OMOLUABI: THE WAY OF HUMAN BEING: AN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY'S IMPACT ON NIGERIAN VOLUNTARY IMMIGRANTS' EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER LIFE ASPIRATIONS

DOLAPO ADENIJI-NEILL, PH.D.
Adelphi University
Ruth S. Ammon School of Education
Garden City, NY

ABSTRACT

This study examines the cultural influences in school success as perceived by Nigerian voluntary immigrant parents and their adult children. The participants of this qualitative research credited their successes in education and in life to an African philosophy known as *omoluabi*: *the way of human being*. The participants consistently expressed this worldview during the interviews without being prompte*d. Omoluabi (Yoruba* origin, can serve as a noun as well as an adjective) connotes respect for self and others. An *Omoluabi* is a person of honor who believes in hard work, respects the rights of others, and gives to the community in deeds and in action. Above all, an *Omoluabi* is a person of personal integrity. We can also define an *Omoluabi* as one who is dedicated to the service of a just community and is dedicate self-actualization. More importantly, the concept of *Omoluabi* encapsulates or distils the Yoruba sense of the critical elements in the positive essences of a total/holistic self and being. A paragon of existence that is measureable across a wide spectrum in the unlimited dimensions of life and existence.[1]

KEYWORDS: *Omoluabi, Ubuntu, cultural norm, effort beget luck, personal integrity, voluntary immigrants, multicultural education, Yoruba, Nigeria.*

INTRODUCTION

This study describes and examines the experiences and worldview of Nigerian immigrants and their adult children as they traversed the United States' educational system and society by adhering to an African philosophy of *"Omoluabi: the way of human being."* *Omoluabi* connotes respect for self and others. An *Omoluabi* is a person of honor who believes in hard work, respects the rights of others, and gives to the community in deeds and in action. Above all, an *Omoluabi* is a person of personal integrity. Okome &Vaughan note, the concept of *Omoluabi* encapsulates or distils the Yoruba sense of the critical elements in the positive essences of a total/holistic self and being. *Omoluabi* denotes a paragon of existence that is measureable across a wide spectrum in the unlimited dimensions of life and existence.[2] This study results in portraits and stories of participants' relationships with parental expectations, school community, immigrant community and the larger society. Immigrant or voluntary minorities are people who have migrated essentially voluntarily to the United States or any other nation because they wanted more economic mobility, or better life in general, and/or political freedom.[3] I used phenomenological design as the theoretical frameworks. Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences.[4] The Yoruba of western Nigeria say that a person is not merely human by being born, that we are human beings because of the deeds and actions that connect us to others: to families to friends to community to nation. They call such a person an *Omoluabi;* in other African countries South of the Sahara, they call such persons *Ubuntu.* Archbishop Desmond Tutu in his book, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, states:

> *Ubuntu* is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks to the very

essence of being human. When you want to give high praise to someone we say, "Yu, u nobuntu;" he or she has *ubuntu*. This means that they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. They share what they have. It also means that my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'person is a person through other people' (in Xhosa, *Ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu* and in Zulu, *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye).* I am human because I belong, I participate, and I share.[5]

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ngugi Wa Thiongo noted,

Sharing stories is the oxygen of the human spirit. But the stories told here are not fictional but rather stories of personal encounter in the quest of the truly human embodied in the term *Ubuntu*. Every individual no matter the culture and community they come from has experienced reality in a unique way and therefore each person has something unique to contribute to the common spirit of our being. Such stories then become like the streams that make up rivers that flow into the common Sea.[6]

The stories of the participants can be likened to the analogy described above; this is the essence of this study, the phenomenological framework is not unlike the fireside chat or moonlight hours shared by African ancestors. The means by which Africans share their worldview with their progeny and the hopes of the present and the past usually enlighten their future and provide a

road map to that future, the way of human being. The individuals involved in this study

interpreted their world according to the worldview they brought with them from their culture and

taught this to their children who in turn internalized them and used them to navigate their daily

experiences including their education. The participants reported calling upon known cultural

constructs from their past to serve as beacons used navigating a new life, and new social

dimensions, which included education as well as their social milieu. At the center of the

philosophy of *Omoluabi* is the people's deep understanding of their culture and how

relationships should work in order for it to be beneficial for all involved. The Yoruba

philosopher and eminent scholar, Akinsola Akiwowo, notes social relations among people is ever

evolving and changing, and the Yoruba philosophy that brings this to the fore is that of "Ajobi"

