Tanzania’s Minority Indigenous College Graduates:

Aspirations and Barriers Overcame to Access Through Completing College

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by

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ASPIRATIONS AND BARRIERS OF ACCESS

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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*Aspirations and Barriers Overcame to Access Through Completing College*

Presented by Luca Rikoyan Mollel

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to myself, my lovely wife Naserian (Nancy) L. Ngwanday and our children, for their support and prayers all the time I was away from home working on this dissertation. I also dedicate this to all the people who supported me financially, in mentoring, and in access to opportunities that made my doctoral journey successful.
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Abstract

Minority indigenous communities in Tanzania have historically been marginalized and are underrepresented in higher education. It is paramount to understand the aspirations of individuals from these communities and how they pursue their goals as they address their social, economic, cultural, and political aspects of life. This study examines the aspirations of minority indigenous college graduates and the barriers they overcame to access through completing higher education. This study was guided by the following questions: Why did minority indigenous graduates aspire to go to college? How do social, economic, cultural, and political aspects of life contribute to aspirations for higher education? What intrapersonal factors have influenced these aspirations and how individuals overcome the barriers?

Using narrative inquiry, four individuals who graduated college were interviewed. The Possible Selves Theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) was used to formulate interview questions and assisted in the analysis process. The theory helped understand what minority indigenous college graduates thought of becoming—or not becoming—after completing college. Each of the participants’ highlighted barriers they overcame to complete college (i.e., lack of mentors, financial and technological resources, cultural and environmental challenges, and stereotypes). Implications future research, theory and policy includes the limited understanding of the social, cultural progress of these communities, and systemic discrimination of the marginalized communities.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Higher education is an essential social service paramount to Tanzania’s development, a country in the list of the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000 – 2015 (Sitta, 2007). Since the MDGs’ adoption in the early 2000s, pressure from international bodies such as the World Bank, UNICEF, and other bilateral organizations have shifted the focus of education policy to education for all, including higher education, to meet the requirements of the market economy (Oyewole, 2009). The shift also occurred in policymaking at local level. For example, Tanzania’s government responded with a parallel development agenda called Mpango wa Kupambana na Kupunguza Umaskini Tanzania (MKUKUTA) aiming to alleviate poverty in line with the MDGs agenda (Sitta, 2007). This is a broad policy agenda that touches all sectors of the economy, including higher education. Years following the implementation of MDGs, Tanzania witnessed a subsequent increase in applicants applying to higher education (Tanzania Commission for Universities, 2019; Teferra & Altbach, 2004). This new focus has made higher education an important mechanism for Tanzania’s transformation. Meeting the market economy’s needs has awakened the aspirations for many in the Tanzanian society to access a higher education, including those in communities that are historically marginalized socially, economically, and politically (Harwood et al., 2015).

Having completed higher education as a person from a Maasai indigenous group in Tanzania, I became aware of the social, economic, and cultural gap between the dominant Swahili groups (or Bantus) and the minority indigenous groups. This social, economic, and cultural gap has become an impediment to the ability of minority indigenous people to compete with Tanzania’s dominant groups for opportunities that will enhance their quality of life. There is a need to understand possible avenues through which minority indigenous groups can access opportunities
for advancement through higher education. A need exists to understand the role that higher education plays in creating those opportunities and shaping minority indigenous’ aspirations as well as the images of their future selves they want to embrace and avoid. In this study, I use “minority indigenous” to separate them from specific groups within the dominant Swahili (or Bantu) Tanzanian population that may also claim the rights of being indigenous/native. These are groups that are known as the marginalized populations (Hodgson, 2002) who are huntergatherers including Hadzabe and Akie, and nomadic and semi-nomadic groups such as the Maasai and Barabaig (Hodgson, 2002; Heilman, 1998). This study contributes to the limited literature regarding minority indigenous’ aspirations and access to higher education in Tanzania and links the role of personal aspirations in overcoming barriers in higher education for this population. Given the scarcity of literature on Tanzanian indigenous populations, I used the literature on access to higher education of indigenous people in Australia, the USA, Colombia, New Zealand, and Canada.

**Synthesis of Literature Supporting this Study**

There are multiple barriers to consider as minority indigenous groups in Tanzania aspire to access higher education. The low quality of primary and secondary education throughout the country has led to low access to higher education, which is even deeper among marginalized communities (Hodgeson, 2009; Luschei, & Chudgar, 2016; Morley, & Lussier, 2009). Failure to achieve minimum performance standards in primary and secondary education makes it difficult for children, especially in marginalized areas, to realize their higher education aspirations (Sifuna, 2007; Tshabangu & Msafiri, 2013). Even among those who meet the required minimum performance standards, they still face other challenges including a lack of information about higher education programs, long commuting distances, lack of family or other support systems, language
barriers, financial barriers, and cultural stigmatization (Sifuna, 2007; Tshabangu & Msafiri, 2013). These challenging factors often limit students’ aspirations for higher education, including those already enrolled.

Minority indigenous groups also face challenges stemming from educational policies that prevent them from pursuing higher education in Tanzania. Policies on free primary and secondary education (Oketch & Rolleston, 2007), providing resources for education in schools servicing minority indigenous populations (Kapinga, 2016), international pedagogical influences (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2013), and affirmative action policies (Onsongo, 2009) have all contributed to the increase in access to lower levels of education. However, low quality in elementary and secondary education in areas that these groups are located is a critical barrier to accessing higher education levels. The magnitude of the issue is disproportionate, influencing minority indigenous community’s more than dominant communities – mainly Swahili (or Bantu) communities (Hodgeson, 2009; Oketch & Rolleston, 2007).

Minority indigenous communities have also been disadvantaged in Tanzania’s development process in the social, economic, cultural, and political realms. Social barriers such as culture, family support, bias, and other infrastructure have blocked this population from higher education (Hodgeson, 2009). The consequences of all these obstacles are stagnation leading to stigmatization, stereotypes, and negative perceptions of minority indigenous communities, resulting in lower social, economic, and political status within the broader society. The negative attitude towards minority indigenous people and their desire to attend higher education made this study important.

Minority indigenous groups have long aspired for higher education opportunities to achieve social, economic, cultural, and political goals (Andersen et al., 2008). The overall enrollment in higher education institutions in Tanzania has increased significantly over the last fifteen years since
the 1999 governmental education policy on higher education, referenced here as the “1999 policy” (The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, 2000). The influence of the UN MDGs, the World Bank, IMF, and UNESCO has also impacted the increase in enrollment to higher education. However, it is unclear how (if at all) these efforts have helped to reduce the challenges of college access through completion for minority indigenous students (Mazrui, 1997; Samoff, & Carrol, 2003). Although the 1999 policy addresses equity in the context of gender, it fails to consider the systemic exclusion of minority indigenous populations from higher education. Overall, the social, cultural, economic, and political barriers are significant for indigenous populations in Tanzania, and this policy failure has limited their access to higher education.

Research Design

Little is known about Tanzania’s minority indigenous groups’ aspirations or about the barriers that they must overcome to access and complete their higher education. The primary purpose of this study was to explore the aspirations that Tanzania’s minority indigenous college graduates had that motivated them to acquire a higher education degree and the barriers they overcame to successfully graduate. Based on the reviewed literature and purpose, this dissertation’s primary research questions were: Why did minority indigenous graduates aspire to go to college? How do social, economic, cultural, and political aspects of life contribute to aspirations for higher education? What intrapersonal factors have influenced these aspirations?

Theoretical Framework

 Locating a precise theoretical framework for minority indigenous populations in Africa, and more so in Tanzania, is critical given that there are limited empirical resources that specifically address aspirations for and access to higher education for minority indigenous groups. To inform my study, I reviewed relevant studies conducted in other countries to draw some parallels for useful
constructs (e.g., Anderberg, Chevalier, Lührmann, Pavan, 2019; Gale, & Parker, 2013; Harrison, 2018; Harwood, McMahon, O’Shea, Bodkin-Andrews, & Priestly, 2015; Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011). These authors revealed that the aspiration of indigenous people, in general, is often connected to their knowledge and beliefs of a future they hope for or fear; a future they expect either individually or collectively. Specific reference of the authors who connected indigenous aspirations with the imagined future are Henderson, Stevenson, and Bathmaker (2019), Hoyle and Sherrill (2006), Markus and Nurius (1986), Oyserman and James (2009). It is in reference to these studies that this dissertation used the Theory of Possible Selves by Markus, and Narrius (1986) along with interrelated concepts of Possible Selves from Gale et al. (2013) to uncover the aspirations for and barriers to higher education by minority indigenous populations in Tanzania. This theory is relevant to this study because it connects indigenous peoples’ aspirations to their past and present experiences. The Possible Selves Theory develops the concept of self-awareness about what individuals might, or would like, or are afraid of becoming, including cognitive components such as goals, hopes, threats, and fears. These components determine individuals’ approach to life in a meaningful way (Markus, & Narius, 1986). Gale et al. (2013) provide a roadmap to understand how social imaginary, taste and value, desire for positive and appreciable life, possibilities, navigational capacity, and resources from the Possible Selves Theory (Markus, & Narrius, 1986) relate to indigenous aspirations and access to higher education in Australia as detailed in chapter two.

Methods

I used narrative inquiry methodology (Clandinin, & Conelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2003, 2013; Riessman, 1993) along with the interrelated concepts of the Possible Selves Theory (Markus & Narious 1986) by Gale, et al. (2013) to understand participants’ aspirations and the barriers associated with access to higher education for Australian indigenous communities. The narrative
approach provided me with a window to understand participants’ identity construction (McAlpine, 2016; Riessman, 2008) by allowing them to reflect on the opportunities of access to higher education and how they relate to their past, present, and future career aspirations.

According to Clandinin (2013), narrative research is a qualitative research approach based on participants’ stories, narratives, and descriptions of their own experiences. Clandinin (2013) notes that narrative methodology helps explore the “social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals’ experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted” (p. 18). Daiute (2013) also describes narratives as expressions of individuals’ life experiences, and they involve stories about imaginations, things that attract individual/public interests, and many aspects of life faced in the context of “past, present and future time” (p. 2). Narrating stories help express the relationships between characters/humans and the life events that occur over time (Daiute, 2014). It is a behavior tied to human culture entailing the interaction of life and the events occurring in different periods.

The narrative inquiry approach in this study elicited participants to narrate their stories about experiences in the past and present, and to reflect on how these experiences impact their future. Using this approach, I elicited participants’ views on the need for higher education, their aspirations for higher education, and the obstacles they encountered to achieve these aspirations. These stories are not just the expressions of underlying constructs of their identity, but about how they described their aspirations for higher education as well as the barriers they overcame to access higher education (Baddeley & Singer, 2007).

I focused on minority indigenous Maasai and Barbaiq communities in northern Tanzania who graduated from higher education located in in two different regions: the Arusha and Morogoro regions. These are not the only regions where these communities are found, but they are historically known to dominate the northern and central regions of Tanzania. Other regions where these groups
are hosted in scattered locations are Tanga, Pwani, and Mbeya. I used both convenience and snowball sampling criteria to select participants as detailed further in chapter three of this proposal. Due to financial and time resources limitations, I used both Zoom and WhatsApp calls to collect data from participants. I selected four indigenous participants from these regions who have graduated from college/university. I decided to interview college/university graduates because of their experiences with getting professions that they thought are needed to transform their minority indigenous communities in Tanzania. But, more importantly, because they have gone through the entire educational process, they can reflect on their experiences and relate them to their aspirations and the barriers they overcame to access through completing higher education.

The six concepts guiding the study (i.e., social imaginary, preference/status, desire, possibilities, navigational capacity, and resources) were used to structure the data collection process. Data collection included semi-structured interviews lasting 90 minutes. The interview call out used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) asking about their aspirations to higher education and experiences throughout the process of applying and attending through completing college. Interviews questions were designed and asked in English, but participants were encouraged to use the language they felt comfortable using in their responses. I engaged in a member checking follow-up with the four participants to verify the fidelity of my translation into English of the transcripts given that the interviews were conducted in Maa, Swahili and English, sometimes in these three languages in one interview.

I used the approach by Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou (2013) to analyze the data. Andrews et al. (2013) recommend data clustering using participants’ recent stories as a vital strategy in identifying different and recurring themes. These identified themes help build Plummer’s (2001) idea of data organization about how research participants share life stories. The clustering approach by themes also follows Creswell’s (2018) idea of data analysis spiral, including
ongoing memoing, reading, recording, mapping and clustering themes, verification, member checking, editing, and reporting as detailed in chapter three of this proposal.

**Reflexivity and Positionality**

Reflexivity places the researcher at the center of the study (Bryman, & Cassel, 2006; Salmons, 2015). Doing this research meant defining myself as the primary contributor in this process, not as a participant but as a vital contributor of the study. This enabled me to define my position and how it might influence participants' responses. It also made me identify how my perspective on the topic affects possible interpretations of the data. Although this study was relevant to my life experience as a college graduate from the minority Maasai community in Tanzania, I constantly reflected on how my role and experience could infuse bias into my recollection of participants’ narratives. Therefore, I was careful to reflect on my positionality throughout the study (Rallis, & Rossman, 2012).

I am a member of the Maasai community, which is one of the minority indigenous communities from where participants of this study come from. While I don’t want to use my experiences accessing and completing a higher education as source of data for this study, they are the basis of why this study is needed. My higher education experience started when I was in high school. However, my experience going through higher education contained barriers that challenged my ability to make an encouraging progress. At some point, these barriers made me doubt about the possibility to make it through higher education. I almost dropped out due to lack of academic and psychological support. These feelings resolved after receiving support from professors and friends. Coming from a marginalized community, I came to understand that higher education is key to creating the self I wanted to become (that is, be educated, a role model, a leader), but also a self I was afraid of becoming (that is uneducated, unemployable). Being one of
the few individuals from this community who got the opportunity to obtain a higher education is overwhelming, especially knowing that there are many behind who view me as their role model. Sadly, they still might fail to fulfill their aspirations because of the barriers surrounding access to higher education in Tanzania. This study will shed light on how indigenous people from my community can overcome those barriers by focusing on those who succeeded.

**Limitations of the Study**

Although a local colleague was able to identify and connect me with potential participants, the majority of those contacted declined to participate in the study. I contacted a total of nine participants to end up with the four participants needed. Those who declined to participate gave varied reasons including lack of availability due to the time zone difference and their work and family schedules, technology or means of communication barriers due to being in rural areas, and other reasons related to lack of money to travel to areas where access to internet is available. Also, as I anticipated, acculturation to the mainstream culture seems to have prevented some individuals from participating in this study, presumably by not feeling comfortable sharing their experiences.

During the study, I found that male participants (2 participants) were not as forthcoming telling their stories as the female participant (2 participants). I understood that this might have been caused by their awareness and even intimidation by the fact that I belong to the Maasai, and I am a highly educated male pursuing a PhD in the U.S. They might have assumed that the interview would question their views about education in connection to their background. Mokoro, for example, appeared to limit himself on most of the things he was willing to share (mostly on issues related to his experience during and after college). He was very reluctant to elaborate, almost with a sense of mistrust. Ngape was a little more open but seemed cautious sharing experiences during college. He specifically appeared to be cautious expressing his views about how he navigated
college opportunities, with concerns that I was investigating the quality of his academic institution. While male participants were not so forthcoming, female participants were more forthcoming in sharing their experiences. I did not sense this level of caution and reluctance with the women in this study, which suggests a gender dynamic in the interviews likely reflecting the gender hierarchy among these communities (including mine).

The number of participants chosen was small and might not represent complete information needed to inform the totality of aspirations and barrier of access to higher education by the Maasai indigenous population. In addition, because acculturation still plays a role in the educational identity of participants, there is a possibility that their responses do not capture the essence of the aspirations of the minority indigenous population. Their identities may have shifted because of acculturation to the point of not necessarily represent the experiences and aspirations of those who did attend college.

Conducting this study without travelling to Tanzania created complex barriers. The use of Zoom and WhatsApp allowed me to conduct the interviews but in person meetings with participants would have enhanced its quality. In addition, the time difference between Tanzania and the United States of nine hours was a challenge, forcing me to conduct interviews around 3am in the morning, and perhaps impacting the quality of the interview.

**Justification and Significance**

Participation in higher education for minority indigenous students in Tanzania is no longer a matter of conjecture. Higher education is invaluable, and minority indigenous groups in Tanzania aspire to obtain a college degree to achieve their social, economic, cultural, and political goals (Andersen et al., 2008). The low involvement of minority indigenous populations in Tanzania’s tertiary institutions indicates a social, economic, and political gap. Revealing indigenous
aspirations is critical to understanding the possible selves that this segment of the population aspires to after completing higher education.

This study contributes to the development of knowledge about minority indigenous aspirations and the barriers to higher education in Tanzania. Being informed of these barriers in relation to indigenous’ aspirations helps policymakers and practitioners re-examine existing policies. It also provides a foundational understanding of related issues that will need to be addressed in future research studies.

Definition of Key Terminology

Aspirations

Aspirations are the dreams, hopes, or goals individuals hold for their lives (Harell, 2019). They can mean expectations about making positive progress - usually looking for a better future. Tanya (2019) states that people can have different expectations, including social, career, and personal aspirations. This research suggests that, like other communities in Tanzania, minority indigenous individuals aspire to advance their social, cultural, economic, and political spheres of life. Higher education is an avenue by which to achieve these aspirations.

Higher Education Access

In this study, access means the opportunity to partake in higher education. It underlines the rational ideals of equality in societal institutions, in this case, higher education. The Glossary of Education Reform clarifies that the term access refers to the strategies by which institutions of learning and their policies ensure equal opportunity for all people (Ravitch, 2010). It demands these institutions ensure that all services needed to address equality are provided so that students
who were previously barred will be included. The GER points that “factors such as race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, perceived intellectual ability, past academic performance, special-education status, English-language ability, and family income or educational-attainment levels—in addition to factors such as relative community affluence, geographical location, or school facilities—may contribute to certain students having less ‘access’ to educational opportunities than other students” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 44-52)

**Possible Selves**

This theoretical concept addresses an individual’s conception of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming, thus providing a conceptual link between cognition and motivation (Markus, & Nurius, 1986). They represent the cognitive elements of *hopes, fears, goals, and threats, and they give the specific self-relevant form, meaning organization, and direction to these dynamics* (Oyserman, & James, 2009).

**Minority Indigenous**

In this study, I use “minority indigenous” to identify specific groups within the Tanzanian population, which may also claim the rights of being indigenous/native such as dominant Swahili (Bantu) groups. These are groups that are known as the marginalized populations in Tanzania (Hodgson, 2002). They include Hunter-gatherers, which include Hadzabe and Akie, and nomadic and semi-nomadic groups such as the Maasai and Barabaig (Hodgson, 2002; Heilman, 1998).

**Dominant Groups**

There are communities who also claim the right to be indigenous of the territories they occupy. They include all Swahili communities who in this study are referred to as the dominant or majority communities.
Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The review of the literature in this study begins with a broad overview of the studies that are relevant to framing the concept of aspirations and barriers of access to higher education in general. In this section, I focus on studies that give a historical perspective of the higher education system in Tanzania and Africa. I address literature that has a close relationship to the topics on indigeneity, aspirations, access, and the overall motivation of individuals from indigenous communities. I end the chapter by addressing studies related to the barriers to indigenous aspirations for and access to higher education in relation to the Theory of Possible Selves. All these illustrate how the literature addresses questions that are broadly, closely, or directly related to the primary research questions of this dissertation.

Overview of Indigeneity

Until recently, a concise definition of “indigenous people”, was hotly debated throughout the literature in countries where indigenous people reside. One of the arguments states that the standards being used to qualify a group as indigenous to a place, country, or geographical location are forms of exclusion and discrimination to other groups (Corntassel, 2003). According to Corntassel (2003), requiring indigenous identification standards will deny other similar groups the same privileges they deserve. Critics suggest that indigenous groups should self-identify based on criteria laid out by international human rights legislating bodies such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (Thornberry, 2013). While I agree with the critics’ idea that indigenous people should be left to self-identify, this might possibly be chaotic as those groups with a cultural capital (such as those whose ancestors have power over technology/media/western education) will possibly dominate the narratives of self-identifying themselves as indigenous of a
place they alienated their original inhabitants. However, according to Corntassel (2003) and Thornberry (2013), nations that fail to identify or define its indigenous people fail to meet the international legal standards for the rights of indigenous groups, thus creating a conundrum – should nations identify the indigenous groups or wait until the groups identify themselves?. The self-identification idea works if nations allow these groups to be identified within the social fabric and include in mapping system or geographical location of the country.

