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DENKYEM (CROCODILE):
IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND NEGOTIATION AMONG GHANAIAN-
AMERICAN MILLENNIALS

By

Jakia Marie
B.A., Grand Valley State University, 2013
M.Ed., Grand Valley State University, 2016

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in Pan-African Studies

Department of Pan-African Studies
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

December 2019

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November 1, 2019

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ABSTRACT

DENKYEM: IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND NEGOTIATION AMONG GHANAIAAN-AMERICAN MILLENNIALS

Jakia Marie

November 1, 2019

Ghanaian immigrants and second-generation Ghanaian-American Millennials are largely ignored in scholarship. Using qualitative methods, this study explored the experiences of Ghanaian-American Millennials who are first, 1.5, and second-generations with the purpose of understanding how they create, negotiate, and re-create identities. Twenty-one individuals were interviewed using a phenomenological approach. The main findings suggest that even though the sample populations were of different immigrant generations, they have some similar experiences, which demonstrates the value in exploring age instead of solely immigrant generation. The findings also suggest that there are a number of complex layers that are involved in identity development and negotiation that become compounded when one is an immigrant or second-generation American. The study closes with suggestions for future research and implications for practice for scholars, policy makers, and community members.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Ɔdenkyem da nsuo mu nanso ohome mframa,”

“The crocodile lives in water yet it breathes air.”¹

-Akan Proverb

The study of cultures and identity has been of fascination for scholars for over a century in Western academia. Many anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists have theorized how cultural identities are formed, but there has recently been a shift in the way scholars view culture and identity. Brubaker (2009) notes how scholarship related to race, ethnicity, and nationalism has been siloed based on discipline and regional location. While compartmentalization is unavoidable in certain respects, it is not always beneficial because many points of interest are related to, or overlapping with, one another. As scholars recognized the limitations of parochial research, a shift, which is often seen in ethnic studies, has emanated to systematically investigate identities (associated with ethnicity, race, nation) using a cross-disciplinary approach. This shift has resulted in “the emergence of an integrated interdisciplinary field of study embracing ethnicity, race, and nationalism in all the varied forms they have assumed in different times and places, [and]...the development of a set of analytic resources for studying the way ethnicity,

¹ Denkyen (denkyem) is derived from an Akan proverb that highlights adaptability. In relation to my study, it highlights how those I was fortunate enough to interview for this project have learned to adapt in different environments to achieve success while maintaining their sense of self.

race, and nation work in social, cultural, and political life without treating ethnic groups, races, or nations as substantial entities, or even taking such groups as units of analysis at all” (Brubaker, 2009, p. 22). This new shift has moved from the compartmentalization of different approaches to the study of identities to a more integrated, holistic one. Brubaker states:

This [shift] has generated a new field of study that is *comparative, global, cross-disciplinary, and multi-paradigmatic*, and that construes ethnicity, race, and nationhood as a *single integrated family of forms* of cultural understanding, social organization, and political contestation. This section traces the contours of this new field, addressing each of these characteristics in turn. (p. 22)

In order to gain a full understanding of the complexities of identities, they must be seen as simultaneously working within various forms. That is, different identities have varied levels of significance in various social, political, and cultural structures; but these structures are always operating simultaneously.

This dissertation uses an integrated interdisciplinary approach to understand the experiences of first, 1.5, and second-generation Ghanaian-American Millennials living in the United States (U.S.). An integrated interdisciplinary approach is not limited to one discipline or school of thought. It uses a global perspective to understand phenomena and recognizes that there are variations of how groups choose to express their identities.

I utilize theories and research methods from various disciplines and scholars based around the globe to conduct a detailed examination of the topic at hand. I am indebted, in this instance, to Imoagene’s (2011) work, which also used an integrated interdisciplinary approach in her exploration of second-generation Nigerians in the U.S.

and U.K. She uses theories and methods from various disciplines to investigate identity and experiences of her participants in two different global locations. Although Imoagene worked with second-generation Nigerians with an emphasis on socioeconomic status, not age, her work shares many of the same themes of immigration and identity that are central to my study and interests. I have used her work as a foundation to formulate my ideas, and this project furthers her research related to identity and immigration.

Immigration into the United States has become an increasingly popular topic in relation to public policy. These policies are associated with immigration preferences (Sullivan, 2018), public health (Hardy et al., 2012), social policy (Brady & Finnigan, 2014), the national workforce (Chomsky, 2007), and other legal and social issues. The United States has seen a dramatic increase in immigration since the passing of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965. The Refugee Act of 1980 and the U.S. Immigration Act of 1990 were especially instrumental in opening the U.S. to more African immigrants and refugees (Anderson, 2015). The U.S. Immigration Act of 1990 was intended to increase the migration of Europeans, but African immigrants also benefited (Anderson, 2015). There were approximately 80,000 African immigrants in the United States in 1970. The number of Black² (African, Afro-Caribbean) immigrants in the United States has quadrupled since 1980 (Anderson, 2015), and rose to 4.2 million in 2016 (Anderson & Lopez, 2018). Ghanaian immigrants are the 7th largest Black immigrant population in the United States (Anderson, 2015). Today, there are over 2 million African immigrants, and Ghana is the fourth largest country of birth for the foreign-born population from Africa in the United States (Anderson, 2017).

²"Black" will be used to refer to those of African descent or origins in a general sense that is not specific to an ethnicity or a nation (Agyemang, Bhopal, and Bruijnzeels, 2005).

While much of the research concerning immigration focuses on international relations and public policy (Eshun, 2006), more attention needs to be given to the experiences of immigrants and their families that specifically relate to their identities that include, but also go beyond, racial identity formations (Asante, Sekimoto, & Brown, 2016) to better articulate how socialized identities impact immigration, acculturation, and self-agency of groups and individuals. By exploring the experiences of Ghanaian-Americans specifically, scholars, activists, policy makers, and community members can work to better understand Ghanaian immigrants and create a more inclusive and welcoming society. In this introduction, I sketch out the topic to be investigated and its purpose, and I discuss the critical and theoretical approaches I perused.

Statement of Problem

Ghanaian immigrants and second-generation Ghanaian-American Millennials are largely ignored in scholarship which is why the experiences of this particular demographic should be explored, highlighted, and valued. Further, much of the scholarship on immigration groups immigrants into categories based on larger regions instead of countries (e.g., Africa/West Africa v. Ghana), but a more thorough and comprehensive analysis of the experiences of immigrant communities that focuses specifically on Ghanaian immigrants and their descendants, helps reveal their unique experiences that are different from those of other African immigrants, other Black immigrants, and other Americans of African descent. This project aims to explore, among other things, the various relationships Ghanaian immigrants³, 1.5 immigrants⁴, and second-generation Ghanaian-Americans have with their families, friends, and other social

³ Individuals who were born in the country of Ghana and moved to the United States as adults.

⁴ Foreign-born immigrants who migrate as children (Gindelsky, 2018).

networks, as a contribution to the scholarly articulation of the role multiple identities/factors play in formulating and expressing various identities and negotiating social spaces. Therefore, one group membership or identity (e.g., Christian) can hold different weight, or significance, in different social settings, but it does not take away from the other identities that may not be as salient in other situations (Hames-Garcia, 2000). One cannot separate identities into parts; instead, the whole person is “constituted by the mutual interaction and relation of its parts to one another” (Hames-Garcia, 2000, p. 103).

As immigrants move, their children, growing up in the new countries, experience these spaces in ways that are different from those of their parents. Their experiences also include being raised in a home that may not be as “traditional” as the other families in their neighborhood because they, or their parents, are immigrants. These experiences are largely overlooked in scholarship or are grouped under overarching categories in immigration scholarship with no distinction between home country, race, age, gender, and ethnicity—distinctions, which my project seeks to delineate. The traditional Ghanaian home in the U.S. is distinct from the dominant white American and many other ethnic groups’ homes in the U.S. These differences can include, but are not limited to, food, familial roles and structures, and languages.

