Career Decision-Making and College and Career Access Among Recent African Immigrant Students

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ABSTRACT

The number of African immigrant youth in American classrooms is on the rise. School counselors are uniquely positioned to help these students to be college and career ready. Using the Social Cognitive Career Theory framework, this article aims to address the unique career development needs, college and career access challenges faced by African immigrant students with an emphasis on high school students, and recommends strategic interventions for school counselors helping this population navigate career choice and determination. Implications for school counseling practice and research are also addressed.

Keywords: Career-decision making, African immigrants, barriers, high school students, college access, interventions

College and career readiness for all students is now the focus of most United States education systems (Conley, 2010). The mandate to prepare all students to be college and career ready has been supported by the former President of the United States (Barack Obama) who stated, "we must ensure that every student graduates from high school well prepared for college and a career" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d). In fact, the United States hopes to implement policies to reclaim its lost position as a world leader in college completion by the year 2020 (U.S. Department of Education. n.d.). If this goal is to become a reality, it behooves every state, school district, and school building to be sensitive to the career development needs of all the students under their purview regardless of race, gender, country of origin, or other demographic variables that impede equitable educational and career outcomes.

Recent United States Census data suggested that African immigrants are migrating to the United States at an increased rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Using these Census data, Mukiibi (2015) noted that the African immigrant population has risen from 64,000 to 1.6 million within three decades from 1980 to 2010. These data suggested a 2,500% increase in the immigrant population during that period. As of 2015, one out of every four Americans was an immigrant, or had an immigrant parent, and by 2065, the number is projected to rise to one in three (Pew Research Institute, n.d.). The immigrant student population has also increased rapidly. The Current Population Survey (CPS) statistics indicated that about 2.7% of the students enrolled in high school were foreign born, whereas, 5.5% were children of foreign-born parents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). In summary, if this trend continues, future

immigration could change the face of America (Pew Research Institute, n.d).

Unique Career Development Needs of African Immigrant Students

Immigrant students and children of immigrants face unique challenges as they try to negotiate the education system in the United States, including the process of choosing a college and/or career (Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). Adjusting to a new culture, learning a new language, developing relationships, and dealing with racial/ethnic discrimination are some of the challenges that new immigrant students have to navigate in order to be successful in American classrooms (Goy, Wahl, McDonald, Brisset, & Yoon, 2007; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2009). The shifting demographics of the American classrooms require new approaches in addressing culturally and linguistically different student populations, among whom are African-immigrants (Harushimana, 2007). Despite the increasing numbers of African immigrant students in American schools, the lack of research about the unique challenges faced by this population in their career development and choice is concerning. This article focuses exclusively on the college and career concerns of recent African- immigrant students as well as the native-born children of at least one foreign-born African parent. The article aims to address the unique career development needs of college and career accessibility challenges faced by Black Sub-Saharan immigrant students (with an emphasis on high school students), and

recommend some strategic interventions for school counselors helping this population navigate the career choice and determination.

The African Diaspora

It is important to note that Africa is a vast and diverse continent with 55 countries that are internationally recognized as members of African Union (AU), and United Nations (UN). There are over 3,000 languages spoken in Africa. There are varying histories of colonization, civil strife, and political instability in each of these countries. Additionally, there are differences in culture, ethnicity, race, traditions, economic viability, and socio-cultural factors, all of which will influence the career trajectory of African immigrants in the United States (Stebleton, 2007). School counselors therefore need to be aware of pre- and post-immigration contextual factors that may hinder or facilitate career decision making of African immigrant students.

For many African families, a primary reason for immigrating to the United States is to provide better education and career opportunities for their children. Attending a school in the United States education system may be a life changing opportunity for African immigrant students; potentially having implications for intergenerational mobility (Crosnoe & Truly, 2011). In most cases, African immigrants enter the U.S. legally through the many visa options available including the Diversity Lottery Visa (popularly known as the Green Card), diplomat visa, student visa, visitor's visa,

refugee/political asylum status, business visa (temporary work visa for professionals), or fiancé visa (Harushimana, 2007). At times, negative life events force immigrant students to leave their home country as refugees due to war, political oppression, disease, and/or natural disasters leading to potential for trauma responses in addition to the stress of acculturation (Stebleton, 2007). Many challenges and needs might arise as African immigrant students' make a transition to the United States. Some of the most common challenges and needs are described below:

