Article

Prioritising Family Needs: A Grounded Theory of Acculturation for Sub-Saharan African Migrant Families in Australia

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Abstract: Pre-existing acculturation models have focused on individual orientation and may not be fully applicable to African migrants due to their strong connection to family. In this study, we utilised qualitative semi-structured interviews to explore how 22 migrant families from eight sub-Saharan African representative countries: Congo, Eritrea, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe, who now reside in Townsville, Australia experienced the acculturation process. Data were analysed at the family unit level using the three steps of grounded theory method: open, axial and selective coding. The theory derived illustrates that the acculturation process involves two major phases (maintaining core moral values and attaining a sense of belonging) within which six categories were identified. Three of the categories were related to deeply held heritage values and beliefs (family relationships, societal expectations and cultural norms), while the other three (religious beliefs, socio-economic gains and educational values) indicated integration with the host culture. These categories constitute central concerns for the participants and demonstrate what matters to them as a family unit and not as individuals. We conclude that a selective process of "prioritising family needs" determines the acculturation strategy of sub-Saharan African migrant families, aiding the fulfilment of their migration goals, ensuring effective functioning of the family unit, and enabling them to be productive members of their local community.

Keywords: individualistic; collectivist; cultural values; acculturation strategy; sub-Saharan Africa; family needs; grounded theory

1. Introduction

In today's increasingly interconnected world, international migration is at an all-time high (Davis et al. 2013; Sequeira et al. 2017). The number of international migrants has increased by 51 million from 2010 to 2019, with major destinations including America, Canada, Europe and Australia (UN DESA PD 2019a). Of the 272 million migrants worldwide, about eight million reside in Australia. Some of the reasons individuals and families migrate include conflict or political instability which caused people to seek refuge as humanitarian migrants in other countries (Hayes et al. 2016; Nordland 2015). In addition, skilled professionals and individuals migrate for economic reasons as they seek career advancement and personal development (Lundy and Darkwah 2018).

Upon arrival into the new country, humanitarian and professional migrants are exposed to new cultural value systems and must find ways to adapt to this new living environment (Sam and Oppedal 2002). The degree to which migrants become fully functioning members of the host society depends on their willingness and capacity to embrace the new culture and acceptance in the host country (Mukhtar 2013). Acculturation refers to a set of adaptation and psychological changes a person (the migrant) undergoes through contact and involvement with representatives of other cultures, particularly the host country culture (Berry 1997, 2005; Redfield et al. 1936). Different acculturation models have investigated the relationship between immigrants and their host society. Berry's (1997) bi-dimensional model of acculturation defines four strategies (assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation) migrants may adopt as they settle into the host culture. Over time, other theorists have expanded on Berry' theory. Cohen (2011) developed a three-fold model with four new acculturation strategies: group integration, group nostalgic insulation, group acculturation and group insulation. Other models such as the relative acculturation extended model (RAEM) by Navas et al. (2005) and the ecological acculturation framework (EAF) by Salo and Birman (2015) suggest that acculturation processes vary by ecological context, and this is dependent upon the life domains in which the migration occurred. While both models refer to life domains, the RAEM considers Berry's four acculturation strategies in different contexts, such as work, economic, familial, social and religious practices. Conversely, the authors of the EAF challenged Berry's bi-dimensional model and suggested that life domains are cultural contexts that bring to bear adaptive changes and not merely situations in which immigrants prefer one type of acculturation over another (Salo and Birman 2015).

Evidence suggests that the processes of acculturation are complex and very challenging (Saltmarsh and Swirski 2010), predominantly characterised by anxiety, feelings of loss, frustration and confusion, resulting from the loss of familiar cultural signs, symbols and social rules (Chaban et al. 2011). Sam and Berry (2010) assert that people from all ethnicities use similar adaptation processes during acculturation. Contrarily, Kuo (2014) argues that different ethnic groups have their own unique ways of experiencing the world, therefore, the adaptations that characterise the acculturation process vary between ethnic groups. A major criticism of the acculturation literature is that it adopts a "one size fits all" approach (Rudmin 2003) and focuses on migration changes that occur at an individual level, without taking into account the complex, mutual and reciprocal relationships that migrants share collectively with intimate others who are undergoing acculturation (Choi and Kim 2010; Gonzalez and Méndez-Pounds 2018; Salo and Birman 2015).

Within the African context, over 25 million sub-Saharan African (SSA) migrants lived outside their countries of birth in 2017, with a 31% increase between 2010 and 2017, outpacing the rate of increase from both the Asia-Pacific (15%) and Latin America-Caribbean (9%) regions (Connor 2018). This exponential migration growth of sub-Saharan Africans (SSA) is significantly more than the 17% worldwide average increase for the same period (Connor 2018). Although SSA have enormous inter- and intra-societal variations such as diverse languages and religious practices, they still have many cultural and historical similarities which reflect philosophical affinity and kinship (Karsten and Illa 2005). In particular, these societies share a common historical experience that reflects a collectivist approach with a response to collective need rather than individual achievement (Hofstede 2001). In the SSA setting, cultural practices that foster kinship are the norm and family comprises of both the nuclear and the extended family. The people are predominantly patrilineal and patrimonial with strong power-distance relationships based on ascribed status, gender and age (Hofstede 2001). Kinspeople are treated as siblings and being part of a kinship group involves taking responsibility for one another, sharing resources as well as child-rearing responsibilities (Alber et al. 2010; Onwujuba et al. 2015).