The Millennial⁵ generation is the largest generation in U.S. history (Scardamalia, 2015). The Pew Research Center identifies Millennials as those born between the years of 1981-1996, but generational start and cutoff years are only an estimate, not a scientific measure (Dimock, 2018). For example, Howe and Strauss (2002) categorize Millennials

⁵ Millennial is capitalized because it is the name of a particular group of people

as being born between 1982 and 2002. Because generational categories are not exact and are slightly flexible, Millennials, for the sake of this study, are considered those born between 1982 and 2002, thus providing a larger sample size.

While data often show Millennials in the United States as one generation, there are not many systematic investigations into the diversity of this generation. The differences in birth year, ethnicity, geographical location, and cultural background, to name a few points, result in the diversity of the generation. The Millennial generation continues to grow in part because of the increase in international immigration into the United States (Scardamalia, 2015). The size and diversity of this generation make Millennials valuable for this project, as it centers and explores various identities (racial, gender, ethnic, cultural) among Ghanaian-American Millennials in a country as diverse as the United States.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to provide a more thorough understanding of the role multiple factors (i.e., age, race, gender, ethnicity, nationality) play in formulating and expressing ‘Ghanaian’⁶ cultural identities, and in negotiating social and private spaces in the United States. The understanding of what constitutes Ghanaian culture, or specific ethnic cultures, is from the perspectives of the participants. Since the participants will have different levels of familiarity with Ghanaian societies and communities, their own understating of what represents Ghanaian culture (e.g., food, language) will help nuance the idea of culture, as well as who has rights to claim membership in such groups. To understand the impacts of these multiple factors, the lived experiences of Millennials who

⁶ Ghanaian cultural identities are to be defined by each participant and can include, but is not limited to, nationality, ethnicity, familiarity with cultural traditions, familial lineage.

are immigrants or children of immigrants from Ghana residing in the United States must be explored. To achieve this goal, I utilize qualitative research methods to gain insight into the lives and experiences of participants.

Methods

This study used an integrated, qualitative methodological approach (to be discussed in chapter three) to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of participants. Qualitative work targets a specific population sample, context, or event and has an idiographic analytical style (Gerring, 2017). A phenomenological theoretical perspective guided the methodological approach. Since this study is focused on the identities that are salient to the participants and how they negotiate different social and private spaces, their own, individual perspectives must be centered. Therefore, a phenomenological approach deemed itself most appropriate. Equally important to this project are approaches and theories that speak to identity formation and expression, immigration and acculturation, race, ethnicity, gender, transnationalism, and culture in an increasingly globalized world.

Theoretical Framework/Approaches

An exploration of the experiences of Ghanaian-Americans and the various ways in which they develop identities and negotiate spaces bring one to consider multiple aspects of society that conceptualize these complexities. That is to say that to understand the complexities of the experiences of Ghanaian-Americans, it is imperative to begin by breaking down the various salient identities they hold to analyze how those identities may impact their social interactions. First, the multiple ways in which immigrants in general, and immigrants in the United States specifically, negotiate their immigrant identities need

to be explored. Next, one must consider the impact the fact of being an immigrant specifically from Ghana has on Ghanaian-Americans. This is an important factor considering the negative sentiments against African countries that dominate U.S. cultures (Shaw-Taylor, 2007). Finally, the experiences of second-generation Ghanaian-Americans need to be analyzed. Beyond being Ghanaian and immigrants, or Ghanaian and American, there are also the questions of how other social identities such as race and gender, and their intersections, influence one's experiences. Kretsedemas (2013) argues that the immigrant experience cannot be analyzed in binary ethnic and racial terms. Immigrants do not solely situate themselves as international guests or “new American[s]”; Kretsedemas argues that they rather situate themselves as a part of a cultural diaspora being forced to negotiate the influences of “the postcolonial identities of the old land and the ethnicities and racial politics of the new land” (p. 17). The structure and significance of the “old land,” or birth country/familial home country, still maintains prominence, especially for those of the first-generation since they have a stronger memory of this old land; but maintaining a strong ethnic identity does not mean that one cannot simultaneously associate themselves with a racial identity. Unfortunately, no single theory conceptualizes the influence of all of these identity markers and how they interact. Instead of attempting to conceptualize every aspect of identity development and negotiation, this study utilizes Identity Process Theory (IPT) (Breakwell, 1986) as the overarching theoretical framework.

To understand the IPT, Breakwell (1986) first describes the complexities of identity. She asserts that identity is a “social product, residing in psychological processes, which cannot be understood except in relation to its social context and historical

perspective” (p. 9). Breakwell’s understanding of identity dynamics explains why an integrated, interdisciplinary approach to this project is essential because identity is complex and dynamic. Breakwell also explores the work of other identity theorists who argue that there is a difference between the personal and the social (see Turner, 1976) or the public and the private (see Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). Breakwell also argues that data related to identity work demonstrate that individuals do, in fact, recognize the differences between personal and social identities and that they negotiate their most prominent identities and behaviors based on the specific situation. Breakwell’s model does not make a distinction between personal and social identities but instead argues that they work together, and social identities, in some sense, become personal. This implies that our social interactions impact our personal beliefs and identities. Social interactions influence how we see the world and how we perceive the world sees us, which in turn guides how we choose to interact with others.

Breakwell asserts that identity structures can be described through a content and value dimension. The content dimension can be characterized by 1) the degree of centrality, 2) the hierarchical arrangements of elements, and 3) the relative salience of components; but she acknowledges that these components, or dimensions, are neither static nor unresponsive to changes. Each of these constituents of the content dimension has positive and negative values, which then leads to the value dimension of identity. She notes, “the value of each element is open to reappraisal as a consequence of changes in social value systems and modifications in the individual's position in relation to such social value systems” (p. 277). Simply put, societies and societal values are constantly changing, which means individual values will also be subject to these changes within

society. In the context of transnational migration where the roles of identities shift, are rearranged, and gain new meaning, it is imperative to recognize the flexibility of the dimensions outlined by Breakwell. Identities are also structured around the “the dynamic process of accommodation/assimilation” (Breakwell, 2011, p. 277), which can be best understood as memory system that involves the taking in of new elements in relation to structuring one's identity (assimilation) and the readjustment of established identity structures to make space for the new elements (accommodation). Assimilation, therefore, is mainly the taking on of elements from a new society, whereas those who accommodate take some aspects of the new society but not all, as they negotiate which elements work best for them in any given situation. This IPT model helps better understand how individuals manage experiences that threaten their identities (Breakwell, 1986).

Breakwell (1986) has identified three main identity principles, which are said to guide the universal processes of identity formation: *continuity* across time and situation; two processes working to create individual *distinctiveness*; and *self-esteem*, or social value. Since identities develop in specific socio-historical contexts, the saliency and meanings of these principles can change over time. Further, IPT asserts that saliency and other changes of identity occur with a purpose. The individual exerts their agency by creating, changing, and adjusting the saliency of identities based on their own personal, cultural, and social situations and needs. While the social context is imperative to understanding identities, they are not the only factors to consider because individuals hold multiple, intersecting identities that make that person unique.

Extending IPT, Vignoles and colleagues (Vignoles, Chryssochoou, & Breakwell, 2002; Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Gollledge, & Scabini, 2006) have proposed two

additional *identity motives*: 1) belonging, which refers to the need to maintain feelings of closeness to and acceptance by other people; and 2) meaning, which refers to the need to find significance and purpose in one's life. Simply belonging in a group may be acceptable for some, but others want to feel that they are wholly accepted which is why these two motives are important.

Breakwell (1986) also discusses interpersonal coping strategies for threatened identities and suggests that there are four overarching options. These options include: isolation, or attempting to minimize negative interactions by avoiding them; negativism, or attacking or challenging anyone who attacks the individual's identity structure (p. 113); passing, or removing one's self from the threatened situation by *self-misidentification*; and compliance, or living up to the social expectations and stereotypes.

