THE ROLE OF SHORT-TERM DIASPORIC CULTURAL IMMERSION EXPERIENCES ON
AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND PROCESSES

By

Rome Darwin Meeks

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Psychology—Doctor of Philosophy

2019

ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF SHORT-TERM DIASPORIC CULTURAL IMMERSION EXPERIENCES ON
AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND PROCESSES

By

Rome Darwin Meeks

Since 1619, when the first documented enslaved and kidnapped Africans were brought to

the shores of America, they struggled to find a sense of belonging (Branch & Young, 2006; Smith

et al., 2011). Today, their ancestors, African Americans, continue a search for belongingness while

faced with structural and institutional racism in significant ways (Oyserman et al., 2007). African

American identity is widely studied among American Scholars. However, what seems to be

missing from most contemporary literature is an understanding of African American identity

development and processes beyond an American experience (Cokley, 2005; Cross, 1971; Parham

& Helms, Marks et al., 1981; Phinney & Onwughalu, 1996; Sellers et al., 1998). For example,

most African Americans recognize that their ancestors are from Africa, but there is not much

discussion of the African historical, cultural, and geographical links that possibly facilitate positive

African American identity development (Jackson & Cothran, 2003). A more global understanding

of African American identity can inform the development of interventions that seek to foster

positive African Americans' identity development, but most importantly can help them increase

their psychological well-being, sense of belonging, self-esteem, and increase resiliency in the midst

of racism (Brown et. al, 2011; Settles et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2011; Stubbins, 2016).

To contribute to the literature and further such an understanding, I examined daily

reflection questions provided by participants in Sankofa 360, a program of diasporic cultural

immersion to Ghana, West Africa. Participants were a purposive sample of 12 African American

college and professional men and women. My analysis was guided by Miles, Huberman and

Saldana's (2014) First and Second Cycle qualitative approach examining participants' written reflections for days 2, 4, 6, and 7 of the Sankofa program. Goals of the research study included: 1. An examination of the manner in which participants' daily written reflections during diasporic cultural immersion in Ghana, West Africa describe changes in African American identity and African Self-Consciousness and 2. An examination of whether these described changes align with Cross' theory of racial identity. I identified 24 themes and grouped them into 3 analytical categories linked to three higher-order program components: General experiences of being in Africa (Ghana, West Africa), Ghanaian Community Immersion, and The Influence of Learning One's Own (African) history. I discuss the way these findings describe the experience of African American men and women and the influence the perceived experiences have on participants' racial/ethnic identity. I discuss, also, the implications of my findings for the development of African American identity through diasporic cultural immersion experiences.

This dissertation is dedicated to every African American man, women, boy, and girl who seek to have their existence validated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I just completed my dissertation; therefore, I will not make this section a dissertation of acknowledgements. However, I am very aware that this accomplishment was made possible by the Lord and those that He placed in my life at the right place and time. I have been sustained by His grace! First, I want to thank my ancestors who fought, and others who died so that future generations might have access to spaces they could have only dreamt of. Sankofa 2018 participants, thanks for making this possible and filling out those daily reflection questions, lol. I would like to express gratitude to Dr. Villarruel for believing in me and allowing me to openly share my feelings and plans of liberating African Americans. You listening to my optimism for a people I believe are full of life, persistence, dedication, and purpose, which led you to introducing me to Dr. Bill and the Community Psychology program. Dr. Bill, I would like to express my gratitude to you. Thanks for accepting me into the program and believing in me even when things got difficult. The long chats in your office meant more to me than you will ever know. Thanks for sharing your wisdom and dropping so much knowledge.

Next, I would like to thank Ignacio, my committee chair, for not only encouraging me but challenging me. I can't express in words how grateful I am for the space you created for me to be honest, and sometimes share my frustrations. Thanks for allowing me to share some of my most intimate feelings of being a Black male in America, where very few people will understand that showing up to class is just half the battle. I must also express sincere gratitude to the remainder of my dissertation committee and Pennie Foster-Fishman for their overwhelming support.

To my maternal grandparents, Mary and Isom Thomas, who sacrificed time, finances, and who knows what else, I can't thank you enough for all that you have done for me. After raising

nine kids of your own, you saw it fit to accept me and raise me as your tenth child. I am forever grateful. Additionally, I thank my parents for being supporters of me, even when they did not understand what I was doing. And, I thank my aunts, uncles, cousins, play cousins, siblings, and friends for your prayers and words of encouragement. To the loved one's that were part of my fan club and are no longer here physically, I am so grateful for your love and support. Ma (Orcie), you never made me feel like I was less than a son of yours. You were one of the first to visit me in college, buy me all types of food and drank (we won't talk about that), and always ask me how school was going; I miss you so much.

To my paternal grandparents, JW and Gladys Griffin, I can't thank you enough for your prayers, financial support, shoulders used for crying and those encyclopedia reports De'Aon and I had to do when I we visited during winter or summer breaks or just spent the night; I think it payed off… Aunt Val, thanks for your words of encouragement and support. You always knew the right things to say. Mr. Tim Swain, thanks for allowing me to live out one of God's purposes for my life through Anidaso 360. Ced and Virgil, thanks for your 20+ years of friendship. I sure am glad that I don't have to hear you guys ask me when I'm graduating every time we speak. Dr. Karlin Tichenor, thanks for being such an inspiration and encouragement. I have learned a lot from you!

Last in acknowledgement but dearest to my heart, my wife, Dr. Shimia Meeks! I am thankful to God for your fine, smart, caring, and encouraging brown-skin self. Shimia, thanks for encouraging me with scripture and praying for me when I was exhausted or had doubts about what the end would look like. Also, thanks for being understanding during the late-night library and coffee shop sessions. I love you. # Coming soon! #Blacklove!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

African American identity is associated with peoples' socially constructed race and their ancestral-cultural-roots (ethnicity) (Cross & Cross 2008; Smith & Silva, 2011). African American identity surfaced out of the historical oppression of Africans from White Europeans beginning with enslavement. For Whites to inflict their socially constructed supremist ideology on Africans, they had to establish a justification of difference, which became a fabric interwoven into American society (Branch & Young 2006). This difference created an "us versus them," "Black vs White" mentality between Europeans (colonizers/enslavers) and Africans (enslaved) resulting in Africans—who prior to enslavement held various distinct cultures, languages, and beliefs— creating shared cultural values and beliefs. This created an identity and way of life for the Africans in America and their offspring, referred to today as African American. African Americans continue to be mistreated, marginalized, fear being shot or mistaken as criminals, and must convince others that their lives matter (Brown & Tylka, 2011; Smiley & Fakunle, 2016; Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds & Cancelli, 2000). The result is that they exist as an involuntary minority, a racial group within the United States (US) whose ancestors found themselves in America against their will, being forced to make America their place of residence (Ogbu, 1998).

Because of their historical and contemporary mistreatment by European Americans, African Americans may find it problematic to connect with the dominant European American society and are instead more likely to connect with other African Americans (Hackett, 2017). African American identity development, then, involves an individual's identification with "a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves or others, to have a common origin and share segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients" (Yinger, 1976, p.

1

200). These ingredients may include traditions, behaviors, values, and beliefs that an individual identifies with that create a sense of bonding or connection to others (Ott, 1989; Yinger, 1976).

While most African Americans call the US home; their ancestral home is on the continent of Africa. Unfortunately, the historical context of slavery makes it nearly impossible for African Americans to trace exactly where in Africa their ancestors are from. This causes not only a geographical detachment from Africa and African people, but also a disconnect from their spiritual, ethnic, and cultural identities (Jackson & Cothran, 2003). This tension contributes to African Americans' continued search for a physical and social belonging to a heritage and identity they can claim as their own (Cross, 1991).

Although many researchers use the terms African American, Black, and Black American interchangeably, I refer to African Americans exclusively as the descendants of enslaved Africans who were forcibly brought to the US. African Americans do not include other Blacks who live in the US or whose ancestors immigrated to the US voluntarily (e.g., Jamaicans, Haitians, Trinidadians, and Tobagonians etc.) (Agyemang, Bhopal & Bruijnzeels, 2005). These distinctions are important in discussions about identity, specifically for African Americans, because their experiences are unique. African Americans and other Black Americans account for 13.3% of the American population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Because there is not a separate demographic category for Black and African American, it is safe to estimate that African Americans make up less than 13.3% of the American population.

This study examined the effects of diasporic cultural immersion in Africa on adult African Americans' identity and an endorsement of an Africentric paradigm. An Africentric paradigm, sometimes referred to as African Self-Consciousness (ASC), seeks to explain Black/African American behavior based on African principles and values (Baldwin & Bell, 1985; Mutisya &

Ross, 2005; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005; Robinson & Biran, 2006). Before describing the method and results, I review several areas of relevant scholarly literature. First, African American identity, its development and benefits, and the conditions that foster said development are reviewed. Next, I introduce Africentricity or African Self-Consciousness as a component of African American identity. I then focus on how the development of African American identity is influenced by exposure to culturally appropriate learning. Finally, I describe how diasporic cultural immersion experiences allow African Americans to discover their African American identity.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

African American Identity

> "Without a clear racial identity, an American is in danger of having no identity"
> Jaret, 1999 (p. 717)

Although African American identity is one of the most widely studied constructs among African Americans, it is seldom comprehensively defined, a problem that has existed for almost 30 years (Phinney, 1990; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley & Chavous, 1998). Most studies published to date have focused on notions of African American identity that capture some elements of the definition provided by Sellers and colleagues (1998), who described racial identity in African Americans as the significance and meaning African Americans give to a sense of belonging to one's own racial group. These scholars found that a positive African American identity is associated with many beneficial outcomes including resilience in the face of racism, identity and psychological well-being, self-esteem, and belongingness and social support (Settles, Navarrete, Abdou, Pagano & Sidanius, 2010; Smith et al. 2011; Stubbins, 2016).

Resilience in the face of racism. Racism and discrimination affect African Americans at disproportionate rates compared to other racial minorities (Stubbins, 2016). Racism is defined as "beliefs, attitudes, institutional arrangements, and acts that tend to denigrate individuals or groups because of phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group affiliation" (Brown et al., 2011 p. 260). Examples of racial discrimination include being called by racial slurs, accused unjustly of wrongdoing, denied housing in certain neighborhoods, or denied loans from financial institutions solely on the basis of one's race (Brown et al., 2011; Landrine & Klonoff, 1996). While many scholars have studied the negative effects of discrimination on African Americans' psychological well-being (e.g. sense of hopelessness, disinterest in school, and a lack of motivation etc.), other scholars have studied how African Americans have overcome the negative effects of discrimination

(Brown et al., 2011; Davis & Gandy, 1999; Martin, 2008; Miller, 1999). The overcoming of stressful and traumatic life events that allows for successful coping and purposeful life trajectories is known as resilience (Brown et al., 2011). The results of present research support the assertion that a positive African American identity protects against the negative effects of racism, discrimination, and negative racial messages in society (Davis & Gandy, 1999; Martin, 2008; Miller, 1999).

Identity and psychological well-being. Identity formation is an important aspect of an individual's psychological well-being (Erikson, 1959/1980; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005; May & Yalom, 2005). Researchers have documented positive effects of African American identity on psychological well-being that are particularly important because, due to high levels of stressful life events experienced by African Americans, higher levels for depression and other mental health-related diagnoses are often a concern (Hammack, Robinson, Crawford, & Li, 2004; Lindsey, 2010). African Americans' psychological well-being is strengthened when they hold cultural values that they are proud of. This pride comes from the recognition of special contributions made by their racial group, and positively increases self-esteem and a sense of belonging (Stubbins, 2016).

Self-esteem. Self-esteem is the degree to which a person accepts who they are and the respect they have for themselves (Mandara, Gaylord-Harden, Richards & Ragsdale, 2009; Stubbins, 2016). African Americans who increase their positive African American identity have higher levels of self-esteem (Mandara et al., 2009; Settles et al., 2010; Stubbins., 2016). Stubbins (2016) argued that the relationship between African American identity and self-esteem is strengthened because regard for oneself, and for others of a shared racial background, protects the mental stability of African Americans in the face of racism, discrimination, and mental distress. These stressful experiences, either because of societal injustices, or other forms of oppression, are more easily

combated by having higher self-esteem (Bandura, 1997; Davis & Gandy, 1999; Mandara et al., 2009).

