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THE COLLEGE CHOICE OF WEST AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: A
GENERALIZATION OF THE HOSSLER AND GALLAGHER MODEL OF
STUDENT COLLEGE CHOICE

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Educational Administration, Leadership and Research
Western Kentucky University
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Doctor of Education

By
Zeambo Wynger Dahnweih

May 2021

THE COLLEGE CHOICE OF WEST AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: A
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Date Recommended **March 10, 2021**

Aaron W. Hughey Digitally signed by Aaron W. Hughey
Date: 2021.03.24 16:00:55 -05'00'

Dr. Aaron Hughey, Chair

Lester Archer Digitally signed by Lester Archer
Date: 2021.03.24 16:09:33 -05'00'

Dr. Lester Archer

Joseph Cangemi Digitally signed by Joseph Cangemi
Date: 2021.03.29 09:49:57 -05'00'

Dr. Joseph Cangemi

Nicholas Brake Digitally signed by Nicholas Brake
Date: 2021.03.24 16:23:46 -05'00'

Dr. Nicholas Brake



Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Education

This is a Dahnweih medallion. This project is dedicated to my family. To my parents, Joseph and Ellen Dahnweih, you expended your all that I might be here today. I am eternally grateful.

To my three beautiful girls—Alexis, Zaye, and Joy, thanks for your motivation that helped spur me to this height. May this also serve as an inspiration to strive for future doctorate degrees yourselves.

To my siblings—Anthony, Loretta, MaryAnn, Comfort, Emmanuel, and Merkayea, your encouragements have today paid dividends. Many thanks to you.

Finally, to the extended Dahnweih clan, this project is dedicated to you as an inspiration that no amount of negative predisposition is insurmountable.

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STUDENT COLLEGE CHOICE

Zeambo W. Dahnweih

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Directed by: Aaron Hughey, Lester Archer, Joseph Cangemi, and Nicholas Brake

Educational Administration, Leadership and Research Western Kentucky University

After decades of research, the question of a universal college choice still abounds. In the United States scholars still advance disparate data on how students make college choice decisions that meet their particular needs. And, whereas research is replete with studies on the college choice of black families, there remains a dearth of studies on Black people of foreign descent, an integral demographic of the overall U.S. higher education enrollment.

This qualitative case study focuses on the college choice plights of West African students who enroll at U.S. public universities. It employs a West African-centric version of the Hossler and Gallagher model of student college choice to gauge respondents, who encompassed current and former West African students (graduates and undergraduates) at U.S. public universities.

Findings from this study suggest that for West African students, college choice is a multifactor process involving the student, family, and friends as most college decisions are made in consultation with families or friends, or both. Additionally, the findings also indicate that provision of scholarship, prospect for opportunities, need for exposure to modern technologies and faculties, adversarial condition in home country, and limited college choice in home country do influence West African international students' college choice of U.S. public universities, with scholarship overwhelmingly standing out as the

greatest driving force behind their choice. With the aid of families and/or friends, these factors help at the search stage to develop a choice set of possible universities and at the choice stage to make a final decision.

With scholarship as a paramount concern, some family members get to select institutions for their relatives; for others, the search process is sometimes abruptly abandoned at the offer of a scholarship. Also, given the crave for Western education, many West African international students would enroll at any U.S. public university with a genuine offer of a full scholarship.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

There exists a fierce competition among United States schools in recruiting international students (Delgado-Marquez et al., 2011). This rivalry has engendered a progressive surge in the number of foreign students. Evivie (2009), citing Institute of International Education, stated that the number of international students spiraled from 48,486 in 1959-1960 (when the census was first recorded) to 623,805 in the 2007-2008 academic year. By the 2016-2017 school year, a whopping 1,078,822 international students were enrolled in United States postsecondary institutions (Institute of International Education, 2017).

The scramble for international students among U.S. institutions of higher education is motivated by inherent institutional, national, and international benefits. A significant portion of revenues for higher educational institutions is generated from tuition and fees assessed international students, sometimes up to three times those of domestic students (Mokua, 2012). Nationally, the high cost of studying in the US contributes favorably to the economy. Institute of International Education (2017) documented that international students bolstered the U.S. economy by \$39.4 billion in 2016. But benefits garnered from the presence of visiting students are not limited to the economy—there is also a cultural component. Students from around the world also help infuse international perspectives into American classrooms by preparing global citizens.

Most universities are seeking ways to expand their international populations. A better understanding of how international students come to matriculate to universities is important to pursue. It is particularly noted that West African nations are a fertile ground

for recruiting international students. Among the internationals being recruited, there has been limited attention recruiting students from West African countries.

Statement of the Problem

The subject of college choice is a trendy theme among researchers. The literature recognizes that despite gains in the racial and ethnic diversity in American classrooms, there remains a significant gap in the college enrollment of students of color. To study this deficit further, many researchers have used the Hossler and Gallagher model (1987) to explore the college choice of black students (Hamrick & Stage, 2004; McFadden et al., 2012). The model opines that the decision-making process for college choice encompasses three stages: predisposition, search, and choice (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Some researchers have attempted to explain the shortage of black students in terms of lower educational aspiration (Solorzano, 1992), while others have viewed it through the lens of limited occupational payoff for the black race (Mickelson, 1990). Still, some scholars blame the dearth on poor high school preparation for minority high school students who tend to reside and study in impoverished neighborhoods (Pitre, 2006). To date, understanding the disproportionate increase in the participation of students of color in higher education remains elusive.

Over the years, several enhancements have been made to the Hossler and Gallagher model (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987) to determine why black student enrollment in American universities continues to lag those of their peers. The overarching findings suggest that the college aspiration of this population may be responsible for the stifled rate of its postsecondary matriculation. But whereas research is replete with studies on

the college choice of black families, there remains a dearth of study on black people of foreign descent, an important demographic of the overall U.S. higher education enrollment. According to Institute of International Education (2017), in the 2015-2016 academic year, of the 20,185,000 total U.S. higher education enrollment, 18,100 were West Africans.

Purpose of the Study

To the extent that the scope of the Hossler and Gallagher (1987) model of college choice is principally on domestic students, the purpose of this research is to further generalize this model to encompass West African international students enrolled at U.S. public universities. Specifically, the study seeks to get a better understanding of the predisposition, search, and choice factors that influenced their decisions to enroll in a U.S. public university. A better understanding of predisposition, search, and choice for students looking to study in an international university will be valuable in empowering universities to recruit West African students more successfully. The primary question under investigation in this study is: *“What are the predisposition, search, and choice factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?”*

Research Questions

Specific questions of the study are as follows:

1. What are the predisposition factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?
2. What are the search factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

3. What are the choice factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

Significance of the Study

The significance of a study of West African international students in U.S. higher education is of specific interest. First, the total enrollment of this population is a lowly 18,100 (Institute of International Education, 2017), which, in itself, suggests the need to actively recruit more students from that global region. With half of international students disproportionately coming from China and India, there is a significant need on the part of U.S. universities to look elsewhere in their quest for a global internationalization of their campuses. Appendix A lists the top 25 countries of origin of international students in the US. Additionally, the issue of West African international students is significant because of the scarcity of studies in the literature regarding international students from this geographic region of Africa. Where mentioned in the literature, scholars have usually lumped West Africa together with the rest of Africa, often under such generalization as Sub-Saharan Africa (Baro et al., 2019; Eduan & Yuanqun, 2019). Also, more college-aged students from West Africa are making the US their destination for study abroad due to constraints at home such as poor quality of higher education and poverty (Erinosho, 2008; Varghese, 2004). Natural and artificial calamities such as famine, epidemics, and civil wars also contribute to unsafe learning environments and brain drained societies (Coombe, 1991). Consequently, the number of West African enrollment in U.S. postsecondary education continues to rise. Whereas the number improved from 16,958 in 2016 to 18,100 in 2017 (Institute of International Education, 2017), the region does represent a fertile recruiting ground for U.S. institutions. Thus, it is important to know

the factors that lead to the college choice of its postsecondary students in order to aid in their recruitment process.

The lack of adequate knowledge of the factors that contribute to the college choice of specific targets of international students has become a major culprit for the failure of many U.S. higher education institutions to appeal to and attract potential students of foreign (or black) descent (Vaira, 2004). Some institutions may thrive on name recognition as a way of securing foreign students, but a successful institutional marketing orientation strategy transcends the sheer hype of popularity to encompass a well-designed recruitment methodology. Narver and Slater (1990) conceptualized three facets of institutional market orientation: *customer orientation*, *competitor orientation*, and *inter-functional coordination*. Customer orientation encompasses the understanding of the needs of current and future customers with the hope of providing short-and long-term customer satisfaction. Competitor orientation refers to understanding both the short-and long-term strength and weaknesses of current and future competitors. Inter-functional coordination suggests that the creation of best practices for target customers is an organization-wide responsibility rather than the task of a single department. In the context of higher education, market orientation is significant, as it merges “institutional objectives with the needs of students and employers, primarily because it forces the institution to focus on customer identification” (Vaira, 2004, p. 224).

International students are characterized by needs unique and disparate from those of domestic students. As institutions identify these distinct needs and determine the disposition of their rival universities, they can adopt university-wide approaches specifically tailored to a recruiting market. This study will be a valuable resource for

admission counselors, policymakers, and stakeholders interested in becoming magnets for potential West African students. It will aid in the acquisition of the requisite knowledge for recruiting this group of scholars, even as there currently exists a scarcity.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is the supporting structure of an existing research; it keeps the study within its scope. Variants of frameworks have been discussed in the literature regarding student college choice (Anctil, 2008; Azmitia & Cooper, 2001; D. Chapman, 1981; R. Chapman, 1986; Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Freeman, 1997; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Perna, 2000). After perusing the literature on student college choice, I have used the Hossler-Gallagher model (1987) as the theoretical framework to guide the study. This is illustrated in Appendix B. However, as the scope of the study is about West African international students, I have made the model more West African-centric by adding specific questions relative to that geographic subdivision. For example, the socioeconomic status (SES) of many West African students has inhibited them from going to school, let alone universities. Still, many have fought against enormous odds to get a taste of Western education. Bergerson (2009) opined that SES is one of the predisposition factors which determine whether a student goes to college or not.

When considered further, the problem of SES is not a standalone phenomenon. If SES, as a factor, hinders a student from going to college, it is likely that his parents have no college education themselves. Students whose parents have no college education are less likely to have one (Bergerson, 2009). In addition, with the high, rising cost of college education in the US, Bok (2006) further brings the issue of SES into the limelight for students of West Africa.

General Methodology

In this study, the dominant method of approach is a qualitative case study. It encompasses West African undergraduate international students enrolled at U.S. public universities. As a case study, the research satisfies Yin's (1994) three-fold criteria for a case study in research studies: it has an intrinsic interest in "how" and "why" questions, it involves situations beyond the researcher's control, and has a scope of contemporary issues. As the intent is to study the college choice process of these students, a purposive sampling method is employed, which targets respondents who are familiar with the subject. Once initial respondents are gathered, a snowball effect of sampling is used to gather further interviewees by referral. The participants are homogeneous and share the same characteristics (Laerd, 2012) and were selected because they were either current or former West African international students at a U.S. public university. Data were collected through a face-to-face interview session comprising semi-structured questions spanning approximately 45 minutes per respondent. Of interest also were documents students mentioned in their interview that shaped their choice process. Those materials included institutional data, letters of acceptance, and other institutional documents. The sites of the data collection varied. They were venues of mutual interest, such as the library, clubhouse, church, and workplaces. The method of recruitment was through emails, telephone calls, and word of mouth. The samples were presented with informed consent documents prior to the survey, which spelled out the overview of the study and allowed respondents to opt out of the process at any point in time if and when they chose to. The interview questions were uniquely developed using an instrument comprising a

West African-centric version of the Hossler-Gallagher model (1987), while the data were analyzed using a priori coding scheme as listed in Appendix C.

Definition of Terms

Active search: Where students become seekers of information and conversation about available options in higher education enrollment. (Hossler et al., 1999, p. 25)

Alternative family: Students who live by themselves, with partners, or with other types of living arrangements. (Pimpa, 2005)

American College Testing: A standardized test used in the United States for college admission.

Attentive search: A passive interest in conversation and information about postsecondary options. (Hossler et al., 1999, p. 25)

Brain drain: A situation in which a destination country benefits from human capitals from origin countries at the expense of development in the origin countries. (Gong & Huybers, 2015)

Brain gain: A situation which occurs when migrants have a positive effect on origin countries through their potential to promote sustainable development at home. (Gong & Huybers, 2015)

Chicagoland: A generic word used to refer to the city of Chicago and its suburbs.

Choice set: A group of institutions that a student has decided to apply to and seek more information about in order to make a better final matriculation decision. (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987, p. 214)

Choice stage: The stage in the college choice process when students narrow down their choice for college to specific institutions, which may vary from one to several.

(Hossler & Gallagher, 1987)

Core-periphery hierarchy: A part of the world-systems theory in which the core (developed country) disproportionately benefits more from economic capital by manipulating the production of goods from the periphery (a more vulnerable, under-developed) country. (Wallerstein, 2004)

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals: An American immigration policy which permits children brought into the country to avoid deportation and receive work permit to live and learn in the United States.

Extended family: Households with nuclear and other family members, or relatives excluding the nuclear family. (Pimpa, 2005)

General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS): An agreement borne out of the World Trade Organization, which ensures fair and equitable treatment of all members involved, thereby fostering economic growth through binding policies.

Interactive search: When a student initiates discussion with family members, teachers, counselors, college representatives, and requests information from higher education institutions. (Hossler et al., 1999, p. 25)

Internationalization: A way of thinking and acting which is not constrained by national boundaries or traditions. (Monash University, as cited by McBurnie, 2000)

Nuclear family: Households comprised of parents and siblings only. (Pimpa, 2005)

Parental encouragement: Conversations between students and parents about parental expectations and aspirations.

Parental support: Parental behavioral support for children, including saving for college, visiting higher education campuses with students, and participating in financial aid workshops.

Pull factors: Characteristics of the host country which influence foreign students' selection of a destination country. (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002)

Push factors: Economic and social forces within the home country, which drive students to immigrate to another country for studies. (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002)

Reflexivity: Researchers reflect about how their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status, shape their interpretations formed during a study. (Creswell, 2014)

Scholastic Aptitude Test: A standardized test used in the United States for college admission.

Search stage: This is the stage in the college choice process at which students, through active search, create a choice set of colleges they would like to attend based on preliminary information they may have.

Temporary Protective Status (TPS): An American immigration policy which allows nationals of designated countries afflicted by conflicts and other natural disasters to remain in the United States for a limited time.

Summary

The research project is dedicated to determining the college choice process of West African international students, a crucial demographic of American higher education, which has remained relatively marginalized. The findings help admission offices chart out novel strategies in regional marketization for recruiting international

students. In Chapter I, the study was introduced; it unveiled the justification of the problem, the purpose of the research, its significance, and limitations. Chapter II outlines the perusal of the literature on college choice. It explores the history of the concept from its inception. International students' perspectives on college choice are also examined. I have made attempts to consider the choice process from disparate parts of the globe. Also discussed in Chapter II are internationalization efforts on higher education campuses around the world. Chapter III encompasses the methodology of the study. The design of the research, its population, and settings inhabit this chapter. The research questions receive answers in Chapter IV as data shape up in their findings. Finally, having answered the research questions, the study is concluded and discussed in Chapter V, as well as the implications for the study and future recommendations.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

As the surge intensifies for the acquisition of American postsecondary education, colleges and universities have begun to seek an understanding of factors that influence the college choice of students. This research pertains to the college choice of West African international students studying at U.S. public higher education institutions. The purpose is to generalize the Hossler-Gallagher (1987) model of student college choice using West Africans, who comprise a fraction of the U.S. tertiary population. In this section of the work, I attempt to delve into what authors have said about the subject of college choice. The sources used were gathered primarily using ProQuest and Top SCHOLAR through the Western Kentucky University libraries. I also frequented Google Scholar. Using keywords, I narrowed down my search to empirical articles and books relevant to the subject. Also, the study led me to consult references that were found to be very resourceful in directing me to other relevant authors.

The review of the literature encompasses the historical evolution of college choice as we know it, considering the nuances of the varied theories in the journey. Additionally, I made a foray into Bergerson's (2009) monologue for further insight on the development of college choice as well as the influences of the myriad of authors on the subject, especially as they relate to students of color and of low socioeconomic status. Next in this section, I examine the current trends in the internationalization process by the US and other nations. Together, they shed light on the college choice patterns for international students who hail from disparate backgrounds. Institutional attempts at internationalization are also discussed. The sometimes-eccentric pathways charted by

foreign students and schools may at times be dissimilar to those of domestic students in America. Last, the college choice of international students is explored. This scope of the literature review is diagrammed in Appendix D.

History of College Choice

The history of college choice is laden with variant theories based on studies done by numerous authors. It is an issue that has claimed the attention of many researchers and education practitioners alike. Three perspectives inherent in the study of college choice that have together shaped the search landscape are its *sociological*, *psychological*, and *economic* dimensions. The sociological perspective emphasizes the background factors that impact students' decision to go to college. Those include race, ethnicity, family income, parent education, peers, school contexts, parental expectations, academic achievement, high school curriculum, etc. In the psychological perspective, institutional characteristics such as the college cost, location, curriculum, and financial aid are variables that influence student college choice. According to Bergerson (2009), the availability of financial aid may influence students with low income to settle for a particular college despite everything else. Factors such as the real cost of college attendance, the level of financial aid available, students' perceptions of return on investment, and the foregone income to attend college are concerns Bergerson cited that comprise the economic perspective of college choice. Hence, many colleges are embarking on the search of market-oriented strategies that appeal to students. In this section of the chapter, I attempt to delve into the history of college choice, perusing some of the trends researchers have discoursed about this subject.

The David Chapman Model

Chapman (1981) is one of the leading pioneers of college choice theory. He is best remembered for his model which focused on the external influences that come to bear on students' college choice decisions. His paradigm examined at length how external phenomena interact with student characteristics to influence their enrollment decisions at higher education institutions. Those external influences included institutional characteristics, communication between the institution and student, the influence of other students currently enrolled at the school, etc. Chapman described student characteristics as college aspiration, socioeconomic status (SES), academic ability, etc.

As the hallmark of Chapman's (1981) model encompasses external influence, the author enumerated three factors of external influence that come to bear on a student's college enrollment decision. The first is "influence of others." The author discussed the impact of the role of peer groups on students. He opined that peer influence constitutes the most significant pressure on a student's enrollment. Students tend to seek advice from each other. As students stand at the crossroads of college choice, endorsement by their friends is of significant effect, as they would like to bond with their peers in college if the institutional climate is welcoming. It must be noted that the issue of peer influence as the single greatest persuasion is contradicted by most researchers in student college choice (Bateman & Spruill, 1996; Paulsen, 1990; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Dupaul & Harris, 2012).

Chapman (1981) also cited institutional characteristic as another influencer. The influence this variable has on a potential student can be summed up in the word

“homogeneity.” Students tend to fare better when they study within a homogenous group. Therefore, potential students are likely to seek admission at institutions that host students with which they share some things in common, such as academic abilities. Chapman mentioned that the average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Testing (ACT) scores are considered when searching for academic congruence. Communication with a college is another element of influence in the Chapman model. The author noted that students use printed college materials to confirm already-existing beliefs about a college/university. This conclusion was reached by interviewing students at a university in an effort to shed light on the role of communication with a prospective postsecondary institution.

The Randal Chapman Model

As a result of a review of the literature, Chapman (1986) proposed a model that demanded significant amount of attention in the college choice world. His model suggested a five-step process in college matriculation, which involved behaviors and decisions. The steps included pre-search behavior, search behavior, application decision, choice decision, and matriculation decision. According to Chapman, the pre-search behavior stage starts as early as grade school. While it may seem too early, Chapman thought it was wise to begin this conversation as early as the student was able to embrace the concept of schooling, and elementary school was a good starting point. Chapman stressed that this is embodied in parental conversations with students and their encouragement in continuing to college. The author acknowledged that this stage is the most difficult to study. The issue of parental conversations with students has been

paramount to college aspiration and choice. This may differ based on factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, academic ability, geographic location, and parental education.

The search behavior stage in Chapman's (1986) model involved an active search process in which a student pursues institutions and gathers information in the hope of possible enrollment. It must be noted that this action may be done to multiple colleges; i.e., a student in the search behavior stage may pursue as many universities at the same time. Pursuing a school may entail a variety of actions such as campus visits, correspondence with the school, research, consulting catalogs and brochures, etc., all the while evaluating the benefits of attending each of those schools. Some potential students actually do campus visits during the search behavior stage. As Anctil (2008) opined, college pursuits are not done in a vacuum. As applicants actively seek out universities, information garnered from these institutions is used to supplement what they already know from parents, peers, and other sources.

Chapman (1986) also discussed the application stage of his five-step process of college matriculation. After considering pertinent institutional characteristics such as cost, climate, curriculum, academic programs, etc., students enter the application decision stage when a formal application is submitted to those institutions that made the search list. This process continues with all institutions that have been selected and ends with acceptance letters, after which the applicant is ready to move on to the fourth stage, the choice decision stage. Students at this stage make a comprehensive analysis of the universities that have granted acceptance. Based on information already gathered in the search behavior stage, a choice is made among the potential institutions. The final stage, the matriculation decision stage, is when a student officially enrolls and begins classes.

As Chapman (1986) model was not set in stone, many scholars endeavored to expand on it as well as on previous ones. One extrapolation of it was done by Chapman and Jackson (1987), who set out to investigate the role of individual characteristics on the search behavior stage of the Chapman (1986) model. Both authors reckoned that the search behavior stage may not be experienced equitably by all students; therefore, student individual characteristics were considered in determining any disparities. The thesis of the Chapman and Jackson (1987) model contended that given student opinions formed based on the objective and subjective verifiable attributes of a college/university, their search behaviors may be conducted differently. Verifiable factors such as name recognition, institutional reputation, location, institutional size, and course offerings constitute objectively verifiable attributes, whereas subjective verifiable attributes encompass information possessed by the student about the college, based on prior preferences. The Chapman and Jackson's (1987) findings are based on the premise that "students choose colleges primarily on the basis of their prior preferences, and that aid plays a role in the choice process, especially guaranteed renewable scholarship aid" (p. 54).

Student academic ability has been found to be a basis on which colleges determine aid eligibility. It must be noted that this study was conducted around high-ability students. A total of 1,183 high-ability high school seniors who had taken the SAT were surveyed by mail and by interview before and after their college choice decisions were made. Each student had applied to at least two colleges. Out of this number, 64% was awarded at least one form of financial aid. The findings led to the development of what Chapman and Jackson (1987) called a multistage model of college choice, which

consists of the students' perception and preference judgment values that are formed during each of the stages in the Chapman (1981) model.

The multistage involved three stages: performance judgment formation, preference judgment formation, and choice behavior. In the performance judgment formation stage, perceptions of students, family, and peers are compared against institutional objective characteristics. The perception judgment formation stage is when institutional characteristics are judged by the prospective student. Institution's academic ability, size, type, climate, and gender are some of the characteristics potential students are evaluating at this stage, and Chapman and Jackson (1987) mentioned that student opinions will differ at this time. They expounded this stage further by noting that student perception of both academic quality and institutional characteristics combine to influence a student's choice of academic enrollment.

Finally, the choice behavior is a phase at which students begin to narrow their choice set already created. The variables the authors cited that are considered at this stage include communication with the institution, its faculty, alumni, and current students. The authors added that financial implications are not considered at this stage.

The Hossler and Gallagher Model

The financial and institutional factors inherent in the area of college choice have fueled the interest of many. The Hossler-Gallagher model (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987) of student college choice has become the gold standard for studying student college choice. Some researchers have built on features of it, while others expanded the idea to investigate college choice. Hossler and Gallagher's model is a theoretical concept and is based on the work of trailblazing authors in the college choice field (some of whom are

mentioned previously), and opined a three-stage, developmental process whereby students determine their choice of college: predisposition, search, and choice. It is an interactive concept between the roles of individual students and colleges/universities, as well as between pre-college and college phenomena.

Predisposition

The predisposition stage is one that determines whether a student is likely to go to college. In this stage, a college or university has very little influence on a particular student's search. The variables of effect in this stage exclusively pertain to the student. They comprise the elements that determine the student's level of interest in furthering his education beyond high school, or his likelihood of not doing so. These factors include the quality of high school attended, having a positive appreciation for education, early information regarding financial aid, institutional cost, etc. (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). In addition, Hossler and Gallagher also discussed key background characteristics in the predisposition stage that tend to increase student college choice. Socioeconomic status (SES) has a direct relationship to college enrollment. Peters (cited by Hossler and Gallagher) stated that students with high SES are four times more likely to attend college than those with low SES (p. 210). Dugan (also cited by Hossler and Gallagher) asserted that SES impacts student college attendance beginning as early as preschool and continues well into later school years (p. 210).

Another background characteristic discussed by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) with a direct relationship to college-going is student ability. As used here, ability is synonymous to academic achievement. As this variable increases, the authors noted, the likelihood to attend college increases. The role of parents in influencing the college-

going capacity of their children was also discussed at length by the authors. The significance of this led Hossler et al. (1999) to dichotomize parental influence into two distinctly critical roles: parental encouragement and parental support. The former was described as “conversations between students and their parents about parental expectations and aspirations” (p. 24), while the latter was explained along behavioral lines to include “saving for college, visiting higher education campuses with students, and participating in financial aid workshops” (p. 24). The impact of parental encouragement on students is pivotal. Confirming this truism, Bergerson, (2009) affirmed that parental influence is greater if parents have a college degree themselves. Along with parental influence, Hossler and Gallagher also stressed peer group influence as great influencers. Students whose friends are planning on going to college are likely to yield to the peer pressure of going to college themselves. Hossler and Gallagher also mentioned that students who were involved in extracurricular activities in high school, as well as those who lived in close proximity to their schools, have a high likelihood of going to college.

A discussion of the college predisposition stage cannot be adequately done without an examination of the issue of access. Since the 1980s, the building of a comprehensive college choice model has given way to the novel paradigm of access. The question of access is a salient one. It has steered researchers into blazing trails for the removal of barriers to college access for many based on gender, race, culture, and cost of attendance. Up to the 1980s, college choice theories were built on the premise and assumption that the road to college was an even and equitable path for all students. However, the pursuit of higher education has been, for many, a difficult bout. Others

have found it unattainable due to the inequitable distribution of access throughout the entire choice process but beginning as early as the predisposition stage. Given the uneven access to college education, Bergerson (2009) lamented that the existing college choice theories would become only partially useful (p. 2). Notably, the prevailing research interest now in college choice appears to include the development of a college choice process which explains how specific demographics of students prepare for postsecondary education (Azmitia & Cooper, 2001; Freeman, 1997; Kao & Thompson, 2003, Perna, 2000; Cabrera & LaNasa, 2001).

Regarding the impact of access on predisposition, Bergerson (2009) had a lot to contribute. In her monologue, she stressed the need for equity in the college representation of American students. It focused on three major trends that impact the subject of equity. Those trends include: (a) the increasing stratification of American higher education, (b) the preparation for college, and (c) a focus on policy. Bergerson cited reports from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to indicate that higher education in America is stratified by race and social class (p. 12). According to the report, white students dominate both four- and two-year colleges disproportionately. Students of color appear to have higher enrollment in two-year institutions but are still dwarfed by their Caucasian peers (whites 63.4%, blacks 12.2%, Hispanics 14.5%, Asians 4.9%, and Others 4.9%) (p.12). Similarly, the percentage of students from high- and middle-income households exceeds those of low-income households by 60% to 17%. As parent education is an influencer for student college choice, Bergerson reported that 36% of students enrolled in private four-year institutions have parents with a graduate degree, compared to 14.7% who do not (p.12).

The issue of stratification in colleges previously discussed is borne out of a number of social and racial concerns. Bergerson (2009) cited that, holistically, students of color and those of low SES may be less prepared for college. She pinned their lack of preparation on the lack of adequate government funding for their grade and high schools. These schools offer fewer advanced placement courses known for augmenting student college enrollment chances. Bergerson faulted the existing tax-based system of funding, which she said is responsible for the limited preparation students get at impoverished schools compared to their peers at higher SES neighborhood schools. Bergerson named another culprit that plagues students of color and of low SES: the economic approach of college choice. Hailing from a disadvantaged pedigree, this demographic of students is discouraged from pursuing higher education when they consider its payoff. They may have college ambitions but fear the uncertainty of landing well-paid jobs that would offset their tuition costs. Additionally, taking into consideration the tradeoffs of going to college may often mean taking a non-academic route post high school. Studies in the literature about aspiration and achievement (Hanson, 1994; Mickelson, 1990) revealed the impact of role models on student college enrollment. Bergerson contended that as students of color and low SES come into contact with community or familial role models who lack college experience, their aspirations for college dwindle to the point where many lose permanent desire for postsecondary education. The extrapolation of this truth is that as the role model goes, so goes the student. Role models who lack knowledge of where to point their mentees for aid may cause the students to be unaware of a wealth of resources that may contribute to their college funding. Bergerson then challenged researchers and scholars to strive to find an explanatory model that focuses on college

access to students from various demographics of U.S. higher education, rather than a comprehensive college model, because, as it stands, the prominent hurdle in the way of the college choice process rests in the area of access.