(consanguinity/blood relations) and "Ajogbe" (co-residency).[7] And an *Omoluabi* balances these

ideals to the best of his or her ability in order to bring harmony to all relationships including

work, school and home, so that a personal goal of self-actualization can be reached.[8] When we

talk about relationships in Yoruba worldviews, there are two basic tenets followed by five

inalienable social values that motivate and guide social relations: ajobí (consanguinity/blood

relations) and àjogbé (co-residence): (1) ire àìkú (value of good health to old age), (2) ire owó

(financial security), (3) ire oko-aya (the value of intimate companionship and love), (4) ire omo

(the value of parenthood), and (5) ire àborí òtá (the value of assured self-actualization).[9] These

values are human values that resonate in the aspiration of West African immigrants in the age of

globalization.[10] These are the foundation of the *Omoluabi* philosophy of ways of being.

OMOLUABI AND EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Ogbu's studies of over two decades (1991-2003) are one of the anchors of this study.

Participants were asked if their cultural outlook, namely the norm of *Omoluabi*, had anything to

do with their educational success. This is a crucial question because Ogbu found that the relative success of the children of immigrants and non-immigrant students of color and linguistic minorities in education is linked to their cultural frame of reference.[11] In his study of *Cultural Problems in Minority Education*, Ogbu aimed to separate the issue of cultural diversity or representation from cultural problems, and focus solely on "cultural problems." He introduces the term, *cultural frame of reference* to the discourse on minority education in order to bring to light the difficulty experienced by some minorities with the cultural and language milieu of the classroom. He states that all minorities face cultural and language differences; however, their ability to overcome such differences and succeed in school is contingent on their cultural frame of reference, which is how they interpret the differences. Ogbu concludes that voluntary minorities, who do not have an oppositional frame of reference, are more successful in school partially because they interpret learning the school culture and language as a plus and not counter to their cultural and language identity.[12] In the narratives of the participants in this study, a non-oppositional *cultural frame of reference* highlighted is that of strong resilience in the face of obstacles, as well as the participants' own creation of a folk theory that hinges on the belief that success is possible, success is expected.

CROSS CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENT

A number of factors are identified which bear on the performance of the immigrants' children born and educated in the United States. All the children in this study are high achievers in U.S. schools, up through their college and postgraduate years. All are from educated families (see Table 1). Factors that have a bearing on the performance of these individuals have been identified in the results. This study traces factors back to their cultural roots--and it is the fusion,

or more precisely, the interactive dynamics of these factors, that can be connected to academic achievement.

Studies on sociostructural theory find that immigrants' children confront the same sociostructural issues as their parents.[13] This is true for the participants in this study as well. The cultural characteristics of the Nigerian immigrant families that bear on the upbringing of children include hard work, discipline, importance of education (which can lead to a better life for the children than that of their parents), and sacrifice for a commitment to education, and the support of parents, siblings, extended family members and the community.

Several studies assert indigenous African learning is inseparable from the peoples' daily lives.[14] Indigenous education plays a vital role in the transmission of values that Africans consider essential in experiencing life in a holistic way. This is critical to the African's way of life; therefore, indigenous education is not divorced from traditional African norms and values. Thus, for Africans, the educational institution is not separate from life. There is no distinction between formal, non-formal and informal education. The entire community is ever engaging in continuous learning and teaching. Among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, the education of a child begins at the "naming ceremony," seven days after birth. During this process, the baby is introduced to the ancestors, family, friends and community, and various food items such as salt and honey are dabbed on the tongue of the newborn, thus its education in becoming *Omoluabi* begins.[15]

