PORTRAITS OF SUCCESSFUL AFRICAN IMMIGRANT FACULTY ON U.S CAMPUSES

Zipporah Wanjira Abla

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Committee:

W. Kyle Ingle, Advisor
Dafina L. Stewart
Graduate Faculty Representative
Mark A. Earley
Faith W. Ngunjiri
ABSTRACT

W.Kyle. Ingle, Advisor,

African immigrants in the U.S. are still understood according to a “melting pot” model of immigration and are expected to identify with a segment of the host society—African Americans (Olupọna & Gemignani, 2007). However, African immigrants are culturally and socially different from native-born African Americans. For example, due to colonization, African identity is mostly based on ethnicity, culture, geography and nationhood while African Americans identify primarily with or in racial terms (Appiah, 1992). The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the experiences of African immigrant faculty members who have successfully advanced academically in the U.S. campuses as evidenced by tenure and promotion, and to understand the extent to which African faculty members are aware of how their “African-ness” has contributed to their success in American campuses. It is important to contextualize the experiences of the study’s participants to gain an understanding of where their individual narratives fit within the broader landscape of diversity, multiculturalism and inclusiveness in American campuses. This study uses portraiture methodology, a qualitative approach that concentrates on unearthing goodness and highlighting successes, while recognizing that imperfections will always be present within a social system. A conceptual framework of three interrelated constructs—African spirituality, resilience, and acculturation—understood within the context of African immigrant faculty experiences was used as an analytical lens.
The findings from this study may be used as a template to demonstrate the avenues to success for immigrant faculty, which would help in recruiting and retaining African immigrant faculty. The findings can also aid as a means of educating students and faculty to have a better perspective of the African immigrant and to dispel myths and negative stereotypes about African people and other immigrants.
To the glory of my Lord Jesus Christ

…and lovingly dedicated to Victor Abla, the love of my life…

Through his kindness and love, writing this dissertation was so much easier.

Philippians 2:9-11
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In an era of global competition for talent, there has been a rapid increase of foreign-born students and faculty in U.S. institutions of higher education (Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2008). This may be for the reason that these institutions are making great efforts to attract the world’s “best and brightest” students and faculty to diversify their campuses and to enhance their scientific leadership and innovation (National Association of Foreign Student Advisers, 2011).

The Institute of International Education (2010) documented that foreign-born faculty in the academic year 2009-2010 had increased to 115,098 from 86,015 in the academic year 2001-2002, an increase of 33.8%, despite the problems in obtaining visas after the September 11, 2001 terrorists attacks. Immigrant faculty members are disproportionately found at research universities and are often employed at the most prestigious universities in the U.S., typically on the east and west coasts (Open Door, 2008). Also, these faculty members are concentrated in the science, technology, engineering and math fields (National Science Board, 2010). According to the Institute of International Education (2010), the immigrant faculty makes up one third of all new faculty hires, surpassing the number of native-born female hires and domestic hires from other under-represented groups.

Research indicates that under ideal conditions, immigrant faculty may provide a broader worldview for their students (Audas, 1990). O’Hara (2006) argues that U.S. scholars are more parochial than their immigrant colleagues. Takaki (1989) maintains that the diversity of ideas and perspectives by immigrant faculty are valuable qualities which can be included in assessing their contributions to academic institutions. Basti (1996) posits that immigrant faculty may provide an insider’s view that can help their departments in laying the groundwork for successful foreign exchange programs, and they may be able to provide a forum for internationalization of
the curriculum. In a study on role model influence in academics, Rask and Bailey (2002) argued that, given the rising immigrant diversity within the student body at universities, the immigrant faculty role model effect may in fact support affirmative action policies.

Surprisingly, despite the immigrant faculty members becoming “highly visible symbols of the changing face of the population in higher education” (Manrique & Manrique, 1999, p. 103) and being a significant percentage of the diverse workforce they have been largely ignored in the higher education literature (Wei, 2007). Mamiseishvili and Rosser (2010) postulate that immigrant faculty in U.S. universities have been an overlooked group within the professoriate despite the fact that they “occupy special niches” in U.S. campuses (Lin, Pearce, & Wang, 2009, p. 9) and make valuable contributions to U.S. higher education enterprise, especially in research (Corley & Sabharwal, 2007; Marvasti, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

Although the literature on diversity issues in higher education has been growing, most studies focus on U.S. born racial and ethnic minorities (Jones, 2000). These studies fail to differentiate between the native-born and the immigrant (Johnsrud, 1993; Kossek & Zonia, 1994). For example, Joshrud (1993) reviewed literature on women and minority faculty members and noted that distinctions between immigrant and native-born faculty members were rarely made. Sometimes these immigrant faculty members qualify as minority, and their needs may parallel those of native-born faculty in some aspects. However, their career path is further shaped by their cultural and linguistic background as well as their immigration status. Therefore, the career development of these faculty members is often different from that of their native-born peers (Shih, 2005) and should be explored further.
The literature that is available on immigrant faculty mostly draws attention to their struggles. Some of these struggles include the U.S. government’s efforts to tighten visa and immigration procedures in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks (Collins, 2008); their accents and problems articulating American phonetics (Ngwainmbi, 2006); lack of collegiality at the departmental level (Thomas & Johnson, 2004); and their struggles with self-identity as they depart their homelands and join the ranks of minority in a new land (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1998; Thomas & Johnson, 2004). Also, students continuously doubt and challenge the teaching quality of international faculty, which affects their teaching evaluation and promotion evaluation (Skachkova, 2007). Other struggles include racism, prejudice, and bias (Mayuzumi, 2009).

With all these struggles, how have some immigrant faculty members managed to successfully advance in the professoriate and earn tenure from institutions of higher education? To date, research addressing this question is notably absent from published literature. This is a gap in the literature that this study addresses. Furthermore, the scant existing studies focus on immigrants from the major geographic regions from which the immigrants originate, such as Asia, Mexico and the Caribbean. Few studies examine immigrants from Africa (Takyi, 2002). The lack of research on African immigrants may be explained by the fact that most African immigrants are still understood according to a “melting pot” model of immigration and are expected to identify with a segment of the host society—African-Americans (Olupọna & Gemignani, 2007). However, immigrants are very different culturally and socially from native-born Americans, such that they have been referred to as “strangers from a different shore” (Takaki, 1989). For instance, Ghana-born philosophy scholar, Kwame Appiah (1992), argues that Africans’ identity contrasts significantly from the identity of African Americans. For
example, due to colonization, African identity is based mostly on ethnicity, culture, geography and nationhood, while African-American identity is primarily based in racial terms. Therefore, this research study addresses the gap in the literature concerning how successful African immigrant faculty members advanced to successful careers in U.S. institutions of higher education.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of African immigrant faculty members who have successfully advanced in U.S. campuses as evidenced by tenure and promotion. Lin and Gao (2008) claim that tenure and rank are the two milestones in the ladder of faculty careers. The intent of the study is to understand the extent to which African faculty members are aware of their “African-ness” and how it has contributed to their success in American academia. The goal of this research is to give a voice to the multiple dimensions of the African immigrant faculty experiences in the U.S., bringing to light how they experience their African-ness in the complex, dynamic tensions of U.S. academia. The study gives attention to how African immigrant faculty on U.S. campuses experience and understand their world, how they feel, what they believe, and how they have turned any barriers into opportunities to maximize their fullest potential in U.S. institutions of higher education.

This portraiture study concentrates on unearthing goodness and highlighting successes, while recognizing that imperfections will always be present within a social system (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). This study provides a vehicle and suitable medium to articulate African immigrant faculty members’ voices and offers a first-hand account of their mechanisms of adaptation, integration and incorporation that are fostered to ensure success in American institutions of higher education.
Research Questions

The questions that guided this inquiry are:

1. What are the lived experiences of successful African immigrant faculty members in higher education institutions in the U.S.?

2. To what extent has their “African-ness” contributed to their success in American academic systems?

Significance of Study

It is important to study faculty members and, in particular African immigrant faculty members, for various reasons. First, knowledge generated has policy implications. Schwartz (2007) observes that a diverse faculty is essential to a pluralistic environment that supports scholarly inquiry, creative thought, groundbreaking research and inter-disciplinary programming. African immigrant faculty members bring with them a diversity of perspectives and worldviews that potentially enrich the university in the global context. Therefore, it is essential to understand this group of faculty members to aid efforts to recruit and retain the best scholars into the academy and to enhance the contribution of immigrant faculty to the research and teaching mission of U.S. universities.

Second, this study will add to the limited body of literature on immigrant faculty members, in particular those of African heritage. Findings from this study may provide a better understanding of the experiences of African immigrant faculty and highlight strategies that have facilitated their success in academia. This information may be useful for other racially and ethnically diverse faculty members, and other marginalized populations in U.S. campuses and together they may learn to cope with the challenges and barriers in a collective manner and with a stronger voice. This information may also be beneficial to those who work with and provide
support to immigrant faculty members, such as academic administrators and human resources management. Armed with this information, they may be able to create policies and support strategies in their institutions that may create an environment that will enhance the quality of life and increase the likelihood of success of the immigrant faculty members.

Third, knowing more about the experiences of African immigrant faculty can aid as a means of educating students and faculty to have a better perspective of the African immigrant and to dispel myths and negative stereotypes about African people and other immigrants. Data confirm what educators have given testimony to: that students learned better when the learning occurs in a setting where they are confronted with others who are unlike themselves. Patricia Gurin and colleagues (2002) conducted an in-depth empirical analysis to measure the educational benefits of diversity. Her studies show that students educated in diverse classrooms learn to think in deeper and more complex ways and are better prepared to become active participants in a pluralistic, democratic society.

Delimitations

The delimitations of a study are those additional controls imposed or restrictions exercised by the researcher in order to make it more functional, feasible, workable, reliable, and valid (Pajares, 2007). The population in this study is African faculty members. These faculty members hold immigrant status such as naturalized U.S. citizens, permanent residents, or immigrants with work visas in the U.S. In particular, this study looks at those who came to the U.S. for advanced degrees. I presuppose people with such experience have an ample understanding of their home culture and educational system, and their background may presumably influence their adjustment process and their leadership behavior to the educational institutions in a foreign culture such as the United States.
This study was restricted to tenured faculty members only because tenure is the single most important accomplishment in the career of an academician (Mindiola, 1995). Tenure is not just an important honor bestowed upon a professor; it is, in fact, a legitimization of a career (Mindiola, 1995). A tenure appointment is one without term, or of indefinite term. It guarantees the faculty member a continuing appointment, subject to certain conditions (Jones & Gold, 2001). The American Association of University Professors (AAUP, 2001) ties the purpose of tenure to two objectives: academic freedom and economic security. Because of limited time and other resources, I will further restrict this study to those faculty members in Midwest campuses, because this is where I am situated.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher (Creswell, 2012). There are several inherent methodological limitations of this study due to the nature of the research questions, scope of the study, and the role of the researcher. The first limitation is that the research questions addressed in this study are laden with emotion, as this research examines personal experiences with subjectivity, prejudice, and discrimination.

The second potential weakness may be that, as a former professional and a current doctoral student in the U.S. from Africa, I have strong empathy for those immigrant faculty members in U.S. institution who are searching for a place to belong in academia. A common limitation of the interview method is related to the researcher’s biases and reactivity. While bias denotes the researcher’s subjectivity in the form of individual beliefs and perceptual lenses, reactivity entails the influence of the researcher on the participants of the study (Maxwell, 2005). My interpretations of the data may be subject to my personal and professional background.
Lastly, participants may have varied national and cultural backgrounds. This may also be a limitation because some cultural nuances may not be properly received and interpreted. I will provide the means by which such subjectivities will be mitigated in Chapter Three of this study.

Conceptional Framework

A conceptual framework describes what is to be studied and the presumed relationships between what is studied (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this section, I describe three relevant interrelated components understood within the context of African immigrant faculty experiences: African Spirituality, Resilience Theory, and Acculturation Theory. I also describe how I position myself in relationship to the research.

African Spirituality

To understand the experiences of African faculty, I drew from African spirituality. For African peoples, the essence of life is spiritual (Alkebulan, 2007). Paris (1995) states that spirituality is deeply embedded in the development of African people. Parrinder (1974) observed that Africans are "incurably religious people" (p 9). Mbiti (1990) poetically stated that “Africans are notoriously religious” (p.1) because there is no separation between religious life and daily life. Mbiti (1991) further maintains that religion is the richest part of African heritage such that to be an African is to be truly religious. Within the African cosmology, the universe and everything in it is sacred (Wane, 2011). Life, death, birth, circumcision, business success, educational attainment, a good harvest, and a successful marriage can be explained in terms of blessings from or disfavor with the spiritual realm (Ngunjiri, 2010). Some researchers such as Bernard (2002), Wheeler, Ampadu, and Wangari (2002), who have studied African people, affirm that spirituality is a tool for coping and healing. Spirituality has also served as a personal and communal source of liberation, solace, hope, meaning and forgiveness (Dash, Jackson, &
Further, it has shaped individual, family, and communal relationships promoting altruism and unity. Dei (2002) put forth that African spirituality stresses mind, body, and soul interactions. Such spirituality is about values, beliefs, ideas of integrity, and dignity that shape individual consciousness into a collective and unified existence. Dei (2002) further asserts that the individual develops spirituality through the engagement of society, culture and nature interrelation. Desmond Tutu (2010) called this interdependence with fellow human beings and with the rest of creation (Ubuntu) often heard as, “I am because we are, and because we are, I am.” This theological anthropology is a human-centered, yet spiritual view of what it means to be human. To be human means to be in relationship with others (Ngunjiri, 2010). Wane (2011) strongly asserts that African spirituality is a good force and a necessary philosophy to be claimed in contemporary educational spaces where knowledge is created and disseminated.

In light of this study, the central idea to be underscored is that, at the very center of African spirituality, lies the core issue of relationship. For African people, spirituality is communal and corporate (Kasambala, 2005). It is, therefore, fair to hypothesize that successful African immigrant faculty embrace and integrate Ubuntu principles in their classroom and campuses, as they do not conceive themselves as separated from the cosmos, but as being completely integrated into a universe that is much large than them and yet is centered around them.

In addition, to understand the immigrant African faculty members better, I examined the cultural aspects that impacted how the African immigrant faculty members understood and negotiated American academia by looking through the framework of Acculturation theory.
Acculturation Framework

I drew on the cross-cultural theory of acculturation as a means of appreciating cultural aspects that impact how immigrants negotiate American society (Berry, 2005). Acculturation refers to the changes that take place as a result of contact with culturally dissimilar people, groups, and social influences (Gibson, 2001). Acculturation theory sheds light on the study of experiences of immigrant faculty in the U.S., especially those who may be struck with anxiety or disorientation when encountering a foreign culture (Schumann, 1986). It is important to note that the acculturation process does not take the same form for all immigrant groups and receiving societies (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). For instance, African immigrants have a “dual frame of reference” (Ogbu & Gibson, 1991, p. 7), meaning that they constantly compare the status that they have achieved or hope to achieve in the U.S. with that of their peers in Africa and/or upon their repatriation to their homeland.

Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones (2006) developed a model with which to understand the acculturation of immigrants within the context of identity theory. They argue that social and cultural identity underlies acculturation, and that personal identity can help to “anchor” the immigrant person during cultural transitions and adaptation (p.2). In their discussions of acculturation, identity, and culture, Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones (2006) note the individualist and collectivist self-construal. These construals can influence, and in many cases determine, the very nature of individual experience, including cognition, emotion, and motivation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Broadly, individualism is thought to characterize western cultures, whereas collectivism is thought to characterize non-western cultures. Markus and Kitayama (1991) assert that those endorsing individualism are most likely to emphasize personal aspects of their identity (e.g., beliefs, values). In contrast, collectivist people tend to be
more concerned with the welfare of their families and other social contexts than with their own individual functioning, and to emphasize social aspects of their identities (Chen, Brockner & Katz, 1998). For individuals that maintain a collectivist view of self, identity is acquired from their group, and the concept of “we-ness” is of supreme importance. From the previous section on African spirituality, it is clear that Africans’ view of self is connected to others; therefore, it is a collective self-construal.

From a cultural strength perspective, research indicates that ethnic minorities who develop a well-defined ethnic identity schema (Alvarez & Helms, 2001) and express ethnic pride in their identity may benefit from the cultural strengths afforded by this identification; a sense of belonging to their ethnic group, coupled with a strong favorable attitude about their ethnicity (Castro & Murray, 2010). According to LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993), the ideal goal is for a person to be socially competent in a second culture without losing the same competence in his or her culture of origin. Ainslie (2002) refers to the ability to shuttle or transition back and forth between cultures, with the objective of dealing with both the new and the old cultures, as biculturalism. According to Suarez-Orozco and Paez (2002), the process of developing biculturalism and creating a new identity requires combining two frames of reference-- the culture from the country of origin and the new societal expectations of the American culture.

A study conducted by Sadao (2003) used the acculturation theory to examine how faculty of color explain their success or failure in faculty ranks relative to the societal, organizational, interpersonal, and individual factors that affect career patterns within organizations. These faculty members were skillful at “code switching” --using a different set of values and cultural orientation to respond to the university culture which tends to reflect
traditional societal values and norms while insuring that their ethnic culture or culture of origin was not lost. Elaborating on the importance of biculturalism, Rashid (1984) suggests that biculturalism is an attribute that all Americans should possess because it creates a sense of efficacy within the institutional structure of society along with the sense of pride and identification with their ethnic roots.

In conclusion, immigrant faculty members who are competent biculturally (i.e., have the potential to shift from one cultural context to another) can choose from a repertoire of behaviors to adapt appropriately to the cultural context. This ability may help them leverage to make learning and knowledge transfer across contexts less arduous and, hence, facilitate learning.

**Resiliency Framework**

Resiliency is defined as “the ability to cope with adversity and overcome the most challenging circumstances” (Hassinger & Plourde, 2005, p. 319). Grotenberg (2001) describes resiliency as the human capacity to face, deal with, overcome, learn from, be strengthened by or even transformed by experiences of adversity. Bickel (2009) states that resilience is the capacity to remain robust under conditions of stress and change. A pivotal concept in the literature is that resilience is not a personal trait but one that encompasses internal and external factors (Cora-Bramble, 2006). Internal factors are those that reside within the individual, such as competence, self-esteem, cultural identity, coping skills, self-efficacy (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). External factors are those that help individuals to overcome challenges such as mentoring, faculty development, and minority faculty peer groups (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005).

Rutter (1987) found the following behaviors and characteristics consistently expressed by resilient individuals: engaging the support of others, having secure relationships, demonstrating self-efficacy, and having a sense of humor. These qualities were validated and expanded in
Rutter’s subsequent research (1993). Lyons’ research (1991) suggests that resilient individuals demonstrate the characteristics of patience and the ability to tolerate negative emotions; however the participants were all white Caucasians. The recent emergence of the “positive psychology field” has identified other individual factors known to contribute to resiliency, such as optimism, hope, creativity, faith and forgiveness (Richardson, 2002). Other studies have examined the role of environmental factors contributing to resiliency, such as social support (e.g., connection to other competent adults within and outside immediate family (Flores, Cicchetti, & Rogosch., 2005; Rutter, 1985).

Historically, research on resiliency focused primarily on children and adolescents in the developmental psychology literature (Rutter, 1987). Given the struggles and challenges experienced by immigrant faculty in U.S. campuses, resiliency theory may provide a new and insightful paradigm to frame the discussion of African immigrant faculty academic advancement in U.S. campuses despite these circumstances. In a study of career resilience among faculty members at Qatar University, it was found that resilient faculty members are flexible, goal-driven, optimistic, and high in self-esteem; and they understand that to make effective change takes time and provides new learning opportunities for implementation (Wang, Haertl, & Walberg, 1998). Campbell-Sills and colleagues (2006) found that resilience was positively related to personality traits and coping styles.

It is vital to note that the conceptualization of resilience is still a major issue in research; resilience is conceptualized as a trait, state, process, or outcome (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000), and much disagreement exists as to which of these is most appropriate. In this study, the model that is employed conceptualizes resilience as a dynamic process, and, therefore, the construct is more appropriately called “resiliency.” This takes into account characteristics of the
person and environment and the self-regulatory processes exercised by the individual (King & Rothstein, 2010).

In conclusion, resiliency is a key skill for faculty members who are expected to keep up with innovations, to serve in the community, and to publish or perish (Loo & Ho, 2006), in order to progress in their academic careers. Figure 1 captures the discussion of the three relevant conceptual frameworks from which to view the portraits of successful African immigrant faculty members.

*Figure 1. Successful African Immigrant Faculty Conceptual Framework*

![Successful African Immigrant Faculty Conceptual Framework](image)

**Situating Self**

My own personal interest in studying the lived experiences of successful African faculty members in the U.S. must be exposed so as to show how I developed my ideas and how my
conclusions are tinted. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) posit that behind the methods and analysis of qualitative research “stands the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gender, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective” (p.18). Just as the artist is the primary instrument in painting, the researcher is the primary research instrument in qualitative investigation.

I too am African, and I began my sojourning experience in the U.S. eight years ago. I initially came from Kenya to the U.S. as a missionary working alongside an Anglican church. I worked with underprivileged people in the Washington, D.C. metro area. My American host family took every opportunity to provide me with a lifetime experience as I navigated the complex fast-paced life in Washington, D.C. Three years ago, I relocated to the Midwest for graduate school. While my graduate studies have provided the academic and professional development experience I desired, the town/community-at-large in which the university is located seems to avoid others who do not fit into their immediate family structure. Whether it is a consequence of my accent or my desire for community, I am still trying to discover whether I belong here or not. Discussions with other immigrant graduate students and professionals here have provided me with a strong sense of validation of my own perceptions.

There is a profound difference between my African worldview and the American worldview in the emphasis and value placed on the collective good versus the individual. The meaning of personhood in African societies is centered within the family and community, not the individual, as is true in most Western cultures. Growing up in Kenya, my community helped shape and define the person I am today. I am who I am because of who we all are (Umundu). Therefore, my concept of career is relational and socially rooted with the focus on the other person.
In African culture, time tends to focus on the past and present, not the future (Pennington, 1990). According to Mbiti (1970), “The future is virtually absent because events which lie in it have not taken place; they have not been realized and cannot, therefore, constitute time” (p.19). In African culture, time is related to significant events. For example in my culture, the Kikuyu people, trading with the neighboring communities is a very significant event. Therefore, market days are a very important aspect of the Kikuyu culture and not the actual hour, minute or second. This might explain the old adage, “there is no hurry in Africa.” Given that the concept of time in the American culture is linear, finite, and future-oriented (Pennington, 1990), I tend to be behind schedule for many meetings and classes. I now choose to make efficient use of time a priority while juggling work, school and family responsibilities. This has undoubtedly exacerbated my cultural tendency toward how I interact with time.

Another cultural difference is in regards to the value of honor and shame, which has confused and sometimes embarrassed me. In Kenya, faculty members are recognized as authority figures, and student-faculty relationships are significantly different from those in the U.S. universities. The Kenyan student-faculty relationship framework is formal and meritocratic, and the relationships occur in groups. I was confused when faculty members in the U.S. asked us to call them by their first name instead of “Doctor.” However, I now appreciate that these personal relationships promote mentor-mentee relationships, reciprocal learning, and scholarly collaboration. I am still embarrassed when students challenge and critique a colleague’s work or even a faculty member in class. Culturally, in Africa, critiquing should be done in private so as not to shame the person.

I have wrestled with the transition of coming from an African country, Kenya, where I was a racial majority. This has led to experiencing feelings of cultural loss. I have faced
additional complexities, such as differential treatment because of my race and my accent in various situations. Furthermore, because I have been separated from my culture for over eight years, when I go home, my mannerisms give me away as a foreign national, thus, I do not quite fit in as a Kenyan, nor do I quite fit as an American. So in a sense, I feel caught between two cultures; and it is a challenge negotiating multiple, and sometimes conflicting, cultural identities and values in my everyday life.

In conclusion, the key motivators for this study from a personal viewpoint are as follows: First, it is my cognitive attempt to bring together a whole, more or less, cultural harmony of two distinct cultures, each with inherent strengths and weaknesses. Second, I had pondered about what I may possibly do to honor my bicultural, bilingual status and make connections with my native country while negotiating differences in cultural values and norms deemed necessary for not only survival but success in U.S. academia. Third, I am determined to be a successfully integrated African immigrant graduate student and ultimately a successful immigrant faculty member in the United States. It is for these reasons that this study evolved with the intention that I could examine those who have gone before me and blazed the path for African immigrant graduate students like me to follow in their footsteps.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms were used in this study:

*Acculturation*: The changes that take place as a result of contact with culturally dissimilar people, groups and social influences (Gibson, 2001).

*African Spirituality*: The interdependence with fellow human beings, creation and the Creator.

*African Immigrant faculty*: Those immigrant faculty members from the continent of Africa.
**Foreign-Born/Immigrant faculty:** Any faculty member who is not a U.S. citizen at birth, including those who have become U.S. citizens through naturalization. (For simplicity, all foreign born are referred to as immigrants, regardless of their visa type.)

**Higher education** - Comprises all educational institutions that provide post-secondary degree education. They include universities and colleges.

**Portraiture:** A qualitative research methodology that concentrates on unearthing goodness and highlighting successes, while recognizing that imperfections will always be present within a social system (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983).

**Resilience:** The ability to cope with adversity and overcome the most challenging circumstances (Hassinger & Plourde, 2005).

**Successful faculty:** Faculty members who have attained tenure and promotion.

**Summary**

In summary, Chapter 1 provides the contextual and conceptual framework undergirding my study. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the experiences of African immigrant faculty members who have successfully advanced academically in the U.S. campuses as evidenced by tenure and promotion, and to understand the extent to which African faculty members are aware of how their “African-ness” has contributed to that success. This study uses portraiture methodology, a qualitative approach that concentrates on unearthing goodness and highlighting successes, while recognizing that imperfections will always be present within a social system. A conceptual framework of three interrelated constructs: African spirituality, resilience, and acculturation understood within the context of African immigrant faculty experiences were used as an analytical lens. The rest of the dissertation is organized as follows:

- Chapter Two provides selected relevant literature review.
• Chapter Three discusses the research design and the rationale for employing portraiture methodology. It will also discuss participant selection, data collection, and data interpretation. This chapter will also discuss the strategies used to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity.

• Chapter Four will provide eighteen portraits of my participants.

• Chapter Five will report the thematic findings that emerged from the data collected for this dissertation study and where they intersect.

• Chapter Six will report an overview and the final resonance. In addition, the implication of this study for future research and practice are discussed here.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to explore and gain insight into the experiences of African immigrant faculty members who have successfully advanced academically in the U.S. campuses as evidenced by tenure and promotion, and (2) to understand the extent to which their “African-ness” has contributed to their success in American academic systems.

In higher education, faculty members are referred to as the core human resource of higher education (Green, 1989). Moses (2000) regards faculty as the heart and soul of academia. Kezar and colleagues (2007) assert that faculty members are the stewards of campus leadership and decision making. Guy (2005) notes that leadership in 21st century academia must take into account the changing environment, such as issues of shared governance, institutional maturity, and organization complexity. These issues extenuate against single source leadership. Depree (2003) contends that leadership is a concept richer and more inclusive than that of the single hero as ultimate visionary. Kezar and colleagues (2007) emphasize that faculty leadership is not restricted to those in formal leadership positions but that all those faculty members who work directly to advance the institutional mission of teaching, learning, and research represent the core human resource of higher education. Pielstick (2000) describes this leadership being exercised by those not in formal positions of leadership as “informal leadership.”

Guy (2005) notes that it is increasingly clear that employees at all levels are expected to identify problems, contribute to their solutions, and help guide colleagues. In higher education, students need leaders and advocates who are prepared to be change agents-- armed with the knowledge, strategies, support, and courage to make curriculum, instruction, and engage students (Khrabrova, 2011). According to Davis, (2003) when leadership “bubbles up” in various places within institutions, we can no longer focus only on formal leadership roles. Thus, it is fair to
conclude that all faculty members exercise leadership, either formally or informally. This study is about successful faculty leaders both in formal and informal leadership roles.

Success in the Professoriate

In higher education, the “success” carrot held out before a junior professor is tenure (Turner, 2000, p. 111). Tenure is an indefinite appointment that provides faculty with a sense of permanence or stability in their position subject to certain conditions (Jones & Gold, 2001). Tenure must be earned by performance exceptional enough to earn the approval of senior colleagues in an academic department or unit. Once awarded, tenure gives a measure of security to those faculty members who have sacrificed other more lucrative career possibilities to pursue the life of a scholar (Allen, 2000). Tenured faculty can only be removed if there is “just cause,” such as termination of a program, or the university is in severe financial trouble (Mooney, 1993). Tenure is instrumental to the maintenance of faculty culture and morale, and it brings cohesiveness to academic organizations.

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP, 2001) ties the purpose of tenure to two objectives --academic freedom essential for safeguarding the right of free expression, and for encouraging risk-taking inquiry at the frontier of knowledge within a sufficient degree of economic security to make the profession attractive to men and women of ability. Tenure is perceived as the “gold coin” of faculty academic careers (Cooper, 2006, p. 7), and remains a strong lifetime shield for faculty at virtually all universities (Premeaux & Mondy, 2002). For faculty, tenure serves as the institutional sign of acceptance (Allen, 2000).

The Road to Tenure and Promotion

Duranczyk, Madyun, Jehangir, and Higbee (2011) compared the tenure and promotion process to fraternity and sorority hazing, in which a group of more experienced peers have the
power to admit or deny access to their organization based on a set of criteria. This makes the academic career fragile and risky for most of the professoriate (Allen, 2000). Kawalilak and Groen (2010) describe the tenure-track pathway as lonely and circuitous, a maze of sorts. Coleman, et al.,(2006) posits that the process of advancement to tenure is often filled with anxiety and frustration. According to Warde (2009), much of this anxiety and frustration emanates from an initial difficulty to discern which activities count most toward earning tenure. Tenure requirements are becoming increasingly stringent and are based on evaluation of a number of areas, which vary from institution to institution (Cooper, 2006) and sometimes may seem arbitrary and unfair (Stronch, 2004). Even though tenure and promotion are not always defined clearly by colleges and universities, Hanna, Haug, and Krabbaenhof (2007) contend that the criteria for tenure and promotion in most institutions of higher education center around an evaluation of the faculty based on their performance of teaching effectiveness, scholarly activities, and service and contribution to the university.

**Teaching, Research, and Service**

Teaching is traditionally defined as classroom instruction. Research is the investigation of new knowledge and truths. Service is defined as participating in a variety of activities to help better the institutional environment, student development and community development. (Benjamin, 1997; Burgess, 1997; Park, 1996).