Similarly, cultural values and practices play a major role in the acculturation process for SSA migrant families because they bring with them cultural and specific customary practices where the expectations and contextual understanding of the family set-up differs from what pertains in individualistic societies (Hofstede 1980). Individualists (such as Western societies) typically operate on an analytical mindset focused on autonomy, independence and rule-based reasoning

(Varnum et al. 2010). Collectivists (such as ethnic groups from SSA) on the other hand, typically adopt a holistic thinking approach, looking at the broader relationship between objects and individuals and using familial-based reasoning (Nisbett et al. 2001; Varnum et al. 2010). With their strong orientation towards extended family systems, SSA migrants' adaptation to a new environment occurs often in the context of complicated changes in family relationships, gender roles and social support (Renzaho et al. 2011). Additionally, parents and children may not adapt at the same pace or in the same way (Poppitt and Frey 2007). For the youths who migrate with their parents, this process may be important because adolescence is traditionally thought to be a stage when individuals negotiate their roles in society (Stuart and Ward 2011). Questions of who they are (self-identity), what interests them most and their self-esteem in relation to other individuals and groups take the centre stage of their adaptation processes. Resolving these issues may be complicated by their migration journeys, as youths must position themselves relative to both their heritage and the host cultures (van Oudenhoven and Benet-Martínez 2015).

Past models have either examined the process of acculturation in different communities (Bell 2013), or quantitatively identified the distinct ways that African immigrants acculturate to different domains of life (Navas et al. 2007). However, no research focuses on acculturation processes through the lens of cultural dynamics at the family level among African immigrants. This perspective is highly important in relation to transition and acculturation processes for Africans migrating to western countries like Australia because there are significant systematic cross-cultural variations in psychological acculturation processes between individualistic and collectivist cultures (Kitayama and Uskul 2011; Kuo 2014). Within collectivist cultures, family relationships which underscore inter-dependence and shared responsibility, guide individual choices and this exerts a significant influence on the acculturation process (Onwujuba et al. 2015; Ward and Geeraert 2016). While Sam and Berry's (2010) reference to acculturation outcomes as "strategies" is limiting in explaining the stages and outcomes of acculturation for SSA immigrants, this disparity may be explained by the ecological context in which the process occurred (Ward and Geeraert 2016). However, there is limited research examining the impact that contextual factors (such as family dynamics) have on the acculturation process of SSA immigrants.

Migration, particularly to a country characterised by differences in cultural values, beliefs and traditions often requires fundamental changes in the functioning of the family unit (Renzaho et al. 2017). Consequently, the exploration of acculturation models that are suitable for families with collectivist heritage migrating to an individualistic society is paramount. This will provide insight into the dynamic relational aspects of family acculturation. Furthermore, with deeper understanding, policy makers and service providers can develop more effective support strategies and resettlement programs that meet the needs of this group of migrants as well as equip the new settlers to support the local community. Therefore, this study sought to develop a theory to describe the acculturation process of migrant families from eight SSA representative countries: Congo, Eritrea, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe (collectivist heritage), who now reside in Townville, Queensland, Australia (individualistic society). These countries are treated as a single entity because they have many cultural and historical similarities including a deep respect for the elderly, paternalistic, interpersonal and interdependent relationships (Karsten and Illa 2005). Additionally, given that in any family set-up, parents and children may adapt differently, this study also aimed to explore differences between parents and their children's approaches to acculturation.

2. Materials and Methods

A qualitative methodology was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' acculturation processes. Data were collected through interviews and analysed using the grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is a qualitative approach grounded in data collected from participants' shared life stories (Charmaz 2014). According to Crooks (2001), grounded theory is appropriate for exploring the integral social relationships and the behaviours of groups where there is

scant research of the contextual factors that affect the lives of groups and individuals. This particular approach was deemed most appropriate because its systematic open, axial and selective coding processes facilitate development of an explanatory theory that employs both inductive and abductive reasoning (Birks and Mills 2015).

2.1. Study Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in Townsville, Queensland, Australia. In 2019, an estimated 7,549,250 international migrants were reported to reside in Australia (UN DESA PD 2019b). The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported approximately 7.3 million overseas migrants in 2018 which increased by 3.1 million from 4.2 million in 1996. In 2016, Queensland had 1,140,040 overseas born migrants and of that number, 85,050 were African migrants (ABS 2019a). In Townsville and northwest Queensland region, there were 32,477 persons born overseas. Within this region, the Townsville local government area had the largest number of persons born overseas with 25,588, making Townsville one of the fastest growing regions with a diverse population (ABS 2019b).