Language proficiency. Many African immigrant students come to the United States with strong academic potential (Mukiibi, 2015) and tend to outperform their non-immigrant peers academically (Crosnoe & Turley, 2011), yet still face numerous challenges when entering the United States education system. African immigrant students may face forms of racism, discrimination, and prejudices that they did not face in their home countries (Mukiibi, 2015; Stebleton, 2007; Thomas, 2012). Crosnoe and Truley (2011) noted that despite strong academic abilities and potentials, many immigrant children would face discrimination from teachers and peers in the United States education system based primarily on their language proficiency. Language proficiency is central to the career decision-making needs of youth when you consider what language proficiency means for other's perceptions of their nationality (Mukiibi, 2015), and the subsequent beliefs and assumptions from others might directly or indirectly influence the youth's career decision-making.

Discrimination. Many African youth are proficient in English, but may still face discrimination because of the color of their skin (Mukiibi, 2015). Black -African immigrant students are typically associated with African-American students due to skin color. This may cause dissonance since Black-African immigrant students may not know or share the cultural history of African-American youth. Furthermore, this misattribution may further isolate or mask students' culturally specific needs (Mukiibi, 2015; Thomas, 2012). In schools, African immigrant students are likely to face discrimination from teachers, administrators, and peers who contribute negative attributes to their skin color and language use. Students' futures are no more hopeful as African immigrants are likely to experience discrimination in employment as evident by the high unemployment rate among African immigrants. Of course, this factor may also be impacting students' families, an important aspect of their ecological field (Mukiibi, 2015), as well as impacting family socioeconomic status, which in turn can influence if, when, and how African immigrants go on to post-secondary education (Crosnoe & Truley, 2011).

Acculturation. African immigrant students typically face the idea of navigating dual cultures as they make the transition into the United States education system (Watkinson & Hersi, 2014). Mukiibi (2015) purported that African immigrant students struggle with

addressing dual cultures in terms of their parental cultural expectations and peers/friends acceptance. African parents typically expect youth to maintain collectivistic cultural values, while United States peers/friends typically expect the youth to adopt individualistic cultural values. Maintaining traditional cultural values and incorporating new cultural ideals can cause significant stress for African immigrant students in terms of their identity development (Mukiibi, 2015).

Navigating the education system. The United States education system can be completely different from the education systems in African immigrant students' home country (Mukiibi, 2015). Challenges of navigating the education system arise when we consider the student's language proficiency, race, and level of acculturation. African immigrant students must adjust to the new learning environment such as: the structure of the school, the educational approaches in the classroom, and the sequence of educational events (e.g., course sequencing, graduation requirements, college planning, etc.) (Harushimana, 2007). Crosnoe and Truley (2011) and Mukiibi (2015) both suggested that navigating the education system becomes less challenging based on the African immigrant student's family supports and the family's understandings of the United States education system.

Career Decision Making Process
There is a notable lack of research on the career decision making process of African-immigrant students in the United States;

therefore, very little is known about how this particular population constructs their career interests. A review of the literature found no empirical contributions addressing career decision making for African immigrant high school students. Corollary studies investigating career development concerns for immigrant students from other collectivist cultures (e.g., Chinese immigrant students) may provide limited insight into the processes of African immigrant students. This lack of research with African-immigrant students is a wake-up call for empirical studies to help explain the unique career development needs and decision making for this population. According to Super's (1990) developmental theory, adolescence is the stage of career exploration, during which the adolescent form general vocational goals, through awareness of their resources, contingencies, interests, values, and plan for a preferred vocation. Career development tasks at this stage include crystallizing and specifying occupational preferences, and implementing the selected choice (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2017). Such a process may be difficult for any adolescent without the guidance of a mature adult who understands the intricacies of the career decision process (Watkinson & Hersi, 2014). Subsequently, it is certainly more difficult for a recent immigrated African-student who may have little to no understanding of the different college and career opportunities that are available to the youth (Vu & Walters, 2013). Career decision making is an uphill task that will definitely require the assistance of the school counselor

to navigate. School counselors need to be aware of the contextual factors that influence career decision making for African-immigrant students (Watkinson & Hersi, 2014).