Breakwell (1986) and Vignoles et al's. (2002, 2006) articulation of IPT will be used as a theoretical framework because they do not look at specific identities and, therefore, the theory can be used to examine multiple identities an individual holds and place them into a macro-societal context. Further, IPT's articulation of the influence of time and place allows for a more holistic way to analyze how transnationalism impacts identity saliency of the multiple identities an individual holds and places them into a macro-societal context and a micro-level context in relation to familial interactions. This is vital for this study because it will assist in formulating the decision-making process of Ghanaian-Americans in relation to identity saliencies and expressions as they negotiate the U.S. social terrain. Breakwell's articulation of identity processing, motives, and coping strategies will be useful in analyzing the complexities of how identities shape one's social experiences and how social interactions influence one's identities.

Race/Ethnicity, Culture, and Gender

Identities are not fixed. They are continually being shaped as individuals grow, develop, and have different social experiences (Jenkins, 2008). This understanding of the complexities of identity has led me to investigate how identities are created, shaped, and negotiated among first and second-generation Ghanaian-American Millennials. Instead of highlighting one identity (i.e., culture, race), I have situated this study at the intersection of the private and the public. That is to say that I am exploring which identities are most recognized, expressed, and most complex in public and private spaces with particular attention being given to race, culture, gender, and ethnicity. Positing this study concerning space and time and not one specific identity allows me to be more comparative and multi-paradigmatic in my analysis and makes room for a better understanding of the full lives of my participants and not just certain aspects of their identities.

Scott (2015) notes that identity is a fusion of ideas one holds about themselves, the various roles they play in different settings, and the characteristics that make them unique. Identities are individual and social phenomena. Jaspal (2014) explains that social and psychological change can affect individual identities and actions, demonstrating that the processes by which an individual negotiates their identities are both personal and social. One significant factor to note about identities is that they cannot be disaggregated. “Membership in various social groups combine with and mutually constitute one another”, and it is the unity of these various relationships “in their mutual constitution” that encompasses the individual self (Hames-García, 2000, p. 103).

Since the concepts of identity, identity formation, and identity negotiation constitute a multitude of social experiences and individual reasonings that are in constant conversation with one another, identity saliency is always being challenged and shifted. Because of the complexities of identity, the categories of race/ethnicity, culture, gender will remain central to the conversation. These categories are most prominent because they are most salient when evaluating one's social experiences. Further "this multiplicity of the self becomes obscured through the logic of domination to which the self becomes subjected" (Hames-García, 2000, p. 104).

To better understand the experiences of immigrants and their families, their social position must be put into context. For this study, the social ideologies and norms of the United States must be understood. Alexander (1996) notes that immigrants are often alienated in their new place of residence. In the context of the United States, this sense of alienation for Black immigrants can be a result of not only cultural differences but social identities that have negative connotations. Being a racial minority and ethnic minority in the U.S. has its own set of social connotations, which cannot be separated from gender identities. Smith, Cordero-Guzán, and Grosfoguel (2001) note that new immigrant groups are forced to confront racism and negotiate the process of racialization, which influences the degree of cultural, economic, and social integration into the U.S. culture.

The process of racialization and other political identities are often unavoidable for those residing in the United States. Racial, gendered, and other categories are often created to separate people and to develop and maintain social hierarchies. As society attempts to address/fight marginalization based on identities, the concept of post-identity has emerged to argue that identity politics is passé. Post-identity does not focus on an

“other” or differences. It “looks both at the ways identity categories are deployed to sustain the status quo and at the ways alternative notions of identity already exist that defy, deconstruct, or perversely alter power asymmetries” (Roof, 2003, p. 3). Post-identity focuses on systems and not attributes of difference. It challenges the superficial methods of categorization and investigates systems of power and how power structures marginalize and alienate people. Much like other “posts”—postcolonial, post-racial, post-feminism—post-identity speaks not only to “after”/“beyond” identity, but also to the ways in which identities, because they are, in the main, social constructs, need to be eliminated altogether. While this is discursively persuasive, it is phenomenologically untenable because identities are a fact of life, and my study would be conceptually impossible without the concept of identity and the role it plays in our lives.

Race and Ethnicity

Racial categories are central to U.S. politics and social culture, which are related to immigration. The Black-white paradigm of race in the United States is embedded in American culture (Jaynes, 2000). I am not limiting race to Black-white comparisons, but this understanding of social culture and ideologies in the U.S. helps situate Ghanaian-American experiences in relation to native, multi-generational Black American experiences. The idea that all immigrants following a linear pathway to U.S. cultural assimilation neglects the underlying differences between white immigrants and people of color—race and racism (Smith, Cordero-Guzman, & Grosfoguel, 2001; Spickard, 2007). The pressure of racism can impact how one chooses to express their culture. Rivers (2008) explored how the U.S. uses racist constructs in its governance. Feagin and Ducey (2019) described the multiple ways racism is embedded in the U.S. society that rage from

microaggressions to systems of discrimination. Since this study only includes U.S. residents, it is impossible to complete a sound project without exploring the impacts of race and racism. Many scholars have examined the experiences of immigrants in the U.S. in relation to race and racism (see Foner, 2016; Gosin, 2017; Hunter, Case, Joseph, Mekawi, & Bokhari, 2017; Johnson, 2016; Waters, 1999), and some have even compared the experiences of “Black” immigrants to those of African Americans in an attempt to demonstrate intra-racial differences or to expose how modes of white supremacy attempt to pit groups against one another (see Thelamour & Johnson, 2017; Tormala & Deaux, 2011; Waters, 1999; Waters, Kasinitz, & Asad, 2014; Wilkinson & Bingham, 2016). It should be made clear, however, that the purpose of this study is not to compare one ethnic group to another. Considering the diversity of the U.S., it is reasonable to expect different groups to interact with one another, share similarities, and have differences. I believe expecting all “Black” people in the U.S. to join in solidarity and befriend one another is fundamentally Eurocentric, and I have not approached this project from a Eurocentric epistemological perspective. Therefore, exploring the impacts of racism and associations with racial categories are important, but intragroup relations are not the focal point of this project.

Blank, Dabady, and Citro (2004) assert that there is no single way to conceptualize or define race. They state that “race is a complex concept, best viewed for social science purposes as a subjective social construct based on observed or ascribed characteristics that have acquired socially significant meaning” (Blank, Dabady, & Citro, 2004, p. 37-38). Understanding the complexities of race is necessary because racism manifests in different forms. Racism is entrenched in American popular culture (Guterl,

2013), so all people who are not recognized as white will be affected directly or indirectly, covertly or overtly.

Schermerhorn (1978) defines ethnicity as “a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood” (p. 12). Expanding Schermerhorn’s conceptualization of ethnicity, Cornell and Hartmann (2007) agree with Jenkins (2004) that ethnic categories can be defined externally but that the individual has to be the one to assert the identity. Further, Cornell and Hartmann argue that ethnic categories vary in extent. Some ethnic groups have many similarities while others may only share how they identify; so, some may only be connected to an ethnic group because they claim said ethnic category. The above definitions of ethnicity demonstrate the heterogeneity of the term. An individual’s relation to a group is defined by that person. With this being noted, I define ethnicity as *a social group with a real, or imagined, ancestral past and cultural similarities that an individual associates themselves with and are welcomed by, to some extent, others in the said group*. It is imperative to note the importance of acceptance into an ethnic category because it allows the members to be the gatekeepers. Minoritized groups deserve visibility without the influence of other, more dominant groups. Therefore, I am not at all convinced that ethnic grouping can be externally bestowed upon a person, and I do not believe one person can claim a group identity without any real relation to that group. This is not to say that an individual can only be a part of one ethnic group, or that dominant societies do not try to group people themselves.