In turn, increased self-esteem increases resiliency against societal exposures that often devalue African Americans creating a buffer that protects African Americans from the negative perception that others may have of them solely because of their race or ethnicity (Mandara et al., 2009; Smith et al. 2011). For example, Mandara et al., (2009) examined racial identity and self-esteem as predictors of mental health among African Americans finding that those who had an increased sense of racial pride and positive self-esteem had lower levels of psychological distress.

Belongingness and Social Support. African American identity provides a sense of belonging and social support that fosters better psychological well-being (Outten et al., 2009; Smith et al. 2011). The feeling and sense of identifying with another are synonymous with a sense of connectedness and with positive feelings that individuals experience by being around or a part of their racial-ethnic group (Oyserman, Brickman, & Rhodes, 2007). This belongingness is also inclusive of a sense of membership that includes traditions, social support, and a worldview focused on spiritualism (Hackett, 2017; Oyserman et al., 2007). Consequently, connections create a source of strength and self-acceptance when negotiating difficult societal barriers allowing one to recognize that they are not alone in their experiences. (Smith et al., 2011).

While scholars have extensively focused on African American identity and its relation to psychological well-being, they have often done so without considerations of how African influences (i.e., African self-consciousness) may impact African Americans' psychological well-being. As noted earlier, African American identity is made up of both one's race (socially constructed phenomenon to create power differentials that categorize humans based on superficial characteristics, and hierarchy of cultural, moral, and intellectual worth) and ethnicity (ancestral-

cultural roots) (Cross & Cross 2008; Smith et al., 2011). Trying to understand African American identity without acknowledgment of the cultural and biological makeup of African ancestors is incomplete. African Americans carry the biological and cultural heritage of Africa and their African ancestors, yet African Americans may not have thought about or understand the relevance of their connection to Africa (Dawson, 2000). This next section introduces Africentricity and its importance in understanding a more comprehensive African American identity.

Africentricity

Africentricity[1], also known as African Self-Consciousness (ASC), derived from the work of Black personality theorist Joseph Baldwin who saw it important to uncover the deeply rooted and innately unconscious processes of African Americans (Baldwin, Duncan, & Bell, 1987). Afrocentricity is defined as a perspective in which Africans are the subjects of history and not the objects of historical experiences based on the margins of European ideology (Mutisya & Ross, 2005). Baldwin & Bell (1985) proposed that African Self-Consciousness include four components: First, the person embraces some awareness of their Black identity (identifies with a collective Black experience) and their African identity (seeking increased knowledge of African history and culture). Second, the person acknowledges the necessity for Black ideals and institutions that affirm Black livelihood (i.e., practices, customs, and values). Third, the person has made a commitment to

---

[1] Afrocentric and Africentric are terms often used interchangeably. However, there are small distinctions. The term Afrocentric refers to values rooted in African cultures that uncovers a deeper understanding of African American identity (Cokley, 2005). Africentric is used to describe African and African American cultural principles (i.e. unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility etc.), but with an added component of African Self-Consciousness. African Self-Consciousness refers to an awareness that African Americans have as African people historically, culturally, and philosophically (Baldwin, Duncan, & Bell, 1987; Grills & Longshore, 1996). In this paper, I will use the term Africentric because of its distinct measure of African American psychological Self-Consciousness to explore the self-extension of African Americans to their African ancestors' values and principles.

seeing African Americans liberated and experiencing dignity, worth, and integrity. Lastly, the person recognizes that racial oppression exists, and work to resist or combat any opposition they encounter (people, concepts, institutions).

Baldwin and colleagues (1987) argued that African Self-Consciousness develops through a process called self-extension or a sense of spiritually (Africanity) that allows for the manifestation of African Americans' awareness and knowledge of themselves as African people historically, culturally, and philosophically. African Americans who have developed African Self-Consciousness are more likely to experience positive psychological functioning and behavior (Baldwin & Bell, 1985; Mutisya & Ross, 2005). This is because African Self-Consciousness facilitates these individuals' self-affirming and efficacious behavior from an African survival perspective that is part of the collective African American personality and identity. Moreover, Africentricity can be a facilitator to the revitalization of African cultural identity (Mutisya & Ross, 2005).

The research on African Self-Consciousness recognizes the African cultural and biological roots of African Americans that are often overlooked by African American identity scholars, emphasizing that it is important for African Americans to be exposed to environments and teachings that allow them to positively identify and strengthen a racial/ethnic identity that includes these roots. Although the next section reviews a key model for the development of African American identity, it should be clear that such an identity is incomplete without an honest exploration of ASC.

Cross' Developmental Process

Developing a racial/ethnic identity is a normative developmental process for African Americans (Quintana, 2007). William Cross, a leading theorist in racial/ethnic identity proposes a four-stage process for the development of Black identity. During stage 1, *Pre-encounter*, a Black American recognizes that they are different than the majority culture. During this stage, Black Americans see "white as right," comparing their actions and behaviors to European Americans as a model for their actions and behaviors. During stage 2, *Encounter*, Black Americans become aware that prejudices and racism exist because of either personal experiential or cultural events that single out their race. These occurrences confirm that they are different than the majority demographic and cultural groups, and not accepted solely based on race. At stage 3, *Immersion-Emersion*, Black Americans actively seek out others of similar backgrounds with the desire to learn more about their shared culture and history. During stage 4, Internalization-Commitment, individuals accept their Black identity, its cultural and the culture of others. They begin executing a plan of action that focuses on the concerns people within the Black community have or a focus on issues of people of their same racial/ethnic background.

The above stages are presented linearly; however, racial/ethnic identity development can recur throughout the life course, often triggered by events/experiences or ideas that heighten awareness of prescribed cultural or racial norms that challenge a person's pre-established racial/ethnic identity (Cross, 1991; Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). Examples of such events or exposures include racial injustices against oneself or others and exposures to new ideas or perspectives involving race and identity (e.g., White supremacy rally, being denied access to employment based on the color of skin, questioned about your belonging in a certain neighborhood because of the color of your skin etc.). It is posited that exposures to positive

messages about race through culturally appropriate learning can heighten one's awareness and increase their positive racial identity and create a reemergence of Cross' stages of Black identity (Hackett, 2017; Stubbins, 2016).

Culturally Appropriate Learning

The development of a positive racial identity is very much dependent upon positive racial socialization messages (Martin, 2008; Miller, 1999). Racial socialization refers to messaging about race—including one's racial history—passed down from a loved one, friends, television or learned through various teaching methods (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014; Cunningham & Kliewer, 2005; Demo & Hughes, 1990). These messages can be either direct or indirect (Hackett, 2017).

Positive racial socialization is pivotal to how well African Americans can identify with and develop a positive African American identity. The opportunity to learn their history allows for an exposure that enables individuals to explore and make meaning of the present way of life, and to learn from past mistakes either from self or of others (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014; Balgooy, 2014). Not having a clear understanding of one's history can prevent a full understanding of one's meaning and purpose. For African Americans to learn about their true culture and their history creates a sense of pride in oneself and their racial group (Robinson & Biran, 2006). Moreover, racial pride in learning one's history draws out a sense of self-efficacy and self-worth (Bandura, 1997). Unfortunately, the schools attended by most African Americans do not teach Black History (Ford-Paz & Iwamasa, 2012; Stubbins, 2016).

Outside of formal education, which has done an inadequate job in teaching African Americans about their history, (Landa, 2012), "many adults of racial minority groups enter adulthood with an identity that is psychologically functional and positive, yet culturally limited

10

and even corrupted with miseducation" (Umana-Taylor et al, 2014 p. 29). African American parents, who normatively have experienced limited exposure to African American history, can experience challenges exposing their children to a full history of Africans and African Americans in the US (Stubbins, 2016). African American children may then look outside of the home to construct their own narratives of identity as they try and make sense of history. At the very best, U.S. society offers African American school-aged children a focus on slavery and civil rights, limiting their knowledge of their ancestral African roots (Shervington, 1986).

African Americans can be empowered by having an increased appreciation for African American culture when they are taught about slavery, civil rights, and exposed to important Black figures (Robinson & Biran, 2006). As introduced earlier in this paper, it appears that African Americans who are exposed to accurate historical literacy also go on to develop a positive racial identity that leads to higher self-perception, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Adams-Bass et al., 2014; Burt & Halpin, 1998; Mandara et al., 2009). Unfortunately, the biased power structures that exist in most US schools prevent a full accounting of African American history, and—in particular—African heritage (Pitre et al., 2008). In turn, these societal limitations fail to set the foundations that would allow most African Americans to pass on important knowledge about cultural heritage. Perhaps more importantly, African Americans may continue in patterns of hopelessness in their communities when they don't have the foundation grounded in a cultural awareness of their existence (Robinson & Biran, 2006). Stubbins (2016) argued that it is important to teach African Americans about the history of Africans and Africa prior to Slavery. Environments and other intentional spaces like diasporic cultural immersion experiences that expose and teach African Americans about their history can provide the grounding for teaching African Americans about their history and—in some cases—to

(re)connect with their ancestral roots physically, culturally, and spiritually (Rowles J. & Duan C., 2012).

Diasporic Cultural Immersion Experiences

Immersion into African cultures is likely to be one of those transformative events that trigger African Americans' re-examination of racial/ethnic identity (Cross, 1971; Day-Vines, Barker & Exum, 1998; Lee & Green, 2016 & Tolliver, 2000). Cultural immersion programs or activities, either domestic or international, uproot individuals from their immediate physical, social, and cultural environments and immerse them into a different cultural environment (Sue & Sue, 2008; Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010). Cultural immersion provides individuals with consciousness-raising experiences that are often missing from familial settings, traditional classroom settings, and other didactic learning structures (Sue & Sue, 2008). These experiences often bring to light one's biases and stereotypes and encourage intentional self-reflection that allows immersed individuals to confront and recognize prejudice and racism they might have ignored or denied in familial cultural contexts (DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005; Pope-Davis, Breaux, & Liu, 1997; Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010).

For African Americans, immersion into African cultures provides a powerful opportunity to bridge a physical, psychological, and emotional gap to a cultural and historical heritage that has been broken and obscured by slavery, oppression, and the neglect of culturally appropriate teachings (Stubbins, 2016). Africa is the ancestral home of African Americans, a continent where Africans are the endemic majority and a place where the cultures that the ancestors of contemporary African Americans were taken lives on in modern form. For African Americans, cultural immersion in Africa provides poignant reminders of the cultural richness that was lost through slavery and 400 years of systemic oppression.

African Americans' experiences of cultural immersion in Africa can be tied to Cross' theory of racial/ethnic development and identity processes. More specifically, cultural immersion can be thought of as encompassing encounter and testing processes. Cross (1978) described the first of these processes as a person's initial discovery of an idea or event and the second as the examination of the way the new idea corresponds to previously held beliefs. Together, these processes drive the transformation of identity.

While there is strong theoretical support for an expected effect of African cultural immersion on the racial/ethnic identity of African Americans, very few peer-reviewed studies have directly examined this assumption. This is unsurprising as cultural immersion efforts that emanate from the US tend to not focus on Africa (Pires, 2000) or on African Americans (Dawson, 2000; Dessoff, 2006; Piers, 2000; Sutton & Rubin, 2010).

