

Affecting Lives: How Winning the US Diversity Visa Impacts DV Migrants Pre-and Post-Migration

ABSTRACT

Usual debates about the diversity visa (DV) programme revolve around the impact of DV initiated mass migration on African countries' development, on whether the programme sufficiently diversifies U.S. immigrant streams, and on whether there is a tradeoff in immigrant quality for diversity. This article seeks to extend the focus of these debates by examining the impact of the diversity visa programme on DV migrants at the micro-level pre- and post-migration. Based on in-depth interviews with sixty-one diversity visa lottery winners from Ghana and Nigeria, the article examines how this immigration policy has become a contextual determinant of immigrant incorporation. It argues that an account of the impact of immigration policies on immigrants' pre-and post-migration must be added to theorization of state agency in shaping migration flows. It concludes with a discussion on ways the diversity visa programme can be modified to facilitate incorporation of DV migrants in the United States.

INTRODUCTION

The US diversity visa lottery (DV) programme has become a key migration channel for African migrants to the United States (Lobo 2006; Thomas 2011). The African population in the United States has grown from just 80,000 individuals in 1970, or 0.8 per cent of the total immigrant population, to 2.1 million in 2015, or 4.8 per cent of the total immigrant population (Anderson 2017). Between 1990 and 2000, diversity visas accounted for 47 per cent of the growth in African migration to the United States (Lobo 2006). In the twenty-first century, DV migration accounts for a third of the increase in African migration to the United States (Thomas 2011). DV migrants deserve attention because they provide an opportunity to examine how immigration policies impact incorporation for immigrants who are not unskilled, poorly educated, and/or undocumented. Additionally, they are part of the skilled, educated, and professional immigrant categories of which Favell, Feldblum and Smith (2006, 3) note “there [is] relatively little ‘human level’ research.”

Debates on the US diversity visa programme and African migration usually focus on two key issues: First, that the diversity visa programme contributes to the loss of human resources and the brain drain of highly skilled professionals from African countries, which hinders their development (Ketefe 2013; Logan and Thomas 2011; Rotimi 2005). However, there is evidence of brain gain from highly skilled migration through improved living standards of immigrants, increased human capital accumulation among immigrants and people in the home country, remittances and transfer of information on study and work opportunities to the home country, and return migration (Clemens 2007; Gibson and McKenzie 2011, 2012; McKenzie, Gibson, and Stillman 2007). Second, while some critics claim that increasing immigrant diversity necessitates a tradeoff in immigrant quality (see Kremer 2011), others argue that the programme, in allowing

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

a more racially diverse group of immigrants to settle in the United States, gives Africans from underrepresented countries an opportunity to migrate to the United States (Newton 2005). While these debates call attention to important issues, they remain at the macro-level and fall short of discussing the impact of the diversity visa programme on DV migrants at the micro-level. Also missing from these arguments are the voices of African DV migrants themselves discussing how winning the DV has affected them and their families.

This article seeks to add to the little we know about DV migrants. It examines how winning the DV impacted DV migrants from Ghana and Nigeria while they were in their home country and after their arrival in the United States. It examines how administration of the diversity visa programme affected immigrants' pre- and post-migration. It then discusses the links between the DV as a mode of entry and DV migrants' experiences in the United States. Situating its findings in the theoretical perspectives of why people move, I argue that theories of international migration need to extend theorization of why people move, and state agency in shaping and controlling migration flows needs to include an account of the impact of the diversity visa programme on its winner migrants, pre- and post-migration. Such an account would enrich our understanding of the link between theories of international migration and immigrant incorporation, and on how immigration policies become contextual determinants of immigrant incorporation. It concludes by proposing modifications to the US diversity visa programme that would improve overall quality of DV migrants and facilitate their incorporation into American society, which should benefit the United States, sending countries, and DV migrants and their families.

EXPLAINING AFRICAN MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

African migration to the United States and the West is caused by powerful historical, economic, social, and political factors. Using the push-pull theoretical paradigm to explain African migration to the West, Africans are migrating in large numbers to western advanced democratic countries because of poor economic and socio-political environments in their home countries, which create the push factors of low pay, lack of jobs, underemployment, poverty, political instability, and ethnic conflicts (Kaba 2009). These worsening conditions make the pull factors of Western advanced countries, including higher paying jobs, better job satisfaction, freedom from violence and persecution, educational opportunities, and reunification with family members, more attractive (Lobo 2006; Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang 2006).

According to macro- and microeconomic international migration theories, African immigrants move to the United States because a cost-benefit analysis convinces them that migration to the United States would maximize the returns to their human capital, after costs of the journey are deducted (Borjas 1989). Theories of the new economics of migration argue that migration is a family decision, where families nominate a member of the household to migrate as insurance against market failures in the home country (Massey et al 1999), and indeed, many African immigrants view their move to the United States as an opportunity to maximize their income and help their families. However, Gibson and McKenzie (2011) found that other components of utility maximization, which they termed preference variables (e.g. risk aversion, patience, and foreign language ability), mattered more than income maximization in explaining migration decisions.