Scholars representing the professions of international law developed a working definition that identifies and defines indigenous people. This working group included the concept of nationhood, and it included leaders of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and NonGovernmental Organization (NGOs) (Corntassel, 2003). Holm, Pearson, and Chaves (2003) developed the current definition, which needed to be dynamic and flexible while utilizing the concept of peoplehood. I use the concept of peoplehood in this study.

The concept of peoplehood states that indigenous people can only answer the question of who indigenous people are. This self-identification policy has become widely advocated by the international community such as the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (UNWGIP), World Council of Indigenous People (WCIP), and the International Labor Organization (ILO) as a way of protecting indigenous people against possible attacks by hosting nations who might refuse to accept indigenous rights (Corntassel, 2003). Although this definition has been politically criticized by indigenous hosting nations who think self-definition might disintegrate the process of community and national building (Jung, 2003), it remains a working definition to the present. I agree with this argument, but it might be too vague as it does not create the parameters of who can claim to be indigenous. As Corntassel (2003) argues, the self-identification frame applies to indigenous groups just as it applied to the nationalists who
fought for independence during colonialism. These nationalists used the same approach to locate themselves within geographical spaces with people sharing similar cultural, ideological, and social practices, and they self-identify these spaces as region, nations, party, organization, community, and the like (Corntassel, 2003).

To support this argument on self-identification, Wilmer (1993) examined the historical process of moral exclusion used by the western world to deny identity to indigenous people. In her writings, Wilmer (1993) identified indigenous people as communities that:

1. Are tradition-based cultures;
2. Were socially and politically autonomous before colonialism;
3. Continue the struggle to maintain or preserve their cultural integrity, economic self-reliance, and political independence during, and after colonialism by resisting the assimilation policies of a nation-state;
4. Live in conformity with their evolving culture and traditions;
5. Are descendants from the original inhabitants of a geographical location; and
6. Do not control their political destiny, and therefore are frequently subjected to policies arising from the cultural hegemony originated from colonialism (adopted from Corntassel, 2003, p. 78).

These definitions resonate with the view that minority indigenous communities (i.e., in Tanzania) have about themselves. Moreover, their livelihoods or nature of their life practices, history, environment, vulnerability to all sorts of discrimination, and lack of political representation place them in situations similar to those of similar groups identified as indigenous by United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (Thornberry, 2013).
Minority Indigenous Groups in Tanzania

In Africa, there are many challenges when defining who are genuinely indigenous among the many ethnic groups. This study uses the terms “minority indigenous” to identify the groups that are commonly known in the Tanzanian political society as marginalized. Using “indigenous” as the only term to identify these groups will be perceived as an act of disuniting society or claiming the ownership of history that other communities might have in Tanzania. The phrase is rejected in Tanzania’s social, political, and administrative settings, even though indigeneity has received significant attention on international platforms (Heilman, 1998; Davis, 1993). Challenges facing many indigenous communities, especially those who have faced systematic marginalization, fail to be voiced without fear of being branded a traitor or “tribalist,” a term similar in western societies to that of “racist.”

When entering this debate, issues of history, politics, religion, geography, economics, and data analysis become critical. Studies by the African Commission on Human and Peoples Right (ACHPR) and the International Mechanism dealing with Indigenous Peoples Rights (Lynch, 2011; Barume, 2010; Wiessner, 2009; Hodgson, 2002; Beteille, 1998) provide some relevant information about who are regarded as indigenous, specifically in Tanzania. These studies characterized indigenous peoples as nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists and hunters/gatherers living in situations of marginalization and discrimination (Barume, 2010).

For this research study, “indigeneity” is used to describe people originating in geographical locations with unique traditional and cultural practices different from westernized or dominant majority ways of life (Canessa, 2007; Montenegro, & Stephens, 2006; Kenrick, & Lewis, 2004; Hodgson, 2002). In Tanzania, indigenous people include two community categories that are
nationally and internationally recognized based on their social and economic ways of life: (a). Hunter-gatherers composed of Hadzabe and Akie, and (b) Nomadic and semi-nomadic groups composed of the Maasai and Barabaig (Hodgson, 2002; Heilman, 1998).

**Tanzania Education System and Indigenous People**

The system of education in Tanzania is structured by levels of education: $2 + 7 + 4 + 2 + 3$ or 4 (Hare, 2007). The educational structure means two years of pre-primary education, seven years of primary education, four years of ordinary secondary education, two years of advanced secondary education or high school, and not less than three years of higher education (i.e., college or university). This system of education has its trace to the British system of education in many ways. First, the education system is structured (i.e., in five levels). Second, education consists of curriculum development, language, and leadership (Mulokozi, 2016). Though progress has been made to adopt the local language Swahili as the language of instruction in lower levels of education, it is still facing difficulties in its adaptation to many in-class learning subjects, mainly science, technology, and other subjects (Mulokozi, 2016). While all levels of education have the potential of being examined regarding the influence of aspirations for minority indigenous groups in Tanzania, this study will primarily focus on the barriers of access to higher education by the indigenous population.

Although attaining lower education levels have boosted aspirations for higher education for most Tanzanians as indicated in Teferra and Altbach (2004) research about the challenges of African higher education, minority indigenous, who are also referred to in this study as the “marginalized indigenous groups”, have continued to face unprecedented hardship challenges to accessing higher education. Even with all the progress made in lower education levels, it is
unfortunate but not surprising to say that access to higher education after high school has remained a significant challenge for this population. The initial and ongoing barriers that indigenous students have to overcome have been identified in very few studies as reviewed below.

**Higher Education and Minority Indigenous Groups**

Access to higher education opportunities is still an enduring challenge for minority indigenous groups in Tanzania despite the belief that access to education has been made open for all Tanzanians in a generalized way (Ishengoma, 2013). The generalized open access is done through providing funding in the form of student financial aid (Ishengoma, 2004; Msigwa, 2016; Nyahende, 2013). There is no clear information about the overall percentage of enrollment to higher education institutions - except a breakdown by gender as Teferra and Altbach (2004) indicates, opportunities are made available for those who can qualify for student financial aid in loans or, as Ishengoma (2004) calls, cost sharing. Even though the financial aid is open to access, the limited academic outcomes in the lower levels, such as secondary and high schools for these groups, have been prohibitive from successfully meeting the required standards to access financial aid.

In addition to limited access to funding for higher education, social and economic difficulties become a disadvantage for marginalized indigenous populations who live in rural areas and lack familial and individual awareness of higher education (Andersen, et al., 2008). These difficulties translate into low family and community support and students’ low self-confidence and high self-doubt (Gore et al., 2017). Lack of other resources such as physical access to academic institutions, to libraries, as well as guidance about the type of programs to pursue and limited internet, all further limit the aspirations for and access through completion of higher education for
Tanzania’s minority indigenous groups (Gore et al., 2017). Also, like Hunter, Biddle, and Schwab (2005) point, cultural stigmatization, language, lack of interest in the programs of study offered lack of confidence in the classroom and low-income family support, low academic readiness, distance to college, financial burdens, and lack of community support (Biddel et al., 2004).

A policy framework paper developed by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education in 1999 shows that up until 1992, which was 30 years since independence, Tanzania did not have a clear and consistent policy on higher education (Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education, 1999). The need for a higher education policy emerged due to the political system changes (from one party to multiparty system) and an upsurge in the number of higher education institutions from one university in 1961 (independence year) to over 140 colleges and universities in the 1990s. Access to all education levels has been a challenge for students living in all African countries, and most importantly, the East Africa countries since political independence (Oketch, & Rolleston, 2007; Orodho, 2014). Like other East African countries (e.g., Kenya, Uganda), Tanzania has been making progress to offset this challenge since independence in 1961 (Oketch, & Rolleston, 2007). Subsequent regimes in years following independence made access to education a priority in policy formulation. “Universal Primary Education” was the initial step towards addressing access to education, followed by “Free Primary Education” until “Education for All” was added to the policy, which included both primary and secondary levels of education for both boys and girls (Orodho, 2014). It is important to note that the success of policies of access to primary and secondary education was made possible through collaborations and contributions of the international organizations such as the United Nations under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other bilateral organizations (Galabawa, 1990; Shuyler, & Vavrus, 2010).
Increased access to lower education levels led to increased demand for higher education, while access remained problematic for many years, especially for groups that have been historically subject of systemic marginalization (Brock-Utne, 2003). Before the beginning of the twenty-first century, higher education was mainly accessible to Tanzania’s elite groups (BrockUtne, 2003). In years preceding 2000, access was widened to allow underrepresented groups, particularly women, people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and people with disabilities, to participate (Morley, Leach, Lussier, Lihamba, Mwaipopo, Forde, & Egbenya, 2010). The introduction and reinforcement of the affirmative action policy of 1990 played a significant role in improving access to higher education for these groups (Morley et al., 2010; Onongo, 2009). The implementation of this policy resulted from pressure from international bodies, particularly UNICEF, World Bank, and United Nations under Millennium Development Goals manifests (Shuyler, & Vavrus, 2010; Tierney, 1997; UNICF, 1998). Affirmative action led to the establishment of “Tanzania’s Vision for 2025” (Sitta, 2007), which marked the beginning of continuing education after primary and secondary levels. This vision stimulated the creation of strategies to make higher education accessible to all Tanzanians, including the marginalized communities, focusing on distance learning, which further improved participation but only to those who have access to the needed technology and connectivity for online instruction (Mnyanyi, Bakari, & Mbwette, 2010).

Higher education was one of the five points of Tanzania’s Development Vision by 2025. This vision intended to create a well-educated and learned society by 2025. Other points included in this vision are high-quality livelihood, peace, stability, unity, good governance, and a competitive economy (URT, 1999). According to the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Higher
Education (1999), the Higher Education Policy was developed to address six main problems facing higher education in Tanzania. These problems comprised of:

Low student enrollment.

The need to develop the sciences.

Gender inequalities.

Limited financial resources.

Uncontrolled and unregulated increase of private tertiary training institutions.

The distorted perception of the actual value of higher education.

So far, this higher education policy has significantly impacted gender inequity in higher education but left other prominent inequity problems. There have been unsuccessful efforts to address inequity in its totality, including race, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other forms of inequalities. It is evident with the 1999 higher education policy framework that higher education still has a long way to solve the problems of inequality in access.

Although higher learning institutions have been increasing the number of students they admit each year (TCU, 2018), the equity gap question remains a critical and seemingly enduring challenge to answer. The challenge is not to say progress has addressed the persisting equity gap, but the progress made has been subtle and narrowly focused on one component of what I call the equity agenda. Gender equity is so far the main component of the equity agenda that Tanzania’s higher education has managed to address and document as a success in progress (under equity agenda) for inclusion in higher education (Morley, et al., 2010). Governing bodies in higher education give other components such as race, sociocultural background/ethnic background, and special needs less priority.
While addressing gender inequity is progressing in higher education institutions, it ought to be a roadmap towards addressing inclusion issues to other groups such as the minority indigenous populations including the Pastoral (Maasai) community, Agro-pastoralists (Barbaiq), and Hunters/Gatherers (Hadzabe) communities. These are communities that since the Tanzanian political independence in 1961 have been subjected to many forms of marginalization, including social, economic, and political (Cerón, Ruano, Sánchez, Chew, Díaz, Hernández, and Flores, 2016; Curtis, 2009; Larson, and Aminzade, 2007). This study uses the term marginalization to mean discrimination in subtle and masked ways, especially in political platforms. Their ways of life/livelihoods made them victims of prejudice, stigmatization, and all forms of profiling, preventing them from accessing social services and an economic path to develop their communities. Their ways of life put them at risk of being profiled as primitive, unchanging, lacking aspirations, and unmotivated to clear their future. These forms of prejudices, stereotypes, and profiling pose significant challenges to indigenous aspirations for higher education access. With the lack of clear policy to support their aspirations for higher education, coupled with different forms of discrimination, students from these groups often fail to continue their education, and therefore, remain incompetent of securing other opportunities that will boost their livelihoods.

The dissertation places higher education at heart for sociocultural, economic, and political development, as the engine that drives individual’s aspirations to a life that is enriched socially, economically, and politically, a life which all in the Tanzanian public aspire to and advocated by all in the political spectrum. These views are backed by previous studies that view higher education as a resource that provides the knowledge, skills, and expertise required to address social, economic, and political problems within society and encourage civil involvement in national development (Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley, 2009). Teferra and Albach (2004). Although it
took decades for African governments to place higher education at the forefront of their nations’ development agenda, they finally realized higher education as a critical sector in African development. Tefarra and Altbach (2004) argue in support of higher education that “if Afddrica is to succeed economically, culturally, and politically, it must have a strong post-secondary sector; academic institutions are central to the future” (p. 22).

Given the need to study issues of access, widening participation, retention, success, and completion of higher education by marginalized indigenous communities in Tanzania, a critical understanding of their aspirations and factors that lead to these aspirations for higher education is necessary before delving into studying topics that lead to equity as a goal to achieve social, economic, and political development. As pointed by Pasquier-Doumer and Brandon (2015), the concept of aspirations is multidimensional and can vary widely between individuals or society. Knowing the role that aspirations play in individuals and societal life, Bernard and Tafesse (2012) contextualized these multiple dimensions by seeing them in the context of wealth or income aspirations, educational aspirations, social status aspirations, or aspirations about others.

Bernard and Tafesse (2012) define aspirations as individual’s goals and desires or wishes to attain that goal. They “summarize a subset of an individual’s beliefs, preferences, and capacities that are specifically relevant to behavior regarding the future. However, the vast majority of studies that address the issue of aspirations restrict the definition of aspirations to one dimension” (Bernard and Tafesse 2012, p. 3). Based on this, the Tanzania indigenous aspirations for social, economic, and political transformation have often been underestimated by research and institutions entitled to address issues pertaining to the development of underserved communities. The underrating of indigenous aspirations is prominent when higher is needed for them. The stigma associated with the nature of the environment they live in, and their livelihoods make the mainstream society
(Bantus specifically) and authorities classify/perceive them as primitive, backward, and unchanging (Hodgson, 2002) and therefore, isolate or even exclude them from deserving development programs that other communities have been accessing (for example, better education, and health). These marginalization forms prevent higher education aspiring students in the marginalized indigenous community from the possibility of accessing colleges and universities.

The low level of higher education attendance for indigenous communities has been stereotyped to mean a lack of aspirations for formal education; therefore, there is a need to understand these communities' aspirations (Sellar, Gale, & Parker, 2011). While raising aspirations for the indigenous communities is important for development, it is a misguided view that the low level of attendance to higher education is due to their lack of aspirations. Indigenous communities aspire to be educated and, more specifically, in higher education because of their realization that through education, and more so higher education, indigenous social, economic, and political spheres of life will be improved to make the community position itself in a dynamic world. What makes indigenous aspirations (for higher education) different from the other groups is how they view (essence or real meaning of) higher education as concerning their livelihood, specifically in relation to what they rely on to make them who they are. Therefore, aspirations for higher education emerge from individuals and communities that need to be empowered through culture, land rights, economic and political freedom. As Bernard, Taffesse, and Dercon (2008) affirm, aspirations of the marginalized people reflect the extent to which they view themselves as having control of their future.

While it is true that indigenous students aspire to access and complete higher education, there exist many barriers blocking these aspirations. Some scholars (De Bortoli and Cresswell,
2004) believe that indigenous have low participation rates in higher education due to their lack of aspirations compared to other dominant groups. This study challenges this notion, particularly its application to the groups studied in this research. In fact, like many other indigenous groups worldwide, minority indigenous communities in Tanzania aspire to access higher education for the reasons stated in the above section. Pechenkina, Kowal, & Paradies (2011) conducted a study in indigenous communities in Australia and identified financial hardships, health problems, racist attitudes, and low levels of indigenous students’ academic readiness and aspirations as among the barriers that limit progress for indigenous students. Although racism is not a common term in most African countries because most of the populations are identical in color, similar terms such as tribalism and ethnicity apply. Tribalism is not the preferred term to use in this study, although it can be implied when discussing stereotypes mounted upon minority indigenous communities about their livelihoods. Either way, Pechenkina, Kowal, & Paradies (2011) revealed that higher education institutions lack the motivation to support these students manifested in the inadequate investment in these students, unclear pathways to higher education, over stressing on the point of entry to higher education instead of looking holistically at the challenges of indigenous students’ accessing higher education (Pechenkina, & Anderson, 2011; Pechenkina, Kowal, & Paradies, 2011). They also found a misconception that indigenous students in Australia do not have the motivation to attend higher education because they cannot find a link between the economic benefits versus practicing their ways of life (Pechenkina, & Anderson, 2011). This perception remains to be one of the stereotypes that amount to indigenous people’s livelihoods, impeding indigenous students’ success. I believe the same is true for the minority indigenous groups in Tanzania as similar discussions have taken place by local and international organizations about similar problems facing indigenous people in East African (Lynch, 2011; Barume, 2010; Wiessner, 2009; Hodgson, 2002; Beteille, 1998).
The low level of academic preparedness for indigenous students are also considered a limiting factor for their educational aspirations (Parente, Craven, Munns, & Marder, 2003). This barrier is, by far, one of the factors that leads to the symptomatic low achievement of minority indigenous students in all education levels. Poor performance in high school prevents these students from meeting the required achievement standards to enroll in higher education institutions. Those who met the required standards are also limited by other challenge such as access to academic resources while attending higher education (Parente et al., 2003).

Researchers have documented indigenous’ aspirations to become professionals in fields such as law, medicine, health professions, engineering, sports, art and culture, hospitality, and the like (Nelson and Hay 2010; Sikora and Biddle 2015; Walker et al. 2008). These studies have also documented lack of college relevant information, and so, most indigenous students choose programs that are not what they wish to pursue. Many indigenous students pursue programs that are less selective because of their academic performance do not meet the standard of their preferred programs (Gore et al., 2017).

This dissertation deepens the understanding of barriers to access to higher education for minority indigenous groups. The dissertation’s objective is to provide insights for policies that will create supportive programs that will help minority indigenous students realize their social, cultural, economic, and political aspirations. As Parente et al. (2003) noted, such policies can help strengthen strategies that lead to indigenous success.

Possible Selves Theory and its Relation to Indigenous Aspirations

Opening opportunities for indigenous populations to access higher education requires a critical understanding of the factors that contribute to their aspirations. Semali (1994) sheds light
on a theoretical framework previously used to address access and equity to education in developing countries, including Tanzania. This framework has been used on nomadic societies like the Maasai pastoral society (Rigby, 1985) and contents that the goal for nomadic ways of life is to enhance the quality of “family unity” and promote a “sense of belonging” to their specific environment, culture, and society (Semali, 1994, p. 8). Higher education is an avenue through which minority college graduates envisioned their re-self-identification in relation to their social, economic, and political realities.

However, reforming their identities doesn’t mean changing their identities. It is a redefinition of their sense of belonging in a society submerged in a dynamic and changing world. Higher education is key to finding bridges to this new sense of belonging in a changing world and is therefore, related to individuals’ aspirations, a concept addressed by the Theory of Possible Selves by Markus and Narius (1986).

Possible Selves Theory has been applied differently by different authors to explain why different groups aspire to achieve an education. Possible Selves emerged from the notion of selfconcept that Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) describe as the “what we think about when we think about ourselves.” These self-concepts are “the visual and effective representation of who we were, who we are, and whom we will become” (Dunkel, & Kerpelman, 2006, p. 17). This self-concept description aligns with the Possible Selves Theory’s definition by its pioneers Markus and Narius (1986) and their followers, who complemented the idea of self-knowledge with the concept of possible selves, which they described as individuals’ beliefs about what they aspire to become, would like to become, and or afraid of becoming. Markus and Narius link these notions with an individual’s notion of cognitive and motivational behavior whereby “hopes, fears, goals, and
threats” by an individual or group bring a “specific self-relevance notion, meaning, organization, and direction to these dynamics” (Markus & Narius, 1986, p. 954).