Following an extensive literature review, only four peer-reviewed studies could be found that examined, directly or indirectly, the impact of diasporic cultural immersion programs on African American identity. The search was conducted using Google Scholar, ProQuest, and other electronic databases with keyword searches including: cultural immersion, African American travel, study abroad to Africa, African American cultural immersion etc. These peer-reviewed studies are summarized in Table 1. As can be seen, the existing peer-reviewed literature consists of small-scale qualitative studies and one reflective essay. Collectively, this literature supports several significant conclusions (Day-Vines et al., 1998; Lee et al, 2010; Morgan et al., 2002 & Tolliver, 2000). First, exposure to cultural immersion experiences in Africa allows participants to disprove preconceived negative ideas and stereotypes about Africa. Second, being in Africa allowed for many of the participants to see race and racism in a way that they had not done before. Third, for African Americans, the experience of being in Africa created a heightened sense of psychological freedom of race because they were no longer a racial minority. Forth, the

liberation of race can cause personal critical reflection on race and racism that encourages very thoughtful conversations about Black/White power relations. Lastly, scholars also concluded that African Americans experience in Africa allowed them to explore their racial/ethnic identity and connect with their ancestral roots, developing a sense of belonging and connection to Africa and the African people.

Table 1: *Summary of Research Findings*

Citation	Sample	Methods	Purpose of the Study	Findings/Conclusions
Day-Vines, N., Barker, J., & Exum, H. (1998).	N=7 However, came from a subsample of 18	Naturalistic inquiry Data included participant observations, reflective essays, and a focus group	This study investigated the impact of a study abroad intervention conducted in West Africa using Phinney's (1993) model of adolescent ethnic identity development as the conceptual framework.	- Participation helped them identify the ethnic components of their identity and form a commitment to their race - Participants perceived cultural immersion as developing their perspectives about Africa, and dispelling myths and negative stereotypes they previously held - Diasporic travel stimulates psychosocial development in the areas of intercultural sensitivity and racial identity.
Lee, J., & Green, Q. (2016).	N=4 1 male, 3 women	Qualitative case study The four participants participated in semi-structured interviews ranging from one to two hours.	Explores the experiences of four Black undergraduate students who studied abroad in South Africa. Authors examined how this particular study abroad experience influenced Black undergraduate students' understanding of their Black	- Study abroad allows Blacks to view themselves positively in spaces with other Blacks both culturally and in areas of academics. - Blacks have an increased likelihood of learning about themselves and their identity, and often felt equipped to answer questions about their identity in a way that was absent before. - Participants felt a sense of belongingness to a home that

Table 1 (cont'd)

			identity, and increased their knowledge of South Africa and South Africans through collaborating with the community.	they've never physically been to.
Morgan, R. M., Mwegelo, D. T., & Turner, L. N. (2002).	N=3 3 women (1 African, 2 African American)	A narrative case study	Identify the perceptions of African American women toward a study abroad program in West Africa and to make recommendations to increase their participation.	● Cultural immersion experiences focusing on African and Blacks of the diaspora create opportunities for relationship building that closes gaps among diasporic groups. ● Increased recognition of commonalities that bring the two groups together is explored in ways not previously pursued.
Tolliver, D. E. (2000).	–	Reflective essay	Recorded experiences and observations from a three-week travel course to Ghana, West Africa. The focus of the course has been on culture, spirituality, healing, and history.	● Participants who traveled to Africa were able to critically reflect on race and racism in a way that can't be produced in the context of America.

16

Goals of the Current Study

This study builds upon the existing literature by qualitatively assessing whether African Americans who participated in a 10-day diasporic cultural immersion experience in Ghana, West Africa reported impacts to their African American identity and African self-consciousness. I designed the study to achieve two main goals.

1. Examine the manner in which participants' daily written reflections during diasporic cultural immersion in Ghana, West Africa describe changes in African American identity and African self-consciousness.

2. Examine whether these described changes align with Cross' theory of racial identity.

This study adds to the existing literature in four ways. First, it directly examines the influence that a diasporic cultural immersion program in Ghana, West Africa has on African American men and women's identity development and processes. Secondly, it focuses on people who are both college-age and career professionals. Previous investigations have tended to focus only on college students involved in study abroad programs. Thirdly, as this study seeks to examine racial identity, William Cross' racial identity model will be used as an exploratory investigation of one's developmental journey in a cultural immersive setting. And lastly, this study will examine how, if at all, participants' experiences align with African principles and values identified within African Self-Consciousness.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Ethical Issues Pertaining to Human Subjects

This study involves analysis of program evaluation information obtained by Anidaso 360, a non-profit organization that operates--among other initiatives--Sankofa 360, a 10-day diasporic cultural immersion program for African American adults. The program evaluation information, and the manner in which it was collected, are described in dedicated subsections below. The use of this program evaluation information for the current study was approved by the Michigan State University Institutional Review Board, which determined it to be "Not Human Subjects" research (Study ID: STUDY00002669). In order to protect participant anonymity, the electronic file housing the data used in this study does not include any identifying information, and is stored on a password protected physical drive in the property of the first author.

Participants

Recruitment. Men and women were informed about a cultural immersion experience, Sankofa 360, by friends or family members, and/or through various informational events. Anyone could apply for the experience on the website of Anidaso 360. The application required potential participants to provide two references: one from a peer and another from a mentor. Sankofa staff team members reviewed the applications. Some of the selection criteria included: (a) Prioritization of people that have limited or no travel to Africa, especially Ghana; (b) clearly articulated reasons for believing the experience would be a good fit for them; and (c) clearly articulated explanation of how the experience would help them grow spiritually, culturally, and professionally, and (d) ability to cover the cost of participation. [2]

---

[2] All individuals who applied were offered training in fund development to support their participation. All of the individuals who ultimately participated received the training except for one participant. One of the participants was able to cover the costs without any fundraising.

Sample. Anidaso 360 received a total of 35 completed applications. After the review process concluded, 23 applicants were offered acceptance into the Sankofa program based on the above-mentioned criteria. Following the acceptance, applicants were asked to formally accept the organization's offer to participate. Out of the 23 that accepted, 12 were able to participate. Some reasons why the other 11 accepted applicants declined to participate included having received other opportunities for the summer, inability to take time off work or summer school, etc. Twelve participants (5 men, 7 women) between the ages of 18-35 became a part of the Sankofa 360 cohort. All participants self-identified as African American or Black and were born within the United States. Four were undergraduate students and eight were career professionals. In order to protect participant anonymity, background data were not linked to responses. I describe participants with enough detail to establish transferability without compromising anonymity.

Measures/Instruments

Daily reflection questions. During the cultural immersion experience, participants were asked to provide written answers to daily reflection questions regarding significant events and critical reflections around race/ethnicity. Specific questions used in this study are: (1) how, if at all, did certain events remind you of your racial/ethnic identity? (2) give examples of what you learned today that made you reflect upon your race/ethnicity in a different way and (4) how were you challenged positively or negatively?

Procedures

Sankofa 360. After completing the recruitment and selection procedures, participants completed Sankofa 360, a cultural immersion experience focused on supporting their development of a positive racial/ethnic identity and African Self-Consciousness through a

short-term cultural immersion experience that exposed African Americans to Ghana, West Africa. The experience included culturally relevant classes and activities focused on African history, the slave trade, positive African and African American role models, and the ability to engage in critical dialogue around race. Participants also visit historical sites of the transatlantic slave trade.

Cultural immersion in Ghana is particularly important to African Americans because it was one of the main areas where West Africans were held upon being captured and enslaved. Thus, many African Americans are likely to have ancestry in Ghana and/or nearby West African countries. Travel to Ghana also offers African Americans an eye-opening experience in a country where, unlike the United States, Black people are the demographic and economic majority, and where they hold respected positions of power

Consent. Participants in Sankofa 360 provided consent for the use of program evaluation in two principal ways. First, they provided consent via an online participation, which included the following language:

"Anidaso 360 is very interested in better understanding your views about race and culture. In the case these responses will be used for publication purposes, your name will be deidentified from the data you provide. If you are uncomfortable with any of the questions you can feel free to skip or discontinue the survey at any time."

Additionally, during the first day of orientation in Ghana, participants were asked to give verbal consent. The verbal consent processes involved alerting participants that the information they provided would be used for program evaluation, that it would be deidentified in any public summary, that they had the right to decline participation and/or skip any questions that they may not feel comfortable answering.

Evaluation procedures. As part of the program's didactic approach, participants' written answers to reflection questions were collected daily. However, this study's analysis focused on answers provided from a subsection of program days selected because of their anticipated influence of identity and African Self-Consciousness. Decisions about likely impact were guided by the relevant literature and by program administrators' experience. This study includes data from the 2nd, 6th, 7th, and 9th day in Ghana. Day 2 is the first day spent interacting with Ghanaian people. During day 6, participants visited a site where enslaved people took their last bath before walking more than 40 miles to the slave dungeon, which is also visited on that day. Anecdotally, these site visits tended to spark a great deal of reflection. During day 7, participants attended an event that brings them together with Ghanaians to discuss their views of one another and to talk about the ways in which they may advocate for, and with, one another. On Day 9, participants visited the Kwame Nkrumah and W.E.B. DuBois Museums, which also tend to prompt much discussion and reflection.

Reflexivity

Qualitative analyses demand that researchers be deeply involved in extracting meaning from the data, which raises the possibility of introducing biases into the research process (Berger, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To combat the negative effects of these biases, qualitative analysts carefully examine their assumptions and approach, and consider the way these may influence the research. To ensure trustworthiness, qualitative researchers are upfront about these biases and assumptions.

As the primary analyst involved in the proposed study, I believe each person is uniquely designed to fulfill a certain calling or purpose in life. Unfortunately, there are institutional and societal injustices that often inhibit one's fulfillment of their life's purpose, especially for African Americans. African Americans are often told they don't belong in America and that their existence is due to a default and is inferior compared to other ethnic groups, especially Europeans. As an African American born in the United States, I often struggle to find peace, comfort, and acceptance, solely based on the color of my skin. Growing up I received conflicting messages. Although my parents validated my personhood and existence as a Black person and often told me I should be proud of my African American heritage, they also would say that in order to be recognized or acknowledged I would have to work twice as hard as White people. For them, White people only cared about themselves and did not have an invested interest in the affairs of Blacks. The negative messages seemed more salient in my mind and in some ways confirmed what I observed in low resourced, and distressed living environments populated by African Americans versus predominantly White environments.

Through high school and beyond, I often heard messages that made me question my significance as an African American. In school, I learned I was the descendant of slaves that

were considered property and not whole persons. Additionally, in school I would learn about civil rights and how Blacks were not allowed the same opportunities or resources as Whites. For example, African Americans had to drink from different water fountains, were not allowed to sit at the front of buses, and they were not allowed to live in the same neighborhoods or certain neighborhoods because of redlining.

As a young person, I began to research the positive contributions that African Americans made in society and I began to feel a sense of pride as an African American; I decided I would not allow negative messages from media or others to define and minimize my existence. Unfortunately, I still felt a gap and distance between myself and my African ancestors and thought it was important to know and accept that I was only a descendant of slaves and sought to learn about the contribution of Africans in Africa prior to the slave trade. In my quest for knowledge, I found a love for travel and had the opportunity to explore several countries in Africa. However, my travels to Ghana, West Africa really allowed me to find personal comfort as these experiences began to close a gap in my search for existence and identity. In Ghana, I experienced what it was like to be a part of a majority race and felt what it meant to not be judged by the color of my skin. I was able to connect to my ancestors' past through various site visits and personal encounters with the very places that my African ancestors had to endure due to the slave trade, and I was able to connect to the African people who called me son and brother.

As an African American, I believe these travel experiences influenced who I am and compelled me to find a sense of belonging and identity. Based on my discussion and research into identity, I believe that other African Americans also have an internal desire to know more about Africa and African people. As an African American, I have several foundational assumptions that I believe are crucial in forging an African American identity. First, the

23

foundation of African Americans' identity lies within the historical treatment and experiences of African Americans. Second, it is shortsighted to talk about African American identity without talking about African Americans' African heritage and biological ancestry. Third, in order to understand and develop a complete African American identity, African Americans must know more about their history prior to slavery. Fourth, an immersive experience on the continent of Africa awakens an African American's critical consciousness of race and identity. Lastly, researchers must allow African Americans to be the experts and share their lived experiences through qualitative inquiry.