Globalization has caused increasing migration from Africa to the United States (Okome 2006). Processes of globalization have made the world a village linking distant locales in such ways that each locale is impacted by events happening in other parts of the world. These linkages

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

via mass media, faster transportation systems, and information networks make Africans aware of the socio-economic and spatial disparities between Africa and the rest of the world, and engender in them a strong desire to migrate out of Africa to enjoy higher standards of living. Visiting and returning migrants from these western countries coming with “flashy trappings of Western affluence” along with the Western media help spread the news that life is better abroad (Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang 2006, 17).

The US diversity visa programme is an important factor in the push-pull matrix that contributes not just to the potentiality of migration but strongly impels migration to the United States. But despite the fact that the diversity visa programme is shaping significant migration flows from different regions of the world, and especially from Africa, to the United States, we don't know much about its effects on its winner migrants pre- and post-migration. There is a small body of literature on African DV migrants in the United States. Kremer (2011) was one of three studies I found that examined how DV migrants fared in the US labor market. Comparing the employment outcomes of DV migrants to all other legal permanent residents (LPRs)—those that came via family unification, refugee, and employment—he found that DV migrants were slightly less likely than other LPRs to be employed. Kremer (2011, 2014) found that educational attainment was insignificant in affecting employment status, while experience in the United States was the most important positive predictor of employment. The third study, Akresh (2006), found that while all US immigrants experienced an initial period of downward occupational mobility, DV migrants were more likely not to see an improvement in occupational status between their first US job and their current job. Because all three studies used the first wave of the New Immigrant Survey, which conducted interviews with LPRs six to eighteen months after they were granted their green cards, it was impossible to draw definitive conclusions about DV migrants' long-term labor market

prospects. Both studies treated DV migrants as a homogenous category, failing to incorporate the diversity of DV migrants in their analysis. These studies also could not speak to any effect(s) of winning the lottery on DV migrants. The few micro-level studies on African DV migrants focused only on their experiences in the United States (Ette 2012; Hailu et al. 2012; Kremer 2014).

THE US DIVERSITY VISA PROGRAMME

The US Diversity Visa Programme was created as part of the 1990 Immigration Act and went fully operational in 1995 (Wasem 2011). Its objective was to increase the diversity of America's immigrant streams. Each year, the programme awards 50,000 immigrant visas through lottery to people who come from countries with low rates of migration to the United States. Citizens from countries that have sent more than 50,000 immigrants to the United States in the past five years are barred from playing the lottery. Since its inception, approximately 20,000 Africans use the diversity programme to migrate to the United States each year (Konadu-Agyemang and Takyi 2006).

The diversity visa programme has an educational requirement. Applicants must have at least the equivalent of a high school diploma, which is defined in the United States as successful completion of a twelve year course of elementary and secondary education, or two years' work experience as a skilled artisan in an occupation that requires at least two years of training/apprenticeship.

Winning the lottery does not automatically grant the winner legal permanent residency. It only gives the winner the right to apply for the diversity visa which confers legal permanent resident status. Applications for the diversity visa must be processed within the twelve-month period finishing at the end of the fiscal year for which the applicant won the lottery. Many

applications are not processed within this one-year window and many others fail to meet US admissibility criteria. The winner and/or his derivatives (spouse and children under the age of twenty-one) must use their visas to enter the United States within that fiscal year as the visa cannot be deferred or used in another fiscal year. A significant financial outlay is needed (approximately two thousand dollars per adult) to pay the visa processing fees and buy an airplane ticket to the United States.

DATA AND METHODS

This article is based on data drawn from semi-structured in-depth interviews with sixty-one diversity visa migrants from Ghana and Nigeria: 37 Ghanaians and 24 Nigerians. Because all immigrants need an adjustment period, I chose to interview DV winners who had migrated to the United States during or before 2014. Several key sites were used to recruit respondents, including Ghanaian and Nigerian churches and organizations. Key informants identified DV migrants in these organizations and in their social networks. I supplemented with snowball sampling. Interviews were a mix of sit-down and telephone interviews and were conducted from March 2016 to November 2016. Interviews ranged from forty-two minutes to two hours thirty eight minutes in length. The average length is one hour twenty-four minutes. Fifty-seven per cent (N=35) of respondents were male and 43 per cent (N=26) were female. Sixty-two per cent (N=38) were college graduates and thirty-eight per cent (N=23) were non-college graduates. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically with Atlas.ti.

The data analyzed for this article was drawn from questions asking respondents about their experiences in their home country and the United States. They were asked how and why they applied for the diversity visa lottery, what expectations they had about life in America, and whether their lives now matched their expectations. They were asked to discuss their experience with the

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

DV application process. I asked these questions to understand how winning the diversity visa changed their lives and the negative and positive consequences of being a DV winner. All names used are pseudonyms.

Because snowball samples are unlikely to be representative of the whole population of interest, particular attention needs to be paid to the questions addressed by the data obtained (McKenzie and Mistiaen 2007). This study was designed to achieve an in-depth understanding of the impact of the diversity visa lottery on winner migrants and their migrant journey. My analysis of DV migrant experiences using the New Immigrant Survey (NIS) provides reassurance that this study has discovered several consequential challenges and processes that impact DV migrants' incorporation in America.