2.2. Recruitment

A purposive sampling method was used to recruit study participants. Townsville has a representative number of migrants from diverse African communities. Most of these communities have well-organised associations that are coordinated by elected leaders (e.g., presidents), usually the elders. These leaders were consulted, and they provided letters of support as well as encouraged their members to participate in the study. While the African migrant association leaders assisted in the initial stages of connecting the first named author (P.A.T.) with families, additional participants were obtained through a snowballing strategy (O'Leary 2014). The following three inclusion criteria were used in the selection of participants: (a) of African descent; (b) parent/s with children in secondary or tertiary education; (c) youths aged 13 to 29 years old. The term "youth" used in this study refers to young people transitioning from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood and are aware of their interdependence as members of a community (UNESCO 2017). This study extended the age bracket for youth up to 29 years old to factor in students who had delayed education due to extended migration processes. Parents/guardians provided consent for youths under the age of 18. Ethics approval (H7006 and H7374) for this study was obtained from James Cook University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). For confidentiality purposes, participants were given pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. Involvement in the study was purely voluntary and there were no incentives, monetary or otherwise, offered to participants.

2.3. Data Collection

Interviews were conducted between August 2017 and September 2018 and the venues for each session were chosen by participants. These venues included public settings or the participants' residences. Interview sessions ranged from 30 min to one hour. Semi-structured interviews were appropriate for the data collection as they allowed the researcher to gain further insight into the facets of participants' adaptation processes (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). In most sessions, parents were either interviewed first followed by their adolescent children on the same or different day. Parents were interviewed separately from their children so that the youths could feel at ease to speak their minds. P.A.T. conducted all interviews in English with B.M.A. attending the first interview session to validate the data collection process. No professional bilingual interpreter was required. Participants were asked to describe their background and intercultural context to provide demographic information. A set of open-ended questions were asked pertaining to participants' migration experiences, family backgrounds and how they were settling into the new environment. With the permission of participants, all interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber for analysis.

Based on the tenets of grounded theory methods (GTMs), both theoretical sampling and saturation were achieved through a two-phased data collection process. The initial data collection involved 13 SSA families. In order to attain data saturation, which confirms or disconfirms the initial categories developed from participants' stories, a second data collection was carried out involving nine SSA families. This process also facilitated identification of categories and saturation of data for theory construction (Birks and Mills 2015; Charmaz 2014).

2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred concurrently with data collection to inform when data saturation was achieved. The analysis process followed Charmaz's three phases of coding: open, axial and selective (Charmaz 2014). In open coding, the transcribed interviews were examined line-by-line to develop the initial coding for descriptive categories. Axial coding was carried out to establish the relationships between the developed categories (Charmaz 2014). Selective coding was the final stage of the analysis during which the acculturation outcomes of SSA migrants were analysed to find a meaningful and coherent story; a process that utilises both inductive and abductive reasoning (Birks and Mills 2015). P.A.T. conducted the initial coding and B.M.A. confirmed the emerging categories. Verbatim quotes from participants' responses that support the categories were integrated into the constructed model.

2.5. Data Trustworthiness

To avoid the formation of preconceptions that could jeopardise the credibility of the emerging theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), the researchers did not conduct any formal literature review in the substantive area until the final theoretical coding phase of analysis. Self-reflexivity was employed to identify any other potential sources of researcher bias by reflecting on presuppositions (Patton 1999). The study's trustworthiness was ensured through first, the iterative and concurrent data collection, analysis process and the extensive notetaking and reflection. Second, researchers (F.A. and A.M.S.) less familiar with the substantive area were involved in the interpretive process to determine whether or not the results and interpretations were supported by the data, thereby fostering reflexivity in the data interpretation process. Data triangulation occurred by interviewing multiple participants from similar SSA origins but with different family life circumstances. This was done so that theoretical data saturation would be representative of participants' different characteristics such as entry status (humanitarian or professional migrants), length of residency, parents' level of education and family membership (parents and children). Being able to compare parent and children responses both within and between family groups provided a deeper understanding of the intergenerational familial dynamics of adapting into the host culture.

3. Results

3.1. Participants' Characteristics

Twenty-two families, consisting of 25 parents and 32 children, were interviewed in this study. They comprised 26 males and 31 females from eight SSA countries residing in the Townsville region. Families identified themselves as coming from one of the following ethnic communities: Congo, Eritrea, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Participants' length of residency in Australia ranged from 1 to 31 years. Eighteen families identified their residential statuses as being Australian citizens and four as permanent residents. Table 1 shows the study participants' profiles.

Table 1. Study participants' profiles.