Data Analysis

I designed the analytical strategy for this study to answer the question "How do participants describe changes in African American identity and African Self-Consciousness as a result of this cultural immersion experience?" To prepare the qualitative data for analysis, the daily reflection questions—which were either handwritten or typed by participants—were transcribed into an electronic word processing file. I then extracted themes and categories from these transcripts using a qualitative software called MAXQDA, and following an inductive two-cycle analytic approach outlined by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014). In this approach, each cycle included several steps, depending upon approach and qualitative data. The First Cycle included the creation of general inductive and deductive codes assigned to each question asked in the daily reflections. A second step of the First Cycle involved expanding codes from Step 1 into sub-codes that were more detailed and helped better understand racial/ethnic identity concepts. Sub-coding is defined as a type of second-order tag that gives detail to a coded excerpt (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana's 2014). These sub-codes were used to create a visual display of the emerging results.

The first step of the Second Cycle started with the list of codes generated in Step 2 of the First Cycle. This allowed me to start Pattern Coding. In Pattern Coding, I examined the data in the First Cycle, identifying a summary of the patterns. Pattern Coding serves four purposes: (1) Condense large portions of data into smaller, more manageable units, (2) Start analysis during data collection, (3) Create to a cognitive map or mental schema for relationships within data, and (4) Prepare cross-case analysis for multi-case studies by identifying common themes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

After careful consideration, I decided to pattern the themes by program components (see Appendix B for program schedule). This decision was made to support future researchers and

program developers/coordinators to better understand the impacts of specific components within a diasporic cultural immersion program, including impacts on African American identity development and African Self-Consciousness. One consequence of this decision is that some themes were repeated across categories. For example, the theme "Empowered to make a difference" was repeated in the categories "Exposure to Being in Africa" and "The Influence of Learning One's Own (African) History."

As I developed these themes and codes, I conducted two qualitative trustworthiness checks. The first involved a cross-check of results with a second researcher who served as an inquiry auditor, examining my processes for data collection, analysis, and the results, with a focus on verifying that the findings reflected the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The second trustworthiness check was conducted by former Sankofa 360 participants, a procedure known as "Member Checking." Participants provided four recommendations for revision: (1) remove subtheme "knowing history helps develop solutions to problems" from underneath theme "The influence of learning one's own (African) history;" (2) change theme title "General Random Experience" to "General Experiences;" (3) change theme title "feelings/emotions" to "expressed feelings and emotions;" and (4) remove a coded reflection "learning about my ancestors that were a part of the slave trade and all they had to endure was very saddening and heartbreaking" from subtheme "insider/outsider perspective/reflections" to "expressed feelings and emotions."

Table 2: *Summary of Qualitative Results*

Category	Results		
Theme Subtheme	**Program Days**	**CRI Phase (Stage)**	**Afrocentric Values/Principles**
General experiences of being in Africa (Ghana, West Africa)	-	-	-
Recognition of cultural similarities and differences	2 & 7	Encounter	1
A deeper understanding of the Ghanaian people	2, 6 & 7	Encounter	
Increased sense of identity & awareness/Black pride	2, 7 & 9	Immersion-Emersion	1
A sense of [Black] pride	2 & 9	Encounter	1
Changes/perceptions of self or other Blacks	2, 6 & 7	Encounter& Internalization-Commitment	1
Recognition of (racial) oppression	2	Encounter	4
Empowered to make a difference	-	-	-
Empowering to see people appreciate what they have	2	-	-
Challenged to change/contribute to positive changes	2 & 9	Internalization-Commitment	3 & 4
Ghanaian and African American relations	-	-	-
Ghanaian's and African American relations/Reconciliation	2 & 7	Internalization-Commitment	1 & 2
General experiences	6 & 9	-	-
Expressed feelings & emotions	2 & 7	-	-
Did not learn anything new	2 & 7	-	-
Ghanaian Community Immersion	-	-	-
Recognition of cultural similarities and differences	2 & 7	Encounter & Immersion-Emersion	1
An awareness of harmony and tight-knit communities	2	-	-
A sense of pride	2	Internalization-Commitment	1
Increased eagerness to learn more about the culture	2		1
Empowering to see people appreciate what they have	2	-	-
Black people are resilient	2	Encounter & Immersion-Emersion	1 & 4
Expressed feelings & emotions	2	-	-
Did not learn anything new	7	-	-

Table 2 (cont'd)

The Influence of Learning your (African) history	-	-	-
There is significance in learning Ghana's history	2	Encounter & Immersion-Emersion	1
Knowing history helps develop solutions to problems	6	Immersion-Emersion & Internalization-Commitment	1
Increased sense of identity & awareness/Black pride	2	Encounter & Immersion-Emersion	1
Realization about one's own (mis) education	2	Encounter	1
Empowered to make a difference	2 & 9	Internalization-Commitment	3 & 4
Recognition of (racial) oppression	2 & 6	Encounter	4
Black people are resilient	2	Encounter	4
Did not learn anything new	2	-	-
Realization of enslavement and colonialization influences	-	-	-
The realities of learning history vs. experiencing	6	Encounter	1
Changes/perceptions of self or other Blacks	6	Encounter & Internalization/Commitment	3
Insider/Outsider perspective	6	Pre-encounter & Encounter	1
Realization about one's own (mis) education	6	Encounter	1
A recognition of (racial) oppression	6	Encounter	4
A need for healing	6	-	-
The present-day impact of enslavement and colonialization	2 & 6	-	-
Disunity as a result of the slave trade	2, 6 & 7	Encounter	1
Black people are resilient	6	Encounter	4
Negative reactions to the influence of White people	6	Encounter	4
Expressed feelings & emotions	6	-	-
The exposure and impact of Black leaders	-	-	-
Acquired knowledge about historical Black leaders	9	Encounter	2
Creates pride/Black knowledge/Appreciation	9	Immersion-Emersion &	1 & 2
Empowered to make a difference/Change self	9	Internalization-Commitment	4
Leaders can hinder progress	9	-	-

Note. Afrocentric principles = 1. Identifies with a collective Black experience and African identity; 2. Acknowledges the necessity for Black ideals and institutions; 3. Makes a commitment to African American liberation; and 4. Recognizes racial oppression exist, and work to resist or combat oppositions.

28

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

I summarize my results in Table 2. As observed, I identified 24 themes and grouped them into 3 analytical categories linked to three higher-order program components: General experiences of being in Africa (Ghana, West Africa), Community Immersion, and The Influence of Learning One's Own (African) History. Results from each program component are presented in dedicated subsections.

General experiences of being in Africa (Ghana, West Africa)

Eight themes referred to participants' broad reactions to being in Ghana, unconnected to specific program components. These themes were: recognition of cultural similarities and differences, increased sense of identity and awareness/Black pride, recognition of (racial) oppression, empowered to make a difference, Ghanaian and African American relations, general experiences, expressed feelings and emotions, and did not learn anything new. Each theme is described in a subsection below.

Recognition of cultural similarities and differences

More than half of the participants compared cultural similarities and differences. For example, Participant 4 said, "…we have a lot of similars in culture to other groups of people from African descent... for example, the way Ghanaians view family versus the way we [African American's] view it." Participant 10 reported, "there are similarities in the cultures of African Americans and Africans in Ghana. An example of a similar behavior/cultural practice are savory meals and lip smacking when communicating."

Some participants reflected on the differences among cultures. For example, Participant 6 described African's and African Americans differing views of one another, "I learned that most

of the disconnect from Africans and African Americans is different views. While African Americans is more of an identity while Africans is more economic."

Increased sense of identity and awareness/Black pride

More than half of the participants reported an increased sense of awareness of their African American identity. Participant 10 said, "leading the discussion on racial pride vs. racial suicide caused me to reflect on my journey of identity. I have shamefully been embarrassed by my black Americans before and have grown to learn and support." Perhaps related to this increased sense of awareness of their African American identity, the experience of being in Africa led a participant to express several views about what their lives would have been like if they lived in Africa vs. America. For example, Participant 5 stated, "[I had] just an even bigger realization (more than I already knew) that I appreciate being in America! …Things in Ghana I've seen & learned today presented the question to myself: Am I grateful my ancestors were shipped to the U.S…. probably not the way it happened…but I'm not complaining that I'm in the U.S." Other participants felt differently. For instance, Participant 1 stated that "It would be so much easier being black in Africa. In America so much of our struggles are racial-based and in Africa race isn't a factor." participant 12 stated, "I felt like I belonged here but also felt like a foreigner."

Recognition of (racial) oppression

More than half of the participants made statements around oppression. Participant 2 stated, "I realized how much white people direct or indirect have to be a part of my life. It was heartbreaking." Another participant described strong emotions while thinking about what was taken from her and other African-descent people by stating "I also felt emotional due to the fact that much of [what] the African Americans could've had was stripped from us," [Participant 9].

30

Empowered to make a difference

A few participants made comments suggesting that cultural immersion empowered them to make a difference in their own lives or in the lives of others. Participant 8 stated "I was very humbled, many have very little, but they look so happy and welcoming." Participant 2 said, "I believe if blacks in the diaspora work in cohesion. We can create unimaginable power for our people." Participant 4 shared similar sentiments, "What I learned today challenged me to want to do more to help my Black brothers and sisters."

Ghanaian and African American relations

Most participants reported that conversations and informal interactions with Ghanaian people were encouraging. Participant 12 said, "…the interaction was helpful in beginning to build relationships and understand each other." Other participants suggested that the increased interactions between African Americans and Ghanaians lead people to feel more comfortable and understanding. For example, Participant 5 stated, "spending real time [with] the Ghanaian's helped normalize interacting [with] them and other Africans." Half of the participants stated that conversations and interactions improve relations by helping to tear down stereotypes that Ghanaians and African Americans have about each other. Participant 3 stated:

> "Today we had the opportunity to have a very well needed conversation with the Ghanaians to undo some long standing stereotypes, from both sides. The Q & A with them was very beneficial. Satisfaction was the most dominant emotions due to the fact that there needs to be progress & this is the start… Yes, I feel better about foreign relations moving forward. It seems possible, now more than ever, to build positive relationships with our brothers & sisters."

General experiences

A few participants shared general reactions that could not be categorized into other themes. For example, Participant 7 reflected on a team building exercise that required walking

31

across a bridge suspended 30 meters above the ground at Kakum National park, "walking across the bridge made me feel more connected to God."

Expressed feelings and emotions

Many participants expressed profound feelings and emotions associated with cultural immersion. For example, Participant 8 said, "I felt sad at first because I was like how can we be so misunderstood. It felt like I was on the other side of the skepticism. I felt like really weird."

I did not learn anything new

Participant 1 did not believe that general cultural immersion offered any new lessons. This participant stated, "I did not learn anything."

Ghanaian Community Immersion

Eight themes captured participants' reactions to being involved in a Ghanaian community and interacting with local people via activities, intentional conversations, and eating together. The themes were recognition of cultural similarities and differences, an awareness of harmony and tight-knit communities, a sense of pride, increased eagerness to learn more about the culture, empowering to see people appreciate what they have, Black people are resilient, expressed feelings and emotions, and did not learn anything new. I describe these themes in this section. Because the first three themes were reported by more than one participant, they are described in dedicated subsections. Themes tied to a single participant's comments are described thereafter.

Recognition of cultural similarities and differences

Multiple participants reflected on the impact of community immersion as highlighting differences and similarities. For example, Participant 10 stated, "the experience [with] the children of compassion [Compassion International is an organization that is dedicated to the

development of children living in some of the most impoverished communities] was an amazing experience that caused me to realize that even with different language or practice, we all share the ability to smile, laugh, dance and enjoy one another in fellowship."

Empowering to see people appreciate what they have

Two participants reported feeling empowered as a result of community immersion. For example, Participant 2 stated, "It was empowering seeing these people would didn't have much appreciate the things the[y] do have."

