerians are the most educated ethnic group in the United States (Casmir, 2008; Massey et al., 2007; Okome, 2006; Takyi, 2009). Scholars have noted that Nigerian immigrants articulate their desire to maintain ties and visit Nigeria. However, less focus is on immigrants who return home or find a third home outside of the United States.

Data from this study reveal that Nigerians have obtained U.S. degrees and voluntarily returned to Nigeria. What is discussed here are the stories of Nigerians who return to their country of origin. This belies the Black immigrant literature that focuses on African migrants that permanently stay in the United Sates and gives insight to Nigerians who decide to return and live in their country of origin. For example, 35-year-old graduate student, Dayo shares

> My parents have very clear expectations. Remember where you are from and whose son you are. Ya know, which is what they drill in us ya know back, back in Africa. So I think that's the majority of it…Uh well my parents lived abroad. They lived in the UK they lived in the US. My dad schooled in the US...Ya know so. Yea um okay my dad went to Columbia for his Masters. NYU for his other Masters and did his PhD here at university. My mom is a nurse so she went to nursing school back in Nigeria. She went to nursing school in UK and then she schooled in the US. Both of them are back in Africa, specifically Lagos [Nigeria].

In this excerpt Day describes the transnational movement and educational attainment of his parents. He also, explains that with their degrees from prestigious universities in hand, his

parents returned to Nigeria. Similarly, Kenechukwu told me that his family lived in Canada and

Nigeria, but his parents decided to settle in Nigeria. He recalls,

> *Kenechukwu:* Well initially we didn't but after a while we began to integrate [into
> Nigeria]. We had people our age all over the place. Demographic mostly middle to upper
> class. It was a state housing estate that was in Calabar in Southern Nigerian. Oh rewind
> well that's where grew up anyways.
> *Interviewer:* Ok well how about after that?
> *Kenechukwu:* We lived in Lagos and then Canada.
> *Interviewer:* Your whole family lived in Canada?
> *Kenechukwu:* Initially my parents lived there but my mom just went back and forth
> having everybody except me, so she kind of carried me.

Bosola and Chidi also mention in conversation that their parents lived in the United States but

decided to move back to Nigeria. Bosola explains that her family desired to live amongst family

and friends and Chidi recalled how his father had better opportunities in Nigeria than in America.

These reports suggest that Nigerians are making transnational movements outside of the United

States and are voluntarily moving back to their country of origin for better opportunities. Most

research devoted to Black immigrants in the U.S. higher education implies that individuals who

reside in the United States long term do not return to their original country. However, this

research overlooks the transnational movements of those who return to their country of origin

after receiving their American degrees. Also ignored in this scope of literature are the positive

and negative socioeconomic movements of Black immigrants/ international and second

generational immigrant students (Batalova & Fix, 2008). The next section addresses this sub-

theme.

Socioeconomic Jumping

Segmented assimilation theory suggests that identity formation is highly correlated with

socioeconomic mobility. I demonstrate that integration into a racial minority culture is not

necessarily downwardly mobile or oppositional, as evidenced by descriptions of *socioeconomic*

jumping. Participants expressed economic fluidity in their life cycle. For instance, Tunde shared that he was born in the United States and moved back to Nigeria with his family when he was seven years old. His father received a job offer in Nigeria. Tunde returned back to the United States as a teenager and joined his older sister. He enrolled in community college and then a four-year institution and earned a bachelor's degree in engineering before pursuing a graduate degree in business at BRU.

Tunde shared that his family returned to Nigeria because his father accepted a job offer. His family experienced positive socioeconomic mobility by returning to Nigeria. However, when Tunde returned to the United States as a teenager he lived in a low-income neighborhood. Therefore, he experienced downward mobility when he moved back to the United States. Batalova and Fix (2008) explain that many skilled immigrants leave their country and experience a downward socioeconomic mobility because their professional credentials do not transfer in the United States. As for Tunde, he recalls living in low-incoming housing in the Bronx.

> That was probably the worst part of the Bronx…We survived I guess. It was a two hour journey every day to get to school it was okay but that neighborhood wasn't the most conducive I should say…There were cops around all the time. At night you knew not to come home late…I was fine with it but you definitely saw cops lurking around. I had the apartment with me and my sis but the environment not anybody would be able to live there comfortably and that's the general point. And at this point I have to thank God. I have to thank God for bringing us out of there (light laughter) out of all the places we stayed.

Tunde expressed the Bronx projects was the worst neighborhood he had lived in. Contrary to literature that asserts a static experience for Black immigrants, Tunde describes how his socioeconomic standard declined when he moved back to the United States. Similarly, other participants' responses reflect this kind of socioeconomic jumping. Chidi recalls,

I would say sophomore year I graduated elementary school in 2002, well 2003 2004 around Fall 2003, Spring 2004 is when I moved to the south side of Chicago at that point in time. Ya know my mom got some more income we got more established.

Umm, she didn't tell me anything. I didn't really, I mean America always seemed like a nice colorful rich place, when what the TV would show and in Nigeria we would watch TV but because we didn't watch, well we watched, as a kid we watched a lot of cartoons so America had to be this colorful nice lively. Ya know? Umm just everything seemed so like, like I don't ...don't know so futuristic I guess. And you know at that point of time we traveled so I been to London been to Paris so we may be able to know what it is but America seem so different its this land of milk and honey. That was the perspective I got.

Chinedu describes how his parents were professional upper middle class but the neighborhood changed over time and he soon found himself in a neighborhood that was experiencing gang violence.

…umm I was raised in Bellwood, Illinois…at that time, there was just some violence, kinda why we left, there was a couple shootings here and there and umm gang violence crack cells, all that but the block I lived on was pretty, pretty safe, pretty well kept. But you know like kinda how tragedy just keep spreading and spreading so we decided it was a need to get out of town. Umm we were, I would say, upper middle class even though we were living there. Nothing was…we're still upper middle I would say. Umm, we never had to worry about certain things we just chose to worry about them. Money was never really an issue we just made it an issue. Like kinda like pretending to be broke. It makes sense kind of if you think about it.

Participants discussed moving and having various living and economic situations. These reports show that socioeconomic status is fluid and Nigerians experienced both upward and downward mobility.

Theme Two: Identity Construction

In this section I present the responses from the questionnaires regarding participants' race and identity. Next, I reference participants' open-ended responses to their personal identity. Then, I discuss how students negotiate and construct their identity based on their social context. Finally, I describe the role native language fluency informs participants' identity.

While assimilation theory posits that African immigrants gain positive mobility by distancing themselves from African Americans and maintaining their ethnic identity (Pierre, 2004), I provide contrary empirical support that shows both Nigerians with a strong international background and U.S. born second-generation students that identify with the Black racial category. While I recognize the questionnaire shape the direction of the answers, findings from the responses I received when I asked about their racial and ethnic identities are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Participants' Racial and Ethnic Questionnaire Responses

	Do you consider yourself Black?		Do you consider yourself African American?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
International				
Chike	✔			✔
Dayo	✔			✔
Lalou	✔			✔
Kenechukwu	✔			✔
Nnamdi	✔			✔
Taiwo	✔			✔
Ugoo	✔			✔
Transnational				
Bosola	✔			✔
Chidi	✔			✔
Mark	✔			✔
Tunde	✔		✔	
1.5 Generation				
Ngozi		✔		✔
2nd Generation				
Abiola	✔		✔	
Blessing	✔		✔	
Chinedu		✔	✔	
Emi	✔		✔	
Femi	✔		✔	
Ike	✔		✔	
Jessica	✔			✔
Peace	✔		✔	

Table 4 illustrates the responses I received from questionnaire data about the participants' racial and ethnic identity. When asked, "Do you consider yourself Black?" 18 out of 20 respondents marked "yes;" and when asked, "Do you consider yourself African-American?" only 8 participants responded, "yes" and the majority of those respondents were second-generation Nigerians. Whereas, 7 out of the 8 second-generation participants reported that they considered

themselves both Black and African- American, the majority of international and transnational students reported that they considered themselves Black but not African American.