The second trend Bergerson (2009) discussed which impacts the issue of equity in college representation is preparation for college. As the preponderance of recent literature has focused on the preparation for college, Bergerson dissected the area of preparation for college into two significant halves: (a) a focus on programs intended to provide students with the requisite skills, knowledge, and information for college choice, and (b) the varying experiences of students in this process. Given the issue of access which has engendered the stratification of higher education, many have proposed programs and strategies that would assist underrepresented populations with the skills, knowledge, and information pertinent to higher education. Others have suggested ways of enhancing already known skills in those interested in college enrollment through college preparation classes and counseling. Bergerson cited her panacea, which included tailoring college preparation processes to the cultural assets of individual students:

Relationships with others that recognize and build on the cultural assets of the students to promote self-efficacy, academic preparation for college through development of course taking and study skills, information about higher education generally, and information about and access to financial support. (p.18)

Another recommendation for making college accessible to underrepresented students was directed at the state and local district levels. It involved the placement program of students in special education and English as a Secondary Language programs. Bergerson (1987) discussed the reexamination of the merits of this nationwide

institutional practice. Given that college preparation is essential for college attendance, Gonzalez et al. (2003) reported that the inequitable placement of students of color in these developmental programs precludes them from acquiring the requisite college preparation courses offered their peers in traditional mainstream classrooms, and thereby causes a delay (p. 167) in their progress. The processes by which students are placed in these programs are developed by state and local governments and are called into question by Gonzalez et al.

Search

The second stage in the Hossler-Gallagher model (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987) is the search phase. This is the stage at which students create a choice set of colleges they would like to attend based on preliminary information they may have. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) described “choice set” as “a group of institutions that a student has decided to apply to and seek more information about in order to make a better final matriculation decision” (p. 214). Bergerson (2009) asserted that at this stage, students begin to learn both about themselves and about the institutions they would like to attend. As they take the ACT and SAT, students learn of their academic abilities as their scores help buttress their chances of getting accepted into college. Hossler and Gallagher posited that during this stage, institutions of higher learning exert a modest influence on their potential students. As students actively search for colleges, they too become objects of search as institutions actively seek and pursue them. Through this interaction, students can determine which universities appeal to them as they compile a list of possible schools. They may also choose at this point to veer off into non-college options such as vocational trainings or simply refrain from going to college at all.

As in the predisposition stage, parental influence was again mentioned as a significant element of the search stage. Price, proximity, and institutional quality are some of the institutional characteristics parents mention in influencing their children in the search stage. As Bergerson (2009) stated, parents can use the phenomena of price and proximity to signal where they would like their children to go to college (p. 24). Also, Flint (1997) emphasized that parents who went to college do take a page out of their own college experiences to influence their children's choice. As the search stage is about searching for a good-fit college, salient considerations revolve around cost and aid; the lack of awareness and the general funding avenues can be a major issue (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). The lack of access to pertinent information about college is a legitimate issue that has been explored by many researchers (Flint, 1997; Freeman, 1997; Kao & Thompson, 2003).

As students explore the search process, the inequitable distribution of resources hinders students of color, students of low SES, and those with parents of limited education. Grade schools situated in impoverished communities tend to have limited resources to prepare students for college. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) noted that the search process for students who are products of these schools usually takes longer due to their reliance on school counselors and is often less efficient. To aid in this effort, they proposed that market segmentation strategies be instituted by colleges and universities to provide varying recruitment strategies for all segments of students in the search process (p.214). The authors' proposed solution was borne out of the limited information available to these disadvantaged students in vital college search areas such as the

diversity of college options, the actual cost of enrollment, and the availability of financial aid, which are usually shrouded by postsecondary institutions.

Hossler et al. (1999) discussed three types of searches germane to the search stage: attentive, active, and interactive searches. Attentive search involves a passive interest in conversation and information about postsecondary options. Active search is when students become seekers of information and conversation about available options. Then, in interactive search, a student initiates discussion with family members, teachers, counselors, and college representatives, and requests information from higher education institutions (p. 25).

Choice

The final stage in the Hossler-Gallagher (1987) model is the choice stage. The authors lamented that there is not enough accurate data available to allow a robust study of this process. They, however, pointed at ACT and SAT data to affirm that in this stage, students typically make multiple applications. The choice stage is when students narrow their choice sets to specific institutions, which may vary from one to several. When a student reaches this stage, Hossler and Gallagher opined that the college now has little influence on the process. The authors contended that three variables would now interact to determine the outcome of the choice stage: the applicant's preferences, the attributes of the colleges or universities, and the earlier courtship procedures (p. 216). This is illustrated in the *Variables in the Choice Stage* in Appendix E. The conclusion drawn by the authors on the decisions that influence student choice was "that aid and net cost have an impact on student matriculation, but the impact may vary among types of institutions and students" (p.217).

The subject of aid in college choice has led many researchers to focus on its significance and role in the process (Dynarski, 2002; Dynarski, 2003; Lillis, 2008; St. John, 1994). Avery and Hoxby (2004) underscored that students found the words “scholarship” and “grant” made a great difference in their choice process. Students of minority descent and those of low SES are most affected by the equitable access to aid, or the knowledge of its pursuit.

Contemporary authors have discussed the issue of aid at length, with consistency in their findings (Chapman, 1981; Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Flint, 1997; Litten, 1982). Hossler and Gallagher (1987) explained that institutional characteristics, individual characteristics, high school context, and social capital were determining factors for college enrollment. College location, curriculum, reputation, distance away from home, faculty-student ratio, and sense of fit are some of the institutional characteristics that facilitate a student’s choice, while parental encouragement, student aspiration, student ability, and GPA describe individual characteristics. Student high school context denotes the type of curriculum, the extent of college preparation, and the relationship between high school and colleges. Social capital bespeaks the student’s social network such as peer groups and family history. To this, Cabrera and LaNasa (2000) added that the blend of parental encouragement, student aspiration, and expectation favorably affects college enrollment decisions.

The choice process is laden with nuances from state, federal and institutional levels. Researchers have studied the roles these institutions play in the choice stage regarding whether and where students go to college. There is a consensus among authors that policies of the three administrative bodies are to blame for the disproportionate

enrollment of higher education patrons. Notable among scholars in this field is Paulsen (1990), who advanced a number of best practices to influence a feasible and equitable college-going experience for all students, particularly the underrepresented minorities. His recommendations were directed at the institutions of higher education as well as at the state, and federal levels of government. Paulsen's advocacy is grounded in the premise that more research is needed in the area of college choice. He noted that with an even larger volume of information, the perusal would afford admission authorities a vivid knowledge of the nuances of the process and develop effective marketing segmentation strategies for all demographics of higher education enrollment (p.73). Included in the vast volume of data suggested by Paulsen is information on what he called "non-traditional" students. He expanded this group of learners to encompass students outside the mainstream majority, such as those over the age of 22, students of color, females, graduate students, and international students. He called on state and federal bodies to strategize ways of funding this process. Bergerson (2009) summarized Paulsen's advocacy: "The more we know about enrollment behaviors, the more effectively we can direct resources and policies to encourage enrollment" (p. 102).

Paulsen (1990) made a number of recommendations on the institutional level. Among others, he proposed an early intervention as a way to buttress college-going tendencies in students. As predisposition begins very early in life, Paulsen proposed that colleges begin intervention as early as the grade school level. He also urged colleges to discern what essential student characteristics are scant at their institutions and determine if certain groups of students would be best served at their institutions. With this knowledge, the colleges may then launch institutional marketing strategies (with

collaboration with schools) specifically tailored to those populations, beginning at the grade school level.

Another institutional proposal advanced by Paulsen (1990) centered on stereotypes. To even the field of college choice, unfettered access must be granted to all students. Paulsen proposed a paradigm shift from stereotypes to individual merits, where a student would be viewed by institutions as a person, rather than through the lens of stereotype. Such shift is best demonstrated in attitudes and beliefs, rather than through programs. He noted the peril of viewing students through the prism of stereotype: “If individuals make assumptions about students based on the groups to which they belong and act on those assumptions, the ability to assist students in accessing institutions that may seem unwelcoming is diminished” (p. 103).

Paulsen (1990) further extrapolated the individualist model to encompass a holistic approach, which makes a foray into the cultural relevance of the students. The holistic approach charges institutions with the responsibility of investing time and resources to maximize every form of assets available to students in their college pursuit: parents, family members, community, friendship groups, etc. The more forms of cultural capital to which an institution can appeal, the better the university’s chances at improving the enrollment chances of the unrepresented. Tierney (2002) recognized an added benefit of involving parents using the holistic approach. In addition to providing encouragement for their children, parental involvement also helps parents understand the significance of their role in their children’s college pursuit (p. 601).

Later researchers have expanded Paulsen’s (1990) investigation of the continued stratification of American higher education. Heller (1999) and Perna and Titus (2005)

perused the policies of federal and state governments as culprits for the continued stratification of higher education, while Lillis (2008) and St. John (1994) focused on institutional financial aid guidelines in efforts to determine their impact on students of color and low SES. The salient consensus frowned at the ubiquity of student loans and the increased reliance on it by students as reasons that, together, discouraged the efforts of students of color and low SES from participating in higher education. While they may be a quick fix to the problem of matriculation, student loans carry long-term ramifications which may prove disastrous for students who are doubtful of favorable returns on investment. Additionally, these disadvantaged students are often in the dark regarding processes in acquiring access to grants and aids to avert taking loans. Bergerson (2009) advocated a shift from the traditional loans paradigm to a need-based grant/scholarship system to encourage unfettered participation of students of color and low SES.

Current Trends in Internationalization

To bolster international student enrollment in U.S. higher education, stakeholders are exploring a variety of options. The Two-Plus-Two model (Farnsworth, 2005) is of particular interest. The model is a pilot study being conducted by a few consortiums of tertiary institutions, including the University of Missouri. Its goal is to maintain the United States' leading edge over competitive English-speaking nations as a leader in international student destination.

Following the event of September 11, 2001, international students began to look to other European and English-speaking nations such as Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand as destinations for study abroad (Farnsworth, 2005). To circumvent this shift, the Two-Plus-Two model was developed by the system of higher education in

the US. While not new to domestic student enrollment, the model is a novel paradigm for international student recruitment/enrollment unlike any other being used by major English-speaking competitors. Under the Two-Plus-Two program, one or two community colleges will partner with one or two colleges/universities to recruit and provide tertiary education to international students. In doing this, the burden of international student recruitment is jointly shared by both institutions. Also, the prospective international students are given the options of choosing either the Two-Plus-Two program or a participating four-year institution for the entire duration of the study. Once a student graduates from a member community college, he is guaranteed placement in a participating university for the second half of his baccalaureate degree. Whatever option the student chooses, the ultimate goal of the Two-Plus-Two is to recruit more internationals for the combined whole. The program serves immense advantages for both the community colleges on the one hand and the four-year institutions on the other in ways that neither party benefits if it had to go it alone. The author enumerated a four-fold benefit of the Two-Plus-Two program: (a) it would reduce costs and greater efficiencies in recruiting, (b) it would significantly reduce cost to the international student, (c) it would provide broader social and cultural opportunities, and (d) it would provide residual transfer benefits.

Farnsworth (2005) also cautioned that the model does not come without a caveat. An effective Two-Plus-Two would mean that a participating four-year university would be giving up some freshman recruits to community colleges. Also, community colleges, that currently have limited funds, would be compelled to provide residential facilities in

the form of dormitories for students. Still, the program cannot afford to breach its agreement with the students once they get recruited.

In her investigatory work on college choice, Patton (2012) set out to investigate best practices in international recruitment of students. Her study found its impetus in the policies and financial shifts governing foreign student recruitment at two major universities, the University of South Carolina (USC) and McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. It employed a comparative study of both institutions to delve into the active and passive recruitment practices of international students at the universities.

Patton (2012) believed that U.S. higher education benefits from internationalization in a variety of ways, including on-campus diversity and financial incentives. These factors, the author disclosed, form the basis for the policy and financial postures of the internationalization efforts at these schools. Patton also warned that recruiting internationally can be a difficult and complex effort requiring the concerted participation of all members, from the higher echelon of executives (who make decisions and approve policies and funds) to the students, who embody diversity on campuses and give the institution a record on retention. In her work, the author highlighted the stark contrast between the two institutions in their pursuits of international recruitment. She encapsulated this into two distinct categories: (a) the institution's image or name recognition abroad and (b) international student experience on campus. As a land grant state institution devoted to the needs of its domestic students, USC's policy shift toward internationalization includes investing in building its relatively unknown image abroad. On the other hand, McGill, a university with an international focus, fosters internationalization by appealing to the foreign students already enrolled. With the use of

Kolb's experiential learning theory, McGill helps prepare international students for the global market. Combined, both institutions are home to 23,000 undergraduates, with 1.78% of this population comprising international students at USC and 17.26% at McGill. The method of research was qualitative, and data were thematically analyzed. Respondents were selected through snowball sampling. Spanning over a nine-month period, data were collected through observation, analyses of documents, and interviews. Patton reported that respondents were recruited from the Admissions Office, International Student Office, Residential Life, and English Programs for Internationals (EPL).

In the discussion of her findings, Patton (2012) suggested that recruiting internationally should begin with an institutional image in the foreign nation. This, she continued, can be done by attending to the needs of those internationals already enrolled. Rather than endowing thousands of dollars into flying recruiting personnel to a foreign country, the author recommended that universities should invest the funds into meeting the myriad plights faced by international students while studying in the US. She concluded that if international students are well cared for in their host country, this would, in itself, help build the host institution's image abroad in the international student's home country through word of mouth. Patton also stressed that all departmental efforts at recruitment should be a university-wide endeavor and fully supported by the leadership.

On an institutional level, internationalization today has become a euphemism for recouping lost dollars. A study by Macrander (2017) unveiled the current unspoken rule by universities to gain financial profits under the veneer of diversity. Her work explored the international student mobility (ISM) to the US following the 2008 financial crisis

through the evaluation of secondary data of educational appropriations, international students, tuition revenues, and the economic benefit resulting from ISM. The findings indicated a significant inverse relationship between declining educational funding and the increased matriculation of international students to the US.

Following the \$14 trillion loss to the U.S. economy in 2008 and the incidental budget cut to universities and colleges by both federal and state governments, as well as decline in endowments (Grovm, 2013; Siegmund, 2009), one way many tertiary institutions remedied this conundrum was to look internationally for solutions to their national plight: hit foreign students with a third tier of tuition rate, which happens to be the most expensive. Whereas in the 1960s, ISM was motivated by peace and mutual understanding, foreign policy, and competitiveness (Guruz, 2008), the corollary of the 2008 financial crisis shifted the focus to revenue procurement. The study was conducted using linear trend lines for state data on a number of variables, including international students, educational appropriation, student share, and economic benefit spanning 10 years from 2002 to 2012. These trends were used to build a statistical model to determine whether the change in each variable was significant. A regression equation was also employed. Residuals and predicted residuals were examined using normal probability plots.

As the findings of Macrander's study (2017) revealed, there is a significant inverse relationship between declining appropriations and the rise in international student enrollment. Macrander cited statistics from 2008 to 2015, indicating the incremental increase in the number of foreign students from 672,000 to 874,926. That many of the international students have emigrated from developing countries with struggling

economies is a concept that the author suggested is representative of the world-systems perspective of core-periphery hierarchy. Core-periphery hierarchy is a part of the world-systems theory in which the core (developed country) disproportionately benefits more from economic capital by manipulating the production of goods from the periphery (a more vulnerable, underdeveloped) country (Wallerstein, 2004). Many international students who study in the US are drawn primarily by the presence of a world-class education in the host nation, which is missing in their home countries. The author emphasized further how the US, like many Western countries, enacts the core-periphery dynamic by possessing monopoly of the state-of-the-art education, which pulls the young, bright minds out of their already struggling countries. Rather than returning home upon graduation, many of such students tend to remain in their host countries to advance their careers, thereby depriving their exploited home countries of the much-needed academic talents and further exacerbating a brain-drained society (Altbach, 2004a).

Increased institutional reputation to attract international students is a means of effecting internationalization for some U.S. tertiary institutions. Stromquist (2007) arrived at this finding in a case study conducted of a U.S. private research university in response to current global trends. The university remained unnamed in the research transcript. Global education is a phenomenon embraced by most institutions of higher education. This noble idea was borne out of the need to prepare students for a global world in an era where the globe is now becoming a unified village. To attain this end, the university under study, a U.S. private research university, shifted policies toward building its global profile. This was achieved through the recruitment of famous faculties and talented students, who had the potential to help enhance the procurement of grants and

increase the institution's research capacity. Grants and contracts enabled the university to carry out more research and improve the school's image. The anticipated result of this was to appeal to global students who would be attracted by the institution's profile. The study was conducted using a qualitative research design of case study. It involved the interview of 12 professors and a ranking university administrator from the university under research. All participants were involved with internationalization works in capacities such as deans, former deans, program directors, curriculum chairs, etc. Mid- and long-range planning documents pertinent to the institutional internationalization program were also analyzed.

As Stromquist (2007) noted, initially, the research university's idea and practice of internationalization included sharing of information across borders, enabling overseas students to enroll, as well as facilitating their students to study overseas. Ten years later, internationalization at the studied institution embodied a new paradigm, namely the expansion of its global perspective and presence. This novel perspective of internationalization engendered a semblance of competition with other universities, aspiring to outdo them in the area of faculty talent. The global presence involved maneuverings to strengthen weaker departments to make them more appealing to prospective students and for grant proposals. In addition, efforts were made to decrease faculty-student ratios in various departments, making the institution a university of choice for foreign students. Other efforts made to revamp its institutional perspective included the formation of a multilateral collaboration with outside universities. This network of universities worldwide constituted a partnership through which students could later

transfer to the flagship school or earn university credits abroad while not physically enrolled on the flagship campus.

Another internationalization effort in the literature relates to Monash University, Australia's largest university chain. The university is referenced as the subject of a case study in an article by McBurnie (2000). Monash is home to students from over a hundred countries, a third of whom speak English as a second language. Of this population of students, over 7000 are spread across the six Australian campuses, and about 1000 reside on the Malaysian campus. With most of the students enrolled physically or virtually on foreign soils, Monash was well on its way to achieving its goal of up to 40,000 students by the year 2020.

The purview of the study underscored the notion that to remain central, a university must expand its vision for internationalization. For Monash, the goal was encapsulated into two words—*internationalization* and *globalization*. To this end, the university embarked on the following three institutional approaches: internationalization of the composition of the student body, the establishment of the university's presence overseas, and the internationalization of the educational experience. The 1999 annual plan of Monash University, *The Leading Way* (as cited in McBurnie, 2000), drew attention to the university's worldview of internationalization and globalization:

“Internationalization” is taken to mean a way of thinking and acting which is not constrained by national boundaries or traditions and which actively seeks inspiration, understanding, and input from outside Australia. “Becoming global” refers to the process of locating operations, either physically or virtually, around the world. (p.63)

At the heart of Monash's internationalization effort is the goal to diversify its student body, thereby contributing to global education. One way the university influenced this was the establishment of its overseas presence. The plan of establishing and enhancing an overseas presence is worth noting. In addition to its first foreign campus in Malaysia, Monash now has plans underway to establish another physical presence in South Africa. Another way the university expanded its foreign presence is through partnership programs. It currently enjoys education agreements with universities in Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, United States, United Kingdom, and Germany, while another is being facilitated in Italy (McBurnie, 2000). In addition to academics, Monash has a non-academic entity overseas, which serves as a contractual wing of the institution. The role of Monash International is multifaceted, including providing non-academic counseling of international students, negotiation of new education opportunities overseas, and the international marketing of university interests. As far as internationalizing its educational experience, Monash also made it an educational criterion that all courses in the university curriculum have an international dimension. This effort also availed a set of options for Monash's diverse students (local and foreign) and enhanced their marketability and preparedness for a global workforce. Blending students of disparate cultures to enhance the experiential learning process became the bedrock of Monash's mission. The Monash Plan (as cited by McBurnie, 2000, p. 68) "is for graduates to have an understanding of different cultures that enrich experience and challenge assumptions." As an added measure, The Monash Abroad Student Mobility Program was instituted to enable incoming undergraduate students to do some of their studies abroad prior to enrollment on campus.

Using a case study involving institutions of higher learning in the state of Colorado, Theobald (2008) looked at how the word “internationalization” is perceived by disparate universities relative to curricula, faculty, and campus activities. Home to 1.8 % of the nation’s institutions of higher education, the state of Colorado has a population that is less diverse (with the exception of Hispanics), relatively younger, more educated, and slightly wealthier than the national averages, according to Theobald (p. 207).

Respondents were recruited electronically by email over a six-month period. To begin with, 70 possible respondents were contacted from 36 accredited public and non-public universities in Colorado, including the Colorado Community College System (CCCS), and from the University of Wyoming. They included individuals who worked with international programs or had institutional ties to them. A total of 41 completed surveys were returned electronically from respondents representing 28 institutions. Using public records and websites, Theobald (2008) gathered information about course offerings and institutional missions for universities not returning questionnaires. The study was done using a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative research designs. In the former, responses were coded and analyzed thematically while the latter method involved descriptive analysis on the individual and institutional levels. Frequencies, central tendencies, identification of outliers, and the bivariate relationships were examined.

The results of the study are multifaceted but can be encapsulated under the overarching theme of institutional inconsistencies in the understanding and application of the word “internationalization.” The study showed inconsistencies in the definition and perceptions of internationalization across the Colorado higher education institutions

surveyed. First, the findings disclosed that not all institutions in the state of Colorado were interested in internationalization. Whereas many affirmed their support for internationalization, just a little over a quarter of the participating institutions had the word *internationalization* (or the concept) in their mission statement. Smaller, isolated institutions in rural Colorado with low populations indicated that attracting international students and scholars was of less importance than enrolling first generation students. The results also unveiled that some respondents held a narrow view of internationalization, limiting it to the acquisition of international students, faculty, and staff, facilitating study abroad initiatives, and complying with immigration regulations. For others, it was about incorporating international programs in their curricula.

Another result the survey showed was that institutional perceptions of internationalization reflected their on-campus portrayal of the concept. Nearly half of the surveyed universities managed international programs through international program offices only, while others expanded this crucial responsibility to be a joint, concerted task for admissions, student advising, and study abroad offices. Personnel who had multiple responsibilities at their universities had little considerations for internationalization. Theobald's (2008) discussion suggested that institutions should focus on the recruitment of a few international students from varied parts of the world rather than admitting a large block of students from a single country. A few four-year institutions mentioned the integral nature of administrative support to affect international programs, noting that without such support, all university efforts at internationalization would be in vain (p. 210).

In another study, McBurnie and Pollock (2000) built on McBurnie's (2000) research on Monash University to shed light on the range of opportunities and risks inherent in establishing international presences by universities. To be successful at this, the authors stressed the combination of strategic vision, academic priority, and business consideration on the part of the flagship institution.

McBurnie and Pollock (2000) cited that offshore campuses allow international students to acquire foreign degrees without having to leave home. For Monash University, benefits for establishing international campuses included:

- the enhancement of university profile (more of the university was known by people in foreign lands who had known little or nothing about it);
- financial benefits (funds gained from fees charged international students and from proceeds profited from consultancy opportunities abroad);
- expanded student base (more campuses meant more overall student enrollment for the university);
- increased number of alumni (over time, Monash would benefit from its graduates impacting many spheres of society around the world);
- enhanced opportunities for student and staff mobility (students could transfer from one Monash campus to another without having to leave the university network);
- development of new curricula (additions to existing curricula are made specific to the local country and incorporated into the wider Monash University curriculum);
- additional research and development opportunities (this expansion has enabled

Monash to carry out research specific to the country of the campus); and

- the creation of a resource base in other locations, which can be used strategically (the interconnectedness of the campuses allowed for a unified synergistic effort among Monash's multiple sites)

Also stressed by McBurnie and Pollock (2000) was the inherent risks in transnational campuses. The authors summed up those risks under five categories: financial, reputational, legal, sovereign, and physical/personal. To minimize these risks, the authors cautioned that sufficient strategic, academic, and business planning be utilized. The market and its benefits must also be considered to curtail risks and maximize success.

As the level of competition increases worldwide for the attraction of international students, the question of whether the US would maintain its role as the leader in internationalization continues to be a major phenomenon of interest for researchers and educators alike. As the current leader among destination countries of foreign students, the U.S. faces challenges from other developed and industrialized nations such as United Kingdom, Germany, and France in internationalizing its higher education campuses. Over the past decade, the sending countries of international students have slightly fluctuated for reasons such as the economic vicissitude of the home countries as well the political climates involving participating countries (both home and abroad). The incident of September 11, 2001 in the US is noted in history as a salient factor. Altbach's (2004b) monologue is a culmination of continued studies in the field of internationalization, the findings of which suggested that given the advantages of size, importance, and quality of education enjoyed by the US, the nation is poised to remain a major competitor in the

scramble for international students; but, the author also cast doubt over the country's prospect of remaining the most dominant player.

Altbach (2004b) opined that whereas the US appears to be a favorite of many foreign students, actualizing this dream is difficult, if not impossible, for many. The author placed a significant blame on what some foreign student applicants and current students considered hostile treatments by the U.S. government and citizens. He also mentioned how the lack of federal incentives for foreign students hampers their U.S. quest for studies. Unlike a higher education reform measure such as the European Union's "Bologna initiative," which helps facilitate foreign students' studies in Europe, the U.S. Federal Government has toughened its stance on international students aspiring to study in the US, leaving the responsibilities on the shoulders of the states, that themselves are cutting down on subsidies to universities. Embassy consulates responsible for discretionary judgments in the issuance of student visas have been described as adversarial, especially toward students of Muslim background. Many applicants reported sprees of denial or lengthy delays in their application processes. This has deterred aspiring foreign students from considering the US as a destination for study abroad. In addition, the creation of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is an initiative that has made studying in the US an arduous mission for internationals.

Students are not the only ones migrating in cross-border education. Institutions are now taking education to the students. They are establishing their presence across nations. This form of transnational education is accomplished in a number of ways, including having a physical institutional presence in an overseas country, partnering with

a foreign institution to offer an academic program which is usually taught in the language of the flagship country, and through distance education. In each of these instances, students acquire Western education and degrees without physically having to leave their native countries. Despite the headway dominant nations have made in transnational education, Altbach (2004a) cautioned about an inherent risk. The viability of offshore education is tied to the stability of the foreign nation. In the case of Israel, several financially strapped US universities sponsored teacher education programs in that part of the Middle East in anticipation of financial boosts through enrollment. However, as the dream was not actualized, the venture proved futile, as the Israeli government reversed its policy on international collaboration. The Japanese context saw several economic issues ensuing for the U.S. institutions at the bursting of the Japanese economic bubble, triggering the closure of many of the Japanese-based American universities.

As a means of facilitating transnational education for U.S. universities, Altbach (2004a) proposed the prospect of removing some of the financial restrictions on international trade through the *General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)*. This initiative, he maintained, would help American institutions establish branches internationally with fewer financial risks. While the U.S. government, the Department of Commerce, and some for-profit universities support GATS, most of America's academic community, including the American Council on Education (ACE), oppose it on grounds that it would create a competition that would water down the values of traditional U.S. education, as well as jeopardize the academic autonomy of the host nation by curtailing its sovereignty over its own nation's education. The author concluded that the involvement of the US in transnational education is devoid of a fixed national policy,

leaving individual states and institutions to develop policies tailored to their specific financial needs. Consequently, the prospect of maintaining its role as a leader in internationalism remains uncertain.

A model of how to better internationalize one's university was the focus of the work of Liu et al. (2018) involving international students and administrators at two Chinese public universities. This study focused on factors influencing international students' choice of a study abroad destination and what the institution was doing to recruit them. As one of the world's leading cultures of education, China not only exports students internationally, but it also serves as a destination country for many international students from around the world. The government of China has instituted measures to ensure the country's internationalization efforts remain vibrant. The Liu et al. study showed how the mainland country positioned itself to better attract foreign students. The research was a qualitative study carried out in two phases: (a) four case studies involving eight to 10 participants, and (b) a thorough interview with 75 student participants and four university administrators (two high-level and two mid-level). University recruitment practices at both institutions, as well as students' choices of institution selections, were solicited. The institutions' identities remained anonymous in the entire research but were referred to as University A and University B, both in the Yunnan province in China, with the former being renowned for studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, while the latter specialized in Physical Sciences.

A purposive method of sampling was used to recruit research participants at both universities, and data were analyzed using a thematic approach. The 7-P marketing contextual framework was the guiding context of the investigation. As a research

marketing model, McCarthy (1964) had proposed a 4-P theory, which comprised of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. Liu et al. (2018), (citing McCarthy et al.), explained the “P” as follows: “‘Product’ suggests a ‘tangible physical good or an intangible service, or a blend of both,’ while ‘Price’ denotes ‘the amount of money that is charged for a certain product. ‘Place’ signifies ‘the venue or location that provides products, which should be convenient for consumers to access,’ and ‘Promotion’ bespeaks ‘communicating information between the seller and potential buyers’” (p. 95). For the sake of this research, the authors expanded the 4-P to include 3 additional p’s; hence 7-P. The three additional p’s included People, Process, and Physical Evidence. Liu et al. (2018), citing Hoffman et al., defined “People” as “the personnel who participate in service delivery.” They also credited Booms and Bitner in stating that “Process” denotes “the procedures by which service is delivered”, and “Physical evidence” as “the environment in which service is delivered, including equipment, furniture, and facilities” (p. 96).

Liu et al. (2018) cited in their findings that the research uncovered that “place” is the most important factor influencing international students’ decisions to study at the universities under investigation. It should be noted that the geographical location of University A and University B was in the Yunnan province of China, and 90% of the foreign students hailed from within proximity of that region. Institutions with geographical advantages to international students are encouraged to emphasize this in their recruitment process of international students. Liu et al. also found that there is a second phenomenon of interest to international students seeking study abroad destinations: price. Given the pricey cost of education, especially for foreign students,

international students, most especially those from financially disadvantaged nations, are very conscious of university tuition and fees. In addition to the Chinese government's policy of providing scholarships to students from developing countries, the cost of living in the Yunnan province is relatively low, partly accounting for the choice of many internationals.