To be clear, I am focusing specifically on marginalized groups and dominant societies' attempts to infiltrate, take ownership of, and appropriate the experiences of those communities. If an ethnic identity is "assigned" to someone, they do not have to accept it; and if someone wants to claim membership in a group, the group does not have to receive them. These actions take away the autonomy and authority of said groups. This is important to my study because it shows not only how individuals identify but how they interact with others of the same identity. It emphasizes the social aspect and group dynamics of identity and identity politics. It should also be noted that the emphasis on acceptance cannot be quantified. Some, as will be discussed in the final chapters of this study, are chastised for their perceived lack of knowledge of cultural norms and traditions related to a particular community. In-depth knowledge of certain traditions does not negate one's cultural heritage of familial history. Therefore, it should be noted that although I emphasize the importance of acceptance into communities, I recognize that the level of acceptance one receives can be arbitrarily given based on individual situations. This is why there is no way of quantifying such acceptance.

Since race and ethnicity are often misunderstood terms, this articulation of the two is needed for this study. Ghanaian-Americans, no matter the generation, are aware of their ethnicity/ethnicities. Further, they are aware of race in the U.S., and many identify with a racial group. Despite recognizing and identifying with an ethnic group/ethnic groups and race, each group category serves a different purpose and has various meanings. Therefore, although race and ethnicity may be discussed in the same section, it should be made clear that they are different terms that work in conjunction with one another.

Culture

Stuart Hall is arguably the most significant contributor to the field of Cultural Studies of the last four decades. Speaking about the Caribbean diaspora, Hall (1990) notes:

There are at least two different ways of thinking about 'cultural identity.' The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self,' hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves,' which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people,' with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history. This 'oneness,' underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence, of 'Caribbeanness,' of the black experience. It is this identity which a Caribbean or black diaspora must discover, excavate, bring to light and express through cinematic representation. (p. 223)

He continues by stating a second type of cultural identity as:

...a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. However, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. (p. 225)

Hall's assertion recognizes that culture, or cultural identity, can be seen in various ways that would depend on the group and those who are expressing their own identities. Since this study highlights a younger generation, the idea of culture must include the past but allow room for reconstruction in the future. Therefore, I will utilize Hall's second definition of cultural identity as it also demonstrates how one can still share a cultural identity even when how they express that identity varies. This is a significant point to include because although the participants in this study may trace some familial lineage to Ghana, they all come from different walks of life; and the ways they define culture and express culture may vary. Ethnicity can be used to express cultural identities, but they are not the only ways in which one can express themselves. It is this reason that this study does not focus solely on ethnicity or solely on race because culture is expressed in a variety of ways through a variety of identities. This is also why I am not limiting the study to one particular ethnic identity.

Cultural identities and norms are challenged after migration to the U.S. If immigrants are expected to assimilate in the way Park (1914) describes (below), they would shed themselves of their native norms and duplicate white normativity. Even if immigrants are not expected to assimilate, anti-immigrant rhetoric can influence how groups choose to identify or express their cultures. Vargas, Sanchez, and Valdez, Jr. (2017) explored how immigration laws affected Latino communities in the U.S. They noted that immigration laws impact pan-ethnic identities of Latino communities. Vargas, Sanchez, and Valdez, Jr.'s work focused specifically on Latinx communities, but their analysis can be used for immigrant groups in general even if these groups are at the center of anti-immigrant discussions. If immigrants are afraid of being noticed as an

immigrant due to fear of detainment, warranted and unwarranted, they are more likely to abstain from cultural practices that are not common to U.S. mainstream culture. The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrested more people in 2017 and 2018 than 2016⁷. Although their reports explain that they arrested individuals who were residing in the country illegally, there has been an increase in clear racist practices.

In April 2018, ICE arrested Peter Sean Brown⁸ and threatened to deport him to Jamaica even though he was a natural born U.S. citizen. In November 2018, Jilmar Ramos-Gomez⁹, a marine veteran and U.S. citizen was arrested and threatened with deportation. These two cases are prime examples of how racist and discriminatory practices are utilized by ICE. Both men were citizens, and both were people of color. Given the national attention both cases received, it is not implausible to assume there are correlations between cultural expression and national social climate in relation to immigration. Further, these cases demonstrate how anti-immigrant sentiments impact immigrants and their families directly regardless of citizenship. These experiences can be compounded when sexism and other forms of discrimination are added to the equation.

Kretsedemas (2013) described cultural racism that relates to anti-immigrant sentiments. Beyond attacking immigrants, Kretsedemas notes that cultural racism targets non-white immigrants, can only take place once immigration is racialized, and is a response to the fear of white-dominance dissolving due to the increase of immigrants who are not white. Kretsedemas' work demonstrates the complexities of the Black

⁷ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2018). *Fiscal year 2018 ICE enforcement and removal operations report*. retrieved from <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/about/offices/ero/pdf/eroFY2018Report.pdf>

⁸ Shoichet, C. E. (2018, December 4). He's a US citizen born in Philadelphia. He says ICE detained him anyway. In *CNN News*.

⁹ Dwyer, D. (2019, Jan 18). Kent county changes its policy on ICE requests after Marine veteran mistakenly detained. In *Michigan Radio*.

immigrant experience. Black immigrants experience similar types of discrimination as native-born Black Americans, but they also simultaneously experience cultural racism that is a direct result of being immigrants. This understanding of racism and cultural racism nuances the discriminatory practices aimed at immigrants and challenges one to consider how second-generation immigrants then experience the world since they are more likely to have an American accent, which would help shield them from cultural racism. Kretsedemas explains that immigrants are more likely to attribute the discrimination they face to ethnicity or culture rather than race, but that may be different for those of the second-generation. As Adjepong (2018) noted, those in her study who were raised in the U.S. were likely to have salient Black, African, Ghanaian, and American identities. This shows that how one identifies and categorizes life experiences may be different between adult immigrants and 1.5 and second-generation Americans.

Gender

Gender, which differs from sex, is a performative, socially constructed identity that is often shaped by social practices and interpersonal interactions, or expectations from others (Lorber & Moore, 2002). Zamani Gallaher (2017) states that gender is a concept that is socially constructed whereas “gender identity comprises a spectrum of how individuals identify that is multidimensional and not linear, but rather a continuum of maleness, femaleness, and gender identities not bounded by the twofold of male or female” (p. 91). The experiences of people of color in the U.S. are often different based on sex and/or gender identity, which can range from varied experiences at home to the workforce (Cordero-Guzman, Smith, & Grosfoguel, 2001). Men and women have different experiences throughout the migration process (Espín, 2011). Immigrants in the

U.S. face many challenges, and some of these challenges are compounded when sexism is incorporated. After the dissolvment of colonialism in the 1960s, many from former colonial states sought education in European metropolitan countries; most of those migrants were males (Seck, 2015; Arthur 2009). In the last two decades, more women have been migrating in pursuit of economic achievement (Seck, 2015). Despite the fact that many seek financial stability, Corra and Kimuna (2009) found that African female immigrants had disadvantaged economic attainment compared to other immigrants in the U.S. Borch and Corra (2010) found that white immigrants were more likely to earn higher wages compared to Black immigrants and that female immigrants, of any race, were more likely to earn less compared to their male immigrant counterparts. The work of these scholars demonstrates the effects of racism and sexism in U.S. social culture that negatively impact Black women—native and immigrant.

Racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender identities are the prominent identities that immigrants bring with them or that are assigned to them. This is the case for all immigrants, but the experiences of Black African immigrants and their families are different from others. In this study, participants are asked to identify their gender, which adds to the overall analysis of gender identity and performance and how it relates to other identities.

Immigration and Assimilation Theories

Immigration involves some acculturation process, and part of this process involves adjusting to a new culture and environment (Kamya, 1997), which can prove to be difficult for Black African immigrants as many are not used to living in a racialized country. This new racialized society adds another layer to the acculturation process for

Black African immigrants. Immigrants from Africa and the Afro-Caribbean region are generally politically classified as Black in the United States (Benson, 2006) and they usually experience marginalization because of their new racialized category (Waters, 1994).