Menkiti states,

In African thought persons become persons only after a process of incorporation. Without incorporation into this or that community, individuals are considered to

be mere danglers to whom the description 'person' does not fully apply. For

personhood is something which has to be achieved, and is not given simply

because one is born of human seed . . . Whereas Western conceptions of man go

for what might be described as a minimal definition of the person - whoever has

soul, or rationality, or will, or memory, is seen as entitled to the description

'person' - the African view reaches instead for what might be described as a

maximal definition of the person. As far as African societies are concerned,

personhood is something at which individuals could fail, at which they could be

incompetent or ineffective, better or worse. Hence, the African emphasized the

rituals of incorporation and the overarching necessity of learning the social rules

by which the community lives, so that what was initially biologically given can

come to attain social self-hood, i.e., become a person with all the inbuilt

excellencies implied by the term.[16]

Thus for the participants of this study, learning is not left to the educational institution alone.

Learning that happened at home is expected to be demonstrated at school. It is very important to

the parents that their children demonstrate the art of human being at all times particularly at

school because they believe that their children's successes and failures hinge on their behavior

and their beliefs about educational attainment.

PRINCIPLES OF TRADITIONAL EDUCATION AMONG THE YORUBA PEOPLE

The principles of Yoruba (African) traditional education, according to Akinyemi[17] and

Awoniyi,[18] are based on the concept of *Omoluabi*. In other words, the product of Yoruba

traditional education is to make an individual an *Omoluabi*. In essence, the main idea of Yoruba traditional education has always been to foster good character in the individual and to make the child a useful member of the community. Therefore, traditional education embraces character building as well as the development of both physical and mental aptitude. Education in Yoruba culture is a life-long process and the whole society is the school.[19]

METHODS

This qualitative research is informed by phenomenological perspectives/philosophy as established by Husserl[20] and the European philosophers Sartre, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, who were also the pioneers of phenomenological studies of existence. Phenomenology as defined by Husserl is the study of how people describe things and experience them through their senses. The assumption is that we only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our consciousness.[21] In phenomenological research, the researcher identifies the "structure and the variations of structure, of the consciousness to which anything, event or person appears."[22] "In phenomenological inquiry the reflection of lived experience is necessarily recollective: it is reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through."[23] viewed through socio-cultural perspectives, lenses and realities. Furthermore, "phenomenology is a philosophy as well as a method: the procedure involves studying a small number of participants through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning."[24] I would add that it is also a reflection on the individual's present experience. My role as the researcher is from an "emic" (insider) perspective. I am a member of the community that I study, and I have an "extensive and prolonged" insider's view of the issues experienced

and discussed by the participants. Since the purpose of this research is to make meanings out of the lived experiences of the participants, the phenomenological method is appropriate.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this qualitative research consisted of eight Nigerian voluntary immigrant families and their adult children (students) residing in New York, Vermont and Michigan: (N = 20, Men = 7, Women = 13, including 5 adult children). The main criterion for participants was that the Nigerian parents be voluntary immigrants and have adult children (18 years or older) who have gone or are going through the United States' elementary, secondary and or college educational systems. The method of selection of the subjects was by "network" sampling, where one participant leads to another. The network sampling technique is suitable for interviewing in-depth, observations, case histories, and for life history interviews as used in this study. The method is naturally limited to a small number of participants.

The study was conducted using personal interviews, life history interviews, participant observation, field notes and journals. I focused on Nigerian immigrant parents residing in the United States and their children.

INTERVIEWING PROCESS

Many of the participants were interviewed in their homes, others in office locations after establishing fairly good rapport with participants. The information obtained in the interviews was grouped, analyzed and interpreted as it relates to the research questions; other questions emerged during this process. Because of this, it was possible to obtain a fairly consistent picture of the feelings, attitudes, knowledge and beliefs of the participants. Special effort was made to

establish rapport with the participants; this was essential to help overcome most defenses such as disclosing "family business to an unknown individual." The selection of the subjects, the approach to them, and the interview environment and technique were designed to help strengthen rapport, I visited and established a friendly relationship with each participant before requesting an interview. Further, it is important to point out that in no instance did the interviewer mention the word *Omoluabi.* It came up frequently, but only voluntarily from the participants without prompting. This is why I decided to take a second look at this African philosophy as viewed by the participants.