IMPACTFUL EVENTS AMONG RESPONDENTS FROM WINNING THE DIVERSITY VISA LOTTERY

From respondents' stories, it became clear that winning the DV had caused unexpected developments in many respondents' lives that had made settling in America more challenging. From their stories, I identified several DV-caused impactful events that affected them in the United States. I discuss five of these events in this article. They are marital and or family instability; interruptions in one's educational career; insufficient knowledge about the diversity programme; weak social networks that provided limited and or transient support to the DV migrant; and feelings of dislocation and or emotional trauma. Table 1 presents the number of respondents that experienced these events.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Eighteen respondents won the DV either while they were in university or just about to start their degree programmes. Two respondents, after entering the United States to activate their

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

diversity visas, returned to their home country to finish their degrees before migrating to the United States. Sixteen respondents (twenty-six per cent) interrupted their college education upon hearing they had won the DV.

A total of twenty-one respondents (34 per cent) experienced family instability, which I defined as getting divorced (n=11) or leaving a spouse and or child(ren) behind (n=10) as a direct result of winning the DV. Eleven respondents had experienced emotional trauma, with several expressing strong regret that they had migrated to the United States. A majority (N=46) said they had insufficient information about the DV and about the resources available to DV migrants in the United States. Thirty-two respondents experienced failed social support networks. Because the sample is not representative of all DV migrants, the number of respondents who have experienced an event should not be overly emphasized. The key take-away should be that certain events linked to winning the lottery had had consequential impact on DV migrants' incorporation.

IMPACT OF THE DIVERSITY PROGRAMME MEDIATING THROUGH THE STRUCTURE AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAMME

Having little to no time to prepare to become an immigrant was the first way administration of the diversity visa programme affected winner migrants. Because the chances of winning the lottery are minute, no respondent began preparations for travel, which made them quite different from most immigrants. Immigrants using the migration channels of family reunification, refugee, and employment plan their migration, often several years in advance. In this span of time, they are able to prepare themselves emotionally, psychologically, financially, and educationally (e.g. acquiring additional credentials) for the move and transition.

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

Most respondents were shocked to learn they had won the lottery. While some respondents said they had “high expectations” that they would win the lottery because they had “strong faith,” others told me they played it out of fun “not expecting to win it.” Still others played it as a way to strengthen sense of community—filling out the forms with their family members, office coworkers, and church groups. Respondents told me that lottery mania is so widespread in Ghana and Nigeria (when it was eligible), that filling out a DV application has become a “what have you got to lose” proposition. To illustrate how widespread playing the lottery is, in 2014, the last year Nigeria was eligible to play the lottery, 2,390,758 people (including derivatives) put in an application (US State Department 2015). In Ghana, 1,729,929 people (including derivatives)—6.7 per cent of the country’s population—played the visa lottery in 2015 (US State Department 2015). On the whole, even though many respondents said they were expectant of winning, all went about their daily lives and did not commence any preparations.

The impact of the randomness of selection and the shock of winning the visa lottery was exacerbated by the one-year window winners are given to complete their application process and enter the United States. The one-year window put winners under tremendous time pressure, which affected their decision making on whether to migrate or not. Many said they had insufficient time to thoroughly weigh the pros and cons of migrating to the United States. Admittedly the poor economic conditions in Nigeria and Ghana during the 1990s and 2000s created what I call a “context of desperation” that made almost all respondents interviewed state that “they jumped at the chance” to migrate to the United States. But in hindsight, some acknowledged that the structure of the programme did not allow for much deliberation. Even though both DV migrants and refugees enter the United States via US state policy, DV migrants’ experiences are crucially different because unlike refugees (who often arrive with minimal assets due to displacement) they

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

receive no assistance from the US government or private organizations with core missions of resettling refugees (Ludwig 2016). Many DV migrants have weak social support networks in the United States, which is a feature of the visa lottery as it gives individuals who had no traditional avenues (e.g. via family reunification or employment) an opportunity to migrate to the United States.

John is an example. Before learning he had won the lottery, he had been planning to migrate to England to pursue a bachelor's degree in finance. But winning the DV changed things: "We (he and his fiancée) were trying to figure out what we wanted to do. Should we give up our education plan right now (his fiancée had gained admission into a teaching college) and come to United States and then figure it out?" His uncle advocated that he turn down the US visa and come to England where he would sponsor John's college education. "[My uncle] didn't like the idea because he said, 'Look, I'm here. Anything you need, I'm here.'" John made an emotional decision because he knew he could bring his fiancée with him to America but would have had to leave her behind in a move to London, and thus decided to migrate with her to the United States. "So, I guess last minute, it was like...we had like fifty-one days for the visa to expire. And then we were like okay, I guess we'll just do it." John's statement "we'll just do it" is emblematic of the seat-of-your-pants decisions many respondents made. They had no clear idea what their lives would be like in the United States or about the challenges awaiting them. They just struck out with faith that things would work out and lacked the time to really interrogate these rosy beliefs. Today, John regrets his decision to migrate to the United States instead of England. After seventeen years in the United States, he still has not obtained his bachelor's degree and works as a warehouse supervisor in a paper-packaging company.