Khaled, Wenger, and Miller (2007), investigated the effect of scholarly activities, teaching, and service upon promotions, tenure, and merit-pay decisions for business faculty at both teaching and research colleges in the U.S. and found that there were significant differences regarding merit allocations between teaching and research institutions, but not between public and private universities. The research revealed that research institutions, compared to teaching
schools, assign a higher percentage to scholarly activities for journal publications. On the other hand, teaching schools, when compared to research institutions, assign a higher priority to attending conferences, delivering professional presentations, proceedings publications, and writing a chapter in a book. Surprisingly, it seems that research and teaching institutions continue to assign more weight to a journal publication than to all other scholarly activities combined.

A study to determine the factors influencing the speed of promotion of academic radiologists found that the rate of publishing original articles at the assistant and associate professor levels, and the rate of overall publication at the assistant professor level, were the most important parameters in predicting promotion (Vydareny et al., 1999). The National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (2001) reported results from a cross-sectional sample of faculty at four-year institutions. According to this study, tenure was the most important reward/incentive factor, with research activities perceived to be more relevant than teaching. Another recent research study conducted by Gabbidon, Higgins, and Martin, (2011) explored the perceptions of faculty members (n = 454) from two national criminology/criminal justice organizations regarding the significance of book publications and publishing peer-reviewed journal articles for tenure and promotion. The research revealed the sentiment that journal article publications were perceived to be important publications when it came to promotion to both the associate and full professor ranks.

New faculty members are usually indoctrinated into a system that demands that they write continually and successfully publish their manuscripts. However, they typically are not offered help in navigating the publishing process (Friend & González, 2009). Loo and Ho (2006) state that the phrase “publish or perish” refers to the expectation that, if a professor fails to publish a body of original research, he or she can expect to be denied tenure, which may generate
psychological stress to the faculty member and eventually lead to losing one’s job. For junior faculty members who have little experience with scholarly writing beyond their doctoral dissertations, these expectations can be daunting (Pololi, Knight, Dennis, & Frankel, 2002). Friend and González (2009) assert that compounding the problem is a lack of clear criteria such as:

- how many publications are "enough" to meet the expectations of the promotion and tenure review board? Two peer-reviewed journal articles a year? One peer-reviewed article and one book chapter?

- which journals qualify as "high status"?

Research indicates that because of these publishing demands, faculty who spend long hours on the job greatly contribute to research productivity (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004). However, an earlier study by the same researchers, Jacobs and Winslow (2004) demonstrated that professors, especially female faculty, often delay having children as long as possible to meet these tenure demands. This may result in foregoing entirely, or at least delaying childbearing, given that the tenure decision, for the majority of faculty, occurs in one’s early forties to mid-forties.

Kussrow (2001) observes that although teaching, research, and service are the criteria, in reality, there are other “informal” criterion which are not spoken of in the halls of academe; and a junior faculty member has to navigate both the formal and the informal sets of tenure. Tuesday Cooper (2006) also writes in her book *The Sista’Network: African-American Women Faculty Successfully Negotiating the Road to Tenure*, that the tenure process is a “game to be mastered,” often more about politics than merit (p. 107). These unclear tenure performance
expectations have been identified as stressors for junior faculty (Boice, 1992; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996).

**Collegiality and Collaboration**

Collegiality has been referred to as the invisible fourth criteria to tenure (Cooper, 2006). Although most colleges and universities do not specify collegiality as a distinct criterion for tenure or promotion, many have teaching or service requirements that demand that candidates “work well with colleagues,” “demonstrate good academic citizenship,” or “contribute to a collegial atmosphere” (Connell & Savage, 2001, p.37). Fogg (2002) suggests that faculty members are divided on the issue, and it is debatable. Often, faculty who have been denied tenure, or terminated from tenured positions because of lack of collegiality, have gone to court (e.g., the case of *University of Baltimore v. Iz*) and sued their institutions, claiming that their rights have been violated (Connell & Savage, 2001). In this particular case, Dr. Iz filed suit against the university for being denied tenure on the basis of her attitude and collegiality (a criterion not expressly set forth in the tenure review policy). Despite being a good teacher, having a record publication, and being involved in professional activities, the university appealed and won. Thus, while academics debate the importance of collegiality in faculty decisions, the courts do not protect “truculent” professors (Connell & Savage, 2001, p. 37).

In regards to collaboration, it is the key mechanism for mentoring graduate students and postdoctoral researchers (Bozeman & Corley, 2005) and enhancing the productivity of an individual scientist (Melin, 2000). Lee and Bozeman (2005), conducted a study using data from 443 academic scientists examining the effects of collaboration on scientists’ productivity that was measured in terms of the number of journal article publications. Their findings revealed that collaboration is a strong predictor of publishing productivity.
Mentorship

In the world of academia, the influence of a good mentor can be quite powerful. Mentoring has been defined as “an interactive, interpersonal process between a dyad of expert and newcomer” (Goran, 2001, p. 120). Studies have consistently found that mentorship is important in setting tenure track professors on the road to advancement in the professoriate (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Fairbanks, Freedman, & Khan, 2000; Wilson, Valentine, & Pereira, 2002). Bramen (2000) found mentoring to be crucial to socialization in academic environments. Mentoring facilitates collegiality, and positive social contact, intellectual exchanges, and other valuable opportunities. The literature on mentoring indicates having a guide, counselor, and/or role model to ease assimilation into a department, college, and profession is viewed as critical to optimal career development (Grosshans, Poczwardowski, Trunnell, & Ransdell, 2003).

Mentoring can be formal and informal in nature. Informal mentorships are typically initiated on the basis of factors such as perceived similarity, identification, and interpersonal comfort between the mentor and the protégé. By contrast, in formal programs, mentor and protégé matches are often made by a third party within the organization (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006).

Ironically, having a mentor that is “too good” may have negative consequences such that mentees may not receive due credit for their work, or may not find themselves able to separate from their mentors (Baerlocher, O'Brien, Newton, Guatam, & Noble, 2011). A research study on formal and informal mentorships for aspiring and practicing public schools administrators by Pence (1989) disclosed that mentor influence was often shown by encouraging protégés to accept additional responsibilities in administration and by sharing with them confidential information about work-related issues. Respondents in the formal sample also found receiving political tips
and information about their mentor's methods of handling work related problems was beneficial. The respondents from the formal sample most frequently identified time and distance as problems. However, a study by Samier (2000) indicated that the most common limitation in formal mentoring was brevity of contact time (as little as two to four hours per month), often serving informative purposes. The most frequently mentioned negative aspect of the informal mentorships was differences in style or philosophy.

Mentors need not have the same cultural or social background as their mentees; they, however, need to pay close attention to the implications of the differences (Cruther, 2007). Nevertheless, several researchers have noted that minority faculty often have difficulty finding a mentor because people tend to prefer a mentor from within their own group (Bowman, Kite, Branscombe, & Williams, 2000; Margolis & Romeo, 2001). This could be explained by the belief that lack of a multicultural perspective on the part of the mentor can create challenges for the mentee and perhaps make the mentoring relationship less effective (Campbell, 2005). Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2002) assert that mentoring across cultural boundaries is an “especially delicate dance…” (p.15). Also, the process of mentoring is ambiguous and ill-defined. This requires mentors to "make inferences and assumptions about their responsibilities" (Gold & Roth, 1999, p. 8). The ambiguous nature of mentoring is problematic because, depending on the definition, different aspects of mentoring are emphasized (e.g., at times, the mentor-mentee relationship may be viewed as vertical or hierarchical). Additionally, confusion may arise related to the changing roles of a mentor over a career (Brey & Ogletree, 1999; Gold & Roth, 1999).

In conclusion, it is clear that the road to tenure is paved with many trials and tribulations for untenured faculty, and they may become dissatisfied, overworked, stressed, and even
physically ill (Hill, 2004) as they attempt to meet the often unyielding, vague and increasing tenure and promotion requirements (Stronch, 2004). Also, the negative effects of the tenure and promotion process persist after the first year of appointment, leading to increased stress levels throughout the pre-tenure period (Loo & Ho, 2006).

**Importance of Diversity in the Academic Environment**

Diversity is often discussed in relation to legal requirements, equal employment opportunities (EEO), and affirmative action. Terms like *protected groups*, *adverse impact*, *compliance*, and *lawsuits* are also frequently associated with diversity programs (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005, p.3). It was stated by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that employers could not discriminate on the bases of sex, race, color, ethnicity, or religion. These characteristics along with more recent focus on disability, age, and sexual orientation, are commonly considered as part of organizations diversity initiatives.

In an academic environment, this entails maintaining a heterogeneous student and faculty population, thereby constituting an arena for multiplicity of ideas and experiences. In the 1978 case, *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell posited that the “atmosphere of speculation, experiment and creation that is so essential to the quality of higher education is widely believed to be promoted by a diverse student body.” In a similar ruling in 2003 (*Grutter v. Bollinger*), the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the affirmative action admissions policy of the University of Michigan Law School, maintaining that the university’s decision to promote diversity through admission policies that are favorable to underrepresented groups was not unconstitutional. Following these and other similar court cases on the affirmative action admission policy, the values of diversity in public universities have been strongly debated within and outside of academia.
Concerns with diversity in higher education are no longer limited to the student body, however. The arguments about the educational benefits of diversity apply with equal force to another critical group in higher education: the faculty. There are many studies with compelling arguments for diversification of college faculty. A study by Smith and Schonfeld (2000) indicated that 90 percent of Americans believe diversity is important and higher education has an important role to foster it. An overwhelming majority of the academic community believes that racial and ethnic diversity of both students and faculty is a desirable goal (Cole & Barber, 2003).

The demographics of the population in 21st century universities and colleges is rapidly changing. It is, therefore, imperative for the universities and colleges to provide educated people and ideas needed by the society both to understand and to build unity out of diversity (Duderstadt, 2004). Diversity can help schools prepare students to work in diverse environments and increase students’ critical thinking and creativity skills (Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). Research indicates that diversification of college faculty is an important component of preparing students to be citizens in a pluralistic society (Cole & Barber, 2003; Hurtado, 2001). A poll study by NAFSA (2007) indicated that 90% of Americans believe that it is important to prepare future generations for a global society and to have higher education be more internationalized.

Second, it has been found that minority and female faculty members are more likely to use various modes of teaching, particularly interactive teaching strategies; and therefore, they are often more successful in tapping into students’ different learning styles and engaging student interest (Gurin, Dey, Hurtudo, & Gurin, 2002; Millem & Wakai, 1996; Statham, Richardson, & Cook, 1991; Umbach, 2006). Using data from a national study of 13,499 faculty members at 134 colleges and universities, Umbach (2006) explored the impact of faculty of color on
undergraduate education and found compelling evidence to suggest that greater structural diversity among faculty leads to an increased use of effective educational practices.

Third, faculty diversity is believed to be necessary to afford minority students the kind of teachers who will be sympathetic to their special problems, give them the kind of encouragement they need to succeed in college and beyond, and demonstrate to them that in the academic sphere, at least, full recognition of the ability of minority group members is possible (Cole & Barber, 2003). Fourth, other diversity studies demonstrate that the academic performance and career aspirations of minority students is enhanced when minority faculty serve as role models for them (Gebre, 2008). Kane and Orsini (2003) put forward that faculty of color are also important role models to White students as they shape white students’ images of what people of color can and do achieve. Finally, from an organizational perspective, Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1998) put forward that a racially diverse faculty demonstrates the commitment the institution has to diversity. Symbols of commitment to diversity in a society that is becoming increasingly more diverse are critical.

**The Immigrant Scholar**

Because of the low rate of return in graduate education in foreign countries and attractive job opportunities in the U.S., the percentage of foreign-born faculty is on the rise in America (Marvasti, 2005). The National Science Board observed that the number of U.S. citizens enrolled in graduate programs in science and engineering fell during the late 1990s while non-citizens continued to rise, thus leading to a growing dependence on foreign-born specialists (National Science Board, 2010). The Vice Chair of the Task Force on National Workforce Policies for Science and Engineering observed that a partial explanation of the falling citizen enrollment in
graduate school has been that there are attractive career opportunities in the U.S. labor markets that do not require years of advanced science and engineering training (Langford, 2012).

Each year, the United States invites thousands of foreign-educated professionals as immigrants or on temporary exchange visas through the Immigration Act of 1990. This has led to a rapid shift in the demographic of professors in the academic institutions (Nimoh, 2010). In 2006, the President of the National Academy of Engineering observed that, in the past, “one-fourth of the engineering faculty at U.S. universities was born abroad . . . [suggesting] that the United States has been skimming the best and brightest from around the world” (Wulf, 2006, p. 1). A study sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute and the Partnership for a New American Economy found immigrants with advanced degrees boost employment for U.S. natives. This effect is most dramatic for immigrants with advanced degrees from U.S. universities working in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math fields. For every 100 such foreigners added to the workforce, 262 jobs were created for U.S. natives during 2000-2007 (Zavodny, 2011).

Immigrant faculty members are strategically in positions of responsibility and visibility in one of the most important institutions of American society—higher education (Manrique & Manrique, 1999). They play a significant role in the adjustment of American society to the new immigrants. Manrique and Manrique (1999) further put forward that these faculty members:

can provide the important lessons in the difficult process of assimilation, they can also demonstrate the potential and actual contribution of immigrants to this country and thus improve the prospects for acceptance of immigrants. They can serve as role models for the increasingly diverse student population, and as persons of color or persons with
different ethnicities, they can point the way for the successful integration of a multicultural society (p. 2).

Immigrant faculty members are an important resource that is in high demand, especially in the areas of pure and applied sciences (Gahungu, 2011; Lin, Pearce, & Wang, 2008). Their demographic and racial diversity provides students with the privilege of diverse world views and cultures right in their own classrooms (Finkelstein, Seal, & Schuster, 1998). This exposure helps students interact with people from different cultures and prepare for the increasingly diverse workplace in the United States and the world (Nimoh, 2010). Additionally, Corley and Sabharwal (2007) claim that the influx of immigrant scientists into the faculty ranks at universities can have a particularly positive impact on immigrant students who are looking for mentors with backgrounds similar to their own.

O’Hara (2009) observes that immigrant faculty members have a striking presence in U.S. academic programs and are an influential strength for U.S. institutions of higher education. For instance, according to the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (Poojara, 2011), one quarter of American Nobel Prize winners since 1901 (the first year the prizes were awarded) have been immigrants. Most recently, out of the 22 American Nobel Prize winners since 2009, one third of the winners were immigrants: These are:

- Ralph M. Steinman, Canadian immigrant, received the Nobel Prize in 2011
- Ei-ichi Negishi, Japanese immigrant, received the Nobel Prize in 2010
- Willard S. Boyle Canadian immigrant, received the Nobel Prize in 2009
- Elizabeth H. Blackburn, Australian immigrant, received the Nobel Prize in 2009
- Jack W. Szostak, British immigrant, received the Nobel Prize in 2009
- Venkatraman Ramakrishnan, Indian immigrant, received the Nobel Prize in 2009
Charles K. Kao, a Chinese immigrant, received the Nobel Prize in 2009.

In addition to these recent winners, Albert Einstein, who immigrated from Germany is probably one of the best known of the many immigrant faculty members who significantly contributed to the vitality of American colleges and universities. Immigrant scientists are not only exceptionally remarkable among the most famous scientists in the United States; they are also vital to the United States science and engineering workforce (Paral & Johnson, 2004) and key to U.S. prosperity and security (Wulf, 2006).

According to the National Science Board (2010), more immigrant scientists have received advanced degrees than their native-born colleagues. For instance, 58% of all doctoral degrees awarded in electrical engineering in 2003 were received by foreign students. Research (Seifert & Umbach, 2008) suggests that all other things being equal, the larger the proportion of foreign-born faculty members on a campus, the more productive its domestic faculty members are.

Studies indicate that faculty who are tenured published three times more than those faculty who are not. In contrast to tenured native-born faculty, tenured foreign-born faculty published almost 16 more journal articles in their career. Even those foreign-born faculty who are not tenured are still outperforming their native-born counterpart (Zeng & Yan-he, 2010). Corley and Sabharwal (2007) used 2001 Survey of Doctorates (SDR) data from the National Science Foundation to compare productivity levels, work satisfaction levels and career trajectories of foreign-born scientists and U.S.-born scientists. The results indicated that foreign-born academic scientists and engineers are more productive than their U.S.-born peers in all areas. Yet, average salaries and work satisfaction levels for foreign-born scientists are lower than for U.S.-born scientists. A similar study by Libaers (2007) on the role and contribution of
foreign-born scientists and engineers to the public. U.S. Nano Science and Technology Research Enterprise indicated that male foreign-born researchers are more productive than their female peers in the federal laboratory system.

Using the data from the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty survey, Mamiseishvili (2010) examined foreign-born women faculty members’ work roles and productivity in the areas of teaching, research, and service in comparison with their U.S.-born counterparts at research universities. The findings indicated that foreign-born female academics were significantly more engaged in research as evidenced by the number of scholarly outputs they produced compared to U.S.-born women faculty members. Kim, Wolf-Wendel, and Twombly (2011) conducted a study to clarify whether foreign-born faculty are more productive than their U.S. counterparts and to determine whether the relationship between satisfaction and productivity differs by nationality. The study found that foreign-born, foreign-educated faculty are significantly more productive than their U.S. counterparts after controlling for personal, professional, and institutional variables.

Even though their education and position may set them apart, immigrant faculty members are not immune to the prejudices that confront many immigrants; particularly, they cannot escape wearing their accents and their physical appearance as “uniforms” (Takaki, 1989, p. 13). They are not exempt from the stigma attached in American society to someone who appears different.

The most powerful perception about immigrant faculty is that linguistic problems create teaching ineffectiveness (Marvasti, 2005). In this regard, the accent of immigrant faculty has been the most common criticism for students (Manrique & Manrique, 1999). In a study of foreign teaching assistants (Costantino, 1987), it was concluded that students feel frustrated and helpless when faced with professors whose lectures cannot be understood. Borjas (2000)
surveyed undergraduate students in a large public university, concluding that foreign-born teaching assistants have an adverse effect on the scholastic achievement of American undergraduates. However, using the same data, Marvasti (2001) demonstrated that while foreign born teaching assistants appear to have an adverse effect on the academic performance of native students, the effect does not seem to be due to the lack of language proficiency of the foreign-accented teaching assistants.

Flesher, Masanori, and Weinberg (2002), used data from Ohio State University to investigate whether foreign graduate teaching assistants (TAs) can be effective teachers of economics. They found that the drop rate is actually lower among students of foreign TAs than that for the native TAs. However, the foreign TAs received lower ratings of student opinions. The authors attributed this contradiction to the cultural gap between foreign-born TAs and students. Flesher and colleagues (2002) suggested that language difficulties are not at the top of students’ concerns. In an exploratory study of undergraduate college students’ perceptions and attitudes towards foreign-accented faculty, Kavas and Kavas (2008) concluded that, although it can be a challenge for students to understand and comprehend the incoming information from accented faculty, after the second or third class session, students became accustomed to the foreign faculty’s accents.

Other than linguistic challenges, social views of the immigrants on campus have at times been hostile. Their high visibility and position of authority can also make them an easy target for those who oppose immigration or by those who are simply intolerant of foreigners (Simon, 1996). In a study of 34 immigrant women professors in the U.S., Skachkova (2007) found that immigrant women professors as a group collectively experienced systematic differential treatment in academia from students, colleagues, and administrators. Skachkova (2007) also
found that immigrant women professors were less likely to get grants, many of which were directed mainly to U.S. born citizens. Other studies indicate that immigrant professors are segregated to teach courses and research topics that were bonded to their ethnic, national, or regional background. In addition, immigrant professors are expected to be the “expert” on campus to represent their race/ethnicity on all matters (Garza, 1993; Skachkova, 2007). This may affect their teaching credibility regarding other topics (De la Luz Reyes & Halcon, 1988) because they are burdened with performance pressure as they feel responsible for representing other members of their group in a positive light (Jackson, Thoits, & Taylor, 1995).

A study by Corley and Sabharwal (2007) found that although foreign-born scientists produced more scholarly outputs, including articles, books, conference papers, and patents, they were significantly less satisfied with their jobs than their native-born colleagues. The scientists in the study expressed the greatest dissatisfaction with salary, job security, intellectual challenge, and levels of responsibility. A study by Collins (2008) noted that, 63 percent of immigrant faculty respondents indicated that they were not coping well with loneliness. They reported feelings of isolation and of loss relating to friends, family, and their former ways of life—these contributed to higher levels of stress (Kline & Liu, 2005). Asian immigrant faculty are considered “model minority” because they are deemed to have achieved equality through diligence and hard work and as a result they are assumed to be no longer in need for attention and support (Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998).

Research suggests that the tenure process is stressful but that it may be exacerbated among immigrant scholars. They not only have to deal with the initial difficulty discerning which activities count most toward earning tenure, but they also cannot escape wearing their accents and their physical appearance as uniforms. Immigrant faculty also has to take into
account that their high visibility and position of authority can make them an easy target for those who oppose immigration or by those who are simply intolerant of foreigners. These perceptions are likely to be intensified in times of economic stress.

**The African Immigrant in U.S.**

The dearth of research on African immigrants may be explained by the fact that most African immigrants are still understood according to a “melting pot” model of immigration and are expected to identify with African Americans (Olupọna & Gemignani, 2007) because they share the same skin color. However, African immigrants have not melted into the cultural pot of the U.S. because there are considerable differences in the socio-economic, demographic, and cultural profiles of these population groups. Additionally, they face special problems stemming from their non-white racial status that function as barriers to full-fledged assimilation (Ochukpue, 2004).

The melting pot metaphor is an American mythos. Skerrett (2008) posits that it originated from a play in 1908 which President Theodore Roosevelt used as a political platform used to both garner political support and espouse an assimilationist ideology. Vought (2004) conducted an intensive research on U.S. leaders who have used this metaphor. His findings indicate that the core proposition of the melting pot construct is that that new immigrants shed their native cultures and languages and assimilate into U.S. society. Anderson (2000) asserts that the immigrant groups’ ethnic backgrounds became “less and less important as a determinant of both their public and their private identities” (Anderson, 2000, p. 263). With the advent of the new wave immigration from Africa, “many are educated and already middle class and thus under less pressure than previous immigrants to divest themselves in their ethnic identities in exchange for upward mobility” (p.267). Therefore, rather than giving up their ethnic backgrounds, they
“embrace their particularism” (p.262). For African-born immigrants coming to America, particularly professional, technical, and skilled workers whose educational credentials provide immediate access to relatively high-paying jobs, the costs of assimilation are viewed as excessive in relation to their perceived benefits (Ochukpue, 2004).

Africans who have settled in the United States during the last 20 years represent the largest number of Africans in more than two hundred years to settle in U.S. The U.S. census estimates that, in 2003, more than one million African-born immigrants were residing in the country, compared to only 230,000 in 1990 (Olupọna & Gemignani, 2007). Therefore, the phenomenon of African immigration to the United States can no longer be ignored (Arthur, 2000).

**Understanding African People**

To understand the African immigrant faculty, it is vital to appreciate the African philosophical thought system which is influenced by history, folklore, mythology, culture, norms, values, and religious beliefs. The philosophical thought system is known as *Ubuntu*, which embodies the beliefs, values, and behaviors of many African people. Hofstede (2001) defines culture as the “collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (p.9). Culture in this sense includes values, symbols, heroes and rituals. He further elaborates these by saying:

Symbols are words, gestures, pictures, and objects that carry often complex meanings recognized as such only by those who share the culture e.g. dress, hairstyle…Heroes are persons alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a culture and thus serve as models for behavior…Rituals are collective activities that are technically unnecessary to the achievement of desired ends, but that within a
culture are considered socially essential, keeping the individual bound within the norms of collectivity e.g. ways of greeting (p.10).

Culture determines the uniqueness of a human group. The importance of cultural identity to African people has been emphasized repeatedly (Asante, 1983; Karenga, 1983; Mbiti, 1970; Myers, 1978; Paris, 1995). The African people are complex and cannot be assumed to have one monolithic culture. For instance, Africans have a different history, language, value systems, and culture from other groups. They also differ within their own groups. Yet, there are commonalities on experience and culture which can provide some information on this study. Mahlangu (2001), put forward that Africans’ past history of political, social, economic, and cultural domination by the Western nations contributes to their unique and distinct views and how they experience reality.

Scholars of African studies agree on the importance of others in the self-understanding of African peoples (Paris, 1995). First and foremost, the African person is defined as a member of a family. Menkiti (1984) argues that the source of most African identity is the group and starts with the family unit, not the individual. Therefore, the African person is never alone either in self-concept or in the perception of others. In fact, Paris (1995) claims that the African person is related to the family as a part of a living organism is related to the whole. This means that the former cannot live apart from the latter, so the life of a person is wholly dependent on the family and its symbiotic functions of biological lineage, communal nurture, and moral formation.

Colonialism, Slavery and Apartheid

There are some psychological and socio-psychological aspects of the historical legacy of colonialism, slavery, apartheid, exploitation, and gender inequality relating to Africans that cannot be ignored (Appiah, 1992). Africans have experienced a long and complex history of
colonialism and oppression, demonstrated by enslavement by and a fight for freedom from Arab and European groups (Diop, 1974). This colonization period led to “Africa’s loss of independence, loss of sovereignty, economic stagnation, humiliation, and the assumption of the inferiority of Africans and the people of African descent” (Yansane, 1990, p. 64). The impact of slavery and colonialism still continues to influence the psyche and identity of many modern Africans and their families (Asante, 1990). It is reasonable to assume that Black South Africans have been affected by the apartheid laws which prohibited their freedom of movement and expression (Kagee & Price, 1995).

African immigrants may experience racism and discrimination as they negotiate their career objectives in the United States. Most Africans come from an experience in which they have been the racial majority and their adjustment to the U.S. culture is additionally complicated by differential treatment of certain races in the U.S. (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Levitt & Dubner, 2005).

**Reasons for African Immigration to the U.S.**

Discussions about African immigrants in America cannot be complete without the reasons for their migration from Africa. The immigration of Africans to the U.S. is not a new phenomenon. The African presence in the U.S. goes back to the era of the infamous slave trade when significant numbers of West Africans were brought against their will to the colonies in the “New World” (Konadu-Agyemang & Takyi, 2006, p. 2). In his historical analysis of African immigration to the United States, Takougang (1995) divided the movement of African-born individuals to America in three broad stages. Between 17th century and the end of the Civil War, he reminds us that some 10 to 20 million Africans were forcibly relocated to the United States. The growth of the African population in the first wave was hampered by (1) the abolition of
slavery, which effectively ended the flow of Africans to the U.S., and (2) policies that restricted migration from the non-European countries for most of the 19th century (Konadu-Agyemang & Takyi, 2006).

According to Takougang (1995), the second stage of African movement occurred as the de-colonization of Africa by European powers transpired and independent African nations gained growing importance in the context of the Cold War. Most of the Africans coming to the United States were foreign exchange students and members of national elites. The idea by the U.S policymakers was that they would learn the ways of the West and apply the same values to their home countries. Takougang (1995) noted that it was after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) that African immigration entered its third and current phase. This law removed the restrictive immigration laws passed in the pre-1960 era. It made family ties the primary criterion for admitting new immigrants and permitted Africans in the country to sponsor their spouses, children, and parents (Arthur, 2000). Further developments in U.S. immigration policy were the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) and the subsequent Immigration Act of 1990. The former declared amnesty for undocumented immigrants who were in the U.S. before 1982 (Takougang, 1995), and the latter increased the diversity of legal immigrants into the U.S. (Gordon, 1998).

Like other immigrants in the U.S., African immigrants are usually motivated by socioeconomic reasons, such as the notion of economic opportunities, the “American Dream,” and “a better tomorrow.” This dream suggests that all can succeed (Hanson & Zogby, 2010). Others are drawn to the U.S. by transnational connections of relatives and friends who have already departed to the new land (Infante & Lamond, 2003). Another reason is the desire to pursue postsecondary education. Last, but not least, there is a desire to escape from political
terror and instability (Takyi, 2002). Adepoju (1991) reported that the unprecedented migration of Africans was the result of deterioration of social, economic, and political conditions across Africa. Takyi (2002) suggests that these include sluggish or negative growth in national incomes, high inflation rates, economic disintegration, falling living standards, and rising unemployment. African states have also been characterized by civil instability which have destabilized the lives of many people in the region, and thus it is not surprising that Africa has the largest refugee population because of civil unrest (Arthur, 2000).

The financial and educational incentives offered by the U.S. government to newly independent nations in Africa in the 1960s and the 1970s also contributed to a significant number of Africans moving to the U.S. for educational opportunities (Takyi, 2002). After completing their studies, some of these Africans found employment and settled permanently in the U.S.

**The African Immigrant Scholar in U.S Higher Education**

Research on African immigrants consistently inform us that educational attainment among African-born residents of the United States is higher than that of native-born Americans and of most, if not all, other immigrant groups (Amisah, 1994; Apraku, 1991, Arthur 2000; Attah-Poku, 1996; Butcher, 1994; Djamba, 1999; DoDoo, 1997; Zeleka, 2007). At the time of their entrance into the United States, the majority of male African immigrants interviewed in Arthur’s (2000) study had completed their college education and, in fact, within this sample, the immediate motivation of coming to the U.S. was for graduate studies. In his large-scale study (n = 650) of African immigrants, Arthur (2000) reported that among those holding doctoral degrees, "a principal source of employment is in institutions of higher learning, especially historically black colleges and universities" (p. 47).
Offoh-Robert (2004) conducted research to examine the factors that contribute to the academic success of African immigrant students in the U.S. The results reinforced the research theory that it is the African immigrant students' cultural capital of education that helps prepare them for success in the United States higher education system. This theory emphasized three major categories of ideology:

1. The idea that education is seen as a privilege within African societies, not a right; the idea that knowing the consequence of not obtaining education serves as a motivator for students to succeed academically; and the idea that Western and postcolonial values serve to reinforce the ways in which students have learned to think about education within the U.S. (p.vi).

Gebre (2008) conducted a similar study in which he investigated the factors that influenced African immigrant students to participate and persist in community colleges. Through interviews of 21 African immigrants and two English as Second Language (ESL) professors, he found that, despite cultural, language, and financial barriers in higher education, African immigrant students are intrinsically motivated to learn English and endure academic difficulties. The study revealed that the students’ observation of other immigrants who attained degrees and held high paying positions also influenced them to persist. Like Offoh-Robert (2004), Gebre (2008) found that the African immigrant students highly value education and consider it to be the primary pathway to upward social mobility. They possess “resilience-promoting factors,” (p.v) such as perseverance, independence, and a positive attitude toward school that helps them to adjust and survive in the American culture.
Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature around what it takes to be a successful faculty member in regards to tenure and promotion. The literature revealed that the road to tenure and promotion is stressful and new faculty may become dissatisfied, overworked, stressed, and sometimes even physically ill (Hill, 2004) as they attempt to meet the often unyielding, vague and increasing tenure and promotion requirements (Stronch, 2004). The literature also noted that, not only do the negative effects of the tenure and promotion process persist after the first year of appointment, but stress levels may increase throughout the pre-tenure period (Loo & Ho, 2006).