One of the major tasks of high school students is to plan and make career decisions regarding post-secondary career options (Mei, Wei, & Newmeyer, 2008). In order to make such decisions, students are required to have an understanding of self as well as obtain help with occupational information. School counselors play a key role in career planning and development and in helping prepare high school students in planning for their post-secondary career options (Mei et al., 2008). School counselors need to understand the unique factors that influence African immigrant career decision making in order to design effective career intervention programs to assist this population.

Factors Influencing Career Decision Making among African-Immigrant Students

The following are factors influencing career decision making for African immigrant students; notably the interplay between family and cultural norms, the acculturation process, and potential margination of immigrant families are key factors important for school counselors to be aware of (Yakushiko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya, & Gonzalez, 2008).

Family Influence
Several studies found family influences to be a major contributing factor in career decision

making among African students (Kim, 1993; Leong & Chou, 1994; Shen, 2015; Workman, 2015). For example, a study conducted by Kochung & Migunde (2011) with Kenyan high school students revealed that family members were more influential in career choice compared to other persons. Parents explicitly or implicitly convey their career expectations to their children often exerting familial pressure that is perceived as a key factor in career decision making (Ma & Yeh, 2005; Ma & Yeh, 2010; Workman, 2015). Similar to findings about Asian immigrant families (Ma & Yeh, 2005; Ma & Yeh, 2010), African immigrant families tend to have high educational expectations of their children and consequently put a lot of pressure on their children's academic performance (Stebleton, 2007; Workman, 2015).

African immigrant family values and expectations also influence career decision-making processes of the youth (Shen, 2015). For example, the family may value prestige over interests in a career and explicitly or implicitly exert influence to push their children to choose careers that are deemed socially prestigious and well paying. Within a collectivistic framework, this value structure works to ensure economic survival and the ability of the children to take care of ageing parents (Okubo, Yeh, Lin, Fujita, & Shea, 2007). As children grow older, and become more acculturated to the individualistic mainstream culture, they may desire to find personal fulfillment versus pleasing their parents/operating from a collectivistic system of cultural norms (Okubo et al., 2007).

The tension of acculturation within the career decision-making process can lead to intergenerational conflict, and consequently lead adolescents to indecision about making an academic or career choice (Ma & Yeh, 2005). However, the amount of pressure will vary depending on the ethnicity, family structure, acculturation level, socio-economic status, gender role socialization, intergenerational conflicts, and birth order of the youth among other factors (Okubo et al., 2007). Regardless, youth are likely to face challenges to reconcile parental career expectations with their own career interests (Ma & Yeh, 2005). Ultimately, African-immigrant students might choose careers that will fulfill individualistic concepts of self and/or allow them to financially support their families and give back to the community (Stebleton & Diamond, 2016).

Cultural Values

Within many immigrant communities, certain careers are considered to be more valuable or hold more prestige than others (Okubo et al., 2007; Shen, 2015). Careers such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, and architects are held in high regard and presumably well paid. Consequently, parents may tend to value these and encourage their children to pursue such prestigious and secure occupations (Shen, 2015). Therefore, besides considering their own individual career interests, African-immigrant students may have to consider familial and cultural values and expectations when making career decisions (Stebleton, 2007).

Gender Role Expectations/ Socialization

Immigrant parents might often have different career aspirations for boys and girls. A study by Mei, Wei, and Newmeyer (2008) found differences based on gender in self-efficacy and career decision making of high school students. They reported that girls had interest and higher self-efficacy for occupations that involve working with people and expressing oneself (Social and Artistic codes, in Holland's Typology). On the other hand, they found boys to have more interest and high efficacy for occupations that involved data and things (Realistic, Conventional, Enterprising and Investigative codes; Mei et al., 2008). In many African cultures, clear-cut gender role assignments occur at a very early age. Girls learn that they are caregivers and might tend to lean more toward careers in the helping profession such as nursing, teaching, and counseling. Boys tend to receive societal messages that they are the providers and protectors of their family, subsequently choose careers that are more masculine and well paid to maintain their status. However, the influences of gender seem to be weakening with time. For example, Kochung and Migunde (2011), found that gender was not a major factor in career decision-making among Kenyan high school students.