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

The second way administration of the diversity programme affected migrants pre-migration was that the suddenness of winning the DV made it impossible for working and lower class winners to save up the monies needed to process the visa and buy their airplane tickets. Some winners from lower class backgrounds made legally questionable and morally dubious deals that impacted them after their arrival in the United States. Some respondents were approached to, and did, sell a spot on their DV application to another aspiring immigrant, bringing them as their spouse or underage child (see table 1). This was especially rampant in the early years of the diversity programme, the 1990s, when US checks against fraud were not as thorough as they are now. The sale of a spot was sometimes to family members and other times to visa entrepreneurs. In exchange, the DV winner received funds to pay the visa processing fees, medical screening costs, and airplane ticket. Upon arrival in the United States, respondents in marital deals (n=7) immediately initiated divorce proceedings. Other respondents (n=4) could not pay back the loans received from family members on the terms agreed upon.

A third way migrants are affected is that the diversity visa programme creates transnational families (see table 1). Because a visa lottery win cannot be transferred from one fiscal year to another, either for the primary winner or his/her derivatives, some respondents who did not have the money to bring their families over in time to fall within the fiscal year had to leave their derivatives behind. Research on transnational families finds that it impacts stability of marriages, parental relationships, family formation, and wellbeing of family members left behind in the home country. Samson left his wife and three daughters in Ghana. “I came alone because you know... the financial constraints about money. So, I came in. Then later the family followed up when I became a citizen.” He migrated in 2001. His wife joined him in 2008, and his “daughters came in 2011.” It was the same story with Dabira. He left his wife and four children back in Nigeria because

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

he did not have the money to bring them with him. “It was expensive coming with my kids and wife. You don’t know how the place is going to be like. So, we came to the agreement that okay, let me take a lead, and God willing, they would follow. So, that was the system we adopted.” He migrated to the United States in 2004. His family joined him 2011.

The fourth way administration of the diversity visa programme creates challenges for winner migrants post-migration is its inattention to whether winner migrants have strong or weak social networks to assist their incorporation in the United States. It is not required for all DV winners to have a social network that would help ease their transition into American society. Unmarried winners are not required to have a US sponsor. They are only required to provide a US postal address where their green card should be mailed after processing. As a result, some unmarried winners come into the United States knowing no one or having very weak social support networks. Respondents' stories ranged from having strong social networks (a parent or sibling in the United States), to having social networks made up of extended family members (uncles, aunts, cousins), to having no relatives in the United States and relying on friends of friends. Nat had no family members in the United States. His wife’s family had friends in New York who said they would sponsor the couple. But they did not receive much help from them once they arrived. “The moment we arrived, what I was expecting wasn’t what I met—in terms of where to stay and who we were living with. In the first month, they weren’t happy with us to the point that sometimes, I think [our sponsor] felt we were a burden on him.” Their sponsor finally told them after the first month with him that they had “to move and find [their] own place.” Within six weeks they “got an apartment and then you have to start paying.” To pay for the new apartment, Nat had to take up a minimum wage job in a shoe factory. He could no longer afford to be picky.

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

A common theme that emerged among all respondents, with the exception of those who had parents and siblings already in the United States, was an experience of frayed ties and insufficient assistance. Migrants coming to the United States via the migration channels of family reunification, refugee, and employment have significant support networks and resources that ease their incorporation into American society. Those coming under family reunification have family members that provide room, board, and informational networks that ease their transition. Those with employment-based visas have jobs, access to company resources, and often are knowledgeable about America or had lived in America prior to obtaining their LPR. Refugees have government assistance with housing and benefits (Ludwig 2016). They are often linked to non-profit organizations that work to resettle and integrate refugees (Ludwig 2016). However, DV migrants must provide their own support networks. The government does not offer any further support outside of granting them legal status in the United States. But research on immigrant incorporation makes clear that strong social networks are a significant factor in successful immigrant integration (Portes and Rumbaut 2014).

POST-MIGRATION IMPACT AMONG WINNERS

For respondents who were in college when they won the DV, the decision either to abandon their tertiary schooling or complete college after learning they had won the DV was the most consequential decision that determined whether they enjoyed a smooth transition into American society or faced many challenges and/or dashed dreams. A skill bias exists in the US labor market with individuals with college degrees enjoying significantly higher wages than individuals without a college degree (Kalleberg 2011; Portes and Rumbaut 2014). This skill bias holds among immigrants, with a bifurcated immigrant stream and labor market where highly skilled immigrants

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

get good jobs in the primary labor market, and poorly educated, unskilled, and semi-skilled immigrants get poorly paid jobs in the secondary labor market (Portes and Rumbaut 2014).