Immigrant faculty members experience the road to tenure differently from the U.S. native-born faculty because of their cultural and linguistic differences. However, the topic of African immigrant faculty members on U.S. campuses has so far been under-researched (Ochukpue, 2004). It is, therefore, necessary to start by conversing with the African faculty members in order to hear about their experiences and begin the process of placing their experiences within the existing knowledge base. The limited studies available on African immigrants note that although they are highly educated, they also experience their journey differently from other immigrants because of their spirituality and also their historical legacy of colonialism and exploitation.

The next chapter will discuss the research design and the rationale for employing portraiture methodology. It will continue by covering participant selection, data collection and data interpretation. This chapter will conclude by covering the strategies used to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to explore and gain insight into the experiences of African immigrant faculty leaders who have successfully advanced academically in the U.S. campuses as evidenced by tenure and promotion; (2) to understand the extent to which their “African-ness” has contributed to their success in American academic systems. This chapter discusses the research design, methodology and data analysis used in this study which is qualitative in nature.

As indicated in Chapter 1, the questions that have guided this study are:

1. What are the lived experiences of successful African immigrant faculty members in higher education institutions in the U.S.?
2. To what extent has their “African-ness” contributed to their success in American academic systems?

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

In order to tell the stories of African immigrant faculty members, it is necessary to listen to them, observe them as they carry out their responsibilities, and observe how others react and respond to their authority and ground their leadership within their particular context. To hear their stories, a qualitative inquiry is appropriate, because stories are the foundation of qualitative research (Banks-Wallace, 2002).

As researchers, we must strive to “fairly listen to and portray voices, particularly disenfranchised ones” (Lincoln, 1995, p. 283) so that those previously silenced voices can be heard. Through the life stories of the participants, a qualitative research paradigm allowed me to study the African immigrant faculty members’ experiences in the context of their culture and their host society. Unlike a quantitative research method, a qualitative research method allowed
me to study a person’s inner subjective reality, in particular how a person makes meaning of his or her experience (Josselson & Lieblich, 1999). Therefore, the use of qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study because it fits the criteria listed by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) that is:

- Data rich in its description and not readily or easily converted through statistics or quantitative data,
- The absence of a testable hypothesis;
- A need to understand the participant’s perspective of the experience
- Data collection through personal contact with the participant in natural settings.

Merriam (1998) stated that qualitative research has at its foundation the notion that knowledge is constructed inductively through inquiry and that multiple realities emerge from the inquiry. Maxwell (2005) listed the understanding of meaning and context, identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, and conducting formative studies to improve the purposes of qualitative inquiry. Patton (1990) states that one of the major advantages of conducting qualitative studies is that they provide holistic portrayals of a particular phenomenon and focus greater attention on the impact of setting, context, nuances, idiosyncrasies and complexities. Therefore, in order to personalize, understand, and give voice to the experiences of immigrant African faculty, the use of a qualitative methodology provided opportunities for the African faculty members to account for their own situations from their perspectives.

**Portraiture Methodological Approach**

Qualitative research can be regarded as a skill or craft, akin to that of an artist (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003). Portraiture, in art, is a process of representation through which the artist recreates the subject of the image, interesting nuances of physicality and personality
through artistic elements such as line, color and composition. This artistic process results in a tangible imprint of the artistic understanding of and relationship with the subject of the portrait (Davis, 2003). Similarly, the methodology of portraiture, first articulated by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) in the publication of The Good High School: Portraits in Character and Culture and later developed with Jessica Hoffman Davis (1997) in the Art and Science of Portraiture, is a unique social science inquiry, whereby, like the artist, the research portraitist seeks to blend artistic expression with scientific rigor to form an aesthetic whole.

“The drawing of the portrait is placed in a social and cultural context and shaped through dialogue between the portraitist and the subject, each one negotiating the discourse and shaping the evolving image” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. xv).

Portraiture methodology does not stop at the phenomenology of subjective experience but endeavors to understand this experience, with empathy and sympathy as part of the larger unity of the person of whom this experience forms a part, and to communicate this understanding in carefully constructed portraits (Witz, 2006). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) provide the following description of portraiture methodology:

Portraiture is a method of qualitative research that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics and subtlety of human experience and organizational life. Portraits seek to record and interpret the perspectives and experiences of the people they are studying, documenting their voices and their visions-authority, knowledge and wisdom. The drawing of the portrait is placed in a social and cultural context and shaped through dialogue between the portraitist and the subject, each one negotiating the discourse and shaping the evolving image (p. xv).
The purpose of portraiture is not to test previously established theories or hypotheses. Rather, like most qualitative methodologies, the purpose is to explore participants’ experiences and the complexities of how meanings are produced within a particular context (Gaztambide-Fernández, Cairns, Kawashima, Menna, & VanderDussen, 2011)

**Portraiture Methodological Design**

There are various benefits of using Portraiture design. First, portraiture is best described as a blending of qualitative methodologies—life history, naturalist inquiry, and most prominently, that of ethnographic methods (Dixson, Chapman, & Hill, 2005). This means that by using portraiture research, I was able to blend phenomenology and focus on how the African immigrant faculty members experience their social and professional culture on U.S. campuses. I was also able to incorporate ethnography by focusing on the African culture as well as biographies of the African immigrant faculty members by providing first-person accounts of their experiences in a story form. I integrated the principles of a case study because the phenomenon of African immigrant faculty is intrinsically interesting and bounded (Merriam, 2009).

Second, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) explained that life history centers on the “other,” and traditionally ethnography has been uncomfortable with revealing the “self” of the researcher. Portraiture, on the other hand, necessitates presenting both the self as the main research instrument and the participant as co-creator in creating authentic portraits (Ngunjiri, 2007). This provided me with a chance to present my voice as well as the participants. For instance, some qualitative methods, ethnography and life history included, have historically been infamous for their share of the tyranny of colonialism and imperialism in Africa by misrepresenting African people (Oyewumi, 2002). As such, I am conscious of the need for a
qualitative approach that encourages critical self-awareness as well as authentic engagement with the participants as co-creators of knowledge (Ngunjiri, 2007). Paradoxically, in portraiture, the portraitist’s voice does not reduce the reader’s trust-- it enhances it. It does not distort the responsibility of the researcher and the authenticity of the work; it gives them clarity (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Third, I examined the African immigrant faculty with an appreciative lens, whereby I looked for goodness on the ways in which African immigrant faculty members meet, negotiate, and overcome challenges in U.S. campuses. The limited research that is available on immigrant faculty seems to focus on their challenges and struggles. Portraiture rests on search for “goodness” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983) as defined by the participants, instead of diagnosing or imposing pathologies as defined by the researcher (Gaztambide-Fernández et.al, 2011). In addition, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) argued that research that focuses solely on failure has a tendency toward being facile. Gaztambide-Fernández and colleagues (2011) noted that for the portraitist, “goodness” does not imply simply a search for what is positive or coherent about a research subject. On the contrary, rather than interpret competing or contradicting meaning and experiences as problems to be resolved, the portraitist takes such tensions and complexities as constitutive of what makes a particular research context good.

Fourth, the aesthetic nature of portraiture appealed to both my intellect and emotion. Portraiture gave me the flexibility to utilize African cultural forms of expressions such as myths, folktale, and proverbs in crafting the portraits. These foster the discovery and appreciation of Africans and Africa, because they are “pregnant” sources of information on value systems (Gyekye, 1996). Portraiture also allowed me the flexibility to utilize my education, my craft of
storytelling, and life experience as an African student in a U.S. campus as a starting point for narrating the stories.

Lastly, using portraiture as a methodology was a process that was emancipatory and empowering for the participants and myself as the researcher, and hopefully will be for the reader as well (Ngunjiri, 2007).

**Distinct Features of Portraiture**

There are at least four features of portraiture that distinguish it from other qualitative methodologies. First, there is the voice of the researcher. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), voice is the research instrument, “echoing the self of the portraitist overarching and undergirding the text, framing the piece, naming the metaphors and echoing through the central themes” (p.85). Voice speaks about stance and perspective, revealing the place from which the portraitist observes and records the action, reflecting her angle of vision, allowing her to perceive patterns and see the strange in the familiar. The portraitist voice is purposely woven into the written document (portrait), which is created as a result of the researcher’s interaction with the actors in the research setting. Unlike ethnography, or phenomenology or case studies, the portraitist purposely and consciously uses her voice from a minimalist stance to an explicit audible participation (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

The actor’s voice is heard in duet, in harmony and counterpoint. The actors sing the solo lines, the portraitist supporting their effort in articulation, insight and expressiveness (p. 87).

Second, in contrast to an ethnographer who listens to a story, the portraitist approach is a process of listening for a story (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).
The portraits are shaped through dialogue between the portraitist and the subject, each one participating in the drawing of the image. The encounter between the two is rich with meaning and resonance and is crucial to the success and authenticity of the rendered piece. Listening for voice not only requires listening, watching, and questioning, it also requires that the portraitist be attentive to silences (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997)

Silences speak about points of confusion or resistance or they indicate ambivalence or evasion, or they hide private feelings or make a dramatic point. So the portraitist listening for voice is also attentive to silence (p.99).

Third, portraiture rests on a search for goodness. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) advance that portraiture looks for the strengths, unlike traditional research which focuses largely on “pathology and disease rather than health and resilience” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983, p. 8). In the portraiture methodology, the researcher consciously seeks to identify the strengths of the site and the ways in which challenges are approached and addressed.

As a matter of fact, I think that one of the most powerful characteristics of portraiture is its ability to embrace contradictions, its ability to document the beautiful/ugly experiences that are so much a part of the texture of human development and social relationships (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 9).

I studied what works in the experiences of the African immigrant faculty on U.S. campuses and examined when they were most alive, most effective, and most capable of advancing in academia. Although I looked at the positive, I did not negate the impact of the struggles, challenges, and barriers to immigrant faculty success. However, these have been documented in other articles in academic journals (Collins, 2008; Ngwainmbi, 2006; Thomas & Johnson, 2004; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1998).
Fourth, whereas the traditional qualitative methods advocate for the researcher to maintain the stance of a disinterested observer, they (traditionalists) claim that the personal involvement must be monitored and should have visible boundaries of decorum and responsibility, and intimacy must be avoided. However, relationship building is at the center for portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

It is a complex, subtle, and dynamic process of navigating the boundaries between self and other, distance and intimacy, acceptance and skepticism, receptivity and challenge (p. 158).

Arguably, using relationship building takes considerable time that is not always possible with research projects (English, 2000; Hackmann, 2002). Portraiture requires that we build productive and benign relationships—with the participant as ally. The spirit is one of participant and researcher engaging in a collaborative enterprise for a common higher cause (Witz, 2006). Also, it is in relationships where trust is built, intimacy negotiated, data collected, and knowledge construed (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

The Participants

Qualitative inquiry relies on purposeful rather than random sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) when selecting participants for study. Patton (1990) stated “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for depth study” (p.169). Information-rich cases are those from whom one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research.

The participants for this study included a sample of successful African immigrant faculty members on U.S. campuses in the Midwest region. I utilized the “snowball” sampling, which is perhaps the most common form of purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman,
Successful faculty members were identified by tenure and promotion. The tenured faculty designation was used because the faculty members have gone through the rigorous evaluation process of faculty effectiveness. Further, only faculty members born in African and to African parents were included in the study. Eleven countries were represented (See Table 1). Most of the participants originated from Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and South Africa. This is congruent with statistics from the American Immigration Council (2012) that state that the top countries of origin for African immigrants are Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, and Kenya. Therefore, this study may help the reader to transfer specific knowledge from the research by making connections to these countries.

Table 1

Participants Native Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gambia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In particular, this study looked at those African faculty members who came to the U.S. when they were adults. I presupposed that people with such experience had an ample understanding of their home culture and educational system and their background may have presumably influenced their adjustment process and their experiences in educational institutions.
in a foreign culture such as the United States. The faculty members hold green cards or are naturalized citizens.

The participants in this study were primarily male. It is important to note that gender is an integral part of the migration process. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), women make up more than half of all immigrants living in the United States. However, the Bureau’s data indicates that among the regions of birth, the foreign born from Africa had the highest proportion of males (53 percent), while the foreign born from Europe and Northern America had the lowest (each 45 percent). This sample also gives a fair reflection of how gender compares in academia. While it is true that more women are now getting into tenure track faculty positions, there are still relatively few (Webster, 1989). In regards to rank, the sample was evenly distributed with 50% Associate Professors (See Table 2) below.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings from this study are structured as portraits and themes. Eighteen portraits are presented. In crafting these portraits, I made choices about what to include or exclude to aid both the empirical and the aesthetic considerations in producing a coherent whole.

**The Places.** The research took place mostly in the faculty member’s offices. A few members were interviewed on Skype video conferencing, and one preferred a telephone
Eleven universities in four states in the Midwest region were represented in this study under three Carnegie basic classifications. According to Carnegie basic classification framework (2012), five institutions are classified as research universities with very high research activity (RU/VH). Four institutions are classified as research universities with high research activity (RU/H). Two universities that were classified as Master's Colleges and Universities (Masters L) with larger programs (see Table 3). All the institutions were public universities. The student population ranged from 15,000 to 60,000. Most of the universities are considered predominantly white institutions.

Table 3

Institutions Represented by Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carnegie Classification</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Institutions Represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Universities with very high research activity</td>
<td>RU/VH</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Universities with high research activity</td>
<td>RU/H</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Colleges and Universities with larger programs</td>
<td>Master's L</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negotiation Access

I initially used personal connections to identify African immigrant faculty who met the established criteria for participation in the study; these faculty members then identified others to become members of the study. This sampling method is referred to as “snowball sampling” (Creswell, 2012, p. 146). Some of my referrals preferred I email them with the details, and others preferred to let me know if they would be interested in the study after hearing more about it. For
those who wanted me to give them details beforehand, I emailed them a short description of the study that briefly explained the purpose and nature of the study and asked whether they would be willing to participate in my study. When I got an affirmative response I then made a call and started verbal communication on when we would meet and have our first interview. I also sent them the approved informed consent form (Appendix D) for them to read and sign. I collected the forms at our initial face to face meeting. Those whom I interviewed on Skype or telephone chose to scan and email me their consent forms.

**Researcher’s Role**

Although qualitative studies utilize a broad range of information gathering techniques, the researcher is the “primary instrument of data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p.15). In portraiture, the researcher’s voice is the research instrument (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). There are various ways in which the researcher negotiates voice in portraiture and they are manifested through the researcher’s chosen methodology, research tools, data collection procedures and data analysis (Chapman, 2005).

First, I used my voice as a witness (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), expressing the outsider’s stance, “which looks across patterns of actions and sees the whole” (p. 87). Because I did not personally know the participants, I took the advantageous position as a stranger, which allowed me to see how they experience the American academia through new eyes.

Second, I used my voice as an interpreter (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) by trying to make sense of the data presented to me. As Geertz reminds us in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), the ethnographer’s work is inevitably interpretive; it is a search for meaning. It involves tracing a path through a dense thicket of interpretation. As I moved from the thin (un-interpreted data, the systematic documentation of the who, what, where and when of the action)
to thick description (the information that I needed to gather in context and from a variety of sources), I used the interpretive voice, which seeks meaning.

Third, with increasing presence in the text, I used my voice as preoccupation (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). This refers to the ways in which my observations and my text were shaped by the assumptions I brought to the inquiry, reflecting my disciplinary background, theoretical perspectives, my intellectual interests, and my understanding of the relevant literature. Here, my voice refers to the lens through which I see and record reality.

The fourth use of my voice while doing portraiture research was autobiography. This is reflected by my own history --familial, cultural, ideological, and educational to the inquiry (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). I made use of my own knowledge and wisdom drawn from these life experiences as a resource for understanding and as a source of connections and identification with the participants in the setting. However, I did not let my own history obscure or overwhelm the inquiry. The balance required here called for me to be constantly vigilant to avoid being narcissist and yet use myself as a research instrument. This balance was approached through self-reflection and self-criticism as I engaged in observing, listening, and talking to the participant.

Fifth, my voice was used when discerning other voices or as (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) states:

When a portraitist listens for voice, she seeks it out, trying to capture its texture and cadence, exploring its meaning and transporting its sound and message into the text through carefully selected quotations (p.99).

Listening for voice not only requires listening, watching and questioning. It also requires that the portraitist be attentive to silences (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The moments of
silence are just as important to understanding the story as the message conveyed through words. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) posit that silences speak about points of confusion or resistance, or they indicate ambivalence or evasion, or they hide private feelings or make a dramatic point.

The sixth use of voice in portraiture is dialogue. This is when I purposefully placed myself in the middle of the action and expressed my views with the participant, and together we both defined meaning-making (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). I was active at the sites. I observed classes, held informal conversations with the faculty members, and read documents about them.

In addition, it was my role as the researcher to provide background information through which the audience can better understand the topic, the setting, and the participant’s involvement in the study. As the researcher, it was also my role to assure the participant and the audience at large that I had taken the necessary steps to protect the rights of the participants and that the participant voluntarily participated in the research. Attached (see Appendix A) is the approved consent form from the Human Subject Review Board. It was also my role as the researcher to anticipate sensitive ethical issues that may arise.

Ethical Issues

As a portraitist, I have a huge ethical responsibility because the process of creating portraits means that I enter into people’s lives, build relationships, engage in discourse, make an imprint, and then leave. It was, therefore, of paramount importance to ensure that the participants were informed of the exact purpose of the study (Sarantakos, 2005). Deception occurs when participants understand one purpose, but the researcher has a different purpose in mind.
(Creswell, 2009). So I made sure that I kept restating the purpose of my study so that it was clear to the participant.

Before I collected data, I got the approval from the Human Subject Review Board (HSRB) on campus. The HSRB exists on campuses because of federal regulations that provide protection against human rights violation. This helped me assess the potential risk, such as physical, psychological, social, economic or legal harm to participants in the study. I developed an informed consent form for participants to sign before they engaged in the study (Appendix D). Informed consent is a vital part of the research process and, as such, entails more than obtaining a signature on a form (Creswell, 2012). As the researcher, I educated the potential participants to ensure that they could reach a truly informed decision about whether or not to participate in the research. Their informed consent was given freely, without coercion, and was based on a clear understanding of what participation involved. The process of educating the participants about the study was at the initial contact and continued for the duration of their participation. Potential participants were then given a copy of the informed consent document to take home so they could carefully read the document and discuss the research with their family, friends, and develop questions to ask at our next meeting. Once they had read the consent document and their questions were answered, those who agreed to participate in the research signed and dated the informed consent document, which I collected.

Another ethical issue was about confidentiality for participants who did not want to be identified. I maintained confidentiality of the participants by usage of pseudonyms, which they chose themselves. They preferred to use African names which they identified with or reflected their philosophy or ideologies. This is significant to the African naming tradition. However some participants wanted to own their words and chose not to use a pseudonym. I respected
them by allowing them to retain ownership of their voices and exert their independence in making decisions. I also respected the research sites, such that they were left undisturbed after the research study (Creswell, 2009). I did so by timing my visits in such a way that they did not interfere with the flow of activities of the faculty members.

Interviewing in qualitative research is increasingly seen as a moral inquiry (Kvale, 2007). As the interviewer, I considered how the interview would improve the human situation as well as enhance scientific knowledge. Also, I sought to be sensitive as I interviewed and interpreted what was said. Another ethical concern when constructing portraits of these participants was the issue of my voice. As a portraitist, my voice became intertwined throughout the entire portrait (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). To remain true to the nature of the study, I sought to remain as reflective as possible. I also worked on developing a relationship with my participants so that I would be able to probe deeper when I did not understand what they meant.

After collecting the data, all information gathered through original fieldwork was maintained in a safe, locked box. This material includes a master list matching participant designations to their actual names and the pseudonyms for those who chose a penname. This list was kept and it is in hard copy form only. I will keep the data for a reasonable period of time such that I will be able to bring the research process to a meaningful end. In this case, the conclusion of the dissertation process, and defense, the presentation of findings at professional conferences, and the publication of findings in peer-reviewed research journals. Sieber (1998) recommends, 5-10 years. After this, I will destroy the data so that it does not fall into the hands of other researchers who might misappropriate it. It is important to note that ethical issues do not stop with data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2012). Ethical issues apply as well to the actual writing and disseminating of the final research.
Data Collection Procedures

In accordance with my institution’s Human Subject Research Board (HSRB), data collection commenced upon the approval from the Human Subject Review Board. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that a researcher should choose methods by determining which techniques might provide more and better data at lower cost and which techniques could provide clues as to the nature of the context. The data in this study were collected through interviews, observations and documents, or in Wolcott’s (1992) “common, everyday terms” (p.19). Data collection is about asking, watching, and reviewing. Patton (2002) suggests that interviews, observations and documents should be used to supplement, complement, and reinforce one another in order to obtain as complete a picture of the setting or phenomena being studied as possible.

When using portraiture, the researcher must remain “…alert to surprises and inconsistencies and improvise conceptual and methodological responses that match the reality” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 43). I maintained a journal of my own thoughts and responses to events throughout the data collection process, also termed as “impressionistic record” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p.188). This record contributed to the iterative development of themes and the final portrait.

Interview Protocol

DeMarrais (2004) defines an interview as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study’ (p.55). As Patton (2002) explains, we interview people to find out from them those things we cannot observe such as feelings, thoughts and intentions. The purpose of interviewing then is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. This study incorporated the ideas presented by Seidman (1991) in his book, Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A guide for Researchers in
Education and the Social Sciences, for the interview protocol for this study. He stressed that “the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p.3).

This study utilized a semi-structured interview protocol as the primary approach for data collection. The semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions (Ayres, 2008). I developed a written interview guide in advance (see Appendix A and B), which had a list of topics to be covered based on the research question and the tentative conceptual model discussed in Chapter One. I conducted the first interview utilizing Interview Protocol #1 (see Appendix A) to learn about the participants’ work experiences and Interview Protocol #2 (see Appendix B) to learn about their history while growing up. These types of open-ended questions gave participants an ample opportunity to guide the conversation and talk about what seemed salient to them. They were in the driver’s seat, sometimes choosing early on to address the questions I had planned to ask later on. In order to ensure interpretive validity, I avoided leading questions, such as “What is the main African cultural value that has benefited you in navigating U.S. academia?” An arguably less leading question was “How would you evaluate your African culture in navigating the U.S. academia?”

The interviews were scheduled within a four-month period, thus increasing the quality of the relationship that has to be established between the participants and myself. The interview conversation began after the participant had signed the consent form and was concluded with a debriefing, which included giving the participant a chance to add some comments or pose questions about the study (Brinkmann, 2008). Each interview lasted approximately two hours. I had face-to-face sessions with ten participants, I video conferenced via Skype with seven
participants, and I had a telephone interview with one participant. Each participant was given an opportunity to select a pseudonym and some opted to own their voice. Those who selected pseudonyms gave me a rationale of why they had chosen those names given the importance of naming traditions in the African customs. After some “small talk” about the campus, the weather, the office setting, etc. (in order to build rapport). I began the interview by formally introducing myself and the project, explaining the purpose of the research, assuring the participants of confidentiality, the option not to answer questions, and asking them for permission to digitally record the interview. The participants provided me with demographic information first (see Table 5), a sketch of their educational and professional history, as well as the parameters of their personal lives (age, marital status, immigration status, etc.). These interviews were digitally recorded, and the transcripts were returned to each participant for revisions and additions to their recorded responses, thus ensuring the authenticity of the interview data and the credibility of the dissertation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Observation Protocol**

Observation is one of the oldest and most fundamental research method approaches (McKechnie, 2008). Observation involves collecting impressions of the world using all of one's senses, especially looking and listening, in a systematic and purposeful way to learn about a phenomenon of interest (McKechnie, 2008). According to Merriam (2009), observations can be distinguished from interviews in two ways. First, observations take place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs instead of a location designated for the purpose of interviewing; second, observation data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the work obtained in an interview.
In this study, I observed the behaviors of the participants, the physical environment, the activities around them, and how they interacted with the participant. I also observed the conversation, including what was being said, the silences, and other nonverbal behaviors that added meaning to the exchange (see Appendix C). I made note of subtle factors that were less obvious but may be important, such as dress and physical spaces, informal and unplanned activities, and perhaps symbolic and connotative meaning of words. As the researcher, I was as much a part of the scene as the participant, and, therefore, I also noted whether my presence was affecting the scene, and these data is my “observer comments” (Merriam, 2009, p. 120). All the data from the observations were recorded as field notes. These field notes were recorded within 24 hours of data collection while my memory of the events was still strong. The field notes included written descriptions of what was observed and also contained maps, diagrams, and documents or other objects gathered while observing. I was not able to observe some of the participants’ classes because some of them had online classes during the spring semester and some were not teaching because of course buyouts.

Documents

Documents, as a record of human activity, provide a valuable source of data in research. Along with interviews and observations, they comprise one of the main forms of data sources for interpretation and analysis in case study research. Document analysis can provide a window into a variety of historical, political, social, economic, and personal dimensions of the case beyond the immediacy of interviews and observations (Olson, 2009). In Merriam's (2009) view, documents comprise a variety of written, visual, and physical material, including any artifacts that can shed light on the case. In this view, documents are by-products of human activity that “document” their activity over time.
Documents are not dependent upon the whims of human beings whose cooperation is essential for collecting data through interviews and observations. According to Merriam (2009), one of the greatest advantages of using documentary material is its stability. Unlike interviewing and observations, the presence of the investigator does not alter what is being studied. Documentary data are “objective” sources of data compared to other forms. Some other advantages of document analysis are that they are not intrusive and they don’t alter the setting in ways that the presence of the investigator usually does (Merriam, 2009). The data found in documents can furnish descriptive information, verify emerging hypotheses, advance new categories and hypotheses, offer historical understanding, and also track change and development.

In this study, I also collected written, visual, digital and physical material relevant to the study, such as material from university websites, official records, newspapers, other published material (such as participants biographies, newspaper articles, and ratemyprofessor website), and participants’ curriculum vitae (See Table 4). These provided the study with rich information regarding the African faculty professional experiences in U.S. campuses. All the data collected were considered confidential and kept in a safe and secured place.

Table 4

*Documents Collected*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents Collected</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Vitae</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books (memoirs, autobiographies)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Websites</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.ratemyprofessor.com">www.ratemyprofessor.com</a></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal articles</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper articles</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet search</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochures</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speeches, Radio interviews</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data (Creswell, 2009). It is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, and between description and interpretation (Merriam, 2009). A qualitative design is emergent. Typically, a researcher does not know ahead of time each person who might be interviewed, all the questions that might be asked, or where to look next unless data are analyzed as they are being collected. In this study, the process of data collection and analysis were done simultaneously because “in qualitative research, there is no clean cutoff—no time when everything else stops and writing begins” (Merriam, 2009. p 237).

As a portraitist, I entered the field with clear conceptual framework and guiding research questions but fully expected and welcomed the adaptation of both my intellectual agenda and my methods to fit the context and the people I was studying. My methodological plan and the conceptual framework which were independently constructed before entering the field were only starting points, but aspects of both were immediately transformed and modified to match the realities of the setting. Even though I anticipated changes in the research plan and was attentive to the cues in the field to which I responded and adapted, it was necessary that I record my framework before I entered the field, identifying the intellectual, ideological and autobiographical themes that would shape my view. This is what Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) call the voice of preoccupation. Articulating these presumptions did not inhibit or distort my vision; rather, they made my lenses more articulate.

I made anticipatory schema explicit in the form of memos, journals, and self-reflective essays to allow for greater openness of my mind. The framework I brought to the research reflected a mix of my earlier research experiences, my interdisciplinary predisposition, my
philosophical stance, my intellectual intrigues, and my own life story. Once in the field, I began by listening and observing, being open and receptive to all stimuli, acclimating myself to the environment, documenting my initial movements and first impressions, and noting what was familiar and what was surprising. The research stance evolved from quiet watchfulness--where I mostly took in stimuli and listened carefully to the more purposeful activities of initiating relationships with my participants. At the close of each day, I gathered, scrutinized, and organized the data, and made sense of what I had witnessed. I used *NVivo*, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software package which facilitated the analysis process by organizing my data, assigning codes and also by facilitating searching through the data and locating specific text or words. I recorded my reflections, tentative themes, hunches, and ideas to pursue what was derived from this first set of data in an “impressionistic record” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

These impressionistic records allowed me to become increasingly focussed and discerning with the discovery of patterns, the development and dialogue of ideas, and the convergence of phenomena. This process began at data collection and lasted throughout the entire research process until the writing of the final text. The emergent themes grew out of data gathering and synthesis, accompanied by generative reflection and interpretive insights.

After the first interview was completed, I listened to the entire digital recording again and started the process of analyzing. I transcribed the conversation and this allowed me to continuously hear and look for bits of data that struck me as interesting, potentially relevant, or important to my study. This process is called coding (Merriam, 2009). This helped me to recognize unclear data that was clarified in the second interview. I also recognized interview questions that were redundant and needed to be refined for clarity.
This interpretive and analytic process went on through the entire data collection until it became the central activity of synthesizing, sorting, and organizing the data after I left the field. Categories were formed by assigning codes to pieces of data (Merriam, 2009). The construction of categories was highly inductive as I looked for bits and pieces of data and derived tentative categories from them—all the while trying to preserve the nuance and complexity of real lived experience, and remaining attentive to the “deviant voice” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 214). These are the perspectives that deviates from the norm. They contradict each other and seem decisively inconsistent with others.

The emergent themes were reduced, using five modes of analysis suggested by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997):

1. Listening for repetitive refrains that appear amongst the participants and that suggest a communally held view
2. Listening for resonant metaphors, cultural expressions, and symbolism that reveal the ways participants enlighten and live through their realities
3. Listening for themes expressed through cultural and institutional rituals that seem important to organizational continuity and coherence
4. Using different sources of data, which included conversations, observations and documents
5. Constructing themes and revealing relationships among perspectives that are often experienced as divergent and cacophonous by the participants (p. 193).

This process not only helped formulate emerging themes, it also aided in the process of validating my data, which is discussed below.
Trustworthiness and Authenticity

Though qualitative researchers can never capture an objective “truth” or “reality” (Merriam, 2009, p.215), there are a number of strategies that I, as the researcher, used to increase trustworthiness and authenticity of my research. Some practical strategies for ensuring the quality of my research included (1) engaging with the setting for a period of time (2) member checking, which enabled me to check the participants’ reaction to data findings (3) peer debriefing, where I involved my colleagues and committee members to help me be honest about the meanings and interpretations I assigned to participants’ statement and (4) triangulation of data from multiple sources, demonstrating an audit trail, and thick description.