As Figure 1 above shows, the Possible Selves that individuals want to be is presented in a small circle that intersects the two large circles of the vision individuals have about their future. The two large circles represent the current or future actions that individuals do to define the Possible Selves they wish to become. The Possible Selves concept serves as a motivation to enrich or avoid future conduct, and therefore, important to provide an individual with the concepts to evaluate and interpret their view of themselves (Harison, 2018; Hoyle, & Sherril, 2006; Markus, & Narius, 1986).

In pursuing the paths to understand individual selves of their future aspirations, Gale et al. (2013) revealed six concepts that can be used to understand individuals' aspirations towards life.
The concepts are drawn from multiple studies and reflect how individuals reflect themselves about the images of the selves they want to become or avoid becoming in the future. These images of the future selves change the way individuals behave in the present time in order to achieve future aspirations (Harison, 2018). The six concepts that Gale et al. (2013) reveal are: (1) social imaginary, (2) status or taste and preference, (3) desire for appreciable life, (4) possibility, (5) navigational capacity, and (6) resources.

**Social Imaginary**

The social imaginary concept addresses how individuals imagine themselves within the context of collective social life (Taylor, 2004). The concept addresses the way individuals perceive their symbolic existence within the social context. Tylor (2004) states that this notion of individuals imagining themselves within social life is complicated. It includes a common understanding of how individuals fit and need each other to perform collective tasks related to their collective life. Aspirations for and access to higher education address the dreams and images that minority indigenous students in Tanzania have in relation to their broader social existence. How do they imagine themselves as educated individuals and addressing their collective social, economic, and political life after acquiring a higher education degree?

**The Sociocultural Status or Taste, and Preference**

This concept assumes that individuals often picture themselves in the context of a future sociocultural apparatus and challenge their current selves on the relative merits of goods and practices (Gale et al., 2013). Three tastes and preferences are discussed in Bourdieu (1984). The cultural norms of a particular social class may influence individuals’ aspirations. Higher education creates a social class that individuals in the minoritized indigenous groups aspire to reach. These future aspiring goals are the “positive assessment of the preferences by the dominant social classes;
thus, other preferences are regarded as less tasteful” (Gale et al., 2013, p. 8). The taste and preference of some higher education programs in realizing the social class are the factors that motivate this group to meet the challenges and find ways to access higher education.

The Desire to Achieve a Future Appreciable Life

Berlant (2011) views an appreciable life as the “clusters of promises that we want to make possible” (p. 23). Desires are objects that individuals aspire to build themselves (Gale et al., 2013). Getting a university or college degree has been the desired goal for most Tanzanians since the beginning of the 21st century (Tanzania Commission for Universities, 2019). The desired positive goals for minoritized indigenous community are those that make individuals realized their deemed social, economic, and political aspirations (for example, attaining higher education will mean gaining some social status, be employable with skills needed in the market economy, be able to represent the community in both professional and political platforms).

Possibility

As Gale et al. (2013) point, desires and possibilities are two interrelated concepts but different in the way individuals perceive or interpret the concept. Individuals can desire, but those desires can have limited possibilities. Gale et al. (2013) remind us that aspirations are “an important aim of desire is to make promises – to oneself – possible” (p. 9). Structural limits on aspiration may impede the possibility of achieving the desired goal. For example, cultural background – the fear of losing their cultural continuity due to attending higher education limits the possibility of achieving aspirations for higher education (Alfred, & Corntassel, 2005; Keddie, Gowlett, Mills, Monk, & Renshaw, 2013). This study views the current social structural as affecting the possibility of a minority indigenous group in Tanzania to achieving their desired aspirations for higher education.
Navigational Capacity

This concept stresses individuals' ability to identify and follow the streams that lead to realizing aspirations (Appadurai, 2004; Gale et al., 2013). The concept further addresses the personal knowledge to plan and make efforts to achieve the aspired goals. These plans and efforts to achieve goals require what Appandurai (2004) called the resources needed to achieve goals tied to economic, social, and cultural knowledge and experiences of previous successes (Gale et al., 2013). This concept is essential in addressing minoritized indigenous aspirations for indigenous communities in Tanzania. The lack of institutional knowledge, the limited offerings from different higher education institutions, and the lack of other resources have prevented minority indigenous students from realizing their higher education aspirations.

Resources

This concept addresses individuals' imaginations of their future wealth situation regarding financial and material wealth (Apandurai, 2004). This concept also suggests that being a resource is not a notion of individual self-centeredness for financial success in life, but an individual forward-looking mindset about how they can be an attribute of the socioeconomic and political fabrics. Individuals think of becoming part of the socioeconomic fabric by acquiring the knowledge and sharing experiences to develop their communities. It is important to reflect on the minority indigenous communities in Tanzania and their aspirations and see how they overcame the barriers to access and achieve higher education.
Summary

Understanding indigenous aspirations for higher education requires a critical understanding of the factors that contribute to their aspirations. Along with this understanding of indigenous aspirations, it is also important to understand the barriers of indigenous aspirations for and access to higher education. The Theory of Possible Selves helps to address these factors and barriers for and access to higher education.

According to Graven et al. (2005), there is some truth that indigenous have low aspirations to continue their education to higher education. However, these low aspirations are attributed to the barriers indigenous students have to overcome to access higher education. These barriers are mainly caused by several factors related to low achievement in secondary education, limited knowledge of career paths, entrance requirements, lack of access to financial resources, lack of role models, and lack of family and community support or cultural and environmental influence (James, Bexley, Anderson, Devlin, Garnett, Marginson, & Maxwell, 2008).

Looking at the overall reasons for why underrepresented groups aspire to access higher education, Gore et al. (2017) reveal that both highly represented groups in higher education and underrepresented groups aspire to access higher education, although some have stated that these aspirations are a sign of elitism (Craven et al. 2005; De Bortoli & Cresswell 2004). I agree however with other scholars who view college aspirations of indigenous minorities to higher education due to the need to advocate for their community success in the changing social, political, and economic aspects throughout the current world. In this sense, a higher education becomes a service to their communities, a tool to advocate for their livelihoods (Parkes et al. 2015; Walker et al. 2008).
Chapter 3: Methodology

The higher education aspirations of minority indigenous groups in Tanzania continue to be understudied. Also, there is limited to no research exploring the relation between minority indigenous aspirations to higher education and the associated barriers they experience. This study explored the aspirations that minority indigenous college/university graduates had that motivated them to access and complete higher education in Tanzania and the barriers they had to overcome as they navigated through higher education. The research question was: Why did minority indigenous graduates aspire to go to college? How do social, economic, cultural, and political aspects of life contribute to aspirations for higher education? What intrapersonal factors have influenced these aspirations? These questions address the evolved aspirations of minority indigenous college/university graduates that pushed them to succeed. It tracks the reasons that this population associates with higher education in terms of future ambitions and concerning the past and present they want to avoid falling under.

Through narrative inquiry, this study provided an account of the critical aspects of participants’ higher education attainment: their aspirations for higher education, the barriers encountered related to these aspirations, and how they overcome these barriers. This narrative approach honors participants' experiences by elevating their voices regarding their journey to attain a college/university education. The theory of Possible Selves by Henderson, Stevenson, & Bathmaker (2019), and Markus and Narrius (1986) was used as the framework to make meaning of the indigenous aspirations to go to higher education and how those aspirations propelled them to graduate. The stories narrated by indigenous college/university graduates was used to inform researchers, policy makers, educators, leaders, and those overseeing community development of indigenous populations on the importance of higher education to minority indigenous
Aspirations and Barriers of Access communities. It helps them understand how minority indigenous relate higher education with other social, economic, and political ambitions.

Research Approach

Although most of the research on indigenous aspirations and access to higher education has used quantitative methodologies to analyze aspirations for these groups (Fetterolf, & Eagly, 2011; Kim, Klager, & Schneider, 2019; Koshy, Dockery, & Seymour, 2019; Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004; Papafilippou, & Bathmaker, 2018; Pechenkina, & Anderson, 2011; Stevenson, & Clegg, 2011), I used a qualitative research approach to understand the aspirations to higher education of Tanzanian indigenous college graduates. One of the reasons for choosing a qualitative research methodology was that this approach provides a richer understanding of the experiences about a marginalized population in Tanzania, such as the minority indigenous groups.

This methodological choice aligns with a transformative epistemology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) point that a transformative worldview relates to “power and social relationships within the society” and the “purpose of knowledge construction is to aid people to improve society” (p. 25). A transformative lens permits the researcher to raise the voices and the consciousness of the research participants as issues are exposed (Job et al., 2013). The ultimate objective of this research is to elevate the aspirations and success stories of minority indigenous individuals obtaining a higher education in Tanzania and advocate for this marginalized population. Upon reporting the aspirations and barriers overcome by minority indigenous graduates to access and succeed in higher education, the findings of this study will be used to advocate for indigenous social, economic, and political justice through recognizing indigenous ambitions for higher education and create bridges for access to higher education for these communities based on
these success stories. The narrative research design is most applicable given that its data collection process elevates indigenous individuals' stories and journeys who graduated from college in Tanzania.

**Research Design**

The research design of this study is narrative inquiry. A narrative approach elevates participant’s journey, including their feelings and first-hand experiences with particular attention to their aspirations, barriers they encountered, and how they overcome those barriers. I used Riessman (1993) and Clandinin and Connolly’s (2000) concepts of narrative inquiry. Clandinin (2003) describes narrative research useful to uncover individuals’ experiences while having a keen understanding of the social, cultural, and institutional experiences as narrated by participants (Clandinin, 2003). Clandinin's narrative inquiry concepts align in this study since participants’ experiences with higher education access connect to social, cultural, linguistic, economic, and institutional unique factors faced by indigenous in Tanzania

Additionally, using Riessman’s (1993, 2008) concepts, I treated narratives as discrete units where individuals tell their stories about their lived experiences and organize such stories in a chronological order (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Creswell 2014). In this study, indigenous participants had the opportunity to reflect upon their journeys and thus, gave me, as the researcher, the opportunity to reflect upon their journeys and mine.

**Theoretical Framework: The Possible Selves Theory**

This narrative study adopted the Possible Selves Theory to understand why participants in this study aspire to acquire a higher education (Henderson, Stevenson, & Bathmaker, 2019; Sellar
& Gale, 2011; Stevenson & Clegg, 2011; Whitty, 2002). This theory provides a framework to understand the different layers of reasoning that participants ascribe to concerning higher education. The theory also provides an understanding of the barriers they have overcome to achieve their aspirations of graduating from higher education.

The Theory of Possible Selves in this paper is a lens I adopted from its original authors (Markus & Narius, 1986), and framed to suit the intent of the study following the guidelines of a study by Harrison (2018). The foundational definition of this theory mirrors the perceptions that people have about what the future holds for their lives. According to Harrison (2018), the Possible Selves Theory is useful in studying how individuals imaginarily invent the future using one's past and present life experiences. The imagined future motivates individuals to pursue a set of actions in an identified present – which may be the actions that have occurred sometimes in the near past/present or immediate present - which have or are likely to create the “like-to-be self or evade a like-to-avoid self” (Harrison, 2018, p. 1).

Additionally, the theory suggests that individuals present a list of possible selves that they want to achieve, categorized as positives to be aspired for and negative to be avoided. The aspired for and against are related to individuals' feelings about what makes them happy, succeed, secure, and attain a desired wellbeing (Markus, & Narrius, 1986). This theory is relevant to this narrative study as it helps to understand why Tanzanian minority indigenous college/university graduates aspired to go to college/university and the barriers they overcome to obtain a higher education degree. I used the six Possible Selves Theory concepts developed by Gale et al. (2013) to interpret the data about indigenous aspirations in relation to higher education among those who successfully graduated from college.
Methodological Choice in Relation to Possible Selves Theory

The use of narrative approach to study aspirations and Possible Selves is not unique to this study. Packard and Conway (2006) provide an important review of how and why narrative is a preferred methodological approach to studying the aspirations, motivation, and self. The literature uses Possible Selves Theory to introduce identity (Packard, & Conway, 2006). The search for possible selves involves a process of individuals’ reflection of the self, confined by social contexts, past, and present experiences that can be used as references to shape current behaviors for possible future selves (Markus, & Nurius, 1986). To understand an individual's own future identity based on his or her present time situation, a researcher requires an approach where an individual will be able to narrate their stories of the present and past in reflection of the future. According to Packard and Conway (2006), the narrative methodological approach allows individuals to “highlight the dynamic, temporal, and integrative aspects of identity,” which underline the basis for using Possible Selves as a theory to understand identity and aspirations (p. 252).

The methodological choice has consequences on the way data is collected. This methodological choice and its consequences to research have been addressed across the self-concept literature (Packard, & Conway, 2006). Importantly, those research studies present identities as dynamic and future-oriented. Individuals define their existence as they become aware of their own life based on past experiences (Dunkel, 2000; Packard, & Conway, 2006). This notion of identity as a dynamic future reflection is important to note in this study because it informs how college graduates from minority indigenous follow similar paths searching for the aspired future possible selves as a community. Students' identities can be investigated by asking individuals from these groups to narrate stories about their evolving experiences on aspirations and the barriers they overcame to access higher education in Tanzania.
Packard and Conway (2006) identified two metatheories to justify the methodological choice that researchers confront in studying the self as revealed in the identity and self-literature, each of which is related to aspirations as the focus of this study. The two metatheories that Packard and Conway (2006) identified are (a) a *self as a collection of schemas* (Markus, & Wurf, 1987), and (b) a *self as a story* (Bruner, 1990). These metatheories can be traced from the mind's cognitive state and traditional narrative in psychology fields (Packard & Conway, 2006).

While the two metatheories seem to play similar roles when studying the self-concept, they are different in how each affects the researcher’s position in data collection (Packard & Conway, 2006). Most importantly are how a researcher views him/herself in the process of data collection and analysis. This displays a researcher’s position as an insider or outsider role player (Packard, & Conway, 2006). The researcher’s position may influence his or her relationship with the research participants. According to Kvale (1996), when the self is described as a collection of schemas, the researcher is presenting him/herself as a minor role player in providing information while describing a self as a storyteller. A researcher is part of the storytelling. When making dialogue with participants, these participants' narratives are unfinished until a researcher co-constructs them to suit the expectation of all involved in a study (Packard & Conway, 2006).

Previous studies on possible selves’ studies vary in their approaches to understand individuals’ aspirations, expectations, motivation, and goals to achieve in the future. Although aspirations, expectations, motivations, and goals are not the primary concepts addressed in the method choice in most studies reviewed for this research, the possible selves, which is the main framework for the method choice, reflects on these future-oriented concepts about individuals (Oyserman, Johnson, & James, 2011; Packard & Conway, 2006). To expand the understanding of the methodological choice for possible selves in relation to aspirations, expectations, motivations,
and goals, Packard and Conway (2006) suggested four methodological clusters base on for the choice of method to address a self. These clusters are “structured surveys and interviews, narrative, visual, and drama” (Packard, & Conway, 2006, p. 255).

Selection based on these clusters depends on the research design (whether qualitative or quantitative). The structure surveys/interviews are commonly used by quantitative researchers to study a self (see Markus, & Narius, 1986; Dunkel, 2000), while those using narrative, visual, and drama are commonly used by qualitative interviews researchers (Lips, 2000; Ruvulo, & Markus, 1992). The semi-structured or open-ended questionnaires are emphasized over other approaches when studying possible selves (Whitty, 2002). Visual and drama are commonly used when studying individuals' possible selves in the arts and performing industries (Ruvulo, & Markus, 1992). The two choices are displayable in the form of images, drawings, and performance (Prosper, & Schwartz, 1998). In this study, a narrative approach with a semi-structured interview/questionnaire protocol is the best choice to study indigenous aspirations. A narrative approach gives participants a chance to tell their stories openly and broadly about the kind of self aspired to be after attaining a college degree and how these aspirations evolved after attaining a higher education credential. This chapter presents detailed information about how this methodological choice will be used to collect data.

**Data Collection**

The most important but challenging attribute of this study was to locate research participants. Recruiting was anticipated to be challenging because there were limited records of individuals from different ethnic groups, including minority indigenous groups in the Tanzania’s educational setting. Studies have found similar challenges recruiting participants in many parts of
the world, willing and able to participate in studies addressing inequality in society. Salmons (2015) states that “locating the right people and recruiting them in a study is a challenge for any researcher” (p. 140) and talks about steps for selecting participants. First, I mapped out the study’s scope, both geographically and the participants' social status. Second, I specified the type of participants needed in the study. Third I looked for these participants based on these specifications. Fourth, I contacted these participants and recruit and interview them (Salmons, 2015).

**Mapping the Scope and Type of Participants**

This study focused on the minority indigenous people of northern Tanzania. These groups occupy two northern regions (Arusha, and Manyara regions) as shown in the map below. Historically, these indigenous people are characterized as nomadic, semi-nomadic pastoralists, and hunter/gatherers living in marginalization and discrimination (Barume, 2010; Hodgson, 2002). The hunter-gatherer groups are composed of Hadzabe and Akie; while the nomadic and seminomadic groups are composed of the Maasai and Barabaig (Hodgson, 2002; Heilman, 1998). This study didn’t use these terminologies (that is nomads, hunter-gathers) to identify the communities in these groups, because of the implication and negative perceptions these terms impose to the communities identified in this study. The Maasai (who are categorized as nomads and seminomadic groups) were the main target of this study because of the easy access to participants compared to other groups. The Maasai group is also the largest of the all the groups targeted by this study, occupying the two regions (they corridor across central regions through Dodoma, Morogogo, Tanga, through the southern region of Mbeya). The Barabaig populates the Manyara region. I found those who completed higher education in grassroots, nonprofits, and other advocacy organizations such as law firms or the tourism industry. Others work in service institutions such as education and health divisions within the community or municipalities.
There are no reliable sources about the number of indigenous people in Tanzania. However, using information obtained through the International Work Group on International Affairs (IWGIA) webpage, the four groups that form minority indigenous people in Tanzania, are estimated to be a little less than a million (IWGIA, 2011). Although this data is questionable as Tanzania does not conduct its national census based on ethnicity, it is the only available information. Over the last few decades, Tanzania's demographic census has eliminated a straightforward question asking individuals about their ethnic background (Coast, 2002). I was unable to find up-to-date information regarding a change in the approach to obtaining demographic data in studies after Coast (2002). Because of this, it is impossible to accurately estimate the number of minority indigenous groups in Tanzania, consequently causing sampling criteria to be of convenience and snowball.

**Convenience and Snowball Sampling**

After mapping the scope of participants based on the geographical location, I used a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling to select and find participants.
Convenience sampling is vital in selecting readily available participants. I contacted participants using the internet means such as Zoom or WhatsApp (Patton, 2002; Salmons, 2015). However, before selecting participants, I invested in a snowball sampling technique to identify people who know the type of participants I wanted to interview (i.e., meaning college/university graduates) and who were willing to participate in this study (Patton, 2002). I invested in snowball sampling because it helps to access the hard-to-reach individuals from the minority indigenous population in Tanzania. Research suggests this technique as it reaches "individually or groups often hidden because openly identifying with specific factions or lifestyles can result in discrimination" (Brown, 2005, p. 47; Salmons, 2015, p. 122). Because of technological, environmental, and distance limitations to recruit participants from minority indigenous communities in Tanzania, a snowball sampling technique was appropriate as the first step to identify participants who have graduated from college/university. I used a Tanzanian colleague who has agreed to facilitate the process of recruiting participants. This colleague works in the local community organization and knows of indigenous individuals who graduated from college. Once the person identified potential participants, I used them to find other potential participants.

Upon finishing the identification of potential participants using snowball sampling, I applied convenience sampling to select those participants who easily communicated in English and knew how to use the internet for communication, including being able to use Zoom and WhatsApp messenger. Having participants fluent in English assisted during member checking when I asked them to verify the fidelity of the translation of the interview transcripts into English. Also, participants were able to understand the intent of the study. A total of nine individuals were contacted but only four were interviewed. This was because of the challenges associated with the internet and other communication services. Two male and two female who graduated from
different colleges were recruited, resulting in four individuals. I interviewed college/university graduates because of their experiences in overcoming the barriers of access to higher education. While there are different views on the number of qualitative research participants, several studies suggest that one or two for narrative research design is sufficient (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hubber & Whealan, 1999).

**Participants**

In this section, I intentionally omitted some of participants’ demographic information like age and family information because they did not feel comfortable including them in this study. I focused on sharing information about their ethnic group, place of origin, and education.