Emotions tied to community immersion

A few participants described a variety of feelings and emotions tied to community immersion: elation, empowerment, awe, joy, and heartbreak. Participant 2 said, "Words cannot express the awe and joy I had when we first went to New Ebu. It was empowering …"

Additional themes

Several additional themes were reported by only one participant. Participant 8 reflected on the *exemplary harmony* that exists among the Ghanaian people, "I think seeing the villages or communities impacted me. It was amazing to see how close and tight-knit they are, like, [they] are true brothers and sisters. Their relationships are a great representation of how we should be there for one another." Participant 9 experienced *a sense of pride* as an African American as a result of community immersion, "…The fact that our people are able to educate themselves and are motivated to be strong, confident, and display leadership. The school was ran by Africans for Africans. Respect/Honor." *Ghanaian Community immersion* drove Participant 1 to want to continue to engage with the Ghanaian people to learn more about their culture, "… after visiting the two communities I felt more eager to learn as much as possible about the culture." Finally,

Participant 12 did not believe that community immersion had an impact on their racial/ethnic identity by stating, "In regard to my racial/ethnic identity I don't recall anything."

The Influence of Learning One's Own (African) History

Eight themes referred broadly to participants' reactions to learning their own African history as a result of lectures and visits to historical and cultural sites. These were: there is significance in learning Ghana's history, increased sense of identity and awareness/Black pride, realization about one's own (mis) education, empowered to make a difference, recognition of (racial) oppression, did not learn anything new, realization of enslavement and colonialization influences, and the exposure and Impact of Black leaders. Each theme is described in a subsection below.

There is significance in learning Ghana's history

Two participants commented on the positive impacts of learning Ghana's history. Participant 3 reported that, "…it was a pleasure to learn the history of Ghana." Participant 12 expanded on the role of learning history in addressing the separation of people in the African diaspora, "what I've learned reminds me of the separation that exists within the African Diaspora. However, knowing the history helps develop the solution to the problem.

Increased sense of identity and awareness/Black pride

A few participants reported that learning about Ghana's history gave them a sense of awareness and pride. Participant 1 emphasized pride, "I especially loved hearing about the history of an African Country in depth. Having a deeper knowledge of a country in Africa knowing that my ancestors came from there gave me some pride." Participant 8 emphasized the of learning on identity, "I think when [the lecturer] was talking about the history of Ghana name

34

change, it hit me. I wouldn't say in a negative way. However, I would say I need to know more about who I am & my racial/ethnic (true) history."

Realization about one's own (mis) education

Participant 8 reported that learning Ghana's history created an awareness of the limitations of education, "I loved the history lesson. [It] brings truth to a lot of lies I've been told."

Empowered to make a difference

Multiple participants described how learning history influenced them to make a difference in their own lives and those of others. For example, after reading articles by Kwame Nkrumah and W.E.B. DuBois Participant 4 said, "I feel more confident about my ability to make a difference and change the world." Participant 11 described their[3] empowerment in the following way, "… [the] history session has me thinking I should be more active in encouraging others to learn more about slavery and the effects of it."

A recognition of (racial) oppression

A few participants described an increased awareness of the oppressive historical treatment of Black Americans and Africans. Participant 7 said, "I believe black Americans and African People have been oppressed from their history." Another participant linked this historical oppression to the resiliency that exists among Africans, Ghanaians specifically, and African Americans, "no matter the hardships we are placed in, we still seem to rise and do great things, that really encouraged me and reminds me that's a part of who I am" [Participant 8].

---

[3] Participant's demographic information was deidentified. Therefore, the third person plural pronoun "they" is used as a third person singular pronoun for unknown gender identities.

I did not learn anything new

Participant 11 was unable to recall if they had learned anything new. This participant stated, "I did not learn anything about my racial/ethnic identity. I felt a sense of contentment as my previous studies have aligned with what my interactions were today (i.e. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana independence, colonization)."

Realization of enslavement and colonialization influences

Exposure and learning related to enslavement and colonialism particularly impacted participants, who made several comments about these experiences. Because these comments could be grouped into subthemes that expand on aspects of this increased understanding, I describe each subtheme in a dedicated subsection.

The realities of learning history vs. experiencing. More than half of the participants made distinctions between the significance of reading about enslavement and being exposed to the various places where the trans-Atlantic slave trade started. For example, Participant 1 said, "I had always heard how bad my ancestors had it pre-middle passage, but after experiencing the castle and bath it hit and hurt me deeper." Participant 2 reflected on their experience by saying, I realized how awful an experience of being capture really was. I always had thoughts of the severity but to see firsthand is life changing."

Changes/perceptions of self or other diasporic Africans. Participants described this significant experience as changing their perceptions of diasporic African peoples. For example, Participant 4 stated, "I do view black people in a more positive light knowing that they had to be the strongest to endure all of that." Participant 8's comments were similar stating, "we are inventers. We are revolutionaries. We just have to survey the true side of history."

An Insider/Outsider perspective. A couple of participants reflected on other participants' reactions to historical and contemporary slavery. For example, Participant 3 said "… It's easy to pass judgment on Africans that captured & sold slaves and/or to question why others didn't help the slaves, but in reality, slavery goes on today and we don't generally react now with the same fervor as we proclaim we would have during slavery…"

Realization about one's own (mis) education. Half of the participants described that what they learned about slavery and colonialism was new or different from what they previously knew. One participant stated "my American education is a lie" [Participant 7]. Half of the participants commented on how learning about Africans' involvement in the slave trade was something they had not heard of. For example, Participant 5 wrote, "…I thought that colonizers were the only 'bad guys' in the horrible part of history, but Africans were to blame too". Participant 9 offered similar comments, "…Africans helped other Africans become slaves, although the conditions of the trans-Atlantic slave trade could not have been predicted".

Recognition of historical (racial) oppression. Participant 8 wrote about the effect that learning about enslavement and colonialism had on their understanding of the need for healing from historical racial oppression:

"we can't fix issues until we address/correct a harm we have been subjected

to…I think one thing I learned is we need healing in our racial identity.

There are so many different constructs but there are also so many things that

have kept our racial identity oppressed. We really need healing."

The present-day impact of enslavement and colonialism. A few participants reflected upon the present-day realities of the slave trade and colonial influences. For example, Participant 5 wrote, "we all live by a lot of remaining British influences, we all have hated on our 'brothers &

sisters' right next to us because of colonialism at some point…" Almost half of the participants specifically focused on disunity and separation as a current reality among people of African descent that is influenced by enslavement and colonialism. Several participants wrote extensively about this point. Participant 8 wrote:

"hearing about a lot of the activities that occurred in the slave castle showed me how much activities are passed generationally. A lot of the competition, hatred, & hurt we inflict on other black people comes from what was passed down from the slave trade. The abuse & rape that occurred to the female slaves I can see generationally in my own family."

Participant 6 stated, "When I learned about the lighter skin babies helped continue the slave trade, it made me feel like there is a separation in the black race." Participant 1's comments were similar, "We've been mistreated, lied to, and manipulated for hundreds of years. We've been pitted against each [other], stripped of our resources and voice, and still carry a mentality taught to us hindering us from unity". Participant 2 put it more succinctly, "I realized how separated black diaspora really is. We have truly been dispersed and its given us a disadvantage in uplifting ourselves".

Black people are resilient. As participants reflected about oppression and slavery's effects on African Americans today, a few participants described Black people as being resilient. For example, Participant 8 said, "I now see even in the pain, strength, was birthed. Our racial identity is seen as weak, but we are so much more, we are resilient." Participant 3 added, "The slaves were subjected to some pretty harsh realities & walking for miles on end, mistreated & survived through to "emancipation" and we're still here!".

Negative reactions to the influences of White people. A few participants commented on their reactions to White people's roles. Participant 2 focused on a current reaction, "I was challenged by seeing white people making themselves at home in the slave castle. It didn't quite sit right with me. I felt intruders were there. I didn't believe they had the best interest of the people in the community. Participant 12 discussed both historical and present contexts, "learned about the slave trade and last bath. Very emotional experience that left me angry to know that white [people] did those things and still feel righteous is beyond my understanding.".

Expressed feelings and emotions. More than half of the participants described a range of feelings and emotions tied to their learning about, and visiting, historical enslavement sites. These emotions included empathy, anger, beyond my understanding, upset, sorrowful, hurt, sad, heartbreaking, bittersweet and challenged. Participant 9's comments are illustrative, "the gruesome nature of slavery & conditions they endured caused me to feel very upset and sorrowful." Participant 2 said, "seeing the dungeons with no ventilation and feces and urine and blood being there in the midst of this unsanitary, hot prison, saddens and angers me at the same time. A couple of participants were unable to describe their emotions. For example, Participant 8 said, "today was extremely emotional! We experienced feelings that can't even be described." Participant 6 said, "the feelings had me more speechless than anything.

The exposure and impact of historical Black leaders

Most participants reflected critically on their readings about, and visits to museums dedicated to, W.E.B DuBois and Kwame Nkrumah. Two participants focused on the new information they learned. For example, Participant 6 stated "I learned that W.E.B Dubois had a very extensive library and many academic merits which is very important for our current students that are African American to know." More than half of the participants described a

sense of increased awareness and pride resulting from their exposure to these Black leaders. For example, one participant said "I felt empowered. I loved learning about the contributions W.E.B. DuBois and Kwame made to society. They changed so many things in their few years of life" [Participant 8]. Participant 1 stated "I felt pride in seeing the achievements of fellow black people and fellow [fraternal] Greeks."

Two participants described how these experiences inspired them to create change. For example, Participant 10 said, "I learned from this that I have the power to make a difference, just as they did." Participant 8 stated it this way, "they changed so many things in their few years of life. It inspires me to know that I can do the same." While many participants described positive reflections of the historical leaders, other participants reflected on some of the leaders' shortcomings. For example, Participant 2 said, "…our heroes sometimes can hinder empowerment through selfishness."

Expressed feelings and emotions. Many participants shared very similar feelings and emotions of gratitude, empowerment, and associated with their readings and visits of historical Black leaders. For example, Participant 6 said, "today [I] learned that African Americans or Pan-African leaders were continuously active in connecting in the entire diaspora, which is empowering."

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to better understand the influence of a diasporic cultural immersion program to Ghana, West Africa on African American identity development and processes. Principles and theories of African Self-Consciousness and Cross' four stages of racial identity guided my examination of participants' daily written reflections. I had two overarching goals: (1) examine the manner in which participants' daily written reflections, during diasporic cultural immersion in Ghana, describe changes in African American identity and African self-consciousness and (2), examine whether these described changes align with Cross' theory of racial identity. In this section, I will provide critical reflections on both goals, new insights, general discussion of prior research on the effects of racial identity development and its role in cultural immersion experiences, and future research directions. These reflections are followed by limitations and conclusion.

Goal 1: Diasporic Immersion Influence on African American Identity and African Self-Consciousness

According to participants' reflections, cultural diasporic immersion to Ghana influenced African American identity and African Self-Consciousness. Although researchers tend to examine African American identity and African Self-Consciousness as independent constructs, participants' narratives describe these as one and the same. Specifically, these narratives describe the internal cognitive processes associated with African Self-Consciousness as related to behaviors that are consistent with Cross' stages of identity development. This link between African American identity and African Self-Consciousness highlights a Pan-African component.

Pan-African Perspective

Pan-Africanism is a perspective that encourages the strengthening and solidarity of ethnic groups of African descent for economic, political, and social gains (Adi & Sherwood, 2003). Participants' written reflections often included this perspective. Although most participants may have believed, prior to their immersion experience, that African Americans should work together as one collective unit, their exposure to Africans in Africa helped to expand their local ideas on unity to a global/ Pan-African solidarity. For example, Participant 8 stated, "it was amazing to see how close and tight knit they [Ghanaians] are, like, they are true brothers and sisters. Their relationships are a great representation of how we should be there for one another." Participant 2's reflections also addressed Pan-Africanism, "I believe if blacks in the diaspora work in cohesion we can create unimaginable power for our people."

Scholars that have focused on African American identity development have rarely directly made the connection between the development of identity and a Pan-African perspective; nor have they linked this connection to diasporic cultural immersion travels (Cross 1978; Marks et al., 2004; Phinney 1992). If replicated in future research, the finding that diasporic cultural travel facilitates an African American identity aligned with African self-consciousness and Pan-Africanism has important implications for social and political relations between African Americans and other groups of African descent. For example, African Americans who experience diasporic cultural immersion may be expected to have a less stereotyped understanding of other African groups of the diaspora, an increased self-regard for their own ethnic group, and a stronger commitment to Black liberation.