Cultural Identity/level of Acculturation

Career decisions may be markedly different for peers based on their levels of acculturation and ethnic identity. Intergenerational conflicts between students and their elderly family members may hinder them from

discussing career related concerns with their family (Okubo et al., 2007). Students may turn to other sources for career information. However, it is important to note that children born in the U.S. by immigrant parents tend to be more acculturated than their immigrant counterparts. Being more assimilated may mean that they are more vocal, assertive, and independent (Okubo, et al., 2007). Such values may compete with the traditional African values of humility and respect for the elders; consequently resulting in more intergenerational conflict (Okocha, 2007). It is important to examine how the balance of two cultures influence career decisions making for African-immigrant students (Stebleton, 2007). African- immigrant students have to navigate between their home and school cultures, which can create competing ideas about careers (Okubo et al, 2007). Although the American culture reinforces the quality of independence in decision making without involving others (Ma & Yeh, 2005), African culture demands consulting and listening to the family members when making major decisions such as career choices and future plans.

Academic success might have a different meaning from an African perspective in comparison to an American perspective. Career indecision can be construed to mean immaturity from a western perspective (Ma & Yeh, 2005); however, such indecision among African immigrant students may be rooted in the cultural expectations of their community; requiring the youth to consult their families before making decisions (Okocha, 2007).

Assessing career maturity of African-immigrant students from a Western theoretical perspective can lead to a biased perception. Subsequently, school counselors might perceive immigrants as less mature when compared to their white counterparts (Ma & Yeh, 2005).

Role Models/Significant Others
Some African- immigrant students may not be living with their immediate family members and hence lack social support especially during career decision-making processes (Watkinson & Hersi, 2014). Not having family to consult with regarding such decisions is one impediment in college and/ or career decision-making. Furthermore, a lack of role models within the family (i.e., someone with a college degree) can affect the career decision-making process of young immigrant students who may view college as not a necessity for their survival or in the best interest of caring for family intergenerationally (Watkinson & Hersi, 2014;Yeh, Okubo, Ma, Shea, Ou, & Pituc, 2008).

Financial Challenges
Some students may fail to make career decisions to pursue college for fear of lack of finances to pay for college education (Gibbons et al., 2006; Vu & Walters, 2013). Stebleton and Diamond (2016) suggested that students might experience anxiety about college debt and the prospect of meaningful employment to pay back the loan. Such students may opt to work upon high school graduation or even choose to go to a two-year college (Vu & Walters, 2013).

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Individual Factors

Race, gender, first-generation student, family support, and legal status identities may affect an individual's career decision-making process (Stebleton & Diamond, 2016). English language fluency and perceived barriers such as fear of discrimination due to their immigration status, and minority ethnic status may affect their educational and career goals (Ma & Yeh, 2010). Some students may avoid selecting college majors and careers that require a high-level mastery of English for fear of not meeting the expectations (Stebleton, & Diamond, 2016).

Career Decision Making Approaches

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

Few empirical studies can be found that provide an evidential basis for career work with African immigrant high school students, therefore we recommend Social Cognitive Career Theory as the starting foundation for conceptualizing work with this population. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2000, 1994) conceptualized Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) to describe how career interests, goals, and behaviors are influenced by contextual factors (i.e., unique person inputs and environmental conditions), learning experiences, and the individual's self-efficacy and outcome expectations based upon these learning experiences. Although each of these factors are interrelated with one another, SCCT is helpful in school and career counseling to effectively conceptualize the impacts and influences of each; particularly

when working with marginalized populations (Morris, Shoffner, & Newsome, 2009).

Bandura's (1986) triadic reciprocal model is a key component of understanding the complex relationships of SCCT. The triadic reciprocal model describes how learning experiences lead to the development of and relationship amongst self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal career goals and decision-making behaviors. Self-efficacy beliefs are "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Outcome expectations describe what an individual expects to happen if they take an action including extrinsic reinforcement (i.e., tangible rewards), self-directed consequences (i.e., pride in accomplishment), or outcomes resulting from the activity itself (i.e., receiving admiration from others). Personal career interests, goals, and planning actions help individuals organize themselves and signify one's determination to obtain a particular outcome (Lent et al., 1996). Figure 1 on page 70 provides a conceptual model of the triadic reciprocal model as it relates to the larger SCCT framework.