Family ID	Family Composition	# of Persons in Family	Entry Status	Level of Education (Father)	Level of Education (Mother)	Length of Residency
1	Parents and Child	3	Humanitarian	Secondary	Secondary	8 years
2	Parents and Child	3	Humanitarian	Secondary	Primary	1 year
3	Parent and Child	2	Humanitarian	-	Secondary	6 years
4	Parents and Child	3	Humanitarian	Tertiary	Secondary	2 years
5	Parent and Child	3	Professional	Tertiary	-	17 years
6	Parents and Children	4	Humanitarian	Tertiary	Primary	4 years
7	Parent and Child	2	Humanitarian	Tertiary	-	5 years
8	Parent and Children	3	Professional	Tertiary	-	12 years
9	Parent and Child	2	Professional	Tertiary	-	12 years
10	Parents	2	Professional	Tertiary	Tertiary	6 years
11	Parents and Child	3	Professional	Tertiary	Tertiary	6 years
12	Parents and Child	3	Professional	Tertiary	Tertiary	11 years
13	Parent and Child	2	Humanitarian	Secondary	-	4 years
14	Parent and Child	2	Humanitarian	Tertiary	-	8 years
15	Parent and Child	2	Professional	Tertiary	-	13 years
16	Parent and Child	2	Humanitarian	Secondary	-	6 years
17	Parent and Children	3	Professional	-	Tertiary	6 years
18	Parent and Children	3	Professional	Tertiary	-	6 years
19	Parent and Child	2	Professional	Tertiary	-	7 years
20	Parent and Child	2	Professional	Tertiary	-	13 years
21	Parent and Child	2	Professional	Tertiary	-	31 years
22	Parent and Children	4	Professional	-	Tertiary	8 years

3.2. Open, Axial and Selective Coding

The open coding of the interview transcripts revealed an intricate and complex navigation process whereby participants identified, evaluated and compared aspects of their host and home cultures. Six categories were identified: three (family relationships, societal expectations and cultural norms) of which were related to deeply held heritage values and beliefs, while the other three (religious beliefs, socio-economic gains and educational values) indicated integration with the host culture. These categories constitute central concerns for the participants (SSA families) and demonstrate what matters to them as a family unit and not as individuals.

The axial coding revealed two major themes: (1) maintaining core moral values, which are associated with deeply held heritage values and beliefs and (2) attaining a sense of belonging, which indicates integration with the host culture. These two themes explain the acculturation strategies participants adopt and their reasoning for making such decisions. Based on the participants' description of their acculturation process, a core concept "Prioritising Family Needs" was constructed from the selective coding as displayed in Figure 1. The concept of "Prioritising Family Needs" hinges on the two major themes identified and consequently determines the participants' acculturation strategy, fulfils their migration goals, ensures effective functioning of the family unit and enables them to be productive members of their local community.

In this study, the analysis of participants' acculturation stories revealed that for SSA migrants, adaptation to a new environment is not about the individual—it is a family affair. In terms of acculturation processes, there are two essential conditions deemed to be of paramount importance in navigating through the new environment. These conditions include maintaining core moral values and attaining a sense of belonging in the new society. The strategies SSA families apply in each situation is contingent on their capability to facilitate achieving a particular familial need to benefit the family unit rather than individuals' interests.

Prioritising family needs is always considered significant to SSA migrant families whether they are residing in their heritage country or in the host country. This stands out in the words of one participant who migrated voluntarily: "We had friends who had come here to Australia and it worked out for them. So, they told us, don't do it for yourself, do it for the children, so that's exactly what

we have done!" (Mary, P (P = parent)). Upon settlement, participants were also concerned about supporting their extended family members back in the heritage country as exemplified in the statement of a participant who migrated on humanitarian grounds: "My life here is better than our country. Here, the government gives you money, even if you don't have a job . . . I can sometimes send \$100 to my family to buy some food . . . " (Grace, P).