The impact of Pan-Africanism is not a novel idea and has been part of many organizations' agenda for equality and equity. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Frederick Douglass,

Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Kwame Nkrumah, and W.E.B. DuBois, among many other African and African American scholars, spoke of Pan-Africanism as the response to solidarity and social injustices (Schramm, 2004). DuBois played a pivotal role in organizing Pan-African conferences starting in the early 1900's (Dubois, 1968; Kendhammer, 2007; Romero, 1976). The main goal of the conferences was to encourage African Americans to express and protest for the concerns and ill-treatment of one another (Contee, 1972; Kendhammer, 2007). In the resolution of the fourth national Congress, DuBois mentioned, among other things that, "Negroes everywhere need: A voice in their own government, native rights to the land and its natural resources, and modern education for all children" (DuBois 1927, as cited in Kendhammer, 2007 p. 57). Unfortunately, Pan-Africanism is not discussed much in contemporary literature although it seems to have an impact on the minds of African Americans today as an important role in Black liberation and African American identity processes.

To completely account for African American identity, future studies must consider African American's ancestral, geographical, and historical links to Africa. More specifically, researchers might continue to develop an understanding on the development of Pan-Africanism in the context of Cross' Racial Identity stages, especially internalization-commitment. The internalization-commitment stage acknowledges a person's desires to contribute to the uplifting of African decent people (Cross 1971, 1978, 1991).

Study findings also support future research into the role of diasporic cultural immersion in these processes. Such research would be enabled by studies that establish more appropriate qualitative and quantitative measures for the influence of diasporic immersion travels on African Americans identity. Most of the existing research that captures the experiences of African Americans' involvement in diasporic travel is qualitative (Day-Vines et al., 1998; Lee et al.,

2016; Morgan et al., 2002; Tolliver, 2000). However, there are quantitative measures of racial/ethnic identity and African self-consciousness (Baldwin, 1985; Bhagwat et al., 2012; Helms & Parham, 1990; Phinney, 1992; Sellers, 2013; Vandiver et al., 2002). If these measures are used or adapted appropriately, the possibilities to expand our current knowledge for the influence of cultural diasporic immersion travels on African Americans identity development and processes can be achieved.

Goal 2: Diasporic Cultural Immersion and Cross' Racial Identity Theory

The second goal of this study was to examine whether participants' descriptions of changes in African American Identity and African Self-Consciousness aligned with Cross' theory of racial identity development. Black racial identity, as assessed by Cross, develops over four stages: (1) *Pre-encounter; (2), Encounter, (3), Immersion-Emersion, and (4) Internalization-Commitment.* To achieve the study's second goal, I attempted to categorize each theme that I extracted during the analyses into Cross' four stages of identity and was able to successfully categorize almost 2/3rds of the themes that I extracted. In Table 3, I summarize this categorization. As summarized, I identified categories and themes aligned with Cross' four stages of identity across the diasporic cultural immersion's programmatic components.

I only assigned one theme, insider/outsider perspective to Cross' *Pre-encounter* stage, which is defined by a lack of acceptance or exposure to ideals or people that challenges one's previously held ideals of race (Cross 1971, 1978, 1991). During this stage, African Americans subconsciously hold onto white supremacist ideals and values (Cross 1971, 1978, 1991). The theme, insider/outsider perspective, captures participants' reflections acknowledging unknown facts and misinformation--about African Americans, Africans, or Ghanaians—previously thought to be true.

Perhaps there are not more themes categorized as *Pre-encounter* because of self-

selection of participants with better-explored African American identities. Participants

voluntarily applied for Sankofa 360, and in their applications had to discuss the importance of

a positive racial identity and how travel to Ghana could help develop them spiritually,

culturally, and professionally. Therefore, most participants likely already saw a racial ethnic

identity as being important prior to their travel to Ghana.

Table 3: *Cross' Racial Identity Thematic Analysis*

PRE-ENCOUNTER	
Realization of enslavement and colonialization influences	Insider/Outsider perspective/reflections
ENCOUNTER	
General experiences of being in Africa (Ghana, West Africa)	Recognition of cultural similarities and differences
	A deeper understanding of the Ghanaian people
	A sense of [Black] pride
	Recognition of (racial) oppression
Ghanaian Community Immersion	Recognition of cultural similarities and differences
	Black people are resilient
The influence of learning one's own (African) history	There is significance in learning Ghana's history
	Increased sense of identity & awareness/Black pride
	Realization about one's own (mis) education
	Recognition of (racial) oppression
	Black people are resilient
Realization of enslavement and colonial influences	The realities of learning history vs. experiencing
	Changes/perceptions of self or other Blacks
	Insider/Outsider perspective
	Realization about one's own (mis) education
	A recognition of (racial) oppression
	Disunity as a result of the slave trade
	Black people are resilient
	Negative reactions to the influences of White people
The Exposure and Impact of Black leaders	Acquired knowledge about historical Black leaders
IMMERSION-EMERSION	
General experiences of being in Africa (Ghana, West Africa)	Increased sense of identity & awareness/Black pride

Table 3 (cont'd)

Ghanaian Community Immersion	Recognition of cultural similarities and differences
	Black people are resilient
The influence of learning (Your) African history	There is significance in learning Ghana's history
	Knowing history helps develop solutions to problems
	Increased sense of identity & awareness/Black pride
Realization of enslavement and colonialization influences	---
The exposure and Impact of Black leaders	Creates pride/Black knowledge/Appreciation
INTERNALIZATION-COMMITMENT	
General experiences of being in Africa (Ghana, West Africa)	Changes/perceptions of self or other Blacks
	Empowered to make a difference
	Challenged to change/contribute to positive changes
	Ghanaian's and African American relations/Reconciliation
Ghanaian Community Immersion	A sense of pride
The influence of learning (Your) African history	Knowing history helps develop solutions to problems
	Empowered to make a difference
Realization of enslavement and colonialization influences	Changes/perceptions of self or other Blacks
The exposure and Impact of Black leaders	Empowered to make a difference/Change self

Most of the themes and categories that I extracted from participants' reflections aligned with Cross' *Encounter stage*, which describes the impact of first encounters that foster a deeper perspective on participants' identity (Cross 1971, 1978, 1991). These themes and categories highlight a profound knowledge that occurs as participants distinguish between the impact of learning history from afar and experiencing it up close. The concentration of themes within the encounter stage speaks to the influence of cultural diasporic encounters on the identity of African Americans. The themes categorized within this stage also describe various specific encounters that impacted participants' identity, including being in Ghana; being

exposed to culturally relevant curriculum; and experiencing the Ghanaian culture more intimately.

The remaining themes and categories were about equally likely to be categorized into Cross' third stage, *Immersion-Emersion,* as they were to be categorized into the fourth stage, *Internalization-Commitment.* The first of these stages applies to African Americans making efforts to seek out others of similar backgrounds with the intention of learning about a shared culture and history (Cross 1971, 1978, 1991). The themes and categories assigned to this stage described participants' increased understanding of themselves—and increased pride in their race—associated with immersion in the Ghanaian community, making cultural observations, and being exposed to the history that they shared with Ghanaians.

During the last stage of Cross' model, *Internalization-Commitment,* African Americans fully embrace their Black identity and commit to working on behalf of African descent people for liberation, which is a Pan-African value (Cross 1971, 1978, 1991). The themes and categories assigned to this stage reflected a higher self-regard for self as they made ancestral, historical, and geographical connections to Africa and the Ghanaian people. Participants reported that their experiences with Ghanaians, and the exposure to history and the Ghanaian culture allowed them to view Ghanaians more positively and have a deeper hope for relational connections. Participants described the internalization of these experiences as inspiring personal commitments to change themselves and, their communities.

Overall, participants' descriptions of changes in African American identity and African Self-Consciousness during diasporic cultural travel aligned with Cross' theory of racial identity development. This finding has important implications for the study and practice of diasporic cultural travel among African Americans. Generally, it highlights the importance

of evaluating the effects of diasporic cultural immersion activities on African American

identity. Specifically, it suggests that these evaluation efforts would be stronger if scholars and

practitioners expand their understanding of African American identity beyond the American

experience. Finally, given the limitations of the current study—and of the literature to date—

it points to the importance of conducting longitudinal studies to examine impacts that may

occur after a cultural immersion experience (e.g., African Americans involvement in Black

liberation). Adherence to these recommendations across various programs, especially

considering the low or unreported numbers of African Americans that travel to Africa, would

significantly increase allowing for a more representative sample and broader conclusions for

the influence of diasporic cultural immersion experiences on African American identity.[4]

---

[4] There are several benefits for African Americans having an increased positive racial/ethnic
identity (Settles, Navarrete, Abdou, Pagano & Sidanius, 2010; Smith et al., 2011; Stubbins,
2016). As discussed in the literature review, a few of these benefits include belongingness;
increased self-esteem; and resilience in the face of racism. These outcomes are a result of
African American identity studied within the context of America. Therefore, there is little
research to explain how positive outcomes will be manifested when African American identity is
developed outside of the United States. While this question was not a focus of the current study,
I briefly explored how these same positive outcomes showed-up and were discussed among
Sankofa participants in an international context. (See Appendix D for a discussion on how
positive outcomes of developing a positive racial identity show-up in an international context
among Sankofa participants in Ghana, West Africa).

Limitations

The findings of the current study must be considered alongside its limitations. A first set of limitations is associated with the sample. The sample is comprised of individuals who self-selected into the intervention. Given the selection criteria, these individuals are likely to have had existing interests in their racial/ethnic identity and an immersion experience to Africa. Future studies might examine whether these findings apply to other groups of African Americans. For instance, they may randomly assign African American participants to attend either diasporic cultural programs or other programs. One particularly important group to study may be African American individuals who fall within Cross' (1991) *Pre-encounter* stage of Black racial identity development. According to Cross (1991), *Pre-encounter* individuals have not been exposed to, or have yet to internalize, racial ideologies that challenge their existing beliefs of race and ethnicity. Identifying these individuals to be a part of a cultural immersion program will further assist scholars to identity how, if at all, the effectiveness of a program is in developing a positive African American identity. I would expect that a diasporic cultural immersion experience would be a transformative one, especially for African Americans that have never traveled to the continent of Africa or encountered people or events that challenges their preconceived ideas of race and identity.

There are also limitations associated with the study design and the way data were gathered in this study. First, the goals of this study were exploratory allowing participants to recall their experiences and describe changes in their racial/ethnic ideals or beliefs as a result of the experience. While their perceptions are a direct reflection of their experiences, it is important that causative relationships with their experiences are not concluded. Second, participants' responses to the daily reflection questions were all self-reported which prevents

49

them from being independently verified. However, participants are asked to reflect on their experiences no more than one day following the previous day's events. This study occurred on African American college students and career professionals who had a desire to explore their racial/ethnic identity within a specific context. Therefore, conclusions cannot be generalized to diasporic immersion experiences in other parts of Africa or the world. Future researchers could be directed toward the differential impact of racial/ethnic identity development and African Self-Consciousness when interventions take place in various geographical locations within the diaspora (e.g. the Caribbean vs. West Africa).

Conclusion

Despite the study's limitations, the findings support the assertion that diasporic cultural immersion program for African Americans plays a significant role in the development of African Americans' identity. Additionally, results also support the assertion that—in the context of diasporic cultural immersion—African American identity development is inclusive of African Self-Consciousness and Pan-African values. It is important to note that, in this study, the influence diasporic cultural immersion has on African American identity is a result of a true immersive program with three program components, (1) General experiences of being in Africa (Ghana, West Africa, (2) Ghanaian Community Immersion, and (3) The influence of learning one's own (African) history, and not as a sole function of being in Ghana, West Africa. The insights from this study can inform future research into the influence of diasporic cultural immersion on African American identity, African Self-Consciousness, and Pan-Africanism. Individually and collectively, these constructs hold tremendous promise for lessening the negative outcomes of historical trauma and increasing well-being among African Americans psychologically, behaviorally, and socially.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Daily Reflection Questions

Day:

1. As you reflect on today's experiences and activities what, if anything, did you learn about your racial/ethnic identity? Please express any feelings, of emotions you felt.