The relationships described in Figure 1 are largely buffered from cultural differences; instead, they describe a very human process linking learning experiences to outcomes. This process does not happen in a contextual (i.e, cultural) vacuum, in fact contextual factors greatly influence this learning-through

-outcomes process. SCCT conceptually envelops this learning process within three key components of external factors: (a) Unique Person Inputs, (b) Environmental Conditions, and (c) Contextual Influences proximal to choice behavior. Let us look at the three contextual factors from the vantage point of working with African immigrant students making career decisions.

Figure 1.
Conceptual Model of the Triadic Reciprocal Model Unique Person Inputs.
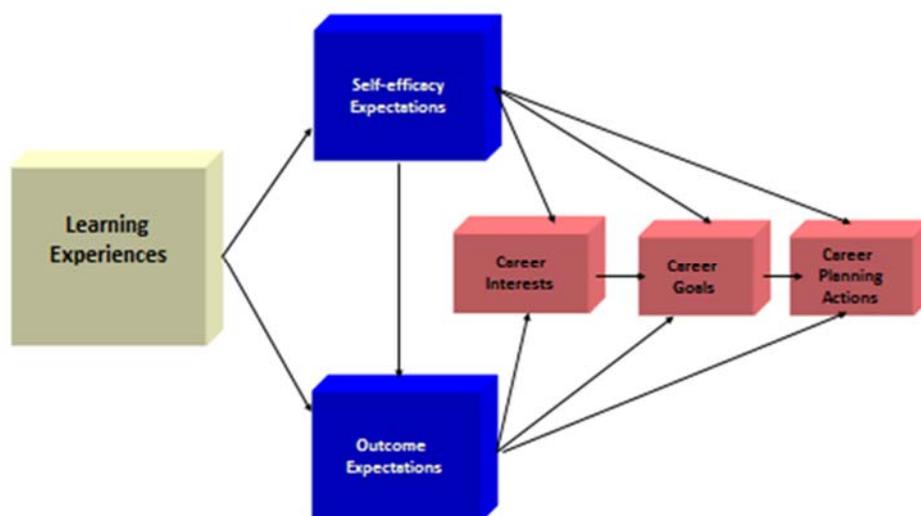
SCCT acknowledges the importance of person-centric factors or inputs such as predispositions, gender, race/ethnicity, and disability or health status as influencers of career development and decision-making. Situating these person-centric inputs within the broader context of African immigrant status might create a list of additional unique person inputs for African immigrant students including country of origin (e.g., Kenya, Nigeria), family systems of support (e.g., collectivistic attitudes, proximity to family based on immigration status), adherence or oral traditions (e.g., acculturated to African oral traditions or acculturated to U.S. traditions for talk therapy), experience with Western colonialism (e.g., economic outlook, education system experiences), and problem-solving preferences (e.g., collectivist/community-centric preference versus Western individualistic preferences). Each of these factors affects the counseling/advising relationship and the process of career development and decision-making.

Distal Factors/ Environmental Conditions Background factors present throughout the career development process (i.e., at a distance from choices or actions) "affect the learning experiences through which career-relevant self-efficacy and outcome expectations develop" (Lent et al., 2000 p. 37). Distal factors influence the perceived and real opportunity structure within which students are experiencing career development and making career decisions. An apt example is the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policies as applied to student financial aid for higher education whereby policy changes are prohibiting foreign-born

students who reside permanently in the United States from achieving their postsecondary goals. For African immigrant students, distal factors such as family socioeconomic background, U.S. immigration policies, and school afforded opportunities (e.g., ELL programs, knowledgeable staff) influence career development and decision-making.