Although two major themes emerged for the SSA migrant families, the categories within the two major themes varied for both parents and children. Given that family needs are prioritised over individual needs, children were compelled to accept their parents' preferences (Figure 1).
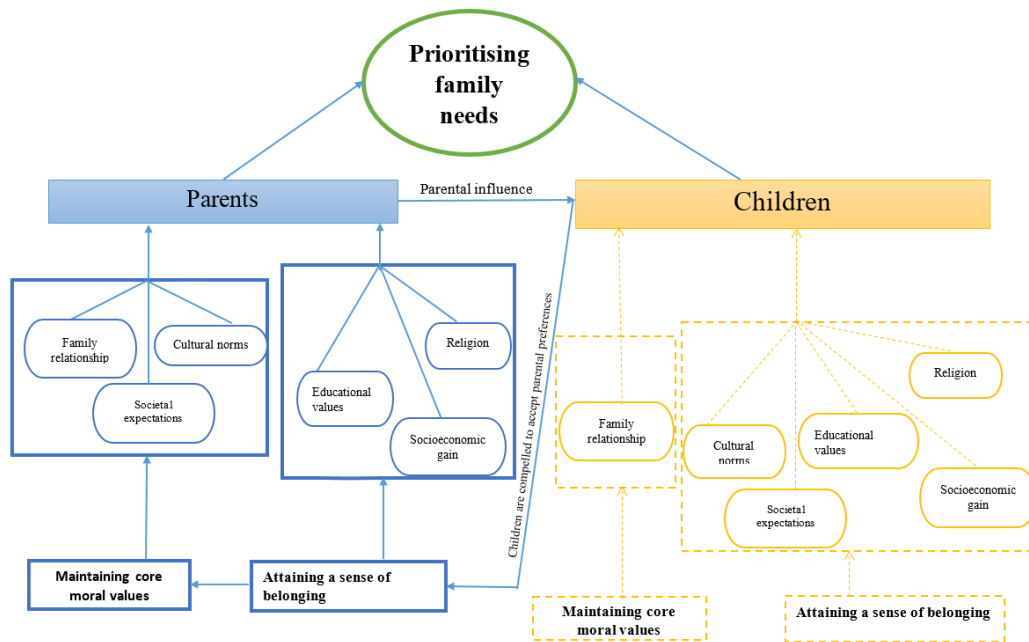
Figure 1. Prioritising family needs model for African immigrant families. Maintaining core moral values and attaining a sense of belonging were the two main categories identified. Solid dark lines signify parental preferences while the broken lines signify the children's preferences. Parents maintained core moral values (heritage culture) in terms of family relationship, cultural norms and societal expectations, while attaining a sense of belonging in terms of educational values, religion and socioeconomic gains. On the other hand, children preferred to attain a sense of belonging (identify with the host culture) with respect to cultural norms, societal expectations, educational values, religion and socioeconomic gains. Family relationship was the only aspect for which children maintained core moral values (heritage culture). However, the parental preferences overrode the children's preferences and the children were compelled to accept parental preferences, as family needs are valued over individual needs.

3.3. Maintaining Core Moral Values

Family relationships, societal expectations and cultural norms are the categories that facilitate maintaining core moral values for the migrant parents. This is to ensure that the African migrants can preserve the ethos of their cultural heritage. In contrast, the children preferred to only maintain core moral values in terms of family relationships; while preferring to attain a sense of belonging with the host environment in relation to societal expectations and cultural norms.

3.3.1. Family Relationships

The composition of African families extends beyond the parents and children to include other relatives such as grandparents, aunts and uncles. "We explain to our children, so they know that their cousins and aunties and the friends are all part of our family—that the African family unit, it's not just comprised of mum and dad, but it's pretty extended family and let them understand" (John, P).

Children are taught that the family is not just made up of the mother, father and siblings; other significant figures are also involved in the affairs of the family. ' . . . I would say like in Africa there's a lot of community involvement in the raising up of an individual. So, you have aunties, uncles, so many people are involved in disciplining you' (Caroline, Y (Y = youth)). Children acknowledged that even important decisions about their future were not only made by their parents, but also uncles and aunts who have great influence in the child's life. "I think they [extended family members] tend to have that contribution because they understand you and understand exactly what you're going through and they know exactly what would suit you since you see them 24/7" (Angela, Y).

3.3.2. Societal Expectations

Meeting societal expectations is important to African migrants as they promote the emotional bonding of families and foster solidarity among members. This responsibility is not geographically bound, therefore, wherever the migrants relocate they still honour their responsibilities towards ensuring that these ideals are met. " . . . my children know, that when I have a child, I expect that one day when I am old, my child will take care of me. . . . myself I came here with my mother, though she is older, everywhere I go, I have to go with her." (Tony, P).

Respecting elders and caring for one's parents are noted examples, where interdependence is at the core of societal expectations.

> " . . . but for our house, we make sure we maintain the culture, like the kids have respect just like back home, when my mummy and daddy are speaking, you just listen, and we just listen, my kids, they don't argue when we talk. So we still have that culture as well, and we want to keep that culture" (Sara, P).

> "Yes, that's not the way here but these kids are from my culture, I need to impress on them that this is what we do. . . . when I see my child not respecting an older person, I cannot let that go. I have to stop them and say, look, that's an older person, they need your respect and they need to know." (Celeste, P).

3.3.3. Cultural Norms

African families tend to align strongly to, and maintain, their heritage norms and values and their overarching motive for strong alignment is based on achieving the needs of the family rather than the individual. There were instances when some fathers acknowledged that their heritage cultural ethos was challenged by the cultural values of the host country, resulting in a feeling that their authority over their family was undermined. "In Africa, in the house the man [dad] is on the top. After the man [dad] is mum and children. But here I can see it is children at the top, mum and father. You see, it is very different here. As parents we feel that we are not considered . . . " (Tony, P).

As well as being tenacious about maintaining their cultural practices, parents uphold customs such as food preferences. Food is an essential part of culture and participants did what they could to maintain their food preferences. " . . . food is a big thing . . . . Well, I like my African food, but my children being here [in Australia], they don't really like it! They like some, and they don't like some of the African food . . . " (Olivia, P).

However, some migrant youths were not as passionate as their parents about their heritage delicacies. " . . . I have a specific [African] food that I don't eat, I just stay away from . . . but generally I eat most of the African food, and I enjoy eating them. I also like eating maybe stuff like pasta and most food you get from here" (Louisa, Y).