College Choice of International Students

Why do international students choose to study abroad? This is a question that led Tan (2015) to pursue a study of foreign students at two four-year-universities in Southern Texas—a private, faith-based and a public university. Citing the declining economic, political, and educational atmospheres in their home countries as reasons that drove them to study abroad, international students at both universities majored in the following fields of study: business and management (21.8%), engineering (18%), and mathematics and science (9.5%). The participants were ones who had completed at least a year of study at their individual institutions and who held an F-1 or J-1 visa.

The study was carried out using a mixed-methods research methodology. In the quantitative approach, surveys were emailed to 600 randomly selected groups of international students, out of which only 183 were returned, corresponding to a 30.5% response rate. The instrument used was survey monkey, online survey development software. The responses were analyzed using descriptive and inferential analyses. Students were asked if they would be interested in having a follow-up interview. Eight consented and were interviewed using open-ended questions generated from the responses of the initial quantitative research. The answers were analyzed using thematic coding analysis.

The findings in the quantitative study were grouped into categories. Overall, students revealed that strong institutional support was paramount in their choice for U.S. institutions. By gender, males cited easier applications, easier admissions processes, and student service support for international students as bases for their choice of U.S. schools. For females, international student support service, a varied choice of academic programs, and a vast hub of foreign students from a variety of countries were significant pull factors for deciding to enroll at a particular American higher education institution. Students were unanimous, regardless of genders, on institutional type. Issues such as safety of the institution, high institutional rank, and family influence were mentioned as influencers of international student choice in America.

Participants differed on their level of study, with doctoral students stating that easier application process drove their selection of a U.S. school, while non-graduate students stressed having a variety of students from diverse cultures and background, as well as a strong institutional support, as their most crucial factors in selecting an American school. The findings from the qualitative aspect of the study were categorized into three groups: perception, influence, and opportunity. Students reported their perceptions of U.S. postsecondary educational institutions. Words like thoughts, feelings, and knowledge were salient in expressing their high perceptions of U.S. education. Respondents also mentioned that their decisions to choose American universities were influenced by members of their families, friends, and the media. Opportunity was also a theme. Participants discussed that studying in the US was an opportunity to hone their English skills. They also found easy admissions processes and

the availability of certain academic programs as drivers of their decisions to choose the US as their destination for higher education studies.

International students' selection and enrollment in overseas universities is pinned on a phenomenon some have come to call the push-pull factor. McFadden et al. (2012) arrived at this finding through a research study done at a Southern public research university of international students from Fall 2010 to Fall 2011. The purpose of the research was to find what institutional programs and recruitment strategies influenced international students' choice of US colleges and universities. The study concluded with three truths: class size matters (there is a need for international students to feel connected with their staff/faculty); ease of admission and duration of studies are important (a carefully crafted business strategy that attracts internationals is encouraged); and college funding is paramount (if U.S. institutions want to remain competitive in the international student market, they must make appropriations to assist with more funding).

The methodology used by McFadden et al. (2012) was quantitative. It involved 216 international students, all of whom held a J-1 or F-1 visa. The respondents were either current students or had graduated with a bachelor's degree, master's degree, or a doctorate. The response rate to the questionnaires was 53%. To determine any significant differences, the responses were stratified by gender and degree sought. Of the total 216 respondents, 122 were enrolled as degree-seeking. Also, 40 were undergraduate students while 54 were seeking a master's degree and 28 a doctorate. They spanned over 56 countries covering eight regions, including Asia, Europe, Middle East, Central America, South America, Africa, the Caribbean, and North America. There were 87 males and 127 females.

To determine differences between genders, a two-tailed independent sample *t*-test was conducted, which found that males were more likely to find university size and enrollment more important than females. Males also rated the rigor of the program to be more important (as opposed to females). As there were three degree categories, an ANOVA was performed to establish if there were any differences in degree types. Non-degree-seeking students were excluded in this section. Undergraduate students responded that the friendliness of the staff, the pace at which they were admitted into the program, the ease of their admission, and the duration of the program as important. For master's students, it was the funding, the speed of admittance, the availability of aids, and the program characteristics that mattered most. Doctoral students were more concerned about funding, class size, and friendliness of staff. Regardless of degree level, all respondents considered college funding and ratio of faculty to student as important.

In a meta-analysis of their own previous studies, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) studied the opinions of Taiwanese, Chinese, Indian, and Indonesian students on the “push and pull” factors that influenced their selection of a study abroad destination. The push-pull model served as the basic framework of the study. Mazzarol and Soutar described push factors as “economic and social forces within the home country” which drive students to emigrate to another country for studies, while pull factors suggest characteristics of the host country which warrant their selection (p. 1). The research samples included a total of 2,485 students across the four countries through previous works done by the authors. These surveys spanned from 1996 to 2000) and comprised a qualitative form of research in which the questionnaires were translated directly into the written language of participants. Also, a common set of items was used across all four

demographics of respondents to ensure validity. In addition, a convenient sampling procedure was used to recruit respondents through the help of local colleges and student recruiting agencies. Prior to the study, a focus group was convened, which helped shed further light on factors which influence international students' choice of a host country.

The findings of the study suggest there are certain factors in the home countries which politically and economically push students to study abroad. On the other hand, specific national, state, and/or institutional factors contribute to pull students to a particular institution, once the push factors are already into play. Students listed specific phenomena as push factors that propel them overseas. The first motivator for study abroad is better overseas study programs. The respondents also noted that compared to their home countries, there are better options of studies in foreign countries, particularly in the West. When students are faced with these options, they often gravitate to the latter. Behind the notion of better overseas options is the issue of relatively poorer quality of tertiary education in developing countries. Students also reported difficulties getting admitted into local universities. As the admissions process becomes laden with insurmountable obstacles, or when the students' desired programs of study are not available at home, they look elsewhere.

Among other push factors found were international students' resolve to better understand the West; i.e., the desire to attain a western perspective of globalization was often the sheer reason for wanting to study abroad. The respondents also noted that for some internationals, this opportunity translates into permanent residency. Indian students reported the intent to remain and live in the host country; i.e., decisions to study abroad had little to do with the education. Parental influence also surfaced in the findings as a

major push factor as parents and family members were said to have major impact in students' study abroad. This was found mostly in the case of undergraduate students. Most parents who studied abroad noted to be apt to influence their children to do so. The findings also disclosed pull factors. They suggested that the profile of the host country was a pull factor attributable to the selection of a destination country. The national profile was mentioned to be significant as international students were found to be attracted to countries that are most likely to ensure their safety. In addition to safety, all students in the survey acknowledged that the educational profile of the host country played a significant role in their choice. The quality of education offered, degree type, national and global recognition, and ease of admission into the university were important pull factors. The students also mentioned that affordability was another major element. For them, concerns about affordability included living expenditures. Chinese and Taiwanese students were found to be most cost-cognizant not only of the cost of education, but also of the prospect of job opportunities. Another pull factor affirmed by respondents included environment. Students cited that they were pulled to a university based on a number of things, including climate and appearance. They also affirmed that environments with high concentration of immigrants and friends, and those close to home, were preferable.

As in the previous studies, the push-and-pull factor was also examined by Bodycott (2009), to determine factors that influence student choice of study abroad countries. It found that when it comes to selecting a study abroad destination, Chinese parents and students differ on what is important. The research was conducted among 251 mainland parents and 100 students in Confucius China.

While the boom in the Chinese economy was expediting study abroad for students of mainland China, the global recession was posing a significant threat to international study abroad. Given this scenario, understanding the recruitment market is vital for institutions desirous of remaining competitive in international education. Chinese heritage pertinent to student college choice is built on the bedrock principle of filial piety, which suggests that parents go out of their ways to do whatever possible within their reach to provide for their children's education. This gesture is reciprocated by the children's unwavering outpouring of love and care for their parents during their later years. The unwritten covenant of filial piety often means that children are likely to go to their parent's choice of college.

Bodycott's (2009) research had dual methods—qualitative and quantitative—and involved 251 parents and 100 students who were attending college exhibitions or seminars for international education. The quantitative method encompassed the answering of a three-fold question: sources of information on study abroad, factors that influenced their decision, and the factors that affected their choice of a study abroad destination. Respondents were instructed to rate the items on a 4-point scale in order of importance: very important, somewhat important, not so important, and least important.

The qualitative aspect involved five parents and five students from each of the data collecting sites. As there were in total five focus groups, the breakdown of the participants in the qualitative method was 25 parents and 25 students. These respondents were interviewed using an open-ended form of questioning, which was later transcribed from Mandarin to English. The analysis was done using a thematic approach. ANOVA was used to determine the differences between parent and student ratings.

The findings of the study revealed marked differences between what parents and students perceived as important in selecting a study abroad destination. For both parents and students, college fairs were the most important source for initial information for college. However, students relied heavily on the study abroad materials selected by parents at the fairs. Parents also agreed that the inadequate number of universities in mainland China, as well as high prospect of employment, was the most important push factor for their children's studying abroad. Students, on the other hand, suggested that the quality of education and the international experience were the most important push factors in their selection of study abroad destinations.

After testing a New Zealand college choice model on visiting students through a focus group, as well as screening for all forms of validity, Joseph and Joseph (2000) surveyed 200 high school students in Indonesia on their college choice criteria for attending overseas tertiary institutions in New Zealand. The schools were randomly selected, and participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in the research. All students surveyed expressed desires to study at an overseas postsecondary institution.

The query was done through the answering of questionnaires. Of the total 200 questionnaires sent out, 110 were returned usable. This amounted to a 55% response rate. The gender breakdown was 80 males and 30 females. The 17 items on the Likert Scale questionnaires ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. It was analyzed by using factor analysis and the examination of the rotated factor scores across all identified factors.

The results showed that Indonesian international students place a great deal of importance on all five attributes of college choice contained in the questionnaire: course and career information, physical aspects and facilities, cost of education, degrees; and value of education. Institutions seeking to assert their competitive edge in the international market of students should place special attention on these factors of importance relative to their prospective students.

It was also concluded that building an overseas alumni body of graduates is a formidable way of influencing student college choice. Another college choice factor which surfaced in this study was the partnership program. Through this effort, students wanting to study overseas could begin their studies at a home sister institution before transferring to an overseas tertiary institution.

How personal and social factors explain pathways to higher education was examined by Bornholt et al. (2004) in research aimed at explaining the choices students make as they negotiate their way from high school to college. Socio-ecological study of college choice suggests that students go through a series of enrollment negotiations with prospective universities prior to actual enrollment. The authors asserted that this is a common behavioral practice that yields different outcomes per different social groups.

The respondents for the Bornholt et al. (2004) study encompassed a cohort of high school graduates in Australia and comprised half of the applications the universities received from 1989 to 1993. Data were collected through mail-in questionnaires as well as from personal data on each student. The mail-in questionnaires contained questions about preferences, offers, decision to enroll and defer, or let the offers lapse. The personal data on students were provided by three state government sources. Information

such as gender and location (urban, rural, remote) were reported. Data on disabilities, family background, and home language were not included. The database information also included applicant final course preference and information about the acceptance of the student applicant (or at least his/her offer by the school).

The study concluded that students were generally confident and excited about application to college, and were optimistic about success, job prospects, and return on investment. They were, however, less motivated by pleasing other people or with the sheer act of putting in an application. More students were excited about receiving an offer from an institution to which they had applied. Reasons for enrollment, deferment, or simply letting offers lapse were blamed on abilities, interests, attitudes of others, and employment.

Additionally, it was concluded that decisions to apply to a university, accept admission, enroll, or even defer acceptance varied with social economic indicators, geographic locations, and school type. Remote communities and disadvantaged neighborhoods, for example, have more difficulties negotiating their pathways to college enrollment. The same is true with socio-economic status.

During the academic year 2001 to 2002, the Thai international student enrollment in Australian higher education rose by 17%. This gave Pimpa (2005) the cause to investigate the rise. At the time of the study, Australia ranked at the top among international study destinations for students of Thailand, exceeding the US, United Kingdom, and Canada. The research was conducted primarily as a quantitative research study. As a necessary first step, three qualitative focus groups were convened and interviewed. Each group comprised nine participants. The first was selected randomly

out of the Thai Student Association in Victoria, Australia. The next two focus groups were assembled using snowballing technique. The data from these sessions were processed using emergent themes, frequency, and order. In the actual research analysis, which was done quantitatively, 1,600 international students from 15 universities and 10 technical colleges across Australia received questionnaires, but only 803 were returned usable, amounting to a response rate of 50.2%. The questions on the questionnaires were based on the five areas of family influence mentioned by the focus group. They were scaled 1 to 5, with 5 representing the most influence. An ANOVA was done to determine the level of family influence on each of the five areas of family support among three family types—nuclear, extended, and alternative. Tukey's Honest Significant Different (HSD) test was used to determine differences between groups.

Responses from the questions revealed that, as an alternative to studying at home, Thai international students have to make five important choices: the decision to study abroad, the country of choice, city, academic courses, and the university (Pimpa, 2005, p. 437). The respondents noted that family plays a pivotal role in each of these choices. They outlined familial roles to encompass finances, information, expectation, competition, and persuasion. Family support through *finances* was found to be essential not only in the payment of tuition, fees, and other monetary expenditures, but also influential in important areas such as the selection of universities and programs of study. Family influence was also credited for primary information on institutions of interest. Students rely heavily on family members who had studied at these Australian institutions for *information* on how to navigate their ways around the universities, especially in areas such as part-time employment and accommodation.

Familial influence on the line of *expectation* was said to be embodied in the anticipation of parents and siblings to see the students broaden their global experiences by studying abroad. Many mentioned that this message had been inculcated into their minds since childhood. The way *competition* affects Thai students' international education was expressed through the desire to outdo other families. Respondents explained that in Thai homes, there appears to be the tendency of comparing their overseas opportunities with those of other households. However, the nature of competition differed with respondents who were graduate students. These focus group members mentioned that their prominent competitors were their peers and work colleagues for better pay rates due to their international exposure. The results also talked about the influence of *persuasion* from family members. The respondents indicated that they received a great deal of persuasion from family members residing in Australia to study there. The extent of their persuasion went as far as selecting universities and programs for their children. Pimpa (2005) quoted a famous line frequently told students by family members residing in Australia as a bid to persuade them to study abroad: "If others can study abroad, you can do it too" (p. 438).

The findings also suggested a trend of marked differences between students whose family members have studied abroad and those whose family members have not. The decision to study abroad, the choice of country and city, and expectations are all high within families whose members have experience studying abroad. The results also showed that students of families from Bangkok face more significant social competition than those from outside Bangkok regarding the decision to study abroad. However, regarding the choice of city, there was no difference between students of families from

Bangkok and those outside that city. Additionally, the results also revealed significant findings among the three family types (nuclear, extended, and alternative). For students from a nuclear family, financial influence was found to have a significant impact, while this was not the case for students from extended and alternative families. Familial information also had a significant impact on the choice of Thai international students of nuclear families than on those of extended and alternative families. The influence of familial expectation was found to have significant differences among the three family types. Thai students of nuclear and extended families were found to have stronger levels of expectation from family members than did their peers of alternative family background. While the results showed no significant differences among the three Thai family groups, there were signs of slight impacts on students from extended family backgrounds. The level of familial persuasion on the three Thai family groups to study internationally did not have a significant difference.

A discrete experiment to determine international education choice was conducted by Gong and Huybers (2015) using Chinese international students, one of the largest demographics of global study abroad students. Given the concept of brain drain and brain gain cultures, the study was a necessary expedition to decipher the study abroad choice pattern of Chinese students whose government provides scholarship programs to enhance the country's brain gain efforts. Results from this study noted that Chinese students assign the host country's safety and the university's academic ranking higher marks than other college choice factors.

Two focus groups were convened comprising 17 Chinese international students enrolled at two Australian universities. These students were considered new arrivals,

meaning their participation in a selection of international student abroad destinations was relatively recent. The focus groups had three objectives: (a) to determine whether the factors described in the literature about college choice were applicable to Chinese students, (b) to determine if there were additional Chinese-relevant college choice factors not discussed in the literature, and (c) to determine the attributes to be used in the actual data collection questionnaires. Next, a pilot study was organized to test the reliability of the instrument developed, test the survey's validity, as well as to critique the survey's translation into Chinese.

The actual data collection process occurred over an 18-day period, involving prospective international students at three Chinese universities in Qingdao and Zibo and a training institute. Of the 459 questionnaires dispersed, 308 were returned, amounting to a 67% return rate. The choice data were modeled using Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Multinomial Logit (MNL) approaches. Findings revealed that the safety of the destination country is paramount to Chinese international students' choice of studying abroad. They noted that if a nation is to play host to foreign students, it is important that that country "maintain and/or enhance its level of safety and to promote itself as much as possible as a safe place for Chinese students to study" (p. 12). Respondents also made known that the university's academic ranking, as well as the host country's overall standard of education, matters most. By this response, Chinese students made it known that despite the importance of other college choice factors, university ranking is a salient concern for their international study destination.

Summary of the Review of the Literature

For decades, scholars have grappled with finding a comprehensive model of student college choice. Despite decades of research, there still remains a dearth of data in the literature regarding a gold standard for a universal college choice model. Nonetheless, the phenomenon of college choice remains a trending issue across the globe, both in the literature and on college campuses.

This chapter has used the funnel technique to discuss the literature on student college choice, beginning with the history of the phenomenon, then making a foray into the current trends host countries are pursuing in efforts to internationalize their higher education campuses. It concluded with a review of the literature germane to the college choice of international students. The sources used in this review were gathered primarily through the WKU libraries using ProQuest, Top SCHOLAR, and Google Scholar.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this study was to generalize the Hossler-Gallagher model (1987) to get a better understanding of the predisposition, search, and choice factors that influenced the decisions of West African students to enroll in a U.S. public university.

The Hossler-Gallagher model is a theoretical concept developed by the authors based on a review of research work done in the area of college choice by previous authors (Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982). It proposed a three-stage process of student college matriculation: *predisposition*, *search*, and *choice*. To accomplish this, I used research questions to investigate students at each of the three stages in the model. I have also discussed in this chapter the research design, population and sample, data collection, and data analysis.

According to the literature, the number of West African students studying in the US was 18,100 during the 2015-2016 school year (Institute of International Education, 2017). Findings from this study will provide a measurable recruiting mechanism for university admission personnel and policymakers seeking to increase the representation of West African international students at their institutions.

Research Questions

To better understand the college choice pattern of West African international students relative to the Hossler and Gallagher (1987) model, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the predisposition factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?
2. What are the search factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?
3. What are the choice factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

Research Design

By design, this study used an instrumental case study. An instrumental case study is “the study of a case (e.g., person, specific group, occupation, department, organization) to provide insight into a particular issue, redraw generalizations, or build theory” (Grandy, 2010, p.1). Case studies are ideal for understanding peculiarities of a culture or society. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), case studies “take the reader into the setting with a vividness and detail not typically present in more analytic reporting formats” (p. 267). The authors also added that case studies incorporate the use of interviews, observations, and document analyses where necessary. Yin (1994), an authority on methodology, opined that case studies are ideal for studies that (a) pertain to “how” and “why” questions, (b) pertain to variables researchers cannot manipulate, and (c) pertain to contemporary issues. In this study I have attempted to do just that. The “how” and “why” questions were explored when I delved into determining the predisposition, search, and choice factors of West African international students that elected to enroll in U.S. public universities. As mentioned in Chapter I, these variables, predisposition, search, and choice, were coined by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) to gauge student college choice. However, their efficacies were not investigated using students

from West Africa. As my subjects originated from cultures dissimilar from that of the US, I was interested in knowing the extent to which the Hossler-Gallagher model was generalizable to West African international students studying at U.S. public universities. Also, the question of college choice is a variable over which a researcher has no control. Unlike laboratory-based experimental research, where certain variables are manipulated while others are kept constant, a researcher cannot control or manipulate the factors that determine students' college choice in a qualitative study because those search factors had already been completed in the past. Still, in keeping with Yin's (1994) declaration, this research pertained to contemporary issues in that the subject of college choice is relevant to the present day. Given the global craze for college (Delgado-Marquez et al., 2011; Evivie, 2009), the scramble for students among universities (Institute of International Education, 2017), and the federal and state governments' failure to regulate cost, the issue of college choice has gained significant research interest among present-day contemporary scholars (Mokua, 2012). Many institutions are seeking ways to provide market segmentation strategies that appeal to students of diverse backgrounds. As an instrumental case study, this research garnered a thick resource of information from participants regarding the phenomenon of choosing and matriculating into U.S. public institutions of higher education.

This study also embodied a qualitative method of research. When it comes to case studies, a qualitative method of approach is best suited as it allows humans to ascribe meanings to their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, I selected the choice of qualitative study as an appropriate contrast to the overwhelming number of quantitative studies in the literature regarding international student college choice. Using

Creswell's declaration, the process of college search is a lived experience that marks the next chapter of the lives of many students after high school. As I sought to dig out these experiences, I became alarmed by the disproportionate number of quantitative choice studies in the literature. I, therefore, aspired in this research to add to the literature a paralleled qualitative point of view.

Setting

The research primarily occurred in the city of Chicago. The cities of South Bend, Indiana and Bowling Green, Kentucky also contributed as venues for interviews. These cities record a high concentration of West Africans, including many current and former university students. In addition, the cities are homes to some of the notable universities in the Midwest, giving them the implied status of university towns. As immigrants love to congregate together, many West Africans who immigrate to the US for college purposes tend to live in close proximity to family and friends either during or after studies to ensure a network of family support.

Traditionally, in the literature, push-and-pull factors such as calamities (natural and artificial) and education were noted as influencing factors that bring African immigrants to the US (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; McFadden et al., 2012). Notably, the infamous Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade which began in the 16th century may have been the historical date when immigrants from West Africa began arriving in the US (Pew Research Center, 2017). However, a new wave of migration to the US was birthed beginning in the 1990s with the emergence of civil wars in Sub-Saharan Liberia and Sierra Leone (James, 1990). This, in part, occasioned an even novel trend of voluntary immigration for the purpose of education. It is impossible to determine exactly how

many West African students are in the Chicagoland area, since most college matriculation applications usually categorize all persons of African descent as “African Americans” or “blacks.” Chicago, according to Poe (2005), was a preferred destination for West Africans because of the city’s active, progressive communities and because the metropolis was home to the Midwestern Consul General.

The Nancy B. Doe Scholarship of 1984 was a notable pull factor in the Chicagoland area. Named for the then first lady of the Republic of Liberia, the grant was sponsored by the state of Illinois, and brought in 25 international students from Liberia to study at a university in Chicago (James, 1990). Many Liberians continue to make Chicago their preferred city for learning.

Nigerians account for the most populated West African community in Chicago (Cogan & Ibe, 2005). Fleeing the Biafran War (1967-1970) and subsequent military uprisings in the West African nation, Nigerian refugees found a haven in America, and most settled in Chicago. Cogan and Ibe reported that the Nigerian government, through its oil reserves, was able to sponsor many students at American universities. Many have gone on to become successful practitioners in law, medicine, and academia.

Like other American universities, recruiting international students is a novel fad for Chicago’s tertiary institutions (Delgado-Marquez et al., 2011). Illinois universities, while seemingly a favorite of internationals, have slightly varied approaches to their admission requirements. For example, Northwestern University offers many grants and aid packages to incoming undergraduate international students for all four years of their studies. In addition, providing a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score is optional at this Northside university if an international student’s SAT Critical Reasoning

Test score is above 600 (Northwestern University, n.d.). On the southside at Chicago State University, if English is an international student's first language, the school's policy is to waive the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and TOEFL score requirements. Still, the University of Chicago's admission policies differ by department. Generally, there are provisions whereby the TOEFL or IELTS requirements may be waved based on a number of factors (University of Chicago, n.d.).

In addition to the city of Chicago, the interview occurred in South Bend, Indiana. The city is a fast-growing urban locale along the St. Joseph River, 95 miles East of Chicago. With a metropolitan population of 318,586, the Hoosier city is the fourth largest in Indiana (South Bend, n.d.). It is host to many Africans, among which West Africans remain a rising number. One of the phenomena of attraction to South Bend is its immigrant-friendly ambiance. The Indiana University of South Bend (IUSB) in the city of South Bend and the University of Notre Dame, located in the unincorporated township of Notre Dame, just adjacent to South Bend, are immigrant-rich universities. The region also attracts West Africans by virtue of its growing number of home health care and supported living job opportunities. Another amenity South Bend offers is its proximity to Chicago, making the commute feasible for immigrants who have families across the border. The research drew some of its respondents from the West African community in this locale. Up to the time of this project, the institution's website had not listed information on its 2018-2019 enrollment. However, the most recent statistics on enrollment indicated a total full-time enrollment of 4,973 for the 2016-2017 school year at IUSB (Indiana University South Bend, n.d.). The site also put the total international

enrollment at 193. A further demographic breakdown maintained that 54% of the total is males while the remaining 46% comprises females.

While IUSB generally requires foreign students to show proof of English proficiency (in other words, TOEFL and IELTS), the institution has a predetermined list of countries exempt from this requirement. However, all international students must take a required placement test in English language and mathematics upon arrival. As Sub-Saharan Africa hosts many regional conflicts, many West Africans have found Notre Dame's Peace Studies programs as a pull factor to attain a U.S. collegiate education. Graduates from the Peace Studies program go on to work in various capacities as peace builders around the world (University of Notre Dame, n.d.). Students receive a generous cost-free scholarship, which includes all tuitions and fees associated with the program. Also, fees associated with a mandatory six-month internship with countries/organizations dedicated to peace resolution are fully covered.

The third city that comprised the setting for the data collection included Bowling Green, Kentucky. Much like South Bend, Bowling Green is a collegiate community. The city is home to Western Kentucky University (WKU), situated on a hilltop between Louisville, Kentucky and Nashville, Tennessee. With over 1,200 international students from 70 different countries, WKU prides itself on its international reach (Western Kentucky University, n.d.). Whereas international student presence has dwindled somewhat in the Bowling Green community in recent years, the southeastern city still remains a hub for many African immigrants. Some of the respondents for this project encompassed current West African students who lived off campus.

Participants

Current and former West African international students at U.S. public universities were of interest in this study. The sample size consisted of 24 current and former West African international students. There were 20 males and four females, 18 undergraduates and six graduate students. The participants originated from Nigeria, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Liberia. A breakdown of participant demographics is illustrated in Appendix F. As a case study, the mode of participant selection was similar to that of experimental research (Yin, 1994). Also, given that the research did not focus on a particular institution, its samples were not restricted to a specific locale. Participants identified with disparate universities across the US. Once initial respondents were garnered following approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at WKU, I received referrals for other possible interviewees. This snowball form of sampling is a non-probability technique used when the samples for a research are rare or are limited to a very small subgroup (Explorable, 2009). Chicago is home to many West Africans. While many Liberians and Sierra Leoneans have settled in the Midwestern city as refugees and asylees due to civil unrests in their home countries, others have used the acquisition of Western education as a pull factor to flee the hostilities. According to the Pew Research Center, immigrants are more likely to settle in the South (39%) and East (25%) as opposed to the Midwest (18%) (Pew Research Center, 2017). It is important to note that whereas the respondents lived in the cities previously described under Setting, and whereas those cities were homes to many renowned universities, the respondents did not necessarily attend the universities in their respective cities of residence.

Yin (1994) mentioned that results from a case study should be compared to a theory. When the emerging result matches the theory, the result is said to be replicated. Hence, I examined and compared the college choice processes of the international students in this study to the theory of the Hossler and Gallagher model (1987) to determine a match or the lack of a match. The respondents were diverse and unique, originating from disparate parts of West Africa. Their experiences, while sometimes similar, were in many ways also dissimilar. In keeping with Stake's (1995) principles of generalization, I made petite generalizations as I determined that certain individual narratives corresponded with each other. Only when they were identical to the theoretical concept of the study was I able to make a grand generalization (pp. 7-8). The sampling unit was not representative of the West African population that has left its homelands in search of Western higher education in the US. They were selected solely because of their knowledge and experiences in West African student college choice.

First, I held a focus group prior to the interviews. Focus group is an effective data collection mechanism used in qualitative research. Wilkinson (2004) described it as “a way of collecting qualitative data, which—essentially—involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion (or discussions), focused around a particular topic or set of issues” (p. 177). Given its informal nature, participants in a focus group find it less burdensome and are more likely to openly discuss their perceptions devoid of undue pressure. Whether for the purpose of attuning research questions in the social sciences (Morgan, 1998) or to assist the U.S. government in evaluating the effects of media on human attitudes toward government involvement in World War II in the 1940s (Merton, 1987), focus groups have been an essential

component of qualitative research for ages. As the name suggests, focus groups are group-focused, meaning the information from these sessions are useful on a group level rather than on an individual basis.

Also, focus groups are not interested in an individual's progress, nor can their findings be generalized to other groups with somewhat different characteristics (Marczak & Sewell, n.d.). Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) posited that the size of a focus group and the number of times they meet vary. Wilkinson (2004) recommended that the numerical composition of a focus group ranges from six to 10 people and that its members do share common characteristics. In the focus group for this study, West African international students were surveyed by a face-to-face group interview. While most of the members were enrolled at WKU, the group was primarily a construct of a local African Christian church congregation in Bowling Green, Kentucky. The 14 participants were from the West African countries of Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. They all shared some attributes in common, including origination from West Africa. They were also international undergraduate students, and all studied at the same university.