Personal Identity

The questionnaire items mirror questions that appear on university documents. While the questionnaire asked if participants considered themselves Black and African American, it also imposed the direction of the answer by selecting the choices (i.e., Black African-African) for the participants. In doing so, the documents provide identity options and direct students racial and ethnic identity. Nnamdi's recalls that the administrator changed his form to African American after he checked the box "other" and then wrote in "African." This is an example of imposing social identities onto students. Noting this, I aimed at gaining a better understanding of how students self- identify. Therefore, I asked how students self identify and responses from this question are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

Participants' Personal Identity

Pseudonym	How do you identify yourself?
International	
Chike	Nigerian
Dayo	African
Lalou	Nigerian
Kenechukwu	African/ Nigerian
Nnamdi	Nigerian
Taiwo	Bantu, Yoruba
Ugoo	Nigerian/Black African
Transnational	
Bosola	Nigerian
Chidi	Transnational Nigerian
Mark	African
Tunde	Nigerian/American
1.5 Generation	
Ngozi	Nigerian-American
2.0 Generation	
Abiola	African-American
Blessing	African-American
Chinedu	African-American
Emi	African-American
Femi	Black/ African-American
Ike	African-American
Jessica	Nigerian-American
Peace	Nigerian-American/African-Americans

Results from Table 5 show that most international/transnational students characterized

themselves as Nigerian and African, whereas second generation students described themselves as

African-American. Results from interview data that their identity construction is fluid and

depends on the context, situation, circumstance, and response.

Labels have currency

Chidi explains in the following excerpt how his identity has changed over time. He recalls,

> …when I was like filling out like a job application it was probably a while back but I
> know that I put, I put instead of just Black I put like other and I put African and it was

just the notion of I guess I was just at a...I was at a high as far as cultural identity and I was just feeling myself. I don't know as far as nationality just cultural pride.

Now… I mean I know what I am and if anyone sat down and asked me what I think I am or what I identify myself as I say I'm a transnational Nigerian and I am a Black man. Um that's pretty much it but overall if you're asking me on paper what do I put down, I put down Black just because I'd rather express that identification in person or vocally than on paper.

This statement reflects that identity formation is a process that develops over time, through lived experiences and interrelated social contexts. While findings show that students articulate their identity differently depending on context, fewer research studies examine the unique challenges Black African international students have adjusting to predominantly white universities in the United States. For example, Taiwo describes his difficulty with people understanding him.

Like I said my first one month here I really didn't I didn't even notice anything about my accent. When I first came here my accent was really thick. It's still thick though. I mean yeah I mean I don't try to… when I first got here the first few months was really rough for me. People that couldn't speak English as much as I could I mean even up until now I still feel like Americans can't really speak English. I'm serious like see I'm even I'm adopting I'm adopting the way the way they speak like "like". I mean I have no real issues with those Americans but I feel I speak English at the highest level possible. You know British English and stuff. You understand when I came there was this impression. When I mean the first three weeks I was like "God, are you saying I can't speak English?" Yea, because you know I would get on this bus sometimes and when you talk to the driver and he's like what? What? I mean it was as if I am not communicating so I have to and because I worked with people I worked with a lot of foreigners [in Nigeria]. But they were all Asians and stuff so I kinda had like this little Asian [English] kind of accent. Not really. I mean that was me when I conduct my accent it goes Asian not even American accent. I tried to I tried to make myself more understandable for Americans. So I mean I am hoping that my accent doesn't leave me.

While writing this quote I questioned whether or not I should write Taiwo's quote phonetically. For instance, Taiwo pronounced *thick* as *tick*, and did not accentuate the r sound in many words. However, I wanted to respectfully represent my participants; therefore, I wrote out the words because I wanted the reader to understand what Taiwo was saying. In the quote, Taiwo

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articulates his experience on campus and the difficulties he has had communicating with others. He expresses conflict between his desire to be understood, and his desire to maintain his Nigerian accent. Taiwo also mentioned that his inability to communicate with others affected his confidence. Similarly, Kenechukwu adds "Even some words I pronounce I intentionally don't pronounce them the American way…I hate having to try to speak with an American accent. When I first came people couldn't understand me and that was very annoying. It makes me slower and my speech different."

Dayo, a soft-spoken father of two, disclosed the challenges with meeting the demanding expectations of graduate school and communicating with family in Nigeria. When asked how often he communicates with his family back home, Dayo replied:

> A lot. My parents every 2-3 days and my 6 siblings every two three days. Talk or chat every day. A mix BBM [Blackberry Messenger] Skype everything, video calls, voice calls, parents are phone calls. And my older siblings…There is room for improvement. It [school] has kept me really really busy. I have not had an active social life as it could have been. I have to play a lot of catch up. Working with different time zones I am trying to catch up with them… effects social life.

Dayo explains how he has missed out on social events with colleagues and campus life because he is trying to keep in touch with his family in Nigeria. Even with the help of various modes of communication battling the time zone difference has impacted his social and academic life. Dayo has to plan his study time and family schedule accordingly in order to manage sleep and schoolwork.

Kenechukwu, a male graduate student, shared issues he had obtaining a paid internship because he was an international student. He explained that one company told him that his resume was impressive and when she found out that he was an international student she was no longer interested in his services. Some employers are not willing to sponsor or take the time to process

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an international student's paper work. Unfortunately for Kenechukwu securing a prestigious

internship is expected for people in his program. Kenechukwu makes it clear that he loves being

Nigerian but he would not mind having an American passport. When asked to describe his ethnic

background he states, "I am black not African American but black. I am from Africa. I am

Black…Nigerian, African period. Although an American passport would be nice so I can travel

all over the world." While Kenechukwu describes his race and ethnicity he notes the power of an

American passport. His accessibility is limited and would be expanded if he had an American

passport. While Kenechukwu describes the restrictions that come along with being an

international student, Bosola describes the complexity of her international background and her

American citizenship as it pertains to the university setting.

> Hmmmm yea well. Yeah when I say that I am Nigerian they say "oh really, how?" So
> (laughter) so you know I have to explain that as well. Um and then just the general
> misconception of Africa as a continent. Always trying to explain things to them or let
> them know that even though I did grow up in Nigeria I have had similar experience as
> you did. I didn't live in a jungle or I don't have animals in my backyard (laughter) things
> like that. Always having to explain or (I don't want to say justify) my experiences but
> trying to like let them understand that ok I am not beneath you because I am from a
> different country or I grew up in a different continent, I am not beneath you, I am also
> like you. But at the same time I acknowledge the fact that I do have different experiences
> don't necessarily make me less than you are. I am also like you. I am equal as equal as
> you are in any situation. Sometimes I always have to prove myself in that sense. And
> sometimes people are like oh you are from Nigeria you speak such very good English.
> And I am like "we speak English in my country" English is the official language and I
> didn't just learn English because I came here. So just having to correct some stereotypes
> or ideas that people have of not just Nigerians but African but even international students
> in general.

Bosola passionately explains how people on campus are confused when she tells them she is

Nigeria but not an international student. She also describes how she has to correct

misconceptions about Nigeria and Africa as whole. In the process she feels like people treat her

differently because of her international background.

Although this section illustrates the different terms used to describe people of African descent, participants stressed those terms, accents, and the ways in which participants enact (i.e., dress, accent, mannerisms) their identity changes, but identity itself does not change.

"Identity doesn't change"

Literature maintains that Nigerian identity is fluid and complex (Awokoya, 2012; Balogun, 2011). Many participants stated that their identity did not change but terms, context, social behavior, rituals, and mannerisms are fluid, negotiated, and complex. Nigerian- American, 1st generation American, African American, and diaspora Nigerians were just a few terms the participants used to describe themselves. Taiwo declares, "Identity doesn't change" when asked about if he could recall a moment where he identified a different way. Nnamdi, an international student adds, "In every environment I am Nigerian." Nnamdi further explains his answer in the following quote:

> To be honest in Nigeria we don't talk about race because it is predominantly Black. Ethnicity I'm Igbo…in Nigeria you understand you are black. I guess in Nigeria everybody is Nigerian. And to be honest you identify with where you live. I'm a Port Harcourt boy, I'm a Lagos boy, you know. You identify with where you live first and foremost. And then the forms in Nigeria you might get things like Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa …and my parents they promoted the culture in the sense they went to traditional events and wore traditional clothes to those events. And we spoke the language, we experienced it. We eat traditional Igbo food**.**

Nnamdi explains that his ethnic identity and country of origin is an ascribed status, and not something that can be achieved or changed due to his environment. He specifies that he is Igbo. Further, Nnamdi's remarks illustrate his in depth understanding of the different ways race operates in America versus Nigeria. In America race is a salient identifier; however, in Nigeria everyone is Black therefore ethnic identity (i.e. Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa) are more salient than race. This revelation was difficult for me to accept. Literature asserts that identity is impermanent and

ever changing (Awokoya, 2012; Balogun, 2011). For some individuals and with some identity aspects, this may be the case. Certain identity components are more salient at different times and the meaning the person makes of their identities can change over time. For example, race (e.g., black, white) and sex (e.g., female, male) does not change for most people. Nnamdi explains that Nigerian heritage is an ascribed status that does not change over time, whereas performance (i.e. language, accent, etc) can change over time. Ascribed refers to a social status that is given to a person at birth. It is not earned or selected but assigned (Kapoor, 2012). I was so focused on identity being impermanent that I almost overlooked these remarks. My reflections and journaling before and after the interview pushed me to accept this as a finding.