There were some cultural practices that parents prioritised as the binding force for the family unit and they dissuaded their children from indulging in practices that were alien to their native culture. However, children wanted to negotiate on some of these matters. Sleepovers and invitations to outings with friends are often contentious issues between parents and children. " . . . when kids go and sleep in another kid's house, I am against those things. We do not do that...! We do not sleep over . . . " (Sara, P).

Sometimes these contentions affect the emotions of the children. " … there are events my friends invite me to attend, but my parents told me not to go or I can't go, and I've really taken it to heart." (Naomi, Y).

3.4. Attaining a Sense of Belonging

For successful integration into the host country, the migrants identified areas of common ground with the host culture that gave them a sense of belonging and acceptance in the new society. The factors that were instrumental in developing their sense of belonging for African migrant parents were the connection through shared religious beliefs, pursuing socio-economic gains and imbibing educational values. In contrast to parental preferences, the children preferred to attain a sense of belonging in terms of societal expectations and cultural norms (Figure 1).

3.4.1. Religion

Interestingly, for all participating families in this study, religious activities serve as the focal point for social interaction with the members of the host culture. " … by far, maybe the large[est] share of my Australian friends are actually from the church, because in church we mingle. I serve in different communities and the eldership, and lead activities as well. So, most of the support base and friendship base is mostly from the church" (Mark, P).

> " … To be honest, it was helpful for me. When I decided to get involved with the church,
> I went to youth group meetings on Fridays. Once I was able to immerse myself in that,
> I started to enjoy it, made friends at church and I integrated with the way of life here [in
> Australia]" (Cathy, Y).

The African families in this study were more willing to integrate and interact more freely with members of the host community regarding religion to meet the spiritual needs of the family. African families are grounded in religious values, for religion provides many buttresses to strengthen family bonds. "The knowledge of God I have instilled in my children will keep them going … , they will be able to fit into any situation they find themselves." (Rita, P).

3.4.2. Socio-Economic Gains

For parents, the sense of belonging reinforces the importance of economic gains for wealth creation. Parents generally hope that their children will surpass them and utilise the job opportunities in the new environment to enhance the socio-economic conditions of the family. In matters relating to acquisition of competencies for economic gains and social capital, this cohort of migrants were most flexible and ready to assimilate into the host culture in order to safeguard the needs of their families. For instance, the professional migrants were willing to assimilate at the workplace for sustainable employment.

> "I think you find that at home (in Africa) the work relationship was more vertical … and
> here it's more horizontal … you need to see people more as equal fellows … here everybody
> has their say, and I think if you fail to accept that, then it becomes very hard to assimilate"
> (Jude, P).

One parent commented: "[We came to Australia] … for better opportunities, better education system and more career opportunities for the family … " (Mary, P).

Children also understood that migrating with their parents offered them better access to education leading to them acquiring socio-economic capital for future gains " … It was all about better education for a sustainable job opportunity … " (Caroline, Y).

3.4.3. Educational Value

Education is one of the prioritised needs of SSA families. Through education, parents generally hope that their children achieve high levels of success. " … the beauty of being in the First World is

you can do anything . . . so to me, education opens doors and that's my legacy for my children as a parent, that's why I tried to send them to the best schools . . . " (Celeste, P).

In the SSA extended family system, it is the responsibility of parents to provide education and training to ensure their children have the necessary knowledge and skills for their adult lives. " . . . if they get good education, that's the biggest inheritance you can ever have in order to properly assimilate into the local community . . . " (Celeste, P).

Many youths agreed that migration provides educational opportunities, which otherwise may not be available in their heritage countries. " . . . I think probably back home there isn't really a lot of options of what you want to do. So, I honestly don't think I would have been able to do like the whole criminal psychology stuff if I was back home" (Patricia, Y).

However, some of the participating migrant youths expressed opposing views to what their parents intended for them.

> " . . . I think my parents are just focused on one thing when it comes to career stuff! . . . they like you to go and do something they like. . . . and it's like they have a closed mind . . . Parents need to open their minds . . . and dialogue with their children and find out what kids want to do when they grow up." (Angela, Y).

Due to divergent views between some parents and children about career decision-making, there were occasional instances of discordance.

> " . . . my parents sent me to school, thinking I will do what they wanted me to do. They wished I became a teacher like one of my aunts . . . that was the path they wanted me to take! But it was not my passion. There was a misunderstanding between my parents and myself when I chose to go into nursing! They told me you should do education! I told them, 'mum, dad, I can't do that! I am going to do what I want.' . . . this misunderstanding lasted for years, until when I started working and earned good money. Then they said . . . 'that's good!'" (Seth, Y).