Respondents' starting or entry point into the US labor market was affected by their educational level. Respondents with college degrees had a wider set of opportunities such as entering accelerated degree programs (e.g. programs that gave them a bachelors in nursing degree in twelve to eighteen months) or obtaining postgraduate and professional degrees and qualifications. Respondents with college degrees got good jobs quicker than respondents without college degrees. Respondents without college degrees held down hourly wage jobs, mostly in health and hospitality sectors. Many of them had spent years trying to obtain the prerequisite course credits required to gain admission into bachelor degree programs. Of the sixteen respondents who abandoned their college programs upon winning the lottery (see table 1), only seven had obtained a bachelor's degree in the United States. It took these respondents an average of eight years to get their bachelor's degree, more than twice as long as it would have taken them had they stayed back in their home country. The elongated time it took to get their college degrees minimized their occupational mobility, and several of them, upon getting their degree, were unable to use it to obtain jobs with higher wages and occupational prestige. Nine respondents had failed to get their bachelor's degree at the time of interview. The majority of these respondents had low-wage service jobs in the health industry.

Respondents gave varied reasons why they abandoned their bachelor's degree programmes upon winning the DV. Some said they considered finishing their degree programme before migrating but could not afford it. Others thought it would be easy to continue their education in the United States. They were unaware of the difficulty of doing so alongside pressures to work and pay bills. Kweku migrated to the United States in 2011. He is twenty-seven years old. He learned

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

he had won the DV just after he had gained admission to read biochemistry at the University of Ghana. Initially, he did not want to migrate to the United States. “I was set; so, I wasn’t really focused on coming here [to the United States].” But his parents and elder sister convinced him to migrate. They concluded “that since I was going to study biochemistry in university and would end up being a teacher, it might be easier for me ...because my in-law was here I could stay with him [and] go to school.” Despite his parents’ expectation that he would be able to return to school, Kweku has found it difficult. He got minimal support from his in-laws. They told him to get a job and help pay the bills. He worked as a sales associate in Kmart for four years. He is currently working in a nursing home where he “take[s] care of two clients [who] have mental handicaps.”

He admits that his dreams have not yet materialized but he is working hard to ensure they do. “I mean I don’t think I have realized these dreams.” He wants to become a physician or a pharmacist if he does not succeed in gaining admission to medical school. But in the nearly six years he has been in the United States, he has not yet acquired all the course prerequisites he needs to gain admission into a pre-med degree programme. He is taking courses at a community college to get the prerequisites he needs. “I mean I’ve got a lot of credits but what I have now is an Associate Degree.”

Respondents who interrupted their human capital acquisition and had failed to obtain an equivalent bachelor’s degree in the United States regretted leaving their home country before finishing their university degrees, thinking it would be easy to go back to school in the United States. They were convinced that they would have gotten their bachelor’s had they stayed in their home country. Some said their mates back in their home country were doing so well, much better than they were doing. Sola told me he asks himself “What kind of decision did you take now? I am full of regret. I ask myself, Sola, but what did you go and do in America?” However, they all

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

are unwilling or not yet ready to concede defeat and return to their home countries. For some, too much time has elapsed, and to return without achieving success in the United States and/or accumulating large sums of money that they can invest in business projects back home would be an admission of failure and result in a loss of face.

Their stories indicate that DV visa entrepreneurs are targeting young men and women at this very critical stage of the life course—just out of secondary school or enrolled in college. Tunde mentioned the ubiquity of internet cafes on his college campus that advertised the US diversity visa programme. Paul said the same thing was happening in Ghana. “It is a big time business. They set up as internet cafes and set up the DV business. What they do is that they go to universities and colleges and take pictures of people...they will give you a form to fill out. All they need is just your information. And they take a picture and they attach the picture to your form so they will enter it for you. So when you win, all they need is for you to give them a fee.” Respondents from both Ghana and Nigeria mentioned seeing huge banners advertising services to help students play the visa lottery. Such practices increase the likelihood that significant numbers of college students would win the DV, and the experiences of my respondents who abandoned their bachelor degree programmes to migrate to the United States indicate that this single decision obstructed their transition into middle class paying jobs in the United States.

Having poor social support networks was the second most important factor that made things difficult for diversity winners in the United States. Gifty recalled quarrelling with her uncle two months into her stay with him and having “to move from Milwaukee to live with an aunt in Philadelphia.” This move impeded her schooling as she had to give up her admission to do a laboratory technology course as she “did not have other people to stay with in Milwaukee or the money to rent her own place.”

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

However, there were five important factors that enabled respondents to positively weather the challenges associated with winning the diversity visa programme and smoothly incorporate into American society without long term downward mobility into a lower class than they held in their home country, or they expected to hold based on their pre-migration status or trajectory. These were 1) being a college graduate; 2) being at the early stage of one's career; 3) being unmarried or unfettered by a romantic relationship; 4) having strong social support networks, particularly having a parent or sibling in the United States who was legal and doing well; and 5) coming from at least a middle class background—having parents and siblings who did not need financial support and who in fact could support the winner migrant if needed. Adaobi who came from a middle class background and held a law degree before migrating to the United States told me, “It was easier for me because I was not married when I came. I came to do a masters [degree],” and “In fact my father paid my school fees to do my masters.” Another respondent told me “I thank God I came to the United States when I was in my early twenties, just a few years after graduating from university. I was young enough to deal with going back to school to get a postgraduate degree... I tell all the people I know who want to come to the United States that they better get their bachelor's degree before coming. It makes life much easier for you.”