The racialized categories in the U.S. are also a difficulty for the children of African immigrants. Clark (2008) explored how the children of African immigrants negotiated their multiple identities as African and American. She found that the children were intentional about recognizing and claiming the country their families moved from as well as a racialized American identity. Many parents expressed concern that their children would become “Americanized” to the detriment of their African culture, and the children, as a result, felt a need to prove their “Africanness” and distinguish themselves from African Americans.

Shaw-Taylor (2007) argues that many African immigrants prefer not to be classified as Black as an attempt to not only distinguish themselves as culturally distinct from other groups, but also in hopes of avoiding racism. For most Black immigrants, it is an “unremitting process of defining and negotiating social situations as the Other Black people in America” (Shaw-Taylor, 2007, p. 27). Tormala and Deaux (2011) note that in many ways, Black immigrants and Black Americans are perceived in the same manner because their skin color groups them together. “Whether by passersby, customers walking around a store, or drivers in an upper-class neighborhood, Black immigrants will be categorized as Black and subjected to the same kinds of race-based bias and discrimination as American Blacks” (Tormala & Deaux, 2011, p. 137).

Chacko (2003) explored assimilation strategies and identity among 1.5-generation Ethiopian immigrants and second-generation Ethiopian Americans in the Metro D.C. area. Most of the participants explained that they preferred to be considered African rather than Black. Many explained that they had negative K-12 experiences with native-born African Americans and were subjected to bullying and name-calling which added to their desire to be categorically distinguished from the term African American. Chacko also explained that the longer an individual had lived in the U.S., the more likely they were to understand the complexities of racism and racial stratification.

In terms of ethnicity, participants of Chacko's study did not associate nationality with ethnicity. Even if one was a U.S. citizen, they were not hesitant to express pride in their national and cultural heritage. Their pride in their ethnicity was attributed to their parents who maintained Ethiopian cultural values and pride while living in the U.S. Although cultural heritage was a point of pride for the participants, those of the second-generation were less likely to have a deep, developed understanding of the meanings of different traditions and customs even though they participated in them.

Arthur (2010) argues that this subclass category prevents African immigrants from fully integrating into the U.S. society, and I argue that this is the case for most Americans of color or other marginalized identities; but the stratification of social groups may help African immigrants better understand the complexities of the social climate of the U.S. early in their transition because they come to recognize the racist systems of the United States which then prepares them to deal with situations they may not have experienced at home (e.g., having the police called on you while taking a nap in your school's graduate common room during a study session just because of the color of your

skin and others believing you do not belong because of it¹⁰). In other words, as I have argued before, forming a subgroup, or being “drafted” into one, precludes, a priori, assimilation into mainstream U.S. society.

In the early 20th century, many scholars began theorizing the experiences of immigrants in the U.S. Robert Park of The Chicago School was a leading sociologist of his time. He saw assimilation as a process whereby individuals of diverse backgrounds achieve a type of cultural solidarity (Park, as cited in Gordon, 1964). He stated:

In the United States, an immigrant is ordinarily considered assimilated as soon as he has acquired the language and the social ritual of the native community and can participate, without encountering prejudice, in the common life, economic and political. The common-sense view of the matter is that an immigrant is assimilated as soon as he has shown that he can “get on in the country.” (Park, as cited in Gordon, 1964, p. 63)

Using Park’s understanding of assimilation, all immigrants, no matter their country of origin, would have the ability to live comfortably in the U.S. as long as they mimic the mainstream society. Park’s definition omits the experiences of citizens of color let alone immigrants of color, and his social assimilation theory was later challenged.

Gordon (1964) argued that Black people in the United States could not assimilate into the mainstream U.S. society due to systematic oppression. He explained that Blacks could assimilate civically and partially culturally depending on their socio-economic class status. He did note that Black people could not assimilate structurally, martially,

¹⁰ Wootson, C. R. (2018, May 11). A Black Yale student fell asleep in her dorm’s common room. A white student called police. In *The Washington Post*.

behaviorally, through identity, or through attitude reception. Concerning acculturation, Gordon argued that communities could adopt behaviors and patterns from the host society and dominant culture, but this dominant culture was primarily rooted in middle-class, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant norms (Alba & Nee, 2003). Gordon's argument has been debated, and the concept of assimilation has been criticized for, at the foundation, being Eurocentric (Alba & Nee, 2003) and racist which is part of Gordon's analysis of assimilation. Assimilation theories have advanced the idea that immigrants would shed their cultures for the more favorable white, European cultures (Alba & Nee, 2003) which is why approaches such as Park's are not relevant to my study's analysis. Theories that developed from early assimilation work are limited in scope and, partially because of the era they were written, do not explore the diversity of immigrants and ethnicities in the U.S., which proves to be a significant limitation and renders them unusable in my study. Despite the shortcomings in early theories, the developmental histories of such arguments are essential to note. Alba and Nee (2003) re-examine assimilation theories and define assimilation "as the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences" (p. 11), where 'decline' means the saliency of certain distinctions becomes insignificant. They argue that individuals of both the mainstream and minority cultures "mutually perceive themselves with less and less frequency regarding ethnic categories and increasingly only under specific circumstances" (p. 11). This definition allows for more of a two-way street for all parties involved.

Even among those who may attempt to assimilate, Blacks in the U.S. are still discriminated against. One prominent example is the death of Amadou Diallo at the

hands of New York police in 1999.¹¹ Diallo left Guinea to have a better future, but his life was cut short when he was shot 19 times by Officers Kenneth Boss, Edward McMellon, Sean Carroll, and Richard Murphy, all of whom were acquitted of all charges for their vicious acts. Officers claim they believed he had a gun, but he only had his wallet. This tragic event that claimed the life of a documented immigrant demonstrates how, no matter how optimistic a person is, citizenship and immigration documentation cannot provide immunity from prejudice. Further, this incident occurred during a time that many of the participants of this study were relocating to the U.S. Unavoidable prejudice is especially a reality for those who do not fall under the racial category of white.

While assimilation theories have been, and continue to be, discussed in various cultural studies debates, others have presented different ways of viewing the relationships between mainstream white America, and other communities. Examples are biculturalism theory, or the ability to be competent within two cultures but not lose one's cultural identities (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993); Transnationalism (Callaghy, Kassimir, & Robert, 2001), or when an immigrant maintains close connections (i.e., political, economic, cultural, familial) with their home country; and hybridity (Iyall Smith, 2009). Hybridity may prove to be the most useful in exploring how identities are not siloed because it is:

A reflexive relationship between the local and global...The identities are not assimilated or altered independently, but instead, elements of cultures are

11 Fritsch, J. (2000, February 26). The Diallo verdict: The overview, 4 officers in Diallo shooting are acquitted of all charges found not guilty. In *The New York Times*.

incorporated to create a new hybrid culture...The local and the global interact to create a new identity that is distinct in each context. (Iyall Smith 2009, p. 3)

Globalization, Postcolonial Theory, Hybridity, and Transnationalism

While migration is not a new phenomenon, its motivating factors change and shift over time, and is largely amplified because of modern-day globalization. Identities are constructed within discourse and through difference, and they are created and manifested within unique socio-historical and political settings (Hall, 2000). To explore identities today is to examine identity formation in the socio-political context of globalization. Mohanty (2000) notes that there is a relationship between identity and experience, and Castells (2010) argues that there is a systematic relationship between globalization and cultural identity reaffirmation. There is no one definition of globalization, but contemporary globalization can be understood as the ever interconnectedness of the world through economics and technology (El-Ojeili & Hayden, 2006; Robertson, 2009). Suárez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004) argue that globalization defines our current era and is the culmination of the movement of people, goods, or ideas between countries and regions at an accelerated rate. As contemporary globalization has become embedded in almost every corner of the globe, the relationships between globalization, postcolonialism, and identity are a vital intersection to investigate.