There were three interviews for each parent participant: life history interview, interviews on parental expectations and an exit interview or participant co-evaluation of data. There was one interview for the adult children. No interview was longer than 90 minutes. Below is the demographic data of participants, stating age, education, occupation, and length of time in residence in the United States at the time of the interviews.

TABLE 1. Participants' demographic data

Letter codes	Age	Education	Occupation	Length of time in the United States (years)
BM (F) AM (M) 2 Daughters 1 Son	50 44 19^ (in college), 13 17	Education includes post-secondary school certifications (F) Baccalaureate Teaching Certification and other job specific certifications (M)	Production supervisor (F) Teacher/Social Worker (M)	6
BE (F) (Widowed) 4 Daughters	61 32^ 30 28 27	*PhD. ^* PhD *MD BA BA	State Bio Engineer Medical Doctor	38 All children born in U.S.
SB (M) (Separated) 1 Daughter	44 17	BsN.	Nurse	1
BO (M) O (F) 3 Daughters Or (18) EO (29)	53 67 33^, 29, 18^	*B.A. *RN, *MS ^*BA, MA	Business Anesthetist ^Asian languages/Business	35 40 All children born in U.S.
MU (Single parent) 3 Daughters 1 Son	60 38,36,26 32	*RN All are pharmacists	Nurse	36 All children are born in the U.S. except the last daughter.
SN 2 Daughters 1 Son	58 23, 22, 19	PhD (All are in college)	Consulting Engineer	18

TABLE 1 *(continued).* Participants' demographic data

Letter codes	Age	Education	Occupation	Length of time in the United States (years)
OA (F) SO (M) 3 Daughters	49 45 19^, 17, 14	*PhD *BA (^ In college.)	Criminologist Counselor/Social Worker	25 24 All children born in the U.S.
SA 3 sons	55 18, 20, 21	*MD (All are in college)	Medical Doctor	48 All children born in the U.S.

Notes. M = Mother; F = Father; * = degree or certification obtained in the United States
^ = Adult Child interviewed (Adeniji-Neill, 2009).

DATA ANALYSIS

A folk theory of Nigerians emerging from their narratives became the base for the discussion. Wong and Rowley postulate that a well-designed single group study may provide more informative data than comparative studies to enhance our understanding of minority children's schooling.[25] Folk theories are significant because they largely reflect common knowledge in a particular culture, and function as guiding principles in everyday practice.[26] A folk theory represents ordinary people's worldviews that are shaped by their cultural and life experiences.[27] An open-ended question interviewing method was employed to help uncover the reality beneath the surface. Patton notes that quotations from interviews reveal the respondents' levels of emotion, the way in which they have organized the world; their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions.[28]

In this research, taped in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim, field notes and journal entries were reviewed regularly. Data were analyzed through descriptive analysis.[29] The aim of descriptive research is to gather knowledge about the focus or object of study; but to avoid bringing about any changes in the focus or object. The results of this study were verified by returning transcribed interviews to participants via email or post. Time was also spent with the participant families by visiting them at their homes and was involvement in some family outings and recreation activities. Open-ended interview data provide important contextual background for analysis. Data were also organized into categories and connective themes identified. Actual quotes from the participants (see Appendix) served as the basis for the results.

THE VOICES

The sociocultural norm, *Omoluabi,* plays an important role in how the participants view themselves and how they use *Omoluabi* as a compass for navigating various areas of life including education. The participant below noted tenacity as one of the principles of *Omoluabi.* Archbishop Desmond Tutu called it "engagement." In education as in life, the participants believe in engagement, trying hard and not giving up. An *Omoluabi* is not lazy; he or she is engaged, in the context of the participant below referring to how she tells her children to approach their schoolwork:

> **OA (parent):** I would like to touch on another Nigerian trait: tenacity, the ability to put in one's all and focus on the task at hand rather than be divided and be all over the place. One simply focuses and finishes a task because procrastination to many Nigerians is not an endearing trait.   They think that is laziness and an *Omoluabi* is not lazy.   Life is all about working hard and staying focused.