2. Give one or two examples of things that you learned or experienced today that has made you reflect upon your own racial/ethnic identity in a different way?

3. Were there any things heard or learned today that challenged (positively or negatively) how you thought about your own race/ethnicity or?

Appendix B

Sankofa 360 Cultural Immersion Itinerary

Saturday June 2, 2018	*Travel Day*
Sankofa Actperience Dates	**TENTATIVE ITENERARY**
Sunday June 3, 2018	**Arrive to Kotoka Airport at 8am** **Depart for Accra to Cape Coast** • Lunch **Evening Session:** • Welcome • Processing time • Expectations • Risk Management • Schedule Overview • **Short Session:** Our bodies are a temple? **Dinner**
Monday June 4, 2018	**Morning** • **Workout** 6:30-7:30am • **Breakfast** 9-10am **Morning Session:** 10-11:30am • Identity in Christ Devotional • **Lecture:** History of Ghana (Introduction of Twi)
	Afternoon **Community Engagement** 12:00-4:30pm • Tour Apewosika (Grinding Mill) • Tour New Ebu-Kofi tells us about Compassion • Meet with Community Leaders @ New Ebu • Meet with Chief of New Ebu • Overview of the work we will be doing over the next couple of days. **Lunch** • People/Community Observation Activity
	Dinner (On Campus)
	Evening Session: 6:30-8pm • Group

	Processing Time
Tuesday June 5, 2018	**Morning** **Workout** 6:30-7:30am **Breakfast** 9am-10:00am **Morning Session:** 10-11:30am • Identity in Christ Devotional • **Lecture:** Twi language Class
	Afternoon: 12:00-4:30pm **Community Engagement:** New Ebu Lunch
	Dinner (On Campus)
	Evening Session: 6:30-8:00pm Individual men and Women's time
Wednesday June 6, 2018	**Morning** Workout 6:30-7:30am Breakfast 9am-10:00am **Morning Session: 10-11:30am** • Identity in Christ Devotional • **Facilitated Reading:** Voluntary and Involuntary Minorities (John Ogbu) **Afternoon: 12:00-4:30pm** **Community Engagement**: New Ebu **Evening Session: 6:30-8:00pm** Individual men and women's time
Thursday June 7, 2018	**Morning** **Workout** 6:30-7:30 **Breakfast** 9am-10:00am **Morning Session: (Excursion):** • Identity in Christ Devotional • **Excursion:** Kakum National Park/Lunch
	Lunch: Out as a group
	Dinner: On Campus
	Evening Session: 6:30-8:00pm

	Individual men and women's time

Friday June 8, 2018	**Workout** 6:30-7:30am
	Breakfast 9am-10:00am
	
	Morning Session: 10-11:30pm
	  • Identity in Christ Devotional
	  • **Lecture:** Colonialism/Slave talk

	Afternoon Excursion:
	  • Assin Manso (Processing time)
	  • Elmina Slave Castle Tour (Processing time)

	Lunch: Out as a group
	Evening Session: 6:30-8:00pm • Individual men and women's time

Saturday June 9, 2018	**Morning:**
	  • Workout: No group workout
	  • Breakfast:

	Lunch (On Campus)

	Afternoon/Evening Session:
	
	 Unite Conference
	(1:45-6:30pm)
	  • The Unite conference will focus on building leaders of African descent through strategic planning and culturally explorative conversations that breakdown stereotypes. Organizers envision unity among Africans and Africans of the diaspora via cross-cultural engagement.
	        Reading: Black Vs. Black

Sunday June 10, 2018	**Morning:**
	  • **Workout:** No group workout
	  • **Breakfast:** No group breakfast
	
	          Church

	Depart Cape Coast for Accra
	Staff Meeting
	Dinner (Out as a group)

	Late Night Session:
	  • Brief Accra Orientation
	  • Group Prayer and Reflection time

**ACCRA AGENDA**

Monday June 11, 2018	**Workout** 6:30-7:30am
	Breakfast 9-10am
	
	Morning Session:
	   • Identity in Christ Devotional
	   • **Facilitated reading:** Dubois/Kwame Nkrumah

	Afternoon Excursion:
	   • Dubois Center
	   • Kwame Nkrumah memorial

	Lunch: Out as a group
	Dinner: On campus
	Evening Session: Men & women's leadership development time or large group topic processing time

Tuesday June 12, 2018	**Morning:**
	Workout 6:30-7:30am
	Breakfast 9am-10am
	
	Morning Session:
	   • Identity in Christ Devotional
	   • **Facilitated Reading:** Black Power Black Theology

	Lunch: On Campus
	Afternoon • Shopping at Art Centre

	Evening Celebration: 6-10pm
	   • Planned activities
	   • Group Photo (NOTE)

Wednesday June 13, 2018	**Workout 6:30-7:30am**
	Breakfast 9am-10am
	
	Morning Session (PART I): 10:00-11:00pm
	   • **Devotional:** (Tim Swain)
	   • Next Steps: Your next steps as a participant
	   • Ghana's Strategic development plan
	   • Becoming Ghanaian Citizens (The African American Ghanaian Association
	   • Share reunion dates (Impact Conference)
	   • What you do when you get back home (Ambassador program) • Recruit for Anidaso 360 Volunteers

	Morning/Afternoon Session (PART II): 11:05-1:15
	• Reentry Session • Evaluations
	Lunch: On Campus **REST OF AFTERNOON IS FREE**
Depart to Airport at 6:30pm	

Appendix C

UNITE Conference Agenda

Assistants: Put supplies on tables (see supply list in supply column), get walls ready (tear tape, put up signs), organize supplies for each table. Rome/Tony will give instructions on site.

Agenda	supplies	time
Evaluation **Assistants: As participants walk in have them to fill out the evaluation**	Evaluations Pens	Pre-Meeting
Opening by Local and Foreign facilitators (Rome & Tony) • Prayer • Purpose of today (why we are here; what we hope to accomplish) • Thanks for coming • Note that goal is to take what emerges today and work to gain perspectives and break down stereotypes.		2:00-2:08
Overview of the Day (Person) • What we hope to accomplish by end of the day • How today's work will be used to move the work forward • Briefly go over agenda (very broad)		2:08-2:15
Find Someone Who activity **Give instructions** • To get ready for the day – good to know who is in the room, get ourselves ready for honest conversations and reflections. • NOTE – STILL NEED TO RECREATE ACTIVITY TO REFLECT BOTH CULTURES.	Find Someone Who activity printed in two different colors Two giveaways: One for American and other for Ghanaian (Black Panther?)	2:15-2:35

Introduce speaker (Dr. Edmund Abaka) --- Department of History **Question and Answer**	Ask speaker if he has any audio-visual needs/Will room accommoda te that?	2:35-3:25
BREAK		3:25-3:30
Introduction of next section: **My Experience—What I wish you knew about us** • American Context	2 stacks of different colored index cards	3:25-3:35
• Ghanaian Context Assistants: Pass out index cards	Need to create prompts	
Question Exchange: American and Ghanaian facilitator • **Rules**		3:35-4:35
Shared vision/understanding • Imagine we have done it – we have created a world where all people of the diaspora are connected…stats (working together) • What would it look like? • Participants write their brainstorming ideas on ½ sheets of white paper in middle of table. Assistants: Walk around to the tables to make sure everyone understand the instructions and is working on this process.		4:35-5:00
My Experience—What I wish you knew about us • American Context • Ghanaian Context		5:00-5:10
I pledge/commit exercise	100 sheet ½ white paper	5:10-5:20
Closing and Next Steps • Leaders give closing remarks by: o summarizing the great work/dialogue that was accomplished during the day o Describing what they can expect after this (meeting summary, updates, etc.)		5:20-5:30
Family Style Dinner		5:30

Appendix D

The Outcomes of a Positive African American Identity in an International Context

Current study findings from participants' written reflections aligned with those of prior research suggesting that African American identity development improves broad effects on identity and psychological well-being; resiliency in the face of racism; self-esteem; and belongingness and social support. Below is a general discussion of how prior research and current findings substantiate identity processes even in an international cultural immersion experience.

Broad effects on Identity and psychological well-being

Presented throughout this study are multiple descriptions of participants' increased sense of identity and psychological well-being. For example, Participant 7 stated, "in regards to my identity, today has allowed me to see how much stronger we are." While this study did not assess psychological well-being directly, research would suggest that a sense of self pride helps to protect racial-minority groups from increased psychological distress (Pierre & Mahalik, 2005). An increased exposure to one's ancestral and historical past increases identity and improves psychological well-being (Martin, 2008; Stubbins, 2016). Participants' descriptive responses demonstrate an exposure to historical knowledge comes a critical awareness tied to one's identity. This was true whether what participants learned were positive or negative realities of history. Additionally, culturally appropriate environments increase African Americans' psychological, emotional, and spiritual development (Tolliver, 2000).

A point of direction for future researchers would be a better understanding of how the components of cultural diasporic experiences directly influence psychological well-being. Additionally, a future direction for researcher's would be to measure African Americans' levels

of distress, including levels of historical trauma pre and post immersion programs to better assess psychological well-being.

Resilience in the Face of Racism

An increased positive identity creates a buffer against racism (Brown et al., 2011; Martin, 2008; Stubbins, 2016). Participants' exposure to Ghana, a country where Blacks are in the economic and political majority creates an awareness and sense of self that is unknown of within America (Gaines, Eshun & Matory, 2012; Haviser & MacDonald, 2016). For example, Participant 1 stated, "it would be so much easier being black in Africa. In America so much of our struggles are racial-based and in Africa race isn't a factor." Being Black in America versus being Black in Africa creates an internal tension among African Americans as they reflect on what could have been but is not because of the influences of colonialism.

Within the US, African Americans' resiliency can be strengthened with culturally appropriate lessons that focus on the lives of their ancestors, what they endured, and the positive contributions of Africans and African Americans past and present (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014; Cunningham & Kliewer, 2005; Demo & Hughes, 1990; Martin, 2008). Therefore, being able to better understand how this resiliency is influenced by a strong positive identity would be significant in changing the mindset and landscape of African American communities.

Self-esteem

A positive racial identity is strongly correlated with an increased positive self-esteem, often presented as a positive self-regard for oneself and others (Mandara et al., 2009; Settles et al., 2010; Stubbins, 2016). The cultural immersion experience often allowed for an increased awareness of racial pride. For example, Participant 10 stated, "my experience has just helped me to be more comfortable in my blackness." Participant 12, when asked what they learned about

61

their racial/ethnic identity stated, "there is power in knowing who you are… a sense of pride can be established." The written reflections that elicited the most responses around racial pride and positive self-regard included: the exposures to Africa, the Ghanaian people, and increased cultural and historical knowledge among groups of African descent.

For African Americans to gain a positive self-esteem, an increase in positive affirmations, especially those from and about others within their ethnic group helps to create a sense of pride in one's identity (Stubbins, 2016). Therefore, it is important that scholars focused on self-esteem recognize the cultural implications of the construct. Additionally, it is important for scholars conduct research to better understand what types of physical spaces and historical literature are needed to deepen one's understanding of self.

Belongingness and Social Support

According to African American identity theorists, African Americans seek to find others within their racial/ethnic group they can identify with (Oyserman et al.2007; Smith et al., 2011). The behaviors of comparing oneself to the Ghanaians were described in the reflections of the participants. For example, Participant 12 stated, "I felt like I belonged here but also like a foreigner." It is not surprising that the participants made these types of observations because the purpose of their travel was to connect with the African people. Participants would even make "we" statements when discussing issues that were relevant to themselves and the Ghanaians. Consequently, the idea of belonging and an increased social support helps to validate this inner desire of connection with others of the diaspora (Oyserman et al., 2007).