Kenechukwu adds that he claims his Nigerian identity even in the midst of bad or negative (i.e., corruption, scams, unemployment, disease) reporting about Nigeria. He emphasized that he does not shy away from negative discussion about Nigeria. He remarks,

> Oh no, never. Usually when they talk about the corruption issue in Nigeria, I don't shy away from it. I am very proud to be Nigerian because we are different, we are happy people. I like the way we do things, not all the time. I like the way we speak. I like the culture.

While Kenechukwu clarifies that he maintains his Nigerian identity in the midst of negative reports about Nigeria, research shows that negative media portrayal has a destructive impact on Nigerian's identity formation (Harushimana & Awokoya, 2011; Okpalaoka & Dillard, 2012).

Language Fluency

Language plays a central role in assimilation and identity formation (Rambaut, 1994). Language also played a key role in maintaining culture. Sustein and Strater (2012) suggest that language can act as a filter, keeping outsiders away from understanding. To this end, my insider knowledge and awareness of terms and accents was useful throughout my study. The topic of language fluency came up in many conversations.

Nigerian language fluency varied across generational and international backgrounds. I anticipated that second generation Nigerians would not be able to speak their native Nigerian language, but what was surprising to me was the amount of international and transnational students who reported that they were not fluent. Table 6 shows participants' self-reports of their Nigerian language fluency.

Table 6
Fluency in Nigerian languages, by Participant

Speak and Understand, Fluent	Understand, Not fluent
Blessing	Abiola
Chike *	Bosola*
Lalou*	Chinedu
Mark*	Chidi*
Ngozi	Dayo
Nnamdi*	Emi
Taiwo*	Femi
	Ike
	Jessica
	Kenechukwu*
	Peace
	Tunde*
	Ugoo*

* International/Transnational students

A total of 5 international and/or transnational students reported that they were not fluent in their native language. All participants who could not speak their mother tongue fluently expressed disappointment. Non-fluent native language speakers also discussed insecurity about not knowing their language especially when they were around other native speakers. Similar to findings from Balogun (2011) participants shared that "Nigerians "policed the boundaries of an 'authentic' ethnic Nigerian identity. Some described how fluent Nigerian language speakers would mark those without Nigerian language skills as not 'truly' Nigerian" (p. 446). Ugoo, an international graduate student and Peace a second generation graduate students both blamed their parents for not knowing how to speak Igbo:

Those people [parents] I blame them for my situation. It's funny how they want me to speak the language out of thin air. They didn't have expectations at the beginning. Dream was to speak very well English. Having an accent and deterring from that. As parents get older they communicate some deeper things.

Ugoo, 29-year-old graduate student

Ok this is kind of funny. My language is Yoruba native language. My mom wanted me to speak Yoruba. Focus on speaking English. I went to a secondary school where speaking your native language would get you in trouble. You weren't expected to speak it outside of class. Strangely enough growing up now they speak Yoruba. How do you expect me to understand? I do understand it but don't speak it fluently. I am not happy about that. I look at people from different people speaking their language and I can't necessarily do that.

Bosola, 27-year-old graduate student

But I feel like if you're talking to a lot of my friends who are PhD students who have come straight from Nigeria to pursue their PhD or graduate degrees I'm never Nigerian enough. I mean I don't speak the language. I cook the food but I don't speak the language so I'm not Nigerian enough. So it's like a sliding scale it just depends.

My mom never taught me the language and I would follow her with a notebook she never taught it to me and it was to the point where I was 9 years old and I started studying Spanish and now I'm like bilingual in that way.

Peace, 23-year-old graduate student

Among co-ethnic communities speaking the language illuminated various modes of identity formation. Shame was associated with not speaking or pronouncing words correctly. As Nigerians continue to navigate their social and academic space in U.S. institutions, they recognize that there are not too many opportunities to exercise their Nigerian accents and dialects. Such was shared by Kenechukwu in the following exchange:

Interviewer: So did they [parents] speak the language in the household?
Kenechukwu: Mmmmhmmm To themselves.
Interviewer: So not to you?
Kenechukwu: Nope
Interviewer: So you didn't speak to them?
Kenechukwu: Nope.
Interviewer: Where did you grow up again?

Kenechukwu: They would tease you about it but that's about it

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Kenechukwu: I don't know. Maybe just subtle ways of telling you pick it up if you can. In my aunt's house they spoke Igbo all the time and that is where I learned how to speak.

Interviewer: What are your feelings about the degree to which you can understand/speak your parents' language?

Kenechukwu: Fair enough. I understand better than I speak.

Interviewer: Do you plan on teaching your children your parents' language? Why or Why not?

Kenechukwu: Nope. If they pick it up that's fine. If they don't that's fine.

Interviewer: Why?

Kenechukwu: Well if you pick up the language who are you going to speak it with? I mean we will probably end up living in Lagos or Abuja or even if we end up living here [America] who are you speaking it with. If you learn that's fine if you don't that's fine. It would be nice to learn it but if you don't learn it. If you don't know how to speak it that's fine.

Kenechukwu explains how he learned Igbo. He discusses how he learned by being around his aunt and how he was able to pick it up. There was not an active effort by his family to teach the language; however, because he was in an environment with other Igbo speakers (his aunt) he was able to learn the language. Kenechukwu also describes the challenges of learning the language and practicing it outside of an area with other Igbo speakers. In certain regions of Nigerian Igbo is not spoken by most people and such is the case in America. Therefore, being around other Igbo speakers would be important in maintaining language proficiency. To this end, Nigerian students in America rely on other native speaker to practice and maintain their native language. Having spaces and opportunities where students can comfortably use their accents and speak Pidgin English is important.

Theme 3: Group Interactions

Research has established a connection between identity formation and group interactions (Awokoya, 2012; Baber, 2012; Balogun, 2011). More specifically, research posits that Black

students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) seek formal spaces on campus among co-ethnic groups (Baber, 2010). Results from this study indicated that social and academic networks influenced identity formation. Data revealed that these separate but interrelated networks significantly influenced the ways in which participants viewed and performed their identities.

Participants described how they negotiated their racial and ethnic identity. First, I discuss peer group interaction. Then, I present how student groups played a role in racial and ethnic identity. Finally, I discuss how participants describe their experiences in their social and academic group settings.

Peer Group Interactions

Participants reported they received implicit and explicit messages about their race and ethnicity from African and non-African peers. While describing her interaction with African and non-African peers, Peace confides:

> I think I have finally come to a point where I'm not American I'm just not American. But I'm also not wholly Nigerian and I think that's like the perfect balance. I am Nigerian-American…I think it's also (as much as I hate to admit it) the people that have influenced my identity so I was never Black enough for the Black people but I was too Black for the White people and I was too American for the Nigerians but I was too weird or African or something for the American. So I think it's like I believe in everything in balance. I'm not wholly anything because I don't fit wholly anywhere so I think that's like the best balance I can strike is by saying or hyphenating it.

Peace describes how American and African peers question the authenticity of her identity. Due to these interactions she reports that she does not feel completely Nigerian or American and therefore considers herself Nigerian-American. Other participants also described various ways their Nigerian names were a topic of discussion and differentiated them from Americans.

> I feel like your name speaks for itself…so I mean when somebody sees your name your first name. Whether it be my…I go by Ike but my first name is Chijioke so when people see the first name and the last name they, they, they know you have African descent.
> <div align="right">Ike, 27-year-old graduate student</div>

…it's easy because my first name is Peace but when they see my last name and they're like "Okay, that's something I've never heard before". But I think looking at me or hearing me speak I would say a majority of people think I'm Black, and they're surprised when I say I'm all Nigerian.