To have any effect on either the practice or the theory of a field, research studies must be rigorously conducted. They need to present insights and conclusions that ring authentic and trustworthy to readers, practitioners and other researchers (Merriam, 2009). The criteria for evaluating trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which a research account is believable and appropriate, with particular reference to the level of agreement between participants and the researcher (McGinn, 2009). A study is credible if readers recognize in the findings the meaning that the research has for them in their own social context (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). To establish credibility, I strived for data saturation. Saturation is the point in data collection when no new or relevant information emerges. It is at this point whereby no more data need be collected (Creswell, 2012). I collected and analyzed data on an ongoing basis, continually comparing to see if new ideas, constructs, and themes arose or if the same notions reemerged. Another strategy to enhance credibility is triangulation. This is where two or three measurement points enable
convergence on a site (Merriam, 2009). There are four types of triangulation: the use of multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators and multiple theories (Denzin, 1978).

This study used a framework with three interlocking constructs: African spirituality, acculturation, and resiliency theories. It also utilized multiple sources of data: interviews, observations, and archival documents. This means I was able to compare and cross-check data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people.

Transferability

Transferability is the idea whereby I, the researcher, help the reader to transfer specific knowledge from the research by making connections (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). I have done this by providing a narrative that is sufficiently “thick” (Geertz, 1973) to enable the readers to make their own informed judgment about how my story might link with their experiences and, therefore, draw their own conclusions. When rich, thick description is used as a strategy to enable transferability, it refers to a description of the setting and participants of the study, as well as a detailed description of the findings with adequate evidence presented in the form of quotes from participant interviews, field notes and documents (Merriam, 2009). As Lincoln and Guba (1985) put it,

…the best way to ensure the possibility of transferability is to create a thick description of the sending context so that someone in a potential receiving context may assess the similarity between them and the study (p.125).
Dependability

Dependability means that the study is carried out in a stable and consistent manner and could be repeated (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). This enables the reader to evaluate the adequacy of the analysis through following my decision-making process. Dependability is best established through an inquiry audit (Tobin, 2009). An inquiry audit is the systematic process of checking the analysis for procedural and organizational quality using criteria and an audit trail. A well-organized audit trail aids peer reviewers in evaluating the quality of the analysis by breaking down the data by class, type, and source (Tobin, 2009).

Conformability

Conformability is judged by the way in which the findings and conclusions achieve the aim of the study and are not the result of my assumptions and preconceptions (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Therefore, for this study, I show in Chapter Five how the data are linked to their sources so that the reader can establish that the conclusions and interpretations arise directly from them. I also demonstrate clearly the procedures which give evidence and confirmation of the findings of the research.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the research design and the rationale for employing portraiture methodology. I also discussed the population the study drew from, and the data collection procedures that were utilized. I later reviewed how the data was analyzed, my role as the researcher and the anticipated ethical issues and strategies used to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity.

The following chapter will provide portraits of my study's participants. It is important to mention here that each participant was given an opportunity to choose their pseudonym for
confidentiality purposes; however some of the participants wanted to own their voices and did not pick a pseudonym. The portraits begin with an introduction of each participant, followed by written text that illustrates their journey as an African immigrant faculty member on U.S. campuses, and then conclude with my reflections about each portrait.
CHAPTER FOUR: PORTRAITS

In this chapter, I present eighteen portraits which are composite descriptions informed by observations and conversations with each participant. I capture the voices of the participants according to the guidelines of portraiture that allows the reader to gain insight into the roles of successful African immigrant faculty members in the U.S. through thick descriptive narratives of their respective journeys. When weaving the portrait, I attended to the four dimensions advised by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997).

…the first is the conception, which refers to the development of the overarching story; second is the structure, which refers to the sequencing and layering of emergent themes that scaffold the story; third is the form, which reflects the movement of the narrative, the spinning of the tale; and last is the cohesion, which speaks about the unity and integrity of the piece (p.247).

In order to focus on the four dimensions, I followed four questions provided by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), to develop the final portrait:

- Has contextual information been included as clarifying introduction to and edifying backdrop throughout the portrait?
- Has voice been sufficiently revealed and modulated so that it will inform but not distort the interpretation presented in the portrait?
- Have relationships been respected and faith kept with the actors on the scene throughout the shaping of the final whole?
- Do the identified emergent themes resonate throughout the language and culture of the actors on the site, and do they adequately scaffold the interpretation presented in the portrait? (p. 265).
Woven throughout each portrait are the artistic representations of participants made to illustrate their perceptions of themselves as African immigrant faculty on U.S. campuses and connections that best illustrate the a priori conceptual framework. Concluding the portraits are my reflections on particular issues and emergent themes.

Table 5

*Participants’ Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nativity</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th># of Yrs in U.S.</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Immigration Status</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Carnegie Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Odenigbo</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Naturalized</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Undisclosed</td>
<td>RU/H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutua</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Naturalized</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Master's L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mugo</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Permanent Resident</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>RU/H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailu</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Naturalized</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Undisclosed</td>
<td>RU/H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanjala Omsabu</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Naturalized</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Master's L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyang</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Professor</td>
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**Professor Sakui Malakpa**

Dr. Malakpa attended Albert Academy in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He holds a bachelor’s degree, cum laude, and a master’s degree from Florida State University, as well as a Ph.D. from Harvard University. He also earned a *Juris Doctor* at the University of Toledo and was awarded
Outstanding Teacher of the Year in 2008-2009 and Outstanding Advisor of the Year in 2006-2007. He reached full professor with tenure in the Department of Physical and Special Education and had numerous certificates and plaques of appreciation from professional, civic, and community organizations. In 2008, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of The Republic of Liberia bestowed upon Dr. Malakpa as Knight in the Humane Order of African Redemption.

After our first meeting, he got a call from the government of Liberia notifying him that he had been appointed by the President to be part of the national steering committee to plan the future of Liberia for their 2030 National Vision.

I met Dr. Malakpa at his office on two different occasions; and I was surprised to see that he moved pretty confidently in his remarkable lab given that he is blind and did not have his cane with him. I chuckled at how, even early in my research journey, my personal assumptions were blatant. I, too, was feeding into the stereotype that the blind and visually impaired are helpless. This was a quick reminder that I should be cognizant of such biases throughout my research.

He was dressed in casual khaki pants and a sweater, and his office was adjacent to his lab with a connecting door. On his desk there was a Braille machine, computer, and a talking clock, which spoke the time at the top of every hour. There were pictures on the wall of his mother, his father, his three children and his wife. His office was very tidy and it was clear everything was in place because he knew exactly where to reach when he needed a pen or a book. Dr. Malakpa is a vibrant, energetic and very witty professor. I quickly felt at ease with him, and our conversation for the next two hours was filled with laughter, awe and wonder as he reflected on his academic journey from childhood to present. I was enthralled by his life story, and I am compelled to share it here.
Dr. Malakpa was born in a little town in Northwest Liberia called Wozi. He was born in a big family, and his father had four wives. He narrated some of his defining moments which have strongly shaped him. He began with the death of his father. Dr. Malakpa’s father was renowned in the society as a Zowo, a traditional ruler and healer; and young Malakpa was actually being groomed to be a Zowo prince by his father. However, his father died before Dr. Malakpa’s tenth birthday, and suddenly he became a “pauper.” Second, by the time he was in fifth grade, he was diagnosed with *Onchocerciasis*¹. Later that year he lost sight in one eye, and within another year he went blind completely and had to drop out of school. Although he did not have a typewriter of his own, he polished his typing skills with an imaginary typewriter! Another defining moment for Dr. Malakpa was when the President of Liberia [President William Richard Tolbert], funded his schooling in Sierra Leone. Later President Tolbert was assassinated in a violent coup d'état on April 12, 1980, and Dr. Malakpa’s, funding was withdrawn.

I went through very difficult times without a scholarship and then I wrote to the new minister of Education for an extension of my scholarship, he granted the extension but there was no money. I don’t know how I survived. I had no money, nothing. Fortunately I was in university housing so they couldn’t throw me out but it was really really bad. I had three dollars to buy food. I walked to the grocery store about 3 miles and I bought enough groceries to last a week or two. Where was the rest going to come from?

Luckily, Dr. Malakpa’s Lutheran connections helped him by getting him a Lutheran scholarship which facilitated continuing his education until he completed his undergraduate

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¹ According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012) this is a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD) caused by the parasitic worm *Onchocerca volvulus*. It is transmitted through repeated bites by blackflies of the genus *Simulium*. The disease is called River Blindness because the blackfly that transmits the infection lives and breeds near fast-flowing streams and rivers and the infection can result in blindness. In addition to visual impairment or blindness, *Onchocerciasis* results in skin disease, including nodules under the skin or debilitating itching. Worldwide, *Onchocerciasis* is second only to trachoma as an infectious cause of blindness.
education. He got an assistantship for his Master’s at Florida State which was “a huge relief.” He later applied to Cornell, Harvard and Penn State for his PhD in educational administration planning and social policy and was accepted by all three but he chose Harvard because it had the international focus which he was interested in.

I asked Dr. Malakpa what drives his success as a professor and his enthusiastic response was:

The students truly are my source of energy and joy. No matter what mood I’m in, when I enter the class, I’m alive and animated.

I steered the conversation to how he experienced life as an immigrant faculty, and he shared at length how that was for him:

My experience in higher education as a professor is different. Number one, we come with an accent-- that’s the first mark of difference. Once you open your mouth and they notice an accent, whether you are from Kenya or from India or Jamaica or Brazil, the presumption is you are ineffective. Some of my students don’t believe I have a doctorate. I have been asked about it on several occasions. One time I was teaching a class and a young kid asked me, “Do you really have a doctorate and from where?” To ask a professor whether he has a doctorate, that’s unusual. They would never ask a native born professor if he has a doctorate. I come here, I’m Dr. so-and-so, and that’s enough!

He also brought to light that there is an idea that because he was black some people thought he had received his doctorate because of affirmative action, which was not true.

Dr. Malakpa spoke about how his African culture has influenced his work as a professor. My first year here, I wrote only 3 pages long on my Annual Report of Professional Activities (ARPA), well when I had done all kinds of things. My department chair at the
time called me into her office and told me you are from Africa, you are too modest. This is not the time to be modest this is the time to market yourself. What else did you do? I said I presented a paper to an African group in New York, but it’s an African group, she said write it down. By the time we finished it was 11 pages long. Those are cultural things that you can’t take away…..It is the kind of thing that my culture teaches. It teaches humility and modesty.

Dr. Malakpa mentioned that he faces some other challenges because of his African-ness. He elaborated:

You face differences in the way you are perceived and how people treat you. Maybe it’s the cultural differences; maybe it’s because I’m from Africa. I am not going to hide my African heritage, I will tell you anytime I am from Africa.

I asked what other kinds of cultural values had influenced his experience as an African immigrant

Because of my African background there are certain cultural characteristics you can never wipe out. One of those is tenacity; we are brought up to be tough people. You face challenges and you draw back, you don’t go sit in the corner and cry, don’t get your blood pressure raised. You face the problem head on.

He emphatically stated that nobody would ever strip his African-ness or culture from him because they are a “part” of him. Other than his African-ness, I asked Dr. Malakpa what else influenced his achievement and success in academia in the U.S.

Number one, I am a Christian. I think my Christian heritage has been a big factor in whatever I have done. Number two, I come from a good family. My father was and is the greatest man I have ever known. In literature, in real life, in mystery, in fantasy, you
name it--I have never known anybody greater than my dad. He died before I was even ten years old. That tells you how much his influence has lingered over the years. My mum was a great lady--she died in 1994. I have had many people that have helped me along the way. Their influences, my family influence, my Christian influence all combined to make me who I am. I don’t take credit for anything I have done. I give the credit to those people who have been there for me--My good Lord and Savior, my family, my friends, my helpers, people who have come when I needed help. That’s one thing, and, like I was telling you, that African sense of tenacity I don’t think has ever left me. So I find life always has a challenge, and that’s what life is; it’s made of challenges. It’s made of successes; it’s not always a bed of roses. But if you look up to God and really trust Him there is no problem you cannot overcome.

Reflection

Listening to Dr. Malakpa’s successful journey to academia despite harsh difficulties of losing his father, losing his vision, and losing his academic funding scholarship, inspired and challenged me. I was inspired by his statement that his strong Christian faith has served as an anchor to ground him. Also, Dr. Malakpa’s strong African heritage- “never forget your home”- has strongly influenced most of his research. Even though he has lived in the U. S. most of his adult life, his research agenda is related to developing countries. His love for his students was evident, and he treated them as family. This was evidenced by the fact that he was readily available to be of service to any student who needed him regardless of the time. I was challenged by Dr. Malakpa because, for the first time in my life, I was forced to face my stereotypes of people who are blind. I initially felt uncomfortable around him because I did not know how to relate to a person who is blind, but he immediately eased my tension, which helped dispel my
myths concerning blindness by speaking about it in a practical manner. This gave me a new perspective on the devastating impact of prejudice against people with disabilities.

**Professor Dineo Modise**

Professor Dineo Modise chose her pseudonym, which means “gift” or “blessing” in her language. She earned her doctorate in education at a large research university. Although she was happy to participate in my study, she had a very busy schedule with international travel and was not available for face-to-face interviews. The classroom observations were also going to be impossible, because she was not teaching during the spring semester. However, she really wanted to be supportive, and she suggested that we may have to do some of the interview time via Skype or some other electronic mechanism. That way she could still participate even though she was out of the country. I was touched deeply by her willingness to support my work. I looked forward to hearing her story and learning from her.

When we got to video Skype for the first interview, I was surprised to see a very youthful and beautiful Professor Dineo Modise. She was 42 years old and had attained full professorship at 39 years of age. This was definitely different from all the other faculty members I had encountered. Again, I quickly noted my personal assumptions that full professors were old. Even though she had lived in the U.S. for 22 years and was a naturalized American citizen, Professor Dineo clarified that she identified as a South African living in the U.S. She thinks of herself as a foreigner or international person rather than an immigrant.

Professor Dineo Modise was born in South Africa in a fairly small town at the heart of the Free State province in South Africa. As a young girl growing up under apartheid policies, she was oblivious to the far reaching and detrimental implication of the discriminatory policies. As a matter of fact, to her, life seemed “pretty good.” She was surrounded by loving parents, extended
family members, friends and community members, who cared about her and nurtured her spirit so that she could soar beyond the oppression of the apartheid system. She grew up in an environment where education was emphasized heavily with the expectation that she would be as successful as many of her relatives were. For instance, her mother came from a very well regarded family, and her grandmother was the first certified nurse in their town.

She first began to experience and understand the insidious nature of apartheid when in the seventh grade. She recalls going for a school trip in Johannesburg with her classmates where they could not be accommodated at the hostels and hotels because they were segregated. They had to stay at a Catholic school. This was a defining moment for her: To be branded as inferior and underclass in her own country. She also remembered travelling on a segregated train.

First class was for white people. They had nice chairs, comfy chairs with foam in them. Waiting room for where the white people could sit at the train station was nice and clean and had toilets and windows with window panes. The waiting room for black people was just a room, a window with no windowpanes, and the bathrooms were horrendous.

Her extended family was fairly active in politics and created a space where she was nurtured so she could ascend beyond the potentially devastating effects of deeply entrenched discrimination. For example, they played African music, which under apartheid, was subversive and banned. They wore African clothing, which was also banned, and they told her stories about powerful African leaders like Chief Moroza of Barolong, Chief Moshoeshoe of the Basotho, and King Shaka of the Zulu, who rarely made it into the history books. Inevitably, she got exposed to the system, which was riddled with racial disparities. This influenced her thinking of what apartheid meant and raised her level of consciousness and curiosity.
Young Dineo came to the U.S. for the first time as an exchange student for a year in high school. That year she read a “ton” of books about South Africa that were banned back home. She was excited that she could access these books in the U.S. and was astounded by how ordinary they seemed. She could not understand what was evil about the books or why they had been banned.

I remember reading a book about Winnie Mandela and how she protected her children, and I thought it was so ordinary to me. It seemed like a life I had experienced at some time.

That year in the U.S. concretized and clarified some of the conversations that she had heard around her dinner table. She returned home after the exchange program and joined the local university for her undergraduate education. However, in the late 1980s, South Africa was going through massive transitions politically. Her family, like many other South African families, was heavily involved in politics. This political involvement meant that there were levels of harassment that were not conducive to one trying to be a successful student in the university. She transferred to the U.S. to finish her education.

Professor Dineo stated that as a foreign born/international faculty she has to put in more effort and energy in her work, partly because it is emphasized that foreigners are “not from here.” In her experience, the hard work paid off, but the pressure to go above and beyond to be successful was intense.

If I compare my scholarly productivity to colleagues at the same rank, I feel I had to work two to three times as much. What was acceptable for them was not acceptable for me. Not because of standards I made, but I understood I wasn’t from here so I made sure I covered all the bases.
Most of Dr. Dineo’s work is primarily on South Africa. She is very “intentional” to pursue topics that allow her to maintain an active connection to her home country. She knows she will be relevant when she returns back home. Her publication portfolio catapulted before she graduated with her doctorate. She published four articles from her dissertation, which gave her a good start, and she kept the momentum going. She also got her first book contract before she graduated. She talked excitedly about a “phenomenal” mentor, who had been pivotal to her first book publication and consequent publications. This mentor gave her the roadmap on how to convert a dissertation into a book and provided extensive feedback. Another thing that she attributed to her successful publication was that she had collected a tremendous amount of data for her dissertation, which she had not utilized. This data helped her create new publications.

She collaborates with scholars in the U.S. and in South Africa around issues of gender, equity, and access to higher education. Her last two books were on Egypt and Pakistan covering issues of religion and higher education. She calls these “historically marginalized societies.” At the time of our interview, she had about 70 refereed journal articles, 13 book chapters, and seven books.

She stated that she was only 28 when she started teaching. She remembered that many of her students were much older than she was because she taught at the graduate level. She recalled that her first years were difficult, and that she had a reputation as a “very tough person.” This is because she felt that she had to set a boundary between herself and the students. She felt that some students were outright disrespectful because she was young.

In my first few years, I had to make it very clear that I was the professor. But I remember there were a couple of white male students who tried to assert themselves in ways that were not constructive, and I had to be very clear on the guidelines and my expectations.
I probed Dr. Dineo to give me an instance of how she had dealt with this issue. She said that with grades she was very clear. She was clear about syllabi and what was expected. A lot of the time when a student would contest her grading, she would sit down and go through the paper with the student and always asked the student to show her in their paper where they deemed that they had been given the wrong grades. If she had made a mistake in her assessment, she tried to be reasonable. But a lot of times that was not the case. She also talked about some students in the class who would be playing games on their laptops and were doing things that were unacceptable in class, which she had to address immediately. Sometimes she would confiscate the laptop and request the student to collect it after class. Other times, she would call them out in front of their classmates. “Thankfully”, she has not had to do this in the latter part of her career now that her reputation is established and people know her work. Her classes fill up fast.

Although grants are considered challenging, Dr. Dineo seemed to have had considerable success with them. At the time of our interview, Dr. Dineo has received a total of $2,130,237 in grant money. I enquired what could have attributed to her registering such success in grants. She responded that since most donors preferred to fund research that was U.S. based, she has learned how to package her grant proposal so that she can clearly demonstrate the relationship of her work to the U.S. discourse on access and equity.

In regards to the process of attaining tenure, Professor Dineo said it is a “mystery”. She reported that tenure requirements were a moving target. At her university, nobody told her what she needed to do to acquire tenure. As a result, she states:

Mediocrity was not an option. The rules are there, but you are not quite sure they apply to you [international faculty] the same as they are to other people. I had to make sure I was completely covered; there was no question whether I was a qualified candidate. I just
didn’t want to leave anything to chance, so I went above and beyond. If people were coming with three books I would come with six. If people had two articles I would come with six. If people attended three conferences, I would go to eight conferences to make sure I was covered.

By the time Dr. Dineo was going for tenure, she had 16 articles published in refereed journals, four books, a couple of book chapters, and book reviews. She had also attended and presented papers in many conferences, both nationally and internationally. In regards to service, she was serving on a Board of Directors and an editorial board for prestigious associations. She had also served on many dissertation committees and other university committees. Although most research on faculty members details the importance of mentors, Professor Dineo did not have any formal mentors. She had professional mentors elsewhere who helped her navigate the complex pre-tenure journey. She stated strongly that her university did not provide the mentor/mentee space.

Every success story comes at a cost, and Dr. Dineo shared some challenges which she has encountered in her academic journey. She mentioned that, sometimes, people tend to second guess her capacity and abilities, and that she does not feel supported by her institution. A surprising challenge that she mentioned was that sometimes there is tension between African immigrant and African American faculty. She clarified by saying:

Sometimes there is tension…they [African-American faculty] think you “foreigners, you are a safe black, they hired you coz you are safe.” People impulsively assume that you were hired cause you are not going to talk and you are this that or the other.

At times, the challenge is isolation because some of the native faculty members have the impression that, since one is from Africa, they would not understand what is going on around
campus. She revealed that she had been cut off in some situations when she was bluntly told “You are African, you are not white, and you are not African American, you don’t understand.”

A different challenge that she mentioned was the presumption that African immigrants have special privileges that other people do not get. Yet for her she has succeeded primarily because she “cannot afford not to succeed. I can’t go home and sort of show off nothing.”

She also pointed out that sometimes tensions exist when dealing within a group. There is the general attitude in academia that black people get the “back seat.” This attitude exposes instances where one can see the level of support is not comparable to what other people would be getting. She reflected that when she became faculty, she did not have any expectations in regards to support “because there was a part of me that understood that I was not necessarily going to be supported.” She, therefore, had to figure it out quickly. She told of some new faculty who come looking for mentors and needing a lot of handholding. She believes that these faculty members “are not going to succeed.”

Dr. Dineo understood that sometimes her African-ness might impede her success while in U.S. She confessed that she often has to consciously abandon her “collective orientation” so as to advance in academia. She elaborated on this by saying:

There is a part of our culture that is a collective culture and modest culture. And you come here [U.S. campus] and it’s neither collective nor modest. People are competing here. Don’t ever disillusion yourself into thinking otherwise.

Initially, she did not understand this phenomenon because she had assumed that collaboration and collegiality were fundamental to academic success. Yet, this was not displayed in her institution. Although faculty often discussed doing collaborative work together, she reported that there was no sincerity, and many only collaborated if it benefited them.
In addition, Dr. Dineo’s believes that the African culture of modesty and humility do not work well in the competitive academic culture in the U.S. “African culture teaches us to be very modest and humble.” She described times when she has had to do her annual review process and also times she has sat on a review committee.

I sit on a review committee, and people [native-born] will do two small things and embellish them. I sit there thinking, hmm, “I did the same thing; how come I didn’t write it big like this?” I just recorded that factual event.

Dr. Dineo attributes a lot of her success to her family support. Her husband, an academic like her, is “very helpful” because he understands when she has to work 60 hours a week and sometimes on Saturday and Sunday, since they both go through the same process in terms of expectations to “publish or perish.” She revealed that they have collaborated on some publications. Her mother, who is now retired, was very helpful when the children were small, because she came from South Africa and stayed home with each child when they were born until they were a little older. This helped Dr. Dineo significantly, especially when she was doing international travel, because she knew she could trust her with the children. Dr. Dineo mentioned that she is connected to other Africans in the Diaspora and that is where her life outside of work revolves. This support system has been “absolutely critical,” because these people have extended themselves to her and have reached out professionally and mentored her. In her words, “My success can be accredited to the support I received from others.”

Reflection

Professor Dineo’s story stimulated my consciousness towards racial and apartheid policies. Growing up in a country that was hostile to black people, it is clear that Dr. Dineo was not entrapped by those laws; instead she defied them by demonstrating a certain sense of self
which she attributes to her success. Her ability to see opportunity in the “craziest” of places has
also attributed to her success. Her close family and her extended family have been very
instrumental in her journey. Even though her research is primarily South African based, she has
figured out, with guidance and input from colleagues and mentors, how to situate her work
within a broader international discourse, which has benefited her publication record. Unlike other
international faculty, accent was never an issue for Dr. Dineo. Although she has an accent, and it
is clear that she is not from this country, nobody had ever raised an issue about the fact that she
spoke differently. She knew some of her international colleagues had issues occasionally, but by
and large, in her experience it has not been an issue. For Dr. Dineo, failure was never an option,
and she made sure she understood what was required and valued and worked tenaciously towards
those things.

Although Dr. Dineo identified strongly as an African, she unabashedly said that she had
increased her endorsement of individualistic values and decreased her collectivist values in order
to succeed in academia. She also disputed that she did not subscribe to the dogmatic views on
religion like most of the other participants. She said:

I believe that I am not notoriously religious. I have always had real challenges with the
way religion was used and misused. I guess I haven’t resolved that conflict. I know that a
lot of Africans that I’ve met are very steeped in religion in ways that I’m just not. And
this is not to say it’s good or bad, but it’s just where I am.

Dr. Abiola

On February 8, 2012, at 9.30 a.m, I knocked at Dr. Abiola’s office, and the door flew
open. She cheerfully threw her arms around me, hugged me and welcomed me enthusiastically
into her small office as if we were old friends. I immediately felt at home with Dr. Abiola. She is
a tall, vivacious and beautiful African woman. On that day she was dressed simply but tastefully in straight trousers and a blazer. She immediately noticed that I had only one earring on as my other earring had apparently fallen off while I was rushing from the parking lot to her office. She started rummaging through her drawers looking for earrings to give me. I was amazed by the collection of African jewelry she had stashed in one of her drawers. When I asked why she had all that jewelry, she said “I like to keep them here so that I can give them as gifts to students who come to my office.” I smiled. Her office was cluttered but comfortable. She had postcards from all over the world; her college diplomas and pictures of her family were stuck on her walls. Her desk was cluttered with birthday cards; she explained that she had turned 52 years old the previous week. When I asked about the postcards on the wall, “They are great conversation starters...” was her cheerful remark. She said her students usually sent them to her when they travelled, and she kept each one of them. Dr. Abiola is an Associate Professor in clinical psychology. She joined the university in August 1997 and attained tenure in 2003.

Dr. Abiola was born in the Southwest region of Nigeria, from the Yoruba community. Her name means she was born into an honorable family. The literal translation means that she was born into wealth. But in African culture, wealth is not about material things but about honor. She grew up in an educationally enriched environment because her father was the Vice Chancellor (equivalent to university president in the U.S.) for a large university in Nigeria, and her mother was a teacher. She reported that there are several professors and other educators in her extended family, such that their family was known as “the family of academicians.” She was the first of six children, and from the time she was a little girl, she wanted to be like her father: a university professor. She reported:
From maybe grade two we would go to the bookstore on Saturday, and I would look for novels’, and you know it’s free because it was open from 8am-3pm. I was a voracious reader. That’s how I got to reading books. We used to go to the public library to read books. She [mother] started borrowing for us books when we were little.

Dr. Abiola earned her Bachelor’s degree in psychology with a second class upper division (equivalent to Magna Cum Laude) in Nigeria. She later went on to graduate school and earned her Master’s degree in organizational psychology. After teaching at a local university for a few years, she moved to Canada, where she obtained her Ph.D. in 1993 at the University of Toronto. After her Ph.D., she accepted a position as a research coordinator for a non-profit agency and worked a couple of years prior to relocating to the U.S. for her professoriate career. Unlike many female immigrants to the U.S. who are traditionally viewed as “dependents”, moving as wives, mothers or daughters of male immigrants (Corra & Kimuna, 2009), Dr. Abiola moved her entire family to the U.S. when she got an offer from the university. Although she got offers from other universities, Dr. Abiola chose her university because there was a match between her expertise and what the department needed. She reported that the move was easy on her entire family because the campus is situated in a very multicultural area. As she put it, “You can get Nigerian food easily.”

In describing her teaching philosophy, Dr. Abiola says that she is reminded of the British actor Laurence Olivier’s quote: “Always do your best; you can’t do more and you mustn’t do less.” This phrase guides her as she juggles her multiple identities. Her research agenda is focused on physical, mental, and behavioral health issues using community psychology, positive psychology, and cross-cultural perspectives. She continues to maintain an interest in the interfaces of race, gender, and class issues and has been involved in writing grants with
colleagues in different departments and colleges as well as community partners. Several of these have been funded.

As a researcher, she shared that one of her pre-tenure challenges was the issue of publishing.

The pressure to publish is immense, and my work focused primarily on Africa. Yet, work on Africa is not appreciated much or even considered valuable in this part of the world. When you publish in African journals, they are considered sub-standard or not prestigious enough. That can be hurtful. That is a challenge in terms of the value they place on your work, yet you have your own background and you don’t want to be someone else. You don’t want to be ‘European American’ because you are not.

I enquired how she handled this challenge pre-tenure, and she revealed that she strengthened her community service work and converted that into scholarship work. She developed a service learning and community externship course, which involves about 20 students from her university serving as tutors and academic mentors in the city. This successful program earned her an Outreach and Engagement Excellence Award. To Dr. Abiola the importance of service learning and other modes of experiential learning and community outreach opportunities for students cannot be overemphasized, and that has significantly helped in her success as a professor. She also confirmed that once she got tenure she was able to do the kind of research she always wanted to do and now focuses her research on African issues. Most recently, she has been working on unemployment-related issues. These include coping with job loss and the recession that often involve psychosocial factors, such as family support, hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy associated with coping and the positive outcomes of unemployment, such as personal growth.
Dr. Abiola also serves on several committees at the departmental, college and university levels. She has been nominated to most of the committees she serves on because she has demonstrated good leadership, she seems to enjoy it and is committed to the work.

I attended Dr. Abiola’s Psychology class on our second meeting. The lecture hall was filled with about 100 students. The mood in her class was one of order and decorum. The students were well behaved and friendly. Dr. Abiola brought all her soul and energy to class. She chitchatted with students before class started, and it was clear that they respected her. Even though the class had over 100 students, she addressed her students by name. The classroom was equipped with high technology equipment, and she knew how to handle it skillfully.

Given that literature indicates that students complain about accents and phonetics of immigrant faculty (Ngwainmbi, 2006), she confirmed this by mentioning that some students had complained that she spoke too fast or they did not understand her accent. I inquired how she had dealt with that in the classroom. She states that she takes her stand from the first day of classes. She mentioned that giving ground rules at the beginning of classes sets the pace of the class and gave her control of the class. “You have to be in control. Otherwise, it will suck your self-esteem.” She also indicated that she incorporated her cultural aspects in her classes, and this enriched the curriculum.

She reported that in spite of setting the ground rules at the start of the class, students still try to undermine her authority in class, and sometimes she had to assert her authority. Dr. Abiola said that she tries to create the environment where it is not competitive but collaborative. She does this by demonstrating to her students that “they can all get As.”
As a Nigerian citizen, Dr. Abiola is also a traditional African Chief. Her title is Chief Aye-Akewesulu, which means “a woman who uses education to develop society.” The term “Aye” distinguishes that it is a woman chief because culturally chiefs are male.