**Katarina.** Katarina is a female participant who completed her college education in tourism. She aspired to use business as an approach to support women in her community. She did not prefer being employed although didn’t rule out employment – instead she started her own entrepreneurial center which will be used as both educational and curio shop center to support Maasai women to become economically self-reliant.

**Jackline.** Jackline is a Maasai female with a degree in environmental science and management. She worked in a polytechnic college in southern part of Tanzania. She also has a Master’s degree in Agribusiness. After her masters Jackline now works in a community nonprofit organization as a gender advocate in the Maasai community in costal and central regions of country. She is planning to establish an organization to provide mentorship and other resources including financial resources to young Maasai girls struggling to achieve their academic, and job placement opportunities. Her goal is to reduce the challenges these girls face to access these opportunities before and after completing college.
Mokoro. Mokoro is a male from the Maasai indigenous community, the oldest of a family of six siblings. He comes from Olkeju Loongishu village in the Great Rift Valley of Eastern Africa in Ketumbeiine ward - Longido District. Mokoro has a Bachelor’s degree in Geography and Environmental Studies from the University of Dodoma in central Tanzania. He is currently pursuing a Master’s degree in natural resource management at the Open University of Tanzania. Mokoro’s plan was and still is to establish an Environmental Impact Assessment consultancy firm which will be hybridized as a nonprofit with a for-profit soul to give guidance and information about how and what community economic projects are harmful to their environment.

Ngape. Ngapi is a male participant from Longido Maasai District. He went to a Christian university and later to a public university to pursue his education in Business Administration and Finance. Mokoro’s vision was to become a businessman and or a politician after completing college. He now works as a government employee in his district.

Interviews

The interview process was conducted via Zoom and WhatsApp calls. I followed a two-step process. The first round of interviews used a set of general questions to understand participants’ demographics, rationale for attending higher education, and barriers they encountered (see Appendix A). Since this is a narrative study, the protocol was used as guiding questions to invite participants to tell their own stories about their aspirations and access to higher education. Participants’ stories were elicited using the concepts of the Possible Selves Theory by Gale et al. (2013), including: social imaginary, possibilities for social change, navigational capacity, and resources. I also used the interview process by Clandinin, and Connelly (2000) and Salmons (2010) which highlights making specific reference during the interviews to the experiences of the
phenomena under study, in this case, the aspirations of getting a college education as a means to enrich their goals in life – both collectively in the community and individually.

The second round of data collection process was to verify the fidelity of the transcriptions. The interviewees were asked the questions in English, but they responded in Swahili, Maa, and English. This caused a delay in the transcription of the narratives since Swahili and Maa cannot be accurately captured by google translate or zoom translate, or other language transcription tools. I therefore transcribed the interviews in English and during member checking I showed them my interpretation translating the interviews to make sure my translation was accurate. I also ask them for clarification in some instances.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis in this study was an ongoing process that began during data collection. I drew on the ideas of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) related to narrative inquiry data analysis. Clandinin and Connelly suggests that the data analysis for narrative research is a process that takes seven interrelated steps. As such, in the first step I engaged into the initial reading of the transcripts, where I began the analysis by identifying the structure of the stories being told, that is key events and ideas. In the second step, I described and classified emerging themes. This step determines the structure of the stories. This helped me mark boundaries within participant’s stories temporality, in particular I looked at when did individuals experienced barriers of access to higher education, what happened, and how aspirations were impacted, what meaning was given to these experiences, who contributed to the experiences, what perspectives. I was interested in the actions that individuals took to reach their expectations, and how these actions make sense in their life. In the third step, I read for different voices in their journeys. Doing so, I was able to identify images of
how individuals conceived their stories. For example, I was able to distinguish participants’ personal aspirations from their family members’ expectations and the barriers they encountered while going through higher education because of these differences. In connection to identifying the voices within narrated stories, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also suggests the fourth step of using a three-dimensional model of identifying the self within stories. In my study, this included my ability to examine the interaction between participants and their broader social aspect of their life, the continuity within an individual’s past, present and future context, and the individual’s inward, outward, backward, and forward looking of their own selves. In the fifth step I used Clandinin, and Connelly (2000) idea of constructing these stories and retelling them in constructs drawn from those of my research participants. In this step I accessed interpretations as well as represented and visualized the data using constructs such as the college enrollment process, culture as an impediment to navigating opportunities, or role models that influenced their college experience. I then used Clandinin, and Connelly’s sixth step of identifying different themes that seem to stand out as messages representing participants’ views. In the last step I connected the themes with the framework of this study. These themes were (a) participants’ experiences of aspirations to go to higher education; (b) the cultural aspect of participants’ background; (c) language and technological barriers; (d) resources before, during, and after college (e.g., role models, books); and (e) gender differences between participants’ experiences.

**Ethical Considerations**

Any credible research requires all researchers conducting their inquiries to ensure that participants are voluntarily willing to participate (Clandinin, 2007; Salmons, 2010). I engaged in this ethical consideration throughout the process and all data collection (Andrew, Squire, & Tambouku, 2013; Clandinin, 2007; Salmons, 2015).
As a narrative researcher, I have an obligation to follow all necessary ethical standards to eliminate or minimize any possible harm or risks that might arise before, during, and after the study. Protecting my research participants' confidentiality will be paramount to maintain the codes of conduct and ethical practices advanced by Clandinin (2007), Clandinin, and Connely (2000). I emphasized four interrelated ethical principles throughout qualitative research to maximize the ethical standard in this research. These principles include informed consent, identity, privacy, and data protection (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin, & Connely, 2000; Salmons, 2010).

Before I begin the interview process, I made sure to provide information regarding this study and obtain the consent of participants. Among other information to be provided to seek their consent include reasons for studying this topic, reasons for choosing each of the participating individual, and give a general picture of why this study is essential and what any participating individual should expect throughout the study process. I further informed participants that their participation is voluntary (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin, & Connely, 2000; Salmons, 2015; Salmons, 2010). Participants were informed of their freedom to withdraw at any time.

Additionally, I gave detailed information about the procedures, including the benefits (such as being advocates of minority indigenous rights to access higher education, and reference of minority aspirations) to participants and the risks which may potentially arise (such as being viewed as tribalist) and how to minimize the consequences to participants. Importantly, I informed and assured participants about the potential strategies the researcher is taking to prevent these risks from happening or prevent them from causing any possible threat to an individual's life. So far, the only risk that I could think of is the political landscape surrounding the term/name indigeneity in Tanzania. For the indigenous community in Tanzania's political system (IWGIA, 2011), the name indigenous is controversial, ambiguous, and not commonly used by authorities and the general
public. The term marginalized or minoritized groups is more common when referring to this population. This controversy is why this study chose to use a minority indigenous community instead of bolding the community as the only indigenous community found in Tanzania. Using a minority indigenous community will prevent any possible risks of participants' information being viewed as tribalist.

Identity and privacy are addressed together in this paragraph, because they relate to each other when addressing ethical considerations in research. This study uses pseudonyms to conceal individuals’ identity. I asked participants to write and send via email any information that they think was important to enrich the data they provided if there is any information left unanswered during zoom or WhatsApp interviews. Despite asking them to send their responses via email, three of them didn’t use this means, instead they used WhatsApp call to give acknowledgment and approve the accuracy of the documents. Another participant was unreachable for a long time, but later confirmed that he did not have any additional information to add or remove from the documents I emailed. I concealed self-identifying information such as college attended, family information, age, residence/place of birth, and sexual orientation using a pseudonym, as pointed by Salmons (2010).

Protection of Data. I understand the potential breach of participants’ confidential information when using technology. I kept participants' information in a secure and well-protected device. All authors of the research textbooks emphasize the importance of the rights of research participants and entitlement to these rights (Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin, & Connely, 2000; Creswell, 2013; Creswell, & Poth, 2018; Salmons, 2015). I guarded personal data against unauthorized access, disclosure, and modification (Salmons, 2015). I did this with the transcriptions to ensure fidelity. Therefore, I made this study’s data only accessible to participating
individuals via email to allow them to view and edit their answers to align them with their expectations. I used password-protected zoom meetings as well.

**Trustworthiness**

The narrative approach helped establish the data’s authenticity and trustworthiness of the through the participants’ views about aspirations, barriers and access to higher education, and the researcher’s interpretation of these views. Trustworthiness aims at convincing the researcher and readers alike that the study’s results are credible, dependable, and confirmable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study’s credibility was determined by how my representation of the results matches with the participants views. Using email exchange with my participants, I debriefed with them to provide member-check on the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For my findings’ dependability, I presented the results logically, traceably, and clearly (Tobin & Begley, 2004). This process enables readers to examine the study and be able to make judgements about results. An audit is an excellent way to ensure the study's dependability (Koch, 1994). Throughout the process, I documented and properly organize the data of this study and have my dissertation committee with the committee chair’s leadership, go through the findings, to audit my interpretation of the findings in relation participants’ views.

**Chapter 4: Findings: Before College, During, and After**

The six concepts that guided this study were all addressed organically in a nonlinear fashion by participants. Through participants’ responses, I identified how these concepts were reflected upon by participants, drawing corresponding connections to the aspirations each participant had regarding access through completing higher education in Tanzania. The interrelatedness of these
concepts affirms Sellar and Gale’s (2011) definition of aspirations. For these authors, aspiration is a person’s own imagination of how the future will look like for them - which is broadly explained in the six interrelated concepts of the Possible Selves framework (Sellar & Gale, 2011).

In this chapter, I describe participants’ journey before, during, and after college. To avoid eliminating essential parts of their stories, I exhaustively discuss the stories of each participant separately. I draw attention to the concepts of possible selves (social imaginary, desire, possibility, taste and preference, navigational capacity, and resources) as I analyze participants’ stories organized by the three phases of access through completing college: before, during, and after college. I identified five themes: stereotypes, culture and family, communication and language, funding, and aspirations to access through completing college to provide a unified analysis of the findings. It is necessary to point out that the lengths of participants’ stories are not equal. Attempting to balance the length of participants’ stories to obtain equal proportion between each story would remove vital details of participants who provided lengthier responses. For example, Katarina provided a more extended discussion of her experience in all phases of her educational journey than the other participants. In Ngape’s case, he shared elongated explanations of his experiences before college, while Jackline and Mokoro lengthened their after-college stories.

**Katarina’s College Journey**

Katarina connected her college aspirations with her desire to help women in her community. Although she did not explicitly share when her college dream started, Katarina aspired to use business to support women in her community. Katarina understood the challenges to achieve her desire and envisioned pursuing a college degree in tourism as a potential route to back her desire to support other women after completion. Katarina courageously explored different
opportunities to fulfill her desire, including looking for scholarships and applying for student loans. After graduation, Katarina did not want to be employed, although she did not rule out employment. Instead, she wanted to start her own business of an educational and curio shop center to help Maasai women to become economically self-reliant.

*Katarina’s Before College Journey*

A multilayered experience influenced Katarina’s college dreams as a young girl from a traditional Maasai community in the central region of Tanzania. Like many other girls in her community, Katarina grew up in a polygamous family, and her mother is one of many wives her father married (she was uncomfortable sharing the number of wives her father married). As a result, women in her family did not have reliable sources of income – domestic animals belonged to the father. Because of this, Katarina grew up seeing her mother struggle to find opportunities to support her children. Her mother sold beads/curios to local and international tourists as well as milk to earn a living. Through her mother, Katarina found tourism as a calling to pursue and fulfill her aspirations to support women in her community. This helps to understand the role gender (women) play in changing the future of aspiring girls like Katarina. That is, Katarina wanted to become an entrepreneur in tourism – a readily available and practiced opportunity in her district. She believed that a college education in tourism could support her aspirations of using entrepreneurship to reduce poverty among women in her Maasai community. Katarina said, “I want to become an entrepreneur – I was envisioning redesigning our cultural dressing codes to be attractive and benefiting my people, especially women in my community.” To achieve this vision, Katarina thought that having a college education in tourism would be an appropriate strategy to realize her desire, as expressed in this quote:

Back to my aspirations – Tourism was the course I wanted to do in college. The reason for that was because I wanted to build on the skills my mum taught me – to develop beadwork
projects which was relied by most women in my community. My goal was to establish a tourism center that has a curio shop and a program that helps tourists to visit attractive places in areas surrounding my community [all services will be given with a fee – which will be used to develop the center]. I wanted women in my area to benefit from their artistry/curio business. This desire increased when I attended a course fieldwork in some of the national parks.

One can trace the beginning of Katarina’s vision through her experiences growing up. She started with a dream of starting a business in tourism that did not have a clear future. Her social image of becoming a tourism businesswoman supporting the artistry of women was innovative but challenging to accomplish; however, this vision was always present in her mind since the time she was seeking college opportunities.

In my dream I wanted to be an educated woman, I want to be an advocate of other women and my community. But how can I become one if I don't have a higher education degree? My dream is to be an advocate of girls from my community at least to reach the level of education they desire like me. When I look back at the school we went to for primary education, eight girls from my village started the first year of secondary education with me. By the time I was completing my fourth year of secondary education only five of us remained. This number reduced to two when I was finishing my form six or advanced level of secondary education. Imagine we remained only two girls from the Maasai community who went through high school. The other three have all been married. So, the two of us were lucky to reach this level...When I was working as a volunteer in my former higher school, I discovered that girls seem confused, not knowing how to get the resources to help them succeed.
As she states in the quote above, Katarina looks back to her education trajectories and how her classmates from the same community failed to complete their secondary education because of the environmental and cultural barriers they experienced going through lower levels of education. Katarina understands that these barriers are the constant struggles for female students in the Maasai community have to overcome to fulfill their career aspirations. Her experience seeing friends dropping out of school following their parental-planned marriage fueled her desire to become an advocate of girls who wanted to obtain a college education. Katarina viewed college education as the opportunity to empower herself with the knowledge and skills she needed to create an initiative advocating for other women with similar experiences in her community. Moreover, according to Katarina, a high school education would not have given her a job to earn money in Tanzania, a country with a high unemployment rate for people with no job-specific skills and experience.

My classmate was not able to go to college – a three to four-year college - because of the lack of the resources or the support she needed from her family, school, and the society to succeed in her career advancement. She went to a two-year college for her diploma certificate, and I found my way out to the university. This already has become the gap between the two of us – something which wasn’t a good feeling for me. I started thinking – maybe God has a reason why I became successful to continue my education. My imagination was that – God saw my desires to help other girls/women in my community reach their dreams as I did.

Katarina viewed herself as a lucky Maasai woman with the privilege of obtaining a college degree – the privilege that her peers admired but could not get. Katarina took this as an opportunity God had granted to her. The opportunity to obtain a college degree made her view herself as a resource and support to other girls who face familiar challenges like her former Maasai classmates.
She wanted to become a mentor to young Maasai girls who struggle to access opportunities in society.

Katarina’s aspiration to mentor other girls and women in her community was something that could not wait until she got a college degree. Thus, she started mentoring other girls in her previous high school, volunteering as a teacher before entering college.

Before I went to college, I volunteered as a teacher - in the school I completed my high school at – which back then was the only school in the district that had many students from the Maasai community. I volunteered to teach for six months after my high school – I started in March through September. In October, I went home to continue the process and get ready to go to college. My volunteer work was not perceived well at home because I needed a lot of things to get me ready for college – I was only relying on my mom. Expectations for the people at home was that I was getting paid and [they] never knew my goal was also to get experience, stay away from my dad who would have send me to be married and probably shorten my dream, and also, I wanted to stay close to those Maasai girls who were struggling to reach their dreams in secondary school as myself.

Volunteering was a strategy to meet her future aspirations of having experience mentoring others with familiar experiences. It was also a strategy to escape from possible temptations of cutting off her college dreams by parents (specifically her father) who already had a plan to send her to an unknown husband against her will. Her desire to become a mentor to Maasai girls grew stronger after interacting with these girls as a teacher volunteer.

When I was volunteering and interacting with these Maasai girls, I could tell a lot of them felt the same way I felt when I was at their level of education. Most of them seemed confused, not knowing how to get the resources to help them succeed – that is reading, understanding, etc. I helped them feel confident about their abilities to excel academically,
keep their dreams, and pursue them, reflect on their school opportunity – why they got this opportunity, etc.

Katarina developed her mentorship dream from her own experience in lower levels of education. However, the multilayers of experiences interacting with familial groups intensified her desire to be a role model to address issues in the community as she got older. Katarina was shocked to witness community members being responsible for deferring the girls' aspirations. For example, girls were seen as less deserving of educational progress because their future depended on their husbands. She saw these devaluing beliefs multiple times when she was volunteering as a teacher in her previous high school. All these experiences made her determined to search for opportunities to continue her education including applying for student financial aid which is detailed the next paragraphs. She witnessed a girl whose family member came to ask for permission to take her home in deceiving ways. Katarina narrated this story filled with emotions:

But while I was there, I witnessed other girls whose family members would come to take them out of school and would not come back. Someone would come and lie to a girl that – “your grandmother is sick she needs to see you before she dies.” It's not that her grandmother is sick - they lie to her so when she gets home - nepwui aaya [they snick on her and get her married to a man] - she never goes back to school. School allows children to go home if parents send relatives to go get them for incidents at home. They use death tricks to make school administrators believe it is a serious problem. Men use a lot of intelligence – and sometimes they even rent luxury vehicles, so they know it is a serious matter. Many times, these little girls get overwhelmed and fail to have control of themselves when they are in such a situation. But I found myself seeing a lot of these experiences with these girls and I was glad to have an opportunity to motivate them.
A similar situation happened when Katarina shared the experience of a widow in her village who had to exchange her daughter for dowry, hoping that the in-laws would assist her with her financial future.

Because parents back home have little interest in sending girls to school, they feel tempted to receive dowry from men in exchange for these young girls. This often happens when parents are in difficult situations that need some form of capital like – money or cows to support the family. For example, in my village I witnessed a widow who was given 500,000/Tshs (USD 250) from a man to marry her daughter. Her situation made her receive that money, hoping that it will help her lower the family burdens she is carrying and hoping that her in-laws will support her when her daughter is married to him.

Although Katarina was frightened by these experiences, she was not discouraged. Instead, she took them as the motivation to overcome the barriers to Access College. For example, when Katarina learned that her father was planning to send her to an unknown husband, she volunteered as a teacher in her previous high school to avoid her father. Her father was not interested in sending girls to college. Instead, he was more interested in sending his daughters to be married in exchange of cows. Katarina described her father’s actions in the following manner:

My father contributed to discouraging girls from making progress in school. My dad would not be happy to hear I was going to apply to go to university. Parental support to girl children was difficult – “sometimes you have to lie to pursue your dream even if you don’t like to lie.” Girls are viewed as assets for income generation in the form of dowry and my father was planning to do the same for his girls including me.

Katarina was unhappy staying close to her father, knowing that his plans would end her future aspirations. However, her mother gave her the courage and support when Katarina sought ways to stay away and eventually start the process of going to college. Katarina’s mother would wake up
every morning to milk and take the milk to the nearby town to sell. She used this window to work and send college application packages. Even with this opportunity, her father would still question her when she arrived home late. The money she received by selling milk and beads was used to buy house supplies and support Katarina getting into college and settling in college. When Katarina finished volunteering at her previous high school, her mother bought her a phone to keep in touch when she began college.

Katarina felt indebted by these experiences she obtained while volunteering, and so, she wanted to continue communicating with the girls from her community and support them in achieving their aspirations. She felt that losing her connection with the girls she mentored would be a bad experience for her in college. In her story, Katarina said:

> When I left the school, my mum got me a phone. Before I went to the university, I went back to my former school and noted my phone number to the girls. My goal was to continue encouraging them in case they would go through some deceitful [experiences] or [if] anyone would be in situations that may need advice from me.

Katarina’s mentorship desires became a burden that followed her through her college life. Her desire to support other girls led to a challenging situation in her first year of college where she tried to help one of her high school mentees escape from her father and an arranged marriage to a man she did not know. This story is detailed in the following section.

**Katarina Experiences During College**

Katarina’s desire to mentoring other girls continued during her first year in college and affected her academic progress. The desire to support these girls was fueled by the traumatic events she experienced while volunteering back at home. Katrina did not know how staying in touch with these girls would affect her college progress until one of her former mentees called her for help as she was being forced to marry although she wanted to continue with her education. Katarina’s first-
One year college experience mentoring and assisting the girls back at home was one that none of the other participants in this study went through during college.