Interview Protocol

After combing through the literature, I developed an interview protocol to get a better understanding of the college choice of West African international students. The protocol was adapted with permission from the Hossler-Gallagher (1987) of student college choice. The permission statement is included in Appendix G. As the Hossler-Gallagher model is mostly tailored to U.S. domestic students, there was a need to modify some questions in this current research to the West African milieu. Hence, I made the interview protocol more West African friendly. I have included the protocol in Appendix

H. This basic protocol considered the three factors rooted in the Hossler and Gallagher model of student college choice: *predisposition*, *search*, and *choice*. Questions in the protocol regarding predisposition centered on factors that augment the student's desire and propensity of going to college in the first place. The search questions delved into the comprehensive effort by the student in searching out potential universities in his quest for postsecondary education. The questions also considered the role of the university in wooing students. The choice questions encapsulated the process through which students narrowed their search efforts to a single university.

Procedures

As the interest of the study inhabited the college choice experience of West African international students, I employed the medium of interview as the primary source of data collection. I also used artifact and document analysis as additional means of gathering data. As in other sections of this project, I relied heavily on the philosophies of Yin (1994), an acclaimed authority in qualitative research, as I navigated the data collection process. Yin instructed that to add an air of validity to a case study, multiple sources must be considered and evaluated. The procedure was implemented principally through a recorded face-to-face interview process. Given that the questions were semi-structured, I enjoyed the flexibility of asking follow-up questions as needed. The average duration for each interview was approximately 45 minutes. To begin with, each subject was given an Informed Consent Form, which overviewed the purview and scope of the research project. In addition, the statement included information on the procedure, risks, benefits, and confidentiality of the study. It also underscored the rights of the respondents to decline or to withdraw at any time at any point in the process. Each

consenting participant then signed the document and retained a copy for their record. As the interviews unfolded, respondents were asked about their college choice experiences. These conversations were recorded and later analyzed.

Yin (1994) also taught about the importance of document analysis in qualitative research as an added layer of evidential support. The support document analysis provided in qualitative case studies is pivotal. Where respondents' anecdotes referred to documents or information that influenced their college choice decisions, efforts were made to secure those materials for triangulation. Whether wittingly or unwittingly, respondents tend to embellish or understate responses. This is especially true as recalling facts over time often becomes toilsome. In some cases, documents cited by respondents were not readily available or the students no longer could retrieve their copies. Other times, documents not cited were of relevance to West African student college choice. Still, information which was pertinent then to a particular student's college choice may have now changed. In those cases, I researched such documents or requested from the student's institution. In each of these cases, Yin opined that it is important to attempt to gather such artifacts. Hence, I made attempts to secure all pertinent documents cited by respondents. The data collection procedure in this study thus included the review of documents such as letters from institutions, welcome packets, and institutional websites. Field notes were also crucial. Where the interviewer could not handily jot down records while conducting interviews, these notes were documented immediately after interview sessions.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data is where the collected data are systematically examined and scrutinized to gather useful information that support decision making. In this case, useful patterns were compared to the framework, the Hossler and Gallagher model (1987), to determine if they were congruent or incongruent with the framework. According to Yin (1994), there is no set standard for a match. This suggests that the degree of similarity or dissimilarity is subjective to the researcher. In my analysis, my objective was to find the Hossler-Gallagher model of student college choice as either similar or dissimilar to the college choice process of West African international students. Given the cultural differences between West Africans and the domestic students for which the model was initially designed, I was also expecting to uncover partial deviations in my case study.

An a priori coding scheme was used to analyze the data from the interviews. Diving into the analysis section with a prior, pre-planned list of working codes served as a vital way to explore analysis (Delamont, 1992; Gough & Scott, 2000; Miles, 1979). Marshall and Rossman (2011) also suggested gleaning ideas and concepts from the literature review and interviews to build up a firm reservoir of codes. For this project, I started by gathering a list of initial codes from those mentioned by authors in the literature regarding student college choice. While collecting interview data, I specifically listened for possible future codes. This ensured that the design was West African friendly, meeting the specific needs of West Africans. Finally, as I prepared for analysis, I further populated the list with additional codes by reviewing the data collected. From

these codes, I developed nodes for each of the three stages of student college choice studied. Those nodes were analyzed using an Nvivo 12-Plus software system.

Role of the Researcher

Creswell (2014) described qualitative study as “an interpretative research...in which the inquirers explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status that shaped their interpretations formed during a study” (p. 187). In this section, I aspired to do so. In determining the factors that influence the college choice of West African international students, there are some nuances of the choice process that reflexively aligned with my personal background. As the sole researcher involved with this project, I am originally from Liberia, West Africa. Like the subjects interviewed in this study, I was once an international student and participated in the choice process of U.S. universities. My socioeconomic status predisposed me as a high school student not likely to go to college. Also, not having parents with college degrees was an added disadvantage (Bergerson, 2009). Notwithstanding, in my nuclear family, I was the first to go to college. Moreover, in the pedigree of my extended family, I am a first-generation college student, one of two to obtain a college degree to date.

As I proceeded with the work, my positionality served a dual purpose. First, my background mentioned earlier posed a possible threat to validity in the area of bias. Being a former international student who once navigated the college choice process himself, and who hails from West Africa as did the respondents I interviewed, it may have seemed easy to foist my personal bias on the investigation. However, my second positionality also served a second purpose. It opened doors that would otherwise not

have been opened. Although I was a researcher, the subjects were comfortable knowing that I was one of them. This knowledge facilitated an ambience conducive for a free flow data collection process where ambiguities and apprehensions were minimized. While on the surface this might appear to occasion a response bias, a thorough familiarity with West African students' college choice helped enhance a better interpretation of the findings. My role as a researcher compelled me to strike a balance between the dual impact of my positionality. The role of the research also ensured that data collected was uncompromised. Data will be stored at WKU, under the auspices of the Office of Institutional Research. To safeguard against bias, Creswell (2007) suggested the use of multiple sources of validation. In this study, efforts were made to review documents that were mentioned in respondents' answers to interview questions. Archival record review also was considered. Still, the methodology of the study, including the research protocol, was reviewed by my project advisor.

My role in this study predates the data collection process. Prior to my interaction with the subjects, a formal application was filed with the IRB at WKU. The application sought and obtained permission to engage in human subjects research with West African international students in U.S. public institutions, current and former. A copy of the IRB Approval is attached in Appendix I. On approval, recruitment letters were mailed to possible respondents. As this was a purposive sampling project, initial participants were purposefully targeted according to the needs of the study. Consenting participants were given copies of the Informed Consent Form prior to the interview. In addition to providing respondents with an understanding of the nature and purpose of the research, the consent form cited the inherent risks of the study and outlined steps I had taken to

ensure the confidentiality of participants. Respondents were assigned fictitious names throughout the study to protect their identities. The form also allowed the interviewees the freedom to opt out of the survey at any point.

Trustworthiness

The issue of validity is of significance in contemporary research, but its role in qualitative studies remains a concern. Creswell (2014) maintained that “validity does not carry the same connotations in qualitative research as it does in quantitative research” (p. 201), while Creswell and Miller (2000) explained that as one of the strengths of qualitative research, validity is subjective and is based on the standpoints of those involved in the study, such as the researcher, the participants, or even the readers. On this, Maxwell (2013) concurred that unlike quantitative inquiries which are statistically empirical in nature, qualitative studies are subjective; hence, they lack objectivity. He, therefore, advocated that the term “trustworthiness” is a rather more suitable and appropriate choice of word, as there exists no such thing as objective truth. In this section, I have endeavored to make a foray into the trustworthiness of this research study, attempting to ascertain subjective truths relative to the respondents’ perspectives of West African international students’ college choice. In doing so, I have remained aware that researchers can have a speculation without being presumptuous (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The trustworthiness of the study satisfies the questions of reliability and validity in that the research measures consistently across its scope and any researcher would arrive at a similar conclusion if the variables remained constant, and also that the study is measuring what it was meant to measure (in the case of validity). In this study, the

college choice of West African international students studying at U.S. public universities was of concern. The study sought to determine how, or to what extent, the findings corresponded with the Hossler and Gallagher theory (1987) of student college choice. Per Yin (1994), a researcher can claim replication if the case matches the existing theory. To establish trustworthiness, Creswell (2014) suggested employing multiple approaches to ensure the accuracy of research work. I have incorporated some of those steps in this project as enumerated below.

Triangulation

Creswell (2014) posited the use of triangulation to examine data sources. He added, “If themes are established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding to the validity of the study” (p. 201). Fusch et al. (2018) suggested that this strengthens reliability and adds depth. In this research, triangulation was accomplished by reviewing documents and records cited by respondents. This is discussed further under the section on Role of the Researcher.

Member Checking

Member checking is another approach to validity mentioned by Creswell (2014). It ensures a respondent is satisfied with his responses to the interview questions as well as confirms accuracy of transcription. Merriam (1998) posited this could be done during or after the interview process. To ensure this was applied to this study, respondents had the opportunity to listen to the audio recordings of their responses immediately following the interview sessions. Then, following the data collection and findings, parts of the polished

work were again referred to the respondents to determine whether their inputs were accurately recorded.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing was another way of verifying trustworthiness of the research. An external person is asked to review the work and ask questions when necessary, thereby making the work resonate beyond the interpretation of the researcher (Creswell, 2014). In accomplishing this, a couple independent individuals were contacted to review the work as well as make inquiries and offer suggestions from the standpoint of another, other than the researcher. The individuals involved in this peer debriefing are experts in the field of West African studies. They are West Africans themselves, and have published scholarly works on West African education. This approach encompassed the element of research called construct validity. It helps add layers of bulwark against inaccuracies.

Limitations and Delimitations

To provide readers with an account that is accurate and to equip them with an apparatus to examine the relevance of the findings, it is necessary that a researcher discuss the limitations of his work. Research limitation speaks of issues that arise during the study which are beyond the control of the researcher (Creswell, 2014). This is where the potential weaknesses of a study are cited. Such concerns typically occur in the methodology and tend to influence the findings of the work in several ways. Limitations often inhabit the validity and reliability of the study. As this project was qualitative and occurred within a natural setting, it did not come without limitations. The following are some limitations of the study.

One of the uncontrollable features of this study was the researcher's commonalities with the respondents. As discussed under Role of the Researcher, I am a West African. In addition, like the respondents, I once had to participate in the college choice process at American universities. Also, I was familiar with some of the respondents in this study. However, to ensure the integrity of the study, I did not let my personal bias influence the course of the research.

Another limitation encompassed the lack of observation in the study. As the college choice of students was a phenomenon of the past, this research was unable to include that method of qualitative investigation. In addition, another limitation of the study had to do with cognition. Cognitive recalling of information that has occurred in the past can become an arduous task for many. That the project relied predominantly on cognition as a means of excavating rich, thick data on student college choice, this posed another limitation to the study. Still, the subjective nature of qualitative studies was itself an inherent limitation as what appeared as an important piece of information to one respondent may have seemed insignificant to another. Qualitative studies are subjective in nature, owing to the perspective of the respondent and researcher (Maxwell, 2013). Other manifestations of limitation in the study encompassed the referral process of respondents. After the first set of respondents was acquired, they, in turn, recruited their friends. This snowball sampling technique tends to pose a possible sampling bias as it suggests that the researcher has limited control over the sampling method, and that the respondents are not randomly selected. Finally, for many of the samples, while English was the national language in the respondents' home countries, it was not their native

tongue. This made fluent expression of oneself sometimes difficult and led to possible misinterpretation.

For its part, delimitations are willful, deliberate perimeters imposed on the research by its author (Creswell, 2014). This circumscribed domain guides the scope of the work. The project was delimited to current and former students of West Africa who studied at U.S. public universities. The purposefully guided scope of the study was borne out of the need for knowledge that would help augment the number of international students from West Africa who study in the US. Currently students from West Africa account for a miniscule fragment of the total international student body in the US (Institute of International Education, 2017). The study also had a delimitation in its design. In recruiting respondents, a purposive sampling method was the mode of choice. This means the respondents were purposely chosen and recommended based on their knowledge and experience in West African student college choice. While representative of a small subset of West Africans, the group was homogenous in its construct. The findings of the study, thus, lacked generalization beyond the population studied.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the college choice of West African international students using the Hossler-Gallagher model (1987), a theoretical concept developed by the authors based on a review of earlier works done by researchers in the area of student college choice. The study was an effort at generalizing the model. It focused solely on current and former international students. The subjects were all West Africans.

Purposive sampling was the method of choice to recruit and interview students using semi-structured questions. Documents, including institutional data and university communication to students, were examined as part of the data collection and analysis processes. To ensure trustworthiness, I made a foray into the case of subjective truths as it relates to qualitative research, remaining cognizant that the theory of validity is but a borrowed concept from quantitative studies (Maxwell, 2013). As a former West African international student, I made a conscious effort to delineate my position in relation to the study through reflexivity. Data were analyzed using an a priori coding scheme obtained from the combination of codes gathered from the review of literature, interview data, and those created by the author.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

There appears to be a lack of unanimity among researchers regarding the framework for international student college choice (Chen, 2008; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Tan, 2015). Hence, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to generalize the Hossler-Gallagher model (1987) to get a better understanding of the predisposition, search, and choice factors that influenced the decisions of West African students to enroll in a U.S. public university.

As the Hossler-Gallagher (1987) model is mostly tailored to U.S. domestic students, there was a need to tailor some questions in this current research specifically to the West African milieu. Hence, I made the protocol more West African friendly. To improve West African international student enrollment at U.S. public universities, it is essential to gain knowledge of why and how this population chooses American public institutions as their universities of choice for higher education.

To achieve the purpose of this study, I developed three primary research questions to guide the process:

RQ1: What are the predisposition factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

RQ2: What are the search factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

RQ3: What are the choice factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

In this chapter I provide findings to these research questions through the lenses of 24 current or former West African students at U.S. public universities. They were graduate and undergraduate students. To arrive at these findings, Nvivo 12-Plus analytical software was used to code the data. The codes were developed from a number of sources. First, I derived codes from the Hossler-Gallagher (1987) model, which happens to be the conceptual framework of the study. Next, a list of predetermined codes was developed from the review of the literature on student college choice. Still, I generated other codes from the review of the data collected. To better understand this research, one should bear in mind that its findings are applicable only to West African international students interviewed and cannot be applied outside this setting. Subunits modeling West African international students were selected for this study to reflect the case of West African international students who studied or are currently studying at U.S. public universities.

In the following sections I have answered the research questions using quotes from the interviews to describe West African student college choice. I have made efforts to preserve the original syntax of the respondents' anecdotes and to present them verbatim. Therefore, given that the interviewees are speakers of other languages, there may appear to be some grammatical discrepancies in their individual anecdotes. Also, I have attempted to ensure anonymity of institutions by redacting names. Finally, the findings are grouped and aligned with the research questions to ensure better comprehension and trend of thought. This is outlined in Appendix J.

RQ1: What are the predisposition factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

RQ1 discusses the first stage of student college choice. According to the Hossler and Gallagher Model (1987), the predisposition stage constitutes the first stage. It is at this stage that the student becomes aware of how and why he must enroll into college. After analyzing the data on West African international students who participated in this study, the following are the findings discovered. Per the terms of the interview, some respondents chose to not answer some questions.

Decision to Pursue College Education in the United States

In the first question on the interviews, I wanted to know why the interviewees decided to pursue a college education in the US.

Provision of Scholarship

The availability of scholarship was the most cited reason by the respondents. Six of them explained that while it was not their priority, they were showered with the opportunity to receive scholarships that underwrote their cost of a U.S. college education, so they took advantage of those offers. Three of those students were recipients of a student exchange scholarship to study in the US. In 1984, the government of Liberia was awarded a scholarship by the City of Chicago that enabled 25 students to study at a university in Illinois as exchange students. Those three exchange scholars noted that they heard about the scholarships on the radio and decided to apply. Fortunately, they were accepted after a rigorous screening process.

There were another three respondents who decided to pursue a U.S. college education because of the availability of a scholarship but were not part of the student

exchange program. Escaping the civil war in Liberia, Tenema fled to the Ivory Coast, where he lived in a refugee camp until he got the surprise news of his life that someone had offered him a full scholarship to study in the US. His story follows:

Well, because of the civil war in my country we left from Liberia and went to an exile country in a refugee camp. I never thought that I would have even gone to college. But somebody I knew came over here and contacted a school, and through that contact I was able to come here to go to school and to play soccer. So, I came here on a soccer scholarship.

Prospect for Opportunities

Seven of the interviewees mentioned that their decisions to pursue a U.S. education were driven by their quests for opportunities at a better life. They described these opportunities in terms of employment and its concomitant prospect for a better life. These students believed that a U.S. education would lead to better employment at home and abroad. Nat is one of those students, and he expressed his desire to pursue college education in the US this way:

...the idea that graduating in the United States gives you better opportunities for jobs and for, you know, expanding your horizons. So United States pretty much had the opportunities that I felt I would need as regards to graduating and getting a job and not having to wait to look for a job. So, I think United States has more opportunities which would be primarily one of the reasons why I decided to come to the United States.

Josephine explained how her decision to obtain a college education could make her marketable in her home country:

Compared to studying here, so if I study in Nigeria, I'll be competing with people in my area of expertise within the same country. So it really doesn't give me so much of an edge like we're all doing the same thing, but studying outside the country makes me an international human resource commodity which means people want me more which means they know that I have international exposure. I have knowledge from another country from a better country maybe, you know, so it makes me more employable.

Need for Exposure to Modern Technologies and Facilities

Next, three of the respondents mentioned they decided to pursue a U.S. college education because of the need for exposure to modern technologies and facilities that would augment their learning. These students shed a grim picture of the learning cultures in their home countries and felt a U.S. education would suffice to salvage them. Roberto described in detail the lack of exposure he endured at his home university, which occasioned his desire to pursue college education in the US:

Okay. Yeah. We only have some of the very common facilities like the thermometer and some other facilities that are not even in use currently. For example, in biochemistry we utilize many methods for checking unknown substances. We also use facilities like gas chromatograph. These and many others are not usually available in our universities and also because of that I wanted to go to a place where I would have access to and work with these new techniques so that I could learn how to practicalize biochemistry. I know that. Back home we didn't have access to things like this.

Jared concurred with this:

In addition to what you said, there is this scholarship I think it's from the United States called Fulbright Scholarship. Yeah, yeah. It came to Uniben, the school attended, I did my undergraduate studies, and as they were speaking, I asked a question. They said for you to be qualified you need to gain international exposure, and of which I discovered that I needed to gain that international exposure, like he said, gives you that edge; it makes you an international commodity to contribute to, you know, a wider scoop. So that's why I think coming to the United States would give me that same edge as well.

Adversarial Condition in Home Country

The results also found another reason cited by respondents for selecting U.S. universities. Two of them acknowledged that studying in their home countries, they were susceptible to adversarial conditions, which often made learning difficult. These interviewees mentioned that they pursued a U.S. college education as a means of escaping such disasters. Julia is from Liberia; she narrated how her mother had to get her out of the country to escape the ravaging civil war:

We were in a civil war or crisis in my native country, Liberia. And during that time, I had my parent and my older sister in a U.S... That being said, my mom tried to get me out of Liberia during the crisis and to start my bachelor's degree program. My oldest sister recommended a college in the U.S., called Chicago State, based in Chicago.

According to Julia, not only did the war pose physical danger and an unfavorable learning environment, but it also created a system of corruption within the education

setting. Her story follows:

Because a lot of the teachers in Liberia at that time were not getting their regular wages like the monthly salaries in Liberia. Teachers had to support their families and in order to support your family, you have to have means of accepting bribes, unfortunately. So, most of the teachers accepted bribes just to take care of their families because the government was not paying teachers. Keep in mind that the University of Liberia is a public-owned school or government-owned school, so they rely on government funding; it's not a private institution. And saying that, the government had just recovered from a civil war. So, a teacher or a professor unfortunately accepted bribes.

Charles also narrated his experience with the corruption of bribery in high school, which, he felt was an unacceptable situation in which to learn:

Some of them give money. Some of them gave real money. I have friends who sat in class with me who paid their way to graduate with me the year I graduated. And those friends, few of those friends I know who bribed their way did not make it or did not go to college. And then other people bribed their way through a relationship in terms of a female with a male teacher. So that did happen. I mean, we all know in Liberia it happens.

Samuel explained that he decided to come to the US for higher education as a result of constant truncation of studies in his home country due to civil and other social interruptions that became commonplace, requiring them to spend additional time acquiring a degree than usual:

And that's because of the educational system in Nigeria it requires for people to eat. It makes people spend more than the required time in school because of strikes, you know, or other social activities that affect the economic and political things that affect their education system. So, I'm doing my graduate program here but some of my peers are still doing BSc. Yep, the undergrad.

Limited College Choices in Home Country

One interviewee passionately related that pursuing a U.S. university education was a decision he made by default. In Peter's narrative, he lamented the limited number of postsecondary institutions in his home country at the time he needed one. He, therefore, began to look outside his country.

In Liberia, while I graduated from high school at the time, there were two universities, one was private, Cuttington, and one was public which was the University of Liberia. And the capacity, compared to the number of students that graduated from high school, the university, the public university, could only take so many students. So as a result there was no room for everyone to go and if you take the test, even if you are smart enough to pass, your chances of going there will have to be based on either you know somebody, but it was not by merit.

With the private universities, my parents did not have the means to send me there, even if I was smart enough to get that. So, for that reason, there was nowhere for me to go after high school. There were few community colleges or two-year institutions like in the United States. So, the best option was to look for education outside of home.

Other Reasons for Pursuing a United States College Education

Beyond the previous predisposition factors mostly cited, some respondents also stated other assorted reasons for pursuing U.S. postsecondary education. Randy's parents moved to the States. Charles pursued a U.S. college just because he wanted to come to America, and Grace had a friend in the States, so she used education to be close to her friend. She also mentioned that it was her self-motivation that led her to study in the US.

Socioeconomic Status

The research found that respondents differed on the question of the socioeconomic status of their family. It is important to remember that the class designations stated are relative to the specific West African country from which they hail. The class categories mentioned are enumerated as follows.

Upper Class

Only two of the respondents branded themselves as from an upper-class family. Willie celebrated himself as an upper-class member. He called attention to the fact that his parents could provide for the needs of the family, and that they did not lack necessities as did some families. Nat also called attention to his family's ability to cater to the needs of its own, including feeding and sending them to elite high schools. While he was careful to use the word "upper class," Nat was sure to rate his family as "above average."

Middle Class

Six of the respondents listed themselves as from the middle class. By their narratives, the common themes characteristic of this class are usually that its members

can live a comfortable life and also can afford to send their children to elite schools. Julia told of her family's SOS and described what that means:

Yeah, at that time in Liberia, I would say I was part of what you would call a middle class; all my siblings, including myself, graduated from Catholic schools. Catholic schools were pretty much costly compared to the public schools. And my mother did work at a Catholic institution. Most of the time, middle class families always sent their kids to Catholic schools and private colleges.

Roberto, too, believed his family was a middle-class one because they were able to live comfortably and provided for their needs. He also sounded a caveat that the middle-class status was by Nigerian standards:

I would say middle class in Nigeria. Nigeria's standard or African standard because my parents were not very rich but had enough money to send myself or my siblings to school. That was very, very encouraging. So, I would say middle class. They didn't have much; we went to public schools, myself and my siblings under very encouraging middle-class parents. We're not so rich, neither were we poor.

Lower Class

Three of the respondents identified their families as lower class. By their description, lower-class people usually have difficulties providing for their own needs. For the most part, people from the lower class tend to depend on scholarships to navigate their ways through college. Carl, a member of the lower class in Nigeria, is in the US on a basketball scholarship.

I came from a lower-class family... Lower class families are people who can barely make it. You know, they are people who feed from hand to mouth; in those families, you don't have majority of the kids going to college; they just finish high school and some of them might not even finish high school. They will drop out and just go learn a trade or find a business or work with their grandparents in the farm.

Lower Middle Class

One respondent labeled herself as from a lower middle-class family. She made the case that they were just slightly above the lower class, but not quite a middle class:

I would say my family is a lower middle-income family. What I mean by that is that we are in the lower quarter of the middle class when it comes to income, so we are not really up there but we are just somewhere in the middle, a little bit above low income, I will put it that way.

Neutral

The rest of the interviewees declined to rate the SES of their families. These respondents were careful not to state any particular identifying social class to which they may belong. I was, therefore, uncertain how to label them.

How Socioeconomic Factors Affected Enrollment Decision

Findings from this section of the study revealed a varied set of responses about how SES affected international students' decision to enroll in a U.S. college.

Socioeconomic Factor Served as Motivator in Enrollment Decision

Six of the international students I interviewed related that the lower or middle SES of their parents may not have facilitated their pursuit of a U.S. university, but served

as a motivator. As other respondents identified as lower or middle class, these six felt that their college prospects were doomed; hence, they had to exert some amount of self-effort to turn into opportunities those quintessential phenomena that served as potential obstacles for them. For them, it was about outdoing their parents and changing the status quo of poverty. Grace narrated how she used that low SES as an opportunity:

I actually had to push through, you know, one way or another. But the fact that I'm coming from a low-income family, for me, it's enough motivation for me to push myself so I can be better and then, you know, help my family out of poverty through getting better education and getting to work in better places.

Zobon was of the same mindset as he wanted to alleviate poverty in his mother's life:

Mostly it was. One, my thinking was alleviating poverty from my mother's side. Because once you are granted opportunities to come abroad, that helps the family in a sense. My mother used to say "I don't have life insurance; I don't have this insurance; you are my insurance. So, the better educated you are, the better chances your economic status improves." That also translates to mean "because you're not going to leave me on the sidewalk."

Socioeconomic Factors Aided Enrollment Decision

There were four respondents who acknowledged that their family's SES played a pivotal role in their enrollment decision. They related that had it not been for their parents' social standings and the fact that they were financially capable of sponsoring them, they would not have been able to enroll in a U.S. public university. Nat's father was a little wealthier; he was able to cater to his financial needs here in the States in ways

he wouldn't were it not for his financial status. He made his case in the following anecdote:

Well, it was a catalyst because it is a known fact that schooling in America is a little more expensive than back home. So, you might need to have a little bit of edge when it comes to financial stability. So, I think my family's socioeconomic status gave me the opportunity to be able to come here because I have people who can at least cater for my well-being on my education here. I'd say people who have a lower socioeconomic status may find it challenging because of the fees and what it costs to come here and study. But personally, for someone like me, I must say that was one of the factors for being here because my dad pretty much was my sponsor and is still able to take care of my fees as of now, so I'd say there was one other encouraging factor. Because I said he's retired so right now it's probably time to make best use of as much funds that we have available. But yes, socioeconomic status played a big, big role in coming to study here.

Michael believed that SES is tied to education, and vice versa. Given that his dad was educated, he motivated all his children to acquire the highest level of education possible.

Like I said, my dad was well-educated, so we all look up to that and he encouraged us to go to school to the maximum. My big brother, all have finished college, so it wasn't like a choice. It was like a path everybody's going. Education is like all that we know; everybody going through... I think that if my parents were poor I couldn't. And I think that if my father was not well educated, we wouldn't have anybody to look up to and anybody to encourage us to go that far.

Socioeconomic Status Had no Influence

There were three respondents who noted that the SES of their families had no bearing on their decisions to enroll in a U.S. university. Interestingly, these students came from differential social classes. Charles is from a higher social stratus in Liberia, but stressed that despite his parents' SES, his coming to a U. S. college had absolutely nothing to do with his family. He took advantage of a public scholarship to study as a student exchange scholar, as did 24 lucky others.

On the other hand, Tenema, who hails from a poor parental background, also received a soccer scholarship to study at a U.S. college. His narrative was clear that if it were for his parents' SES, he would not be an international student in the US.

Well, as I said earlier, it was just by the grace of God. My family, knowing the importance of education, had me live with another family, knowing that by living with them I would have gone to a better school. So, living with that family, I was able to go to a better school and they were helping me in going to that school. So right after high school, when the war came to our country, I was given the opportunity and I was able to pass the TOEFL test. That's how I got my scholarship to come here. My family's socioeconomic status would not have helped me, you know, to come to the United States for further education.

Level of Parental Education

Respondents had a chance to discuss the education statuses of their parents. From their anecdotes, there was a varied level of education among parents, ranging from no formal education to post high school education.

No Formal Education

One of the respondents noted both his parents had absolutely no former education, while four stated the same about their mothers. Tenema shared his parental educational story this way:

My parents, I would say, are very poor. They never went to college. They never even went to school. They don't speak English. They are just mere farmers, but they knew the importance of school, I don't know how... No one in my family had ever gone to college.

No High School Education

Then there were two interviewees who narrated while their fathers had gone to school, they fell short of completing high school. Peter is one of those; his dad stopped in the fourth grade but was able to use that elementary school education to become a public figure in the judicial system.

Well my mother is uneducated. My father got a fourth-grade education... They were educated traditionally because they knew the culture and they would make wise decisions. As a matter of fact, with a fourth-grade education my father became a Justice of the peace in Liberia. And justice of the peace is someone who will be in the judicial system making, well, bringing peace in the case of settling disputes between, you know, two parties. So, he knew the law, the common law and he was able to be a peacemaker because people would carry cases to him, and he would judge and decide based on what the common law says.

High School Education

Among the respondents, four disclosed their fathers earned up to a high school education. Another four spoke of their mothers having the same level of education.

Roberto spoke of both his parents in similar characterization:

Okay. Yeah like I said earlier both of them went to high school and got their secondary school learning certificate. But none of them went to college, although not too long ago, my mom went to a teaching school. She graduated with a teaching certificate. That was just recently, but before then, she had a secondary school learning certificate. And my dad too; same thing.

Ethan shared both parents were only high school graduates: My parents have the lowest level of education. I think high school; both of them high school graduates.