Peace, 22-year-old graduate student

Nnamdi: Well I think once they see my name they kinda know that that name is not from around here.
Interviewer: Do they indicate where they think your name is from?
Nnamdi: No, because my department is small there is about 30 something in the department. In my application they know I am Nigerian. And in class you introduce yourself and you introduce yourself as Nigerian.

Nnamdi, 23-year-old graduate student

In addition, many participants explained that they have mostly Nigerian friends and they felt that their friends made them feel comfortable to be Nigerian and express their culture. Participants emphasized that they spoke Pidgin English or with an accent when they were among their African friends.

Oh, my accent switches from Nigerian to American. If I am speaking with a foreigner than I think it will be easier to understand.

Ugoo, 29-year-old graduate student

Chinedu: Umm I would say the demographic of my friends now, majority are African but those are like I would say my closest but just because of the different situations I put myself in, I kinda have a lot of friends, they just range…I just have a diverse friend base now but I would say my closest friends, I could speak Pidgin too.

Interviewer: Is that important to you?
Chinedu: Uh I would say it's very important because being on a campus of this size it's just kind of its important to have a place where you can just feel like you are safe not just because you feel comfortable with them but because you could relate on a certain level.

Chinedu, 19-year-old undergraduate student

These are some of the responses I received when I asked participants about their friends. Participants reported that they appreciated the large Nigerian community presence on campus and felt comfortable around their African peers. Participants felt that speaking Pidgin English is

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something that they did when they were comfortable and when they were with their African peers. Many participants stated that they met friends on campus by getting involved in cultural centered student groups.

Student Groups

Consistent with literature that posits Black students seek co-ethnic student organizations for support (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Swail, Reed, & Perna, 2003), students in this study spoke at length about engaging in campus clubs and/or organizations as a way of coping with isolation and exclusion on campus. Most participants emphasized how joining a cultural centered student group positively influenced their identity. Big Culturally Centered Organization (BCCO) was one African-centered registered organization on campus. According to archival documents, BCCO is also the oldest African centered organization on campus. The preamble reads:

> We, the African students at the [Big Research University], assembled here in [city], in this first meeting of our General Assembly, conscious of our responsibilities to the problems facing our continent and its people, and desiring to disseminate true and adequate information about the African people- their history, culture, traditions, problems, and aspirations- hereby proclaim and solemnly reaffirm our unswerving loyalty to this constitution and to the realization of its objectives.

> We further assert and proclaim the unity among ourselves and our solidarity to mobilise collective organized effort necessary to the realization of our common objectives hereunder enunciated in the Constitution. We therefore affirm our dedication to the cause which we have proclaimed.

This document offers an understanding to the purpose and intentions of African students at BRU and higher education in general. It also supports claims that suggest African people pursued American higher education with the objective of returning and helping their home country (Arthur, 2000; Laosebikan, 2012). Although, it is not known the ages or gender of the students it is appropriate to believe that they were men who felt immense responsibility and pressure to

become political leaders (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2012). American educated African students in the nineteen sixties lived during a time when most African countries were regaining their independence, and therefore educating future leaders who could develop nations was a high priority.

In this study participants discussed how they got involved in BCCO or African- centered organizations on campus. Most participants stressed the importance of cultural students groups in building community and helping transition to college. Blessing, a 19-year-old undergraduate student recalls how she got involved in SCCO, a predominantly undergraduate African centered organization.

> …um when I first came to Big Research University, I was so nervous and home sick. And I started meeting people and going to SCCO I felt a lot better. I felt pretty welcomed. We all know each other. We all know each other and vibed together because of our similar background.

Similarly, BCCO was established to unite African students and raise political awareness. This organization caters to graduate students and held its 10th annual forum Spring 2013. The forum occurs once a year and allows an opportunity for Africans to present their scholarship around issues concerning the African continent and its people. The second page of the forum's program outlines the organization's goals:

> The BCCO is a registered student organization at the Big Research University. Our goals are to:
> 1. Unite African Students with a goal of raising their political consciousness and providing progressive leadership on issues relating to Africa.
> 2. Provide student members with an environment conducive to successful completion of their academic objectives.
> 3. Create and identify opportunities for members from the African continent and members of African descent in the Diaspora to understand each other and their different backgrounds, and enhance awareness about African issues, culture and values.
> 4. Help incoming African students settle and adjust to studying in the BRU community and to give them material and moral support in pursuing their educational goals.

5. Provide a forum for discussion and debate of matters of special interest to African unity and development.

6. Build networks, forge links, and cooperation with other African student organizations from other institutions.

7. Promote racial, gender, ethnic, political and economic equity, and build unity and solidarity especially with African Americans and other Third World peoples and organizations.

These goals attracted Chidi to get involved in BCCO. He discusses his first encounter with BCCO in the following quote:

> My brother was supposed to attend the meeting. He wanted to see what the meeting was like…I didn't know it was mostly graduate students. The first day there I became a paid member. I definitely feel more African. I felt more comfortable. The people there made me feel African. I felt like I was in Nigeria. It made me want to be a member.

Chinedu shared that he felt comfortable at BCCO. It was evident that BCCO provided a space in which Chinedu was able to engage in social behaviors and performances that were indicative of his culture. For instance, I observed that Nigerians felt comfortable using their Nigerian accents and speaking Pigdin English[4]. However, BCCO does not come without criticism. Nnamdi expressed the following:

> I think the problem lies with there… there's a divide. There's an age gap. I went to one BCCO meeting and I felt out of place because a lot of the people where way older than me…I'm a young graduate student. I'm on the younger end of the curve. Right? Early twenties.

In this excerpt, Nnamdi explains how his age played a role in not wanting to be an active member of BCCO. BCCO is similar to many cultural organizations in the sense that it is not a one size fits all. Nnamdi was looking for an organization that fit his interest and comfort level as it pertained to not only his culture but his age as well. Upper level undergraduate students expressed the benefits of cultural centered organizations as an underclassman and focused on

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[4] Pidgin English is a combination of regional slang, native tongue, and English that is spoken in casual and informal spaces.

more career or major specific organizations as they established friends and became more

comfortable on campus.

> I was involved in SCCO freshmen year not so much anymore. I don't have much time
> and they don't have much to offer. I think what they do is offer friendship and getting to
> know people. I think that's more beneficial to freshmen and they usually stay the same
> the four years.
>
> Abiola, 20-year-old undergraduate student

> Um I mainly put it on me just cause like I've I'm just at a point in my college career that
> doing things that won't necessarily pay off for my like very near future or for like the
> future that I'm trying to have I just try to kind of eliminate it. And going to SCCO or
> being involved in a lot of thing like that on campus...bringing us together and things of
> that nature, and not necessarily going to help me attain an internship or a future job.
> Yeah, like the network doesn't expand unless you expand it.
>
> Chinedu, 20-year-old undergraduate student

> I am a part of a volunteer group and not too active in the Small Cultural Centered
> Organization community but I do tend to go to their events from time to time. I was more
> active as of last year. I just have a busier schedule. They don't…are not as beneficial I
> would say that I need to be going every meeting.
>
> Jessica, 19-year-old undergraduate student

In the above excerpts, undergraduate students explicated how they outgrew the cultural centered

student groups as they matriculated and became more concentrated on school and building their

professional networks/ portfolios. Similarly, some graduate students stressed that their rigorous

programs did not allow for much time to participate in social programs, however, they did join

professional organizations that were geared towards minority students. Instead participants

emphasized that they were not paid members of any BCCO or SCCO organization, but attended

particular events when they were available.

"I prefer to play with Nigerians"

Chike, a graduate student, created a football[5] league that consisted of undergraduate and graduate

Nigerian students. For Chike, football helps maintain his culture and helps him not miss Nigeria

as much. Chike shares these sentiments about football.

> *Interviewer:* I noticed that there are mainly Nigerian players that you play with. Is this on
> purpose?
> *Chike*: Yeah. Yep um because we are trying to build community too and we are
> practicing for a tournament. I enjoy playing with Nigerians they understand the norms
> that I am use to.