Using Nigeria as a case study, Otiono (2011) argues that postcolonial globalization neoliberalism influenced emigration from the Global South to the Global North, and that some migrants have a type of "neocolonial dependency" (p. 16) that, based on the work of Manchuelle (as cited in Otiono, 2011), is a result of continued exploitation of former colonial states. Concerning globalization and postcolonialism,

Kemedjio and Pernsteiner (2011) argue that globalization can either weaken or strengthen national or territorial identities. Sandbrook and Guven (2014) state that “owing to rapid advances in transport and telecommunications technologies, distance and national boundaries no longer pose major constraints upon human interaction among the world’s widely dispersed inhabitants” (p. 3). The technological connectivity that has resulted in globalization nuances the exploration of identity and migration as immigrants and migrant communities can stay connected to family and friends across the globe. This brings into question how identities are developed and maintained in a globalized society that was not so connected two decades ago.

While globalization is often related to economics (Suranovic, 2010), others see it as a type of double-edged sword. Donkor (2005) argues that globalization functions as a colonial entity for “Third World Countries,” or, using the framework of Walter Rodney (1972), underdeveloped nations. This continued underdevelopment and economic turmoil can play a significant role in why one chooses to relocate, the resources available to them to relocate, and the ways they view their native home and their selves—identities. Pieterse (2009) notes that globalization is not an even playing field or equitable process. It is primarily connected to economic growth of North America, East Asia, and Europe. When one examines globalization through the lens of postcolonial theory, however, the United States stands as a leading actor in capitalizing on the vulnerability of migrants. Undocumented immigrants, those stamped as “illegal,” Bacon (2008) notes, are a part of the “economic engine” of the U.S. even though they are demonized, threatened, and face inequality: “A globalized political economy creates illegality by displacing people and then denying them rights and equality as they do what they have to do to survive—move to

find work” (Bacon, 2008, p.vi). While his focus was on Latin America and how economic strategies such as privatization displace vulnerable countries and their citizens, this examination can move beyond Latin America. Overall, imperialist nations such as the U.S. have benefited from the unfair and fraudulent global economic functioning, and in turn, have marginalized their “other” citizens. While some argue that the increased Westernization of the world erases cultural traditions and marginalizes the Global South, others argue that it can be viewed in different ways.

Pieterse (1994) argues that globalization can be seen beyond the geographically narrow lens of westernization. The idea of the world becoming more uniform is a product of imperialism of the Western world, but Pieterse (1994) views globalization as a “process of [hybridization] which gives rise to a global *mélange*” (p. 161). With this, he argues that globalization does not create a uniform mindset and cultural structure but rather increases the fluidity of cultural practices. This idea of hybridity on the global level broadens the ways globalization can be conceptualized and challenges the notion of helpless imperial subjects to demonstrate agency and intentionality. Gikandi (2001) argues that hybridity, as it relates to globalization, is challenged by “a sense of crisis within the postcolony itself” (p. 630). He states that there is a struggle within the postcolony on how to respond to the failure of the State, which promised modernization outside of the realm of colonialism. The postcolony is frustrated in the fact that modernization is so closely related to Westernization.

In the field of cultural studies and globalization theory, hybridity is a popular term (Anthias, 2001). Hybridity can be understood as the mixing of cultures as a result of migration and intercultural relations where the immigrant may adopt some cultural

practices from the host country but still maintain some of their native cultural norms (Nyongesa, 2018). Hybridity is created when there is an “us” and “them” boundary, and, as Papastergiadis (2015) states, these boundaries impact the value of the hybridity depending on if the environment is exclusive and oppressive or welcoming and inclusive. Because these boundaries, even if imagined, influence interpersonal interactions, some believe that cultural hybridity can be a tool to blur the lines of ethnic difference.

Anthias (2001) argues that although some believe hybridity can transcend former ethnic identities, the idea of hybridity does not equate empowerment. Further, she explains that even if one is to take on a hybrid of cultures from their home nation and new location, they can still be seen as strangers or outsiders. She states:

While the notion of hybridity focuses on issues of cultural ‘cut and mix’ and deploys a notion of identity, however multi-layered or fragmented (Anthias 1999), I would like to suggest the continuing importance of the social relations of ‘othering’ on the one hand, and resource struggles on the other or what I would like to call ‘translocational’ positionality. These may take particular forms in the period of ‘high modernity.’ Some of these may yield reflexivity in recognizing multiple selves and others (hybrid/diasporic), but even here there are potentially contradictory processes in terms of struggles around resource allocation; such struggles may take place along the lines of the relations of gender, ‘race’ and class. (p. 633)

She argues that translocational recognizes what is considered as identity markers in terms of various processes instead of properties an individual possesses. Translocation acknowledges the fluidity of identity and identity saliency and the impact of social

structures. A significant component of this study is how social interactions influence identity. Whether one subscribes to hybrid cultural practices or not influences how they identify and the significance of those identities. Some theories demonstrate how people may negotiate their cultural practices, but they do not nuance the value placed on different hybrid identities. Transnationalism is one theory that encompasses culture, national identity, citizenship, and other forms of identity as an integrated process.

Transnationalism can be understood as the process by which citizens hold multiple national identities and travel between two, or more, countries where they hold these allegiances (Lee, 2008)—a diplomatic hybrid identity of sorts. This transnational identity has no distinguishing feature that excludes a specific nationality. Tölölyan (2010) argues that the umbrella term of transnationalism does not capture the complexities of diasporic groups and discusses diasporic transnationalism. He notes that diasporic transnationalism has “a commitment to the survival and security of the homeland” (p. 36). In his discussion, he notes how diaspora Armenians are concerned with the survival of a post-Soviet and post-genocide State. Since Ghana is continuously challenged with neoliberal and capitalistic global politics, Tölölyan’s (2010) notion of wanting to see a developing Armenia is easily comparable. The diasporic transnationalism is an active commitment that includes how one identifies but also how one is involved, whether staying abreast of local politics or working with government and nongovernment organizations, in progressing the state of their country. The concept of diasporic transnationalism is most relevant for this study as it recognizes the uniqueness of transnational identities between different groups. Further, it can be used to analyze the ideologies of immigrants and second-generation Americans. For Ghanaian-Americans,

many have a sense of responsibility to the state of Ghana. As a somewhat recent post-colonial state, Ghana has established itself as a stable democracy, and many look forward to Ghana's advancement. After being taken advantage of and preyed on by the Portuguese and British for centuries (Boateng & Darko, 2016; Ray, 2015), Ghana is still in the process of making a strong mark in the global economy (Obeng-Odoom, 2015). Therefore, the commitment one has to their native land, or native land of their parents, is essential to explore.

Contribution to Scholarship

Much of the research concerning African and Ghanaian immigrants in the United States place African immigrants into one homogenous category and is focused on one particular cultural staple or juxtapose Africans and African Americans. Asante, Sekimoto, and Brown (2016) explored racialization experiences of African students and African permanent residents or naturalized U.S. citizens at a Midwestern University. They had participants from multiple African countries. Many of their participants discussed similar experiences of negotiating identity and a racialized identity. Though the grouping of African students was entirely appropriate for this study, especially when considering the limited access to a larger population with the research site, my study hopes to add to the research conducted by Asante, Sekimoto, and Brown (2016) by spotlighting Ghanaians, specifically, and not a group of diverse Africans. Some research also groups Africans in one group and place them against other ethnic communities in the U.S.