This chieftaincy was bestowed on me by His Royal Highness; The Onimesi is the traditional ruler (King) of Imesi-Ekiti (a Yoruba city in Southwestern part of Nigeria).

As chief, Dr. Abiola and her husband, who is also a chief, are leaders engaged in philanthropic activities such as the endowment of scholarships for students at different educational levels, donations of books to schools and libraries, and provision of clothing, electricity and water to the economically disadvantaged. She travels to Nigeria two times a year during summer break and winter break to carry out her chieftaincy role. Although this may seem hectic, she stated that going to Nigeria twice a year rejuvenates her and makes her a more effective professor when she returns to campus.

As a mother, Dr. Abiola reports that she is blessed with three children--two boys and a girl. It was clear how proud she was of their academic achievements. Her face beamed as she spoke about her children. Her first son has a degree in computer science and engineering; and during the time of the interview, he was working as a computer engineer. Her daughter has a degree in biology and is currently doing her masters in immunology and immune-genetics in Manchester, England. Her youngest son is a sophomore in pre-law/political science and is currently studying abroad for a year in France. She reported that she had her children when she was pursuing her doctoral program.

Dr. Abiola had not faced blatant racism or sexism until she came to North America. She has quickly learned to recognize toxic environments, which she referred to the “Ph.D. (Pull Her Down) Syndrome.” She deals with these instances by either trying to change the situation,
perhaps by telling a joke, or not being part of it completely. In spite of experiences with racism and sexism, Dr. Abiola has been successful personally and professionally. Some examples of racism and sexism were:

When doing my Ph.D., in the classroom, you raise your hand or you say something, the professor nods; another [white] person says the same thing you said, and the professor says “wow”… I go for faculty meetings, make a suggestion, people listen quietly; then if another [male, white] faculty member restates your idea, someone says, “I like that. We will go with that idea that Prof XYZ suggested…..” Then I wonder, he just restated my idea! Why does it make a difference? But you brush that aside, you know who you are, and you move on. That’s the only way you can survive…There are differences in terms of attitudes of students, faculty members, people wondering whether I am capable or not. Once you prove that you are capable, and more than capable, people respect you.

I asked how she manages to overcome these obstacles, she says:

My positive attitude to life. I don’t easily get offended; things don’t easily hurt me. I interpret things positively. I put energy on my enthusiasm, knowing today will be better than yesterday, counting my blessings, thanking God for what He has done so far….I continue to try my best. Despite that, I work on my strengths…So I just put in my best. I keep going. I want to prove people wrong. I am different. That keeps me sane.

**Reflection**

Dr. Abiola had much to say, and that is because she is very passionate about her work. She has a positive orientation, and the integration of spirituality clearly demonstrates her approach to life. Unfortunately, the third time I met Dr. Abiola, she shared that her mother had suddenly passed away and she spent a few moments fondly remembering how her mother had
taught and shaped a huge part of her life. Even though she had just lost a loved family member, she still took the time to check on me and my progress and cared enough to ask how I was faring. Her positive attitude is probably even more influential on her success than she might realize. It is somewhat rare to be that positive always, and it seems to have worked well for her it seems. The challenges and obstacles that came her way, such as racism, sexism, and death in the family, have been opportunities for personal growth and reveal her refusal to be victimized as well as her strength to deal with adversity. Her life and work are guided by the meaning of her name, which is “to bring honor” to God, her family and community; and this reality has served her well in the advancement of her career in a U.S. university.

Professor Kat

Dr. Kat is a full professor with tenure and rank at a dynamic, student-centered research university. He also is the department chair. He came to the U.S. in 1990, started faculty work in 1991, and attained tenure in 1995. He was very jovial throughout the interview and I felt completely at ease with him. I asked him why he chose Kat as a pseudonym and he said,

Kat is a 'secret' name. It is an abbreviation of a local alias that goes with my name in the Akan language of Ghana. That is all I can reveal. It will cost you to know the full details.

Needless to say that after that introduction, we had a great interview. I did not need to probe him because he was such a great storyteller and a humorous one at that.

Dr. Kat was born in 1954 in a rural area in central Ghana. His parents were cocoa farmers and they lived a very simple life. His mother had nine children, but most of them had died and young Kat grew up with only two other siblings--his older sister and older brother (who died later). Their town did not have electricity or pumped water. He had to fetch water from the river and study using a lantern. He never wore shoes until he went to college. His father passed away
when he was 15 years old, and that was the beginning of “survival” for young Kat. He did not go
to high school because his mother could not afford school fees. Fortunately for him, it was a time
when the country was going through a lot of structural changes after attaining its independence,
and their first President, Kwame Nkurumah, instituted universal primary education for all, which
led to a great need for elementary and middle school teachers. To this end, the government
opened many new teacher training colleges and offered four-year scholarships to anyone who
had completed middle school and could pass the teacher-training entry examinations.

Even though he did not go to high school, it was evident that young Kat was determined
to go to the university no matter what. To prepare for the university, his sister bought the syllabi
and books for him, and he studied them on his own. He was limited in the fact that he did not
have access to a lab, so he could not study the sciences. He, therefore, concentrated on the arts
and social sciences. He excelled in geography, economics, and history and was admitted to the
University of Ghana to study geography, history, psychology, economics, and statistics. He
majored in geography with statistics. He later earned a Master’s of science in planning at the
University of Science and Technology in Ghana. After graduation, Dr. Kat worked as an
assistant registrar at the university for three years. He later earned a Ph.D. in geography at a
university in Canada.

Initially, Professor Kat intended to go back to Ghana after his doctorate. However, like
many African immigrants, his country was doing poorly economically. Consequently, he started
looking for a job and was employed at a small university in the U.S. Although he was supposed
to start in the fall semester of 1990, he had immigration problems; and he could not get a work
permit on time. He eventually got his work visa and started working in the spring semester of
1991. He served at that university for 15 years, attaining full professorship. Six years ago,
Professor Kat relocated from the small university to be department chair at a large university in the Midwest. He did not apply for the job but was headhunted for the position.

I asked Professor Kat how he had experienced life as a professor in the U.S., and he was emphatic in his response. It was evident that being an African immigrant had a significant impact on his experience, both positively and negatively.

Accent was an issue, the students tell you that you can’t speak English, or they can’t hear you. You go to class and they do class evaluation, and they say “This person cannot speak English; you have to send him back to Africa.” My colleagues never face those things. And I am the only black person in the faculty in the department here [at his current university].

Not only did he have to adjust to the institutional culture but also had to adjust to the environment since he had not experienced snow even though he had done his graduate work in Canada.

I asked how he navigated all these differences, and he confessed that it was difficult initially. He admitted in a matter of fact way, “If you decide to live in a different country, you must be prepared to learn.” It has been a learning process for him. He also acknowledged that he could not please everyone even when he did his best; so, he just worked hard to mitigate these issues. Dr. Kat quickly recognized that to share his story at the beginning of class was a very beneficial strategy because he understood that unless the students were familiar with where he was coming from, they would never understand him. This improved his classroom experience so much that he never received negative evaluations again. Another strategy that Dr. Kat used to overcome challenges was coming to terms with the brutal fact that discrimination is a socialization concept and takes place regardless of whether you are an immigrant or native-born.
He reflected on the fact that even in Ghana he had experienced discrimination because he was from the “wrong community.” I thought this was such a great perspective, which I had not heard from other faculty members.

Being a foreigner and a black African has given him even more determination to succeed in an environment where people expect him not to succeed. He mentioned that he cannot afford to be just ordinary. He has to be “extraordinary.” Although he felt this pressure, Professor Kat stayed on track and published many articles, books, brought in grants, and tried to excel as a teacher. Eventually, this paid off, and he now enjoys the benefits of being a full professor. He reported that his students are his greatest joy, and seeing them succeed is worth the effort.

In regards to his research agenda, Dr. Kat initially focused on technological change in mature industries. He then switched to do development theory as it relates to Africa. Recently, he has been focusing on small cities in the U.S. He bemoaned that one of his frustrations was that it is very difficult getting grants to do substantive research in Africa. In 2004, Dr. Kat got the prestigious Rockefeller Foundation grant of $356,103 to work with the University of Makerere and the local government in Uganda. However, he is clear that he does not want to be labeled as a professor who only does research in Africa.

I noticed that Dr. Kat had taken such a short time to attain tenure, a period of four-and-a-half years in comparison to the other faculty I had interviewed who took five to six years. Dr. Kat had many success stories to share. I probed him as to what he attributed his achievements. He calmly accredited God. He also gave credit to his department colleagues and the two universities that had given him the chance to work in the U.S. “I would be a remiss not to thank them or acknowledge them for their support.” He also talked about his wife fondly many times during the interview, and it was clear that she was influential in his success as a faculty member.
In the same way, he pointed out that the tragic pain of losing his father and growing up in abject poverty in Ghana may have contributed to his inner strength. Additionally, growing up with limited resources made him very resourceful.

I enquired further on how he would advise me as an African immigrant graduate student who wants to be successful as a professor in the U.S., and he revealed that there are many unclear expectations in the academy, and one would have to quickly learn to say “no” but in a collegial manner. He mentioned that finding a mentor or two in the institution who would be able to guide me on the expectations, would be ideal. He also pointed out that it is crucial to be able to balance work and life and have a clear research agenda to be successful in academia.

Dr. Kat explained that one of his life philosophies is “never be afraid to try something new.” He expounded by saying that, even though he had attained full tenure at his previous institution, he was not afraid to move to another state in the U.S. for a new position at a bigger research institution. He mentioned that typically most African immigrant professors are very loyal to their institutions, which have facilitated their immigration papers, to the point where they lose opportunities elsewhere where they can be even more successful.

Reflection

I was moved by Dr. Kat’s humility throughout the interview. He was careful not to come across as though he was “blowing his own horn” because he has been successful. His story strongly demonstrated his determination to succeed and his resilience from an early age, but he attributed his success to God and to his loving and supportive wife. He was also quick to mention that his helpful colleagues also played a part in his success. His university had also processed his immigration paperwork for him to legally work in the U.S. for which he will be forever grateful.
Having grown up with very limited resources in Africa, fortified his inner strength, which helped him overcome obstacles that came his way. Dr. Kat’s positive attitude was infectious, and even though he had found obstacles in his road to tenure and promotion, he still affirmed that the U.S. is the country of opportunities and “everything is possible in this country. It has its own shortcomings and a lot of things that you don’t agree with. But the thing that is great about the U.S. is when they see quality they will take it.” Even though one of his greatest frustrations was lack of support to do substantial work in Africa, he turned that around and demonstrated versatility in his research agenda. He focused on small cities in the U.S. This helped build up his research portfolio quickly which led to his early tenure.

**Professor Masopo**

I met Professor Masopo at her office. She wore her hair in long locks that went all the way down to her back. She had adorned her hair with cowrie shells. She wore leather pants and a manly shirt and shoes. As soon as I sat down, she offered me dark chocolate and told me how good it is for my health, and that she did not want to consume all the calories by herself. That made me laugh, and our interview thereafter was very easy and casual.

Dr. Masopo is a full professor at a large, selective, world-class research university serving about 58,000 students. She joined the university in 1995 and attained tenure in 1999. She has numerous awards for her outstanding service to the global community and teaching awards. She has also been awarded numerous external and internal grants for her work in comparative literature. At the time of the interview, she had published eight books (three of which are novels), over 30 refereed journal articles, had two book manuscripts in progress, and had presented her work at 69 national and international conferences.
Dr. Masopo claims world citizenship by holding American, Swiss, and Congolese citizenship. Her mother was Cameroonian, and her father was Congolese. She reported that she grew up in a large family of intellectuals. Unfortunately, she lost her father, mother and sister and only has three surviving brothers. One is a professor in New York City, another is an interpreter in Cambodia, and the third is a Medical Doctor in Cameroon. She reported that she was an avid reader from the time she was a little girl, and she grew up knowing that she wanted to be a “woman of letters.”

Dr. Masopo relocated to the U.S. because she was “bored” with speaking French and wanted something different. She enrolled at a small liberal arts college in Colorado as an undergraduate student. Here, she met her mentor, who was very influential in her adjusting to an English-speaking college. Thereafter, she went to graduate school at Harvard University but was very unhappy because the program did not focus on the kind of philosophy she had anticipated studying. So, again she transferred to another program in a large university in the Midwest. It was an “incredible” program, because it had a “combination of philosophers that would come and teach every 6 to 12 weeks.” Dr. Masopo liked the fact that she could study with professors from other countries, and many philosophers came from Europe, with whose work she was familiar.

After finishing writing her dissertation proposal, Dr. Masopo was bored again, this time because she could “not find a voice” in her work. She was not motivated. In her quest for finding “a voice,” she went to study Spanish in Mexico, and there she stumbled across a “very interesting writer,” Jean Genet.
I fell in love with him! He was a prominent and controversial French novelist, playwright, poet, essayist, and political activist. Early in his life, he was a vagabond and petty criminal, but later took to writing.

She was inspired and started writing about him. However, one of her professors tried to dissuade her from writing on Jean Genet. He reasoned that it would be difficult for an African woman to write a philosophical research paper on a white homosexual, but Dr. Masopo was persistent, and that is when she found her “voice.”

Writing about Jean Genet was very difficult. Not everyone can write on him. I made it my responsibility to come up with a decent thesis that would get me a job and get me out of graduate school. My professors were really scared that I would not find a job; they felt that being a black woman writing about a white homosexual, I would never get a job. But I had 18 interviews immediately after defending my dissertation and five job offers.

She chose her university because one of her mentors was a faculty member there, and he convinced her that it “was the best job.” She was convinced and does not regret that decision.

Dr. Masopo talked candidly about her position as a faculty member. She went into the profession because she likes research and enjoys teaching philosophical ideas on issues such as race, racism and ethnicity within the Francophone world. However, she said that she was not successful as a French professor due to the fact that she is a “colonized subject.” Pushing for further clarification she said:

I have difficulties with the French language, especially the writing. My difficulties are political. It’s interesting how my subconscious is always at work.

Although French is her heritage, Dr. Masopo felt that the French still treat their colonial subjects in a very “degrading” manner on which she has written a book. She said that something
profound happened at the “core of her being” when she started teaching. She is obviously very passionate about people knowing about the issues of race, especially Francophone Africans. She stated:

It is an aberration for someone to get a degree in French, not knowing that France colonized half of Africa. I have taught those courses even when I don’t want to because I want people to hear that French speaking Africa is a very important part of the configuration. Very few people in this university speak about it.

However, Dr. Masopo feels that the university has not supported her work and has not hired other people to educate the students on issues of race and the French people, which makes her feel somewhat weighed down. She bemoaned:

I have been the only French-speaking faculty member here for 15 years. Some students have clearly written on the university website, “You will kill her [Professor Masopo] if you don’t hire someone to teach what she is teaching.” I feel it’s my role as a woman to continue to promote this work. I am constantly doing this work because I feel that if I don’t do it no one will do it…. Otherwise I could be sitting here and that history of [Francophone] Africa will die away.

There was something very compelling about Professor Masopo that struck me. Although she was very vocal on issues of race and racism, she was very humble when I asked about her success stories which were evident from the documents I had read about her on the university website and reviews I had read on her. She is widely sought after because of her controversial views, both nationally and internationally. Her response was:

I have difficulties with this word “success” because it’s difficult for me to accept that I am successful even though I am.
Instead, she was quick to talk about her students, who continuously make her proud. She beamed when she remembered some of her students, and she cheerfully kept saying that they made her “very happy” and kept her going. She reminisced of a time she met Nelson Mandela and Professor Şengör (a Turkish geologist and philosopher), and other well-known people who have taught her humility. She said it was about “reaching out and giving a hand.” I resonated with this because she was very quick to respond to my recruiting email, even though she was out of the country. When I mentioned this to her during the interview she said:

This is my legacy because I think this work is important. I can’t sit here and say I don’t want to talk to you because I am important. I’m not important if you are not. Both of us are important when you get your work done and I get my work done. Then we will get all of us on the map. I can’t be happy to be on the map by myself. It makes me feel awkward and would mean I do not understand the voice of my ancestors, by not giving of myself. Giving is a gift and I must give!

Professor Masopo candidly talked about being judged because she was different. An African woman philosopher is considered atypical. She explained:

Whenever I write a book, my book is scrutinized more than anybody’s book. I write more than anyone [in her department]. As a philosopher, my colleagues complain that my writing is very dense, philosophical and complicated. I’m not sure they will say the same about someone else. When I don’t theorize or complicate my writings, they say my writing is simple.

She also talked about not having support in the institution. She is the only faculty in the entire university who does the kind of work that she does, and she feels that it’s her duty to “reach out to the continent [Africa].” She gave other examples, such as:
I have encountered obstacles here and there. For example, when you go teach like the stuff I’m teaching right now, when you walk in the classroom the kids look at you, they say “she’s got an accent”, “she is different”, “and she has these heavy dreadlocks hanging on her.”

She feels that the whole system was bound to make her “weak” by making her feel like she was out of place. But her sense of African-ness has anchored her. She says she was brought up as an “African Queen,” and this identity makes her to be “full, to be total and to be complete.” Other than institutional challenges, she has encountered a lot of ungrateful Africans, and sometimes she has been betrayed by her own people. I asked her what made her continue to try to help her fellow Africans, and she wisely stated:

I believe the more people you help they will reach out to others. The more educated people the better - that’s my philosophy.

Professor Masopo regarded herself as an activist by saying that she “was born to fight”. Her current fight is to “leave a legacy for Africans.” She hopes that when she passes on, people will know that “African women are very smart and not over-sexed, exotic and other such morbid labels.” She consistently mentioned that opposition is common, especially to African women, but she has learned to draw strength from the opposition, and practically, she “retracts, rethinkss and then steps forward.”

Professor Masopo indicated that she is writing now even more than ever, even though she is already a full professor. She is passionate about the continent of Africa and is against any kind of “stereotyping” against it. Currently, her research interest is about African women loving women because she does not appreciate the way the West talks about African sexuality.
Whenever they talk about us, they think that we don’t know how to kiss; we don’t know how love works. It’s like we are animals. This is from the colonial times, and the people [western world] are still looking at us that way. It’s up to us to change the image.

She further explained that she did not like the “sadistic readings of the continent,” and sometimes she felt that Africans condemned her for that. She explained that a few years ago she gave a presentation to the African Literature Association and discussed women and desires, and it was very controversial. All the men started “jumping up and down” because this topic is taboo in Africa. However, she feels that as a philosopher this is what makes her whole.

Professor Masopo discussed that spirituality was important to her and helps her understand her work better, especially when she confronts “tragedy.” However, she felt that spirituality is a “difficult” topic. She reflected on a paper she was writing on “violence theory.” She believed that the only thing that can alleviate this phenomenon is spirituality. She said that spirituality has to be rethought. I prodded for more explanation on this, and she said:

When I talk about spirituality, I am talking about a higher spirit, a God, somebody who is there, who we need to ask for clemency and speak to him to try to understand what is happening to us. And, of course, it’s difficult to talk about spirituality without lapsing into stereotypes about different gods and this and that. For me, spirituality is important because it’s a moment where, when I talk about spirituality, I talk about the need to understand the other person. When I look at you in the eye, I see a human being, a beautiful woman, a young woman, a person. If I look at you in the eye and I don’t see that, I can kill you. But when I see that you are like me, it will be difficult to harm you. Spirituality for us Africans is important, a kind of anchor that is helping us to survive.
Another instance when she spoke on spirituality was when she was talking about tragedy, and she said spirituality has strengthened her.

You have to sit and pray that somehow there is a higher spirit that can give you strength, and so for me it’s important. I am not a religious person who goes to church. But I know that the moment I recollect and think about tragedy, I need that spirituality.

She further clarified that she has been able to do the work she is doing because she believes “there is a God “and He helps her to understand her work better. She also related to her ancestors who guide her spiritually by encouraging her on a daily basis.

I asked Professor Masopo to reflect on things that she would advise a junior African faculty or a graduate student like me who is looking into the professoriate. She said:

First you have to listen to your heart, your inner voice. The things within you that nobody knows that you bring out in your work. Do your work and be honest. I believe in honesty and ethics. For me, you have to be ethical. To be ethical is to be as honest as you can with yourself to begin with, and people will see that eventually. You will encounter opposition. But opposition does not always mean failure. Whenever you encounter strong opposition that is an opportunity for you to get up and be strong again.

Reflection

I admired Professor Masopo. As a “woman of letters” she is very subtle at how she expresses herself. She is an enigma. She often referred to “the voice” that gave her the inspiration to do what she did. She is passionate about her African identity, and it drives her research, her teaching, and her contribution to the society. Her family and her mentors have significantly impacted her work; and because of that, she is a mentor to many students. I thought it was genius of her to relate spirituality to her work on “tragedy theory.” It made sense to me.
She was the only participant who related to her ancestors for guidance. The fact that she is a modern African woman who unapologetically spoke about her ancestral spirits guiding her simply made her very intriguing to me.

She invited me to visit with her and her students on one rainy Tuesday evening and I was fascinated to see how she interacted with her students. She is absolutely beautiful to behold as a teacher. She builds on the natural inquisitiveness of laughing and learning. I was inspired as she shared her love of language, literature, film and culture. After spending time with Professor Masopo, I was profoundly moved; and I cannot stop thinking about matters of race, gender and power in the Francophone world. She definitely broadened my views and deepened my perspectives on African spirituality.

**Professor Sembene**

Dr. Sembene chose his name because it reminded him of the renowned Senegalese filmmaker and novelist Sembene Ousmane. He said, “In my younger days, I aspired to be a creative writer and read a lot of African novels.” He spoke in a deep booming voice as he narrated the fascinating story of his journey as an African immigrant professor in the U.S. His journey was most unique because he is the only professor that I interviewed who had previously been denied tenure at a predominantly white college situated in a rural region in the U.S. before he moved to his current university in the Midwest. His tenure denial sparked heated discussions and protests and a crescendo of student demonstrators that brought in a national dialogue on race issues. Scores of demonstrators gathered signatures in support of Dr. Sembene, and a legal defense fund was established to help him fight the tenure decision. He later lost the appeal. However, he never personalized differences with his opponents; he disagreed without being disagreeable. His civility and his respect for the achievement of the academic freedom as a basis
to build on have earned him much respect and affection in the academic world. He is now a full professor at a prestigious university in Ohio.

Dr. Sembene was born in 1951 in a small village in the Gambia. His narration of his origins was quite detailed and gave me a glimpse into his background. His story is one of humble beginnings.

My childhood was a happy one, and while I grew up materially poor, I grew up, like many Gambians of my generation, in a closely-knit community in which respect for elders, hard work, discipline and being one’s brother’s and sister’s keeper were instilled in us at an early age.

He fondly spoke of his parents [now deceased] and his teachers, who were very influential in his formative years. They gave him an excellent academic and moral grounding that has served him very well as a grown man.

When Dr. Sembene graduated high school in the late 1960s, his options and opportunities for higher education were both competitive and limited. He went to a junior college in Gambia which was an “excellent” preparation. Upon graduation in the early 1970s, he taught English and African literature at a local secondary school before coming to the U.S. in 1974 for further studies.

The American education system was attractive to Dr. Sembene because it offered a variety of courses and was also very flexible. His transition to America occurred with relative ease, and being hosted by a network of families helped considerably. That support proved invaluable, and it is one that he still relies upon. To him, the U.S. was and still is a “land of opportunities” even though it presented some challenges. He came to the U.S. at a time when
there was domestic turmoil and other civil-rights concerns for Blacks/African Americans. He reminisced:

In the year I arrived in the U.S. [at a university in Colorado], the political climate in the U.S. was one of excitement and disillusionment occurring as it did during the Cold War, the Vietnam War and Watergate.

His education was fully funded by the university, and he graduated with dual Bachelor degrees in political science and economics, with a minor in philosophy. He later received a Canadian government fellowship, which enabled him to earn a Masters of Arts in international affairs. Afterwards, he came back to his U.S. alma mater in Colorado and completed a Ph.D. in political science. He tried to return home several times upon his graduation without success because of several coup d'états. However, he was quick to say that he still serves his country, the Gambia, even though he is physically not there.

Professor Sembene started his work as a faculty member in 1989. He had a lot of challenges, which led to his denial of tenure as earlier indicated. He lamented:

My work wasn’t appreciated. I didn’t get funding like my other colleagues; it was a very hostile environment. Besides, I was also working in two departments with two conflicting expectations for tenure and tenure promotion. I didn’t feel supported. I did come up for tenure, I could have been tenurable, and I was denied tenure. It created such a big commotion, the students came up strongly against the administration, to the extent that the governor had to come to this school…. Everyone knew that it was unfair.

I enquired why they denied him tenure, and he explained that it was a very political decision. He further elaborated by saying that, since he was reporting to two different departments they seemed to have conflicting expectations.
They were saying that I hadn’t published in the right journals. I was in black studies and political science. Journals that are acceptable for black studies may not be recognized in political science. They said the job was fifty-fifty but it was really 100% here, and 100% there, and that took a lot of time away from research, which I did anyway.

As soon as he was fired from this institution, Dr. Sembene was “grabbed” by a prestigious university in Ohio to serve as a “visiting professor,” and shortly afterwards they put him on tenure track. He was awarded tenure shortly afterwards. He loves the institution he is working for now, and he feels supported, especially since he got tenure and was promoted very quickly to Associate Professor and then to his current position of full Professor. He is currently being considered for chair of the Political Science Department, which to him is an indication of the confidence and support they have in him.

Professor Sembene has written widely on democratic transitions, elections, human rights and other issues that include female circumcision. He tries to have at least three to four articles published in a year. He has also written a number of book chapters and currently has two books now under review at several publishing houses. He had another of his books published last year. He mentioned that his wife is also an academic, and together they are able to bounce ideas off each other. In fact, they have published some articles together. She is a “great” support to him. Most of his research is related to Africa, West Africa in particular, though he has written some work on China-African relations.

It was evident that Professor Sembene brought a unique set of experiences to his class, and his evaluations reflect that. He brings to the table a variety of very rich experiences. He described how he does this by saying:
I’m African, black, Muslim; I bring to the table a variety of very rich experiences. When
I teach international politics, I bring a variety of perspectives which are not familiar to
American students. I was educated here in the U.S. and Canada, and I bring those
experiences to the classroom. Typically, I use a textbook that is pretty well known on the
basic theories, then, I go back to critique the theories on the blind spots they have,
questions and issues they have discussed. Students appreciate that I bring more to the
table. This is something students like. I also share my own life experiences from home.
Growing up in a little village and family structure, social relationships, and so on, have
basically contributed to who and what I am today. Many students find this very
interesting.

Professor Sembene has served on various boards of nonprofit organizations which are
focused on comparative politics. This is a sub-field in his discipline. He has also chaired various
international relations committees. He has also served as an interim chair of the department for
some time. He stated that all that experience has been great for him and exposed him to various
constituencies in the university.

Professor Sembene felt that his experience as an African immigrant faculty was
somewhat similar but also different from his native born colleagues. He said that although he had
gone through the same rigorous training, and the expectations may be the same, immigrants face
a lot more challenges. He explained that as an immigrant, he is typically considered an outsider
looking in and often misses some opportunities that are available to the native-born. But he has
learned to make the best of each situation. He said:

It’s difficult for you to get the kind of opportunities, funds, awards, and other things, that
faculty from the U.S. are likely to get. When you are not born here, you have an accent,
you are perceived as different from the others. But you do what you have to do to basically make it.

He said that when it comes to accent, he has learned to speak slower and pronounce words as carefully as possible. He has also changed his teaching style from lecturing students to a more participatory one. This has helped significantly on his evaluations. He said:

I typically tend to speak quickly, so I slow down. I pause often to ask students if they have any questions. Then, I’m open to having discussions and debates so that I’m not the focus of the whole class period. Typically, when I started out I used to lecture most of the time, but that has changed... Now, I focus my attention more on the students and my evaluations are good.

Dr. Sembene was unequivocal in that his African identity has significantly impacted how he perceives the world as a professor on a U.S. campus. He reminisced on the values that he had been taught growing up, which have anchored him as a mature man.

Back home you are taught to be polite, kind to other people, respectful. Work hard, it’s something we are all brought up with. If you fail once or twice that’s not the end of life; you still can get up. Pursue your goals and have a clear set of goals and direction; asking for help when you need it; having a real support system, family system, friends, colleagues, those are African values.

He also said that coming from Gambia, where he was part of the dominant group, he had been taught to be self-assured and confident and know where he had come from and possibly where he was going. This has helped him especially when he encounters challenges because he knows they do not define him. He also recognized that coming from a poor background allowed him to see many opportunities in the U.S. which the native born Americans perceived as
ordinary. Having this knowledge helped him to pursue and seize all the opportunities that came his way.

Professor Sembene is convinced that belief in the creator has helped to ground him and has also served as a support to his advancement in his profession. He said his faith in Islam has allowed him to view the world differently. For him, Islam has a cultural and religious affinity.

Reflection

Dr. Sembene is a man of few words but what came out strongly about him was that he is a courageous man. His academic adventure has seen him enter and exit major university halls, leaving behind a trail of impressive scholarly record written in indelible academic ink. Although he was denied tenure in one institution, he did not throw in the towel. Instead he learned from the experience and has since soared and succeeded to full professor in his current institution.

Succeeding in the U.S. is not a small feat, especially for immigrants who are Black and have accents, and in his case, is Muslim. Professor Sembene attributes his ability to stay focused on his goals and his ability to take risks to his African identity, his faith as a Muslim, and the help of strong mentors along the way who have given him wise counsel to know which battles to fight and which ones from which to walk away.

Dr. Mogaka

I knew of Dr. Mogaka before I had even met him because of his exemplary work to raise awareness about Kenya and his passion to promote community and a better quality of life among Kenyans living in the U.S. He has been referred to by the President of Kenya as a “professor, mentor and leader” who has promoted outreach and understanding about Kenya. He was awarded the prestigious Elder of the Burning Spear (EBS) in 2009. This is a State Commendation awarded by the President "in recognition of outstanding or distinguished services
rendered to the nation in various capacities and responsibilities.” This award is made by the President upon the advice of a National Honors and Awards Committee in the President's office. So, I was eager to spend time with him and hear his journey as a Kenyan faculty member in the U.S.

His office was small and cramped and there were many books and papers piled all over the place. There was barely anything on the wall except a Kenyan flag and some other patriotic paraphernalia. Dr. Mogaka graciously shoved the books from one side of the table to create a space for us to have a face-to-face conversation. He is a soft spoken man with a slender frame and a ready smile. After a bit of chitchat about Kenyan politics, I embarked on interviewing him for almost three hours. He has been a faculty member since 1999. He joined the university when he was “ABD” (all but dissertation). He worked hard to complete his dissertation and eventually received his tenure and promotion to Associate Professor. Dr. Mogaka was preparing his portfolio for the full professorship promotion.