These factors that facilitated respondents' successful incorporation into American society are consistent with research that finds that immigrants with high levels of human capital and strong social support networks are more likely to successfully integrate into American society (Portes and Rumbaut 2014). Respondents who were young college graduates (in their twenties) before migrating to the United States were the ones most able to fully recover or incorporate any of the different dimensions of disruption (particularly family instability) caused by winning the lottery and still do well.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings in this article show that theories of international migration, in addition to incorporating an account of state agency in shaping and controlling migration flows (Zolberg 2006), must include an account of the impact of immigration policies on immigrants pre- and post-migration. Doing so accomplishes two things: First, it extends our gaze beyond what is happening within US borders to what is occurring in sending countries, and second, it enriches our understanding of the link between theories of international migration and immigrant incorporation. The findings show how immigration policies and the way they are administered are important contextual determinants of immigrants' incorporation, with the impact felt both pre-and post-migration. These findings add to our knowledge of the role played by the migration process itself on immigrant incorporation. Even though the diversity visa programme helps improve the image of the United States, reaffirming the notion that it is a magnanimous country (Goodman 2016), what I have shown is that the United States can do more to support DV winners as they prepare to migrate and after they migrate to the United States. This would help them optimize their potential and facilitate their successful incorporation into American society.

The findings suggest that DV migrants with a particular profile are the most affected by winning the lottery. They are non-college graduates from poor and lower class backgrounds, who were in poorly-paid jobs in their home country, and who did not have well-established parents or siblings in the United States. Withdrawn support from family and friends within the first few months of their arrival in the United States altered their mobility trajectory. Some respondents had to give up educational opportunities that would have helped them in get better jobs, while other respondents had to take poorly paid jobs because pressure to pay room and board truncated the amount of time they had to search/hold out for better-paying jobs. Another group who were

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

negatively affected were respondents who abandoned their tertiary education to migrate to the United States upon winning the visa lottery. A majority had failed to obtain the bachelor's degree they would have earned had they remained in their home country, which affected their occupational trajectory. These winners would have done better socio-economically than they were doing at the time I interviewed them if they had received some support from the United States government at key points in their migrant journey.

The US diversity visa lottery programme is one of a few migration visa lotteries around the world. One of the more researched migration lotteries is the New Zealand Pacific Access Category (PAC), a programme which allows citizens of Tonga to migrate to New Zealand. McKenzie et al. (2010) found that Tongan migrants enjoyed large wage gains, a 263 percent gain in income in their first year in New Zealand. A follow up study ten years later found evidence of stagnant wage growth after the gain enjoyed immediately after the move (Gibson et al. 2015). And this was in spite of “various investments by the immigrants in qualifications, internal mobility, and occupational change” (Gibson et al. 2015, 5). Thus, while these immigrants enjoyed a higher standard of living, due largely to the initial gains in income, the average status of their occupations never returned to what it was pre-migration. And their stagnant wage growth suggests that most of them ended up in lower status occupations with limited prospects for career growth.

Because this study is an in-depth interview-based examination of a non-representative sample of Ghanaian and Nigerian diversity visa lottery winners in the United States, I decided to contextualize its findings by examining outcomes of DV migrants in a nationally representative survey. I used the New Immigrant Survey (NIS), a longitudinal survey of new immigrants in the United States. Using two waves of the survey, conducted in 2003 and 2008/2009, annual (log) income as the dependent variable, and controlling for human capital and other variables, I found

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

that in the pooled sample of immigrants from all over the world, DV migrants fared the worst of all immigrants across the four main classes of admission—employer based, family reunification, diversity visa, and refugees. Among immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, DV migrants had the worst outcomes, doing less well than even African refugees (Author 2017). Just ten per cent of all immigrants and seven per cent of DV migrants had obtained post-migration educational qualifications. And there was no significant difference in income between those with or without post-migration human capital investment. This analysis shows that DV migrants are faring least well of all legal migrants in the United States, but the survey lacked the data to answer why. This article has identified several reasons for DV migrants' depressed outcomes in the United States, showing how the DV lottery program has become a contextual determinant of immigrant incorporation.

Consequently, I propose several modifications to the diversity visa programme that US policymakers and immigration officials can make that would optimize the human potential of DV migrants, and facilitate their successful incorporation into American society. First, the United States should create a college students exemption that permits those who win the DV while in four-year degree granting colleges to get their bachelor's degrees before using their diversity visa. Immigrants with college degrees (even foreign ones) fare better in the US labor market than migrants without college degrees (Portes and Rumbaut 2014). This slight change to the programme would ensure that the United States gets the higher quality immigrants needed to satisfy its economic interests, addressing one of the main criticisms of the diversity visa programme (see Kremer 2011). It would also benefit immigrants' countries of origin because of brain gain through remittances, accumulation of higher levels of human capital among those in the home country, and return migration (Gibson and McKenzie 2011, 2012). Second, administrators of the programme

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

need to create an information brochure that lists agencies and organizations DV migrants can reach out to for help. The brochure should contain educational information for those interested in pursuing educational opportunities and licensing board information for skilled artisans. This would prevent DV migrants from being dangerously ignorant about what their next steps should be once they arrive in the United States.