Proximal Factors

Whereas unique person inputs and distal factors influence the context within which develops career interests, goals, self-efficacy expectations, and outcome expectations, proximal factors play a moderating role at the time when a student is ready to develop their career interests into career goals or take action on their career goals (e.g., turning an interest in science into the goal of becoming a veterinarian and then turning that goal into an application to veterinary school). SCCT posits that students will be less likely to move through this interest-to-goal-to-action sequence when they perceive their efforts to be impeded by adverse environmental factors (e.g., insurmountable barriers or inadequate support systems). Conversely, the perception of beneficial environmental factors (e.g., ample support, few barriers) is predicted to facilitate the process of translating one's interests into goals and goals into actions" (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000, p.38).

Career Development Strategies for School Counselors (Interventions)

Career interventions need to take a holistic approach that addresses unique person inputs, distal/ environmental conditions, and proximal factors because immigrant students may express poor self-concept and low self-efficacy with regard to a number of careers (Okocha, 2007) based on factors unique to their context. School counselors are in a unique position to support and empower African immigrant students as they navigate the career decision-making process; but special consideration unique to their context must be incorporated into existing methods. Following are broader implications for working with this student population and specific intervention strategies.

Unique Person Inputs Strategies

Knowledge of Student's Background. School counselors are encouraged to learn more about African history, culture, and the immigrant experience (Stebleton, 2007; Suarez-Orozco, 2010). Such knowledge of the client's culture is important in understanding their worldview (Suarez-Orozco et al, 2010). School counselors need to have an understanding of the educational challenges that immigrant African students go through and which may interfere with the post-secondary career aspirations and choices (Suarez-Orozco, 2010). To enhance their understanding of the African culture, school counselors may choose to attend cultural events organized by African student groups

on campus or in the community. Keeping current with the happenings in Africa is key to being relevant in working with this population (Stebleton, 2007).

Multicultural Career Competency. African-immigrant students come from diverse cultural backgrounds; being culturally competent is an imperative. First, school counselors need to be aware of their own cultural biases, assumptions, preconceived notions, and personal limitations. Second, they need to have an understanding of the client's world view. Third, counselors need to develop appropriate, relevant, and culturally sensitive intervention strategies for African immigrant students (Okocha, 2007; Stebleton, 2007; Yakushiko et al, 2008).

Distal/ Environmental Condition Strategies

Advocacy. Counselors need to advocate for their clients. Immigrants and refugees face many obstacles to career attainment such as language barriers, limited education, and discriminatory hiring practices (Stebleton, 2007). Students need to be empowered to advocate for themselves as well (Okocha, 2007). School counselors can advocate for change in policies and practices that will offer support for immigrant students "in the form of counseling, after-school tutoring programs, homework help, internships, and summer programs so that they can obtain the academic skills and social support needed to engage in a rigorous academic curriculum" (Watkinson & Hersi, 2014, p.52).

Consultation and Collaboration. To effectively serve this population, school counselors will need to consult and collaborate with a wide variety of organizations including educational institutions, social service agencies, banks, businesses, child care centers, mental health development centers, and prospective employers (Okocha, 2007; Vu &Walters, 2013). Developing partnerships with local community agencies (e.g., mental health agencies, universities, youth development programs, and faith based organizations) will be necessary to work together and provide needed services for immigrant students and their families (Surazez-Orozco et al., 2010). More importantly, school counselors must engage with the immigrant communities and families represented by their student population to be most effective. In other words, school counselors need to possess good consultation and leadership skills (Okocha, 2007; Vu & Walters, 2013).

Parental Involvement. Research studies have shown that parents play a critical role in the career decision making of their children (Workman, 2015). Parental involvement during college and career planning is crucial for this population. School counselors need to reach out to immigrant parents for support of their children. Given that parental influence is mostly associated with the more traditionally accepted career choices such as engineering, medicine, and computer science, parental involvement would help educate parents about the variety of other career

opportunities in the United States (Ma & Yeh, 2005). Additionally, establishing school family partnerships provides opportunities for families to access educational and college information (Watkinson & Hersi, 2014). School counselors need to plan for an extensive outreach to parents if they want to involve them in their children's career planning. Programs that bring parents and students together could be helpful, such as a career nights, or college visits (Gibbons et al, 2006). Additionally, school counselors can request parents who have been in the country longer to come in as volunteers (Mitchell & Bryan, 2007).