Despite years of colonization and selfish implementation of football in physical education and

curriculum by western missionaries, football became adopted and a beloved sport by Nigerians.

Akindes (2012) suggests that football in Africa is not only a sport but also a culture. Bromberger

(1998) maintains that "Football has become a form of universal reference of the rare, if not only,

elements of the world masculine culture, understood by all, transgressing the diversity of regions,

nations, and generations" (as cited in Akindes, 2012, p. 44).

After observing a football match I noticed that Chike shifts his accent, which in return

implicitly signals to others that they can do the same. It is in these moments that I understand

what Chike means when he says, "I enjoy playing with Nigerians." He can be himself and get

lost in a game that has as much to do with football as it has to do with building community.

Classroom Interactions

The classroom setting plays a significant role in the social and cultural construction of

African students. In this space students learn how to work in groups and how to interact with

their professor. While universities are making great strides to internationalize higher education

and promote global learning in the classroom, research shows that educators have a limited

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[5] American soccer

understanding and knowledge with African populations and their cultures (Goodwin, 2002; Sleeter, 2001; Osunde, Tlou, & Brown, 1996; Ukpokodu, 1996). In the following responses participants discussed their interactions with classmates and professors in the classroom setting.

> I hate having to try to speak with an American accent but I have to do it because I hate when people ask me to repeat myself. When I first came people asked me to do that a lot, and I found it irritating. It makes me slower, and my speech different. Usually when I speak in class and I am really comfortable I tend to drop the (American?) accent or drop it very low. Let my accent rip.
>
> <div align="right">Kenechukwu, 28-year-old graduate student</div>

> Not so much as an adjustment studying in another country. If there is something I don't know, I feel comfortable to speak my mind. Professors may not understand what I am saying because of the terms I use. Personally, that has not hindered me from explaining. In terms of working with other people in my class. When I first started working with my first team we kind of clashed. They didn't understand where I was coming from. They found it hard to relate with me. I was in a team with older male individuals. There was a barrier in terms of communication. I don't think they understood my issues when we were discussing issues. Right now I don't think that I have those difficulties. Over time it gets better.
>
> <div align="right">Bosola, 26-year-old graduate student</div>

These statements show that African students adjust to U.S. classrooms by altering their accents and being misunderstood by the terms and phrases they use. The classroom can be a location for intercultural clashes. The participants discussed how they negotiated and preserved despite communication issues. On the contrary, Nnamdi discusses how he was able to learn about Nigeria while doing an assignment. He explains,

> I learned a lot about Nigerian after I left Nigeria. Education in Nigeria they don't teach us about the history right except for fine art they teach you about the pre-colonial history in Nigeria and you know. Then again even fine art doesn't teach about contemporary—colonial and contemporary history. Education in general doesn't talk about history. You have social science, which you learn about contemporary politics and you learn about the states and heads of state…Again I left Nigeria when I was 17 so it was around the age when you are coming an adult. So when I was here I took the time with internet and proper songs and lyrics and just curiosity with different things…And then when a professor will ask you "can you give a presentation" about Nigeria…I took this class

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international planning here at BRU with my professor I currently TA for…she is from Iran…she has been in America for a while. And we had to pick a topic and the class was mostly about urban planning and how developing countries are where they are influences by U.S. and all problems are not created by themselves. And you had to pick an area to do research on. I decided to do research on the Niger Delta and I have been interested in the Niger Delta and there are a couple of things I knew that I learned in addition to what I learned in the class.

In this excerpt, Nnamdi talks about how being in U.S. institutions added to his knowledge about the Niger Delta. Having access to the Internet and other resources provided him opportunity to explore aspects of contemporary Nigeria that he did not learn during his Nigerian school experience.

Chapter 6

Summary and Discussion

This research study employed a qualitative methodology to examine how 20 Nigerian college students make meaning of their racial and ethnic identity. To set the foundation of this work, in chapter one I presented the problem statement, three guiding research questions, and the significance to this research study. The three major questions guiding the research are: 1) How do Nigerian college students articulate and make meaning of their racial and ethnic identities? 2) How do social and academic networks inform their racial/ethnic identities? 3) Do these experience vary by generation (1st, 1.5, and 2nd generation)?

Subsequently, in chapter two I provided a review of relevant literature on Black immigrants in the U.S. and in higher education. Following a critical analysis of the gap in literature, in chapter three, I introduced the qualitative methods for this work that included information about participant recruitment, site of this investigation, data collection and analysis, and techniques for assuring reliability and credibility. Therefore, chapter four includes detailed information regarding participants' profiles. Finally, in chapter five I share findings from participants' experiences through an assimilation theory and segmented assimilation theory lens.

This chapter provides a summary of the findings to the questions guiding this study. In doing so, I compare findings with previous literature on Black immigrants. Addressed in the next section is a discussion of this research's contribution to the framework. Preceding this section is a section on the significance of these findings to the field of higher education. The next section discusses the significance of the findings to higher education. This chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

<center>**Summary of Findings**</center>

Research Question One

      This section discusses the primary research question: How do Nigerian college students articulate and make meaning of their racial and ethnic identities? In this dissertation, race is defined as a social construction based on biological and phenotype (i.e. color of skin) (Omi and Winant, 2007; 2013) and ethnicity refers to the cultural distinctiveness that links an individual to a geographical region, language, religion, etc. (Bashi, 1998; Pierre, 2004). Based on Winant (1994) and Cornell and Hartmann (1998) "race is a classification that is typically assigned or externally imposed, while ethnicity is internally asserted" (as cited in Bashi, 1998, p. 961). It is important to note the distinction between race and ethnicity. However, as I explain in this section participant had their own understanding of race and ethnicity.

      Discourse regarding post-1965 Black immigrants and their offspring's integration into higher education has sparked interest as their presence in selective colleges is under scrutiny (Bennett & Lutz, 2009; Massey et al., 2007). Furthermore, Black immigrants positive socioeconomic achievements have been viewed as a marker for the potency of racism in America and have been used to reinforce racialist myths of Black (American) cultural inferiority. By juxtaposing previous literature and utilizing assimilation/ segmented assimilation theory as a framework, findings from this study support and add to the existing literature. Participants' comments suggest that racial and ethnic identity formation is a fluid and complicated process dependent on social context. What is understudied in the literature are the dynamic and specific ways political engagements, historical background, and social constructions influence the everyday lived experiences, decisions, identity options/choices of ethnically diverse Black collegians.

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While the growing body of research on Black immigrants in higher education is focused on the characterization of Black immigrants within the racial/ethnic climate of America (Griffin, et al., 2012; Fries-Britt, George Mwangi, & Peralta, 2014; Offoh, 2009), these studies do not illuminate the way transnational and international students identify themselves on university documents. In this study international and transnational students expressed concern about the ways that the university setting imposed American racial/ethnic categories on them. Participants offered personal accounts of university personnel/ academic professionals "Americanizing" their preferred name or identity.

In one particular situation an international student describes that he characterizes himself as Black, but not African American. He explained that he noticed that administrators changed his choice on a form. This serves as one example of the ways in which administrators or institutions impose American racial and ethnic categories on African students, and as a result Black immigrants are absorbed into an African American category. In addition, in this scenario the secretary fails to acknowledge Black ethnic diversity and inappropriately imposes an American label (re: African-American) on an international student. Interestingly, the student mentioned he did not petition to change his form back and remarked that he understood that the secretary was working within an American system. This scenario in addition to the fact the student did not petition this change is consistent with assimilation theory that proposes that immigrants process the dominant culture's way of doing things in order to have a more harmonious life (Borjas, 2006).

Notably, literature reveals that "the racialization process is one in which a category is imposed by white people in power positions in the racial structure. When the construction of a racial category comes from outside the group, the categorization process is an example of the

exercise of power held by the oppressors in the racial hierarchy" (Bashi, 1998, p. 960). Findings from questionnaire data in this work, finds that while most participants marked that they considered themselves apart of the Black racial category, international and transnational students reported that they did not consider themselves African American. Interview data shows that international and transnational students were more likely to choose the category 'other' on a form that categorized Black and African-American together (i.e. Black/African-American). These students would then write in African, Nigerian, or Nigerian-American. As Uzoigwe (2008) posits negotiating identity relationship can be a frustrating task and Black African students experience complicated messages about their identity and feel pressure to assimilate and maintain a multitude of conflicting identities.

