I had a dear childhood friend whom I competed against when we were in primary school. We were the best students in our class, and she was very smart. She was the only child of her separated parents who were abusive to her. Worse, her father was an alcoholic and her mother was seldom around. I witnessed firsthand how dysfunctional parenthood changed the trajectory of my friend's life for worse which led her to teenage pregnancy and dropout from high school. My friend's adverse childhood experiences informed my decision to study guidance and counseling psychology at the University of Ibadan where I acquired foundational knowledge and clinical skills to help families, especially abusive parents, to recognize the likely consequences of their maladaptive behavior on their children.

My career goal is to become a mental health counselor and researcher with specialization in family mental health. I am strongly motivated to attain the highest-level of advanced training, i.e., PhD, in my chosen field in a leading university. Obtaining a master's degree from a prestigious university such as Rutgers University will help me acquire the best education to build on my foundational knowledge and skills. Also, this will strongly improve my chances to be admitted to a university for my PhD where I can pursue research that will provide insight into the intricate familial predictors of adverse childhood experiences especially in African American families in the United States of America (US).

I became interested in African American families in the US when I saw data on Covid-19 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It showed that African Americans are the most impacted group by Covid-19 relative to other populations in the US. I was curious to know whether a similar report is found in adverse child experiences among African Americans in the US. This topic is personal because my husband and I have a daughter born in the US which makes her part of the African American community. I used my husband's university's library to do some research on the topic. I did a literature search on the EBSCO APA Psychinfo database using this optimized search string "(mental health) AND (adverse childhood experience OR adverse childhood experiences) AND (African American OR black) AND (families OR family)". This search string yielded only 23 results despite this database being a large repository for basic and applied psychology research. First, the outcome may mean that this topic has not been a priority in the scientific sphere. Secondly, these studies largely reported that this topic is a cause for concern and deserves the attention of the scientific community. I

believe graduate study in Rutgers University will train me in excellent foundational knowledge and skills in research to drive social change through mental health counseling research as emphasized in the program's webpage. Also, my family's social support and presence will be immensely helpful for my success.

I will succeed and achieve my career given my background marked by firsts, academic success, resilience, desire for social change at the family level and conscientiousness. I am the sixth child from a family of seven children and my lovely parents did not attain beyond high school education. Despite these familial constraints, I am the first in my family to top my class during primary and secondary schooling and graduate with a college degree and apply for graduate studies, especially in the United States. Also, I have a history of academic excellence right from my primary school up to my undergraduate studies where I was always ranked amongst the best in my class. During my undergraduate education, I founded Amyrald Food Concept as a means of commercializing my hobbies for baking and cooking to raise funds to support my university education and family. Despite my "side hustle", I was able to maintain and graduate with a very good result and I was ranked among the best students in the class. Furthermore, my passion for family mental health counseling is seen in my undergraduate thesis. I examined emotional intelligence, gender, self-concept and socio-economic status as correlates of marital satisfaction among married persons in Catholic church in Ibadan diocese. I applied my foundational knowledge and skills in research towards completion of my project and I earned a bachelor's degree in Guidance and Counseling and English from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

After my undergraduate education, I embarked on the compulsory one-year National Youth Service Corps training. During this period, I led a team of National Youth Corps members on a Community Development Service (CDS) project provided sex education and reproductive health counselling to young adults in rural Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. This project was very important because rural Ibadan, Oyo State had numerous cases of teenage pregnancies and the young men had poor knowledge of safe sex practices. These large cases may not be intrinsic to Ibadan population of young adults per se, because Ibadan is one of the most populous and largest cities in Africa. This makes it more likely to have more cases of teenage pregnancy in Ibadan compared to other cities in Oyo State. Regardless, I believe this project has made positive changes in the lives of young adults in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. In addition, I led the children's group in St. Thomas Catholic Church in Ibadan for eight years

where I was able to mentor, teach and counsel young children between 2 to 15 years of age. Working with children helped me to develop a strong sense of empathy and warmth which are attributes needed to be a successful mental health counselor and researcher.

After moving to the United States, I volunteered as a research assistant in the Neurolinguistics Lab, Lehman College. I learnt a lot in this position. I learnt how to perform speech and language assessments. I actively participated in a culturally diverse team of lab members, I carried out literature reviews on a complex topic and presented my findings to lab members. This experience is invaluable in giving me a head start as a potential international student in your university. I also enrolled and completed the Google Data Analytics course which included hands-on and practice-based activities on Spreadsheets, SQL, Tableau and R programming. Presently, I volunteer as a representative in the Staten Island Community Action Network (SI CAN). SI CAN work towards improving women's health and wellness, and maternity equity. We are determined to improve the lives of women in our community through maternal health education.

Thank you for reading and considering my application.