All the voices in this study talk about tenacity, the ability to be present, to commit to the task at hand as one of the folk theory *of the way of human being*. Education or studying require concentration, those who succeed usually possess this trait. Listening, is another common theme that surface in the discussion with the participants: they talk about how their culture emphasizes listening, not talking back especially to adults until you have had the wisdom of response (these parents say they have a hard time enforcing on their children in the United States, they say they have adapted; they also listen to the children's point of views). Parents, however, still believe the act of listening makes for a well-grounded person who will succeed in learning, because

listening allows an individual to observe, to be a better student of culture and human behaviors. A parent puts it this way:

> **OA:** Our cultural heritage makes you well grounded in all aspects of your life. It keeps our children well grounded. This one that just went back to Nigeria (pointing to her first daughter); she didn't speak the language. She listened very well, and now she speaks it fluently. Now she has a lot of Nigerian friends. She is into computers and she will check out some of the jokes--there are American/Nigerian jokes. Like one boy she knows who will joke about jollof rice and *eba* [translation: cassava meal]. You know, he is just trying to be funny but these are the subtleties of language; if you don't observe you don't learn much. We demand that our children listen in order to learn a lot.

Another folk theory that emerges in this study is material frugality is not poverty of the spirit. The participants talked a lot about the culture of commercialism that the children encounter in schools as a distraction to their education. They believe that Nigerian culture helped them in teaching their children that it is okay not to have all the material things they wanted as long as they have what they need. They say that sometimes the children came home from school and wanted designer this or that because they see other children with them. A parent's response below is used to summarize the others:

> **JO (parent):** If you were raised that way (Nigerian culture), you don't loose it. If you have a cup of water you will feed everyone. We weren't rich but we were

able to manage. Even without much money, you can survive. That was the

training we had from home [Nigeria], so were able to use it to our advantage. The

way we were raised at home was the way I raised my children. I tell them that I

will give them the best that I can, but when I cannot give them things they should

be satisfied with what they have. We tell them everybody is not rich; there are

people who are worse off than you. This is something from my upbringing that

helps me to survive.

They also talk about human potential, what is possible. All the participants hung to the

possibility on attainment of education and the importance of self-confidence that is not attached

so much to material things but to potential:

BO (parent): Today, I tell my children, 'we look at human potential as opposed

to what they do not have.' . . . It is self-confidence that helped us make it in

America. If you already believe in yourself, the rest is minor detail.

The second generation interviewed also seemed to have internalized the spirit of

Omoluabi. Below are some of the excerpts from the interview where they discussed how they

view the world and how they think the world sees them. They talk about respect for the self and

for people as one of the philosophies emphasized by the family; and families also put a huge

value on education as the means to a successful life. Even though the second generation said

their parents do not tell them what to major in or what career they should focus on; they said they

still feel the obligation to do well and choose careers that their parents will be proud of. The

tension to conform to parental expectations is strong even with the absence of explicit instruction.

> **EJ:** I think as we said earlier, you are not just representing yourself or your family, even your countrymen, you are representing all Black people as a whole. Even when I travel to other countries, I am sort of a representative. Others might feel the need to treat Black people better because they've known me. I don't feel any pressure; it is cool to feel that you are not just serving yourself; you are doing something for others. It also means I change how people view us.

> **LO:** . . . Most of my friends were White or Asian. I knew that the way they were acting with their families is different from the way I was acting with my family. I understood why our Nigerian culture deals with respect and elders and education in a different way: basically, respect for people. And now I realize that it's all to make me a better person, because I can respect people in a different way. I also hold a higher value for family and education. I'm trying to improve myself and better myself. I noticed in high school, that some of the families had a lot of money. The grandparents would give them things, and they could travel to wherever they wanted. It has made me more humble and more proud of all that I do have, and that my family has.