In this sense, students are not trying to gain a monolithic identity; instead they are weighing their options and determining their possibilities based on their lived experiences. This study finds Nigerian college students embrace their various racial and ethnic identities and utilize terms such as African, African-American, Nigerian, transnational Nigerian, Nigerian-American, 1st generation American, Black, Igbo and Yoruba to describe their racial and ethnic identity. Their understanding of which term was associated with race or ethnicity varies. For instance, some participants identified with the African-American category while others felt the term did not describe them.

Overall participants had their own understanding of race and ethnicity and used the following terms to categorize themselves: African, African-American, Nigerian, transnational Nigerian, Nigerian-American, 1st generation American, Black, Igbo and Yoruba. In this situation and others similar participants accepted, embraced, and instrumentally use racial and ethnic categories presented to them in networks, school documents, and in conversations.

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The Nigerian college students from this sample are continually shifting, transgressing and redefining their social identity by reconstructing nationality, race, ethnicity, personal identity, and society which confront them in an age of globalization. The process of constructing identities within a university setting is often dependent on which group they aim to join (i.e., peers, friends, employer, student groups) and services they would like to gain; which in return informs their sociopolitical behaviors (i.e., accents, language, dress, mannerisms).

Research Question Two

This section addresses the second research question: How do social and academic networks inform their identity? This study provides insight on the ways social and academic networks inform students' racial/ethnic identity. Participants described the ways African and non-African networks policed and imposed identities. African peers and culturally centered student groups serve as important forms of support for Nigerian college students as they navigate a large predominate white public research institution. Students felt more comfortable to engage in social behaviors and performances that were indicative of their culture amongst their African peers. Students used their Nigerian accents and spoke Pidgin English amongst African friends and in culturally centered student groups. Undergraduate students relied on cultural centered student groups to help them transition into college and after acquiring a core friend group placed more attention to professional organizations and building their professional networks/ portfolios. Similarly, some graduate students stressed that their rigorous programs did not allow for much time to participate in social programs, however, they did join professional organizations that were geared towards minority or Black students.

Participants also described different ways that they felt microaggressed when connecting with groups on campus and in the classroom setting. Microaggressions refers to moments in

which marginalized groups experience discrimination and subtle insults (Harwood, Hunt, Mendenhall, & Lewis, 2012; Sue et. al., 2007). The insults can be conscious or unconscious. Students felt that their name, accents, and Nigerian heritage made them susceptible to insults and discrimination. Students reported they felt as if they had to prove themselves in the classroom amongst their peers because they were from the African continent. One student declared that she felt like students treated her like she was lower than them because she was from Nigeria.

Research Question Three

This section addresses the subsidiary research question: Do these experiences vary by generation (1.0, 1.5, and 2.0 generation)? Recall each generation is defined in the operational definition section located in the dissertation's preface. Organizationally, this section is divided into three discussions. First, I explain how I re-categorized a group of participants and adopted more fitting terms, such as transnational and international Nigerian, to describe their student status. Next, I address the distinct experiences between the three groups: international, transnational, and second-generation Nigerian college students. Finally, I review the commonalities between the two groups.

Findings revealed that some of the participants were classified as international students by the university and experienced a transnational life course. International student refers to individuals who come to the United States to study in a college or university (IIE, 2014); where transnational students are those who have resided in countries outside of the U.S. or has close family members who are extended across national borders (Haagsman & Mazzucato, 2014; Levitt & Schiller, 2004). In this study, transnational participants reported that they lived in other countries or continents, had close relatives (e.g., parents, sisters, and brothers) abroad, and

traveled regularly back to Nigeria. These groups had overlapping experiences and this summary reflects this finding.

Transnational and international participants were more likely to have traveled to Nigeria recently and had plans to visit close relatives in the near future. In addition, data collected about transnational and international students gives insight on Nigerian returnees who obtained U.S. degrees and voluntarily returned to their home country with job prospects and opportunities. Most international and transnational students explained that they considered themselves African or Nigerian more so than African-American. In fact, in a few cases participants reported that administrators changed either their race/ethnicity or name on university documents. International and transnational participants had distinct experiences that highlighted how they negotiated their accent on campus. Specifically, students reported that they negotiated when they would speak with an American or Nigerian accent, basing their decision on their company and/or environment. However, these participants communicated that they felt more comfortable when they could speak with a Nigerian accent or use Pidgin English. These students also discussed the rights and limitations associated with their citizenship. For instance, one participant described how his international status prevented him from obtaining an internship.

Whereas attention to accent, citizenship, and identity options came up in conversations with international and transnational students, this data was not present in second-generation data. Second generation students were more likely to embrace the African-American label, and felt apart of the Nigerian community on campus. My findings show these students navigated and embraced Nigerian and American understandings of ethnic and racial identity. While this section focuses on the intra-ethnic differences, there were also similarities among the groups. For instance, most of the participants reported that they appreciated having African friends, identified

with the Black racial category, and had at least one college educated parent. Most participants grew up in a two-parent household, and claimed Nigerian heritage.

In addition, Nigerian college students felt that language fluency played a significant role in their identity. There were students from the international/ transnational, and second-generation category that shared they could not speak their mother tongue fluently. Both groups felt shame associated with not speaking their native language fluently and had a desire to learn the language. In contrast to segmented assimilation theory that proposes that second generation immigrants abandon their home language, my participants (both international, transnational and second generation) actively engaged and sought opportunities to utilize accents, Pidgin English, and broken English.

Significance

The intent of this study was to gain a better understanding of how Nigerian college students construct their racial and ethnic identity at a PWI. While this study focused on Nigerian college students, findings from this research can help contribute broadly to the growing body of knowledge on diverse Black populations in higher education. More specifically, this study extends the literature concerning the experiences of Black collegians, international students, and second-generation college going students. Based on the findings, this section offers implications for, practice, policy, and scholarship that require serious consideration. Implications are provided in the hopes of enhancing the services and experiences of ethnically diverse Black students in higher education.

Practitioners

It is imperative practitioners use research to help inform the way they serve students. An important observation about this study is that this population has the potential to be hyper

marginalized within represented and underrepresented groups. In order to meet the diversity and internationalization initiatives of higher education, practitioners must pay attention to the increased diversity within Black populations. In doing so, it is crucial to not limit the understandings of Black populations into a Black immigrant and native Black binary (Onyenekwu & Daoud, 2015). Instead, the reality is that diversity (i.e., ethnicity, generational status, nationality, birthplace, etc.) within the Black community is going unnoticed, and the university setting is a good space and opportunity to learn from people from across the globe. In doing so, intraracial misunderstandings may ensue in the residence halls and/or classrooms. Faculty, academic professionals, and student leaders should be prepared and culturally competent to help mitigate misunderstandings and facilitate intercultural and inclusive dialogue.

University personnel play an instrumental role in the identity construction of ethnically diverse Black populations. To this end, professional development is needed to help faculty, staff, and student leaders better understand this population, particularly because their personal identities (i.e., African, Nigerian, Igbo, Yoruba, etc) do not fit neatly with how U.S. society perceives race and ethnic identity. According to Bashi (1998) understanding race and racial hierarchies comes with navigating racism. In doing so, negotiating the advantages and disadvantage that come along with categories and labels can be emotionally taxing. Practitioners who understand the process in which an individual develops attitudes and belief regarding importance of group membership will be better suited to advise and guide students as they make meaning of their experiences. In addition, providing the appropriate resources and services can prevent homesickness, isolation, frustration, and decrease anger as cited in literature (Constantine et al., 2005).

This study of Nigerian college students' experience can help inform practitioners how to better serve students of color. In doing so, university personnel can help expand the ways we fulfill and implement multicultural and internationalization initiatives. Research studies on campus climate and student retention suggest that being knowledgeable about ethnic and racial identity formation can help support minority college students at PWIs (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, Cooper, & 2012; Evans, et al., 2010). As ethnically diverse Black populations continue to carve out a space in the U.S. racial category, it is important for practitioners to understand how their experiences and challenges impact their academic achievement and educational outcomes.

This study finds that students burdened with navigating their membership and sacrificing their identity for acceptance face discrimination, and are subject to be hyper-marginalized amongst racial/ethnic minority and majority groups. To this end, student organizations play a critical role in supporting students and helping them transition to university. In addition to programing, community engagement activities can help promote student learning and organizational change (Gumport, 2000). Practitioners focusing on student-centered identity and academic growth, paying attention to prevalent issues student organizations bring up can help gain a better understanding of the factors (i.e. language, geographic regions, gender, social class) that impact students experience (Christian & Zippay, 2012).