I assure you Luca – a little less than a year later after joining the university, I received a phone call from a girl to ask for some advice about similar problems she was encountering with her dad as mine did to me before. I found myself in a position that I shouldn’t have. I was at a crossroad between finding ways to advise her, yet I myself needed help. But these girls built trust on me as a senior sister. So, what should I do in this situation? It was the time when I just got financial aid. I didn’t have a choice. Imagine Luca - you can’t believe how I started straining my budget to help this young girl at least find a place to stay while she goes through this experience. This girl lives in Iringa for school at the time, but her mother sells beads and snuff in Dodoma City. Her father lives in Morogoro. Her dad found someone who wanted to marry her. The girl called me to tell me that story. I asked her where she was, and she told me she was with her mother here in town - Iringa region where I was attending my university program. Her mum’s snuffing business wasn’t giving them enough to give them a place to live. Her parents didn’t live together but the father has more say over [the] children. Because the girl’s mum was struggling financially for her little children, the father used this opportunity to find a man who will give cows to marry this girl. So, this girl called me.

Katarina hosted this girl in her hostel for a while hopping that she will find an organization to help her. She also relied on her financial aid to meet both her needs and the mentee’s needs. This experience affected Katarina both psychologically and financially because she had to use all her budget to support both her need and the girl she who run to her for help getting into college.

According to Katarina, girls in her community often face the difficulty of finding opportunities to assist others because people in her community believe that men should be the ones
having access to these opportunities. Based on this perception, Katarina wanted to provide any possible support to her mentee even without parental consent. This was risky and difficult because funding opportunities were not that accessible even to support herself in college. At the end, Katarina realized that searching for opportunities for her mentee was unrealistic given the lack of resources available.

Katarina became mentally and psychologically affected by her inability to help her mentee and started to believe that her mentorship aspirations were not achievable. Her academic progress was affected by this. Additionally, she jeopardized her reputation by wanting to help girls achieve their dreams:

I realized this was becoming a huge burden on me and decided to release her to her dad. This pained me a lot. I took this decision because her dad was reporting me to the police. He was also spreading negative messages around the community that the girl was disrespectful to her dad - to mean me - and that I am extending my behavior to his daughters. ‘So why is she doing this?’ He was telling people that I can’t even help myself, let alone helping other people’s children. This frustrated me a lot. And remember I am still in college – so there is some truth in his accusations that I can’t even afford to support myself let alone someone else. That girl was taken, but I tried whatever I could.

Katarina was very emotional narrating these experiences and struggles during the interview. She sought the help of her spiritual leaders: her Lutheran Church pastors, whom she thought would be the best refuge after failing to get help elsewhere among gentlefolk. However, she did not find the support she was seeking, because the pastor knew the father of the mentee Katarina was trying to help. This comes back to the patriarchal nature of the societal approach to women’s rights:

Ahaaa! Later, I went to the pastor, who is a Maasai. But the pastor was not to help me because he was afraid. And the father had known me since I was volunteering at a school
where these girls were schooling. He also knew that I was spending a lot of time with these girls. The girls would mention to their parents that I was helping them at school – and how I struggled to go to university. He also knew his daughter came to Iringa where her mum was selling beads and snuffs. He also inquired with me when he visited my college and was hiding. So, when he heard rumors that his daughter was in Iringa where I was attending my university, he could draw the line of where her daughter was hiding.

Katarina also struggled to find ways to help her mentee when she asked for assistance of the Maasai men in the same college. The impression she got was that her aspirations of helping girls were not shared by other people - not even those from her community. She understood though that there was little that her fellow Maasai male students could have done because they also have similar experiences, although boys' experiences are not related to forced marriage. On this, Katarina said: So, there was no one - even among the few Maasai boys who were in the same university as me - who was interested in siding with me to help this young Maasai girl. No one had the passion to do something! So, I remained alone. The messages I was receiving was that nobody wanted to be in trouble because of this. Everybody was afraid of being in a situation I was in. This broke my heart – really bad. It was difficult for me. I even tried to find a connection with the women and children’s rights office in the district but failed to. All other people would tell me – let the dad finish solving this matter at the family unit. And no other solution than to send a 14-year-old daughter to the husband she doesn’t want, in her teenage years, when she wants to pursue her education dreams. This girl shared with me a lot about how she wants to achieve her dreams through education. She told me she wanted to become a teacher, and that’s why she wanted to continue with her education. So, this was why this made me really upset.

Katarina spent most of her time during the interview sharing the experience of helping this girl during the first and second years in college, preventing her from focusing on discussing other
experiences she had during and after college. However, she did talk about her interaction with peers, professors, and the experience of accessing in-college opportunities to facilitate her success. Additionally, Katarina briefly shared concerns related to language barriers, and difficulties accessing computers and mentorship services due to lack of designated services at the institutional level for them to utilize. Responding to a question about how she navigated opportunities that led to becoming successful during college, Katarina said:

You know, we don’t have any person to ask for help when we’re in the process of college access through our in-college progress. You don’t have relatives in these institutions for whom you will seek advice from. It’s all about the hard work you put into learning through anything your teacher or professor gives you in class. And requesting for help from those whom you know. And this depends on how committed one is in school. If you have things you envision to achieve in the future, you will be pushed by them to find help from school professors and classmates.

Katarina continued her story linking the challenges of access to resources in college to what she believed were the biases and stereotypes students and even lecturers have towards the indigenous Maasai students:

Overall, it was hard to get help from others because Maasai girls are not very good in asking for help from fellow students from other ethnic groups. There are stereotypes from students from other ethnic communities about us from the Maasai community. They stereotype us that we are from a backward community, and things like that. So, they have their beliefs, and we also do. It takes a long time to diverge these beliefs. Even sharing a room, it was hard at first. The cultural background between us from the Maasai community and others from other communities is different. They have different styles of life than we do. So, until I became used to it, it was a challenging transition. Their taboos are different from mine.
Their preference of the dressing code was a different dressing code preference. Whenever I dress in my traditional cloth, they would talk in demeaning ways to me like, ‘why don’t you put on a dress that covers your shoulders?; I also see them dress in mini-skirts which to me I was ashamed to see them in dress like that. So, it was a difficult cultural interaction at the beginning.

And it was my first time living with a Muslim student. It was a challenge because Islamic faith requires women to cover all their bodies. We Maasai - Parakuyo we don’t cover our shoulders. So, it was a different experience for me at the beginning. It was a lot of personal reflection on how I should behave based on who I live with, or what and how I should eat, and how to relate to these students from other ethnic groups. It was also, how I should maintain my cultural values in the middle of a larger population of students that have different and most dominant cultural values? One experience I found so different was food preference – I grew up drinking milk, and I can’t live with that throughout the day and felt very unfulfilled when I don’t get some. This was surprising to others who grew up eating ugali, chapati, rice, casava, maize, beans, and the like. So, this was a different experience. Katarina also shared her difficult experiences with her male lecturers, when asked about academic mentorship. Katarina explained:

There were instances when male lecturers would show some inappropriate behaviors relating [to] my performance. I saw some female students would get tempted by a male lecturer to sleep with them in exchange of better grades. I was also approached with similar promises, but I maintained my confidence refusing such kinds of behaviors. Female students in colleges face similar challenges in Tanzania. It is also difficult to report them because very little attention is given to such problems – especially in institutions that are hierarchically led by men. I personally did not experience failing or lowering my GPA because [of] refusing to accept male lecturers for inappropriate behaviors.
In the above story Katarina describes the power that lecturers have over student performance. The power that male lecturers exert to students (specifically female students) in a fragile need to accomplish their career aspirations. Katarina views grades as a fragile area that most female students often get trapped – fearing failing will delay their college completion or risk of not completing college, yet they spent money they already were struggling to fins. Regarding access to in-college resources like computers and other materials to facilitate her college success, Katarina said:

Before I received financial aid, I didn’t have the means to access a computer for my school assignments. I relied on the school computers, which are few compared to the number of students who want to use them. So, it was difficult at the beginning. But I bought my own laptop – which made it a little easier to get class information or research on class assignments. Financial aid also helped me to access stationary services – like photocopying documents, or even buying cheaper books.

Despite all these challenges, Katarina continued to push on until she completed college and started her women’s curio shop projects.

*Katarina’s Experience after College: Cultural Center Business*

After all, Katrina realized her original dream. Here she describes her experience opening the curio shop and her family members’ and community views about her shop. First, Katarina’s relationship with her father was not good. Her father did not believe in her ability to achieve her dreams without a man/husband. This is a generational gendered view where parents in Katarina’s community view girls as being unsecured if they struggled themselves without husbands. This was a challenge for Katarina; she needed to work to gain the trust of her father. Second, the community had a different idea of what people should do with a college degree, and that is to be employed as teachers or work in the government. This is a narrow-in-scope in indigenous’ pathways to meeting
their future aspirations. However, Katarina was determined to establish a center to fulfill her desire to help women. This determination helped Katarina to gain the trust of her father and the people in the community with time, as presented in her story below:

I have to tell you Luca - opening this curio shop center was a challenge to me – especially [with] how my parents viewed the idea. My dad was surprised why I came up with such an idea. I like promoting my traditional dress and dressing styles. I used my passion to open a center that promotes my passion. Our traditional attires and all other items that promote our identity have been used by other communities to promote their tourism businesses. All these have been taken advantage of with no benefit to the Maasai people. I took the idea that I saw in similar projects in northern regions of Arusha and Manyara where tourism is practiced on a larger scale. The center will do several projects including supporting all women who want to change their lives through curios and artwork.

Family members in the Maasai community often belittle women’s efforts to achieve their dreams. Katarina’s dad did not trust she could run a business. Knowing that her dad had this perception about her, Katarina pushed hard to make sure her desire came to fruition. Her business grew, and she wanted to make her dad see how this would be an approach to accomplish her goals of assisting other women.

My dad, after seeing the benefits of my center, and after hearing other people in the community speak about the impact the center has on their livelihoods, he started giving me credit and appreciating my vision. Remember he discouraged me throughout the process. Now my dad feels my success is because he allowed me to go to school and he wants the credit. Dads take credit of the achievements of their children in Maasai community – my mum who played a role throughout is given no credit. My dad was bragging about the role I played in supporting other women in the community. I have to mention her name though
when I speak with the women I assist in the project. I was not happy that my dad had to take credit and not my mum. But I was also happy to build trust in myself.

According to Katarina, the center is now an example in her community that helps send girls to college. The center has become a place where women can gather to learn and practice entrepreneurship and receive money to support their families. She also became a role model that other girls go to when they need some advice to reach their educational goals. From the beginning, Katarina’s thoughts were to use the business model to raise the voice for women in her community, and she accomplished just that.

In sum, while Katarina understood the difficulties of empowering girls within her community, especially at the family level, she believed that having a college education for women was vital for liberating their thinking towards their future life within the community.

Jackline’s College Journey

Jackline’s college journey was easier than Katarina’s. Her parents immigrated to a Swahili town where education opportunities were accessible compared to a traditional Maasai village. Her parents also became members of the local church, which enlightened them to change their perceptions of sending girls to school. Despite the church influence, Jackline’s father still wanted to cling onto traditional beliefs that girls should be sent to husbands. On the other hand, since there were fewer Maasai in this Swahili-speaking town, Jackline’s parents were very noticeable in the community. Her father was known by local officials, who later influenced him to allow Jackline to continue her education. In addition, Jackline’s college desires were influenced by her teacher, who mentored her during her elementary education. Jackline wanted to become a medical doctor but did not meet the necessary academic requirements while in high school. She then pursued an environmental degree after failing to get into medical school. The following sections illustrate
Jackline’s experience before, during and after college. I end her story by aligning her experiences to the six concepts of the Possible Selves Theory.

**Jackline Before College Journey**

At primary school level (elementary school), Jackline’s non-Maasai teacher, whose daughter was a classmate, encouraged her to work hard in class so she could become what she wanted to become – including becoming a teacher like herself. This teacher’s mentorship motivated her to work hard all the way to secondary/high school when her desire to become a medical doctor was developed. Her aging grandmother was also one of the reasons why she wanted to get a medical degree. Although she liked her opportunity to pursue a degree in environmental health science, she was upset that she did not meet the standards set by the Tanzanian education authority to pursue medicine. These policies unintentionally sideline students from marginalized communities like her own. She explained the following:

I wanted to achieve that dream of becoming a doctor. So, I was trying to look for something that could make me become a doctor. Because when I was in secondary school, my grandmother was very, very sick and I was, I love to get to take care of her. And I said, once I become a doctor, I can do this. Also, I see the life of all of us, our family is not the same as my friends who we were schooling together with. I had a chance to be hosted in one of my teacher’s homes. Her daughter was one of my classmates. They would give me a chance to discuss matters related to school or how exams might come so we are well prepared. Because I now have a close friendship with her daughter, she came to my father, and asked him if I can stay with her daughter at their home. Because she is a girl like me, my dad agreed. So, I had a very different experience from my home. They had a good house, they had a television, sometimes we would go and watch television. So, I wanted to change my life. I wanted to be like them.
In the above story I learned that Jackline’s grandmother and her mother were the cause of her desire to continue her education (i.e., to help her grandmother, and mother also motivated her to continue her education). Although entering medical school was a priority to Jackline while in her teacher’s home, she also developed a desire for a job to help own a reliable home to afford taking care of others, including her family.

Our family life is different from that of families in other communities – our family is not the same as my friends who we were schooling together. Yes, so this desire that was built from primary, yes, when we're about to do the national examination, whatever. So, my primary school teacher took me to her home. And I was really motivated, and I had that desire of having a job. So, they say that if you want to get a job, the first thing is you have to pass your exams and go for the next level of secondary education to college so that you can get a good job. And so, I built that desire to go for college. So, as I said before, I went through my secondary education - form one up to form six. So, all these were just to reach college and get a job. So that was what I had before joining the college.

Helping the community while maintaining her need to have a job for financial stability became her aspiration in college. Jackline did not receive help in choosing her major. However, her experience interacting with families from other communities allowed her to explore more college course opportunities. A course in environmental health science was her next favorite after failing to enter the college program she was interested in initially to become a medical doctor.

Well, after I found myself, I'm not qualified to do medicine, medical doctor... So, I was looking for something scientific - something that can actually help me to actually do something close or similar to what I would do if I took a degree in medicine. That thing has to bring me closer to my community. I wanted this environmental health. But I didn't know the difference between environmental health science... They call in Swahili “Bibi
Afya,” “Bibi Mazingira.” I didn't know the difference between environmental health science and environmental sciences. So, I wanted to be a little bit connected to health programs. So that's why I chose environmental health science.

The choice Jackline took for her college education allowed her to fulfill some of her desires to work with the community. To Jackline, environmental health science was relevant to what she desired to achieve in helping the community around her. Before joining this program in college, she envisioned becoming an environmental health expert since most illnesses in her community are environmental related (e.g., water availability for animals and domestic use, health, and sanitation).

**Jackeline’s During College - Experiences**

After entering college, Jackline noticed an immediate difference between her secondary/high school and her new college life. During secondary school, she did not have the freedom she had in her first time away from family, teachers, or education guardians. Although she had mentors when she was in lower levels of education, Jackline did not indicate if those mentors prepared her for the freedom she found in college—according to her, being away from parents who have always been planners over what children do (e.g., dictating how to dress and eat) was a little worrisome now that she had to plan, budget and exercise daily aspects of living. Jackline started by conveying her experience transitioning to college. She explained the following:

First of all, the life I have at college is different from the life I had in secondary school - because there's a little bit of freedom in college that we didn’t get in secondary school.

Yeah. So, there is a difference. Here now you have to budget your things and what if you have to plan for your own life sometimes. During college, I had not even a bank account, or whatever. So, for the financial part, there are some challenges.
Jackline in this story simply meant that while she was growing up, she never had any training on financial management or to be independent by her family. Additionally, when asked about interactions with her peers, Jackline did not express any negative or positive experiences interacting with students from other ethnic groups, though she mentioned facing similar stereotypes experiences as other participants of this study. Instead, she expressed her negative experiences interacting with male instructors. Jackline explained:

Yeah, almost that it really changed my perception. And I was fearing - I didn't want to, I didn't like to work with men. So, it's a bad experience. It was a bad experience and as I said for someone who doesn't even know where to go and speak out - because like a lot of things a lot of platforms are not known to us.

Challenges experienced as a female from a marginalized indigenous community was explained in part by the absence of Maasai instructors in the college she attended. Jackline’s experiences working with men while in college was not only different from her secondary education, but these experiences soon turned inappropriate. Jackline retells the inappropriate behavior of her male professors. She stated:

So, inappropriate behavior by lecturers to female students is a problem. Other females from other groups went through some kind of behaviors like this. So, from what I can say this is a challenge to many college girls. The bad thing with college, there is not something like a national examination council – instead the lecturer is everything. So, this sometimes tempts most girls in college to get what they want to achieve - otherwise there is a risk of taking too long without finishing college or failing a class many times. So sometimes lecturers - they take advantage of that. The instructors, the lecturers and whatever, they take advantage of being the final speaker of your future.
For Jackline (Katarina shared a similar experience), male lecturers take advantage of their positions to ask for sexual favors from women for better grades. Though Jackline did not directly indicate if she personally encountered this behavior on the part of male lecturers, she expressed how this behavior was common and appears to put female students in a difficult position when they must decide between completing college with good grades and accept or decline lecturer’s pleas for inappropriate favors. Jackline (and Katarina alike) described these experiences as discouraging and that they undermine the hard work that female students put into their education.

Unlike the other participants in this study, Jackline thought having Maasai lecturers would make it easier to get academic help whenever needed. However, until Jackline completed college, there were no Maasai professors or mentors from whom Maasai students could seek help. This is a structural limitation that exist within higher education institutions. Jackline did not indicate how difficult it was for her to seek help from a non-Maasai lecturer but generalized that female students will not report inappropriate behaviors by male lecturers, fearing any possible revenge from them if the institution did not take action.

I think if there are Maasai lecturers - I'm not sure if things will be different because I never heard of such an experience. I heard that there was a male Maasai lecturer at that time before being admitted to this university. I did my undergrad in 2010 - 2013 … So, at that time, I didn't hear that. And I believe that if there were Maasai lecturers, they could have been supportive to us. I think that. Because if I find any Maasai woman, or man or whatever, in any place, who encounter any challenge, which I can solve, I usually help to find solution to the problem the Maasai encounter. And I think they can do that too. So, if in the future we have Maasai people in every sector, every department, it will be easier for us to get the necessary support we need in those sectors.
Although the absence of Maasai lecturers was not necessarily a barrier, Jackline thought it would have given her the confidence to trust telling her college challenges to someone who understood her experiences going through college with someone with a similar background.

Other experiences that Jackline remembered going through during college were the language barrier and access/use of technology for school/class assignments. She explained that she did not have a computer (similar to Katarina’s experience) and did not know how to use the ones available in the university library. Also, the language of instruction and one that computers use is English, which slowed her learning speed as she took a long time to find help through librarians and sometimes lecturers.

Computers and [the] internet are the main barriers to navigate college. We don’t go to school with computer skills or background. So, it is hard to know how to use computers at university library for homework. Use of computers was not only a problem of Maasai. Unless you took a computer course before joining college, most high school graduate students don’t know how use computers when they get to college. So, I know I was not alone struggling with computer skills. Language was a problem too because English is not our mother tongue. We learned it from secondary school which give us a little confidence to use it but not smoothly as we do in Maa.

From the beginning, Jackline understood that she was disadvantaged in academic instruction and technology used in education. She viewed English and Swahili as foreign, but Swahili is taught from elementary schools, plus she was raised in a village with primarily Swahili speakers. English is taught as a subject in elementary schools but not used in other subjects (e.g., mathematics, geography, biology/science). English becomes a language of instruction for all subjects (except Swahili) in secondary/high school. During Jackline’s time in secondary/high school, computer lessons were not taught in school, and not many schools had computers or
computer labs for students. So, Jackline understood that these two barriers (language and technology) were not factors limiting college students from one ethnic group alone. She, however, views that students from minority indigenous populations are limited by these more than those from dominant Swahili groups when it comes to getting mentors to bridge the gap through translations or clarifying readings. Despite all the barriers, Jackline completed college but went through other challenges, including not having a job after her first degree and navigating a career change until she secured a job that she liked, as detailed in the next section.