4. Discussion

This study examines the acculturation processes of African migrant families, and the differences between parents and their children's approaches to acculturation. What emerged from the analysis is a grounded theory/model which shows how African migrant families navigate between the host culture and heritage culture. In summary, the model illustrates how in African families in particular, the parents are willing to attain a sense of belonging with the host culture and adopt practices that align with their family goals, while maintaining their core heritage culture and moral values when exposed to situations that do not align with their family needs and goals. However, the acculturation process for children differed from the parents with the children having stronger orientations to the host culture. Interestingly, for the African migrant parent, family needs and goals superseded individual needs and the children were compelled to follow the parental acculturation preference. The findings of this study are supported by a previous study conducted among Hispanic immigrant parents, a collectivist migrant group, where the parents mostly maintained their core heritage values (Gonzalez and Méndez-Pounds 2018). Another study confirms that acculturation discrepancies exist between parents and children, with the latter having a stronger preference to the host country and weaker orientations to their heritage culture (Ward and Geeraert 2016).

Previous acculturation models such as Berry's (1997) and Navas et al.'s (2005) RAEM typology suggest that migrants acculturate individually and are more likely to integrate or assimilate into a host culture on public or peripheral issues (work and economy) and less likely to in private core domains (family relations, religious beliefs and cultural norms). Conversely, African migrant families apply these strategies differently to suit their family needs rather than the needs of the individual. This group of African migrants did not dichotomise into peripheral and central domains; their focus, instead,

was on any factor/s that fulfil the needs of the family, and they adopt any appropriate strategy that will achieve this goal. The parents in this study ensured that heritage values such as family relationship, societal expectations and cultural norms were maintained while being receptive to the host country's values regarding religious practices, socio-economic and educational gains. Consequently, our findings imply that current models of acculturation are insufficient in accounting for the complexity of SSA immigrants' lived experiences of acculturation because they do not consider the role of ethnic identity and cultural family dynamics and how these identities are negotiated and understood in the lived experiences of this migrant group.

Additionally, the findings uncovered a trend of divergent views on certain variables between parents and children, which resulted in occasions of discordance in the family. This finding resonates with earlier work by Wilson and Renzaho (2015), Deng and Marlowe (2013) and Rasmi and Costigan (2018). Cultural and educational values posed some conundrums for the participating families and variables that served as strangleholds between parents and children included consumption of African food, the concept of having sleepovers with peers and pursuing a career path endorsed by parents. African migrant parents tended to show greater resistance to change in relation to customs, cultural beliefs and familial relationships to maintain value systems such as filial piety, family cohesion, respect for the elderly and food preferences. The results indicate that migrant youths yearn to fit in with their peers in the host culture, but there were restrictions placed on them by their parents. For example, children having sleepovers with peers is frowned upon in African cultural settings; therefore, parents would dis-endorse these practices, even though these overnight stays, if properly supervised by parents, could be a form of integration which leads to building friendships among children.

Furthermore, SSA parents play a key role in the educational choices of their children, such as career decision-making, and they consider education as the "golden key that opens doors" to greater opportunities in life (Saiti and Mitrosili 2005). Such parental intrusiveness is generally viewed as appropriate intervention to demonstrate support for children's holistic development (Amos 2013). However, some children may misconstrue the intervention of parents as overly intrusive. Vested interests in children's career aspirations was a priority for migrant parents regardless of entry statuses. However, parental educational levels as well as type of occupation defined the degree of influence on their children's career selection. Professional migrant parents influenced decisively the career outlooks of their children and held a non-negotiable stance on their children to obtain university degrees while humanitarian migrant parents adopted a more flexible view of their children's career choices. The professional migrant parents mostly had tertiary education and they felt it was their duty to guide their children towards making informed life decisions including their preferred future careers. Educational status may possibly be the reason for the difference between the professional and humanitarian migrant parents' acculturation priorities in relation to their children's career choices. Parental inclusiveness in youth career counselling programs is necessary to help the SSA migrants better carry out their parental responsibilities as well as forestall any career discordance between parents and their children. Therefore, it is appropriate to make school-based career counselling programs a family affair.

Interestingly, for all participants in this study, religious practices played a pivotal role in their daily lives. African migrant families maintained their religious beliefs and faith; they found it easy to integrate into the host culture through religion (where their faith and beliefs are similar). Consistent with other research (Hirschman 2004; Sanni 2016), our study found that religion provides participants with a common ground to socialise, integrate and build a community with other co-migrants as well as native members of the host community. This was possible for all participants because religion supports the relevance of one's relationship with a higher power whereby the status quo is already set out. Additionally, the routines are familiar because there are common underlying principles and beliefs. Therefore, deliberate involvement of religious organisations in resettlement programs could enhance the restoration of migrants' well-being and sense of belonging. Similarly, participants were willing to integrate with the host culture to foster socio-economic gains, which particularly for professional migrants, is a major reason for migration. Seeking employment is often the driving force behind a

family's migration decision and successful integration may hinge on the migrants' ability to access job opportunities, thereby reducing the initial acculturation and adaptation period (Fang et al. 2010; Mattoo et al. 2008).