All the participants including their adult children talk about advantages and disadvantages of their cultural heritage. The following are the adult children (students) views of how *Omoluabi* affects their life and education.

LO (student): Basically, in anything we do they just want us to try our hardest, no matter what we do. It's never really been about the grades, but the effort. I always know I have to try my hardest, not that I always do. If they notice that I don't, that's when the problems occur. This is my third semester in the university. I am typically an A student, but when I do have a bad grade, it's never about the bad grade but how much effort I put into my classes.

NO (student): Education was a priority. I don't think it was explicit. They were not telling me that you have to study and get all A's and stuff. It was more just implicit. I don't think I remember ever being told. They had high expectations. I was self-motivated. I never needed intervention; I studied on my own. In college, there was (parental) pressure to get into a more technical field. I was an engineer. I remember when it was time to apply to college I ended up only applying to Michigan State. When you applied you apply to different colleges within the school like Literature, Sciences and the Arts, as well as engineering school. I remember thinking that I just wanted to do business, but I remember my mom saying 'No, you need to go into engineering.' And I could remember my dad saying, 'let her do whatever she wants.' I guess it wasn't like such a big deal to me so I did engineering [laughs]. Now I am back to Business. I will be done with my MBA in June.

CONCLUSIONS

PARENTAL CULTURAL DYNAMICS

Parental-child cultural dynamics stand out prominently in the narratives. The parents in their narratives tell of doing their best to link their children to Nigerian culture. They take holidays in Nigeria, attend Black churches, and take their children to gatherings of Nigerians and African Americans. They try their best to instill pride of their homeland in their children while also supporting their own and their children's positive acculturation in U.S. culture. They do not deny their past (Nigeria) nor refute their now and future (U.S.) in favor of the other. Berry hypothesized that acculturation strategies in plural societies, cultural groups and the individual members in both dominant and non-dominant situations, must grapple with the issue of how to acculturate.[30] Strategies to navigate these issues are usually a dance between cultures and the people involved. The participants in this study have chosen an *integration* option of acculturation while holding on to some of the best norms from their country of origin to participate in the larger network of their new country, and by doing what it takes within the boundaries of their original country culture dictum. They reported maintaining active interests in both the original culture (Nigeria) as well as participating fully in their new culture's larger society. They called upon known African philosophy that advocates using the strengths of the many to bring out the best an individual can be. They reported using their cultural construct from the past to serve as a beacon to navigate a new life and new social dimensions, which include schools and other relationships.

STUDENTS' CULTURAL IDENTITY DYNAMIC

The goal of making an *Omoluabi* of oneself and one's offspring is the foundation for these parents, who then proceed to leverage their means of communicating with and supporting their children in school and in the community (see Figure 1).

NIGERIA
CULTURAL HERITAGE

Omoluabi   **The Way of Human Being**
Hard Work
Self-Confidence
Personal Integrity
Respect of Self and Others
Give to the Community   In Deeds and Action

↕

UNITED STATES
VOLUNTARY IMMIGRANTS
FIRST GENERATION
(Parent Participants)

School and Community
More Resources
Expanded Curriculum
Extra-Curricular Activities
Communication between   Home and School
Opportunities for   Experiential Education

↕

SECOND GENERATION
(Student Participants)
Enabled academic achievement and life aspirations

FIGURE 1. *Omoluabi* influence on second-generation voluntary immigrants: academic achievement and life aspirations.

22

Figure 1 illustrates the cross-cultural factors and the process involved in shaping the students in their search for academic achievement and in developing their career objectives and life aspirations. This process is rooted in the cultural heritage of Nigeria as reflected in the attributes of *Omoluabi*. It then carries through to their new country – the United States – where it is intermingled with the new attributes of school and community, reflected in the attitude and behavior of the second generation (the student participants in this study).