**Jackline’s After College - Success Story**

Jackline was not impressed by her experiences after college. Specifically, she found her experiences after college disparaging; she was concerned about the perception people in her community would have about girls spending many years in school and not finding a job. After college, Jackline stayed home for a long time without a job. She was married immediately after college, and because jobs were limited, she stayed home with her husband as a housewife. Staying home, to her, was not a good experience because she was well educated and completed college. However, Jackline said she did not have many connections, and the job market was narrow. She later met with a classmate who connected her with a polytechnic college for a job. This job offered other opportunities, such as obtaining a master’s level education. After her master’s in agribusiness, she returned to the community and worked in a nonprofit organization that she said was an opportunity she liked because she was helping her community.

So, I was staying in my husband's place, I had no job. And after that, I gave birth. So, I was a village woman staying there as a housewife. So, one day I came to my college to collect my certificate. I met my college mate who was working with a private institution, the Mbeya Polytechnic College. And I shared with him my desire - I was looking for a job after college - he told me that they needed a tutor in that college who can assist in natural
resource management. I went there, I applied for that job, and I got that job where my duty was tutoring students from the certificate to diploma on general agriculture and natural resource management. So, that work built my desire to connect the environment and agriculture. I worked for like, two years. And I wanted to go for - to go for a master's degree. Because I find that my education is not conforming to this job - I can't perform well with that level of education - I wanted something more. And I find out that I need to find the connection between agriculture and the environment. So, I went for it - I find it's easier to go for an MBA in agribusiness. So, I joined again, to Sokoine University of Agriculture, for the master’s degree. I have a lot to do in my community including starting an NGO. [That] will put me in a position to do more for my community.

Her story gradually changed as she met a former classmate who connected her to her first job after college. Working in a polytechnic college was life-changing for her because she could expand her connection and secure opportunities. Jackline currently works in a community nonprofit organization as a gender advocacy manager in the Maasai district of Tanzania's coastal and central regions. She plans to establish a nonprofit organization to help underrepresented youths from her community navigate college and other career opportunities. She currently likes what she does but believes having a nonprofit of her own will give her the freedom to do what she aspires to do. The problem was not what Jackline aspired to do, but the career mismatch that shows how minority indigenous college graduates fail to achieve their dreams once they pursue specific college majors.

**Mokoro’s College Journey**

Mokoro’s love for the environment was the foundation for his personal, community, and social aspirations. He has been interested in environmental issues since he was involved in an environmental advocacy group in primary school. Mokoro experienced how environmental
management of resources helps with community development. In these experiences, he saw the ongoing conflicts between his community and the government over environmental resources, and the lack of experts in his community with the proper education and credentials needed to help his community sustain these resources for future generations. That is, Mokoro’s desire to pursue environmental studies was motivated by his passion for the environment (nurtured in his early years of education) and his experience seeing the conflicts between his community and the Tanzanian authorities over environmental resources.

**Mokoro Before College Journey**

Mokoro wanted to pursue a degree in environmental education because he believed it would allow him to become an expert on the topic, permitting him to help his community with their environmental challenges and the associated impact on his community. However, Mokoro’s experience accessing college was not easy. Getting into college for Mokoro was difficult because there was little-to-no available information about colleges, and less about specific programs in environmental management or related areas. He mainly relied on his high school academic office to obtain information about college options. This points the role that mentorship and relationships play in building pathways to enriching aspirations. But schools in rural areas of Tanzania have limited resources to access college related information, limiting their ability to provide comprehensive college counseling to students. He shared the following:

To get to higher education is hard because we don’t have a lot of connections in the system…. When I was in high school, I was introduced to climate change and natural resources – so going to college for these studies was a motivation for me. I saw the gap, the gap in all aspects - I mean in social, I saw the gap in economic issues, I saw the gap in political and even in cultural aspects of life surrounding my community.
Before college, Mokoro grew up in the Maasai community and witnessed the social, economic, cultural, and political challenges they endured while living in their environmental spaces. He viewed these challenges as limiting progress for his community. As a result, he wanted to pursue a degree to help eliminate the conflict between his community and the Tanzanian authorities. Mokoro expanded this idea by breaking down how social, economic, and political gaps are concerns that require people from the community like himself to address them.

I mean - in social issues, we have the issues pertaining to FGM [female genital mutilation], gender mainstreaming, gender imbalances or inequality in the social ways of life and so on. So, I mean, all these I grew up seeing happening in my community have made me aspire to seek ways to change the outdated social and cultural behaviors that my community have practiced since history. Even if I’m not able to change it, I want to be someone or a key person, or a mirror - a person who the community will look at as a reflection of an imaging community with good social and cultural practices. I wanted to be one of the people in the community who even if I won’t cause a huge change, my practices will be seen and exemplified as positively impacting the community. For example, as you know, economically - for a long time - our ethnic Maasai group engaged only in animal keeping as the main source of income. This means pastoralism or livestock keeping was the main source of trade in the market economy. Pastoralism is done nomadically in my community. I mean, moving from one place to another in search of water and pastors to feed their animals.

Since anyone can remember, the Maasai community has maintained a nomadic way of life. The land has defined the livelihood of the Maasai community. According to Mokoro, livestock has sustained the lives of his community since he was a child. Though he believed nomadism was unhealthy, the community manipulated the environment by rotationally grazing their livestock.
To my community nomadism is viewed as the best way to manage grazing land – especially managing land degradation because it involves the rotational process of grazing livestock. This practice is not liked in the growing need of land for other uses – like crop cultivation, national parks, and other protected lands. So, this motivated me to pursue a higher education program that has courses in land use planning and management so that when I come back to the community, I have the knowledge to educate people on how they can manage the lands in ways that will enhance their livelihood.

Referring to how moving from one place to another leads to environmental problems, Mokoro viewed the nomadic way of keeping livestock as causing some environmental concerns that need to be re-evaluated by the community. For this reason, he became interested in pursuing a college degree in environmental science.

Environmental education will give me the knowledge and skills to address issues related to this style of livestock keeping. So, the economic link with environmental studies is important. For example, my community didn't even know how to manage their rangeland ecosystem. So, there's some sort of issues here to sort out in order to make the economy become - I mean, what I can say bigger. So having someone with the knowledge to help the community address the environmental issues related to the nature of their livestock keeping will help the community grow their economy. Someone with knowledge on land management is needed to address land crises caused by population growth and overstocking.

Mokoro was not interested in politics. However, Mokoro understood the role of politics in addressing any social and economic change in his community. Additionally, Mokoro knew that politics was necessary, specifically when addressing community livelihood and environmental resources. Before college, Mokoro believed oppressive policies to the livelihood of his community
occurred because of the lack of representation related to indigenous knowledge on environmental management. Indigenous experts were missing in the government who could connect Maasai knowledge with the dominant knowledge to balance the two views for sustainable use of environmental resources. Mokoro explained:

> Politically - I don't know how I can put this - but there is an inversion of a lot of things in our community. I grew up witnessing political interference in the social [and] cultural practices of my community. This includes interfering with the historic system of traditional leadership which was based on age-set and gender role organization. So, we have our own ways of selecting our leadership which is only unique to our ethnic group. For example, up until now we use experiences and wisdom that our elders have to examine and ultimately select a representative who can traditionally be ordained to become a leader for our community. This means peer group leaders known as Laigwanak, Menye Layiok, Oloboru Engeene and so on - each with distinctive roles. So, the inversion of the new political system had interfered with all this traditional political system.

According to Mokoro, the challenges are in land use and management as it was done traditionally with the guidance of traditional leaders and the current imposed political system appear to be oppressive and alienating traditional ways. For Mokoro, politics has been the cause of conflict between community interests and Tanzanian authorities over environmental resources. He explained as follows:

> Land use and management used to be directed by traditional leaders after several consultative meetings with community and other stakeholders. When new political interference came in – these traditional rights to plan the use and management of land were taken from the community and put in the government bureaucratic system. This change was possible because of the lack of educated people from the community to advocate for
the rights and involvement of the traditional leadership system in the management and use of land in their own community. So, this motivated me as a Maasai to get a higher education degree in a related field so I can come back to advocate for a retrieval of our traditional system of managing the resources together with contemporary strategies of managing these resources. We have to go back to the origin of the Maasai traditional leadership.

Mokoro expanded his view on his desire to go to college because of environmental knowledge and broader cultural protection. Mokoro envisioned acquiring skills that would enable him to identify projects to transform his community's socio-cultural practices. He wanted these projects to advance without necessarily replacing the cultural practices of his community. For example, Mokoro wanted to eliminate aspects of the Maasai culture, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). He described the following:

Culturally – Maasai cultural aspect is a transitioning one. This means that we have some aspects that are no longer needed for the good of our community. Getting education – although not necessarily a higher education, is important to be able to identify those cultural aspects that are no longer needed for our progress. For example, before I went to the university, FGM or Female Genital Mutilation used to be a way of upgrading our sisters into womanhood. Nowadays, FGM is no longer practiced in many areas in my community because most of us have gone to school including women themselves. So, we became advocates of abolishing FGM in the society. Also, we have become advocates keeping the cultural practices that signify our identity. For example, maintaining our values for cultural dances/performances, language, attire, costumes, age set organization, livelihood, and so on.

The cultural aspects mentioned here were not specifically the main reasons Mokoro wanted to go to college, but these were areas he hoped to be able to tackle after college. Mokoro’s primary
reason for going to college was to address the environmental challenges his community was facing, including the ongoing conflicts between his community and the government over the value of environmental resources like land, water, wildlife, and forest.

**Mokoro’s Experiences Accessing College and During College**

Mokoro was able to apply to college thanks to his connections with friends who lived in towns, although he experienced difficulties staying connected with these friends due to the limited communication services available in his village. As a result, he had to make trips to locations where phone tower services were available to make calls. Alternatively, he had to travel from his village to towns where his friends/former classmates lived to check his final high school examination results, so he could apply for college. Mokoro shared his experience when asked about the barriers he overcame to access and complete college. He described the following:

The big barrier I had to overcome to access college was communication, and I mean all kinds of communication networks including transport from my village to where I can get information, internet to access results of my application, phone communication, and so on. So, communication remains the biggest barrier to me and others from my community. Yeah, but it is a little different now. Things have changed and there are a lot of communication improvements compared to the time I was getting ready to go to college.

Mokoro did not elaborate much about his experiences during college. However, he did mention how he confronted stigma and stereotypes against Maasai. For Mokoro, his interaction with students from other ethnic communities did not appear to be a problem since he already anticipated the prejudice, he was going to face given how the Maasai community was generally perceived. He was confident about who he was and ready to confront the stigma. Indeed, he did confront these stereotypes throughout his education. He shared the following:
I expected those kinds of ethnic references – I am from a backward community, blah, blah, blah. I did not care because it happened when I was in high school too. So, if somebody calls me by my ethnic group, in a negative way – “you Maasai and so on” – I feel proud of that. So, if somebody called me by that group, I don't care. But I could tell my fellow Maasai would be angry or embarrassed when they hear or perceive negative impressions about the way other ethnic groups refer to them. They feel offended and react badly.

In this description, Mokoro understands how stereotypes affect individuals from his ethnic group. He appeared to normalize the attitude that his peers from other ethnic groups have about his background and move on from it, but he acknowledges the effect on his colleagues from the minority Maasai indigenous population.

**Mokoro’s Success Story After College**

Becoming an agent for change in his community’s social transformation was crucial for Mokoro’s college education aspirations. He wanted to contribute to how his community approached its social and economic transformation. He had similar approaches as Ngape and Katarina – of using business models to address the socio-cultural, economic, and political transformation. Mokoro’s business idea was to use his environmental skills and degree to establish a consultancy firm to help his Maasai community manage and protect the sustainably of environmental resources. He noted: “I wanted to play a role in setting the foundation for social transformation. I wanted to change the way our culture can be reformed to parallel the direction of a changing world.”

Like other participants, Mokoro also experienced challenges after college. One significant challenge was being unemployed for a long time; employment opportunities based on his credentials were very limited. Being without a job, however, turned out to be an opportunity for him to secure a job that broadened his skills to be transferable to positions in the future – including
his plans to establish an Environmental Impact Assessment consultancy firm. While he was still unemployed, he got a chance to utilize his knowledge in environmental studies to introduce an alternative fencing idea which he named the LIVING WALL. This fencing idea introduced a plan of planting drought-resistant trees to enclose homesteads instead of cutting trees for enclosures. I wanted to play a role in setting the foundation for social transformation. Through meetings, Maasai families started using different strategies to manage the environment including avoiding excessive forest burning or destroying the animal habitats and so on. Additionally, I introduced to them the idea or knowledge of building living walls – a way of fencing homes using some specific savanna trees that can be surrounded by wires to prevent animals from destroying the trees. I demonstrated to this person in order to stop the cutting of trees, a living [fence] comprises a wire and one species of trees known as Esilalei. So, when you cut those bunches of things the sibling can grow. So, we have a wire mesh inside, then you can plant those trees outside the wire mesh - those seedlings grow and become like a wall or like a fence.

Despite being unemployed for a long time, Mokoro was determined to use his environmental skills to change how his community enclosed their homes. For Mokoro, being unemployed seemed to have a bad image to the community, preventing him from fully exercising what he dreamed of doing for the community. However, he still maintained he is passionate about environmental education as the route to bring his community's desired social and economic transformation.

Ngape’s College Journey

Ngape’s journey to college started with his desire to become a businessman and a community political representative. He viewed college as a way to get the skills necessary to fulfill his business and political aspirations in his community. He was converted to Christianity in a local Baptist Church, and in this church, he learned about college and ended up attending a
Baptist Christian university. He liked going to a Christian university because he believed his faith would continue to grow while enrolled. Being part of the local church helped him to find friends who supported him during the college application process and his first year in college. Ngape did not say whether his parents opposed or supported him to become a Christian, although he was reluctant to talk more about his parents’ position on Christianity. He was clear, however, that going to college was not his parents’ preference. While Ngape’s experience look similar to other participants including female participants, his experiences are mainly tied to family, and society. His parents wanted him to have a minimum level of formal (western) education, specifically primary and secondary, in order to be considered for community political leadership.

Below is Ngape’s story before college.

**Ngape’s Before College Journey**

Ngape had two aspirations for his future. On the one hand, Ngape wanted to be a politician representing his people in the government. On the other hand, Ngape wanted to become a businessman and viewed business as a vital practice to reach his aspirations.

Before I joined the university I had different desires for life – which are different from now. First my dreams were to be a change in the community – but also to myself as an individual from the marginalized Maasai community. Before I joined the university, I wanted to be a change in my community through politics. That was my ambition before I joined the university. So, I just dreamed of being one of the few people from my community to advance change through politics. As you know, politics is so powerful that one cannot address change in the community without coming through politics, especially in marginalized communities like my community which has been affected by politics in all areas of life since colonial governments. Politics play all the roles of change in society. It
is a general rule that one doesn’t have to have a higher education degree to get into. It is just your ability to convince people that you are the right candidate to address the change they want. I say a general rule because through politics the community will pay close attention to their leaders – they have more to tell them as their representatives.

While Ngape viewed politics as an essential avenue to bring change in the community, he did not believe one needed to have a college education to become a politician. According to Ngape, most politicians in Tanzania do not have a college degree. Ngape believed that one can become a politician without a college education as long as they can read and write. However, based on his aspirations to influence the community to allow all children to pursue their educational dreams, a college education was necessary for him. College to these participants is an avenue to obtain skills that will empower children to pursue social, economic, and political opportunities. A college education was also valuable to Ngape because it would give him the knowledge to interpret policy pertaining to community development programs. Additionally, he did understand how social capital and family economic status might limit him from being recognized or accepted by voters in his community to represent them in these political positions. Before college, Ngape thought going to university would empower him and raise his social capital. A university degree could give him a voice that people could resonate with whenever he wanted to advocate for social improvement—for example, sending children (especially girls) to school instead of sending them to husbands. With his lack of social capital and family background, Ngape believed having a college education was needed to build his political career. Thus, he used higher education as a steppingstone towards achieving his political aspirations. The following is what he had to say regarding desires for appreciable life through political positions.

I thought participating in politics will help me to represent the community in legislative and policy making bodies. This will put me in a position to discuss need or issues that are
important to changing the lives of my people. For example, representing my people to advocate for the right to own land and use it in a way that suits their livelihood. So, my dream to get a higher education degree was centered on personal and community need for change social, economically, and politically. We have a slogan in my community that says “engong’u naipang’a – ninye natodolishe” to mean someone exposed to other places saw or learned a lot of things. Going outside your community gives you the knowledge of what is good which may be needed to address some life challenges in your community.

On the other hand, Ngape also had a business idea that would allow him to realize his dream of becoming a self-reliant person in the community. Moreover, for him, an education in business was vital to reach his political aspirations. For Ngape, a college education in business would provide him with the knowledge and skills to become financially independent. He also thought that business education would enable him to become a business consultant to train the community with strategies to become economically empowered through business initiatives or entrepreneurship. In his story, Ngape said:

I also had my own personal dreams that I wanted to achieve - I wanted to become a businessman. I focus on using business and politics as a way of changing my community. In business, it will be a resource to understand different aspects pertaining to business. The closest idea to change the community is through business. This was my main aspiration back 10 years ago.

In the above passage, Ngape stated that his interest in getting a business degree was personal, and it started because of his need to become economically self-reliant. He got this desire due to his personal experience growing up in a family that was not privileged financially but relied on livestock for all aspects of life. According to him, his family did not have other means to diversify their economic gains.
I come from a family that has no other means to get income other than livestock. This has not been sustainable because, when I was a little boy, I remember a terrible drought occurred in late 1990s and early 2000s that caused a lot of my father’s cows to die due to lack of grass to feed on and water to drink. This caused poverty in my family. My father has a huge family to take care of. Because of his loss of livestock, he became unable to support his big family which I was part of. But in the same period, I realized those Maasai men who marketed their livestock were able to sustain their income to support their families. When I saw the differences between my family and the families that marketized their livestock for economic sustainability, I was persuaded to think of business as a means to advance the lives of my family and the community. This was when I started to explore college education in business related programs. With advice from friends at church, I became interested in pursuing business administration.

Ngape Experiences During College

Until he was successful getting into college, Ngape went through a lot of challenges, most of which were financially related. Consequently, his family couldn’t support him financially to go to college. In fact, his parents preferred him to stay home and have a family instead of spending too much time in school. He was ultimately supported by his friends and the church through fundraising to raise money for his application process and his first semester in college. In his story, Ngape highlighted essential experiences he encountered going through college. According to him, the first year of college was not a good experience. He had to stop his education in the second semester of university due to the lack of financial support from his family and the community. The community plays a significant role in supporting children who are doing well in their studied, and this is why these participants viewed their education as a valuable tool to transforming the lives of
their community. Ngape described his experience to me while expressing the difficulty of sharing this story of no support from his own family:

Indeed, I didn't complete my first year the same year that I was admitted. I joined the university the first year and then in my second semester I stopped. The reason is the lack of family and friends support financially. I didn't get it. Then the second year, I retained my admission, then I joined – my second year after a semester. In my second semester I didn’t have enough money to cover for my second-year semester too. Then, in that second semester, I struggled, and I found a friend from church who supported me throughout. So, the barriers associated with family and friends affected me a lot. So indeed, that is the way they defected. Indeed, my family wasn’t that poor to not be able to support me at a minimum. They just didn’t want me to go to university.

For Ngape, the cost of attending a private university was unbearable. He explained that he could not get financial aid from the government because he was attending a private college (a church-owned university) which back then was not eligible for governmental aid. This policy changed after Ngape completed higher education. So, being successful in his first year in college was made possible through fundraising from his church’s friends to get school fees and cost of living.

I faced a lot of barriers when I was going through college. And one is the cost of life in college. University is so different from other or lower levels of education. Boding students in high schools can be fed by the government or institutions that they are under. So, students don’t pay for dormitory housing. At the university you pay for your own rent, food, books, you pay for the printing books, and everything that is related to the cost of the university.