According to the Division for Social Policy and Development, it is important to involve families in the design of governmental policies about migrant resettlement as this helps to build inclusive societies, a goal both migrants and the host society seek to achieve (Persson et al. 2016). Policymakers should consider involving elders and educators who are familiar with the cultural context in developing and implementing intervention programs targeted at SSA migrant families. Given that sub-Saharan Africans follow a hierarchical power structure where there is a deep respect for elders and leaders of the community (Wanasika et al. 2011), it is necessary to involve elders and the community in the development of intervention programs (Halliday et al. 2014). This will provide the necessary nuances for successful policy framing and implementation.

In addition, this study uncovered that upon arrival some adult male migrants (fathers) experienced loss of leadership and authority within their families. This finding was highlighted in previous research by Wali and Renzaho (2018). Although the current services in Australia support migrant families, they do not address the specific concerns of migrant fathers from SSA where the loss of authority is considered as a sign of weakness or failure. In the African context, a father is one who has ultimate authority and responsibility for the affairs of the family including overseeing the management of their children's lives (Mkhize 2006). Thus, anything that undermines their ability to lead and be role models in their families and society is considered humiliating (Lesejane 2006). It would be helpful to have some sort of support network for migrant fathers from SSA that are culturally sensitive and inclusive with gender and age appropriate peer groups (Wali and Renzaho 2018). Provision of peer support networks for migrant fathers from SSA could become platforms for counselling, mentoring and role modelling (Lesejane 2006). In African communities, it is considered important for fathers to have peer groups where support, advice and counselling are obtained in addition to guidance provided by elders in the community (Lesejane 2006). Therefore, pairing migrant fathers from SSA with peer groups that share a similar cultural context and experiences will encourage engagement with the services provided.

Furthermore, there is a need for employers, social support workers and service providers who work directly with migrant communities to encourage mutual respect and openness among family members in response to generational conflicts that arise during the acculturation process, family cohesiveness and utilise the social support provided by the family unit to foster successful adaptation (Ward et al. 2010).

4.1. Implications for Acculturation Theory

This study makes a significant contribution to the body of acculturation literature by highlighting the acculturation strategies utilised by African migrant families. The present study is unique in that it provides insight into the acculturation process of both parents and children and highlights the importance of family dynamics in the acculturation process. Most previous studies reported that immigrants acculturate similarly across cultures (Berry 1997; Cohen 2011; Navas et al. 2007). However, the present study reveals a much more intricate and complex acculturation process in which ecological context plays a central role in determining the acculturation strategy of African migrant families whereby a selective acculturation process is utilised based on family needs and goals. Although, Barker (2015) identified a similar selective adoption and integration process in which the individuals adopted host-culture features deemed desirable while rejecting those adjudged as contradictory; the present study presents a clearer picture of the acculturation priorities and reasons for the choices made from the African migrant family perspective. Of particular importance is the supportive function of the family unit which promotes positive outcomes and decreases negative impacts of the acculturation process (Ward et al. 2010).

Furthermore, the present study shows the role of parental influence in the acculturation process of children in life domains like educational, cultural and societal contexts, which sometimes creates

generational conflicts. While previous studies focused on the acculturation process of individuals and parents from collectivist cultures (Choi and Kim 2010; Gonzalez and Méndez-Pounds 2018; Salo and Birman 2015), this present study makes an important contribution to the literature by highlighting the overpowering effect parental influence can have on the acculturation preferences of their children. The children were more likely to identify with the host culture in most domains and this flexibility may be attributed to their youthful exuberance and openness to change (Cheung et al. 2011). It will be interesting to see whether and how the observed strong parental influence is maintained by future generations. Future research could explore how this family-oriented acculturation model changes from one generation to another within the host country. Furthermore, a closer investigation of the impact of this type of parental influence on children's career decision-making processes in different ecological contexts is needed.

4.2. Strengths and Limitations of the Study

To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to qualitatively explore the adaptation processes of African migrant families and the study findings extend the literature on the acculturation processes of African migrants, which brings a greater focus and clarity to understanding the interplay between ethnic identity, cultural family dynamics and adaptation processes. Comparing parents' and children's responses both within and between family groups provided a deeper understanding of the intergenerational familial dynamics of adapting into the host culture. Nonetheless, this exploratory study focused on meanings and lived experiences of only eight purposively selected SSA migrant communities living in the Townsville region of Australia, leaving out contextual sensitivities, and hence limiting the representativeness of the sample (Silverman 2010). Notwithstanding the limitations, the study findings can foster the development of culturally appropriate policies as well as educational support programs and practices that enhance the lived experiences of migrant groups who have strong orientation towards extended family systems. Nevertheless, further research among SSA migrants and other migrant groups in other settings, who have strong orientation towards extended family systems, may be warranted to confirm our study findings.

5. Conclusions

This study highlights the selective acculturation strategies employed by African migrant families while striking a balance between attaining a sense of belonging to the host culture and maintaining core heritage values with the focus on prioritising their family needs over and above the needs of individual family members. The findings emphasise the importance of family dynamics in the evaluation of cross-cultural acculturation processes.

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