Policy

A crucial point is that policy makers must seek overarching solutions that support and celebrate different histories and cultures from Africa. In a time when institutions are moving from diversity initiatives to internationalizing higher education initiatives, maintaining a social justice and multiculturalism lens that values the intellectual exchange of Black populations is

needed. Further, certain risk factors such as citizenship status, funding, and immigration challenges (Awokoya, 2012; Nwuba, 1999) are often not a part of the dominant narratives regarding Black immigrants and need to be addressed in research and in policy.

The university serves as a good setting to do research on ethnically diverse Black populations; therefore, more data and research on this population is needed in order to understand their backgrounds, educational experiences, and needs. In order to fill the gap of knowledge, the ways universities collect data must include categories that capture and represent a better understanding of the heterogeneity of the Black population on campus. This initiative may have to come from the federal government. Currently, widely used databases such as Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), do not disaggregate data by both race and citizenship. Therefore non- U.S. citizens and/or Black international students' race/ethnicity is not reported (Byrd, Dika, & Ramlal, 2013).

Today, many Black collegians are international, transnational, and/or second-generation college going students. The findings of this study reveal the possibility of the U.S. being a third home and educated parents do not always have the resources to help student navigate their challenges. Therefore, more data is needed to understand students who are experiencing the U.S. as a third home.

Scholarship

Educators, student affairs administrators, and residential programming are encouraged to be knowledgeable of identity development theory. Literature on Black African immigrants in the United States has existed in the social sciences for years (Bryce-Laporte, 1972; Ogbu, 1992; Rong & Brown, 1992), but literature on ethnically diverse Black populations in higher education is still limited. I was very limited in research I could draw from to write this dissertation and as a

result turned to other disciplines. What has been missing from higher education literature is a focus on the everyday lived experiences of individuals who are engaging a transcultural global movement. Most importantly, each situation that arises is context specific.

The lack of discussion about the social and educational challenges facing this population should be researched extensively. Given the rapid increase of ethnically diverse Black students within U.S. higher education (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2012, IIE, 2014; Kent, 2007), it is important to recognize the characteristics and socialization of this population in order to best understand how to serve them. While a number of scholars have done research on the diversity of Black students in higher education (Bennett & Lutz, 2009; Massey et al., 2007), much of it is done in a manner that alienates one group from another, ultimately pitting Black Americans and Black immigrants against each other. I propose the revisiting of research on Black immigrants in order to mitigate this narrative that one population is superior to another. A number of scholars have pointed out the differences in the college experiences and college choice processes of Black immigrants and native-Black students (Fries-Britt, George Mwangi, & Peralta, 2014; Griffin, del Pilar, McIntosh, & Griffin, 2012). Conversely, others argue that there is a "unique Black college experience" that is present, regardless of student ethnicity or nativity (Thomas, 2009).

Given the nascence of examining diversity among the Black community, and the ways in which it plays out in higher education, it is important to continue research on this population, disaggregated by ethnicity, to determine the role that nativity may, or may not have, in the identity development and racialized experiences of these students. With outcome disparities between White and college students of color continuing to plague higher education merely amplifying the "voices from the margins" is insufficient. While this dissertation adds to the body of knowledge on ethnic diverse Black students in American higher education, I recommend that

this dialogue continues in future research and practice with acknowledgement of Black intra group diversity as the focal point.

Recommendations for Future Research

Presently, scholarly literature on the Black immigrant population in higher education is rather sparse. Given the inconsistencies in presenting Black immigrant experience (i.e. some argue that it is the same as the Black American experience, while others argue it is not), there is an urgent need for further research on this population. In doing so, higher education scholars and practitioners can ultimately improve the experiences and academic success of Black students. Accordingly, I propose four main recommendations. First, researchers must take into consideration students' generational status and international background when looking at their educational experiences. Foreign-born Black students have a markedly different experience than their U.S. born Black counterparts as it relates to college experiences. These students oftentimes have to deal with assimilating into U.S. society, as well as negotiate their racial identities within a U.S. context. Fries-Britt, George Mwangi, and Peralta (2014) point out that this negotiation is rather complex and oftentimes happens in a way that is not comparable to any other population, including second-generation immigrants. As a result, researchers must be careful about how they discuss the experiences of Black immigrants, since foreign-born and transnational students oftentimes have a difference set of issues with which they must grapple upon arriving to the U.S.

Secondly, researchers should also disaggregate data on Black students by ethnicity and understand that there exist numerous differences between different ethnic groups. For instance, most Black populations from the Caribbean speak only English. Conversely, Black immigrants from Africa oftentimes speak several languages, even if their country of origin is Anglophone. Language alone presents a number of issues as it relates to students' abilities to assimilate, and

consequently perform well in U.S. higher education. Accordingly, I propose that work done on Black immigrants move in the direction of work done on Asian Americans (Museus, 2014) as it relates to understanding the differences between particular populations and moving away from the "model Black" myth.

Third, although this study investigates one public research institutions additional research should seek to investigate this phenomenon within different institutional contexts or across different institutional types including community colleges, for profit institutions, online learning, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, regional institutions, and urban and private schools. Additionally, studying one institution provides a more in depth understanding provide a more rich expansive understanding of the role of assimilation plays into the lives of Black African populations.

Lastly, I implore practitioners who work with students of color, and in particular Black students, to understand that Black students are not a homogenous population; there exist a number of differences as it relates to culture, educational experiences, habitus, and expectations, which must be taken into consideration when working with this population. Providing co-curricular programming that is inclusive of global experiences is critical when working with Black students, particularly given the importance of diverse learning environments and cross-cultural engagement (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013; Museus, 2014). As such, both practitioners and researchers alike have a responsibility to improve upon the ways Black immigrants are researched in today's higher education landscape.

Conclusion

In sum, findings from this research complicate and add to the existing literature on Black immigrants. This study diverges from current lines of inquiry on Black immigrants by attempting

to understand the lives of college students and examining specifically 20 Nigerian college students. Approaching this study from this perspective reveals that the category Black immigrant has its limitations and can potentially further homogenize ethnically diverse populations. By specifically looking at students from Nigeria, this study provided insight on ethnicities (i.e. Igbo, Yoruba) from outside of the U.S. context. I advocate scholars who are devoted to work around multiculturalism and internationalization to seek more inclusive categories, labels, language and understandings of ethnic Black populations on U.S. campuses and to contextualize their experiences with citizenship status and birthplace while using a Pan-African and transnational lens.

Although assimilation theory and segmented assimilation theory offer persuasive tenants to help understand post 1965 Black immigrants and their offspring, this study does not find sufficient evidence that supports second generation immigrants abandon their language, or have to make finite identity choices. In fact, I find that these participants are not thriving for a single identity but are negotiating multiple identities in a multicultural and globalized university setting that provides many opportunities for group membership.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the literature on fluid identity and the contextual nature of identity formation that is continually shifting, transgressing by reconstructing nationality, race, ethnicity, personal identity and society that confront us in an age of globalization. Through this examination a deeper understanding of people from African descent has been captured. In an era of increasing globalization marked by the transnational exchange of students in the university settings, staff, faculty, and students are engaging in collective dialogue. To this end, terms categories and identity are being redefined. The expressions shared in this project raises additional questions that future scholars need to pursue.

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Ethnography of the University Initiative: Student Research

U NIVERSITY OF I LLINOIS
AT U RBANA - C HAMPAIGN

Ethnography of the University Initiative: Student Research

Informed Consent

Description and Purpose of the Research

　Ifeyinwa U. Onyenekwu　 is conducting research to fulfill requirements for a college course
STUDENT RESEARCHER'S NAME

titled EOL 574: Diversity in Higher Education.
　　　COURSE RUBRIC, NUMBER, SECTION, TITLE

This research consists mainly of ethnographic fieldwork, which involves observations and interviews, as well as interpretation and analysis of information gleaned from these activities. The general purpose of ethnographic research is to learn how members of a community (for example, students in a club or employees in a dining hall) make sense of their own community and its relationships with other people, communities, and institutions. Ethnography is a kind of research commonly done by scholars in social science fields like Anthropology.