In addition to his experience navigating the cost of attending college, Ngape also explained the differences between private and public higher education institutions. According to him, public
colleges/universities are more resourced compared to private colleges/universities like the one he attended. Whereas private colleges/universities rely on student fees and a small amount of funds from donors (to support their operations), public colleges/universities receive funding from the government in addition to student fees which all together expand their ability to support or resource their operations. In comparison, his college received substantial donations from church members. Looking at these differences, Ngape (at some point) questioned the quality of the education he received from a church-owned university. Questioning the quality gave him the courage to find connections with peer students in public colleges/universities. This gave him the opportunity to get help accessing books to borrow from public universities as he indicated in the quote below. Also, because the university was under the church – it doesn’t enjoy the resources offered to higher education from the government – like public universities. They rely on students' school fees in order to get resources like books, computers, professors, and so on. And the university also didn’t have a lot of donors other than the community and church members. So, it was under-resourced in many ways. It made me think may be the quality of education was not as good as public universities. But through my connection with student friends in public universities, I didn’t see any huge difference. And I can borrow books and other resources from these friends. So, this helped me a lot.

Ngape also described how his interaction with fellow students from other ethnic groups had affected his college progress. Apart from the differences in cultural backgrounds, Ngape explained how he was offended by the stereotypes of other ethnic groups referring to his culture and the livelihood of his Maasai community.

The second one is about how my friends perceived me when I was starting college. Their stereotypes about my tribe and lifestyle affected me psychologically while I was in college. I think it didn’t affect my progress. Indeed, actually, when we joined college, as I said
before, as a person from the marginalized community, when we joined any group for the first time, the impression that people from other communities have about us is different. That they think that we are outdated persons, means ethnic group is an unchanging/primitive community. A primitive person. Despite the stereotypes, Ngape was not discouraged because he had dreams to fulfill. Instead, he made those fellow students become friends through class discussions and group work. He described that his class performance and grades were better than his classmates’. According to him, his better performance was not because he was more talented than his peers, but because of the challenges he experienced. For example, being stigmatized because of his rigid Maasai background, motivated him to be focused on his studies in order to debunk those perceptions. He said the stereotypes made him work harder to exceed the negative perceptions that his classmates from other ethnic groups have about him.

But as time went by, my classmates from dominant Swahili groups became friends. They became - and they see that, yes, we are primitive, and we are coming from marginalized communities, but we [have] potential. This means that we have to put extra efforts through hard work in class to make friends from other communities recognize [our] potential. My class performance made them perceive the opposite of being primitive. I can say that I learned a lot from them. I learned that to be accepted in a larger group, you have to believe in yourself and have courage to pursue the dreams you want to achieve in life.

Throughout the interview, mentorship appeared to dominate the process of access to and completing higher education. Lack of mentorship before and during college appeared to limit access in all dimensions including access to resources (e.g., books, finances, and technology). Ngape had difficulty finding people to offer advice or share experiences about their challenges in college. Ngape, for example, explained that:
I did not have mentors in college. So, it was difficult for me to get advice on my academics, or advice on how my academic path can help me reach the dreams I have about life. Indeed, I have got a friend who happened to be as interested in politics as I was. But we mostly discussed politics and not how my career path will enrich my political dream.

In public institutions, books, computers, and academic support are better resourced compared to private institutions, which mainly rely on student fees to provide these services in the amount that meet student’s need. In the above story, Ngape narrates how difficult it was for him to navigate the fewer academic opportunities he had access to while on campus because they were being competed for by a large student population. In addition, Ngape viewed language of curriculum and instruction as a barrier, but he did not see it as a barrier for students from his community alone. Students from other communities were struggling with English which is the main language of instruction in college. His view was, “the curriculum and language of teaching did not make me see any difference I have with other communities. We all were trained using English and Swahili.” Despite all of these challenges, Ngape was able to find connections with students from other institutions who agreed to get together and form study groups. This made him successful in completing his college degree and meet his aspirations including starting a small community consultancy project in his community as narrated in the following section.

**Ngape after College**

After college, Ngape started a small business consultancy project that gives small entrepreneurs in his community training on planning, initiating small businesses, and exercising business in their locality and at Namanga – the Tanzania and Kenya border. The first job he had after completing college was trading livestock in Kenya and Tanzania. This gave him the opportunity to earn some money and experience doing business across the border of the two countries. Ngape understood how his community entrepreneurs encountered problems doing cattle
business across borders due to the different regulations in each nation. When these new regulations were introduced, no one knew how they worked. There was a lack of training and understanding about these policies. Ngape has played a role in educating entrepreneurs on these trade policies and he has become a role model for many on how to become successful in business. This opportunity also gave him a chance to advocate in his community about the importance of having the younger generations in the community obtain an education. He explained:

Indeed, I successfully completed my degree in business administration. I started a livestock selling business which I managed to do it with a coalition of other Maasai men from my village. This business to us is more than just business – it is doing business with the type of resources we treasure as a Maasai community (trading livestock). I started some entrepreneurship classes for Maasai business minded people and pay back to the community he belongs. In this, I was successful training people in local church groups, women, and youths. A lot of people in my community haven’t gone to school. I use the opportunity I got – to create awareness and sensitize them to take children to school. And even if there are fewer jobs – at least they will have the knowledge and skills that can lead to the possibility of future jobs – or they can employ themselves with the skills they acquired in school. I view education as a powerful tool to empower the community to achieve what they want in social, cultural, economic, and political realms of life.

According to Ngape, higher education provided him the knowledge to bring change to his people. He viewed college education as a means to extend his boundaries of securing opportunities. He believed that without a college education it is difficult to secure opportunities to meet aspirations.

Ngape did try to vie for a political position in his community. He negotiated and instead agreed to support a friend who was also running for the same political position in the community.
Ngape’s friend won this political position and became a community representative at district level. Ngape applied for a government position to serve as division senior official (local government) and he was successful. Even with this success, he did not abandon his business ideas because he wanted to use it as a means to transform the community through income generation. According to him, serving in this government position is still aligns with his earlier aspirations; he acquired a semi-political role to implement the laws and policies formulated by the legislative body. This is the type of position that members of his family thought Ngape would be working in (i.e., government position) after completing college. He indicated that he could work in government in senior ministerial positions once he has a master’s degree. Below he described how he didn’t think about these types of government roles before attending college:

I later came back and got a government job which they [my family] were thinking it’s the main reason for going to college. Although I have this government job, I still was using my knowledge to initiate business projects to my community as I explained at the beginning of this interview.

In the above story, Ngape explained that he could secure a government job that was not directly related to his business field, but it was a step towards reaching his future financial plans to get capital for business. Also, by getting into the government system, he would have opportunities to work towards reaching senior political, or government positions to further support his business interests.

The Possible Selves of Participants

Social Imaginary

Katarina imagined herself as someone with a tourism and hospitality degree to promote the cultural values of the Maasai through a curio shop and women beadwork center while supporting women in her community to become financially self-reliant. Selling beads to tourists is a common
and readily available business for women in the Maasai community. This is true because there are many local and national parks around this community. Currently, she plans to expand this business idea to reach wider local and international markets. Katarina imagined that through this business initiative women will be empowered to have the potential of supporting their families and contribute to the social, cultural, and political transformation of the Maasai community.

Jackline’s social imagination evolved throughout her college journey. She initially wanted to become a medical doctor for the Maasai because she thought she could contribute to this area which was, and still is, desperately in need of health medical experts. Though she was among the highest achievers on the national high school examination, she was unable to get into medical school. The number of colleges and universities that offer health related degrees is few in the country and so, these programs are very competitive. Therefore, Jackline pursued a degree in environment and health, an important field given the living conditions of her community, where health-related illnesses are often caused by their environment and close contact with domesticated animals. Jackline was unable to secure a job for a long time after graduation. Later, a former college classmate connected her to her first job teaching at a Polytechnic College and she was able to complete a master’s in agribusiness. Since her master’s degree, Jackeline is working in a nonprofit organization as a women’s rights advocate. She desires in the future to establish an organization that supports young girls in the Maasai community. Jackline still views environmental health education as an opportunity she would like to pursue.

Mokoro’s social imagination was more hybridized in nature. His goal was to become both an environmental impact assessment consultant and a community advocate on sustainable use of environmental resources. Mokoro saw a need to address environmental challenges because his community is lacking experts to address conflict between his community and authorities over the use of resources like land and water. In addition to the above imagination, Mokoro thought that by
having a degree in environmental impact assessment could enable him to get a good job, become financially independent, and support his family and others in the community to go to college. For him, a college education would guarantee him an income beneficial to him and to other Maasai to fulfill college aspirations. This is a personal commitment to give back to the community and fulfill that social, economic, and political responsibilities in his social imagery.

Ngape imagined himself becoming a politician but also a businessman in the community after graduating from college. These two dreams pushed him to acquire a college education regardless of the challenges surrounding his access to opportunities before, during and after college. Though a career in politics is his ultimate goal, he used trading livestock in the community as a route to empower young men and women in his community to benefit from such a business strategy. He desired to use this route to transform the way entrepreneurs from his community think about income-generating resources. With a business degree, Ngape specifically wanted to train young entrepreneurs within the community.

**The Sociocultural Status, Taste, and Preference**

Katarina, Jackline, and Mokoro aspired to upper middle-class status by being highly educated professionals and financially stable. Ngape aspired to become a political leader in his community, signaling a desire for a higher status than the other three participants. None of them were born into families with parents with college level education. However, all of them grew up in traditional Maasai families in which their parents seem to be able to provide for their children. I did not find indications that they grew up in poverty according to Maasai ways of living. Except for Mokoro, all participants experienced resistance from their families to go to college, because, according to Maasai culture, they should focus on marriage and families. Women were expected to get married through arranged marriages or in the case of Ngape, men are expected to form families, although not obligated as women are. Overall, Ngape, Mokoro, and Katarina, experienced
a cultural clash between Western aspirations and Maasai ways of life. Jackline, however, was adopted by a Swahili family as a child with her parents’ permission and experienced less of a cultural clash while aspiring to go to college.

**The Desire to Achieve a Future Appreciable Life and Possibility**

Katarina desires to expand her business internationally to export women’s crafts and empower women in her community. She wanted to build a curio shop and beadwork training center for Maasai women. Her vision to establish a center where women could gather and practice their artistic work was among the promises she desired to achieve, a life meaningful and appreciable to others. In this regard, Katarina views her education as a representation of a valuable instrument of girls and women in her community; something that touched their daily lives. However, Katarina’s desire was limited by the inaccessible financial opportunities to support her college aspirations. Limited resources also affected her desire to help other girls who saw her as a mentor: for example, a girl who escaped from her father and lived with her while she was in college. The possibility of accessing resource before and during college underlines the structural limitation that exist between students from dominant groups and those from the marginalized groups.

Jackline’s initial aspiration was to become a medical doctor in her community. However, she ended up receiving a degree in environmental health due to limited possibilities. Her career change and struggles securing employment fostered in her a desire to establish a not-for-profit organization to provide career counseling to young Maasai. Though successful, the chances of her using the environmental knowledge she acquired in college was limited by lack of opportunities in that field once she graduated. Despite this challenge, through connections she was able to teach in a polytechnic college, an opportunity which offered her a scholarship to pursue her master’s degree in agribusiness. Her role as an instructor led her to get a community job position as a women’s rights advocacy official in a local Maasai grassroots organization. At the time of this research
interview, Jackline was exploring the possibility of registering her own organization to provide guidance and career counseling to the youth from her community who are struggling to achieve their college and future aspirations.

Mokoro wanted to build an environmental assessment consultancy firm due to his passion for environmental management based on traditional Maasai ways of living. He was also interested in building a firm that would protect the environment while considering Maasai’s ways of life and the decision-making process honoring the traditional leadership of the elderly. Mokoro’s desire to advocate for social and economic transformation became more possible after introducing the idea of a Living Wall (a drought resistance tree) for fencing Maasai enclosures. He introduced this idea when he was working with a micro finance company which operated in his community for more than a year. Most Maasai homes have adopted this idea, though at a slow pace because of the time it takes for these trees to grow.

Ngape had the aspiration to become a member of Tanzania’s parliament representing the Maasai. He envisions paving the way to sending more Maasai children to college, advocating at the government for policies and resources towards this end. He believes the Maasai need more college educated individuals to advocate for his community. Ngape knew that even with governmental efforts to address inequality, there are structural advantages for dominant groups. These include opportunities of access to financial and technical resources to plan and implement ideas such as his idea of starting a successful business in his community. Though he started a small business training program in his local church, he continued to experience barriers related to lack of resources and limited capacity to make progress towards his goals. There are people in Ngape's community who would want to do business like other people from other communities but are facing these structural limitations, including the lack of knowledge about resources and how to access
them. Additionally, Ngape viewed cultural barriers and family as a limitation to making college access through completion possible.

*Navigational Capacity and Resources*

As mentioned in previous sections, getting resources (financial and human) to get to college was a huge barrier to Katarina. With the help of her mother, Katarina pursued different opportunities including looking for scholarships and financial aid from the higher education student loan board. She was successful getting a student loan. Like other participants, Katarina faced challenges navigating college due to the lack of access to computers, books, and other study materials online. Eventually, she was able to use some of her student loan money to buy a laptop. With a laptop Katarina was able to excel in her studies.

Katarina used her experience to identify areas of concern to address after getting a college education. She wanted to become a mentor to young Maasai girls who are struggling to succeed in life. With determination, she now has a center to train and support girls and women from her community who are trying to empower themselves socially and economically. She was motivated to do so but often finds the task difficult with little support from people around her, but she was able to find the resources to accomplish her vision and be a resource for others.

Jackline identified the opportunity of going to college through her teacher while she was in secondary level of education. She was motivated by her teacher and through her, she was able to perform well in high school, putting her in a better position to attend college. Jackline received support from government officials who persuaded her father to allow her to go to college instead of getting married right away. Her local church was instrumental in supporting her initial stages of completing the college application. Like her peers, Jackline also faced barriers while attending college but said she relied on library materials and her professors to successfully navigate college. The challenge of not obtaining a job for more than a year was overcome by her connection with
former classmates who directed her to a polytechnic institution for a temporary position. Other opportunities including working in nonprofit organizations emerged after completing her master’s degree in agribusiness.

Mokoro was able to pursue his college aspirations with the support of his family and student loans. His access to college opportunities was possible through former classmates from other communities who lived in towns and had more access to information and opportunities compared to him. Mokoro did not explicitly describe how he identified the resources to overcome the barriers experienced in college apart from using friends and his teachers. He also expressed his concern about being without a job after completing college. Though he is pursuing his master’s degree in climatology, he was reluctant to disclose how he navigated the opportunity to get into this program. He has connections with a friend who is pursuing his doctorate in Germany that Mokoro is partnering in his desire to establish an Environmental Impact Assessment company. On this opportunity, Mokoro had limited experience to share.

Much of Ngape’s support came from his local church. Ngape went to a church operated university which he said was his preference because of the connections he established as a church member. Ngape was also able to access funding through member contributions and small church bursaries which helped him pay for his college fees and other expenses. Church membership was the bridge to college for Ngape. Church members supported him financially, spiritually, and morally to continue his education. In college, Ngape identified the barrier of accessing information that he needed. According to him, getting academic materials such books and computers was more difficult in a private university than in a public university. He then developed relationships with students from some public universities that were close to his university in order to access their libraries or participate in their study groups. This was navigational strategy that helped Ngape to successfully complete college.
Summary of Chapter 4

Chapter 4 covered key aspects of participants’ aspirations and barriers of access through completing colleges in Tanzania. Participants’ stories shed light on the experiences they encountered before, during, and after college. Their experiences are important to document in order to inform policy making and implementation processes at public and private institutions designed to address social, economic, cultural, and political justice for minority indigenous populations in the Tanzanian society. These aspects of life (social, economic, cultural, and political aspects) are the drivers of participants’ aspirations for higher education in this study. By looking into these drivers of participants’ aspirations, I discovered the presence of similarities and differences of experiences my research participants had beginning with the application process, through the completion of colleges in Tanzania. In addition, these drivers of aspirations relate to the six concepts of the Possible Selves Theory, which was used to understand what individuals want to become in their near and distal future (Marcus & Narrius, 1986).

The main overarching similarities that appeared in all the three phases (before, during, and after college) of participants’ college journeys is that each of them wanted to go back and use their skills or expertise to transform the lives and livelihood of their community. Before college, participants expressed similar experiences about the challenges of obtaining access to colleges/universities. A dominant limitation was living in remote areas where internet and other communication services are less available. Although all four participants mentioned this communication challenge, experiences based on gender was also identified. Male participants were not concerned about permission from parents to travel to where they could get information. For women participants, their parents—especially their fathers—were more difficult to convince to allow them to leave their homes. Katarina, specifically, described this as the main challenge to accessing college. When she traveled to take care of activities to access college, she said that she
had to lie to her father and tell him that she was going to town just to take her mother’s milk to customers. These types of restrictions made it more difficult for women to access college information.

Three participants made a choice of environmental related fields: Environment and health for Jackline, Environmental Impact Assessment for Mokoro, and Tourism for Katarina. In Jackline’s case, although she was interested in becoming a medical doctor, she was unsuccessful. The limitation for Jackline was due to being disqualified based on the criteria (performance level) used in selecting medical students for university.

During the college application process, women participants were doubted in their ability to continue their education beyond secondary school. Jackline’s parents did not plan to allow her to go to college. However, Jackline’s high school national examination performance prompted government officials to encourage her father to allow her to go to college. In the case of Katarina, her father discouraged her from continuing her education beyond high school. While one of the male’s participants (Ngape) said his parents were not supportive of him going to college, they did not have restrictions as long as Ngape would do the process by himself. In Mokoro’s case, he did receive some support from his parents including substantial financial support to supplement student financial aid.

During college, participants discussed their experiences navigating college opportunities. The participants’ discussed their interactions with peers from other ethnic groups (referred here to as the dominant Swahili groups), interaction with professors, access to technology and books, mentorship, and other services needed to ease their college experience. Ngape, Jackline, and Katarina were concerned about meeting and interacting with peers from other ethnic groups. Mokoro expressed that his interaction with other ethnic groups did not cause him stress. He shared,
however, examples of experiences being profiled by peers outside the Maasi community, similar to the other participants.

The female participants’ stories about their interaction with professors were significantly different from that of the male participants. Whereas male participants did not express any concerns with professors, female participants expressed concerns that were generalized to all female students in college. The issue of inappropriate behaviors by male lecturers toward female students was specifically concerning to both Jackline and Katarina. However, neither one of them indicated personally having to deal with such an experience. Both female participants mentioned that inappropriate behavior happened to friends but did not give further details.

The languages of instruction at university (English and Swahili) were foreign to all participants. Although Swahili is taught in lower levels of education such as primary school, it was still a language participants had to learn in college levels of education. English was not as difficult to navigate because it is the main language of performance standard measurements in college. It was still challenging, however, for all Tanzanians who speak and learn Swahili in primary and secondary school, while the language of instruction in higher education is English. For the Maasai, however, this is a steeper challenge because Swahili is also a foreign language for them.

Participants also described how difficult it was for them to get mentors or access to computers for class assignments. To Ngape, this problem was significant because his university was not a public institution and therefore did not have enough resources to facilitate his studies including books and a computer. The few available resources were competed for by all students. Jackline expressed that the absence of Maasai professors or mentors doubled the effects of negative experiences going through college. Mokoro and Katarina did not expand further on the impact of mentorship on their college experiences.
After college three of the participants (Ngape, Jackline, and Mokoro) described how they entered a career that was different from the one they aspired to be in. These three participants found jobs that they did not dream of, although they expressed that they eventually reframed their aspirations to suit their present positions in the community. Katarina was determined in standing for what she wanted to achieve in the community. She wanted to start a business education and tourism center to help young girls and women become self-reliant financially. Katarina was able to use curios as product to promote her culture and economic ideas. With her determination, her center has received great support and appreciation by the community. Similar to Katarina, Ngape wanted to use a business strategy to meet their aspirations. Ngape started a livestock business and a consultancy center to mentor young entrepreneurs from his community, although he later got a government job as explained in Ngape’s section. Ngape described that his mentorship in the community continues despite constraints on his time with the government job. Katarina was consistent with her business aspirations – which she has maintained until now.

In the case of Mokoro and Jackline, they entered careers of service. For Jackline, she entered the nonprofit service industry to help the career development of youth. In the case of Mokoro, he entered a for-profit service industry to establish an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) consultancy agency for areas where construction of buildings and other infrastructures are taking place in and around his community.