To better understand African American identity, future scholars could explore what it is that Africans of the diaspora are looking for to help validate their identity among one another. Is it a shared story of oppression? A collective experience of being a person of color? A way of

validating oneself or their behaviors to learn about themselves and further develop their own

identity? Once explored, these answers can better inform processes of Black Racial identity,

inclusive of African Self-Consciousness.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Adams-Bass, V. N., Stevenson, H. C., & Kotzin, D. S. (2014). Measuring the meaning of Black media stereotypes and their relationship to the racial identity, Black history knowledge, and racial socialization of African American youth. *Journal of Black Studies*, *45*(5), 367-395.

Adi, H., & Sherwood, M. (2003). *Pan-African History: Political figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787*. Routledge.

African American [Def.1]. (n.d.). *Merriam-Webster Online.* In Merriam-Webster. Retrieved April 25, 2018, from https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/African American.

Agyemang, C., Bhopal, R., & Bruijnzeels, M. (2005). Negro, Black, Black African, African Caribbean, African American or what? Labeling African origin populations in the health arena in the 21st century. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, *59*(12), 1014-1018.

Baldwin, J. A., & Bell, Y. R. (1985). The African self-consciousness scale: An Africentric personality questionnaire. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, *9*(2), 61.

Baldwin, J. A., Duncan, J. A., & Bell, Y. R. (1987). Assessment of African self-consciousness among Black students from two college environments. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *13*(2), 27-41.

Balgooy, M. (2014). Interpreting African American history and culture at museums and historic sites. In M. Balgooy (Ed.), *Introduction* (pp. XIII-2). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control* (pp. 3-604). New York: wHFreeman.

Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative research*, *15*(2), 219-234.

Bhagwat, R., Kelly, S., & Lambert, M. C. (2012). Exploratory factor analysis of African self-consciousness scale scores. *Assessment*, *19*(1), 65-76.

Branch, A., & Young, R. (2006). Ethnic Identity Development of African Americans: Experiences in Search of A Paradigm. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, *30*(3).

Brown, D. L., & Tylka, T. L. (2011). Racial discrimination and resilience in African American young adults: Examining racial socialization as a moderator. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *37*(3), 259-285.

Burt, J. M., & Halpin, G. (1998). African American Identity Development: A Review of the Literature.

Chavez, A. F., & Guido-DiBrito, F. (1999). Racial and ethnic identity and development. *New directions for adult and continuing education*, *1999* (84), 39-47.

Cokley, K. O. (2005). Racial (ized) identity, ethnic identity, and afrocentric values: Conceptual and methodological challenges in understanding African American identity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *52*(4), 517.

Cokley, K. (2007). Critical issues in the measurement of ethnic and racial identity: A referendum on the state of the field. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *54*(3), 224.

Cross Jr, W. E. (1971). The Negro-to-Black conversion experience. *Black world*, *20*(9), 13-27.

Cross Jr, W. E. (1978). The Thomas and Cross models of psychological nigrescence: A review. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *5*(1), 13-31.

Cross Jr, W. E. (1991). *Shades of black: Diversity in African-American identity*. Temple University Press.

Cross, W. E., Jr., & Cross, T. B. (2008). Theory, research, and models. In S. Quintana & C. McKown (Eds.) *Handbook of race, racism, and child development*. (pp. 154-181). New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons.

Cross Jr, W. E., & Vandiver, B. J. (2001). Nigrescence theory and measurement: Introducing the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS).

Cunningham, J. N., Kliewer, W., & Garner, P. W. (2009). Emotion socialization, child emotion understanding and regulation, and adjustment in urban African American families: Differential associations across child gender. *Development and psychopathology*, *21*(1), 261-283.

Davis, J. L., & Gandy Jr, O. H. (1999). Racial identity and media orientation: Exploring the nature of constraint. *Journal of Black Studies*, *29*(3), 367-397.

Dawson, N. J. (2000). Study abroad and African American college students at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. *African Issues*, *28*(1-2), 124-129.

Day-Vines, N., Barker, J., & Exum, H. (1998). Impact of diasporic travel on ethnic identity development of African American college students. *College Student Journal*, *32*(3), 463-471.

Demo, D. H. & Hughes, M. (1990). Socialization and racial identity among Black Americans. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 53*, 364-374. De Ricco, J. N., & Sciarra, D. T. (2005). The immersion experience in multicultural counselor training: Confronting covert racism. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, *33*(1), 2-16.

Dessoff, A. (2006). Who's not going abroad? *International Educator*, *15*(2), 20.

Erikson, E. H. (1959/1980). Identity and the life cycle. New York: International Universities Press.

Ford-Paz, R. & Iwamasa, G. Y. (2012). Culturally diverse children and adolescents. In E. W. Szigethy (Ed.), *Cognitive-behavior therapy for children and adolescents* (pp.75118). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publications.

Grills, C., & Longshore, D. (1996). Africentrism: Psychometric analyses of a self-report measure. Journal of Black Psychology, 22(1), 86-106.

Hackett, M. (2017). The Impact of Racial-Ethnic Identity on Academic Motivation of African American High School Students.

Hammack, P. L., Robinson, W. L., Crawford, I., & Li, S. T. (2004). Poverty and depressed mood among urban African-American adolescents: A family stress perspective. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *13*(3), 309-323.

Helms, J. E., & Parham, T. A. (1990). Black racial identity attitude scale (Form RIAS-B). *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice*, 245-247.

Jackson, J. V., & Cothran, M. E. (2003). Black versus black: the relationships among African, African American, and African Caribbean persons. *Journal of Black Studies*, *33*(5), 576-604.

Landa, M. H. (2012). Deconstructing Black History Month: Three African American boys' exploration of identity. *Multicultural Perspectives, 14*, 11-17.

Landrine, H., & Klonoff, E. A. (1996). *African American acculturation: Deconstructing race and reviving culture*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Lee, J., & Green, Q. (2016). Unique Opportunities: Influence of Study Abroad on Black Students. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, *28*, 61-77.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985) Naturalistic inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Lindsey, M. A. (2010). What are depressed African American adolescent males saying about mental health services and providers. *Social work with African American males: Health, mental health, and social policy*, 161-178.

Mandara, J., Gaylord-Harden, N. K., Richards, M. H., & Ragsdale, B. L. (2009). The effects of changes in racial identity and self-esteem on changes in African American adolescents' mental health. *Child development*, *80*(6), 1660-1675.

Marks, B., Settles, I. H., Cooke, D. Y., Morgan, L., & Sellers, R. M. (2004). African American racial identity: A review of contemporary models and measures. *Black psychology*, *4*, 383-404.

Martin, A. C. (2008). Television media as a potential negative factor in the racial identity development of African American youth. *Academic Psychiatry*, *32*(4), 338.

May, R., & Yalom, I. (2005). Existential psychotherapy. In R. J. Corsini and D. Wedding (Eds.) Current psychotherapies (7th ed.) (pp. 269-298). Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook. 3rd.

Miller, D. B. (1999). Racial socialization and racial identity: Can they promote resiliency for African American adolescents? *Adolescence*, *34*(135), 493-493.

Morgan, R. M., Mwegelo, D. T., & Turner, L. N. (2002). Black women in the African diaspora seeking their cultural heritage through studying abroad. *Naspa Journal*, *39*(4), 333-353.

Mutisya, P. M., & Ross, L. E. (2005). Afrocentricity and racial socialization among African American college students. *Journal of Black Studies*, *35*(3), 235-247.

Ogbu, J. U., & Simons, H. D. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: a cultural-ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *29*(2), 155-188.

Ott, S. The Organizational Culture Perspective. Chicago: The Dorsey Press, 1989.

Outten, H., Schmitt, M., Garcia, D., & Branscombe, N. (2009). Coping options: Missing links between minority group identification and psychological well-being. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 58(1), 146-170.

Oyserman, D., Brickman, D., & Rhodes, M. (2007). Racial-ethnic identity: Content and consequences for African American, Latino, and Latina youths. *Contesting stereotypes and creating identities: Social categories, social identities, and educational participation*, 91-114.

Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescence and adulthood: A review and integration. Psychological Bulletin, 108, 499-514.

Phinney, J. S. (1992). The multigroup ethnic identity measure: A new scale for use with diverse groups. *Journal of adolescent research*, *7*(2), 156-176.

Phinney, J. S., & Onwughalu, M. (1996). Racial identity and perception of American ideals among African American and African students in the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *20*(2), 127-140.

Pierre, M. R., & Mahalik, J. R. (2005). Examining African self-consciousness and Black racial identity as predictors of Black men's psychological well-being. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *11*(1), 28.

Pires, M. (2000). Study-abroad and cultural exchange programs to Africa: America's image of a continent. *African Issues*, *28*(1-2), 39-45.

Pitre, A., Ray, R., & Pitre, E. (2008). *The struggle for Black history: Foundations for a critical Black pedagogy in education*. University Press of America.

Pope-Davis, D. B., Breaux, C., & Liu, W. M. (1997). A multicultural immersion experience: Filling a void in multicultural training.

Quintana, S. M. (2007). Racial and ethnic identity: Developmental perspectives and research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *54*(3), 259.

Rowles, J., & Duan, C. (2012). Perceived racism and encouragement among African American adults. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, *40*(1), 11-23.

Robinson, J., & Biran, M. (2006). Discovering self: Relationships between African identity and academic achievement. *Journal of Black Studies*, *37*(1), 46-68.

Sellers, R. M., Caldwell, C. H., Schmeelk-Cone, K. H., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2003). Racial identity, racial discrimination, perceived stress, and psychological distress among African American young adults. *Journal of Health and Social behavior*, 302-317.

Sellers, R. M. (2013). The multidimensional model of black identity (MMBI). *Measurement Instrument Database for the Social Science*.

Sellers, R. M., Smith, M. A., Shelton, J. N., Rowley, S. A., & Chavous, T. M. (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and social psychology review*, *2*(1), 18-39.

Settles, I. H., Navarrete, C. D., Abdou, C. M., Pagano, S. J., Sidanius, J. (2010). Racial identity and depression among African American women. Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 16, 248-255.

Shervington, W. W. (1986). The Black family: Clinical overview. *American Journal of Social Psychiatry*.

Smiley, C., & Fakunle, D. (2016). From "brute" to "thug:" The demonization and criminalization of unarmed Black male victims in America. *Journal of human behavior in the social environment*, *26*(3-4), 350-366.

Smith, T. B., & Silva, L. (2011). Ethnic identity and personal well-being of people of color: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *58*(1), 42.

Stubbins, Q. L. (2016). The Effects of Learning about Black History on Racial Identity, Self-efficacy, Self-esteem, and Depression Among African American Male Youth.

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (2012). *Counseling the culturally diverse: Theory and practice*. John Wiley & Sons.

Sutton, R. C., & Rubin, D. L. (2010, June). Documenting the academic impact of study abroad: Final report of the GLOSSARI project. In *annual conference of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Kansas City, MO*.

Tolliver, D. E. (2000). Study abroad in Africa: Learning about race, racism, and the racial legacy of America. *African Issues*, *28*(1-2), 112-116.

Tomlinson-Clarke, S. M., & Clarke, D. (2010). Culturally focused community-centered service learning: An international cultural immersion experience. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, *38*(3), 166-175.

U.S. Census Bureau (2010). *Population Estimates.* Retrieved April 25, 2018, from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045218.

Utsey, S. O., Ponterotto, J. G., Reynolds, A. L., & Cancelli, A. A. (2000). Racial discrimination, coping, life satisfaction, and self-esteem among African Americans. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *78*(1), 72-80.

Vandiver, B. J., Cross Jr, W. E., Worrell, F. C., & Fhagen-Smith, P. E. (2002). Validating the Cross Racial Identity Scale. *Journal of Counseling psychology*, *49*(1), 71.

Worrell, F. C. (2008). Nigrescence attitudes in adolescence, emerging adulthood, and adulthood. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *34*(2), 156-178.

Worrell, F. C., & Watson, S. (2008). A confirmatory factor analysis of Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) scores: Testing the expanded Nigrescence model. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *68*(6), 1041-1058.

Yinger, J. M. "Ethnicity in Complex Societies." In L. A. Coser and O. N. Larsen (eds.), The Uses of Controversy in Sociology. New York: Free Press, 1976.