Voluntary Nature of Participation

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you are a UIUC student, you may participate, decline, or withdraw from participation without any effect on your grades at, status at, or future relations with this institution or the University of Illinois. You may withdraw from this study at any time. To withdraw, contact the student researcher. Participants in all EUI-affiliated research must be at least 18 years of age.

Confidentiality

In this study, every effort will be made not to reveal personally identifiable information in publications based on this research. To accomplish this, no records will be created or retained that could link you to personally identifiable descriptions, paraphrases, or quotations. Your actions or things you say may be presented without specific reference to you, reference only by

pseudonym, or combined anonymously with the actions and words of other participants. If you give permission for this interview to be audio recorded, the student researcher will destroy the audio files as soon as they complete the transcription, before the semester ends.

Risks and Benefits

Your participation in this project should not involve risks beyond those of ordinary life. You will not be paid for your participation in this research project, nor is it expected that your participation will bring you any benefits, tangible or otherwise. It is hoped that the student researcher named above will benefit from this project by learning how to do college-level, ethnographic research.

Contact Information

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this research project, please contact the Responsible Project Investigator (RPI) or Project Investigators (PI):

> Nancy Abelmann, Anthropology, 217-333-7273 or nabelman@illinois.edu(RPI)
> Tim Cain, Educational Organization and Leadership, 217-333-1931 or tcain@illinois.edu(PI)
> Karen Rodriguez'G, Ethnography of the University Initiative, 217-244-7733 or rodrigzg@illinois.edu (PI)

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at Suite 203, 528 East Green Street Champaign, IL 61820, 217-333-2670 (You may call collect if you identify yourself as a research subject) or via email at irb@illinois.edu.

Consent Statement

I have read and understand the forgoing description of this research project, including information about the risks and benefits of my voluntary participation.

I give my permission for this interview to be audio-recorded _____ (Please initial to grant consent)

_____
Print Name

There are two copies of this form. Please sign both. Return one to the researcher and keep one for your records

Appendix B

Questionnaire

1. Major: _____
2. Classification: ____ freshman ____ sophomore ____ junior ____ Senior

   ____ Graduate student (Circle One) Masters/ Doctoral

3. Please indicate other degrees: associate in _____ bachelors in _____

   masters in _____

4. Date of Birth (MM/DD/YY): _____
5. Place of Birth: (Ex. United States, Nigeria, Ghana) _____
6. If not the United States please indicate what year you arrived to the United States?
   _____
7. Sex: _____ Male _____ Female

Parent's Background

8. Mother's birthplace: Country, City, State?
   _____

9. What is your mother's race/ethnicity (e.g., white/French; black, Nigerian/Igbo)?
   _____

10. Mother's occupation: _____
11. Mother's education: ___high school ___ some college____ bachelor's degree
    ___graduate degree_____ Professional degree ____ Other.
    Explain_____
12. If applicable, please indicate what professional degree (e.g MBA).
    _____

13. Did your mother attend college in the United States? ____ yes ____ no
14. What is the name of the college your mother attended?
    _____

15. Father's birthplace: Country, City, State?
    _____

16. What is your father's race/ethnicity (e.g., white/ French; black/ Nigerian/Igbo)?
    _____

17. Father's occupation: _____
18. Father's education: ____high school ___ some college____ bachelor's degree ___
    graduate degree _____ Professional degree ___ Other
    Explain_____

19. If applicable, please indicate what degree (e.g. MBA).

_____

20. Did your father attend college in the United States? ___ yes ___ no
21. What is the name of the college your father attended? (ex. University of Lagos)_____

Self-Identification

22. Do you consider yourself black? ___ yes ___ no
23. Do you consider yourself African American ___ yes __ no

If no, how do you identify yourself? _____

24. Do you consider yourself to be bi racial or multiracial?

_____

25. Do you consider yourself to be bi cultural or multicultural?

_____

26. Have you lived in an African country? ____ yes _____ no
27. Have you visited an African country? ____ yes _____ no
28. Do you have relatives in an African country? ___ yes ___ no
29. If yes, which country(ies)? _____

Household

30. Was a native African language spoken in your household? ____ yes ____ no
31. Does either parent speak any language other than English? ___ yes ___ no

If yes, which parent speaks an African language? _____

32. Do you speak an African language? ____ yes ___ no

If yes, which language(s)? _____

33. Did you attend African functions growing up (e.g. church, weddings, parties)? ___ yes ___ no
34. Did you grow up playing with other African children? ___ yes ___ no
35. How many siblings do you have? _____

Residency

36. Are you a United States citizen? ___ yes ___ no

If no, where do you hold citizenship? _____

37. What was the reason you went to Nigeria last? (check all that apply)? ___ visit
___family ____ vacation ____ business ____ study abroad ____ school/ work __ other
(indicate reason)

38. Do you plan on going for any reason? (Vacation, family, research, business, etc.) to an
African country? _____yes ____no

If yes, when? Soon (within a couple of weeks/ months) ____ within years ____ never ____ I
do not know _____whenever I have the money to go

39. Do you plan to live/reside in the United States for the
_____the next 5 years?
_____next 6 – 10 years?
_____11+ years?
_____ unsure

40. Do you consider America your home? _____ yes ____ no
41. Do you consider a country in Africa your home? ____ yes ____ no

If yes, please indicate the country? _____

College Life

42. Do you live ___ university housing ___ on campus ___ off campus ____ w/ parents?

Do you work ____ Part-Time on campus _____ PT off campus____ Full-Time on campus
_____FT off campus (check all that apply)?

43. Are you a part of an organization on campus (check all that apply)? ____ cultural
organization ____ professional organization____ social organization _____religious
organization ____ Other?
44. How are you funding your education (check all that apply)? ___ student loan ___ private
loans ___ scholarship ___fellowship ___family ___ grant ___ work study ___ out of
pocket___assistantship___Other

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Pre-College, Campus Life, Social Networks

1. Tell me about your life before coming to BRU (Probe: neighborhood, primary school, demographic, ages, and other general descriptive details).
2. How would you describe your friends during this time?
3. Tell me about the demographic of your friends (student organization groups, professional organizations, work site, etc).
4. Are you actively involved in any social networks on campus (e.g., religious, sports, registered student group, academic, political, recreational, volunteer, cultural/racial/ethnic based)? If, yes tell me about them.
5. How did you get involved?
6. How much do you feel like you are a part of the campus community (probe: classroom comfort, social scene)?
7. How much do you feel a part of the Nigerian community on campus?
8. Tell me about where you live on campus (ex. apartments, on campus off campus residential hall) (probe: roommate, demographic of neighborhood, complex or residence hall).
9. How would describe your close friends in terms of racial/ethnic backgrounds, national origin, etc.? (Probe: friends at BRU).

Identity and Language

1. When a form asks for your race, what do you put down? Why?
2. What do people (e.g., professors, classmates, colleagues, administrators, etc) think you are? What do you think about that?
3. If you could invent your own box, what would it say? Why?
4. Are there situations in which you feel more or less comfortable identifying a certain way? (probe: class, professors, student groups, networking events) Why?
5. How do you usually identify racially and/or ethnically? Why?
6. What does this identity mean to you? (i.e. how important is this identity to you?)
7. Has your identity changed since you have attended BRU?
8. Are there specific situations in which you might identify differently (probe: use different name and/or accent)?
9. Can you recall an incident in which you began to identify a different way than you do now?
10. Have you ever felt any conflicts over your identity? (e.g being Nigerian and American). If yes, tell me about it.

11. What are/were your parents' expectations about you speaking or understanding their language?
12. What are your feelings about the degree to which you can understand/speak your parents' language?
13. Do you plan on teaching your children your parent language? Why or Why not?
14. Tell me how your parents describe your racial/ethnic background.

Transnational

1. Have you ever visited Nigeria? If yes, tell me about your experiences
2. If no, why haven't you visited Nigeria?
3. What kinds of things do you parents tell you about Nigeria?
4. What kinds of things have you learned about Nigeria since attending BRU (probe: classroom instruction, curriculum knowledge)?
5. If you had to explain to your friends or school administrators about Nigeria what would you say?
6. How much contact do you and/or your family have with people in Nigeria?
7. Tell me about your social life?
8. That is the last question thank you for your time. Is there anything you would like to share?