Third, the USCIS or state department should create a DV migrant assistance office. This should not require much additional financial commitment because the US government already has the administrative infrastructure that assists refugee settlement. The government can also connect DV migrants who need assistance to non-profit organizations it already partners with for refugee settlement.

Fourth, the United States should create a need-based assistance programme for DV migrants. It should build a database of DV migrants' information, and then identify those who might require assistance upon arrival in the United States, based on what is known from sociological research. The most critical group that would need assistance are DV migrants who have little to no social support in the United States and/or are financially impoverished. It is not necessary for the need-based assistance programme to provide regular benefits similar to unemployment benefits or monthly housing vouchers.

Fifth, since sending countries enjoy significant benefits from their citizens living abroad, governments of sending countries such as Nigeria and Ghana should create assistance offices and programs for their citizens in countries in the Western diaspora charged with facilitating their citizens' successful settlement in the new country.

In conclusion, having LPR status is a big deal for immigrants in the United States. DV migrants are indeed fortunate that they are LPRs upon arrival in the United States. But the

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian DV migrants suggests that legal status in and of itself is not enough. Several aspects of the diversity visa programme throw up barriers to DV migrants' successful incorporation into American society, and both the United States and DV migrants' countries of origin can do more to help them prosper in America. Doing so would be a win-win for all stakeholders.

TABLE 1

SELECTED IMPACTFUL EVENTS FROM WINNING THE DIVERSITY VISA LOTTERY

Consequences	# of respondents (%)
Possessed Insufficient Information during Application Process	46 (75.4)
Failed Social Support Network Post-migration <i>(Respondents kicked out earlier than they expected or had been told they could stay; had to move in with another relative/friend; had to turn to church & church members for help; had to abandon or postpone acquisition of more education/occupation credentials because of pressures to pay for earlier than planned housing costs.)</i>	21 (34.4)
Interrupted Tertiary Education	
Won DV while in college in country of origin	18 (29.5)
Remained in college after winning DV and graduated with bachelor's degree	2 (3.3)
Abandoned tertiary education to migrate to United States	16 (26.2)
<i>Had gained admission but did not enroll</i>	3 (4.9)
<i>Was enrolled in university but did not finish</i>	13 (21.3)
Of the 16 respondents	
<i>Obtained a bachelor's degree in the United States post migration</i>	7 (43.8)
<i>Had failed to obtain a bachelor's degree</i>	9 (56.2)
Of the 10 respondents who had not obtained a bachelor's degree post-migration	
<i>Had some US schooling—course credits or associate degrees from community colleges</i>	6 (60)
Marital and Family Instability (directly linked to moment of winning the DV)	20 (32.8)
<i>Unexpected Divorce: (Used for papers—asked for a divorce upon arrival in U.S., evidence of adultery as DNA test proved child of union was not biological offspring)</i>	4 (6.6)
<i>Planned divorce: (dissolution of temporary marital alliances)</i>	7 (11.5)
Created transnational families - Family Separation	10 (16.4)
Feelings of dislocation/emotional trauma	11 (18.0)

REFERENCES

Anderson, Monica

2017 “African Immigrant Population in the United States Steadily Climbs”, Accessed April 3 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/02/14/african-immigrant-population-in-u-s-steadily-climbs/>.

Akresh, I.

2006 “Occupational mobility among legal immigrants to the United states”, *International Migration Review*, 40(4): 854-884.

Borjas, G.

1989 “Economic Theory and International Migration”, *International Migration Review*, 23(3): 457-85.

Clemens, M.

2007 “Do visas kill? Health effects of African health professional emigration”, Working paper Number 114, Center for Global Development.

Imoagene, O. and D. Kirui.

2017 “A Longitudinal Analysis of Immigrant Earnings: Testing the Impact of Admission Categories” Unpublished manuscript.

Ette, E.

2014 *Nigerian Immigrants in the United States: Race, Identity and Acculturation*, Lexington, Lanham, M.D.

Favell, A., M. Feldblum and M. P. Smith.

2006 “The Human Face of Global Mobility: A Research Agenda”, In M. P. Smith and A. Favell (Eds), *The Human Face of Global Mobility: International Highly Skilled Migration in*

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

Europe, North America and the Asian-Pacific, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers: 1-25.

Gibson, J and D. McKenzie.

2012 “The Economic Consequences of ‘Brain Drain’ of the Best and Brightest: Microeconomic Evidence from Five Countries”, *The Economic Journal*, 122 (May): 339-375.

Gibson, J, D. McKenzie, H. Rohorua, and S. Stillman.

2015 “The Long-Term Impacts of International Migration: Evidence from a Lottery”, Working Paper World Bank Group

Goodman, C.