Each participant in this study had interrelated conceptions of life that pushed or motivated them to pursue a college/university education. Their social imagination, resources, desire, and possibility appeared to be similar through their narratives – the only difference was the specific goals each of them wanted to achieve in their community. These elements of their experiences as narrated in their stories reappear across the three stages of their college experience (that is, before college, during college, and after college). The recurrence of the elements of their stories does not
reflect just a repetition in their narratives, but rather highlights the underlining interrelatedness of the concepts used to guide this study. For example, before college, three of the participants (Katarina, Ngape and Mokoro) thought of using a business approach to achieve their social imagery in the community. The fourth participant (Jackline) leaned towards creating a non-profit organization to achieve her social imagery. In general, experiences of these participants appear to be similar - especially when looking at the three stages of their stories about aspirations and their higher education journey.

**Chapter 5: Discussions and Conclusion**

Enrolment in higher education in Tanzania has increased since the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals 2000-2015 (Tanzania Commission for Universities, 2019; Teferra & Altbach, 2004), yet enrolment remains disappointingly low for minority indigenous people. Overall, the increased enrolment reflects open access to higher education made possible by the Tanzanian government under its equity policy agenda, which highlights the factors that lead to access inequality including “ethnicity, language, religion, regional origin, gender and ‘physical or other’ disability” (Morley, Leach, Lussier, Lihamba, Mwaipopo, Forde, & Egbenya, 2010, p. 13). Even with this policy agenda, however, the equity gap still exists in regard to access to resources (i.e., technology, mentorship, supplies, funding, and housing) with additional cultural and infrastructure limitations to access the scarce resources available. As a result, groups that have been marginalized, especially those considered minority indigenous communities, are still undergoing challenging experiences accessing higher education through completion of a degree. 

The main goal of this study was to answer the overarching research question: what aspirations do college graduates from minority indigenous have that motivated them to access through completing college? The objective was to understand how these college graduates relate
their need to get a college/university education with the future selves they aspire to become. The study specifically sought to understand the way participants use higher education as an avenue to navigate their future social, economic, cultural, and political aspirations. I used the Theory of Possible Selves by Markus and Narius (1986) to understand the future participants envisioned before attending college and how their aspirations evolved while enrolled. There are six interrelated concepts of the Possible Selves Theory (Gale et al., 2013): social imagery, taste and preference, desires for positive and appreciable life, possibility of reaching desires, navigational capacity, and resources. These six concepts assisted in analyzing each participant’s experiences before, during, and after college.

Overall, I found a strong connection between participants’ efforts to get a college education and their aspirations. Participants’ experiences were similar to why they aspired to attend college and how they overcame the barriers in all the three phases of college and their post-college experience. All participants noted that a college education was a route to accomplish their future individual and collective social, economic, and political aspirations. In the following sections, I provide an overview of the findings based on the themes identified in participants’ stories. I specifically draw on the five themes situated in Pechenkina, Kowal, and Paradies’ (2011) research on the role of higher education to transforming the lives of indigenous people as detailed in chapter two of this study. The five identified themes are: stereotypes, culture and family, communication and language, funding, and aspirations to access through completing college. Pechenkina et al., (2011) identified similar themes that they viewed as the factors inhibiting students from indigenous communities from making progress in higher education, which are also reflected in the findings of this study. The specific factors highlighted in their research are: financial challenges, health problems, racist attitudes towards students’ indigenous, family, and cultural background affecting motivation, language, and academic readiness. After detailing these themes below, I then discus
the implications of the research findings to future research, theory, and policy. I conclude with a summative reflection of key ideas including aspirations and barriers related to college access.

The findings of this study highlighted the stereotypes that participants faced while going through college. The stereotypes that participants mentioned were connected to how other ethnic groups viewed and referred to them in relation to their cultural and traditional backgrounds. Three of the participants (Katarina, Jackline and Ngape) mentioned being referred to as “from a backward tradition, uncivilized, rigid”, and even using “Maasai” as a name demeaning the ethnic identity of an individual (which has the same psychological effect to a person being named by the color of his/her skin in the context of a western society). These demeaning references built a sense of being excluded from the larger Swahili community which discouraged and demotivated participants from making progress in their college education.

Two participants were explicit about how they dealt with those stereotypes. Jackline and Mokoro indicated that they did not let such incidences remain in their hearts, instead they made it clear that their aspirations made them stay composed and not deterred by what other people said or believed about them. Instead, they reminded focused on building the future selves they wanted to become (e.g., to meet their life aspirations after completing college). Katarina and Ngape reached out to those who displayed discriminating behaviors towards them. Katarina, specifically, was courageous enough to ask anyone with such demeaning behavior to stop and told them that they should not tease or joke about her ethnic background. Ngape used a different approach, and that is, to work extra hard to perform well and debunk stereotypes. There is connection between what individuals from minoritized groups do/feel and the struggles they must put to reach their dreams: work harder and harder to prove themselves in face of discrimination. This strategy also meant that he didn’t rely on peers/others for his own academic success. We can see through these examples how each participant showed resiliency and determination to achieve their future aspirations.
Nevertheless, even with such determination, they still experienced feeling different from their schoolmates from other ethnic groups. Overcoming the challenges to complete college for this group of participants was motivated by the future each one wanted to achieve with a college education. This related to social preferences and desires as elaborated in the Possible Selves Theory.

The findings in this study also indicate that culture and environmental challenges have significantly affected participants’ college access through completion of college. Family and cultural interference in the college application process was a barrier to all the participants, particularly the women in the study. There was little interest from parents in encouraging or even allowing their children to continue to higher education. Instead, parents preferred to have their children (specifically girls) to stay home, practicing traditions that their society values more than their children’s aspirations for their future. This is an area of concern that has little attention in scholarly research. I therefore suggest that future research should look into societal gender divide in these communities and find ways to address the dichotomy between male and female in social, economic, and political advancement.

Other factors that appeared to limit indigenous students' progress in college are language barriers. English being the language in the curriculum and in-class instruction, added more burden to the marginalized indigenous students for whom neither Swahili nor English are their native language. In addition to this language barrier, it was difficult for them to find mentors in college to help them in clarifying course content and any other type of academic advising. While it is unlikely that the education system will change the curriculum to include a language that students from marginalized communities would understand, institutions can create bridging programs such as language proficiency or mentorship programs to ease academic progress as minority indigenous students navigate college.
Financial barriers to attend college also proved to be a considerable challenge for participants. Although they were able to overcome this barrier, it required sustained perseverance and resilience throughout their college years. In their narratives, participants described how the lack of financial support discouraged most of their friends and relatives who completed high school from continuing to higher education. Participants acknowledged the fact that financial aid was available to all Tanzanian high school graduates who qualify to continue to college, but the process of obtaining these funds was difficult to follow through for students from minority indigenous populations. Moreover, some minority indigenous students do not meet the minimum academic performance guidelines. For others, financial aid was difficult to obtain even when they met the qualifications due to insufficient information or barriers accessing computers to apply, for example. Financial issues were stressful to participants as they struggled to meet the cost of college tuition, housing, health, school supplies, and transportation.

Like students from other ethnic groups, minority indigenous students have educational aspirations nurtured throughout their educational journey. Higher education is a potential route to meet future life aspirations for communities in the margins. I argue that further research is needed to understand how the barriers mentioned above lower the aspirations and motivation of youth from minority indigenous communities to go to college. The question is, what is the possibility of fostering these aspirations among those traditionally marginalized? Students from dominant groups have access to resources that nurture their aspirations, in contrast to the limited resources available for marginalized populations. Establishing mentoring programs in lower levels of academic institutions can uplift the aspirations of minority indigenous students to go to college.

**Implications for Research, Theory, and Policy**

With limited research addressing the aspirations for and barriers of access to higher education by minority indigenous communities in Tanzania, this research study is timely and a
steppingstone to achieving minority indigenous social, economic, cultural, and political transformation. The findings of this study have implications to future research, theory, and policy.

Future Research

While there is limited research about indigenous aspirations and access to higher education in Tanzania, progress has been made in similar topics in countries such as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand (Anderberg et al., 2019; Gale & Parker, 2013; Harrison, 2018; Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011). Studies reviewed in this research show similar experiences encountered by indigenous college students in their educational journeys. Among these similarities include facing stereotyping from dominant groups, language barriers, cultural clashes, challenges navigating opportunities, and lack of mentorship (Bishop, Berryman, Wearmouth, Peter, & Clapham, 2012; Canchala & Elena, 2010; Howard, 2002; Sonn, Bishop, & Humphries, 2000). Though similar experiences can be generally drawn from studies in other countries where indigenous communities reside, there are incomparable differences between indigenous people in Tanzania and elsewhere in the world that lie in the political history of the country, cultural and environmental backgrounds of these communities, as well as the Tanzanian educational system.

Tanzania has a blended Swahili and British system of education that is foreign to minority indigenous students as explained in chapter one of this dissertation. In my review of the Tanzanian higher education literature, I was not able to find a single study that shows how students from minority indigenous groups struggle to achieve their aspirations through this particular system of education. Often, they have to abandon their language (Maa) and cultural background to be assimilated to the new system of education. The findings in this study suggest that future research should look deeper at how indigenous Maasai navigate language barriers in the educational system.

Future studies should also focus on the Pk12 pathways of minority indigenous children in Tanzania and how these trajectories impact their ability to attend college. These studies would shed
light on the unknown challenges that children from these communities navigate to meet their aspirations and become prepared for college after high school. Other areas for future research include exploring the role of national college entrance examinations on indigenous students’ college access as well as access to technology to fill out college applications and take entrance exams; the role of parents and cultural norms related to college-going views specially for women; and role of mentors to offer guidance related to college access as well as access to college-related information.

Higher education institutions in Tanzania should develop datasets tracking enrollment, retention, and completion rates of the minority indigenous students and students from other marginalized communities. In addition to developing data base to track individuals from these groups who enroll to higher education institutions in Tanzania, these institutions should also develop more understanding of the Maasai and other indigenous cultures—get trained and work on practices to welcome the Maasai and other minoritized indigenous students. This is an important first step in ensuring that these institutions are inclusive and able to provide firsthand information about the composition of their student populations. At the time of data collection, this study was unsuccessful to obtain statistical data from any of the four higher education institutions that participants attended, despite several communication attempts. Lack of historical data about minority students’ participation rates in higher education institutions limit policymakers and practitioners from making progress addressing the needs and aspirations of minority indigenous communities.

**Implications for Theory**

This study employed the Theory of Possible Selves by Marcus and Narrius (1986) along with the six Concepts of Possible Selves by Gale et al. (2013) to understand the aspirations of
minority indigenous college graduates and the barriers they overcame to access through completing higher education in Tanzania. The theory and its concepts were in line with participants’ college journey experiences and helped to understand why participants wanted to get a college degree, their motivations, and how they overcame barriers of access through completing college. Although Possible Selves Theory was a preferred framework in this study, other frameworks would be appropriate to understand the resiliency of minority indigenous students while they are in college. Specifically, to understanding the resiliency of minority indigenous students, Yosso’s Cultural Wealth Model (2005) and its six components (aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance capital) are relevant in analyzing Maasai participants’ experiences in the three phases of their college journey used in this study (before, during, and after college phases).

Participant stories indicated how their cultural background was stigmatized when they interacted with dominant groups. This has significant implications on the way minority indigenous students navigate and become successful in college. Therefore, it is important to emphasize how stereotypes and stigmatization negatively impact self-confidence and the ability of participants to explore more opportunities including employment outside their community after college. The findings suggested that lack of mentors who could offer advice on bridging opportunities in college such as campus educational support, funding, developing resumes for job applications, and other professional development opportunities, was very detrimental to participants. I argue that these findings can be further analyzed using Yosso’s Cultural Wealth Model. Apandurai (2004) also explored building aspirations to make resources available to give indigenous groups the capacity to navigate the opportunities of accessing through completing college. Building the capacity to navigate the resources to complete college will encourage more indigenous students to continue their education, thus getting the skills to become successful in securing or creating jobs that will
be key to sustaining their future social, economic, and political aspirations. Yosso (2005) referred to this as building community cultural wealth with specific reference to aspirational capital.

The findings of this study further suggest a need to explore indigenous aspirations and barriers accessing higher education using resiliency theory. In the stories narrated by participant of this study, aspirations to earn a college education were linked to the ultimate goal of the future that these participants want to achieve. According to Rose (2009) and Van Breda (2001), the concept of resiliency plays a significant role in assessing how individuals, organizations, and communities respond and recover from the full range of challenges they encounter to successfully pursue opportunities. Participants’ stories accessing through completing colleges have made evident the resiliency they had to make it through their college journey.

**Implications for Policy**

In the interest of nationhood, this research may be viewed as singling only one community, leaving other communities that are marginalized unaddressed. In the same view, the findings of this study may be challenged on the basis of tribalism, with the notion that the barriers highlighted in the findings are faced by the majority of the Tanzanian college students and not by one community alone. However, while many communities in Tanzania face similar challenges, experiences are different between students from the main Swahili population and those from minority indigenous population.

There is little information available about Tanzania’s higher education policy on indigenous college access. Even in the main education policy which covers primary and secondary education, which went through amendments to suit the needs of local people, the policy is lacking provisions about access to education for minority indigenous populations. The 1999 higher education bill has portions that addresses gender equality and access for those with disabilities in order to ensure
equal access to higher education in Tanzania, yet no explicit sections addressing access for minority indigenous populations. National policy is not clear about addressing systemic discrimination and inequalities accessing higher education for indigenous communities. It is important for the policy to clearly indicate the support or add statements that advocate for more representation in higher education for communities that are underrepresented such as the Maasai and other minority indigenous communities. Without clear policy guidelines on how to address systemic ethnic discrimination in higher education institutions, these institutions will be slow to change and will not be places where social justice is found for all. In this regard, participants’ stories in this study highlight the importance of including specific policies that address systemic discrimination for marginalized communities. This has implications on these groups by encouraging students from these communities to continue their education through college.

The findings of this study shed light on the presence of sexual harassment and misconduct in exchange of grades between male lecturers and female students. Participants expressed their concerns reporting these incidences to departments’ chairs and personnel, who are likely to be males. This lack of gender diversity made it, so students did not feel safe to come forward. Female participants indicated that gender discrimination and abuse allegations would not be taken seriously by male lecturers. The findings suggest that female students are fearful reporting these incidents without risking the possibility of facing repercussions through grades. The lack of institutional action and policies to prevent these instances of sexual abuse has implications for students’ performance, confidence, and quality of experience that these institutions.

Funding opportunities was the main concern that participants of this study viewed limited their college education and future aspirations. It was clear that the main source of funding to facilitate their college education was through government unsubsidized student loans. Even with the presence of these loans, college is still not easily accessible to many students from minority
indigenous populations. The criterial used to obtain these loans is based on the type of college institution a student is attending (i.e., public vs private institutions). Also, successful applicants have to meet certain academic performance classifications based on the National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA) and the Tanzania Council for Universities (TCU), both of which determine the selection and allocation of students to higher education (Morley & Croft, 2011). The findings from this study suggest that most students from minority indigenous groups do not meet the criteria and are unqualified to apply for these loans. Participants’ stories also indicated that the amount of the funds that applicants qualified for are rationed depending on the type of college program the applicant is admitted to. For example, those who applied for social sciences will not be given a 100% loan compared to those who go to law schools, engineering, science in education, and health science. These majors require a high-performance level in the national examination which most students from marginalized groups do not meet. This has implications for students’ motivation and ability to pay for their college degree. The findings therefore suggest a need to expand more college funding opportunities for minority indigenous students across different fields of study.

The findings in this study are useful for both in policy making and practice in Tanzania as the initial reference to formulate and implement social, economic, and cultural policies that support the progress of the minority indigenous communities. Access to higher education is key to meeting the social, economic, and political transformation of the minority indigenous communities in Tanzania, and therefore policies that aim to support their aspirations should be put in place. This is important because a college education is necessary to enrich the social, cultural, economic, and political transformation of the minority indigenous communities in Tanzania.
Conclusion

This study looked at the college aspirations of a sample of college graduates from a minority indigenous population in Tanzania and their journey to fulfill such an aspiration. The study explored these indigenous students' barriers accessing and completing college. The study sought to understand the aspirations that motivated participants to access and complete college and persevere through these barriers. Additionally, this study explored the systemic factors that limited them from making progress before and during college. The Possible Selves framework guided this study using the three-phase timeline of before, during, and after college.

Each participant engaged in intense effort to access and complete college. Their effort signifies the dire need to do follow-up studies on minority indigenous populations' college needs, performance, motivations, and resources. Additionally, as the findings from this study suggest, there needs to be a specific focus on how these students' environment and culture shape their performance and ability to meet their aspirations. Moreover, statistical research to identify access and college completion rates is needed to quantify the trends in participation in higher education by the minority indigenous population. Currently, there is no data to refer to that shows the rate of access or completion by these groups in Tanzania. Notably, minority indigenous students face barriers that often overwhelm their ability to access and complete higher education in Tanzania. In addition, there is limited knowledge about minority indigenous aspirations outside of this study. The limited knowledge base can be detrimental to minority indigenous students, given that often non-indigenous researchers conclude that these groups lack aspirations to go to college at all.

I purposefully selected the Theory of Possible Selves (Markus et al., 1986) because it relates to indigenous individuals' efforts in achieving their aspirations. As participants shared stories on college access and completion, they detailed how they encouraged themselves to seek opportunities that led them to complete their college. Although all participants described how a lack of jobs
limited their aspirations after college, the degrees they pursued and completing college were monumental steps towards achieving their intended goals. All of them are still in various stages of fulfilling their dreams with a strong commitment to working for the betterment of their Maasai communities.
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Appendix A

Interview Questions

General Questions • What aspirations did minority indigenous college graduates had towards higher education? o What personal factors have contributed to these aspirations for and access to higher education? o What systemic factors have affected these aspirations?

The Goal

• Beginning Question - Tell me the story of what made you want to go to college/university?
  o Follow up questions based on participants’ answers by asking: “Can you tell me more about…”

• What expectations did you have after gaining a college/university education and how have these expectations evolved after completing higher education?

• How has your college/university education helped you to secure social, economic, and political opportunities in your country?

• How has attaining college/university education shifted your aspirations to impact the livelihoods of your community? (Follow-up)

• What barriers have you faced to achieve aspirations after completing higher education?

• What structural limitations have affected the possibility to realize your aspirations after higher education?

Follow-up/tapping questions

Look inward to internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral disposition.

  o If you did not acquire a college/university education, what were your fears about life – socially, economically, culturally, and politically?
    ▪ What were you hoping to achieve by attending university?

Look outward to existential conditions in the environment with other people and their intentions, purposes, assumptions, and points of view.

  o How did your friends/family reacted to you going to the university?

Look backward to remembered experiences, feelings, and stories from earlier times.

  o What were you feeling about going to the university?

Look at current experiences, feelings, and stories relating to actions of an event

  o How do you feel about having a degree from a university?

Look forward to implied and possible experiences and plot lines.
o What do you look forward to now that you’ve acquired a university degree?

Look at context, time, and place situated in a physical landscape or setting with topological and spatial boundaries with characters' intentions, purposes, and different points of view.

o How do your friends and family treat you now that you have a university degree?

Demographics

a. Pseudonym

b. Ethnic group/place of birth

c. Level of your education.
Vita

Luca Ole Rikoyan Mollel holds a Ph.D in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He has a Master’s Degree in Public Affairs/Administration from the University of and Missouri-Columbia and a Bachelor’s Degree in Environmental Science and Management from Kampala International University-East Africa. Luca has a certificate in Organizational Leadership from the University of Missouri System. His research areas of interest are higher education policy analysis, indigenous and marginalized groups’ aspirations and the barriers they encounter to access social, economic, and political opportunities including higher education, health, land, technology, and global markets. He previously presented research and policy papers in academic and nonacademic platforms including Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), Humanity for Children – USA, African Network for Animal Welfare (ANAW), African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Profit Organizations (PINGOs), Maasai Women Development Organization (MWEDO), and the World Vision – Tanzania. Prior to his Graduate School Luca worked as a Director of the Maasai Visions Organization a community grassroots organization dealing with managing environmental resources while addressing community adaptations to the changing environment. In addition, Luca has experience working in Local Government in areas pertaining Budgeting, Community Development, and Human Resources. He also has several years of experience working in retails businesses and in health sector in the State of Missouri.