Dr. Mogaka was born in 1968 in a small rural village in Kisii, Kenya. He was the eldest of seven children. He reminisced about his upbringing with nostalgia. His father was the Head Teacher (Principal) at his primary school and influenced Dr. Mogaka’s academic success because he was and still is his role model.

It’s a well-established fact that teachers’ kids generally do well educationally. You get that advantage; they [parents] are always helping you, and you have someone to ask questions.

He went to Kenyatta University and earned a Bachelor of education degree. He later pursued his Master’s degree in geography at a private university in Ohio. Afterwards, he embarked on his doctoral work at a large university in Minnesota. He later moved to Ohio to his
current university for employment. Dr. Mogaka loves his job as a faculty member because he knows that he is making a difference and feels like his quality of life has been enriched tremendously because of doing what he loves. However, he confessed that he enjoyed research more than he did teaching.

I had the opportunity to observe Dr. Mogaka in class where he was teaching on Urban Geography Marketing. I noted the lack of diversity in the class. His university is a predominantly white institution, and this particular class had about 20 students. There was only one black male student and three females in the class. The lack of diversity did not seem to faze him. It is clear that he is very knowledgeable and in control of his class because students were attentive and engaged in the class discussions. He told them stories and challenged them to think “beyond the box.” When class ended, students hung around chatting and asking Dr. Mogaka questions.

As a faculty member in geography, Dr. Mogaka stated that his experience has been positive, a “pretty good run” in terms of what he has been able to accomplish.

I have done the research I wanted to do. It’s a good job; I have managed to make successes; and we started an Association for Kenyan Scholars, which has done very well. I have ended up getting a national award because of it. Through the Association, I have been able to mobilize the Kenyan community, and in some cases the African immigrant community in the U.S. to do a number of things for the continent.

However, Dr. Mogaka made it clear that there were the “usual” challenges because he is a black faculty member. He explained further by giving this example:

I remember the first year, the first two semesters, I went to class, and sometimes you walk in and three students basically walk out. So initially my reaction was “that is terrible.” So I had to deal with issues of race.
I enquired how he had dealt with this issue, and he stated that a “strong positive self-identity” and knowing that he was born African freed him and helped him not to be crushed by the negativity but actually saw it as a blessing. He said:

In the end I had to learn to turn it around; and when you think about it, it is a good thing that people who don’t want to be in your class are not there, because you don’t want to waste time with people who don’t want to be there.

Another challenge that Dr. Mogaka faced was the issue of accent. He made a choice not to be a “people-pleaser,” but be true to his identity. He found out that once he owned his identity as an African with an accent, his classes flowed easier and his accent stopped being an issue and disappeared from his evaluations. He actually learned to play with it positively, given that he was teaching a class on globalization. Dr. Mogaka stated that since then he had many students who take his class because of his accent and had “turned his scar into a star.”

Dr. Mogaka recognized that although his African-ness has hugely contributed to his success in the U.S., in a way it had also served as a barrier. For instance, the African concept of collectivism had slowed him down. He gave the following example:

When you come from a communal community, you look out for each other, but when you are living in a society of individualism, it slows you, because a significant portion of your resources are dedicated towards living out the communal upbringing, which is to take care of your friends and brothers back home. So you end up investing quite a bit of your income helping people back home. This actually is the same money you need to invest here to grow.

Dr. Mogaka had incurred a huge financial burden since he had put everybody in his family through college. Because of this, he had not done some of the things his American
colleagues do, such as vacationing. However, it was a burden he was glad to bear, to support his siblings’ education. Also, Dr. Mogaka had to continuously combat the typical black male stereotype in the U.S. This is a negative ethnic stereotype in the United States in which Black men are considered “lazy and do not want to work.” Therefore, he feels that he has to “prove” himself continuously because he does not have the “pre-assigned credibility.” However, he quickly acknowledges that this is a power game amongs humans depending on who has the power, and it’s not only a U.S. issue. He explained:

Human beings behave the same way across geographic scales. At the local level there is a local elite, a national elite, an international elite, a global elite and all the elites are always entitled to certain things and if you don’t find yourself as part of the elite you find you have to fight your way in things.

However, Dr. Mogaka says that being an “underdog” has helped him by giving him a lot of “fight.” It has allowed him to make choices to be a better person and to excel in everything he does.

Dr. Mogaka is a spiritual man, and his faith was evident in our conversation. I asked him to what he would accredit his success and he immediately said that his faith had been very influential. He spoke with such passion about his relationship with God. This relationship gave him his purpose to live and work as a faculty member, and in life.

My Christian faith has been very useful, in the sense that once you have the vertical relationship working, then you don’t really have anything to prove to anybody, because I don’t owe my life to anybody. You find yourself in a position where you basically have a right to exist without apology to any human being whatsoever.
Dr. Mogaka believed that God had given him the right skills and, therefore, had “invested” in him. This made him accountable to God. This revelation helped him to get rid of his feeling of inferiority and uncertainty of his capabilities. He further went on to say that, when he makes mistakes, he knows that he is on the path where God has placed him; and it is an upward trajectory which leads to success. Dr. Mogaka gave a poignant example of how his spirituality helped him deal with his insecurities about his accent issues.

It’s something you see in the Bible, when Moses met with God; Moses was a stutterer, which in my case, I have an accent. God asked him “What’s in your hand?” God has no interest in what you don’t have. He knows there is already something in you. So the more you learn that God has already provided you with the skills within you, you will succeed, because you will never be in competition with people.

Speaking about his family, Dr. Mogaka had nothing but praise for his family. He credited his parents for investing deeply in his education and imparting his faith since he was a little boy. He was insistent that being raised as part of a member of a community grounded him. Dr. Mogaka said that not only was he connected to God, but he was also connected with other people through his African ancestry and heritage, which is fundamental to his success because they gave him an identity which made him secure. The value placed on education by the Kenyan community may also have contributed to his success. In Kenya, education is considered the way out of poverty. Dr. Mogaka spoke fondly of the mentors in his academic community who played a significant role in his success. One of his mentors was the chair of the department who protected him from “unnecessary” service work, the other was a colleague who worked in the same area where he was working, and they collaborated together.
Dr Mogaka is hoping to reach full professor next year and take on more administrative work, and more consulting as well. He feels that he is in the most productive stage of his life, and this is the time to produce his best work.

**Reflection**

Dr. Mogaka stated that his faith, his family, and his strong African identity were very influential to his success as a faculty member. He was also quick to attribute some of his success to two mentors who had provided a space for his success. Dr. Mogaka talked about having an attitude of humility and knowing that you are a steward of the knowledge you have and not the owner. He reckons that this knowledge frees him, especially in class, which allows him to facilitate discussions instead of being the “know-it-all.” Another piece of advice from Dr. Mogaka was:

“You have to treat people the way you want them to treat you; that’s the only way you can have success. The bottom line is the things you get back are the things you put in. It’s the same way the Bible says— if you need a friend, be a friend. It’s sowing and reaping, bottom line, and that works for everybody, even in academia. If you want people to collaborate with you, you have to be willing to collaborate with them. If you go to a department, you have to add value; you can’t be there to take away from the unit.

In conclusion, I can say that I was impressed by Dr. Mogaka’s powerful sense of purpose, his faith, and the infinite possibilities in his future. I was inspired by his philosophy that “attitude determined altitude,” and his willingness to serve others. I am not surprised that he is a successful addition to his campus community and to our country, Kenya.
Professor Odenigbo

Professor Odenigbo’s pseudonym means “writer” or “intellectual” in his language. He grew up in a polygamous family and was raised by his half-brother, who paid for his school fees. He earned his undergraduate degree in his country, Nigeria, and then went to Canada for his graduate work in African History. He relocated to the U.S. when he accepted a tenure track faculty position at a medium sized university in the Midwest region.

Professor Odenigbo has a boisterous personality. He speaks and laughs loudly and claps his hands in a very animated manner, which is contagious, and I immediately felt at ease with him. Our meeting was scheduled at lunch time, and he ate during the interview. His office was large, with many books lining the shelves. His desk was covered with stacks and piles of research articles and books that he was reviewing. I sensed that the office was in a state of organized chaos, since he knew where to pull out books and articles during our interview.

He went for early tenure and promotion in his fourth year, and he is currently the only African male professor in his institution that has attained full professorship. Professor Odenigbo was recently awarded Igbo Chieftaincy for his scholarly contributions to the promotion and preservation of Igbo history, culture and heritage, as well as service to Nigeria and humanity. He was honored as the best advisor for supervising students who have received distinguished dissertation awards in Ohio. The walls in his office were lined with framed certificates of recognition.

Professor Odenigbo went on to tell some real challenges he has faced during his tenure as a faculty member in the U.S. and expressed that he felt undue pressure to constantly prove to colleagues that he was qualified to do his job. The facts that he is a black male with a strong Nigerian accent are two of the many challenges he continuously faces. He expressed that he
understood that the U.S. was a very litigious country and did not want to leave any chance by
being in a closed room with students. He felt that because he was a Black male, he had to be
“doubly careful.” He elaborated:

I have arranged my desk this way [facing the door] and always have my doors open when
having an appointment with students because you do not want to be charged with any
kind of claim.

Despite these challenges, Professor Odenigbo stated that most of his success was because
of his strong African community who “monitor” him as a role model. He remembered that when
he left Nigeria, a large number of people from his community escorted him to the airport. “They
hired a bus.” And still today, many years later, the community members want to have a “progress
report.” Because of this, he cannot afford to fail them. He also attributes his success to
understanding and appreciating what is needed to succeed in the American academy. For
example, he recognized the competitive nature of academia in the U.S., and he convinced his
wife to delay having a family until he had attained tenure. Although this is very “un-African,” it
greatly contributed to his success.

Reflection

I was impressed with Professor Odenigbo’s rapid success in academia but was not
surprised by it, because he exuded such passion for teaching and research. During the course of
the interview, two students popped their heads in his office and were received warmly. I was not
surprised that he was awarded as best advisor of the year, and had received best teaching awards.
Although we did not get into the details of spirituality because of time constraints, Professor
Odenigbo is committed to his community and to the preservation of the Igbo community. This
purposeful connectedness is a significant spiritual tradition. As a Chief, he felt that he was a
steward and had greater purpose to serve the global community by contributing scholarly research.

**Dr. Mutua**

Dr. Mutua was born and raised in Kenya by her single mother. She earned her undergraduate degree at the University of Nairobi. She later went to the University of Wales for her doctoral work in communication studies. Unlike the other participants who came to the U.S. for higher education or for employment, Dr. Mutua, came to the U.S. to seek medical care for her son, who was diagnosed with developmental delay issues at an early age.

My life as a single parent is a struggle. As a black female, raising a teenage child with special needs makes the challenge even more difficult, but not impossible.

As a single mother of a child with special needs, she has had to be very focused on her work so as to succeed in academia. She has long days because she wakes up early to go running with her son, who runs in special races. She humbly states that she is very lucky since her scholarship is unique, and she is the only one doing that kind of work in the Midwest region. She has been on National Public Radio (NPR) on numerous occasions, where she discusses her scholarship. She attributes her success to self-discipline. She states:

Every day, I feel as though I am under surveillance and always on the watch, so I make sure I plan my time very well. I don’t socialize with people very much. I have a very structured life. My child has helped me to be organized because of his needs. We do things a certain way and at a certain time. For example, we eat at 5:30 every morning. Kids with a disability are used to doing things a certain way, and you cannot afford to mess up.
She also attributes her success to her African cultural values, such as respect for others. These were ingrained in her by her mother and her grandparents, who were “very strict Christians and strict Africans.” Dr. Mutua revealed that she felt that her pursuit of success in academia led to her marriage ending in divorce, because she was spending too much time in the office researching and writing.

Reflection

Dr. Mutua has no regrets about her life although she admits that there were limitations to personal freedoms she does not enjoy because of being a single mother of a child with a disability. I was inspired by her unwavering hope, which is grounded in unyielding struggles, yet she managed to earn tenure and promotion in the required time. Her hopefulness was infectious; She felt that despite the challenges, she also had so much to be thankful for and felt privileged to be working in higher education in the U.S. and to be successful at it.

I noted with interest that Dr. Mutua believed that being divorced is un-African and a cause of shame.

Mwalimu Mugo

*Mwalimu* is a Swahili name for teacher. Mwalimu Mugo is an associate professor in linguistics. He grew up in Nyandarua, Kenya. He came to the U.S. as a graduate student and stated that he only applied to two jobs after graduating. He was interviewed for both jobs, and he chose the institution he is at because it was a tenure track position. Mwalimu Mugo loves his job and on enquiring what had contributed to his success, he immediately attributes it to a very supportive department chair who is committed to diversity. His department chair is also his mentor, and this has largely influenced his job satisfaction at his institution. Although he initially had challenges with his students because of his style of teaching and his accent, he is
continuously learning how to negotiate those hurdles. He reflects on what has helped him overcome the challenges and succeed in the U.S.:

Probably because of the situation in our country, we have learned to live with less. So when you come here [U.S.], you find that there are overwhelming opportunities. Also, we are not used to complaining. So, the background I have in Kenya has actually played a part in helping me overcome some of the challenges. The biggest influence is my time at Starehe Boys [High School]. The motto of the director was “Don’t look for excuses.” I don’t believe in giving excuses; I take responsibility for my actions. If there is anything I can do to ensure that I redress, this or I don’t repeat the same mistake, I will be willing to do that. Mostly, I don’t look back and try to use some of my limitations as excuses. I don’t like doing that. I prefer to work extra hard to overcome the challenges. So that’s part of the cultural background that I think has helped.

However, Dr. Mugo feels that his culture acts as a “double-edged sword.” Whereas, his African culture is his source of strength, sometimes it is his weakness because he believes in family, yet he feels it is challenging to raise a family in the U.S. and still pursue an aggressive research agenda. He sometimes wishes he could “outsource children raising.” Dr. Mugo is married to an American woman and has two very young children.

He recalled moments when he has contemplated of returning back to Kenya and perhaps influence his community directly. He feels that, as a linguist who concentrated on the Swahili language, he will be more influential in the interpretation and translation if he is in Mombasa, Kenya, where the language originated.
Reflection

Dr. Mugo is proud of his African identity, and it was evidenced by his clothing and the way he wore his hair in a big afro. He spoke passionately about his love for community living and even said he missed communal living like what he experienced growing up. He longs for a community that is more shared, unlike the selfish, materialistic mind-set prevalent in U.S. academe. Although he is successful, as evidenced by tenure and promotion, Dr. Mugo expressed isolation and lack of work/life balance and felt that “aggressive research agenda” is at a cost of family time. Also, it was interesting to note that Dr. Mugo did not subscribe to the dogmatic view on religion like most of the other participants. He had a more fluid spirituality that is accepting of ideas and values from a wider array of sources.

Dr. Hailu

Dr. Hailu came to the U.S. in 1976 to pursue a degree in wildlife management. He graduated in 1981. Unlike other participants, Dr. Hailu went back to his country, Ethiopia, after graduating with his doctoral degree and worked for many years before relocating back to the U.S. in 1990.

I came here because of the political situation in Ethiopia. So, I left my job and came here with no prospects of finding a job. Just like any political people who feel that, politically, their security is not stable. I wasn’t personally persecuted, but it was not suitable for me to stay and provide for my family or for my family to stay. My wife is a foreigner [Jamaican American] and she felt it wasn’t good for our kids or ourselves. So as a result of that, we just came and I slowly transitioned to academia in 2000.

Dr. Hailu shared some of the challenges he had encountered in academia:
…uncertainty when teaching in a class. …When you come here, you are not quite sure. People have their own accent, you are a foreigner, your students are not familiar about your culture, or who you are. So you are in a new environment, new territory and a different group of people, different culture and that’s the first worry. How well will you do in class? How well are you accepted by students?

He, however, said that he mitigated those challenges by making sure he prepared very well for his classes so that he would be fully available to the students. He was happy to report that he doesn’t have those insecurities anymore. Dr. Hailu shared that the desire to be tenured stressed him a lot, and he was not sure whether he would be able to meet the requirements. He was especially worried since he saw some of his colleagues who had gone before him lose their jobs because of not meeting the tenure requirements. Fortunately for Dr. Hailu, he had a colleague from a different college who helped him tremendously by collaborating with him. He was like my mentor, we worked together a lot and that helped me a lot, in terms of publications of research projects, publications and grant proposals.

He also attributes a lot of his success to the chair of his department who was a formal mentor for him. The chair of the department familiarized him with the “ropes” of attaining tenure. In 2008, Dr. Hailu was awarded the very competitive and prestigious Fulbright Scholarship which provided the opportunity to travel back to Ethiopia for a year to do research in the area of infectious diseases. He reported there was a lot of politics involved in the Fulbright Scholar process which makes it a tedious process. He states:

If somebody in the university knows you, they could select you. But since I didn’t ask anybody to go and propose me. I was not selected… Anyway then the second year I still applied. Went through the same process, went to Ethiopia and still I wasn’t the top
choice. It is politics. When it came time for the U.S. council to decide, they reversed the
decision and offered me the award. That’s why I said when it goes to the country there
could always be manipulation in terms of who they want, it’s not based on how qualified
you are. Sometimes it’s about who you know.

His future plans are to apply for professorship in 2014 and apply for another Fulbright
scholarship.

Reflection

I was impressed by Dr. Hailu’s willingness to relocate back to the U.S. with his whole
family when he did not have a job offer. I was struck by his resoluteness to apply for the
Fulbright Scholarship twice knowing how rigorous the application process is and that he is still
planning to apply yet another time. While interviewing Dr. Hailu, I sensed that he is looking
forward to going back to Ethiopia once he earns his full professorship. He has two adult children
who have successful careers, and he is waiting for his two younger children to finish college
before he relocates back to Ethiopia. I was surprised that his relocation plans did not include his
American wife. But he did not share more details about it.

Dr. Wanjala Omusaba

Dr. Wanjala, a soft spoken man, was born and raised in Trans Nzoia, Kenya. I asked him
why he chose this pseudonym and he explained:

“Omusaba” is the name of a clan renowned locally for their tracking abilities. A loose
translation results in something close to “the seekers.” “Wanjala” is the name given to a
male kid born during the portion of the dry season when grain stocks have been depleted
significantly, i.e. the hungry season. So, we can say that Wanjala Omusaba means the
“Hungry Seeker.” Seeker of what? That is the question.
He earned his undergraduate degree and master’s degree from the University of Nairobi. He later went to Canada for his doctoral work on a commonwealth scholarship. He relocated to the U.S. because he was offered a job at his current institution. He is currently serving as the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at his institution.

Like other participants, Dr. Wanjala spoke about some of his challenges pre-tenure …during my third year review, they said I needed to do more, I did not understand what they meant because I already had eight journal articles. Their recommendations did not make sense, since I only needed six journals to go up for tenure in my sixth year. I got the distinct impression that my colleagues didn’t want me here.

I was curious to know what he had done about it and he said:

I’m usually quite blunt when things are blatantly unfair. I call a spade as it is. I challenged it. We are allowed to write a response and attach it to your package as it goes up. I was very blunt and said these are your criteria, not mine. I even made copies of the criteria and attached it. I have eight, are we using the same counting methods? Of course that didn’t go down too well with the upper administration. The recommendation from the Dean was in line with the departmental one. So I went over their head and went to central administration to the vice chancellor, the provost. I said this is what I have, what else do you want me to do? And they had to call them on that.

Fortunately for Dr. Wanjala, a fellow colleague who is black and had been denied tenure at the same period went ahead and sued the university on the basis of discrimination.

So it was nasty, it was in the papers, in the news. The chancellor and vice chancellor were dragged before the media and the magistrate, and the gentleman proved his point. So the decision of the court of law was that this institution was hostile to minorities. They were
put on notice that that had to change. They wanted the institution to not only practice but to be seen to practicing diversity, civility and tolerance and all that. As a result of that court case they had to get a person of color, open up administration quickly to involve more minorities, women, and people of color. The provost sent word to the school and the department saying, “Hey what you decided in this case is not in line with criteria that you yourselves passed.” They had to revise the recommendation then. By the time I went for tenure I had doubled my publications and it was a straight forward case. I wanted it to be quite obvious. I had more publications than anyone else.

When asked what he would attribute to his success he said:

I was fortunate to have an advisor who was more of a mentor. He prepared me for academic work in this part of the world. I say I’m here because of things that others have done-- Helping hands that have been extended to me and my most satisfying moments are when I’m able to help or to be an inspiration to up and coming, be they faculty or students. I am a product of my upbringing. And maybe that’s where I would say most of the credit should go.

Dr. Wanjala said that he has 60 siblings since his father was polygamous and had eight wives. He reflected that growing up in a large family taught him to be “fairly tolerant and open” and accept the fact everything had to be shared amongst his siblings even though the resources were often not enough. He reported that this approach fits very nicely in an academic unit which is very diverse, and most of what he deals concerns resource allocation.

Being a man of faith has also helped ground him. He constantly prays to the Almighty to give him wisdom and patience when dealing with faculty, staff and students in his department.
Reflection

I enjoyed listening to Dr. Wanjala. His optimism was contagious, and I sensed his faith has anchored him. He kept referring to how thankful he was to God, how God had brought him this far, and how he knew that he worked all things for his good. I was not surprised when at the end of the interview he revealed that he was also a deacon at his local church.

Professor Nyang

Dr. Nyang chose his pseudonym which means “good” in his native Kuteb, a language spoken by a small minority group in Nigeria. He explained further that goodness was a character trait that he strove to cultivate. Dr. Nyang came to the U.S. with a very young family to pursue his doctoral work in Communication Studies. He narrated how he got his first job, and he felt that God had placed him at the right place at the right time because he was offered a job while presenting his dissertation findings at a conference.

Dr. Nyang is a full professor with a “very active” publishing life. He reports that he experienced a lot of acculturative stress when he first began his career as a faculty member in the U.S. He was overwhelmed by the amount of work that was expected of him on a daily basis in terms of teaching and research. However, he revealed that a lot of the stress was reduced by the advanced technology available in U.S. This helped him produce more work with less effort. Being an immigrant forced him to be on “conscious skillfulness,” meaning that he had to be mindful of everything he was doing. Being aware of his own mental state makes it possible for him to be more effective in interactions with others. He also reflects on the actuality that coming all the way to the U.S. from a very poor background is evidence of an “industrious, hard-working, and dedicated individual,” who is determined to succeed. Professor Nyang feels that as an African immigrant he has had to “earn his stripes.” This is from the perception that his native-
born colleagues do not expect him to be successful in academia. The fact that he is an African comes with the stereotype “nothing good can come from Africa,” therefore “Being good is not good enough; you have to be excellent for it to be good.”

Dr. Nyang remembered that initially in his career, speaking with an accent was viewed as a level of disability or intellectual incompetence. He mitigated this by making sure he was good at what he did and he being very familiar with the material he was teaching. Some of the factors that were helpful in building his successful career were: (1) not compromising on his work; (2) establishing a level of credibility within the system professional competence (3) having good people-skills; and (4) having a mentor. He had benefited a lot from having academic mentors, stating:

Almost every department chair I have had has taken a personal interest in my professional success and been willing to mentor me. There are a number of other people who have been very good mentors to me.

Last but not least, he said all these would not have been possible if he had not obtained favor from God. He believes that God gives him wisdom to do his work and that is why he has been successful. He was very open about his Christian faith. He felt that he has been called to be faithful, not to be successful. Yet he feels that once you accomplish your mission as faithful, then success follows suit.

If you keep your eye on faithfulness the other things come along almost without saying; they just come as a result of being faithful. So my goal is to be found to be faithful. I want to hear my God say “well done good and faithful servant.”
Reflection

My thoughts of Dr. Nyang were that he was a very humble man. He accredited his success to his God, his mentors, and his family who had supported him throughout. He was keen to identify his former department chair who has now become a personal friend. He narrated how he helped him a lot. They have co-authored books and conference papers together. He also remembered his professor whom he worked under as a teaching assistant and referred to him as a “God-parent” and professional mentor in assisting him to integrate in the U.S. culture, and in helping him growing personally and professionally. All in all, Dr. Nyang portrays a picture of a very thankful and humble man.

Dr. Effiong

I met Dr. Effiong at his office. He was kind and soft spoke and seemed genuinely happy to interview with me. He offered me juice and made me feel at home. He grew up with his other four siblings in Nigeria. His parents were illiterate, but wanted a good education for their children. He states:

My dad was the first child of the family. My grandfather did not want the missionaries to mess him [father] up. So he [grandfather] didn’t allow him [father] to go to school, because he didn’t believe in it. After my dad got involved in politics and became a Councilor of the local government, he realized the importance of education. My father, he really regretted not having a western style education. So he was adamant that all his children should have a good education.

However, his education was interrupted for three years during the Biafra War. This was the Civil War that took place between 1967-1970 caused by economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions among the various peoples of Nigeria. His father hid young Effiong so that he
would not be recruited as a child soldier for the Biafra army. Because of the ravages of war, young Effiong did not finish his secondary education. After the war, he found a job in Lagos. The government sponsored him to come to the U.S. to study printing, but when he arrived he changed his field to microbiology, and for changing that course, the Nigerian Government withdrew his scholarship. He lost his immigration status and had to go underground for a period of time. During this time he worked as a construction worker and saved all his money so that he could go back to school. He eventually applied for admission at a large university where he finished his undergraduate degree. Life was tough for him because he had to work all night and take classes during the day, but he was driven and determined to succeed. He reminisced:

There were times when things were very rough, and I cried many times. I wished I could die, but then I wasn’t the violent type to take my life. But then I knew from the society that we come from if you come here and stay three or four years and go back without a diploma or certificate, you become the laughing stock. So just going home without anything was not an option.

Dr. Effiong earned his master’s in public administration, and later earned his Ph.D. in health policy. He worked in Kansas at the Department of Health and Environment as a senior administrator until he changed career and moved into academia. Dr. Effiong says there is “no magic bullet” to success. He states, “You just have to work hard.” He is currently preparing his portfolio for professorship. He intends to retire shortly after he acquires professorship and relocate back to Nigeria.

**Reflection**

I was privileged to attend Dr. Effiong’s class to observe him at work. He introduced me to his class and I immediately noticed that his class was not multicultural at all. It was all white
students. He lectured and told a lot of relevant examples. I was captivated by the lesson and so were the students. I also noticed that he wrote a lot on the board. When I later inquired about this, he said that it eliminated a lot of confusion due to his accent. Dr. Effiong had great command of the class and the students seemed to pay attention and were very respectful to him. After the class observation, he took me out to lunch and we discussed his spirituality. He said that spirituality is very personal for him, although he was emphatic to mention that he was not religious. He succinctly explained this by saying:

To me spirituality does not mean going to church. I used to go to church, but I don’t go there anymore. To me spirituality is being able to develop certain standards and live by them. Living well, treating people like you would want to be treated, having basic values that you adhere to. In the evening when you get home, you take a look at your activities during the day. If you did something wrong, you acknowledge it. If you said something that wasn’t very nice to somebody you apologize, and move on. Try to get better. It’s like keeping the Ten Commandments, but I don’t necessarily mean the Bible’s Ten Commandments. It can be from there you develop some standards that you say I will live by these standards. You live a good life; don’t abuse yourself. Go to bed when it’s time to go to bed. Get enough rest but work hard. Feel good about yourself. That’s spirituality to me.

Professor Chigoziri

Professor Chigoziri is a tall, lean, and soft-spoken man. His office was very neat and orderly, unlike many professors’ offices I had been to. When I entered his office, a radio was playing soft classical music in the background, and he had a folder with my name and all our correspondence prior to our meeting. He is a full professor in Marketing.
Growing up in Nigeria, young Chigoziri experienced the Biafra war and did not go to school for three years. His parents [his father was an academic administrator at University of Nigeria] were both overseas visiting universities in the U.S., Canada, and Britain. Dr. Chogoziri remembered living in different homes everyday as bombs exploded around them:

We were very emaciated. It was tough. I am surprised that none of us had Kwashiorkor and big bellies and red hair. We survived air raids; in fact our home was hit once by shrapnel from a bomb. So you wake up in the morning you go and hide and then figure out what you are gonna eat. Sometimes there was food from the Red Cross. You get in the line with your bowl and go and get cornmeal. That was tough.

After the war, Chigoziri resumed his education. He did his undergraduate degree at the University of Nigeria and came to the U.S. for an MBA degree at a large state university with the anticipation of getting a corporate job thereafter. Professor Chigoziri never dreamed of being a professor. However, after he graduated, he could not get a job, and, therefore, to remain legal in the U.S., he applied for a Ph.D. program in marketing.

Although it is clear that Professor Chigorizi is successful and had attained full professorship, he says that it was not an easy run. He always felt that he had to prove that he was a professional. He states:

I realize that in a way I’m a fish in a bowl because I am being watched and if there are any negative things that I do, or I don’t live up to expectation, it’s going to be exaggerated in a negative light… If you are good, people perceive you as average; if you are excellent, people perceive you as good.
Professor Chigoziri spoke about his faith. He feels blessed by God and he attributes his success to his God. He said that he tries to model his life principles around the personhood of Jesus Christ which influences his work in academia. He states:

My spirituality influences my relationship with people. The principles of being fair, being humble, not looking down on people even when you are in a better position or situation than they are, and honesty, truthfulness and so forth.

Professor Chigorizi also attributes some of his success to the ability to be resilient and survive the most adverse challenges. He felt that life in the U.S. was a constant battle and he had to continually be vigilant to be successful.

This place [academia] is a jungle. You feel like you are fighting for your life. Yeah you fight for your survival. You come here, its harsh; there is nothing you can’t deal with.

Reflection

Although Dr. Chigoziri did not initially set out to be a faculty member, he has turned out to be a successful one as evidenced by tenure and promotion. He loved working in the U.S. and appreciated the stability that the country offered. However, he stated the U.S. is a very difficult place to raise children in comparison to Nigeria where the children are “raised by village.”

Unlike other participants, Dr. Chigoziri did not want to return back to Nigeria although he still has family there. He feels that he has settled in the U.S. and this is his home.

Professor Yaw

Professor Yaw was born in Ghana. His parents were illiterate, but desired for their children to get an education. He was determined not to disappoint his parents and took advantage of all the opportunities that arose. He states,
Sometimes the opportunities were not the best ones, but what I told myself is “you make the best out of every situation.” The lesson is you don’t wait for the best. You make the best of what is given to you.

He pursued his undergraduate and graduate work at the University of Ghana. He later went for a second master’s degree in Canada and eventually came to the U.S. for his doctoral work in geography. After graduating with his Ph.D., he worked for the State of Minnesota as an urban planner for two years before going into academia, because he desired the opportunity to do research and teach.