Research that places Africans born on the continent and African Americans against each other is misguided, problematic, and divisive. Further, these studies place

African Americans in a racial category, denying them claim to their Black American ethnic background, while usually placing African groups within different ethnic categories. The African American/Black American culture is one which is distinct from others and unique to the African American experience. Therefore, their ethnic and cultural identities should be recognized and respected. Darboe (2006), a McNair Scholar under the supervision of Dr. E. Kofi Agorshah, studied the relationships between Africans and African Americans. In this research, Darboe provided a historical analysis of scholars and activists claiming the need for racial unity or African unity between the Continent and its Diaspora. Darboe then goes on to discuss stereotypes between the two groups. While the qualitative data presented has merit because one cannot dispute personal opinions and experiences, this type of research is fundamentally problematic from an epistemological standpoint. African Americans are not a homogenous group, and there is no way all African immigrants can be considered one group. If neither of these groups is monolithic, how then can one position them against one another? This epistemic and theoretical flaw is, unfortunately, common in Pan-African, African, Black, and African American Studies discourse. As noted by Kretsedemas (2013), the racial/ethnic dichotomous framework over-generalizes racial and ethnic identities. They place the two against one another instead of in conversation with one another.

Nsangou and Dundes (2018) explored the experiences of African, African American, and white college students and recent college graduates. Their research found that there was no overall group solidarity between African students and African Americans. While this is to be expected considering the diversity of the “Black race,” their work demonstrates the need to further explore what constitutes Blackness and how

institutions serve “Black” populations. Again, their study lumped Africans as a group and African Americans as a group without giving space for specific ethnic groups which could add more nuance to the conversation. It is the aim of this study to highlight the agency of Ghanaian-Americans without any juxtaposition with African Americans, by highlighting their agency, identities, and how they interact with other communities in the United States (i.e., white, Black, immigrant, African immigrant). This study does include participants’ relationships with African/Black Americans because many participants introduced the topic on their own as their interactions with diverse groups of people have impacted their identity expressions, as some participants noted. While this topic was discussed, we did not stop at perceptions because perceptions and ideologies can be challenged and nuanced as time passes and through experience, exposure, and interactions. Participants and I discussed interactions with diverse groups in the U.S. and how they challenge stereotypes and dominant narratives.

My study adds to the literature and discourse on identity politics and im/migration studies because I worked with my sample based on age and did not focus on the amount of time individuals have been in the U.S. Imoagene (2011; 2017) explored on the experiences of second-generation Nigerians in the U.S. and U.K., and my study adds to her contributions by centering Ghanaians and including first-generation. This helps fill the gaps in scholarship that only examines first or second-generation separately, and demonstrate how Millennials respond to migration in a more globalized world. Further, this project does not dwell on one particular factor that relates to identity but instead takes a holistic approach to identity work by exploring how different identities are related to culture and society. Loseke (2007) argues that exploring the reflexive relationships of

identities brings greater depth to narratives of identity versus simply investigating one particular identity. Further, Loseke (2007) claims that “narratives of identity ... are produced at cultural, institutional, organizational, and individual levels of social life” (p. 662), so my inquiry into different social and private sectors along with the exploration into various identities as they relate to culture provides substantial insight into cultural studies and immigration literature.

Limitations

The primary limitation was language barriers with some Ghanaian immigrant participants. Since I am not fluent in any indigenous Ghanaian language, those who did not speak English could not participate. This limitation, however, did not negatively impact the study because English is a popular language—a *lingua franca*—spoken in Ghana (Albakry & Ofori, 2011). This study was also limited in population because the only participants are Millennials, and it is only focused on those who live in the United States. Millennials are the target population because this generation has been overlooked in scholarship, and this study sought to share the experiences of the upcoming leaders of the world. Finally, this study is limited because it is not restricted to one ethnicity. Different Ghanaian ethnicities can have different cultural expressions even in the same country. Since there is no specific attention given to Fante, Asante, Ewe, Gã, or any other ethnic population in Ghana, there is no systematic review of the experiences of these groups and how they differ from other Ghanaian immigrant groups. Although there is no intentional investigation into the experiences of participants based on their ethnic identity, this study still provides a foundation on the topic where future scholars can advance.

Organization of Study

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the project and a rationale for the study, and why it is timely and innovative. It outlines and discusses the pertinent methodologies and theoretical approaches I deploy. The second chapter, Literature Review, highlights literature and scholarship thus far on immigration, identity, and African and Ghanaian (Millennial) immigrants in the United States. It is in this chapter that I discuss how the works I peruse pertain to my project and what my contribution will bring to the existing scholarship. The third chapter outlines the methodology used in this study. The fourth chapter, Findings and Analysis, describes the findings and analyzes these findings. Here, I outline the themes that emerged from my research and provide a discussion of the narratives told, as well as new insights and conclusions reached. The fifth chapter, Conclusion, provides a synthesis of the data, the main ideas from the overall project, and suggestions for future research based on my analysis and the above limitations of the study.

Positionality Statement

I am a multigenerational African in the U.S., or African/Black American, woman. My family has been living in the U.S. for over six generations, and much of our history has been purposefully erased through various systems of racism and oppression. I am interested in identity and the African Diaspora. My personal experiences have grown into a desire to systematically explore the experiences of Ghanaian Millennials. I have no known ancestral lineage to Ghana, which makes me an “outsider” with the group I am studying, but I do have knowledge about Ghana and Ghanaian cultures that have derived from traveling to the country and building personal relationships with Ghanaians.

Although I have no known genealogy to Ghana, I am a Black woman and Pan-Africanist. Many of my participants also identify with a global Black identity and understand the complexities of race and racism. Further, many participants were born in the U.S. like me. This complicates the insider/outsider narrative because I share many commonalities with my participants (e.g., age, familiarity with Ghana) making me an insider but also some differences, which can make me an outsider. I believe that having similarities and differences with my participants nuances the discourse about identity and challenges the insider/outsider binary.

Definition of Terms

1.5-generation – Foreign-born immigrants who migrate as children (Gindelsky, 2018).

Acculturation – Changes in an individual's own personal culture to adjust to the dominant culture (Sam, 2000).

Black – Those of African descent or origins in a general sense that is not specific to any ethnicity or nation (Agyemang, Bhopal, and Bruijnzeels, 2005).

Cultural Identity – “A matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’” (Hall, 1990, p. 225).

Ethnicity – A social group with a real, or imagined, ancestral past and cultural similarities that an individual associates themselves with and are welcomed by others in the said group.

Identity – “Our understanding of who we are and who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us)” (Jenkins, 2008, p. 18).

Immigrant – “Those who come voluntarily to live permanently in the United States or those who came...on a temporary visa but decided to adjust their stay to a permanent status” (Ette, 2012, p. 17).

Immigration – “The process by which a person enters and settles as a permanent resident in another country” (Adekunle, 2013, p. 163).

Millennial – Anyone born between 1982 and 2002 (Howe & Strauss, 2002).

Race – “A complex concept, best viewed for social science purposes as a subjective social construct based on observed or ascribed characteristics that have acquired socially significant meaning” (Blank, Dabady, & Citro, 2004, p. 37-38).

Second-Generation American – U.S. born individuals who are the children of foreign-born immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001)

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

“I'm Asante, so anytime I meet people and I see they're making hints about where I'm from, or my culture or anything like that, I just diving into some educational thing. Oh, I'm from Ghana. I'm from Asante. Asante the kingdom of Ghana...,” Eli excitedly explained to me. As we sat and discussed his experiences as a Ghanaian immigrant via Facetime, I saw his face illuminate every time he spoke about his home country. For Eli, ethnicity was not just a way to describe himself, it was a part of him, his being. The literature explored is presented thematically to demonstrate the complexities of identity in Ghana and abroad.

Ghana is a diverse and multilingual county (Anyidoho & Dakubu, 2008). There are eight (8) major ethnic groups accounted for in the 2010 Ghana Census. These groups include: Akan, Ga-Dangme, Ewe, Guan, Gurma, Mole-Dagbani, Grusi, and Mande (Ghana Statistical Services, 2010). Akans accounted for almost half of the Ghanaian population at 47.5 % with Mole-Dagbani second at 16.6% and Ewe the third largest ethnic group at 13.9% of the population. Within the Akan ethnicity, there are subdivisions of Akyem, Asante, and Fante along with other smaller groups (Salm & Falola, 2002). Many ethnic groups have specific regions of heritage and languages. Those of the Akan group speak different variations of the language Twi and have historically occupied different parts of the country (Anyidoho & Dakubu, 2008). According to Anyidoho and Dakubu (2008), each member of the now Akan group considered

themselves politically and linguistically different from one another before Ghana was colonized and later became an independent, democratic nation-state.