Post High School Education

Six students mentioned their fathers had a post high school education and five stated their mothers did. Both Richard's parents had post secondary school education, with the mother continuing to add to her repertoire:

My dad is a University graduate, and my mom has a ton of stuff just like two, three degrees. She went to school of nursing. She's a nurse, she went to a school of nursing and she also went to further her learning at a university just recently just to reinforce her degree. So, yes, they like education much.

Level of Parental Encouragement

Respondents also had the chance to discuss the level of parental encouragement received toward their pursuit of a U.S. public university. They noted the support they

received from their parents that enabled them to consider the thought of pursuing higher education in the US. The first is *Parental Encouragement*.

Received Parental Encouragement

Five of the respondents answered they received encouragement from one or both of their parents in coming to a U.S. college. These encouragements embodied mere verbal inspiration to enroll in and attain a U.S. education. Nat spoke of the encouragement he received from his father:

My dad always put it in my head that whenever I'm done with my bachelor's degree in Nigeria, he always wanted me to come to the United States to get my master's degree. So right from when I was a little kid, my dad has always said he wanted me to get my master's in America, probably because he did the same here. But that was where it all started from. It actually started from my parents encouraging me and then I took up the interests later.

In the case of Michael, he was already in the US on a different visa. He spoke in the following words concerning the persistent motivational influence of his parents, which spurred him to get enrolled:

When I came here, I didn't start school at once. I delayed, trying to work menial jobs. And when I called home, I was always asked, "Are you in school now; are you planning to go; when are you trying to go; what is preventing you?" So, it came to a time I had no answers for that, so I just had to start.

Received Parental Support

The role of parents in the college choice of their children was also manifested in the form of support. My findings from conversations with the interviewees suggested

four parents went beyond mere encouragement to involve fiscal support for their children's higher education aspiration in the US. Roberto is from Nigeria; he recounted his experience in the following words:

My parents didn't mind going the extra mile so that I go to college, even if they had to borrow money from the bank or anything. So it is really kind of encouragement I got from them, not just the motivational way, but they had to go the extra mile to search for funds to send me to school...I still remember then when I needed to pay my WAEC, West African Examination Council, my parents didn't have money, I swear. My parents had to go borrow money from the bank, you know, on interest, just to make sure I was able to write my West African exams, you know. So that was really encouraging for me. Had to do my best and make sure I could do much with flying colors so that I could go to college.

Nat noted his father had planned his college support for years. Like Roberto, his parents painstakingly had to take loans from the bank to finance his coming to the States for college. For West Africans, this was a costly form of parental support.

Yeah, he invested some money, he put some money away. He planned, you know, he budgeted my expense. Like I said, it was on a prior notion; it wasn't something that came out of the blue. So, it's something that he's always been working on. So, as I'm sure, he put away some money. He probably would have to take some loans at some point.

Zobon recounted his mother's sacrificial support for his coming to the US for college. Out of her meager income, she invested in his college search in the following way:

My mother was mostly the one putting in order the financial touches together because the scholarship was not a full scholarship. It was a tuition-based scholarship. So, you needed some additional funds. So, my mother was the main person. Even though she was selling in the market, doing all this stuff, she put those little coins together that helped me to travel to the United States.

Received No Form of Parental Encouragement

For three of the respondents, no form of parental encouragement was available. They persevered by their own motivation. Peter's mother felt attaining a high school education was good enough for him. He explained his story as follows:

Well, when it comes to my decision to go to college and the support that I got, whether financial or moral, from my parents, I would say my parents did not care one way or another whether I went to college or not. To them High School, or to my mom, High school was good enough. At least to her, I had acquired something she did not, which is graduating from high school. So, whether I went to college or not, you know, that was self-determined.

Level of High School Peer Education

The respondents also talked about the level of education of their high school peers. While for many, it may have been many years since high school, each participant gave a fair assessment to the best of their knowledge.

Post High School Education

Thirteen of those interviewed remarked most of their high school peers went on to college and either have or are in the process of acquiring a post high school degree. Nat sounded very confident in his estimates when he spoke of his high school peers:

What if I'm being honest, about 70 percent of my friends and peers with whom we went to college together are almost done, if not done, with the Masters in different countries. Some live in the United Kingdom, the United States, a few of them are in countries like Russia. But yeah, most of them are pretty much done; have at least done their master's. I had to wait three years after graduation from my bachelor's degree to come for my masters. A lot of my friends just went straight ahead and did their master's. So yeah, most of them, if not all of them I know, most of them are actually done with their master's although some didn't pursue their masters but yeah, most of them did. It was kind of like the idea that everybody graduates from college and you want to do a masters in Nigeria.

Peter, too, gave an even higher statistical figure of his high school peers who went on to college:

Well, most of my schoolmates I graduated with, we all started together. I would say three fourths of them went to college, got their first degree. There are a few of them who did not, but that I will stay away from. So, I would say 75 percent of my peers with whom I grew up went to college.

No Post High School Education

There were three respondents who lamented that most of their peers did not make it on to college. Ethan went to high school in rural Nigeria. He told his story as follows:

Yeah. The mentality is, after high school everybody needs to go to college; doesn't mean everybody goes to college because not everybody can afford it.

Right. Exactly. So like people I went to high school with, I went to high school in a very rural area and most people who finished either just went on and just

went on with their lives. Very few of us actually went to college. So I think people want to go to college, but they can't afford to go to college in most cases.

Carl noted that he is the most educated among his high school peers:

Well, some of my high school peers back home didn't go to college. Some of them started doing business. Some of them that tried to get some type of education learned a trade. You know, to be very honest, among my peers, I'm the only one with the highest level of education because I came to the States. I went to a four-year college and graduated.

The rest of the respondents either did not discuss the level of education of their high school peers or mentioned they had little to no contact with them since graduation. Those participants blamed their peers' shortcomings on adversities such as poverty, warfare, and lack of encouragement or support.

Level of Peer Encouragement

I asked interviewees about the level of encouragement received from their high school peers toward pursuing a U.S. college education. Their responses varied.

Received Peer Encouragement

Three of the respondents stated they received a significant amount of encouragement from their friends in high school to come to the US for studies. Peter narrated an interesting way in which he and his friends encouraged each other to go to college after high school:

Well, the thing is in high school we were very competitive; so competitive means to try to keep up with current events and try to see who could outdo one another as far as knowing what is going on you know. So, when it comes to college, it

was all about what are you going to do after high school, those kinds of question, you know. So it gave you something to think about and the only way you could be able to compete with your friends is to be able to have knowledge of something you wanted to do and that will lead to a career path. So, you start to research on your own or through your friends, based on what they tried to do. If the person says, “Oh, I want to be an engineer”, you start to find out what an engineer does and then with that you try to find your way with it. So, I would say indirectly they prepared me to look at colleges after high school because we were competing against one another to know what you're going to do next.

Received No Peer Encouragement

Four of the respondents noted they received no peer encouragement toward pursuing a U.S. college education. Interestingly, each of those students cited reasons why. Grace did not talk much to her peers about her desire for education past high school because of the uncertainty of it happening:

So, it was admiration like “Oh wow, so you want to reach out to, you know, to do something like that?” or “You want to go outside the country?” I really didn’t speak too much to my peers about it. I didn't talk to them about it because not many people were sure of the possibility of that happening. It was considered a miracle for that to happen in some cases.

For personal reasons, Roberto did not share his ambitions with his peers. He kept his plans to himself until he was already in the US. His narrative follows:

To be honest with you, we never discussed about this to us. People I really discussed about my ambition to study in the United States were my peers I met in

the universities. So for those of them I met in a school, many of them were just thinking on graduating and getting a good job in West Africa and, you know, get a business and have a family; I wasn't thinking in that direction. I didn't hang around them a lot because my mind was already set to travel...I didn't really get much encouragement from them because I didn't discuss my vision with them in the first place because we didn't share similar ideas or similar ambition.

Zobon did not receive any encouragement from his peers, and for that matter, anybody. He kept his good news to himself. He explained that he is from a culture of people who *tend to cast a spell of witchcraft* on people who were seen to be making some social upward mobility. His explanation follows:

Oh, when I was coming, our names were on the radio all the time. But I denied it. So, I can't say how I got encouragement for anybody because I was, you know, traveling from Liberia to the United States, and that is a big deal. You are afraid of witchcraft. So, you didn't want to expose yourself to anyone that you are traveling to the United States. So, I did not get any advice from anyone, to tell you the truth.

High School Preparation for United States College

Respondents also discussed the level of preparation received from their high schools that helped prepare them for college work in the US. Responses were grouped into two categories.

Received Some Level of High School Preparation

A total of 11 interviewees discussed some forms of benefit received from their high schools in their college aspiration. They spoke of this college preparation in terms

of General Education courses such as science, math, and reading. Josephine believed her high school sciences helped her gain mastery in college work:

In terms of like science related courses, I feel like when I got here the math and chemistry they were teaching us on college level was like nothing compared to what I learned. I don't know about any other person but what I learned in high school in like for math and in science related classes is like really on a higher level. So, I mean I got to class, and I saw people struggling in things that I learned in high school. So, I'll say, it's not the easiest, because the kind of teaching was kind of tough. So, when you come here, you're like okay I'm over prepared for this.

In high school, Tenema was not sure what to make of his typing class, which he and his classmates so ridiculed. Notwithstanding, he later found that the course paid dividend in college:

Oh, it helped a lot because when we were growing up at first, we thought some of the things we were learning in our school were not important, like, for instance, I would say typing. Typing was something that I learned when I was in high school. And we were saying “What will I do with typing?” But when I came here, even though it was not typing anymore, it was computer, but the same fundamental ideas go for typing on a computer and that helped me a lot in learning how to type on a computer quickly.

Julia said she owes her high GPA to her overall high school preparation: “Yeah. In order to apply for an academic scholarship, you have to have a GPA that is not less

than 3.5. And my government exam score, which is similar to the SAT score, was within that range.”

Randy, too, stated that he believes he owes his ability to pass admission tests, such as SAT, ACT, and TOEFL, to the rigor of high school preparation he received. He explained:

In my high school, there was SAT, there was TOEFL, there was Cambridge; I even wrote Cambridge so that really prepared me because Cambridge is a very hard exam; it's really, really, really hard. So now that I'm here, I know it's kind of like easier, it's just a little bit somewhat easier. Sure yeah.

Received No High School Preparation

While many were able to point out areas where their high schools helped prepare them for U.S. college, four respondents felt that they received absolutely no high school preparation. Roberto categorically dismissed his high school's abilities to bring about such effect in him:

I would say, because the high school I went to..., I'm not sure they had any idea of studying in the United States. We are not informed; we were not told anything about the possibilities of going abroad to countries like the United States to study so I had no form of information or encouragement.

The rest of the interviewees did not address the question of college preparation by their high schools.

Summary of RQ1

The previous section of the chapter discussed findings from the first research question on West African international student college choice. In answering that

question, participants discussed the predispositions that led them to a U.S. public university for postsecondary education. All participants did not respond to every question.

Of the 24 interviewees, six discussed they decided to pursue college education in the US because they were provided some forms of scholarship. Three of them were scholars of a student exchange program between a Chicago university and the Government of Liberia. Another three received other forms of aid such as athletic scholarships.

Seven respondents explored U.S. college education for the perceived prospect of opportunities, specifically employment. They held that a U.S. education would maximize their chances at landing better paid jobs, whether in the US or in West Africa. Three wanted exposure to modernized facilities and technologies they lacked in their home countries as medical students. They lamented that for the most part, their studies at home were principally limited to theories and concepts, and they wanted to explore a more cutting-edge, practical side.

Two participants stated that they chose U.S. education as a path to escape unfavorable conditions that prevailed in their home countries, such as civil wars and a corrupt form of education, which encompassed bribing one's way through college. One said he looked to the US for postsecondary education because he had only two university choices in his home country at the time. Others mentioned assorted reasons such as their parents had moved to the States or the fact they had friends in the US they wanted to be around.

Participants also had the chance to discuss the socioeconomic status of their families. They identified themselves as follows: two from the upper class, six from the middle class, three from the lower class, and one from the lower-middle class. Students made it clear these designations were only relative to their West African milieu. In addition, rather than asserting themselves as upper, middle, and low class, most respondents preferred to describe themselves in terms of what their families could afford and what they couldn't.

Six of the respondents discussed that while the SES of their parents did not facilitate their enrollment in a U.S. university, it served as a motivator. The SES of their families was not enough to enable them to acquire a Western education, so they had to aggressively find other means for themselves. Four credited their family's SES for their being able to study in the US, while another three responded their family SES had absolutely no bearing on their enrollment in a U.S. university because regardless of their SES, they were offered some forms of scholarship.

Respondents also discussed the level of education of their parents as a predisposition factor. Six stated their fathers acquired some level of postsecondary education, while five said their mothers did. Four discussed both father and mother acquired up to a high school education, while two said their father was a high school dropout. One spoke of both parents having absolutely no formal education, while four stated the same about just their mothers. They also talked about the level of parental encouragement received. On the line of parental encouragement received, five interviewees answered they received encouragements from their parents to pursue a U.S. post high school education. These encouragements were limited to verbal

encouragements. For four of them, their parental encouragement took on the form of financial support toward their coming. Three responded they received no form of encouragement as they had to persevere by their own motivation.

Respondents also delved into the issue of their high school peers. Thirteen of them answered most of their high school peers went on to college in the US, while three stated that most did not. Three participants said they received some level of encouragement toward coming to a U.S. school, while four said they did not. Many of those who received no peer encouragement blamed it on either peer unavailability due to the then ongoing civil war or their personal desire to remain private about their aspirations.

Respondents discussed their high school preparation and college preparation courses synonymously. For 11 of them, these two predisposition factors overlapped. They considered General Education courses taught in high school, such as mathematics, biology, chemistry, algebra, English, and reading, as what helped them succeed in college. When it came to college preparatory courses, eight participants discussed that those same General Education courses helped prepare them for college. Three participants answered their high schools offered no college preparatory courses.

RQ2: What are the search factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

The next stage in the college search process is the search stage. Students at this time typically make a choice list of schools they would like to attend (Bergerson, 2009). Upon analyzing the data, the following are findings from the second research question.

Search Process for a United States University

For some respondents, their search process was explored using an Internet search, while others used alternative means of searching for a U.S. college. There were a few who did not have to search for a university because the opportunities availed themselves.

Internet Search

For 10 respondents, their search was carried out using the Internet and was guided by already defined factors of interest to them. Samuel's search process was carried out using the Internet. He had a set of criteria that guided his search, such as cost, affordability, scholarships:

So, my search process for U.S. schools, I went on the Internet to check for schools that were very good for the costs, or the context of what I was looking for. Then I singled out the ones I thought I could pay or that I could sponsor, or my parents could sponsor. I also looked for scholarships, and not just scholarships but obviously the ones I was interested in when it comes to nutrition, for example.

Nat mentioned that his online search was guided by cities where he knew people:

But the search process was pretty much, the first stage, I'd say is going online and just Google a bunch of schools, check into schools in the area you want. So, when I started, I restricted my search to Boston, Alabama, Maryland, which is obviously where I have family. So, I just checked into areas where I think I may have people for accommodation.

Grace's focus was on Healthcare, so she described her Internet search the following way:

First, the first keywords I typed in when I was looking for colleges in the US were "master's in health care administration". And then I saw the likes of the Johns

Hopkins or the U.N.C's. and all that... In Nigeria when we apply to schools, we just sent in our JAM scores to those schools and then call people we knew in those schools. But here it was different. So, I had to apply online and pay the application fees.

Alternative Means

While many were employing the medium of Internet, one student noted he did not have access to the novel technology. Despite his limitation, he still pursued his college search through alternative means. Tenama's home country of Liberia was going through a civil war at the time he graduated from high school. He had been displaced as a refugee in another West African country where they lacked the luxury of Internet. He employed the traditional postal mail service as a means of college search. He narrated his experience thus:

Well, when we went into the refugee camp, I don't know how I got this dictionary, but this dictionary had all the universities and colleges addresses at the back of the dictionary. And so, I used to look at them and write a letter to anyone that I fell in love with. I would just pick that one and write them and, you know ask them for a scholarship... I sent several letters out to so many universities and colleges asking for help and that was the only means that I had but nobody gave me any scholarship.

Four interviewees answered that they did not have to search for a university; the opportunities availed themselves in the form of scholarships, and they jumped on them. Carl was one of those who benefited from a basketball scholarship he was not anticipating:

After high school back home in Nigeria I never knew I was going to go to college back home in Nigeria, talk more of going to college in the United States. I was supposed to go to a technical school there, but because I play basketball, I had an opportunity to come to the states. Now, I didn't have an opportunity to pick and choose a college in the United States of America because I didn't really know anything, but a school offered to pay for scholarship, and I jumped at the opportunity.

Peter was one of 25 Nancy B. Doe scholars at a university in Chicago; he told his story of how he enrolled at a school to which he did not apply:

It came about when a scholarship was announced. And they were looking for high school graduates that wanted to go to college. And you know all you had to do was to take an aptitude test, and based on your score, there would be a selection process. So, I did this, and I made it. And the rest was history.

Top Priorities in a United States University Search

The findings from this section revealed when it comes to top priorities, West African international students have a varied set of priorities. Those priorities are discussed as follows.

Cost and Scholarships

In answering the question of their top priorities, participants I interviewed spoke of cost and scholarship in the same breath. They interchangeably used these words to denote their concern for the cost of their education and the means of defraying such cost. A total of 10 respondents cited their top priorities were cost and scholarship. Roberto was willing to enroll in whatever institution that was generous to grant him a scholarship:

My top priority was to get a scholarship with a full tuition waiver. That was just my top priority, that any school that could afford me a full tuition waiver and decide to fund my living expenses, I would go to that school, regardless of any other considerations. That was my top priority.

He was not alone; Tenema, too, had a similar plight:

I tell you I had no top priorities. All I wanted was scholarship. Any university or college that would have given me a scholarship to come here for studies, I would have grabbed onto it. So, if I were to answer your question, my priority was scholarship. Not so most of the name of the college or the university, just scholarship.

Admissions Requirements

In addition to cost and scholarships, there were two participants who noted they were concerned about admissions requirements. Rachel was concerned about academics, such as test score records of graduates:

I looked out for the requirements. When it comes to academic test scores, I know that some schools require higher scores. Personally, when I was looking at Western, it was one of the schools that really, they didn't ask for my GRE. My department didn't ask for my GRE, even though I did it. I didn't have a very good score. So that was one of the criteria I considered.

Taylor, also, discussed she had placed much emphasis on admission test requirements:

Of course, I considered the tuition. I also considered the requirements...the TOEFL, the GRE and all that. Yeah, I know. Yeah. Yeah. Because I realized some schools, they still require TOEFL English proficiency test from West

Africans. You know we speak English, you know. So, I considered that. Yeah. Yeah. I considered the GRE, because some schools, their cutoff mark is very high, you know...so those were the top priorities I considered.

Other Top Priorities

Aside from those previously mentioned, four of the participants cited a litany of other top preferences they had for their college search. Almost all respondents mentioned multiple factors they considered top priorities. Those factors encompassed degrees and courses offered, proximity to family and friends, language, and dormitories. For Michael, it was school rating and friendliness of the college staff. He worded it this way:

I was looking for how many people go there, how many people pass their final board exams. I was looking for what people say about the school. I was thinking I went there, meet people who are working there. I was looking to see if they are nice and friendly to talk to, you know. So, these are things I looked for.

Peter was one of 25 students who came to a Chicago university from Liberia on a student exchange program in 1984. He stated that a top priority was to enjoy life in a dormitory as he studied in his host country. As Peter narrated, this was not the case, as he and his compatriots had to share living spaces at the homes of American host families.

First of all, I was told that the school had a dormitory, which was not true. And so, I expected to have come and lived on the dormitory. Not expecting to come and have to try to find my own way. So, it was a shocker to know that everything that was said was a lie, besides just the fact that I had a free ride to college was shocking because there were no dormitories when I arrived.

Role of High School in Gathering College Information in Search Process

All 24 respondents in this study unanimously reported not receiving any assistance from their high schools in searching for a college in the US. They stated there were no personnel at their institutions such as a guidance counselor who sought the academic interests of students, nor were the systems designed to do so. They also did not have any options of doing a dual credit program to accelerate their college pursuit. When asked why they lacked such programs, Grace believed it was a systemic issue embedded in the country's high school system:

I would say exposure. The school itself did not explore that idea of linking students leaving their high schools with reputable schools either in Nigeria or outside the country. So, there was no link. There was no initiative by the school to start something to link students up with colleges. And I went to a very rural school, say maybe infrastructure was a challenge but exposure was also a huge challenge.

Wayne is from Nigeria. He went to a rural school in his West African home country. He expressed the same lament over his high school's inability to provide them any assistance in gathering information on potential colleges and universities:

Like I said Initially, I went to a public school. Many of the teachers were not exposed. I'm sorry to say this; I'm sorry to say this but they had no clue as to study abroad, so they never told us. I think I heard about TOEFL, GRE about two years ago.

Role of Family in Gathering College Information in Search Process

Findings from the interviews with respondents in this study suggested that family played a major role in the search process of their college choice. The role of family at this stage included helping to gather information about prospective colleges. There were other respondents who reported otherwise.

Familial Assistance Received

Five students in this study disclosed they received assistance from their families in the search process. They mentioned those helps were concentrated at seeking and securing universities with possible scholarship and grant prospects. Often, this encompassed the art of networking among family members both at home and abroad.

Josephine narrated how her father was helpful in her search process:

My father helped me get the feel for what I was looking for. So, I related to him or what I wanted, what my plans where, and then what he did, he helped me search. Sometimes he comes across some articles or whatever and he sends them to me through Whatsapp or whatever and he told me this is, this has this content; check if this is what you want...

Nat's dad, while living in Nigeria, actively assisted in his search process by networking with his brother in the US, who also collaborated with a friend to get information on possible best options of universities for Nat:

And my family helped me gather information by so many ways. One of the ways they helped me gather information was my dad talked to his brother, who currently lives in Alabama... So yeah, my family really helped me get our information based on soliciting and talking to people, home and abroad.

No Familial Assistance Received

There were nine who reported receiving no familial assistance in gathering information during their college search. Grace was one of such persons.

There was not any active role like they didn't check the school website or say, "I think you should try this school." They just said, if that was something I was willing to do I should go ahead and do. So, I actually did the information gathering myself. So, no individual family members helped search for school for me.

Richard, too, reported receiving no help from his family in gathering school information.

I would say, in my extended family, I think like I am the first. I didn't get any information from them. Honestly, you know I have some family relations in the US but none of them came here to study. Yeah, yeah probably they got some work, got married and all that. So, I'm like the first to be here for studies, you know. Yeah. So, I didn't get any information from them. They were even surprised how I managed to get here for study and all that.

No Search Process Participation

Four respondents reported they did not participate in the traditional college search process. Rather, their schools were either selected by family members or they received a scholarship opportunity. Those students narrowly focused on those particular universities throughout the entire choice process. Julia summarized how both sister and mother went all out for her in selecting a university and securing a scholarship:

My family did live in Chicago...So based upon that my sister was able to get the enrollment document from the University. It was faxed over to me in Liberia, and I took that document over to the embassy to apply for entry to the US.

Zobon, too, narrated a similar story in his experience:

I did not do a search for a university in the United States. I was given a school and told this school offers a scholarship for 25 students and all you have to do is to take an exam and if you pass you'll be able to attend the school.

Role of Friends in Gathering College Information in Search Process

Participants also discussed the role of friends in their college search process, especially with respect to gathering college information.

Friend Assistance Received

In the study, 10 participants answered they received assistance from their friends in their college search. Taylor's friends advised on specific things to consider in his search; they also suggested specific information to seek at those institutions:

I have a friend who has been here for about five years. I have another who had been here for a year. And they provided me information about schools you know. First of all, they tell me I need to consider tuition. Consider if they offer graduate assistantship, consider the environment too, you know, and the weather. They told me about all of this, and they also helped me with some schools and told me I should apply...Sometimes they sent me some schools and said, "Check this out." Check if they have what you want to study.

Nat discussed a unique way he benefited from support of friends. He was part of a support group, where he and some friends regularly met and did online college search for U.S. schools. He went at length to describe this experience:

My friends too also helped me gather information in the sense we found a group where we just basically sat down and did research and checked the schools that we wanted to go to. It required a lot of Internet support. Most of the time we just sit together and do research and we just look for schools. I would say friends were a very big motivation, even more than my family because I was more involved with the research process of friends as compared to my family trying to help me do everything and just linking me up with people. With my friends, I actually had a more hands on, that's the word...hands on experience. We did research because we could check together, subtract schools we felt were not good enough for us based on requirements. It was more of a motivational process with my friends.

Interestingly, some respondents also recounted they began to consider their present universities by way of word of mouth. They admitted they had not even heard of the institutions; and had it not been for someone who had had a favorable experience with his alma mater, they might not have ever heard of those institutions. Grace's attention was on Canadian colleges and universities until a friend told her about the US college she presently attends. Her story is cited as follows:

Okay in the US initially. I didn't even apply to any school here in the US. My direction was towards Canada. And so, I applied to the University of Toronto, British Columbia University, and then here I found out about Rutgers University,

but I never applied. And then I remembered that I had a friend here. I spoke to him and he recommended applying to WKU. So, I checked the WKU website and the Health Care Administration program.

No Friend Assistance Received

Two participants received no assistance from friends toward their college search process. These two interviewees had distinct reasons. Julia went through high school during some difficult times when her country was going through a civil war. She reported not having the kind of typical teenage years she had wished. Due to the political uprising in her country, everyone was busy seeking safety wherever they could and had no time congregating to discuss life after high school. Therefore, her friends didn't have an opportunity to be of help. Below is her story:

My friends played a very limited role because, as I said, most of my friends fled the country during the Civil War and, by surprise, when I got into college, it was then that I began to learn from some people that a friend of yours is in this States, etc. So, I'd say my friends did not play any role in my coming to the United States.

John purposely did not tell anyone about his coming. He narrated that traditionally, that was the safest way to embrace the opportunity of coming to America:

It's kind of funny but most of the time when you are planning to come to the US or to go to the UK, it is something between you and your family. It's more like on the low key. When you get to the US before you have to tell people. First thing, you're not sure it's going to work. So, you know not to blow your own

trumpet before. I mean *we believe in black magic* and things like that. Things like that actually affect spiritual beliefs.

Role of Admissions Process in Search Process

Interviewees admitted that the admissions process played a vital role in their search process. For individual respondents, the vitality of the role played by the admissions process varied.

Prompt Response from Admissions Office

Three of the respondents spoke of how they received prompt responses from the admissions offices to which they applied, and how those gestures were of help in developing their choice set of potential colleges. A graduate student, John was motivated by prompt responses. He narrated once he emailed, he received immediate feedback:

The graduate coordinator was really helpful. You know, I sent an e-mail directly to him and from there, everything went smoothly. And of course, the international office, too. They responded very promptly to e-mails. They were very helpful. I got all the information I needed.

Ease of Admissions Process

For three of the participants, it was the ease at which the admissions process rolled out at the search stage. Nat explained in the following paragraph:

...the ease of admission, the ease of making payments for application was a big factor...So yeah the admissions process, the ease of the admissions process was a big factor for me because I applied to different schools and of course depending on the one that came in at first then it seems easier to me. You know, not considering on cost yet but the application process was one of the big factors I

considered. So yeah, the ease of admission played a big part in my choice for a school in the United States.

Friendliness of Admissions Office

Five of the respondents thought the admissions offices included in their choice sets were friendly, among other things. Roberto answered that he considered those universities because he found the admissions staff friendly:

They were friendly; they helped me a lot. They had an international student organization, international diplomats, students who are acting as international diplomats from different countries, you know, at the school; so, they helped me with vital information. They helped me in that area. They were friendly.

Carl was looking for a basketball scholarship. He considered universities with friendly recruiting staff:

Yes, they are. You know because they don't have any option but to be, because you're a, you know, you're a new student they want to have the first good impression so that they can be able to lure you in their college. You know, it's just like whenever you get into college, they can do whatever they want there.

Waiving Admissions Test Requirement

Two participants were thrilled by the fact that the universities they dealt with did not require an English proficiency test scores:

What Julia liked about the admissions process was that she was not required to take an admission test, such as the TOEFL.

The admissions process of that school was extremely helpful and a lot easier for me. Because I did not have to take an entry level exam. When I came to the

States, I just filled out the documentation to enroll in school; I did not have to take any kind of entry level exam, and so it made it a lot easier.

Role of Cost and Aid in Search Process

Cost of education and aid as a concomitant factor was a subject of discussion with West African international students who sat through this interview. The study found there were two schools of thought.

Cost and Aid as Major Factors

The findings discovered the cost of education was a major factor for nine respondents, even as they explored U.S. public universities. Coming from a culture of lower social class and considering the lopsided exchange rates of their local currencies to the U.S. dollar, respondents reported having to seek out varied options of defraying their education costs, such as scholarships and graduate assistantships. Zach stated he was focused on cost and mentioned what an important role that played in his search:

Cost was the first thing. I wanted a school I could afford if I ever had to pay out of pocket. The next thing was as I was looking for schools that had GA opportunities because I realized that having GA opportunities would help me get assistance. Yes, yes it will help me reduce the cost of tuition and those were two things I was looking for.

Grace mentioned how important college cost was to her search and how she explored options to meet those costs:

Financial aid was very, very important to me. I subscribed to every financial aid website I could find. It was very important. Schools that were very expensive, I

didn't bother applying. So even though I knew that I met their requirement and all of that like, UNC and the others, I didn't bother applying.

Roberto busied himself searching for low-cost universities and scholarships at the same time. His parents were unable to sponsor him:

It was very vital because I knew where I was coming from and my parents couldn't afford to send me to the United States to study with tuition fees, although I was expecting a full ride scholarship. So I was looking at schools that had not too high tuition cost, at the same time I was hoping that, regardless of the cost, if I had had a full ride, I would appreciate that. So, the cost was a factor, but my interest was getting a full ride scholarship.