Part of his challenges as a new foreign faculty member in U.S. was to establish himself and his credibility as a legitimate faculty member. Eventually he embraced the fact that his international experience, his travels and other experiences were an advantage and benefited his teaching. He states,

Being foreign and a black man from Africa is part of that insecurity. When you add the racial element to the foreign or international, it’s much more complicated and it’s crazier for black males in academia. My experience is that it’s not good enough to be average. Because you cannot blend in. So you either have to stand out as good or bad. Blending in is not an option. You either have to be one of the hardest working guys in the department or someone known to be a sluggard, but average is not enough. If you are average you are relegated to bad instead of being moved up. Average is not good enough.

Although Professor Yaw appreciates his African-ness, he asserts that sometimes it serves as a barrier to his success because he is a “collective thinker” and believes in building consensus and creating community. He stated that this thinking does not work well in a culture that is individualistic such as the U.S. culture. For example, he felt that he thinks too much about the
group relationships that he has built on campus, and sometimes he dismisses offers from other elite institutions just because of the relationships he has built over time at his organization.

Part of my African-ness helped me create a community of faculty in the department so that we can do social things, and other types of things that were missing in the department before I came. We now have such good relationships with other faculty members and this makes it difficult to look for other opportunities or accept other job offers elsewhere. I often choose to stay here because I built some of those relationships. So that can be two-sided. It can be a disadvantage in that way

Professor Yaw stated that he teaches from the heart and he is fully convinced that his work is a “calling.” He said:

It’s a calling and unless you have that calling and the desire to sacrifice yourself to help people, it probably will not be a career for you. The classroom is for people who see the responsibility to help develop solutions to life’s most persistent problems. So the classroom is not a place to give up on life, the classroom is the place to find solutions to life’s most persistent problems.

He feels that his work is spiritual because it appeals to his students’ moral consciousness. Although he does not use scripture, he finds a way to appeal to them to take a “higher order” among themselves. He reports that sometimes he prays with his students when they come to his office with a crisis.

**Reflection**

Dr. Yaw spoke about his work with such passion. He is currently being considered for full professorship. He revealed that earning tenure and promotion had not driven him but were the consequential “fruits” of him passionately pursuing his calling as an educator.
Professor Rumbeiha

Professor Rumbeiha is a soft spoken man with a ready smile. I was honored when he agreed to interview with me on a Sunday because his week schedule was hectic and we could not seem to get a suitable time to interview. Dr. Rumbeiha was born in Uganda. He studied for his undergraduate degree at Makerere University in Uganda and later pursued a Ph.D. in Ontario before coming to the U.S. as a post-doctoral fellow at a large university in the Midwest. He fell in love with U.S. and stayed on when he got a tenure track position in toxicology. Professor Rumbeiha has had a very active scholarly career. So far, he had brought in $7.2 million to his university, in grants. He has published over 75 peer reviewed journal articles, 37 scientific reports, 81 proceedings and abstracts. He has supervised writing and revision of 87 standard operating procedures required for toxicology tests, and has been consulted upon as an expert witness in over 12 court cases.

Professor Rumbeiha reflected on some challenges where he is underestimated. For example, although his work is recognized internationally, people seem taken aback when he goes to conferences because they do not expect him to be an African man. However, he has learnt not to let that bother him. He states,

Many times, people are shocked to learn that I am in charge of my lab. Often they think I am representing a senior scientist. And as you know culturally, we Africans generally do not toot our horns.

Professor Rumbeiha spoke about “knowing the politics,” and “letting your work speak for itself,” and making productive relationships as key components to get ahead in academia. He accredits his success to his supportive wife, his strong familial community and “most importantly to God.” His faith has helped him chart through the “unknown territories” of U.S. academia.
Reflection

When I met Dr. Rumbeiha, I was heartened by his enthusiasm, and willingness to give me a tour of his campus despite his hectic schedule. Once we sat down at a café for tea, he shared with me about the horrors of growing up in Uganda under Idi Amin, the military dictator and third President of Uganda. I was intrigued by his story-telling. He also shared about his family of whom he spoke proudly. It was evident that his children and his wife were a great source of pride for him. He revealed that he intends to relocate back home once his youngest child completes college.

Dr. Subi

Dr. Subi is a chatty Associate Professor with a vibrant personality. I met with her on two different occasions and Skyped on two other occasions. Her schedule seemed to be very hectic yet she graciously accommodated my interview. She grew up in a small town near Durban, South Africa. She has two brothers, one who is obstetrics and gynecology in the U.S. and the other is an entrepreneur in South Africa. Her father died when she was eighteen. Dr. Subi is of Indian descent although she does not know where her descendants came from in India. She grew up in the apartheid era meaning that she grew up in an Indian community and did not “really interact” with other races until she was in high school. Her great grandparents came from India as indentured laborers:

When South Africa and India were British colonies, they [British] needed people to work in the sugarcane plantations, one of the big crops in South Africa. So it was convenient for them to take their subjects from India and bring them to South Africa. They did not call them slaves, meaning that they were on contract but they were not given opportunities to get back home. So my great grandparents stayed in South Africa.
From an early age she experienced the injustices of the apartheid system and this led her to actively get involved in social justice and activism especially, in the areas of diversity and challenging colonizing policies and practices.

It was a defining moment for me to think about apartheid in high school when the boycotts started. I never had a full year of school because of the boycotts and the strikes in South Africa. This definitely defined my sense of social justice. Even though activism today does not mean marching in the streets and such.

This has translated to her academic work where she perceives education as a vehicle to make a difference in the community. One of her challenges is to present her experiences of racism and being racialized without falling into a discourse of victimization.

After she earned her bachelor of education in South Africa she could not get a job, she and her friend volunteered to teach at a rural school for indigenous South African.

This was unheard off!! An Indian going to teach in an African school! The school had no infrastructure. There were no bathrooms, no electricity, no water and students cramped in a room to learn. The principal had given up their home to teach these indigenous students. This experience was another defining moment for me. I got to get some sense of what it meant to be a native black South Africa. Because, you know apartheid categorized race as White, Colored, Indian, and African.

She later came to the U.S. because she was interested in the how the U.S. had dealt with issues of multiculturalism and diversity especially after the civil rights period. She and her husband went to graduate school at a large university in Ohio. She shared that she struggled with being away from South Africa and constantly wondered what that meant to be away. They stayed on when they won the diversity visa lottery and became permanent residents. During our
interview, Dr. Subi shared that she had just gotten her U.S. passport and revealed that it had taken a long time for her to apply for the citizenship because of what that meant to her identity as a South African:

My primary identification is South African, or a black woman, a woman of color. So what does it mean to be an American citizen? I finally gave in because I am tired of renewing my visa to get in and out of the country.

When I asked Dr. Subi to what does she credit her success, she quickly said that there is no one story. Her story is intertwined, and one has to tease out multiple layers to get the full story. However, she attributes some of her success to her upbringing. Although it was painful, she spoke with courage and confidence that “the best comes out in the face of adversity.” She has come out stronger and that has translated to her scholarship. She feels that her family and the value they placed on education have driven her to her success. She senses that one of the reasons she has been successful is because of the work ethic that was ingrained in her growing up. She also attributes her success to collaborating with a group of immigrant colleagues from other campuses.

I asked her to give me words of wisdom as an African immigrant graduate student seeking to be successful in the U.S. academia. She said:

It is very important to get a mentor in your program. Someone who can advocate for you and who has access to a number of networks. It’s not always possible and sometimes if the person is not in your program, look for someone else who is interested in the kind of work you are doing. Network a lot, go for conferences and see who is doing the kind of work you are doing. That would be very helpful.
Reflection

Although I did not spend as much time with Dr. Subi as I did with other participants because of certain unavoidable circumstance, I met her again at a multicultural and diversity conference that she was facilitating and we connected deeply as women of color and shared our experiences of racism and prejudice and living in a society in which we are a minority.

Summary

Table 6 below gives a glimpse of how data was collected among the participants.

Table 6

Data collection from participants

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<th>Participant</th>
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<th>Phone</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Documents (CV, websites, books, brochures, pamphlets, etc)</th>
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This chapter painted a picture of eighteen scholars who contributed to this study. The portraits do not dwell on negative portrayals of the faculty members but rather highlights and celebrates their contributions and successes in academic environments that are not always
supportive. The length and descriptive details included in the portraits were influenced by a number of factors. First, the amount of time I was able to spend with each individual. On occasion, the interview schedule was interrupted by busy schedules and unexpected events. Second, participant personality played a role in the amount and quality of data collected. Some participants were more comfortable sharing a great deal of information, while others were more reserved. The next chapter will extract themes that will expound further on the three main concepts of my conceptual framework by demonstrating how they relate to the participants success. The three components are: African Spirituality, Resiliency and Acculturation.
CHAPTER FIVE: EMERGENCE AND INTERSECTION OF THEMES

By listening to and for the individual stories and crafting those individual portraits in the previous chapter, I was able to extract themes from our conversations that represent the fullness of their life and their successful journey in U.S. academe. Each portrait illustrates the multifaceted experiences of the African immigrant faculty in different U.S. campuses including their early life, coming to America, and how they have navigated their challenges to be successful African immigrant professors.

In this chapter, I will expound on spirituality, resilience and acculturation, the three main components of the conceptual framework by demonstrating how they relate to the participants’ successes and by illustrating the various themes that best explain the main component. I will follow the guidelines posed by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997, p. 263) that follow the presentation below.

Theme:

1. Relevant Dimension 1:
   - Evidence-Quotes that illustrate relationship to relevant dimension
   - Evidence
   - Evidence
   - Evidence
   - Evidence
   - Dissonance-This would be a quote that shows they all may agree, but there are areas of divergence.

African Spirituality

Spirituality was a theme that emerged after my first session with every participant. Many of the participants reported that their spiritual orientation contributed largely to their success as
immigrants in the U.S. It seemed that each participant could not detach oneself from the religion of one’s group. This is congruent with Mbiti’s (1970) position that for one to detach oneself is to be severed from one’s roots, foundation, context of security, kinship and the entire group of those who make one aware of one’s own existence. I will demonstrate how each participant talked about spirituality and how it was integral to their success as African immigrant faculty on U.S. campuses.

**Spirituality as a Source of Wisdom**

All the participants admitted that they could not ignore their spirituality as it was an inherent part of who they were as an individual and as an educator. Their spirituality informs their work in education and influences how they behave in the classroom, how they relate to others, and the nature of the learning space that they collectively create without pushing a religious agenda. This finding is congruent with findings from earlier research (Lindholm, Astin, & Astin, 2005) which showed that faculty who self-identify as spiritual are more likely to reflect a predisposition for engaging in student-centered approaches to teaching, such as enhancing students’ self-understanding, developing students’ moral character, and helping students develop personal values.

The quotes below demonstrate how these African immigrant faculty members connected their success to their ability to make decisions, to discern situations, the ability of insight and the ability to relate with the people they serve.

**Dr. Kat:** I think part of it [success] I would attribute it to my strong faith as a Christian. …Every day when I wake up, the first things I do are read my bible and pray, then go out and live the life as a Christian. The way I solve problems, listen to all kinds of issues, students come to my office and are angry so I listen and calm them down and find a way
out. There is always a solution to something. I don’t panic but I try to do the best that I can and sometimes when the opportunity comes we talk about spiritual issues. I show it [his faith] through what I do and what I stand for.

Dr. Mogaka: I think my Christian faith has been very useful, in the sense that once you have the vertical relationship working, then in a way you don’t really have anything to prove to anybody, because I don’t owe my life to anybody; you find yourself in a position where I basically have a right to exist without apology to any human being whatsoever. I draw my authenticity from my maker, and my right to exist, it actually sets me free to do what I need to do. At the end of the day that is the only accountability I have fundamentally, the extent to which I fulfill my purpose.

Dr. Sakui: I think my Christian heritage has been a big factor in whatever I have done. If you look up to God and really trust him there is no problem you cannot overcome.

Dr. Sembene: Islam has been an influence for success because being a Muslim has allowed me to see the world in a different way from the African or even the world view. When you talk about the Palestinian issue I can appreciate, as a Muslim, the difficulties involved in the country, in their efforts to become an independent nation. Other Africans can appreciate it too. I have a cultural as well as a religious affinity; I can understand the politics of the Arab world.

Dr. Abiola: Catholicism played a huge role in my upbringing. God is number one …God made a way for my tenure…Sometimes, I am able to sense someone in a class has an issue and those times, I give them a blessing. I am very mindful. I tell them “God will be with you”. I am not shy about it but I don’t rub it on people because you have to be careful.
Dr. Masopo: For me spirituality is important because it’s a moment where, when I talk about spirituality, I talk about the need to understand the other. When I look at you in the eye I see a human being, a beautiful woman, a young woman, a person. If I look at you in the eye and I don’t see that I can kill you. But when I see that you are like me it will be difficult to harm you.

Spirituality as a Source of Strength and Hope

The importance of spirituality for individuals coping with adversity has been widely recognized. These participants had gone through various hardships prior to coming to the U.S. such as political war in their countries, apartheid, death of their beloved and other sufferings. In coming to the U.S., they encountered other obstacles. The findings underscore the complex role spirituality plays as a source of strength and hope for these African immigrant faculty. The quotes below illustrate how the faculty members connected their strength and hope to their spirituality.

Dr. Kat: I have experienced so much tragic pain and other things growing up in Africa, in Ghana, in the village environment and all that. Over the years all these things have really combined to give me some kind of inner strength. I am very slow to be angry. I have this emotional inner strength and emotional stability such that it appears that nothing really shocks me anymore. And it’s mainly because of what I believe.

Dr. Mogaka: In the bible, when Moses met with God, Moses was talking of “I stutter, I don’t talk nicely,” which in my case is basically my accent. I have learned to turn weaknesses into strengths and make them work for me. Basically turn your scar into a star. God has no interest in what you don’t have and he will never ask that question
because he knows there is already something in you so it’s actually usually the demonic powers that want to talk to you about what you don’t have.

**Dr. Sakui:** I sincerely believe in God and strongly believe in God, he is my life and substance. I acknowledge that life is full of challenges, that the university professoriate is not a bed of roses, it has many challenges, for one to succeed you have to have a focus. Life is made of challenges and successes, it’s not always a bed of roses but if you look up to God and really trust him, there is no problem you cannot overcome.

**Dr. Abiola:** With God everything is possible

**Dr. Sembene:** Belief in the Creator helps to ground me. I believe that whoever the creator is for you, be it Jesus, Mohammed or another, then that will ground you.

**Dr. Masopo:** Spirituality for us Africans is important, a kind of anchor that is helping us to survive this excessive craziness. We know from the history of slavery and colonialism that they divide. They took our fathers away but left our mothers. Within that division you also have to have strength. I finally understood that this is how life works. You will always have opposition but opposition should only give you strength to stand up. No one can take what you have inside because it’s yours.

**Sacred Relationships**

It was evident from all the participants that they held high value on their relationships. They all spoke fondly of their spouses and significant others whom they were accountable to and held those relationships as a sacred responsibility. They also held their mentors who had helped them along the way in high esteem. Some recognized that they would not be as successful if the Chair of their department had not gone out of their way to lead the way for them. This holding of
relationships in high esteem originates from their familial and cultural teachings. Chavez (2001) posits that this purposeful connectedness is a critical term in many African spiritual traditions.

**Dr. Kat:** My wife has been my support throughout and a great blessing. A lot of your success will depend on your family situation.

**Dr. Mogaka:** My parents, what I credit them the most about is they have been very encouraging, they have a positive attitude, very heavily involved in church as well, so I have ended up living up a lot of what they did. And in terms of setting very high standards of achievements I get that from my parents, both of them are pretty driven. I also had two great mentors in this institution. One was the chair of the department and the other was a fellow colleague. Success is not a lone ranger thing. The reason people fail is that they want to be lone rangers, they want to hog all the success, and they want to be the ones on the moon when everyone else is here. We were created to work with people.

**Dr. Sakui:** I come from a good family; my father was and is the greatest man I have ever known. In literature, in real life, in mystery, in fantasy, you name it; I have never known anybody greater than my dad. I mentor my students because I did not get mentors myself. They are the reason I wake up and come to this university.

**Dr. Abiola:** I wouldn’t be where I am if it wasn’t for my husband. He supported me all the way. He is a remarkable man. I thank God for that.

**Dr. Sembene:** My wife is an academic also. So she is a great support and I bounce some ideas off her and she does the same.

**Dr. Dineo:** My husband is an academic, he has been my support. He understands when I need to work Saturday and Sunday too. My mother was also very helpful especially when
my kids were little. In my professional life, there are phenomenal people who have extended themselves to me and mentored me formally and informally.

**Dr. Masopo:** My family has been very supportive to me. My duty is to continue the chain that our ancestors opened for us…I had strong informal mentors who paved the way for me

**Humility and Stewardship**

Although the concept of humility has not been precisely defined in the academic literature, it is valued in the African tradition under the collective ethic of Ubuntu (Mkabela & Luthuli, 1997). Humility was a theme that reoccurred through the study. Most of the participants had trouble seeing themselves as successful although they all had attained tenure and promotion. They deflected the credit to others rather than crediting themselves. This trait of humility permitted them to see themselves as a relatively small, yet important piece in the larger global picture. All the participants felt that a life with an individual career as the center was too individualistic and even inappropriate or selfish. They all spoke about living for a bigger purpose and they felt that they were in the U.S. to make a difference in their immediate community as well as their home country. In many collective cultures and spiritual traditions, living purposefully to serve the greater community is a guiding principle (Chavez, 2001).

**Dr. Mogaka:** I strive to have an impact globally. When I get an email from China, South Africa, India, thanking me for my work, or I see people quoting my work, I know that people are counting on me. So I have no option of not doing my best. Part of my purpose is to help somebody else... So it’s not a question of competing at all, and if you can do a good job and succeed, it’s a given that I had something to do with the success so you become part of my success.
Dr. Sakui: The thing that keeps me enthusiastic is my students. I love my students... They are my target, they are my purpose and as long as I can get along great with my students then I am fine.

Dr. Sembene: My focus is on my students because they are my clientele. I grew up knowing that I am my brothers’ and sisters’ keeper.

Dr. Dineo: My success is not just my success, its success shared with others

Dr. Masopo: My fight here is to leave a legacy for Africans. I’m not important if you are not important. We all need to bring each other to the map. I can’t be happy to be on the map by myself.

Gratitude

In most studies, gratitude is co-related with well-being but it is rarely reported in connection with career (Cohen, 2006). Yet in this study, gratitude seems to be a common theme that came up among all the participants which is not surprising because gratitude is highly relevant to spiritual, religious, and mystical experiences, as well as peak experiences (Maslow, 1964). Although every participant talked about their challenges and the obstacles they had faced in living and working as immigrants in U.S., they all seemed to have a grateful spirit which is foundational in so many spiritual traditions (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000). They felt that they had so much to be thankful for and actually recognized that they were privileged to be working in higher education in the U.S., and to be successful at it. They also felt that they would be remiss if they did not recognize the marvelous spirit of their students, the kindness of their colleagues, the excitement of working in an environment of constant learning, and the joy of doing work that makes a difference in the lives of others. It was also evident that these African immigrant faculty members had put in a great deal of work to get to their successful positions in academia.
However, they humbly attributed their success to God, their family, their students and fellow colleagues.

**Dr. Kat:** I need to give credit to my department colleagues and the two universities that I have worked for here in the U.S. After all it is they who hired me and gave me the opportunity so it would be a remiss not to thank them or acknowledge them for their support.

**Dr. Mogaka:** This institution gave me an environment that was very conducive for my success. They provide seed money for research, mentoring, and training.

**Dr. Sakui:** I praise God every day that I come from a little village and I made it all the way to the university to a full professor. Only God makes that possible. I have had many people who have helped me along the way. I don’t take credit for anything I have done. I give the credit to those people who have been there for me.

**Dr. Abiola:** I count my blessings every day, thanking God for what He has done so far.

**Dr. Sembene:** I was blessed to have had good and dedicated teachers who served as excellent role models. My parents set me on a narrow path and armed me with the needed intellectual tools and moral compass to help me navigate the world. I am blessed with a job that I truly enjoy, one that gives the time and flexibility to travel, write and contribute to academia and serve as witness through my writing to what is happening in Gambia.

Table 7. Gives a summary of the characteristic responses and the thematic categories discussed in this section.
### Table 7

#### *African Spirituality Construct*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Categories</th>
<th>Characteristic Responses/Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source of Wisdom</td>
<td>I listen for the voice of my ancestors to guide me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I look for a God perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Islam helps me understand the Palestinian world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am guided by the teachings of Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Strength and Hope</td>
<td>Faith anchors me and helps me survive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Islam anchors me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faith gives me inner strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>God has equipped me with all I need to succeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Relationships</td>
<td>If it were not for:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My community back home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My department chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility and Stewardship</td>
<td>I am my brothers’ and sisters’ keeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My purpose is to serve the global community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching is my calling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My fight is to leave a legacy for Africans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>God is an investor and he expects a return on investing in me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>I give credit to my department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would be remiss not to credit my institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I thank my good Lord and savior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My family, my friends, my helpers, my husband/wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I count my blessings, thanking God for what He has done so far.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am blessed with great role models who have been mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My students put in a lot of hard work and make me proud.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am blessed with a job that I truly enjoy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Summary

My findings show that spirituality plays a significant role for most African immigrant faculty in how it informs their pedagogic practices. Spirituality is seen here as a key influence that shapes the scholars’ motivations and desires in teaching practices. This is congruent with Shahjahan’s (2010) study of faculty of color whereby spiritual beliefs, values and practices are
pillars which informs and influences professors’ work in education. They have also found strength to withstand the ambiguities, uncertainties, humiliation, stress, and discrimination they have faced in their careers. While they tend to be strong individuals, they know the value of social support and are able to surround themselves with supportive friends and family and hold these relationships as sacred. These individuals recognize that they are stewards with a greater responsibility to the world. Because of their spiritual and cultural orientation, these African immigrant professors embrace a deep humility and a thankful heart and do not take credit for their success.

**Resiliency Framework**

Research has clearly shown that fostering resilience, i.e., promoting human development, is a process and not a program (Benjamin & Black, 2012). Richardson, Neiger, Jenson, and Kumpfer (1990) defined resiliency as “the process of coping with disruptive, stressful, or challenging life events in a way that provides the individual with additional protective and coping skills” (p. 34). Brodkin and Coleman (1996) defined resilience as “the ability to develop coping strategies despite adverse conditions, positive responses to negative circumstances, and a protective shield from continuous stressful surroundings” (p. 28). I noticed that the construct of resiliency surfaced during my conversations with my participants given the many challenges and setbacks they had experienced in their lives. Below I will demonstrate different elements of resiliency that emerged.

**Optimistic Mindset**

Coutu (2002) posits that one of the characteristics of resiliency is a staunch acceptance of reality but with an optimistic outlook. Scheier and Carver (1992) defined optimism as the generalized positive expectancy that one will experience good outcomes. Research indicates that
optimism is correlated to success (Crane & Crane, 2007). Ogbu and Gibson (1991) posit that most Africans are optimistic about the future because they practice a “dual frame of reference” to enable them to mitigate dissatisfaction in the host country by treating it as transient (p.7). Most of the participants in this study shared the commonality of optimism; they saw opportunities to succeed, even if they had experienced obstacles in their past. In the following quotes, the faculty members illustrate their optimism.

**Dr. Sakui:** Life is a wonderful thing. Wherever you go, you will meet challenges but you have to focus on what you want to accomplish.

**Dr. Kat:** My philosophy in life, especially in things like career, is if I see an opportunity I will try. If I get it, I get it, if I don’t it’s okay.

**Dr. Dineo:** I am gonna be successful; I am not going to fail. I see opportunities in the craziest places. I think maybe because I come from an environment where, most of us who are international, we didn’t have so much and so where you can, you take full advantage of everything around you and maximize opportunities around you.

**Dr. Abiola:** I know today will be better than yesterday. I know that the challenges that come my way make me a stronger person, a better person.

**Dr. Sembene:** The fact that I’m being considered for Chair is another opening, whether I get it or not is immaterial, but just the fact that I’m being considered is good enough. No place is perfect but my institution is really good.

**Dr. Mogaka:** You have to learn to turn weaknesses into strengths and make them work for you. Basically you turn your scar into a star. As soon as you own it, it ceases to be someone else’s weapon against you.
Perseverance

Persistence is thought to develop from a “self-belief of efficacy” (Vargas-Reighley, 2005, p. 27). According to Bandura (1997), it is this self-belief of efficacy that determines how much a person will persevere in the face of obstacles and how much effort a person will exert in an endeavor. Bandura (1997) calls this a resilient self-belief system, which enables a person to rise above adversity. This is congruent with Hansen’s (2003) conclusion that success requires persistence. A number of researchers support the notion that persistence plays an important role in outstanding achievers. For example, Simonton (1987) found that persistence was more powerful than ability by itself in explaining the accomplishment of a sample of outstanding achievers (cited in Gandara, 1995). These researchers do not discount the influence of intelligence; however, intelligence alone is not sufficient to account for success. In the following quotes, the faculty members illustrate their persistence despite impediments and setbacks:

**Dr. Sakui:** We are brought up to be tough people. You face challenges and you draw back, you don’t go sit in the corner and cry, don’t get your blood pressure raised. You face the problem head on.

**Dr. Kat:** Because I am not from here, I come in and I want to do the best that I can so that I don’t lose my position.

**Dr. Dineo:** It’s almost as though people don’t believe you can be successful so it’s like okay, we have given you the job, go and do it and no one gives you support and they let you be. I know I can’t afford not to succeed. I can’t go home and sort of show off nothing.

**Dr. Sembene:** Hard work is a must and finishing strong is important when you are pursuing success. You really have to do the best you can once you have the opportunity.
Humor

Humor has been defined as the amusing communications that produce positive emotions and cognitions in the individual, group or organization (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). A few empirical studies in the field of management have been conducted which indicate that humor has a positive relationship with performance (Avolio, Howell, & Sosik, 1999). These studies postulate that humor triggers laughter which releases tension (Romero & Pescosolido, 2008).
The participants in this study were able to laugh at life’s difficulties, they were able to diffuse volatile situations and explore alternatives for solving problems in a less threatening manner. This, at the very least, has contributed to the success in their career. In the following quotes, I highlight parts of the humorous conversations that we had during the interview.

**Dr. Sakui:** When snake is your dancing partner, watch your feet because it will bite you anytime. The minute you move your eyes, it will bite you. [Referring to the politics in higher education and cautioning on not getting involved with the politics].

**Dr. Abiola:** I tell the students that if they don’t understand my English then say so because I have Nigerian, British, and Canadian English words in my pocket

**Dr. Mogaka:** I learnt to use my African accent to my benefit. During my Globalization class, I tell the students “By taking my class you end up getting two benefits: knowledge and getting exposed to one of the other global English accents that you will need to survive in the days to come.”

Below is a summary (Table 8) of the characteristic responses and the thematic categories discussed in this section.
Table 8

*Resiliency Construct*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic category</th>
<th>Characteristic responses/Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Life is a wonderful thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on what I can do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will try. If I get it, I get it, if I don’t it’s okay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am not going to fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This country has many opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges make you a stronger person, a better person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turn your scar into a star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>You face the problem head on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know I can’t afford not to succeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You have to be extra-ordinary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is do or die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I cannot go back home and show nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failure is not an option for immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard work is a must and finishing strong is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We don’t have the pre-assigned credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being an underdog gives you more fight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>When snake is your dancing partner, watch your feet because it will bite you anytime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am an African queen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I cannot stop my clock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have many English words in my pocket</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

Despite the obstacles that the African immigrant faculty members faced in their academic journey, they were able to recognize that there was hope in the midst of difficulty. They felt the immense need to be extra-ordinary and the added pressure where failure was not an option for immigrants. However, they did not consider themselves as victims despite these challenges and were determined to succeed. They allowed the challenges to make them into stronger people.
while keeping a humorous demeanor. These characteristics buffered the stress to achieve the ability to adapt or bounce back following adversity and challenge.

**Acculturation Framework**

Acculturation relates to the introduction of and interaction with a new culture, the emphasis being on the potential for compromising one's previously held beliefs and values to function in the new culture (Sadao, 2003). A careful review of the participants’ transcripts reveals that despite these challenges of dual cultural membership, all the African immigrant faculty members succeeded at developing a compatible bicultural identity. A bicultural person is successful in switching between two cultures as required by the situation or institution (Sadao, 2003). The faculty members interviewed in this study provide a glimpse of the factors that they think influenced their success and identify a bicultural stance that helps them surmount institutional barriers and balance the demands of a faculty career. Below I will demonstrate how each participant identifies with both cultures, in varying levels.

**Cultural Pride and Identity**

The faculty members attributed their success to their African group membership. They were very aware of their African heritage and the contribution their African-ness had to their success. Their African-ness was valuable in expanding their repertoire of cross-cultural skills and cultural integrity. As such, cultural pride may have directly or indirectly contributed towards their achievement. This finding is consistent with other findings that suggest that ethnic/cultural pride promotes success among ethnic minorities (Constant, Roberts, & Zimmerman, 2009; Pizzolato et al., 2008; Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011).

**Dr. Kat:** Because we grew up in an extended family system, we are dependent on each other. …. I have benefited from an extended family system.
Dr. Sakui: Because of my African background there are certain cultural characteristics you can never wipe out. One of those is tenacity; we are brought up to be tough people.

Dr. Dineo: What I draw from my African-ness is knowledge itself. I have a clear cultural foundation. I draw very deliberately and strongly from that cultural identity. I know that I am not an American. I think separating it and knowing in my head helps me navigate clearly because I am never going to be an American.

Dr. Abiola: As Africans, we are brought up to be hospitable; we want to make the other person comfortable, happy. I am known as the “enthusiastic” lady.

Dr. Sembene: Because I’m African, black, Muslim, I bring to the table a variety of very rich experiences. When I teach international politics I bring a variety of perspectives which are not familiar to American students.

Dr. Mogaka: Being raised as part of a member of a community grounds you.

Cultural Dualism

The participants do not perceive the mainstream American and their ethnic cultures as being mutually exclusive, oppositional, or conflicting. Although they are proud of their African culture and identity, they also embraced the American cultural style. They integrate both cultures in their everyday lives, show behavioral competency in both cultures, and switch their behavior depending on the cultural demands of the situation (Birman, 1994). This finding is congruent with Fordham and Ogbu’s (1986) research which asserts that successful Black students must grasp some of the “White” cultural styles so as to do well in school (p.198). In his research, many of the Black students’ responses of “acting White” pointed to cultural and interactional styles and tastes. For instance, although the African immigrant faculty held strong collectivist values from their heritage, such as family, respect for and respect of authority, as well as service
to their community, they also recognized that adapting the American individualistic values was important for their success as well.