TENSION

It is not easily apparent that tensions exist between the two generations in their internalization of the African philosophy of *Omoluabi,* but there are some tensions. The second generation feels the pressure to conform to the cultural norms practiced and expressed by their parents and their immigrant community. One expressed that she had to behave better than other children at school and at home. One received a degree in engineering to please her mother even though all she wanted was a degree in business administration. She later went back to school to get a masters degree in business. Nearly all expressed the need to be a model human being because they expressed that they are not just representing themselves but all Black communities in the eyes of the world. These are enormous burdens for anyone to carry around.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Findings and conclusions may be useful to educators to help understand their students' cultural frame of reference, cultural inheritance, and to strengthen communication between school and home. The results also show that the student participants are a product of two systems of education: the Nigerian indigenous education system and the American, western

education system. The sociostructural foundations upon which all participants credit success are hard work and perseverance. They all believe that "effort begets luck." The second-generation students have successfully and positively internalized their parents' expectations for them and have grown to be self-motivated and purposeful people as indicated by their narratives. Upon further reflection, one can assume that the narratives are also about all human yearnings: striving for personhood or becoming an *Omoluabi*.

SCHOLARLY OR SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

On the basis of their experiences, the participants ascribed a large portion of their success to a norm that they brought from their cultural past, an ideal of hard work and respect, caring for the self and others known as *Omoluabi*. Parent participants have chosen to adapt to their new environment while retaining the best of the culture they brought with them. They have also made good use of the human, social and cultural capital[31] available to them in the United States. This study adds information and theory to understanding the U.S. diverse and multicultural population, especially the newcomers; it offers a way to see Nigerians through Nigerians' eyes. Findings and conclusions may be useful to educators to help understand their students' home culture and how these students straddle twin cultures: that from the parents' past and that of America. The philosophy of *Omoluabi* is neither a panacea for everything nor a cure all for all that ails education or life aspirations; but rather at the core is a Zulu saying: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngubantu* - a person is a person through other persons.

LIMITATIONS

This study was limited because of its small sample. Another limitation was that I did not look at adult children's school report cards or other documents specifically concerning their

academic grades nor were teachers and close associates interviewed. Given the newness of this territory in research and with few foundational grounds to build on, any conclusion must necessarily be tentative, and subject to revision. Nevertheless, the findings contribute knowledge to fairly an uncharted territory and open up an important discussion. Moreover, because this research deals exclusively with first generation African middle class families, I cannot generalize outside this particular group. Further study might also examine *Omoluabi* through quantitative research methods.

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28

ENDNOTES

[1] This quote will appear in her upcoming edited book: Mojubaolu Okome and Olufemi Vaughan, (eds.) *West African Migrations: Transnational and Global Pathways in a New Century*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan Publishers, 2011 in press).

[2] Email conversation with Mojubaolu Okome (June 22, 2011). This quote will appear in her upcoming edited book: Mojubaolu Okome and Olufemi Vaughan, (eds.) *West African Migrations: Transnational and Global Pathways in a New Century*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan Publishers, 2011 in press).

[3] John U. Ogbu, "Understanding Cultural Diversity and Learning," in *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*, ed. J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks, (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1995), 583.

[4] Van Manen 1990, p. 9-10 quoted in Patton, 10.

[5] Desmund Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (London: Rider, 1999), 31.

[6] Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, "Forward." *In the Spirit of Ubuntu: Stories of Teaching and Research*, ed. Diane Caracciolo & Anne M. Mungai, (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2009), ix.

[7] 1983a in Payne, 1992, 180.

[8] See 1983a in M. W. Payne, "Akiwowo, Orature and Divination: Approaches to the Construction of an Emic Sociological Paradigm of Society." *Sociological Analysis*, 53, no. 2, (1992): 180.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Email conversation with Mojubaolu Okome (June 22, 2011). (Okome & Vaughan, 2011) Mojubaolu Okome and Olufemi Vaughan, (eds.) *West African Migrations: Transnational and Global Pathways in a New Century*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan Publishers, 2011, in press).

[11] For more on Ogbu's finding, see John U. Ogbu, "Cultural Problems in Minority Education: Their Interpretations and Consequences —Part one: Theoretical Account," (*The Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, vol. 27, no. 3. 1995a): 189-205.