2016 *Global game of chance: The U.S. diversity visa lottery, transnational migration, and cultural diplomacy in Africa, 1990-2016*, PhD dissertation, Department of Sociology, Temple University.

Hailu, T., B. Mendoza, M. Lahman and V. Richards.

2012 “Lived Experiences of Diversity Visa Lottery Immigrants in the United States”, *The Qualitative Report*, 17(art. 102): 1-17.

Kaba Amadu, J.

2009 “Africa’s Migration Brain Drain: Factors Contributing to the Mass Emigration of Africa’s Elite to the West”, In I. Okpewho and N. Nzegwu (Eds), *The New African Diaspora*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington: 109–23.

Ketefe, K.

2013 “US Visa Lottery is brain drain, modern slavery”, *The National Mirror*
<http://nationalmirroronline.net/new/us-visa-lottery-is-brain-drain-modern-slavery/>.

Konadu-Agyemang, K. and B.K. Takyi.

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

- 2006 “An overview of African immigration to US and Canada”, in K. Konadu-Agyemang, B.K. Takyi and J.A. Arthur (Eds), *The New African Diaspora in North America, Trends, Community Building, and Adaptation*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD: 2-12.

Kremer, M.

- 2014 “The Golden Ticket: Adjustment of African Diversity Visa Lottery Winners in the America”, In P. Uwakweh, J. Rotich and C. Okpala (Eds.), *Engaging the Diaspora: Migration and African Families*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD: 127-142.

Kremer, M.

- 2011 “The Diversity Visa Lottery: A Study Linking Immigration Politics to Immigrant Characteristics and Experiences”, *Senior Thesis, Department of International Relations*, Tufts University.

Lobo, A.

- 2006 “Unintended consequences: liberalized US immigration law and the African brain drain”, in K. Konadu-Agyemang, B.K. Takyi and J. Arthur (Eds), *The New African Diaspora in North America, Trends, Community Building, and Adaptation*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD: 189-208.

Logan, B. I. and K. Thomas.

- 2011 “The U.S. Diversity Visa Programme and Transfer of Skills from Africa”, *International Migration*, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2435.2011.00711.x

Ludwig, Bernadette.

- 2016 “Wiping the Refugee Dust from my Feet: Advantages and Burdens of Refugee Status and Refugee Label”, *International Migration*, 54(1): 5-18.

Massey, D.

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

1999 “Why Does Immigration Occur? A Theoretical Synthesis”, In C. Hirschman, P. Kasinitz, and J. Dewind (Eds), *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York: 34-52.

McKenzie, D and J. Mistiaen.

2007 “Surveying Migrant Households: A Comparison of Census-Based, Snowball, and Intercept Point Surveys”, IZA Discussion Paper Series, 3173.

McKenzie, D, J. Gibson and S. Stillman.

2007 “Moving to Opportunity, Leaving Behind What? Evaluating the Initial Effects of a Migration Policy on Incomes and Poverty in Source Areas”, *New Zealand Economic Papers*, 41(2): 197-224.

Newton, A.

2005 “Injecting Diversity into U.S. Immigration Policy: The Diversity Visa Programme and the Missing Discourse on its Impact on African Immigration to the United States”, *Cornell International Law Journal*, 38(5): 1049-82.

Okome, M.

2006 “The Contradictions of Globalization: Causes of Contemporary African Immigration to the United States of America”, in K. Konadu-Agyemang, B. Takyi and J. Arthur (Eds), *The New African Diaspora in North America, Trends, Community Building, and Adaptation*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD: 29-48.

Piore, M.

1979. *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labour and Industrial Societies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Portes, A. and R. Rumbaut.

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

2014 *Immigrant America*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

Reynolds, R.

2002 “An African Brain Drain: Igbo Decisions to Immigrate to the US”, *Review of African Political Economy*, 29(92): 90-95.

Rotimi, S.

2005 “Africa: Killing us softly”, *New African*, 445: 8-12.

Stark, O.

1991 *The Migration of Labor*, Basil Blackwell, Cambridge.

Takyi, B. K. and K. Konadu-Agyemang.

2006 “Theoretical Perspectives on African Migration”, in K. Konadu-Agyemang, B.K. Takyi and J.A. Arthur (Eds), *The New African Diaspora in North America, Trends, Community Building, and Adaptation*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD:13-28.

Thomas, K.J.A.

2011 “What Explains the Increasing Trend in African Emigration to the U.S.?” , *International Migration Review*, 45(1): 3-28.

US. State Department.

2015 “Diversity Visa Program, DV 2013-2015: Number of Entries Received during Each Online Registration Period by Country of Chargeability”, Accessed December 10 2016.
<https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/Diversity-Visa/DVStatistics/DVApplicantEntrantsbyCountry%202013-2015.pdf>.

Wallerstein, I.

1974 *The Modern World System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, Academic Press, New York.

Impact of US DV programme on DV migrants

Wallerstein, I.

1980 *The Modern World System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750*, Academic Press, New York.

Wasem, R. E.

2011 “Diversity Immigrant Visa Lottery Issues”, *Congressional Research Service*.

Zolberg, A.

2006 *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York.