Some of the cultural changes that the participants adapted from the American culture involve linguistics. For example, they learned to use American terms when explaining concepts in class, or educational shifts such as changing their teaching styles from lectures to more participatory styles so as to accommodate the American student. Some faculty mentioned that they learned to be more competitive and assertive in their scholarship just to survive. In the following quotes, the faculty members illustrate how they situated themselves in the American culture:

**Dr. Kat:** When you come here [U.S.] you have to adjust to the culture and to the environment. Then you have to learn the institutional culture, how to navigate the campus, the work environment, and all that.

**Dr. Dineo:** The academy is by its nature very competitive. And in the academy we are not rewarded for being collective. We are rewarded for being better than the next person. In the academy, the bottom line is we are competing, and we are being compared. So for me, for this to make sense I have to separate my professional life from my personal life.

**Dr. Abiola:** Before I started teaching here, I wasn’t this assertive. But I have learned that is the only way I will stay in control and in charge in class. That is the only way I can survive here.

**Dr. Sembene:** For me to concentrate on my scholarly work, I did not engage in community work. For the most part I was on my own and lonely. However, this helped me to be successful on the academic end.
**Dr. Mogaka:** The season before I got tenure, I was very busy. I stayed late in the office working; I wished I had 27 hours. I was not very successful with my family.

**Dr. Wanjala:** My culture calls for one to be respectful of authority. But that assumes that authority knows what is best and is behaving correctly. But now, I know that when authority [referring to academic leadership] is not behaving correctly and is being unfair I am not afraid to call them out on it.

Table 9. Summarizes the characteristic responses and the thematic categories discussed in this section.

**Table 9**

**Acculturation Construct**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic category</th>
<th>Characteristic responses/Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Identity and Pride</td>
<td>I have benefited from my extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Succeeding here in U.S. for me, is a success for my village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being raised as part of a member of a community grounds you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We are brought up to be tough people</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I draw very deliberately and strongly from my cultural identity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>As Africans, we are brought up to be hospitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Because I’m African, black, Muslim, I bring to the table a variety of very rich experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being raised as part of a member of a community grounds you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Dualism</td>
<td>I generally lean more to consensus, but academia is very individualistic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have to separate my professional life from my personal life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have learned to be very assertive at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our culture can be a “double-edged sword”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am American by day, African by night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexibility is a must.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We don’t always eat African food.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

African identity is an important identity marker and a source of pride for the participants. However, the issue of collectivism came up repeatedly as both a strength and a weakness for the African immigrant faculty--strength in that it enables them to have social support, and weakness in that it is counter-cultural to the norm in academia. To mitigate this issue, the participants reported using different problem-solving, coping, relational, and communication techniques depending on the demands of the social context. This suggests that they have developed competencies so as to effectively manage the process of living in a different culture. They held both values concomitantly (Stayman & Deshpande, 1989). They indicated an ability to effectively alternate their use of culturally appropriate behavior by engaging in American behaviors such as being competitive, task oriented and individualistic while at the same time prided themselves as having strong familial ties and taking time to serve both their local and global community.

Dissonance

I evaluated this research using both inductive and deductive analysis. I set out by utilizing a deductive analysis approach to examine whether data are consistent with the a priori framework which it did. Then I allowed the research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by conceptual framework. This analysis revealed interesting divergent findings which will be addressed as follows:
Religion

Whereas fifteen participants expressed various religious practices to be their primary conduits which linked their sense of spirituality, three participants categorically stated that they do not adhere to religious practices and were in fact “not notoriously religious.”

Dr. Dineo: I have always had real challenges with the way religion was used and misused. I guess I haven’t resolved that conflict. I know that a lot of Africans that I’ve met are very steeped in religion in ways that I’m just not. And this is not to say it’s good or bad, but it’s just where I am.

Mwalimu Mugo: There are two reasons I parted way with Christianity. The reason I stopped doing this is as my world expanded and I looked at different forms of religion and started looking at logic, they have logic in them. I was raised to look at one, as though everything is black or white. You are either this or not. I have come across people from different faiths, looked at the core of their beliefs, I have seen their justification just as much as I can find justification in Christianity. This has made me reevaluate my biases against other religions. As soon as I allow these other forms of beliefs, then the core got lost. So I don’t have a good justification in believing in that core if it is not so defined.

Dr. Effiong: I don’t go to church anymore. I let my wife and children go on my behalf. Because all they are asking for is money money! Money! Money! and I think there is a lot more to life than just money. I just got too tired of the constant bombardment for money.

Paradoxically, these individuals identified with Christianity yet they did not consider themselves spiritual or religious. However, although they did not assent to the religious views, they subscribe to the African spirituality concept of Ubuntu.
Accent

Whereas sixteen faculty members mentioned that accent had been a challenge for them when they began their academic journey, two participants said that accent had never been an issue for them even though it was clear that they were foreigners. It was interesting to note that these two individuals country of origin is South Africa. This could be explained by the fact that English is one of the languages used for their daily interaction. Amy and Foster (2002) posit that language skills reduce the period of adjustment in the destination area and help speed up the transferability skills and eventually their success.
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study sought to gain insight into the experiences of African immigrant faculty members who have successfully advanced academically in U.S. campuses as evidenced by tenure and promotion, and to understand the extent to which African faculty members are aware of how their “African-ness” has contributed to their success in American campuses. This study used portraiture methodology, a qualitative approach that concentrates on unearthing goodness and highlighting successes while recognizing that imperfections will always be present within a social system. A conceptual framework of three interrelated constructs-African spirituality, resiliency, and acculturation understood within the context of African immigrant faculty experiences were used as analytical lenses. I presented eighteen portraits and expanded upon the a priori conceptual framework.

It is important to contextualize the experiences of the study’s participants to gain an understanding of where their individual narratives fit within the broader landscape of diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusiveness on American campuses. The findings from this study may be used as a template to demonstrate the avenues to success for immigrant faculty which would help in recruiting and retaining more African immigrant faculty members. The findings can also aid as a means of educating students and faculty to have a better perspective of the African immigrant and to dispel myths and negative stereotypes about African people and other immigrants. This study is also significant for the participants as some of them said it gave them a chance to reflect on their own academic experiences and pass on their wisdom gained from struggle and survival to future generations as well as audiences in other locations through the written form of my dissertation.

The research questions for this study were:
1. What are the lived experiences of successful African immigrant faculty members in higher education institutions in the U.S.?

2. To what extent has their “African-ness” contributed to their success in American academic systems?

My thought has been, as evidenced by studies on African immigrants, and my personal experiences, that spiritual beliefs, the ability to adapt or bounce back following adversity, and competency to effectively manage the process of living in a different culture are pillars which inform and influence these African immigrant faculty members’ work in education. This conceptual framework has been affirmed by the data.

In the fourth chapter, I weave portraits of eighteen participants. I use pseudonyms for those faculty members who did not want to be identified and use the real names for those who wanted to own their words. In the fifth chapter, it became clear that the three main constructs of the conceptual framework intersect in practice. To that extent, spirituality, resiliency, and acculturation are critical to the African immigrant faculty members’ life experiences, their perspectives on society and how they undertake their work as educators in academia. As such, the three; spirituality, resiliency and acculturation, are distinguishable, but, in the experiences of these African immigrant faculty, inseparable elements that create a unified whole.

**Discussion of Findings**

This section will discuss the findings of this study pertaining to the success of the African immigrant faculty three constructs in the a priori conceptual framework—African Spirituality, Resiliency, and Acculturation.
African Spirituality

A cursory survey of the literature indicates that spirituality is a central cultural tenet for Africans or a fundamental organizing principle within the African culture (Mbiti, 1970; Myers, 1987). All the participants were consistent in reporting the importance of spirituality in their success, presenting a united front that spirituality is indeed a component that contributes to their success (see Table 10). Five sub-themes emerged from the spirituality construct: (1) Spirituality as a source of wisdom, (2) Spirituality as a source of strength and hope, (3) Sacred relationships, (4) Humility and Stewardship, and (5) Gratitude.

Table 10

Distribution of Spirituality Codes among Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Spirituality as a Source of Wisdom</th>
<th>Spirituality as a Source of Strength</th>
<th>Spirituality as a Source of Hope</th>
<th>Sacred Relationship</th>
<th>Humility</th>
<th>Stewardship</th>
<th>Gratitude</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Odenigbo</td>
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</table>

Although spirituality is not synonymous with religiosity, religious thought, sentiment and ritual do represent its most practical manifestations (Jagers & Smith, 1996). Fifteen of the participants expressed religious practices to be their primary conduits which linked their sense of...
spirituality. For instance, these African immigrant faculty members recognized their human condition and their need for God. When they were describing their lived experiences that were very difficult to cope with, they often mentioned the need to seek out God’s wisdom and strength. This is consistent with findings of Mattis (2002), who investigated the ways in which spirituality helps transcend life stress. Other researchers have explored the redemptive role of spirituality (e.g., Edwards, 1987; Potts, 1991). Eleven of the participants related their spiritual strength to Judeo-Christian beliefs, and one related to the Islam beliefs. All of the participants expressed purposeful connectedness with different individuals, be it their spouses, mentors, children or students. This connectedness originates with the African tradition of holding relationships sacred. Within the African cosmology, the universe and everything in it is sacred (Wane, 2011). Sacred refers not only to concepts of God, the divine and transcendent reality, but also to any aspect of life that takes an extraordinary character by virtue of its association with, or representation of, divinity (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). The participants stated that spirituality provides a sense of strength, hope and wisdom and the belief of comfort and peace that things would get better tomorrow. This is congruent with other studies of African people that saw spirituality as a source of strength and use it as a strategy to help them cope with pain and suffering (Bobb-Smith, 2007). All the participants provided evidence of living for a bigger purpose; they felt that they were in the U.S. to make a difference in their campus community, their home country, and the global community. This sense of stewardship has a spiritual perspective which involves sharing with others and benefiting humankind (McCuddy & Pirie, 2007).

Burke (2006) argues that spirituality produces better organizations and thus benefit society as a whole. He posits that a connection with our spiritual selves allows a holistic integral,
as well as transpersonal connections leading to effective leadership outcomes of value, not only to organizations, but to the global collective as a whole. This may explain why the faculty members were successful at their institution. In conclusion, in this study, spirituality emerges as an orientation which seems to promote the success of these individuals. Perhaps the application of African spirituality may provide a direction for educational leadership.

**Resiliency**

In resiliency studies, little attention has been paid to higher education. Most of the earlier resiliency works pertain to children and adolescents who have been exposed to stressful life experiences (Rutter, 1987). However, more recently, different foci have emerged. Most scholars view resiliency as an adaptive and coping trait that forms and hones positive character skills, such as patience, tolerance, responsibility, compassion, determination, and risk taking (Christman & McClellan, 2008). Wolin and Wolin (1993) developed a model which describes seven characteristics of resilient people: insight, independence, relationships, initiative, creativity, humor and morality. Gupton and Slick (1996) also dubbed persistence, determination, and optimism as resilient characteristics.

In this study, the participants were exceptional at their workplaces however, this had not been an easy feat, and they had persisted and resisted, despite considerable barriers, both in educational leadership and in their lives. I explored what contributed to their resiliency and how they had overcome the barriers. The interviews revealed salient issues with which the individuals had to cope, such as isolation, accents, unfamiliar teaching practices, unclear tenure guidelines, lack of support and many others. The need to be better in order to be seen as an equal was a strong driving force behind these individuals success. Given the emotional weight of these issues, it is not surprising that these individuals encountered a great deal of stress. Becoming a
tenured faculty is an arduous journey for anyone. However, African immigrant faculty members face additional burdens and obstacles, which result in excessive stress. In many ways, these African faculty members are trailblazers. They have not been given detailed guidebooks or maps for their academic ventures; and, as a result, they often relied on their positive attitude, perseverance and a great sense of humor as a strategy for mitigating this stress.

I reflected in this particular study on how the faculty members negotiated their stressful situations with the use of humor and maintaining a lighthearted outlook on life, thereby deflecting issues and reducing discomfort. These results are consistent with the findings of Cameron, Fox, Anderson, and Cameron (2010) which demonstrate that humor may serve as a coping mechanism for adults. Morreall (1983) counts humor as a sort of freedom of the mind, in some cases it is a prerequisite for survival--an ability to rise above any situation--if only for a few seconds. Most participants mentioned that failure was not an option for them, and all said that they have to persevere to be successful (see Table 11).

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Optimism</th>
<th>Perseverance</th>
<th>Humor</th>
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Even though they experienced various challenges, in one way or another, they revealed that they expected good outcomes, even when things were hard. Greeff and Ritman (2005) stated that a primary characteristic of a resilient person is optimism. Hansen (2003) posits that this optimistic mindset breeds success and that much more can be gained by thinking positively and using the mind as a creative problem-solving tool. Although there have been few studies of the association of optimism with faculty success, numerous studies have shown a positive correlation between optimism and quality of work (Burns & Gunderman, 2008). Optimism fosters a sense of ownership for work. A study of leadership values and challenges among medical school deans showed that 28% of respondents identified poor morale as one of their greatest leadership challenges, while having a positive attitude emerged as one of the most important factors promoting leadership effectiveness (Souba & Day, 2006).

Perseverance has been defined as one’s tendency to persist and endure in the face of adversity (Eisenberger, 1992). Perserverance influences how much stress an individual can endure while they cope with setbacks and reach the level of accomplishment they eventually realize (Bandura, 1997). For instance, perseverant people discover ways to circumvent constraints or change them by their actions, whereas less resilient people are easily discouraged by impediments and unexpected challenges (Bandura, 1997; Eisenberger, 1992). To echo the words of Calvin Coolidge, the 30th President of the U.S.:

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.
Even though these African immigrant faculty members have gone through a great amount of stress, they have flourished in a context of struggle and conflict and have developed and substantiated their self-awareness and identity. They can therefore be viewed as transformative (Christman, & McClellan, 2012) leaders in their field. Resiliency is therefore a critical element in classroom success and may be a key to career longevity.

**Acculturation**

By listening to the voices of the immigrant African faculty, and how they have adapted in the American culture, two strong themes emerged. (1) Cultural identity, (2) and Cultural dualism. It was evident from the participants that their ability to define their identity and path as African immigrant faculty was critical for their personal and professional development. This is consistent with Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones’ (2006) proposition regarding the relationship between acculturation and identity. They argue that acculturation represents changes to cultural identity and that personal identity has the potential to anchor immigrant people. In their discussions of acculturation, identity, and culture, Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones (2006) note the individualist and collectivist self-construal. These construals can influence and, in many cases, determine the very nature of individual experience, including cognition, emotion, and motivation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The participants in this study competently demonstrated their ability to negotiate their identity within their binary worlds (Sadao, 2003; Stayman & Deshpande, 1989).

Cultural competence has been defined as the awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic society (Sue, 2001). Behaviorally, it entails the ability to interact, negotiate, administrate, teach and communicate with people from diverse backgrounds. These participants learned the cultural values and expectations of their African and American
cultural life worlds. This ability to see their world through their African lenses and their American lenses simultaneously prepared them to successfully participate in the both cultures of their lives (See Table 12). They did this by choosing from a repertoire of behaviors to adapt appropriately to the cultural context. This ability helped them maneuver to make learning and knowledge transfer across contexts less arduous and, hence, facilitate learning.

Table 12

*Distribution of Acculturation Codes among Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Cultural Pride</th>
<th>Cultural Identity</th>
<th>Cultural Dualism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Odenigbo</td>
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**Implications for Academic Leaders in Higher Education**

Given the early stages of research on this topic, the findings that emerged provide a preliminary foundation for better understanding of this neglected population in U.S. higher education institutions and a launching point for further inquiry into other factors that may attribute to African immigrant faculty success.
Academic leaders in institutions of higher education may use the findings of this study as a template when recruiting and retaining more African immigrant faculty members. First, they can embrace and integrate *Ubuntu* principles in their campuses. Institutions may benefit tremendously if they have academic leaders, who can courageously engage others in conversations about what it means to be human. This requires leaders to challenge assumptions at all levels in an organization and in our society as a whole. Second, academic leaders should recognize that many African immigrants have overcome extreme barriers (e.g. civil wars, apartheid, and colonialism), yet have transformed the pain into growth. This is a key skill for faculty members who are expected to keep up with innovations, to serve in the community, and to publish or perish. Third, academic leaders should be cognizant of the fact that African immigrants come from a collectivist culture and this can influence, and in many cases determine, the very nature of individual experience, including cognition, emotion, and motivation. Their African-ness is valuable in expanding their repertoire of cross-cultural skills and cultural integrity. Cultural pride and identity are elements that are necessary and contribute towards bicultural competence.

Another implication for academic leaders and other policy makers is to incorporate effective prejudice reduction programs into the curriculum. This can aid as a means of educating students and faculty to have a better perspective of the African immigrant and to dispel myths and negative stereotypes about African people and other immigrants. Although many institutions have attempted to incorporate prejudice reduction, multicultural, and diversity training, they have had less than optimal outcomes. Connerley and Pedersen (2005) observe that, if the curriculum does not adapt to the actual needs or is outdated then it will not be effective. Therefore, the
academic leaders need to do a thorough assessment to develop multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills.

Realizing that attaining tenure is one of the most crucial milestones in the life of a faculty member (whether native-born or immigrant), academic administrators ought to encourage departments to establish clear guidelines for promotion and tenure. They should offer a comprehensive approach to faculty development on campus. The challenge for the administrators would be to design a creative orientation process and provide support services and programs that respond to the uniqueness of this particular group.

All the participants in the study clearly acknowledged the need for a mentor. Most of the participants considered the relationship with their mentors as sacred and held them in high esteem. These mentors had guided them in navigating the American academe. Most of the participants indicated that they had gone out of their way to find mentors through informal channels but they felt that their institutions should be more intentional on developing mentoring programs that would be an appropriate fit for junior African immigrant faculty members.

**Implication for African Immigrant Faculty Members**

Junior African immigrant faculty and African immigrant graduate students who aspire to follow the tenure track faculty positions in U.S. campuses may learn from these successful African immigrant faculty members, realizing it is imperative to be “extra-ordinary” because average is not sufficient in academia. It is important to note that African immigrant faculty members face many of the same barriers and prejudices that many other minority faculty members face in academe. However, their all too obvious “alienness” as recent immigrants to the U.S. creates other obstacles for them (Manrique & Manrique, 1999). At the very least, immigrants are viewed as “strangers from another shore” (Takaki, 1989), or aliens for whom the
term “black” or “African American” does not apply. This is reinforced by the stereotypes that Americans may have for people who don’t speak or look like them. For example, women in general receive very confusing signals in the workplace, but for non-European immigrant women, the signals can be even more confusing (Manrique & Manrique, 1999). But as difficult as the road has been for women in academe, the plight of women of color is made even harder by other people’s attitude towards skin color or ethnic background. For African immigrant women, they have a “triple whammy” (p.120) because of their accents.

What is worse is for the African immigrant faculty is that they can be cast as intruders in academe- intruders with a different set of customs, beliefs, and accents (Manrique & Manrique, 1999. p. 121).

Therefore, in order to mitigate this issue, junior faculty need to be over-prepared at all times because they do not come with the “pre-assigned credibility” as do those in privileged groups.

The African faculty can increase their visibility as well as credibility (Homstrand-Irmiter, 2011), as the old saying “out of sight, out of mind” holds true. For the junior faculty to be successful, the must become visible among the community of scholars who evaluate their performance. The junior faculty can increase their visibility by showing good citizenship behavior. For instance, African faculty must learn how to attract recognition by “tooting their own horns” so as to communicate their capabilities, even though it may seem egocentric and un-African. Another method to be visible is by participating in departmental events and collaborating with colleagues. However, they should be cautious of getting tangled in the departmental politics and, if unavoidable, then “choose their battles wisely.” Junior faculty should seek to familiarize themselves as much as possible with the culture and expectations of their unit and regard all their colleagues (from the most senior to the most junior) in a collegial
and professional manner. When in doubt, junior faculty should make sure that everything is clearly and explicitly explained and should not hesitate to ask for clarification or stand up to someone who is being unfair. All in all, junior faculty should find a way of maintaining their sanity through participating in fun activities and try as much as possible to enjoy the journey because they are competent and qualified for the job.

**Implications for Future Research**

The storytelling approach in this study was necessary to gain insight into the experiences of African immigrant faculty members who have successfully advanced academically on U.S. campuses because stories are the foundation of qualitative research. Even so, future researchers may quantitatively examine the constructs of spirituality, resiliency, and acculturation in a larger sample which may be used to provide a generalized conclusion. The participants in this study originated from Sub-Saharan Africa, it would be interesting to examine whether the similar findings would be observed with African immigrants from Northern part of Africa. Also, a comparative analysis of African immigrants and other immigrants could be explored to recognize the extent to which their experiences are unique to Africans or are part of a more general pattern among all immigrant faculty members.

**Personal Resonance**

In this study, I shared a portion of the lives of eighteen African immigrant faculty members who have successfully advanced academically at U.S. campuses as evidenced by tenure and promotion. As I have maintained throughout the study, the intent of the study was to understand to what extent the African faculty was aware of how their “African-ness” had contributed to their success in American academic systems. Using portraiture as my
methodological approach, I celebrated the lives and experiences of eighteen faculty members by highlighting their successes and challenges.

While no phenomenon can be understood out of the time and context in which it is developed, the burden of applying the findings of this study to another context lies with the transferor. Drawing from the rich conversations and interactions with the African immigrant faculty profiled in this study, I am a very different person today from the person I was when I was starting this study one year ago. The process has been one of healing and growing for me. I have had the opportunity to reflect on who I am and how I fit in this world. It was difficult to be aware of my biases, values and beliefs about African immigrant faculty, but at the same time this experience broke walls of silence as we connected in our conversations about our shared experiences as African immigrants in the U.S.

I recognize that the participants did not want me to view their challenges of living and working as African immigrants in the U.S. campuses as inhibiting to success but as opportunities to shine in spite of them. For instance, most of the participants chose to see the “accent issue” as a strength indicative of awareness of their identity and their place in the global community. Personally, I had a love/hate relationship with my accent. On one hand, I know that my accent is a part of who I am and points back to my country of origin, a place of which I have fond memories. But on the other hand, my accent causes me to stand out when I want to blend in. From this study, I now recognize that my accent is not a bad thing, and I have now embraced it is a part of my identity. This study has also heightened my awareness and interest in my African-ness and how my identity as an African immigrant woman can be instrumental to my success in a different culture such as the United States. It is only when I completely identify with my
African-ness will I be able to bring together a whole, more or less, cultural harmony of two distinct cultures, each with inherent strengths and weaknesses.

During my writing, I also experienced some challenges and obstacles. I broke my ankle and had to spend two months without bearing any weight on it. As though that was not a big enough challenge in my progress, I had a miscarriage a few months later. I was overwhelmed by the love and kindness from these participants. Even though I was not their student, they took the time to send me notes of encouragement and support. We connected spiritually. Just as spirituality has been a source of strength for these faculty members, I also had to draw my strength from my spirituality. Though these challenges slowed me down in my writing, it made me take time to see life from a different perspective and appreciate that life is truly not a straight line but a meandering journey where we face obstacles, overcome them, and move on before we reach our desired goals. This has helped me see clearly and make meaning of how the faculty had navigated the challenges in their journey to success.

I am proud to share with others the lived experiences of these eighteen successful African immigrant faculty members. Their stories are filled with happiness, sadness, complexities, blessings and hardship, all interwoven into a beautiful mosaic of what life as an African immigrant faculty member looks like.

**Conclusion**

This study highlighted the lived experiences of eighteen successful African immigrant faculty members in the U.S., and also drew attention to the strategies that they used to succeed in the U.S. to overcome individual and structural challenges. While their stories do not claim to provide the “magic solution”, or a “how-to-guide” to success, they do raise thought-provoking issues that are critical to the success of African immigrants in higher education. The participants
indicated a strong desire for success and were all highly motivated. Their spirituality, perseverance, and ability to competently adapt in a foreign culture helped them in their successful journey in academia. Although the participants not only experienced many challenges associated with attaining tenure, and also faced stereotypes related to being an immigrant from Africa, they demonstrated an optimistic attitude and possessed confidence in themselves. They had a great sense of humor and always looked forward to learning new things and improving themselves.

This has been a long journey in which I felt hopeful, challenged and inspired by the lives of these faculty members. Deep respect is the best description of what I feel for them. They have shared with me their lives so other men and women can reflect on and benefit from their experiences. Their lives may well serve as a legacy for generations to come.
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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL ONE

Life as an Immigrant faculty member

1. Demographic data
   a. Gender:
   b. Date of Birth
   c. Marital Status
   d. Institution:
   e. Years of Residence in the United States: naturalized? Permanent Resident?
   f. Years of service as faculty:
   g. Year of attaining tenure:
   h. Home Country:
   i. Title:
   j. Department:

2. Would you talk with me about the path that brought you to your current academic position in the U.S.? That is, how did you come to choose an academic career, and why in the U.S.?

3. Who influenced your career path?

4. What are the duties performed during a typical day? What kind of hours do you normally work?

5. As an immigrant faculty member, do you feel that your experience as an academic in higher education is the same as or different from the experience of native-born American academics? Compare and contrast the work-related issues you feel are most similar to those faced by your colleagues, as well as those that are most different.

6. Tell me your best experiences or success stories as an African immigrant faculty member

7. What struggles have you faced as an African Immigrant faculty member? How have you dealt with them?

8. What is it about you as a person that influenced your achievements? (Style, values, etc.)

9. Are there specific cultural factors that have served as barriers or support to your advancement as an African faculty member in U.S? What do you do to meet those challenges?

10. What do you like most about this institution? Are there specific policy or support strategies in place in your institution that have enhanced your life as an immigrant African faculty member? What are they?
11. What does the institution do to contribute to its faculty’s professional development?

12. How would you describe the atmosphere at this institution? Is it fairly formal or more laid-back and informal?

13. Are contributions of immigrant faculty to diversity on campus recognized and supported?

14. How would you describe your relationships with your colleagues?

15. How do you keep up with innovative ideas?

16. How much are you required to publish, teach, and serve in your institution? Are these opportunities limited at all by your foreign-born status? How do you navigate the complex demands of publishing, teaching and service of higher education?

17. How much do you publish in a year? In what journals? How about teaching? How many conferences do you attend in a year?

18. Would you say your research interests are related to your country of origin or ethnicity?

19. Has your research been hampered by your immigrant status (such as restrictions on what grants you can apply for, or where you can work)?

20. What committees do you serve in? Has your status as a foreign-born faculty member affected your service opportunities (more, fewer)?

21. What advice would you give to current and future African immigrant tenure-track professors about how best to successfully advance in the professoriate and earn tenure?

22. What are your future career goals?

23. What would you attribute to your success as an immigrant faculty member? What factors and/or experiences do you believe contributed to your successfully advancing in the professoriate and earning tenure? Please describe.

24. What else would you like to share with me about your life as an African faculty member in the U.S.?
**APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL TWO**

**Life History.**

1. Please tell me about your childhood, your family, and your community

2. Who was instrumental in providing career guidance, direction toward obtaining financial support, and educational opportunities?

3. What were the important incidents that occurred during your lifetime that influenced your current accomplishments?

4. How do you think about your ties to your home country?

5. How do you negotiate the two distinct cultures of African and American culture?
APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Observation Field notes

Physical Setting: Classroom/Office
Time:
Length of Observation:

Descriptive Field notes: Activities to observe

Dress code
Office décor
Use of classroom technology
Signs and Symbols
Classroom activities
Student interactions with faculty
Student to Student Interactions

Reflective Field notes:
Dear Sir or Madam:

Re: Consent Form for African Immigrant Faculty Interviewees

You were previously invited by myself Zipporah Wanjira Abla to participate in a research study entitled “Portraits of Successful African Immigrant Faculty Members on U.S. Campuses” as part of my work in completing a doctoral degree in Education.

Purpose of Study: The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of African immigrant faculty leaders with a view to writing stories about them that will help explain what has contributed to African immigrant faculty members’ success in U.S. campuses.

The scarce literature researching immigrant academics draws attention to their struggles in light of the US government’s efforts to tighten visa and immigration procedures in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, accents and problems articulating American phonetics, lack of collegiality at the departmental level, and struggles with self-identity away from their homeland.

Unfortunately, very few studies have explored the stories of immigrant faculty members who have gone through these obstacles and advanced to successful careers in the U.S. institutions of higher education. This study will provide a vehicle and suitable forum to articulate African immigrant faculty leaders’ voices and offer a first-hand account of their mechanisms of adaptation, integration and incorporation that are fostered to ensure success in the American academe.

Procedures: I am requesting that you participate in two face-to-face interviews lasting about two hours each. The interviews will be scheduled within a two-month period in the spring semester of 2012. In our first interview session, I will ask about your professional life as an African faculty member, and in our second interview I will ask about your personal life history.

With your permission, these interviews will be digitally recorded to accurately document the interview. The transcripts will be returned to you for review, revision, and additions to your recorded responses.

Additionally, in an attempt to fully understand your work, your life, and leadership experience, I would like to observe the interactions between you and peers and students in the campus settings on two separate occasions. My role will be strictly as observer.

After all the data have been analyzed, you will receive an executive summary of the research results.

Potential Risks and Benefits: The risk of participation is no greater than that experienced in daily life. Your confidentiality as participant will be secured throughout the study including the confidentiality of any personal information unless you have provided your prior written
permission. The digital recordings will be stored in a digital storage medium like compact disks (CDs). The CDs, observer notes, reflection notes and transcripts will be stored in a secure locked box and placed in a locked cabinet in a secure location with only my supervisor Dr. William K. Ingle and me having access to that data. We will make all reasonable efforts within the scope of the law to protect your privacy. I will retain this data for a period of 5 years.

This study may benefit you by informing the administration with the relevant information to create an environment that will enhance your quality of life as an African immigrant faculty member. Also, your story may be beneficial for other racially and ethnically different faculty members and other marginalized populations in the U.S campuses. I will also benefit both personally and professionally by learning from the example that you provide me through your leadership experiences and your willingness to allow me into your lived world.

Participant’s Rights: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by the law. Your comments will not be shared with your colleagues. Through the use of pseudonyms for you and your institution, you will not be identifiable in the final findings and report of the study. Deciding to participate or not will not impact any relationship you may have with BGSU.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at znyaga@bgsu.edu or 571-338-0961 (cell). You may also contact my advisor Dr. W. Kyle Ingle, at 419-372-7313 (office) or wingle@bgsu.edu. If you have questions regarding participant rights you may contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University at 419-372-7716 or hsr@bgsu.edu.

If you agree to participate in the study, please sign below and I will pick it up from your office at a date that we agree on today. The extra copy is for you to keep.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signature

Date
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__________________________________   __________________________
Signature        Date