Cost was so much an overwhelming factor that Richard was determined he would not pursue a U.S. university if he did not find a scholarship to defray the cost of his study:

Yeah, I think that was a major factor for me coming down here that it's either I get scholarship, or I wouldn't come to the United States. I got that directly from when I was in Nigeria. Because how am I going to pay for my tuition if I don't have a scholarship and all that. I think that is a major factor for many West Africans because how can they afford to school in the United States where if you compare the dollar to our currency ratio, it is something else, you know that so the different is so much, we can't afford to study here without a scholarship.

Cost and Aid as a Non-Factor

There were four who reported cost of education was not a factor in their college search process. Consequently, they did not have to go out of their ways seeking aids. Those students were ones who were already being considered for some form of

scholarships or had been approved for a student exchange program to study in the US. Julia was one of those. She reported she did not have to concern herself with cost as she did not have to participate in a search process since she was already on the pathway of receiving a full scholarship. She confidently recounted:

The cost of the school was expensive but not for my financial process, because I was on an academic scholarship, it played a vital role for me because I did not have to come out of my pocket for anything. Everything was covered so long I maintained a 3.5 GPA or above.

Peter was a Nancy B. Doe scholar. He only cared about being accepted for the student exchange program, not the cost of study.

Well, because it was a scholarship, everything was underwritten by the university here then whoever was selected will be given a full ride for four years. And the government will take care of the other part of it. That was the agreement.

Role of Location and Climate in Search Process

All respondents unanimously reported the location of the university or its climate played absolutely no role in their search. They explored universities with a flexible mindset, being ready to embrace whichever would provide them with the most generous scholarship. For Charles, he just wanted to come to the States:

It didn't matter. I could have gone to a project and it would not have mattered as long as I came to America. That's all. That was my goal to come to America. If I had come here, I probably would not have gone to XXXXXXXX XXXX University. I would have selected something else; wherever I would end up is where I would

have found a school to go to. I didn't select the school. I did not have a choice as to what school I went to. It didn't matter.

Grace joked that she wanted to see the snow:

It really didn't change or influence my decision. I always wanted to see the snow. So if I was going to go somewhere where the snow was going to fall and then, you know, it will make it nicer for me to have that experience, so I really didn't bother about it.

Tenema explained that until he arrived, he did not think there was more friendly weather in parts of the US:

Actually, I was not looking at climate because back home, when we were in Africa, all you know is the whole of America is cold. I got here before I knew that there were certain areas that are warmer than the other areas. So, my choice was not based on climate condition or whatsoever. I just wanted to come to a university or college for studies.

Nat would have loved to be in a warmer climate, probably close to his family in the US but he did not care about those luxuries as long as he had a place to live and study:

Well, let's be honest. That didn't really matter to me because the location is the United States. The climate is different from what we have back home, so I don't really care so much about the location. And to be honest, even though I have families scattered around different states in America, I wasn't really looking, you know, at the location although I would have been better if I was close to my family members, but it wasn't a determining factor. I just wanted to get a good school in a good environment.

Role of Degrees Offered in Search Process

Degrees offered by the university was another focus of discussion, with respondents differing on the role that played in their college search.

Degrees Did Not Matter

Seven respondents answered that as they navigated the search process, the degrees offered by universities did not play a major role in their pursuit of those institutions. Given that participants were not fixed on a particular degree, they were flexible enough to switch areas of study when necessary. Though Julia had planned on studying in one academic program, she was flexible to settle for a closely related degree just to be near her sister.

Yeah, the degree the school offered fit in line with what I wanted to do in college. Even though from the beginning I always wanted to enroll into an engineering college, but XXXXXXXX College was not the traditional engineering kind of degree. XXXXXXXX College is a school of arts and entertainment..., so when I came across the curriculum and I saw sound engineering, it was fascinating to me and I enrolled into the sound engineering program.

Nat, too, explained how flexible he was in his search:

I was actually more flexible than fixed when I started. I have a background in microbiology, which kind of opens the door to expanding into every field you want to go to so I wasn't too streamlined on one degree offered because I could use my undergraduate degrees and you know spread my tentacles into probably public health, environmental health, you know, something. I was still in the category of health sciences because that's what I studied in my undergraduate

degree. So, it wasn't really restricted to one course, it was just more like in a department or in the faculty of Public Health.

Tenema did not have an academic plan. He just wanted to get a U.S. education. He mentioned that his plan was to first get to the States, and then he would make up his mind what to study:

I had no choice of a degree. I wanted to come here knowing that when I got here and entered a college or university, I will be able to tell what I wanted to do. At first I was looking at business, you know or a college that has business or maybe ministry or looking at all of those things, but my main thing was a scholarship to get my foot in the system first.

Degrees Mattered

For three of the respondents, the degrees offered did matter to them in their search process. They did not proceed with a particular institution if it did not offer what they wanted. Grace was torn between two forms of health administration degrees offered by a variety of schools. To choose which universities to pursue, she mentioned having to do a little bit of research:

That was very, very, very important for me. Some schools give an MPH for Health Care Administration Masters. Some schools give an MHA. So, I had to research the difference between an MHA and an MPH and in what areas they had those degrees function best.

Role of Quality Education in Search Process

Respondents differed on the role of quality education in their college search. For some, that played a significant role in their pursuit, while others did not think so.

Quality Education Mattered

There were four respondents who cited that the quality of education did matter to them in their search for universities. They mentioned that the quality of education of those universities, in part, encouraged them to explore those institutions further. For Michael, quality of education mattered. His test for quality encompassed the pass/fail record of the students who sat the board exams at each institution for the chemistry course he wanted to pursue:

It really matters. I checked to see how many people would pass the course that I was going to do every time they sit on board. I knew some people who were doing that course from my work and I asked them how teachers behaved, how did teachers, you know, do whatever they do.

Grace meticulously perused the course descriptions of each of the schools she considered in her search process:

I was sure I went through the course descriptions of each of those forms... And that was the best measure of the quality of education that I could get. I also asked my friend who was already here what the program was like. I heard that he used to go for case competitions. And those kinds of things intrigue me, and I felt like yes it was going to be a challenging, interesting place to go to school.

Zach narrated that he researched the chemistry departments to convince himself if that was somewhere he wanted to study.

Yeah, I considered, I considered what I wanted to study. I have a university degree in biochemistry... The graduate school chemistry department has research across all areas of chemistry in biochemistry, inorganic or organic and all that...

So, when I checked, apart from the scholarship they offered, I discovered they also had those stuffs, so I was okay with that.

Quality Education Did Not Matter

A total of 12 participants discussed they pursued universities for reasons other than the level of their education quality. Nat did not consider the quality of education because, as he stated, American universities were assumed to be of quality compared to those in his home country:

So, one belief we have is that considering, you know, we that come from Africa, from Nigeria. Personally, I had this impression the quality of education in America is more standard than what we have back home. So, coming to America was more of an upgrade, compared to what we have back home. So, I just naturally assumed the quality of education will be at least, you know, above average.

Peter, too, assumed the quality of education was high just because the institution was in the US:

Well, you know, to be frank I could not think about the quality of education because of the fact that I was going to the United States of America. And the thing was I was going to Xxxxxx Xxxx XXXXXXXXXXXX in Chicago, so that just told me the quality of education was so high. That was my expectation.

Tenema did not care about quality; all he wanted was a university that would accept his application and enable him to study in the United States. He spoke of his lack of knowledge of university accreditation:

To admit the fact, I didn't even know there were some schools that were accredited and some that were not. I never knew anything about accreditation.

All I wanted was a school that would accept me. If there's a difference between accreditation and non-accreditation it wasn't even in my mind.

Role of Proximity to Home, Family, and Friends in Search Process

When it comes to what role proximity to family, friends, and home played in the search process, West African international students I interviewed provided mixed responses. For some, those factors did play a major role; for others, the roles were so insignificant they did not even consider it.

Proximity Mattered

Four of the respondents remarked that proximity to someone they knew did matter to them as they considered universities. Julia wanted to stay close to her sister and mother as she commuted at a reasonable distance to school.

Yes, it did matter to me and very important too because I wanted to be at a school that I can be able to go to school and at the same time come home within the same day and my commute should be no more than a 45-minute train ride maximum.

Randy's initial search was primarily directed at schools in cities where he knew people.

He told his story in the following words:

Yeah, it did matter to me while I was looking for schools initially. I was searching for schools where my friends were, like I had friends in Cleveland. I had friends in Atlanta and all that... Eventually I discovered I'm grown up; I could you know take care of myself and just do what I have to do and all that.

Proximity Did Not Matter

Some respondents thought the opposite about proximity to familiar faces. Seven answered that proximity did not matter to them. Carl was on a basketball scholarship; he remarked where he lived did not matter as he had a purpose to fulfill, which was education.

Well it wouldn't have mattered because back home in Africa we are raised to survive in every situation we are. I'm already 7000 miles away from my family. So, let's say I'm in Wisconsin and I got a scholarship to go play in Hawaii. It's not gonna matter because at the end of the day, you're here to get your education and in your situation, basketball is your vehicle. You're taught to slide into the tunnel. And if it's leading you to Hawaii to get that education, you don't have any option.

Like Carl, Peter did not consider the proximity of school to people he knew because he felt that he was on a mission and did not want to be distracted:

No, it did not, because I was coming to do something so I prepared myself to go away for four years, with the hope that once I got back, it would be a joyous day. I could talk to them from that distance so it did not matter because the opportunity said go and come back just in four years and everything will be okay. So, I think it was just to me a no-brainer.

Charles was one of 25 students who came to a Chicago University on a student exchange program from Liberia. Because of this scholarship, he did not participate in the traditional search process of colleges because his school had been handpicked. He reported, however, that the proximity of the school to his family and friends also did not

matter. He and his peers were just glad to be in America. Nonetheless, he added that later in the process of schooling he came to regret this.

It didn't matter to me and to most of the people I knew because I think everybody was just anxious to go to school and were just happy to be here. It didn't matter where they lived. Everybody decided to just focus on school. It didn't impact us until later when things started going wrongly. Maybe like a year later, it did impact a lot of us, including myself.

Roberto had a similar experience. He did not consider the proximity of schools during his search but later regretted not making it a factor:

I didn't consider it. But right now, I think it really matters. I'm really isolated out here. I'm very far from my friends. I didn't think about it, but yeah again, like I said initially, I was only thinking of getting a full ride scholarship and all that. But right now, I think it would have been really, really helpful if I had considered that.

Role of Diversity in Search Process

When it came to diversity on college campus, respondents differed on the role this factor played in their search process.

Diversity Mattered

Five interviewees responded that diversity on campus did matter to them as they searched universities. However, they were quick to add they were not firm on their desire for diversity. Carl from Nigeria narrated diversity was in the forefront of his mind as he would have loved to be around people who looked like him, but at the same time, he was flexible:

Well, it played a role because I would like to be around, you know, people who look like me. But at the same time, I was raised to be acceptable of everybody, no matter your race, creed, and belief. So, I went to a school where Caucasian dominated. And I got along with everybody.

Coming from Liberia, Zobon narrated he had given diversity some consideration in his search process but mentioned he had no choice as he thought the US, being a “White” country, would have a dominantly Caucasian student population on campus regardless.

Diversity Did Not Matter

For seven of the participants, diversity played no role in their search process. Nat bluntly mentioned that diversity didn’t matter: “I’m not going to lie. It didn’t matter at all. I didn’t think about diversity.”

Grace recounted that diversity did not play any role in her search, but in hindsight, she is glad her final choice was greatly diverse.

It was not a top priority. It wasn’t. But when I came here, you know, I liked that I had some Africans here. You know some Nigerians, some Senegalese, some African Americans here too. So, but it was not a top priority for me.

Like Grace, Roberto appreciated diversity only after he was admitted at a university.

Until then, he noted that he didn’t care about diversity in his search process:

I didn’t care, to be honest, as well. Okay but I think it is really important now.

But, however, when I came here, I found out that diversity was really, really wide.

They had a lot of different internationals. In fact, the logo of the school was that it is a campus of international diversity, and all that. There are all kinds of students across the globe studying at the school.

Summary of RQ2

The previous section discussed findings from the second research question on West African international student college choice. Respondents answered these questions to discuss the search stage of their college choice. Participants did not all answer every question.

Internet search was the dominant mode of college search among participants interviewed, with 10 of them citing they used their personal computers to search for possible universities to attend. Respondents who used an Internet search mentioned their search was guided by clearly defined factors of interest such as cost, courses, and proximity to family and friends. One participant resorted to the use of postal mail to mail out letters of application to universities he had selected at random. Four participants answered they did not have the typical search experience as many did. They were awarded scholarships in the form of student exchange programs or athletic and/or academic scholarships to attend U.S. institutions.

Participants tried to describe their top priorities in their search process. Factors they considered encompassed cost, affordability, scholarships, graduate assistantships, work opportunities, language, proximity to families and friends, and dormitories.

There was unanimity among the respondents regarding the role of their high schools in helping to gather information about colleges. Participants agreed their high school systems were not designed to facilitate students in college enrollment; they, therefore, had to go it alone or with help from families and friends. The role of families was concentrated at helping to secure scholarships and grants, according to the five students who responded they received familial assistance in their search process.

Sometimes families had to network with others to recommend schools. Nine interviewees answered they did not receive any help from their families.

Friends were considered the most helpful tools in searching for college, in some cases, more than parents. The findings unveiled 10 participants acknowledged friends were more helpful in recommending universities, as well as helping to secure scholarships. On the other hand, two interviewees thought friends played absolutely no role in their college search. One of those two narrated he purposely concealed all information about his U.S. college ambitions from his friends because *he feared black magic*. Meanwhile, four of the students interviewed stated they did not participate in the traditional college search process. They reported receiving some forms of scholarship at particular institutions in the US; hence, they focused on those individual universities until accepted.

Participants also discussed non-human roles in their college search. They spoke of the varied role the admissions process played in their search process. Three said the prompt responses received from universities encouraged them to pursue those institutions further. For three others, it was more of the ease of the admissions process that they liked, while five were attracted by the friendliness of the admissions personnel. Still, two participants discussed they were pleased some universities did not require English proficiency tests at admission.

Cost was a major influencer for students during their college search. Respondents replied to this question with differing responses. There were nine participants who reported the cost of education was a major concern. They, therefore, only pursued universities that had the potential of awarding them scholarships. Another four

respondents mentioned cost of education played no role in their college search. These participants had either already been offered scholarships or were being considered for a student exchange program that would provide them a full tuition waiver.

Location and climate played no role in the college search of participants interviewed. They all agreed they were ready to brace whatever weather in which a scholarship-providing university was located. Seven respondents mentioned the degrees offered by universities did not appeal to their college search process. Those who felt this way mentioned they were flexible to change their majors of choice if a scholarship were awarded. On the other hand, three students mentioned degrees were important to them. They were firm on their majors and did not compromise with a university if it did not provide what they wanted.

When it came to the quality of education, respondents again perceived this differently; only four of the participants answered that the quality of education of the universities sought mattered to them. They were encouraged to continue their pursuit of those institutions, in part, because of the level of their education quality. Those who said the quality of education of universities did not matter in their search justified their position based on their perceived notion that if it is in the US, it has to be better than West Africa.

Four interviewees noted studying close to family and friends helped tremendously. Their initial searches were directed at cities where they knew people. Conversely, seven participants mentioned being close to family and friends did not matter. These students stated they were on a mission to acquire education and not necessarily to be comfortable.

Diversity, too, received mixed responses from the respondents, as five mentioned that having diversity on campus was paramount to their search; seven admitted they did not even give a thought to diversity during their search. Two of those who stated diversity did not matter to them later came to realize in hindsight the importance of it.

RQ3: What are the choice factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

In the third stage of student college choice, prospective students usually narrow down their choice sets to a single institution (Bergerson, 2009). The following are findings from the third research question in this study.

Process of Narrowing Down Choice Set

After their search factors had been considered, respondents reported they proceeded on to the choice stage of their U.S. college choice. At this stage, a lot of determining factors played a major role as they narrowed down their choice sets to that one lucky U.S. public university. As in their search stage, students at the choice stage narrowed down their choices based on a set of factors they considered paramount.

Intervention of Others

Four respondents reported their final choice was made by people other than themselves. Julia's college was selected by her sister and mother, both of whom already resided in the US at the time. "No I did not search for multiple schools in the United States because my sister and mom had already worked out a deal for me to attend the university or to college, where my sister worked at that time."

Nat also mentioned that he narrowed down his choice through the assistance of his father and uncle:

So my dad, talking to his brother in America, linked me up with another person who I was in constant communication with over the phone and email, trying to narrow down where is the best place to go, what is the best school to choose. So yeah, my family really helped me get our information based on soliciting and talking to people, home and abroad.

Multiple Factors

Three respondents mentioned that the decision of their final choice was not based on a single factor. Grace enumerated a litany of factors that influenced her final choice:

Was a compendium of different factors, from affordability to the quality of the education being offered. Those two were major. And then the type of degree that was being offered was actually very key for me. So I looked at the language that was spoken in the country, I looked at the health care systems in that country, and then I looked at the type of program that was offered in that country. So, I looked at best healthcare systems in the world and amongst those, which ones spoke English, which of them offered MHA programs. And that was how I kept filtering out the schools that I wanted to go to.

Grace was not alone in her method of choice. Michael, too, listed three things he considered in making his final decision:

It was based on about three things: The cost was very important to me, how far I drive to the school was very important to me, the passing rate, how students were doing, you know, it was very important to me. And if I can add one, I went to this school based on how the many teachers and staff also treat students. They were always very important to me.

Nat is from Nigeria. He stressed three determinants for choosing the university he did:

Okay, so like I said, I applied to different schools. They responded at different times. Two reasons why I chose Western were the requirement for English proficiency was waived for me. Another factor was swiftness and quickness to which the admission office responded to my mail... It made choosing another school a little bit difficult because the admissions process was easy...And another thing. Yeah, another big determining factor was the fact that I didn't have to pay tuition from Nigeria. Most of the schools I applied to would require me to pay some type of a deposit for tuition. Unlike Western, they just had me send my financial status to show proof that I was financially capable. And that was it. They didn't waste time. They sent me my I-20, which was pretty much the fashion and that's what I took to the embassy to get my visa.

Student Exchange Program

Three participants got to their final universities by default. They received scholarships to study as student exchange scholars at a university in Chicago. These respondents were part of a cohort of 25 students who came as exchange scholars from the Republic of Liberia in 1984 through a student exchange program between a Chicago university and the Liberian government. All they had to do was apply and sit for an aptitude test, then the selection process began.

Hospitality

Two of the interviewees spoke highly of the friendliness and welcoming cultures at the universities in which they finally settled. They stated those were the criteria they used to make up their minds.

By Default

Three participants reported they had no choice but to settle for the only schools that accepted them. They may not have been particularly thrilled by them but since they received no offers from any other universities, they had to settle with the ones that did.

Roberto explained his situation:

So, I think the discouragement I had in the past of applying to several other schools without any positive results helped me to narrow down my choice to WKU, the only school which gave me an admission. It was pretty straightforward and simple. That was the only school I got admitted to. I had no options; that was the only option for me.

Role of Admissions Process in Choice Process

The role of admissions process in the choice process was also examined by the participants. Responses were classified into two categories: helpful and not helpful.

Admissions Process Was Helpful

For six participants, the admissions process was helpful in their final decision-making process. Respondents found it helpful for a variety of reasons, including waiving of admissions examination requirements, having easily navigable websites, responding swiftly to admissions inquiries, and taking personal interests in applicants. Julia found it helpful that she did not have to take any admissions exams prior to admission.

Yet the admissions process was a lot simple for me because I did not have to take any entry level exam that could probably delay me from enrolling into the school just in case I took the entry level and I came out short, maybe a couple of points from the enrollment.

Nat found the admissions process swift; he also was pleased with the layout of the university's website.

Oh yeah. So, the admissions process for Western particularly has to be one of the best I've seen, and I'm being honest. The website is straightforward because that's really where the first challenge comes from...the application Web. Most schools have different compartments, where you have to, you know, crack your brain to figure out which is which. But Western's website was straightforward. It was one page that had all the required information and that was it. You didn't have to do anything. But the admissions process, I keep emphasizing the admissions process, but the admissions process was swift. It was easy, was fast and it was what you want when applying to any school.

Roberto, too, found the admissions process swift and favorable.

They were really friendly in the admissions process; the graduate coordinator was swift and very positive in his response and all that; I think that really encouraged me because in all the applications I had made before then, the responses I've got, they were not favorable. So, when I got this first response from the graduate coordinator, I was really, really happy, and excited. That really stimulated the whole process. That was really, really helpful, I think.

Admissions Process Was Not Helpful

Aside from those who found the admissions process helpful, there were four respondents who found the process not helpful. Despite being admitted at the universities, these four felt the admissions process played absolutely no role in their decisions to enroll at those institutions.

Grace enrolled at a university but did not feel impressed by the admissions office.

The admissions process really wasn't so encouraging. So, I wouldn't say it was a deciding factor in why I chose the school, because as I stated, emailing was not enough. I couldn't initiate a probe, a challenge, or my concerns via email; I preferred to do that via phone and then followed up via email because I realized that their response was not swift when I was applying. So that was not an important phenomenon why I chose the school.

For Peter, it was not that the admissions process faltered in any way, but as an exchange scholar, his route of enrollment had no direct personal ties with the university's admissions office. He told his story in the following words:

As I said, because this was an opportunity to go to school on a scholarship, I had no choice but to follow whatever school chosen for me. So, wherever I was going, I would be glad to go regardless of any other thing. So, in essence you know I had no say so in it. It was a free ride, and I took advantage of it.

Role of College Attributes in Choice Process

Students were also asked if there were any appealing attributes of their university of choice that made a decision-making impact on them. Again, respondents voiced disparate answers.

Diversity

Eight students said they were thrilled at the level of diversity they discovered on campus, and that helped their decision-making process. Roberto read from the school's website they catered to international students, and that made an impact on him.

Yeah, the first thing I saw on their website was that this school is an international school because they accept a lot of international students. When I came here in the first place, I confirmed what I saw on the website because there were a lot of international people from India, from China, except that very few Africans are here but generally a lot of international students are here.

Peter's university was home to foreign students.

Chicago did play a major role in educating minorities, if you will. And there were a lot of foreign exchange programs that brought in diversity. You had students from all over the world in different programs. And that diversity itself was something that I cherished. It put me in touch with different people from different walks of life.

Multiple Attributes of Interest

Seven participants recounted a list of attributes they felt helped to influence their decision on their final choice. Among them were degrees offered, pass/fail records at board examinations, ratings, friendliness, staff-student relationships, aesthetics, etc. Michael recalled his efforts to research desired attributes of his chosen college: "I did. Like I said, I asked friends about the school, I Googled it myself. I've looked for the passing rate, how they treat people, you know, all those things. I considered all those things."

Like Michael, Grace did thorough research and found a number of college attributes that helped form her final decision.

I spoke earlier about my love for soccer. So that was interesting. The degree offered. That was another interesting factor about the college attributes and then I

looked at the college culture generally. You know you look at their trademark, you look at the alumni of the department that I wanted to go to. All of those things were quite attractive; they are well published on the web site. You know they were actually well done and so it just got my attention.

Role of Quality Education in Choice Process

As participants narrowed down their search, they weighed in on the role of the quality of education of their final choice.

Quality Education Was a Factor

Nine respondents answered quality of education was one of the factors that helped shape their decision. Carl was a communication student, and he was in part influenced when he saw pictures of acclaimed television anchors that graduated from his soon-to-be university.

Yeah, the quality of education was amazing because when I went to visit the school, I can see the pictures of the guys who went through communications that work now in, you know, big businesses like FOX, NBC, and ESPN. So that's when I knew that the communication program is just nice and perfect and that will be a very good opportunity for me.

Quality Education Was Not a Factor

There were seven participants who mentioned the quality of education of the universities in which they enrolled did not play a factor in their choice. Roberto explained he did not give a thought to the education quality to begin with, but later came to appreciate it. "Like I said before, it was really not a factor for me, but I found out later

it's a good quality school; it's full of good quality but that didn't play much of a factor at the beginning.”

Nat explained that his hunch was right, that once it was a U.S. university, it was of better quality than those in his home country. His anecdote describing this experience follows:

I already had this impression that, you know, the American education standard was good. So already I assumed at the back of my mind that the quality of education was good...Now, it's also a good determinant of choosing Western Kentucky University.

Peter, too, felt the same way and did not care to even consider the quality of education.

At the time, coming to the United States and going to a state school, I felt that the quality of education would be better than an education system that I've known.

So, in my view it was a win-win situation because I was going to Chicago State in Chicago.

Role of Cost in Choice Process

International students often must contend with the issue of cost of education. Participants in this study discussed the role cost played in the selection of their final university of choice.

Cost Was a Factor

Six respondents stated cost was a factor in their decision making. Nat was concerned about the cost of college. After doing a cost analysis of several universities, he finally made his choice.

Maybe not in the price range that I wanted but the cost wasn't bad enough for me to reject, since the cost of the school was fairly okay. It's not too expensive, but yet there are more expensive schools and they're probably much cheaper schools. It was right in the balance of good education with optimum tuition cost, you know.

Cost Was Not a Factor

Students who were recipients of scholarships did not seem to care about the cost of education at their U.S. public universities. Nine respondents said the factor of cost was not something they thought about. Tenema came on an athletic scholarship. He declared he did not care about what it cost to go to school: "Cost of the school was not a major issue to me because I will be offered scholarship, so I wasn't looking at cost."

Role of Availability of Aids and Scholarships in Choice Process

The role of aids and scholarships was an important facet in the choice process for West African international students. There was unanimous agreement among all respondents that it was the availability of aids and scholarships that encouraged them to consider the university they finally attended. Grace was faced with a cost of education she could not afford. She discussed how the availability of aids and scholarships helped in this process.

It played a very important role because I had to do my research properly. I asked if they offered reduced tuition for graduate assistance, what those requirements for graduate assistantship might be, so that was very important. And even though the graduate assistantship position offered here, the stipends and reduction in

tuition was not as much as in other schools, but the initial tuition here was not as much as in other schools as well. So, I just decided to use this one.

Roberto was forward when he testified that he was not sure he would be at his current university were it not for scholarships awarded: “Yeah it was very, very important. I was in West Africa when I got all my papers signed that I received a scholarship from the school and all that. If I didn’t have that, I am not sure I would be here today.

Tenema, too, concurred that the provision of scholarship was the reason he came to his current university:

It was just the admissions process; they were willing to work with me, they were willing to give me a scholarship, and a full ride scholarship, for soccer, and yeah, that was the reason why I came to this school that I went to... That played a very important role.

Role of Diversity in Choice Process

Diversity played a mixed role in the final choice of West African international students interviewed.

Diversity Played a Role

For three participants, diversity was part of the reason they decided on a particular university. Tenema mentioned that he was impressed when he saw in the brochure information pertaining to diversity. This was a motivational factor for his choice:

Diversity was a major thing too. I saw it in their brochure...blacks, whites, Indians, all these different backgrounds, all mingling together, and they said they were a school of diversity and I believed in it. So that was something good for me.

Diversity Played no Role

For 12 respondents, diversity did not matter. Michael was one of those who did not think much about diversity on campus. He explained that it was not a priority:

Diversity didn't matter to me. It wasn't important to me. All I know because I thought people are people. It's not about the color. It's not about where you are from. If you are nice to them, they are nice to you; if you treat them good, they treat you good.

Role of College Location or Climate in Choice Process

Location of college or its climate did not play a role in the decision of any of the participants. No respondents reported they chose a university because of its location or the climate. Three reported they were attracted by the location, but that did not translate into a decision. Tenema cited he just wanted to come to the US: "It didn't matter. I just wanted to come to a university in America."

Role of Proximity to Home, Family, and Friends in Choice Process

None of the respondents in this study reported making a final decision on a university because it was close to people they knew. It may have been a good thing to do but was not a game changer for any respondent if they did not get to study close to a familiar person. Their major concern was being admitted into a U.S. university. Roberto would have loved to be near his family and friends but was accepted at a university far away. His story follows:

Yeah, it didn't play much of a factor because I got everything I needed. You know but like I said again, if I had a second chance or if I had to do this all over

again, I would go near family but again, the people here have been really helpful, so I am not feeling it too much. So, it didn't really play that much of a factor.

On the other hand, while Grace studied at a school near her friend, that was not her decision or choice. It just happened: "It wasn't a deciding factor, but because my friend already stays here so it was a plus. It was just a plus, but it wasn't a deciding factor."

Role of Degrees Offered in Choice Process

Degrees offered was a crucial phenomenon in the study as respondents gave differing answers to the question of the role of degrees offered in their choice process.

Degrees Offered Mattered

Two of the interviewees reported the degrees offered by the universities at which they studied was one of the reasons they considered those institutions. Grace explained she wanted an MHA degree. Some universities were offering an MPH; after searching around, she narrowed down her search to her alma mater that provided the kind of health care degree she wanted...MHA. She explained: "Yeah that was very important. That was very, very important. I wanted an MHA, and they offered an MHA, so it was just a perfect fit." Roberto, too, declared that degrees offered mattered for him in his choice: "Yeah, it played a big factor because I wanted to study chemistry or biochemistry. So, when I saw that on their website, I was really happy."

Degrees Offered Did Not Matter

For seven participants, degrees offered did not play a role in their choice process. Respondents who answered this way were usually students who were dependent on receiving scholarships as a condition of enrollment and had no firm criteria beyond

scholarship. Tenema, a former international student from Liberia, made it clear he just wanted to get to the US, so he was flexible regarding the degree he pursued.