Proximal Factor Strategies

Assessments. Selecting assessments based on the principles, beliefs, and values of the client's culture is very important (Watson, Duarte, & Glavin, 2005). Assessment tools that address the collective and communal factors and the meaning of work relevant to African immigrants are important to consider. Very few career assessments have been normed on African populations and to our knowledge, none have been assessed specifically for African immigrant students residing in the United States. Qualitative and informal assessments such as value card sorts, narrative career assessment, life line, and life career rainbow are recommended for use with

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"Assessment tools that address the collective and communal factors and the meaning of work relevant to African immigrants are important to consider."

African immigrant students (Okocha, 2007). These informal assessments provide an opportunity for a holistic evaluation of client's abilities, interests, and values as compared to objective assessments (Okocha, 2007, 2001; Stebleton, 2007).

Based on the factors we have described, we recommend the use of qualitative assessments that captures client's life stories, including their families and socio-cultural factors. Examples of relevant career approaches include ecosystemic, narrative, values-based and constructivist (Savickas) theories in addition to techniques such as portfolios, career genograms, autobiographical work and word sculpturing (Hutchison, 2011).

Mentorship Programs. Pairing African immigrant students with role models from a variety of occupations for information, guidance, and support (Ma & Yeh, 2005) would help them gain understanding of the various careers. Additionally, school counselors could also do well to match newly arrived immigrants with those students who have been in the country longer or other African children born in the country by immigrant parents for support and guidance. Linking student to free afterschool programs and mentoring services would serve as a means to community cohesion as well as to inoculate youth from

toxic environments in their new settings (Surazez-Orozco et al., 2010).

Small Group Intervention. Peer and group interventions may be helpful (Okubo.,et al., 2007). Small groups provide much needed support as well as provide a safe place to explore cultural identities with the goal of enabling the students the ability to negotiate between the two worlds (Watkinson & Hersi, 2014).

Workshops. Workshops designed to help recent African immigrant students navigate the complex educational system-topics could range from effective study skills, college admission, (Surazez-Orozco et al., 2010), types of colleges, and college costs (Gibbons, et al., 2006), among others. In addition, such workshops would serve as the forum to disseminate information about scholarships and financial aid resources (i.e., FAFSA) and application (Gibbons et al., 2006). Furthermore, school counselors could set up mock interviews to help students practice in expressing themselves in English and to practice appropriate etiquette in an interview setting (Shea, Ma, & Yeh, 2007). Presentations by professionals and college students from the community could help demystify the college and career application process as well as help build student's self-efficacy through social persuasion (Lent, et al., 2000).

Implications for Future Research
Given the absence of information on the career development and decision-making on African-born immigrants, there is need for

more research to inform interventions. Considering the cultural values of many African immigrant families and the collectivist cultural norms, we recommend qualitative research designs focused on understanding the lived experiences of African immigrant students and separate studies focused on understanding family values, norms, and acculturation to career decision-making processes. A qualitative research design could help to provide a narrative about the specific struggles associated with African immigrant students and their families as they navigate the student's career decision-making journey. Additionally, such studies could help explain the role of perceived and actual barriers to career development and career exploration among African immigrant students. We propose methods such as phenomenological interviewing and focus groups (see Sideman, 2013) for understanding, participatory action research (see Whyte, 1991) for community involvement and change, and critical theory research (see Soloranzo & Yosso, 2002) for analysis and advocacy. We recommend that future research focus on the process across the lifespan by collecting data from African immigrant students before, during, and after the career decision-making process. Such a study could reveal how prior learning experiences may influence the career decision making process of this population.

Moreover, future research should investigate parental and/or family influences on career decision making process of African immigrant

students. Assessing the extent to which family plays a role in choosing a college major and subsequent career will inform interventions about parental involvement. Such studies will also help to understand the role of social support to career decision making process. To further understand some of the carrier decision making difficulties experienced by this population, we recommended that future studies examine the influence of cultural identity, level of acculturation, and self-efficacy on career decision making process. Additional studies could examine if there are gender differences in career decision making among African-Immigrant students.

Further, psychometric research on career instruments used in schools using African immigrant students is required. We also recommend that future research explore the cultural values of African immigrants as it relates to the use of career related instruments and to their career decision-making process.

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