[12] See John U. Ogbu, "Cultural Problems in Minority Education: Their Interpretations and Consequences—Part Two: Case Studies," (*The Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, vol. 27, no. 4. 1995b), 271-297.

[13] For more on sociostructural theory studies, see R. R. Pearce, "Effects of Cultural and Social Structural Factors on the Achievement of White and Chinese students at School Transition Points." (*American Educational Research Journal,* vol. 43, no. 1, 2006), 75-101; R. R. Portes, & M. F. Zady. "Socio-Psychological Factors in the Academic Achievement of Children of Immigrants: Examining a Cultural History Puzzle." (*American Educational Research Journal*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1996), 489–507; Thomas Sowell, *Ethnic America*. (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 36-147; and Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity and Class in America.* (New York: Athenaeum, 1981), 52-56.

[14] Akinyemi, A. "Yoruba Oral Literature: A Source of Indigenous Education for Children, (*Journal of African Cultural Studies*, vol. 16, no.2, 2003), 161-179.
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[15] Dolapo Adeniji-Neill, *I Will Chant Homage to the Orisha: Oriki and the Yoruba Oral Culture.* Unpublished Master's Thesis, Dartmouth College. (Hanover, New Hampshire, 2004), 20; and Dolapo Adeniji-Neill, *Parental Expectations in Education: A Case Study of Nigerian Immigrant Parents to the United States, (*Tennessee: VDM Verlag Publishing Co, 2008), 45; and Dolapo Adeniji-Neill, *The Yoruba Oral Culture as Indigenous Education: Praise Poetry, Folktales and Folklore, (*Tennessee: Lambert Academic Publishing Ag & Co. KG, 2009), 7.

[16] Ifeanyi A. Menkiti, "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought." In *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, ed. R.A. Wright (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 172.

[17] Akinyemi, op. cit., 161-179.

[18] T. A Awoniyi, *Omoluabı: The Fundamental Basis of Yoruba Education.* Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Department of African Languages and Literature, (University of Ife, 1975), 357-384.

[19] Akinyemi, op.cit. 161-179; and C. L. Adeoye, *Asa Ati Ise Yoruba (Yoruba Culture and Tradition)*, (Ibadan: University Press Limited, 1979), 1-10.

[20] Husserl (1913) one of the pioneers of phenomenology as a qualitative research.

[21] Patton, M. Q. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods, 3rd edition*. (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 104.

[22] A. Giorgio, "Convergence and Divergence of Qualitative Methods in Psychology," *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology, Volume 2*, ed. A. Giorgio, C. Fischer, & E. L. Murry, (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1975), 72.

[23] Max.Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 9-10.

[24] J. W Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 15.

[25] Carole A. Wong, and Stephanie J. Rowley. "The Schooling of Ethnic Minority Children: Commentary." *Educational Psychologist*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2001): 57-66.

[26] For more on folk theories, see: M. Gibson and John Ogbu (eds.) *Minority Status and Schooling: A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities.* New York: Garland, 1991; Lynn Okagaki, "Triarchic Model of Minority Children's School Achievement," *Educational Psychologists*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2001): 9-20; and Jun Li, "Parental Expectations of Chinese Immigrants: A Folk Theory about Children's School Achievement," *Race, Ethnicity and Education,* vol. 7, no. 2. (July 2004): 167-183.

[27] See Li, op. cit.

[28] Patton, op. cit.,19.

[29] R. J. Chenail, et al., *The Qualitative Report*, Nova Southeastern University (2008) http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/index.html (accessed April 27, 2008).

[30] J. W. Berry, "Immigration, acculturation and adaptation," *Applied Psychology: An International Review,* vol. 46, no. 1, (1997): 5-68.

[31] P Bourdieu, "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction," in *Power and Ideology in Education*, ed. J. Karabel and A. H. Halsey, 487–510. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977; and Rueda Rueda, et al., "Academic Instrumental Knowledge: Deconstructing Cultural Capital Theory for Strategic Intervention Approaches." *Current Issues in Education*, vol. 6, no. 14. (16 September 2003). http://cie.asu.edu/volume6/number14/