Summary of RQ3

The preceding section discussed findings from the third research question on West African international student college choice. Respondents answered these questions to discuss the choice stage of their college choice. Participants did not all answer every question.

Respondents reported a number of ways in which they narrowed down their choice set. One of those ways was through intervention from family members. Family members usually networked across continents to suggest what they felt would be best fits for their college- searching relatives. Four participants mentioned using other methods of narrowing down choice sets. Whatever their method, each of these interviewees stated their final choice was guided by clearly defined factors that were of importance to him. For three of those students, multiple factors were involved, including cost, affordability, quality of education, language spoken, health care system, program type, commute distance, waiver of the TOEFL test requirement, and prompt response from the admissions office. Another three mentioned they were recipients of a student exchange award; therefore, they did not have to choose a university for themselves. Two were swayed by the friendliness of the institutions. Still, three others verbalized they made a decision to enroll at the only schools that accepted them.

Once on campus, respondents cited things they loved about their universities. Six answered that they were pleased by the level of diversity on campus, while another three were thrilled by the level on on-campus hospitality. Two stated that they liked the

environment, topography, and diverse method of transportation to and from school. Respondents also discussed the role some institutional phenomena played in their choice process, if any. When it came to the admissions process, six interviewees thought the process was helpful, while four of their peers felt it was not. Those who found the admissions process helpful spoke of the swiftness of the process, the friendliness of the staff, and the fact that the universities had waived their admissions test requirement, such as the TOEFL. One student who thought the admissions process was not helpful explained that the staff was slow in responding to his inquiries. Respondents who were beneficiaries of a student exchange scholarship verbalized that they did not have to deal with the admissions office directly.

Eight participants spoke of on-campus diversity as a college attribute they said made them to consider their final institution. For seven others, there were multiple attributes of interest, including degrees offered, pass/fail records at board examinations, ratings, friendliness, staff-student interpersonal relationships, aesthetics, sports, alumni, etc. Nine participants answered the quality of education at the university helped influence their decision, while seven responded they did not even give thought to the education quality while making an admissions decision.

After doing a cost analysis, seven participants acknowledged cost was a factor in their decision, making sure they could either afford the cost of studies or they had enough scholarship to defray that cost. Nine did not bother themselves with the cost as they were on a path to a scholarship. With cost as an integral factor for college attendance, all participants acknowledged it was the availability of a scholarship and aid that allowed

them to enroll at their chosen universities. They were either awarded grants and scholarships or they sought for them as a criterion for decision making.

Diversity was embraced by three participants as a major reason why they decided for their university. For 12 others, they liked the idea of diversity, but it did not rise to the reason for choosing a university. The role of college location or its climate in decision making was very minimal as no respondents reported choosing a university because of its location or climate. Some were pleased with the location as were three of the participants, but that did not translate into a decision. As nice as it would have been to have their schools close to familiar people, the proximity to family, friends, or home, likewise, played no role in decision making because none of the respondents mentioned deciding on a university because of that factor.

Finally, two participants cited the degrees offered accounted for part of the reason why they chose their alma mater. Seven interviewees, however, did not think degrees offered mattered to them in their choice process.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The study of student college choice remains a trendy subject among researchers of student college choice. As students come in disparate categories, there remains a state of ambiguity among scholars regarding a universal process of student college choice, with different authors positing what they feel is ideal for a particular demographic of people (Chapman, 1981; Bateman & Spruill, 1996; Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Freeman, 1997; Hanson, 1994; Hossler et al., 1999; Paulsen, 1990; Perna, 2000; Lillis, 2008). This study discussed the college choice of West African international students who enrolled in U.S. public postsecondary institutions.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to generalize the Hossler-Gallagher model (1987) to get a better understanding of the predisposition, search, and choice factors that influenced the decisions of West African students to enroll in a U.S. public university. Given that the Hossler and Gallagher study was initially tailored toward U.S. domestic students, it would benefit U.S. higher education to decipher what college matriculation factors appeal to West African international students, even as universities seek to increase their international student populations.

Using anecdotes from respondents, I answered in Chapter IV the research question, “*What are the predisposition, search, and choice factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?*” The participants in this study were either current or former students of West Africa. They encompassed both undergraduate and graduate students. In this chapter, I discuss those findings, suggesting congruence or incongruence with authors in the literature. It ends with a series of

recommendations and implications for future studies. This was accomplished considering each of the three research questions singly:

RQ1: What are the predisposition factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

RQ2: What are the search factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

RQ3: What are the choice factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

Discussion of Results

To discuss the findings of the college choice process of West Africans studying at U.S. universities, this section has been arranged according to the three research questions that guided the study. The data indicate some respondents combined some aspects of the search and choice processes, suggesting while still in the search process those respondents merged into the choice stage when certain conditions became right. For example, while still searching for universities, students settled for a particular institution that promised them a scholarship, thereby abandoning the rest of the search and choice processes.

RQ1: What are the predisposition factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

To determine the predisposition factors that drove West African international students to enroll at U.S. public universities, it was necessary to delve into the decisions that led them to explore postsecondary education in the US.

Decision to Pursue College Education in the United States

Most of the respondents cited the provision of scholarship as the reason they pursued college in the US. Many actively applied for some form of grant, while three others from Liberia benefited from a study abroad scholarship in the form of student exchange program. In the literature, the subject of aid or scholarship is of significance in student college choice. Freeman (1984) found financial aid does influence student choice of university. He added that his finding may not include students with no needs and those from high income families. Chapman and Jackson (1987) suggested large forms of aid may suffice to move a second-choice institution to first choice.

Prospects for opportunities was another reason cited for choosing to study in the US. This reason was often mentioned by students from Nigeria who felt an education from the US would make them more employable in their home country. Students in the sciences also explained they lacked exposure to integral apparatus in their local university labs, and verbalized studying in the US. would expose them to that missing element of pedagogy in their home countries.

Participants stressed the prevalence of adversarial conditions at home as a push factor to study abroad. Students from Nigeria and Liberia spoke of political insurrections at home that made learning unsafe. One participant from Liberia spoke of corruption in the education system, in which students bribe their way through college, either financially or sexually. Some West African students also verbalized the limited college options in their home countries as reasons for preferring to study in the US. The data also found other reasons for studying in the US, including that the participant just wanted to come to the States, or that a student's parents moved to the US.

Socioeconomic Status

The data suggest that socioeconomic status was one of the predisposition factors cited. Respondents I interviewed identified themselves on the range of lower- to upper-class status. One student mentioned a hybrid class of lower-middle class. It is important to bear in mind that to the West Africans, this designation of SES is a relative term. This may represent a considerable difference compared to the American milieu. At the predisposition stage, a student's chance of going to college is greatly affected by SES.

How Socioeconomic Factors Affected Enrollment Decision

Low SES respondents noted that, by itself, the SES of their families could not have enabled them to pursue a U.S. college education; rather, their decisions to go to a U.S. college was borne out of the sense of wanting to outdo their parents socially and financially. Hence, they persevered by self-motivation to make this happen. They turned into opportunities what was meant to be an obstacle. On the other hand, respondents from upper class families relied heavily on their parents' support for college. They related that had it not been for their parents' social standings and the fact that they were financially capable of sponsoring them, they would not have been able to enroll in a U.S. public university.

In the literature, certain background characteristics have been found to positively influence college attendance (Bishop, 1977; Kohn et al., 1972; Miller, 1976). The correlation is so stark that Peters (1977) declared that students from high SES families are four times more likely to go to college than their peers from low SES homes. Dugan et al., (1972) posited that the cumulative effect of SES on a student begins as early as preschool. Bergerson (2009) wrote students of low SES are said to be disproportionately

affected when it comes to access to American higher education. West African students desiring to study in the US face barriers to higher education in much the same way as American students of color. In addition to lack of funding, there is also a barrier to information on resources germane to enrollment. Prospective West African international students also have limited access to American college enrollment information, and as Bergerson (2009) reported, do access such information “in different ways and in quantitatively different amounts, which affects their enrollment decisions” (p. 75).

Level of Parental Education

From the analysis of the data, respondents ranged their parental levels of education from no formal education to post high school, with one participant mentioning his father as having a terminal degree. Few interviewees said their mothers were the more educated in the family; however, in most cases it was the father with a higher level of education. One respondent from Liberia recounted a legendary familial story that, as a boy, his father went to school by default. In families with multiple sons, at least one of them was required by law to go to school. Hence, Charles’ father was the designated school-goer.

Evidently, despite low parental education, all respondents in this survey went on to college in the US. The literature speaks of the role of parental education in their children’s college choice. Bergerson (2009) opined that parental influence is greater if parents have a college degree. This is evident in how some respondents were persuaded by their fathers to pursue a U.S. education. Karen (2002) added to this discourse by asserting the father’s educational level greatly influences his children’s college enrollment.

Level of Parental Encouragement

Some respondents spoke of receiving encouragement from their parents to pursue a college education, while others regretted they received no such encouragement. Those who received parental encouragement signaled such encouragement was embodied in one or both ways: moral encouragement and financial support. They spoke of receiving frequent verbal encouragement to pursue a college education in the US after high school or after receiving their undergraduate degrees. For some, those encouragements extended into financial support. A couple interviewees stated their parents had saved up for their U.S. college support over many years, while others said their parents had to borrow from local banks to make this happen. Some mothers were said to have put up meager proceeds from their daily market sales to support their children's U.S. education.

Much is said in the literature regarding parental encouragement. In a descriptive case study comprising 15 high schools in the US, Rowan-Kenyon et al. (2008) found parents do shape their children's college enrollment opportunities, but such involvement varies based on socioeconomic status. This finding concurs with Conklin and Dailey (1981), who acknowledged a positive relationship between parental encouragement and college enrollment, noting as parental encouragement increases, so does the likelihood of college enrollment.

Level of High School Peer Education

A review of the data found that it was difficult on the part of many respondents to recall the educational levels of their myriad of peers from high school. Notwithstanding, they recalled that most of their peers are either in college or have graduated with a degree, while a few others did not go on to college. Many of those who went to college

were said to have done so in the US. This is in accordance with findings in the literature, which suggest there exists a direct linear correlation of peer education with student college enrollment. Tillery (1973) opined students whose peers are planning on going to college are likely to attend college themselves.

Level of Peer Encouragement

This study found a mixed result on the role of high school peers in the pursuit of their education beyond high school. Some participants reported being encouraged by their peers, while others said they did not. About half of the respondents said their peers spurred them on to college. These encouragements encompassed verbal motivation, some of which were said to be persistent. One student reported being a part of a study group comprised of high school seniors in which they challenged themselves to outdo each other. This, he noted, created a sense of urgency on his part not just to go to college, but to do so immediately. Interestingly, some spoke of receiving encouragement from peers who did not go to college themselves. Those peers wanted them to go to college if they had an opportunity. Montes (2007) investigated the pivotal role played by peers in academic pursuits. In addition to significant others, peers were found to be either negative or positive influencers on their fellow peers when it came to pursuing postsecondary education.

High School Preparation for United States College

Most respondents discussed receiving some form of high school preparation that helped them in college. They explained this preparation took the form of General Education courses such as science, math, and reading. Others credited their improved

GPA and SAT scores (which were necessary for college matriculation) to the rigorous high school preparation.

There is an agreement in the literature regarding the impact of high school college preparatory courses (such as science and math) on college attendance. Students who attend high schools that offer those preparatory courses have a high likelihood of attending college (Kolstad, 1979; Peters, 1977). Also, Alexander et al. (1978) found students who attend high-status high schools have a higher chance of pursuing postsecondary education.

RQ2: What are the search factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

To understand the search factors that moved West African international students to study in the US, it was necessary to get a detailed description of their search process.

Search Process for a United States University

When respondents discussed their college search methods, they spoke of a variety of formats used. The methods of college search ranged from online (Internet) to word of mouth, with Internet search being the most widely used. Others employed the traditional postal mail process. For most of the respondents, online search was done using Google as the primary search tool. Some described their search as random, while, for others, their search was circumscribed by preference. One respondent spoke of having an almanac, which contained pertinent college information regarding enrollment. He randomly selected colleges, hoping one would respond favorably to his application, which he stated he sent out by postal mail since he did not have the luxury of a personal computer.

The findings on the methods of college choice correspond with Lee's (2008) study of international students' choice for U.S. colleges. In her investigation, Lee found 51% of international students rely on the Internet for their information on U.S. colleges. This information may be contained in brochures and online advertisements.

Top Priorities in a United States University Search

Most respondents spoke of cost and scholarships as primary concerns as they ventured into the search process for U.S. universities. "Cost and scholarship" were words usually used in tandem to denote for every cost, there were prospective international students who wanted a form of scholarship to help mitigate it. Some would not even consider a university unless it had the proclivity of offering a scholarship. Respondents also cited admissions requirements as another top priority. They wanted schools that would not require GRE and TOEFL scores as a condition for admission. One admitted her priority was the ratings of the schools, as reflected in the record of test scores of graduates. Other priorities discussed encompassed degrees and courses offered, proximity to family and friends, language, and dormitories. In the literature, Maringe and Carter (2007) noted courses offered by universities are important to African students in their consideration of U.S. universities, even as they seek advanced studies abroad. Also, Tan (2015) reported institutional rankings were important to international students seeking to make the US their place of study abroad, while DesJardins et al. (1999) found test scores, school ranking, and reputable programs do influence students favorably.

Role of High School in Gathering College Information in Search Process

Respondents unanimously denied receiving any high school assistance in their college search. They all stated they received no such assistance. They, notwithstanding,

blamed this letdown on several phenomena, including the systemic failure in their countries' education systems, lack of exposure on the part of their high school authorities themselves, and a prevailing civil war. As the systems were not designed to facilitate its high school seniors into college search, there were no thoughts or expectations of that. Also, one of the respondents reported his high school years were characterized by a civil war in his country; hence, his school system was more concerned about graduating its seniors than carrying out extracurricular activities. Litten (1982) opined students of color and those of low-income families often tend to rely on high school counselors to assist in college search, including guiding them to sources of scholarships and financial aid.

Role of Family in Gathering College Information in Search Process

The data suggest family was an important role player in student college search. The role of family included helping to gather information about universities and seeking scholarships. In the case of some, families actually handpicked universities for their relatives. In those cases, respondents reported abandoning the rest of the search process to focus on those individual schools until they got admitted. There were some who noted they received no family involvement in the search process. Whatever assistances they received, if any, were from people other than family.

There exist some similarities between the West African students interviewed in this project and information in the literature. Pimpa (2005) investigated and found that students rely heavily on family for information on colleges, while Lee (2008) reported 13% of international students depend on recommendations from family members with study abroad experience. And, families considered the quality of international education as well as international exposure as reasons to push their children to study abroad.

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), however, pointed that for some, it was just the sheer desire of attaining a Western education, which they regarded as superior.

Role of Friends in Gathering College Information in Search Process

The role of friends in the search process was very crucial. From their narratives, it was clear for most respondents that friends played a very influential role in their college search than did their parents. Almost all respondents who mentioned they received search assistance from friends spoke of a string of network activities involving friends during the information-gathering process. Friends were credited for securing scholarships or giving respondents leads which led to one. There were some respondents who became recipients of a student exchange program that was introduced to them by friends. Also, of interest was many of the respondents stated they found their college of choice by word of mouth. One of the interviewees mentioned she was not initially considering the US for college. While she was searching institutions in Canada, a friend recommended what later became her alma mater in the US.

Two participants said they received absolutely no friend assistance in their search process, but they were quick to take the blame. One reported it was customary for people planning to travel to the US to keep their ambition to themselves. Another recounted he did not tell anyone of his plans to pursue higher education in the US because *his townsmen were notorious for casting spells of witchcraft on such people.*

As in this study, word of mouth was found in the literature to be the most common way international students select a foreign university of study. Hemsley-Brown (2013) reached this conclusion when he used secondary data to conduct a case study of statements contained in 60 postgraduate international applications on university and

British Council websites. This speaks to the importance of ensuring student satisfaction while enrolled at universities. Ward (2001) reported students with favorable experiences are apt to serve as de facto ambassadors for their alma mater. This study is also in congruence with Nguyen (2014), whose work opined international students draw more of their study abroad influences from friends rather than from family. Lee (2008) also noted 36% of international students depend on college information relayed by friends.

Role of Admissions Process in Search Process

I gathered from the interviews the role the admissions process played at the search stage varied with students. Some expressed disappointment over what they felt was the slow nature of the communication process with the universities. Those students felt especially frustrated they had to stay up late at night just to call an admissions office in the US that had not responded to their communication. Some felt the admissions process went as fast and favorably enough as expected, with prompt responses. Others also expressed satisfaction with the friendliness of the admissions staff as well as the waiver of admission tests such as the TOEFL.

Modern scholars have addressed the importance of college influence on students if the institution is to have a competitive edge in the scramble for students. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) portrayed the picture of college influence as a two-way street; while the student is pursuing the university, he/she also, is being wooed by the institution, such as in the case of the respondents in this study who spoke of the friendliness and promptness on the part of the universities that made up their choice set. Sectional marketization has been cited also in the literature as an effective strategy that appeals to students of differential regions and backgrounds (Ihlanfeldt, 1980; Kotler, 1975; Tillery, 1973).

Chapman (1981) contended an effective marketization effort may attract students who would otherwise not consider a university.

Role of Cost and Aid in Search Process

Cost and financial aid were concomitants of the college choice factors of respondents interviewed. Interviewees noted their choice sets of American universities were singly influenced by the availability of scholarship, aid, grants, or tuition waiver. They did not consider an institution unless it was affordable, or the university was able to provide them some sort of aid. Even those who reported their parents had saved up for their college years still mentioned how much they depended on scholarship and aid. The exchange rates of their local currencies to the U.S. dollar made payment of tuition and fees almost an impossible bout. Participants in this study, therefore, relied in part or wholly on the availability of scholarship or aid. Respondents who identified themselves as student exchange scholars made it clear cost was not a factor for them.

Whereas there have been variants in the findings of scholars in the literature (Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Murphy, 1981; Spies, 1978; Suttle, 1983), Freeman (1984), who employed a more heterogeneous sample in his research, concluded the amount of financial aid does influence student choice of university, except for high-income and no-need students. Like the West African international students in my study, Freeman opined an aid package is indeed an important stimulus for students at the choice stage. To this finding, however, Hossler and Gallagher (1987) added the favorable impact of cost and scholarship may vary among types of institutions and students.

Role of College Location or Climate in Search Process

As an independent factor, respondents made it clear they were not swayed by the location or climate of a U.S. university, while some may have appeared appealing. They emphasized they were flexible when it came to the location or climate, bracing themselves for possible adverse winter weather. One participant flippantly said he was unaware some areas in the US were warmer than others. Other respondents spoke of having a goal, and if that took them to a colder climate for studies, that was what they were willing to do. Still, another person jokingly stated the weather may have been unfriendly but, on the other hand, it allowed him to see the snow.

In the literature, studies on institutional characteristics have suggested factors such as location, courses, programs offered, and institutional reputation are included in essentials students consider before making enrollment choices. However, the college location and climate did not matter to the West African students I interviewed.

McDonough et al. (1998) found the importance of institutional characteristics does vary with students from different SES, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.

Role of Degrees Offered in Search Process

When respondents discussed the role of degrees offered by institutions, the data suggests for some the phenomenon played no role in their consideration of any particular university. For others, degrees offered was a significant issue they considered in building their choice set. The data also show participants were flexible in choosing their degrees if degrees did not matter, and firm if it did. Some participants who answered the degrees did not matter often cited reasons such as they just wanted to come to America, then they would make up their mind on what to study. Regarding degrees offered, Lokko (2011)

reported several factors come to bear to determine a student's choice of a college degree. Future job prospects, peer influence, parental influence, or personal interests are some of the factors that determine the significance of the degrees offered for prospective students.

Role of Quality Education in Search Process

In part, some respondents considered universities because of the perceived quality of education. Students who did this spoke of reviewing course descriptions and researching graduation rates at schools that were of interest to them. On the other hand, some participants said the quality of education did not matter to them. In fact, they continued, they assumed higher education in the US was of better quality than in their native home countries. One interviewee from Liberia added he did not even know colleges and universities needed such a thing as accreditation.

Role of Proximity to Home, Family, and Friends in Search Process

Studying at a university close to people they knew was significant for some interviewees, so they reported they made attempts to make that happen. One way they attempted to accomplish this was to target universities in cities where those friends and families resided. On the other hand, some interviewees wanted to land a U.S. university at all cost, so they were willing to forego that luxury to make ends meet. Another group of people for whom the proximity to familiar faces did not matter was students who benefited from a student exchange program. For them, it was all about the university that offered them the scholarship.

Role of Diversity in Search Process

Findings suggest West African international students in this study, for the most part, thought highly about diversity but did not let that filter into their influencers for

college choice decision. Some admitted they were interested in diversity but did not let that become a choice factor. Others did not even give it a thought. The respondents were mostly concerned about being admitted into a U.S. university with or without diversity. However, some of the interviewees, once enrolled, were glad their schools were rich in diversity.

There is incongruence between my subjects and the literature regarding the role of diversity in the search process. Tan (2015) is a hallmark name in international student college choice in the literature. He accentuated the significance of the role of diversity for international students in their study abroad process. From his survey of 183 international students, Tan compiled lists of factors that were more and less important to foreign students. Diversity was on the list of more important things.

RQ3: What are the choice factors of West African students who elected to enroll in a United States public university?

To understand the choice factors that led West African international students to study in the US, it was first necessary to get a detailed description of the process through which they narrowed down their already developed choice set.

Process of Narrowing Down Choice Set

After building their choice sets in the search stage, participants entered the choice stage where they narrowed down those universities to a single institution. From the data it is clear participants used several phenomena to accomplish this task. The criteria employed suggest what mattered most to them. Interviewees reported narrowing down choice sets by using the following factors: intervention from others, considering multiple factors of interests, student exchange program, hospitality, and by default.

For some respondents, their family members selected institutions they thought were a best fit. Other family members had a hand in the decision process by hosting a planning discussion with the student. For some others, multiple factors were considered to single out the university in which they wanted to enroll. Some of those factors include, cost, affordability, degrees offered, the passing rate of students, student-teacher rapport, the waiver of English proficiency tests, and the swiftness in responding to student application. Other students felt the hospitality of the institution was sufficient, while some indicated they chose their alma mater by default, suggesting that was the only university that accepted them and provided them a scholarship. Still, a student exchange program helped others settle for a particular host university in the US.

Role of Admissions Process in Choice Process

Participants viewed the role of the admissions process in the choice process through two lenses: helpful and not helpful. Specific phenomena found to be helpful in a final choice were the fact that the institution waived admissions examination requirements, including the TOEFL and GRE. They also credited their choice of the institution to having a navigable website and the swift response to admissions inquiries. Some participants settled for a university despite having any impact on them.

Role of College Attributes in Choice Process

Data in this study suggest students decided on a college, in part, because of attributes such as diversity, degrees offered, the pass/fail records at board examinations, rating, friendliness, staff-student relationships, aesthetics, etc. Some participants mentioned in addition to diversity among students, they also were pleased with the

diversity of the staff. One student stressed he was very particular about how the university treated its current students.

Role of Quality Education in Choice Process

Most participants admitted the quality of education constituted part of the reason they decided to enroll at the institutions they attended. Others did not care about the quality of education; they settled for their alma mater for reasons other than education quality. Respondents on both sides of the spectrum, however, agreed their decisions to consider education quality in the US or not was, in part, borne out of a mental comparison of education qualities they made of higher education institutions at home with those of the US. Chapman and Jackson (1987) found the perception of quality often ranks high on the list of choice sets for most students. Murphy (1981) and Spies (1978) reached a similar conclusion, citing a student's first- and second-choice institutions often include factors such as education quality.

Role of Cost in Choice Process

The cost of education was a major factor to the international students interviewed, all of which had to contend with the issue of cost. As their acceptance was, in part, based on proof of ability to fund their studies, and given the lopsided exchange rates of their local currencies to the U.S. dollar, respondents I interviewed acknowledged they had compared the costs of several universities before making their selection. Other participants who were beneficiaries of scholarships as well as scholars of a student exchange program reported the cost of a university did not matter to them.

Role of Availability of Aids and Scholarships in Choice Process

Given the significance of cost in the college search process, the availability of aids and scholarship was noted in the data to have strongly influenced the decision of respondents. There was a unanimous agreement on the part of students that some form of aid was needed to defray the cost of studies if students were to enroll at a particular university. Hence, they sought to achieve this by applying for every form of grant possible, including a graduate assistantship. Participants acknowledged they did not pursue a university if it did not show a potential of meeting their financial needs. Even student exchange scholars applied for the program because of the availability of a scholarship, and families who selected universities for their relatives had scholarships and grants as criteria.

Role of Diversity in Choice Process

As in the search process, data suggest participants liked the idea of diversity, but when it came to choice, they chose to be rather flexible. Even those who answered diversity did not play a role in their choice process admitted they cherished diversity but chose to not make it a choice determinant. Diversity remains an integral phenomenon in postsecondary education, both for the university and students. While most higher education campuses tend to market themselves as diverse, many minority students are opting out of enrollment due to their perceived lack of diversity. In a study involving 35 African American students at the University of Michigan, Slay (2017) found black students tend to shun institutions they do not perceive to be diverse or inclusive. Participants in this study voiced a concern of possible on-campus threat due to their

underrepresented size. Slay concluded that this, in part, accounts for low enrollment of minorities at American universities.

Role of College Location or Climate in Choice Process

The data suggest some respondents may have liked the location and/or climate of some universities, but that did not rise to the level of influencing a decision. Participants unanimously reported they wanted whatever it took to enroll in a U.S. university, and mere location would not have sufficed. Coming from a tropical climate in West Africa did not create a bias in their minds toward unfriendly temperatures in the American north.

Role of Proximity to Home, Family, and Friends in Choice Process

What I gathered from the interviews was living close to family, friends, or home was not an important factor to most of the West African international students in the study. The data reveal some students did welcome the idea but did not make a decision based on it. Others in the interview stated they did not care; in fact, they did not think about it. It was clear the participants in this study, while they had their own individual preferences like everyone else, had the primary goal of getting admitted into a U.S. university, wherever located.

Proximity to home, family, and friends has been discussed in the literature as factors that also influence international students' choice of an institution. In a study by Kemp et al. (1998), Indonesian and Thai students cited the comfort of family and friends within proximity to their place of study enhanced their choice of U.S. universities. Tan (2015) arrived at the same conclusion from a convenience sample of students from a broader demographic.

Role of Degrees Offered in Choice Process

For most of the respondents, they did not care about the degrees offered by the school of their final choice. Their focus was on an institution with the most form of scholarship or aid. This was especially true in the case of participants who came to the US on a student exchange program, which was scholarship based. For two of the respondents, they were very firm on degrees offered. Their reason for considering the universities they chose was, in part, due to the degrees they offered.

Practical Implications

There are individual factors unveiled in this study over which the university has no influence. They are therefore considered non-institutional factors. Those factors mostly inhabit the predisposition stage. To the extent other factors, especially in the search and choice stages, are university related, I have noted some practical implications from this research for policymakers and decision makers in U.S. higher education that would augment their influence on future West Africa student enrollment.

Family, Friends, and Peers

It cannot be overemphasized efforts must be made by the university to forge a harmonious relationship with students and all their affiliates. In fact, institutions must bear in mind much of their success lies in the rapport they build with their current students. There is a sense in which universities feel it is the student's responsibility to line up with institutional requirements and expectations if they must enroll at the school. This is even more true in the case of international students. As suggested in the findings of this research, recruiting West Africans is a holistic process involving not only the students, but also their families and friends. Care must be taken to ensure every current

student and his/her family receive the utmost satisfaction as they would, in time, become de facto ambassadors of the institution to their home countries. A favorable recommendation would increase the likelihood their families and friends would become future students. Whether they like it or not, word of mouth is a very essential tool universities have at their disposal. This could work for or against them outside the classroom. Some participants in this study reported not having the luxury of participating in a college search process for themselves because their parents or family members had selected their U.S. university of study.

Additionally, practitioners in U.S. higher education wishing to recruit more international students from West Africa need to get outside their comfort zones. It is important to make name recognition of some sort in an overseas market. As respondents in this study began their search process, many reported having no clear guidance; they searched haphazardly, beginning with the known to the unknown. As potential students begin to hear of a U.S. university, they are likely to explore that option. A partnership endeavor with West African high schools and post high schools would create the requisite awareness among West Africans for future enrollment.

Socioeconomic Status

Both in the literature and in practice, SES is a major factor in the subject of college choice. Its impact on students and universities is the same across geographic regions. When recruiting students from international backgrounds, U.S. higher education policymakers need to approach them with similar mindset as they do domestic students, except with a little more care. As most of the student applicants from West Africa are usually of low SES, university admission offices must present them with choices and

varieties, as well as all the other numbers of caution discussed under this caption of implication. This makes for a search and choice process that is flexible and less overbearing for the would-be student. It is also best to assume all international students are of low SES until determined otherwise, since it is almost impossible to decipher their true SES across continents. Admission offices also should avail themselves as approachable and tolerant to foreign students who possibly could contact the office multiple times a day making requests and asking questions that sometimes seem redundant.

Parental Education

Students whose parents have no college education remain a strategic demographic of higher education enrollees in the US. The racial and demographic gap in U.S. postsecondary enrollment is in part due to parents who have no college education. Swail and Perna (2002) opined students whose parents did not go to college are among the most targeted groups for outreach programs designed to help even the enrollment field in U.S. higher education. Many of the respondents in this study mentioned having parents with no college education or no formal education at all. As U.S. universities continue their recruitment of first-generation minority students, and given the universal desire to increase international student enrollment on college campuses, higher education practitioners need to ally with foreign high schools to design programs that foster a higher education aspiration in students whose parents are without college education. Redeeming such students at the high school level enhances their chances of going to college, especially at the college that had been grooming them.

College Search Methods

While the method a prospective student employs to search for a desired university is mostly up to the student, there is a sense in which universities do play a role. It is the responsibility of the university to avail itself to prospective students. One obvious way universities make themselves known is through the Internet. But some students in developing countries may not have access to the World Wide Web. They rely on other sources, including word of mouth. Students in this study reported learning about U.S. universities in ways never before thought. Admission offices and decision makers at U.S. universities need to consider other media of propagating themselves in addition to the Internet. Some sources may include magazines, journals, newspapers, and flyers that appeal to readers and populations of developing countries. Institutions also need to encourage their personnel, including students, staff, and faculties, to wear university apparel, fan gear, and merchandise when they travel. Such exposure maximizes awareness.

In addition, given the dearth of online services in most developed countries, coupled with the slow snail mail services, U.S. universities should consider giving international students extended deadlines for their college applications. Having a longer application window would ensure an early start and a later completion time for these student applicants.

College Influence/Admissions Process

A growing number of international students are enrolling in U.S. universities because of the ease of the admissions process. Practitioners at U.S. higher education institutions need to be cautious of the importance of prompt and friendly responses to

international applications. Most applicants do not have the luxury of making follow-up phone calls regarding their application. In addition, the time difference between the US and West Africa makes such follow ups inconvenient. Therefore, if an institution is prompt at responding to their admission needs, West African international students are more likely to continue pursuing that university.

In addition, all student applicants like to be wooed by their prospective universities. This is especially true in the case of international students. There is a point in their application process when internationals feel they are fighting for a sense of belonging. They, too, need to be made to feel needed. If they receive personalized messages or phone calls from an overseas university they are trying to attend, that helps boost their morale and confidence. Another way of wooing international students, which also helps ease the application process, is flexible payment options. Most students from West Africa lack the ability to make huge deposits before admission. A flexible payment option tailored to their needs and abilities would help their enrollment process. Also, while some U.S. universities do have an existing policy of waiving admission exams such as TOEFL for some international students, there are still other institutions that have not caught up with this novel practice. To appeal to international students aspiring to enroll at U.S. universities, practitioners should consider waiving the TOEFL score as an admission requirement for countries whose national language is English.

Cost

For most students, domestic and international, cost is a salient issue in their college choice. International students from West Africa are more affected by this factor. Whereas U.S. universities need funds to keep the classrooms open, it is expedient they

become considerate in the fees assessed international students. On average, West African students, like other international students, are being assessed about three times what domestic students pay. This seems practically unrealistic as the former tend to be more financially incapable, coming from a low-income and underdeveloped part of the globe. All participants in this study admitted the need for some form of scholarship. The need was so vital many reported they were willing to settle for any institution that offered them a full scholarship or the most generous package. Institutions need to allocate more funding for grants, graduate assistantships, and many other need-based grants specifically for international students. Foreign students are assets to the university, not only in a financial sense, but they also help infuse international perspective to the learning culture in the classroom and the school at large.

In addition, higher education practitioners need to be forthcoming regarding the net cost of attending a U.S. institution. Many foreign students are unaware of other hidden fees in their quoted college costs. Once enrolled, this unknown sometimes becomes a morass, occasioning an increase in the rate of enrollment decline as well as breaching their immigration status.

College Location, Climate, and Degrees

While college location and climate may not have been important factors for students in this study, authors in the literature have spoken of it as phenomena that help influence student college choice. The students in this study did not specifically say why they were not swayed by college location and climate, but, from the overall anecdote, it was obvious their greatest influencer was scholarships. Perhaps policymakers whose campuses are already located in a particular locality could learn a thing or two about what

international students desire, as the physical infrastructure cannot physically be removed. To make a location appealing and attractive to internationals, institutions may consider including some international student-friendly phenomena such as support network, worship, and religious facilities, as well as sociocultural activities that appeal to foreign students. Universities should also prioritize the building of an international student enclave on campus. Students in this study were actually attracted to location and climates but not as a standalone phenomenon. When interspersed with other attractions, college locations could be an influencer in itself for international students.

Diversity

Diversity is a vital issue on college campuses. Many modern universities promote themselves as institutions that champion diversity. Diversity is an asset to both institution and students. It fosters a community of critical thinking, intellectual engagement, and multi-faceted problem-solving skills. Diversity also helps dispel stereotypes and creates global citizenship.

Participants in this case study noted diversity played no role in their choice process of U.S. colleges and universities, even though some later mentioned they were interested but had no choice because their primary sight was on whatever institution that would grant them acceptance. In hindsight, I interviewed no participants who mentioned they were not glad they had on-campus diversity.

As it is no doubt both institutions and students do benefit from diversity, the findings of this study suggest U.S. college practitioners pay particular attention to the need for promoting the pool of diversity in their learning domain. This encompasses diversity among students as well as institutional staff and faculty. There is a sense in

which one thinks of diversity in a linear sense as referring to students only, but diversity among faculty and staff needs to be regarded as another sphere of diversity germane to on-campus diversity. Students are thrilled to find not only fellow students, but also faculties and staff of diverse descent. As some international students have idiosyncrasies in their learning behaviors, having an instructor who understands their cultural peculiarities is essential for the student's learning environment.

Proximity to Home, Family, Friends

Many of the participants in this case study noted they did not consider living near family and friends a major criterion in their college decision making. Notwithstanding, scholars in the literature have noted the significance of this factor for many internationals. That international students live close to family, friends, or home is a factor of limited control for U.S. universities. Nevertheless, as the issue is said to be of desire to many, admission officials must expend efforts to create a semblance of home for students studying abroad. International students tend to attract each other. More broadly, immigrants tend to serve as magnets to each other. Where international students find an enclave of people of similar culture, they are likely to consider residency. As noted in this study, students of foreign descent tend to hear about U.S. universities by word of mouth. Admission policymakers in the US need to consider admitting more international students, as they are likely to attract other students from home.

Other Factors

There are other factors discussed in this case study in which the universities played limited to no roles, but which had significant impacts on the college choice of West African students enrolled in U.S. universities. Each of those factors, which falls in

the predisposition stage of the college choice process, includes Peer Education, High School Preparation, and High School Assistance. While the university may have no influence on them, the factors do help influence students' likelihood of going to college. The literature opines students whose peers go to college are likely to go to college themselves. The respondents in this study noted a majority of their peers did go to college, especially in the US. Additionally, High School Preparation such as math, science, and reading courses, as well as other college preparation courses, are essential in preparing students for college. Still, that the high school can assist its students in their college search is another stimulus for college enrollment. Universities interested in recruiting international students from West Africa need to be mindful some of the students are from such backgrounds that had predisposed them to not go to college but have determined to strive against the odds in their quest to attain higher education.

Future Research

Giving the findings of this case study in Chapter IV and the fit of it with the work of other scholars in the literature, I would like to suggest some areas of further research that could add to further knowledge. For the most part, the dynamics discussed in this study relate to factors of institutional interaction with student applicants. The literature could use more research on non-institutional factors that affect West African international student enrollment in U.S. public universities. The predisposition stage of the Hossler-Gallagher (1987) model of student college choice continues to receive the least attention, in part, due to the fact universities may have little to no influence on most aspects of student predisposition. Studies in that regard would be an immense asset. Additionally, during my study, I came across an interesting phenomenon of the West African culture in

which *some traditions inhibit females from pursuing formal education*. Still, some ruled only one male per household could attend schools. These paradigms are research worthy, especially considering how students of these backgrounds made it to U.S. public universities. Therefore, future scholars could consider how the Hossler-Gallagher model affects West African male students' college choice. The female gender also could be explored using separate studies.

Moreover, as this is a qualitative case study, the study could also benefit from a quantitative parallel. This would add a sense of balance to the study of West African international student college choice process relative to the Hossler and Gallagher (1987) model. The same study could also be used for other West African geographic sub-regions. Finally, I would suggest a generalization of the model using a single West African country. While any country could be a good choice, nations with either high or low representation of students in the US could certainly be research worthy.

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APPENDIX A

25 Top Places of Origin of International Students (2014-2015, 2015-2016)

Table A-1

25 Top Countries of Origin of International Students

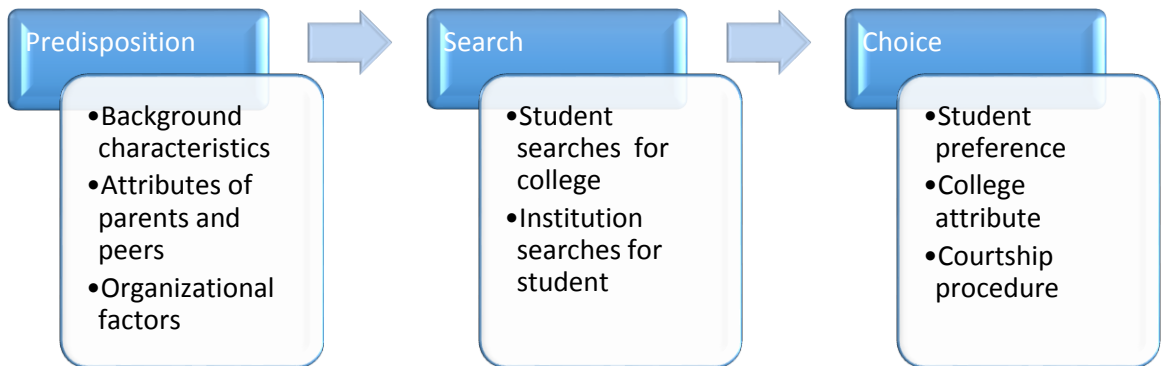
Rank	Place of Origin	2014 to 2015	2015 to 2016
1.	China	304,040	328,547
2.	India	132,888	165,918
3.	Saudi Arabia	59,945	61,287
4.	South Korea	63,710	61,007
5.	Canada	27,240	26,973
6.	Vietnam	18,722	21,403
7.	Taiwan	20,993	21,127
8.	Brazil	23,675	19,370
9.	Japan	19,064	19,060
10.	Mexico	17,052	16,733
11.	Iran	11,338	12,269
12.	United Kingdom	10,743	11,599
13.	Turkey	10,724	10,691
14.	Nigeria	9,494	10,674
15.	Germany	10,193	10,145
16.	Kuwait	9,034	9,772
17.	Nepal	8,158	9,662
18.	France	8,743	8,764
19.	Indonesia	8,188	8,727
20.	Venezuela	7,890	8,267
21.	Hong Kong	8,012	7,923
22.	Malaysia	7,231	7,834
23.	Colombia	7,169	7,815
24.	Thailand	7,217	7,113
25.	Spain	6,143	6,640

APPENDIX B

Theoretical Framework

Figure B-1

Hossler and Gallagher Model of Student College Choice



APPENDIX C

Coding System

Table C-1

A Priori Interview Coding System

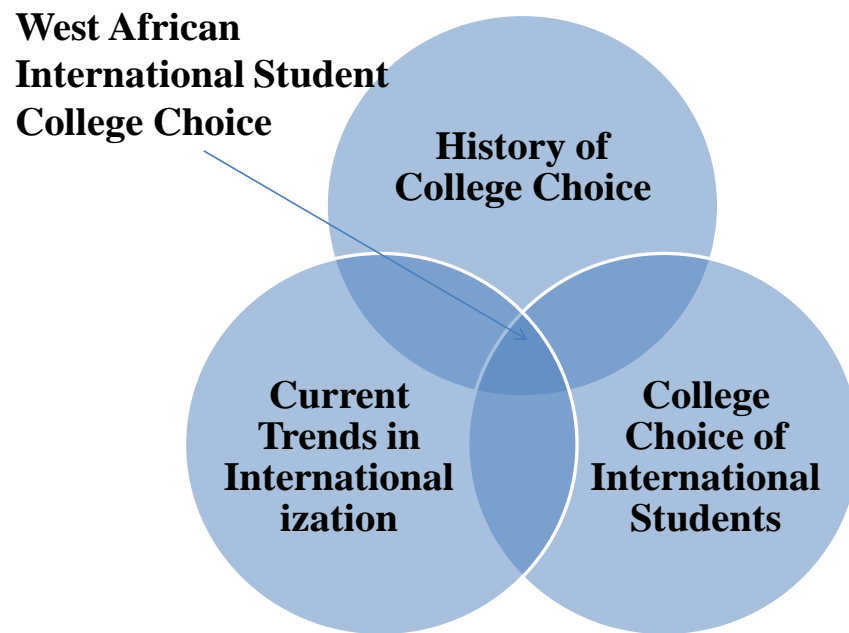
Stage	Codes
Predisposition Stage of College Choice	Opportunities for higher education; Availability of scholarship/aid; Friends/family/relatives; Peer influence; Parental influence; Desire to come to the US; Quality of education; Ability to achieve; College characteristics; Socioeconomic status; Parental level of education; Self-motivation; Encouragement; College preparation; College courses; College board exams; Finances
Search Stage of College Choice	Internet/Online search; Friends/family/relatives; Language; Cost; Availability of scholarship/aid; Affordability; Name Recognition; Healthcare; Admissions process; High school assistance; Location/Climate; Quality of education; Degrees offered; Proximity to family, friends, home; College communication; Diversity; College attributes
Choice Stage of College Choice	Cost; Affordability/Scholarship/Aid; College communication; College attributes; Friends/family/relatives; Proximity to family/friends/home; Admissions process; Quality of education; Diversity; Location/Climate; Language; Degrees; Healthcare

APPENDIX D

Scope of Literature Review

Figure D-1

Scope of Literature Review

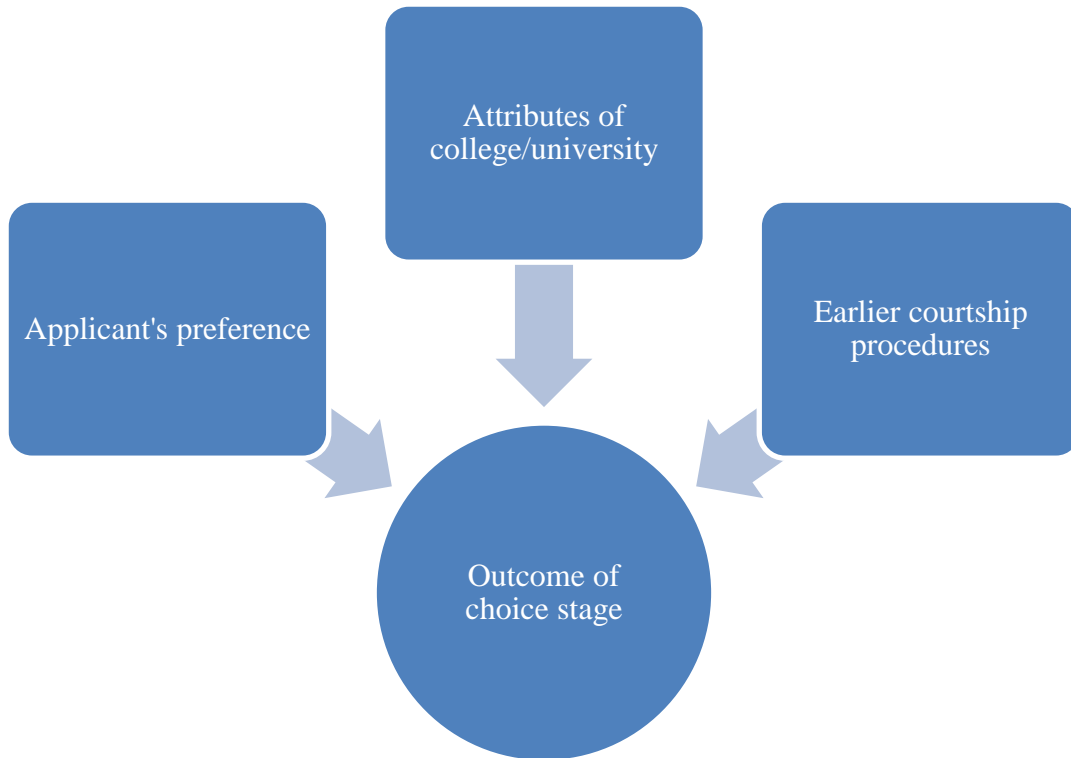


APPENDIX E

Variables in the Choice Stage

Figure E-1

Variables in the Choice Stage



Note. From “Studying Student College Choice: A Three-Phase Model and the Implications for Policymakers,” by Hossler and Gallagher, 1987.

APPENDIX F

Demographics of Research Participants

Table F-1

Participant Demographics

Name	Gender	Student Status	Country of Origin
Carl	Male	Undergraduate	Nigeria
Nat	Male	Undergraduate	Nigeria
Grace	Female	Graduate	Nigeria
Michael	Male	Undergraduate	Ghana
Peter	Male	Undergraduate	Liberia
Julia	Female	Undergraduate	Liberia
Roberto	Male	Undergraduate	Nigeria
Tenema	Male	Undergraduate	Liberia
Charles	Male	Undergraduate	Liberia
Zobon	Male	Undergraduate	Liberia
Randy	Male	Undergraduate	Nigeria
Richard	Male	Graduate	Nigeria
Ethan	Male	Undergraduate	Nigeria
Zach	Male	Graduate	Sierra Leone
Samuel	Male	Undergraduate	Nigeria
Taylor	Male	Graduate	Togo
Josephine	Female	Undergraduate	Nigeria
Jared	Male	Undergraduate	Nigeria
Jerry	Male	Undergraduate	Nigeria
John	Male	Graduate	Sierra Leone
Mark	Male	Undergraduate	Ghana
Willie	Male	Undergraduate	Cote d'Ivoire
Wayne	Male	Undergraduate	Nigeria
Rachel	Female	Graduate	Togo

APPENDIX G

Permission Letter to use the Hossler and Gallagher Model

10/10/2020

RE: Research Permission Request

From: hossler@indiana.edu,
To: zeambo1@indiana.edu,
Subject: RE: Research Permission Request
Date: Wed, Nov 1, 2017 8:36 pm

Please feel free to use this model. Thanks for asking. There was no instrument as it was a conceptual/theoretical article and was not based on empirical research. Best of luck.

Don Hossler

Professor Emeritus

School of Education

Indiana University Bloomington

██████████

APPENDIX H

Interview Protocol

The following interview questions are about your college choice. I am interested in hearing narratives of the factors that led to the myriad decisions you made to enroll in your current institution of learning.

RQ1 (Predisposition)

1. Why did you decide to pursue a college education in the United States?
2. Tell me about the socio-economic status (SES) of your family.
3. In what ways did your family's SES affect your decision to go to a United States college?
4. What are the levels of education of your parents?
5. How much encouragement did you receive from your parents to attend a United States college?
6. What are the current levels of education of your high school peers?
7. How much encouragement did you receive from your peers to go to a United States college?
8. In what ways did your high school help prepare you for college in the United States.

RQ2 (Search)

1. What did your search process for a U.S. university entail?
2. What were your top priorities in the U.S. universities you researched?
3. What roles did the following play in gathering information about your potential college in the US:
 - Your high school?
 - Your family?
 - Your friends?
4. What roles did each of the following college phenomena play in your search for a U.S. college:
 - Admissions process?

Cost/aid?

Location/climate?

Degrees offered?

Quality of education?

Proximity to home, family and/friends?

Diversity?

RQ3 (Choice)

1. How did you narrow down your choice set to the school you attended or are attending?
2. What roles did each of the following college phenomena play in your final choice:
 - College influence/admissions process?
 - College attributes?
 - Quality of education?
 - Cost?
 - Availability of aids/scholarships?
 - Diversity?
 - Location/climate?
 - Proximity to home, family/friends?
 - Degrees offered?

APPENDIX I

IRB Approval



*INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY*

DATE: May 10, 2018
TO: Zeambo Dahnweih
FROM: Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB
PROJECT TITLE: [1239379-1] The College choice of West African international students: A Generalization of the Hossler-Gallagher model of student college choice
REFERENCE #: IRB 18-403
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: May 10, 2018
EXPIRATION DATE: May 2, 2019
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of **New Project** materials for this project. The Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB has **APPROVED** your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received **Expedited Review** based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a *signed* consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All **UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS** involving risks to subjects or others and **SERIOUS** and **UNEXPECTED** adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All **NON-COMPLIANCE** issues or **COMPLAINTS** regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a **Minimal Risk** project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of May 2, 2019.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Paul Mooney at (270) 745-2129 or irb@wku.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

APPENDIX J

Alignment of Interview Questions with Research Questions

Table J-1

Interview Questions Aligned with Research Questions

	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3
Why did you decide to pursue a college education in the United States?	X		
Tell me about the socio-economic status (SES) of your family.	X		
In what ways did your family's SES affect your decision to go to a United States college?	X		
What are the levels of education of your parents?	X		
How much encouragement did you receive from your parents to attend a United States college?	X		
What are the current levels of education of your high school peers?	X		
How much encouragement did you receive from your peers to go to a United States college?	X		
In what ways did your high school help prepare you for college in the United States.	X		
What kind of college preparatory courses, if any, did your high school offer that prepared you for college?	X		
What did your search process for a U.S. university entail?		X	
What were your top priorities in the U.S. universities you researched?		X	
What roles did the following play in gathering information about your potential college in the US:			

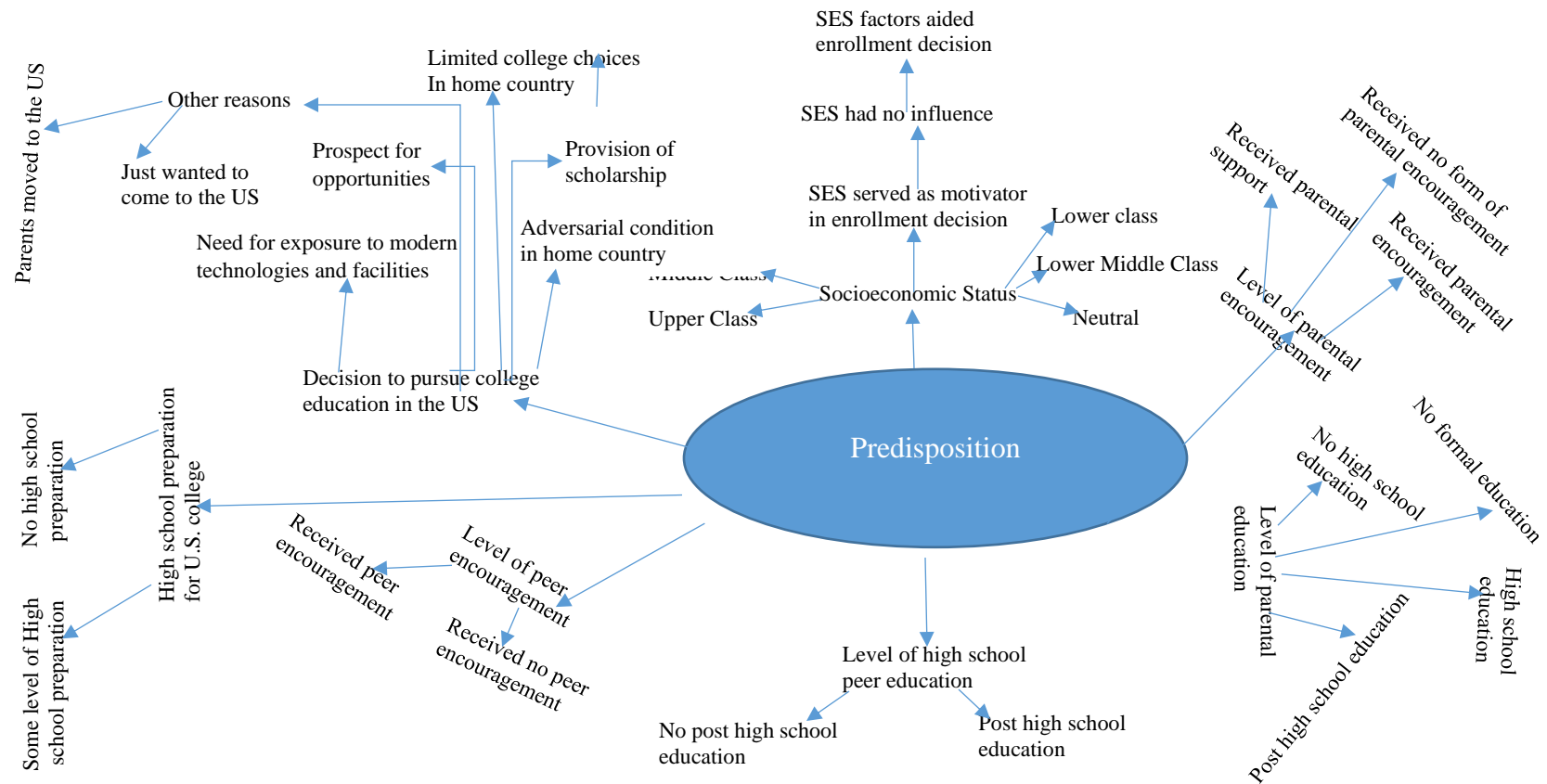
Your high school?	X	
Your family?	X	
Your friends?	X	
What roles did each of the following college phenomena play in your search for a U.S. college:		
Admissions process?	X	
Cost/aid?	X	
Location/climate?	X	
Degrees offered?	X	
Quality of education?	X	
Proximity to home, family and/friends?	X	
Diversity?	X	
How did you narrow down your choice set to the school you attended or are attending?		
		X
What roles did each of the following college phenomena play in your final choice:		
College influence/admissions process?		X
College attributes?		X
Quality of education?		X
Cost?		X
Availability of aids/scholarships?		X
Diversity?		X
Location/climate?		X
Proximity to home, family/friends?		X
Degrees offered?		X

APPENDIX K

Summation of Findings of Predisposition Stage

Figure K-1

Summary of Findings in Predisposition Stage

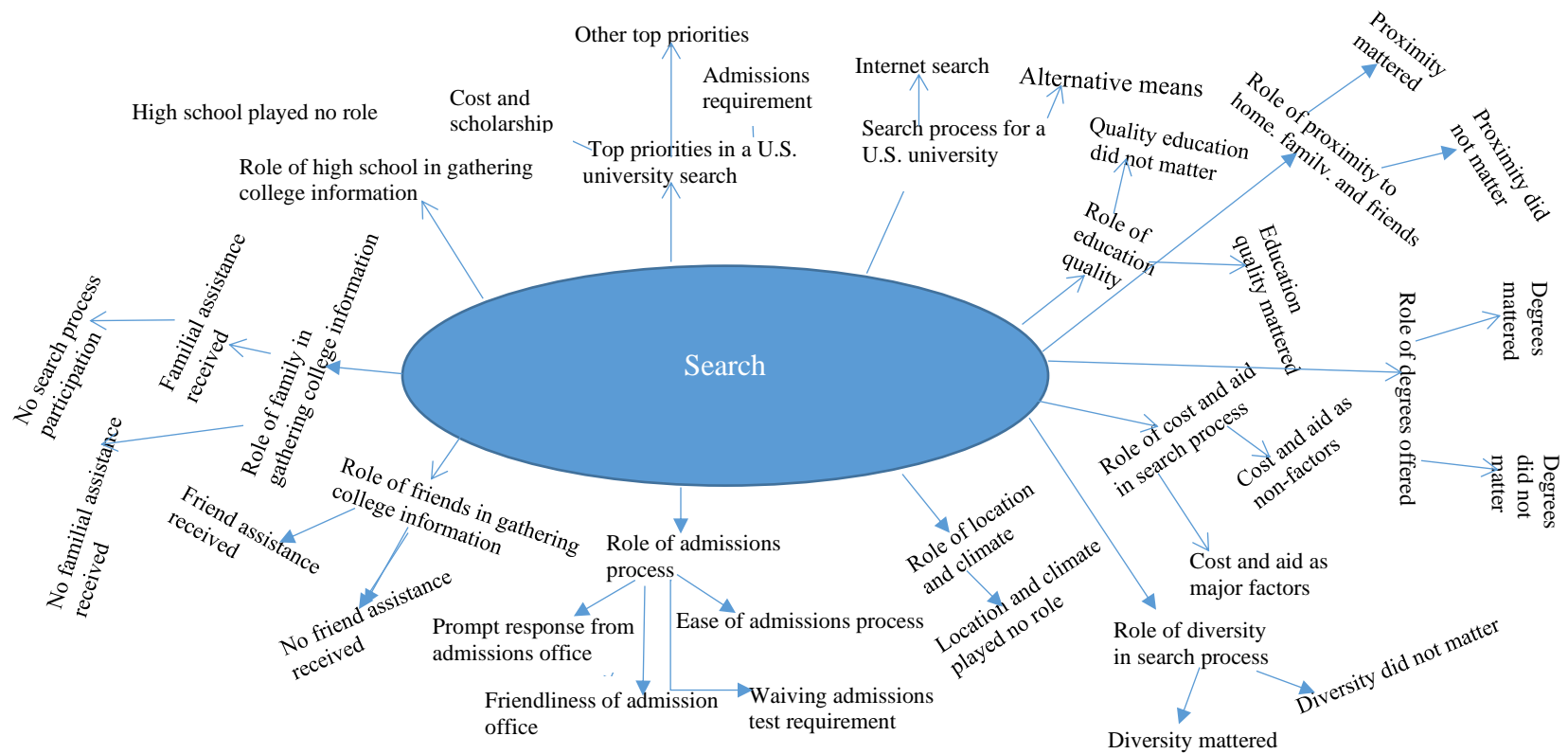


APPENDIX L

Summation of Findings of Search Stage

Figure L-1

Summary of Findings in Search Stage



APPENDIX M

Summation of Findings of Choice Stage

Figure M-1

Summary of Findings in Choice Stage