The Gã–Dangme/Adangbe ethnolinguistic group have historically been situated in the Greater Accra region (Berry, 1995). Oral histories state that the Gã migrated from Nigeria and to Ghana while some believe the ancestors of the Gã migrated from Egypt to Nigeria to Ghana (Salm & Falola, 2002). The Gã language is different from that of Twi or Ewe, and it shares similarities with Yoruba language.

The Ewe people are largely located in the Volta Region of Ghana and have a shared history with those of Ewe heritage in Togo (Anyidoho & Dakubu, 2008). The separation of the group by two countries is a direct result of British and French colonialism (Salm & Falola, 2002). Despite the relatively recent national borders that separate the two regions, the Ewe language and culture have persisted.

While there are more than three ethnic groups related to Ghanaian nationality, most of the participants for this study were Akan, Gã, or Ewe. Therefore, these three groups have been highlighted in this chapter. Different ethnic groups have different historical backgrounds, but ethnic background may also play a role in the everyday experiences of Ghanaians in Ghana. This chapter presents a review of literature pertaining to the lived experiences of Ghanaians in Ghana, migration, immigrant experiences in the United States (U.S.), and immigrant identities.

Ethnicity in Ghana

Many scholars have sought to understand the roles ethnicity plays in the lives of Ghanaians. These scholars have specifically examined the role ethnicity plays in religion, political activity, and national pride. Amoateng and Heaton (2015) explored the

relationship between ethnicity and political participation in Ghana. Their study found that there were no major differences between political interests/involvement and ethnicity in contemporary Ghana. Their study did find, however, that there were differences in opinions and perspectives such as trust in the government and political officials between ethnic groups. Their work highlights the significance of ethnicity in various arenas including politics. Identities, throughout Ghana, influence how one navigates, or formulates, different sectors of life.

In his article, “The Situational Importance of Ethnicity and Religion in Ghana,” Langer (2010) examined the significance of ethnicity and religion in various social contexts in Ghana. His study highlighted how important it is to recognize that identities are always working together and may serve different levels of significance depending on settings or social contexts. He surveyed Ghanaians from different locations, different ethnicities, different religious affiliations, and some who were college students. He conducted two surveys: one with students at the University of Ghana–Legon, and the other was a general survey with adults living in urban settings in Accra, Ho, and Kumasi. The surveys revealed that religion, nationality, gender, and occupation were the most important aspects of their identity. Most participants believed that their ethnicities played a role in their abilities or likelihood to get a job working in government, getting public housing, and getting government contracts whereas many did not feel the same way in relation to educational opportunities. Ethnicity was also more significant in gaining employment with the government compared to religious affiliation. While ethnicity seemed to hold more significance in relation to finding jobs, the surveys revealed that

religious beliefs played a larger role in personal relationships. For example, the majority of the students prefer to room with someone of the same religion compared to ethnicity, and they were more likely to trust someone with the same religious beliefs compared to someone of the same ethnic background. Overall, Langer's study highlighted how religion and ethnicity are both significant but can play different roles in different situations.

Along with religion, language has also been a significant point of discussion in relation to ethnicity, nationalism, and identity. In her article "Identity and Representation Through Language in Ghana: The Postcolonial Self and the Other," Edu-Buandoh (2016) explored the relationships between language, postcolonialism, and identity. In her analysis, she argues that language and the emphasis on formal literacy education in English have influenced the ideas of elitism and identity in Ghana. She notes that when receiving formal education, Ghanaians are taught English. English then becomes a marker of knowledge and elitism. Whether intentional or not, Edu-Buandoh states:

Representations of Ghanaians who do not speak English are, in a way, different from those of Ghanaians who speak English. By the use of constructivist representation, English has become a measure for literacy and upward social mobility, thereby making it easy for some portion of the populace to be represented as 'illiterate' or 'local' while others are seen as 'literate'. The use of the term 'local' in the Ghanaian context constructs an identity of one who is not educated, unrefined, from the rural countryside and with very little or no civilization. (p. 39)

The significance of English as the tool of measurement for knowledge and social mobility is embedded in the history of the country and colonialism. Rather than seeing the indigenous languages as significant, English, which is directly connected to colonialism, is an access point to success. Using Hall's (1997) understanding of the representation of the self, Edu-Buandoh (2016) argues that the educated Ghanaian constructs and sees themselves in similar ways as the colonists presentations of self. This emphasis on the English language has resulted in the reduction of social capital of indigenous Ghanaian languages. Edu-Buandoh argues that while there are advantages in the acquisition of colonial languages (i.e. English), in such a globalized society of the 21st century, the Ghanaian government should place an emphasis on local languages as a means to encourage the retention of Ghanaian cultures, indigenous knowledge, and histories. She argues that the colonial language can still be used in the country but that the national government does not have to maintain colonial policies that regard Ghanaian languages as unnecessary and useless. Along with policies related to Ghanaians in the country, there are also efforts to bring together the Ghanaian diasporic community around the world.

Scholars and policy makers have looked to Ghanaians residing in Ghana to leverage political support and create policies, but Ghanaians residing outside of Ghana are also of significant importance. Mohan (2008), in "Making Neoliberal States of Development: The Ghanaian Diaspora and the Politics of Homelands," examined how the Ghanaian diaspora is of significant interest in Ghanaian politics and economics. He argues that neoliberalism plays a role in transnational identities and ideologies, which have challenged the binary definitions of globalization and transnationalism; hence, he

explored the various ways in which the Ghanaian government sectors encourage national development through the support of Ghanaians across the world. This includes those who may not hold Ghanaian citizenship or have any political rights. Further, he notes that most migrants maintain a connection to Ghana through various forms of “symbolic patriotism” (p. 468) but that they engage in more microforms of support through family, friends, and organizations in Ghana rather than through larger endeavors.

Mohan (2008) also explored the experiences of those of the Ghanaian diaspora as it relates to identity. Again, challenging the binary concepts of transnationalism, Mohan argues that those of the diaspora have multiple allegiances, which are in constant rearrangement. He notes that hometown, religious affiliation, and family were among the most important connections individuals hold to Ghana. In maintaining these relationships, the Ghanaian hopes to leverage a sense of pride to support economic development. While Ghanaians are working to maintain their relationships with and connections to Ghana, be it through physical or monetary means or a personal sense of patriotism, there are also those who are working to build a connection to the United States of America.

According to the Migration Policy Institute 2015 data, the United States is the top destination for international migrants and the second most popular destination for Ghanaian emigrants based on data from 2015. According to their 2017 data, there were almost 50 million international migrants residing in the U.S., making 15.3% of the population. With the U.S. being such a popular destination, it is important to nuance the factors that motivate people to relocate. It is also essential to explore the various experiences immigrants have after relocating. More specifically, the experiences of

African immigrants from across the continent and Ghanaian immigrants are of prime interest.

African Immigrants in the United States: Migration and Identity

Ghanaians have unique experiences in their new host country—The United States of America. Arthur (2010), Moore (2013), Ette (2012), and Showers (2015) explored the experiences of African immigrants in the United States. Moore (2013) focused on African immigrants in Texas, and Ette (2012) focused specifically on Nigerian immigrants in the U.S.; but the analysis the latter presented provides a comprehensive background for discussions related to Ghanaian Americans because he explored a variety of immigration experiences and motivating factors. Showers (2015) looked at the intersections of region of birth and gender among African immigrants in the health-care profession. These studies discuss varying influences on migration and provide personal accounts of immigration experiences and adjustment strategies.

Many Africans view the United States as a place where they can achieve their goals and improve their lives (Arthur, 2010). These goals include educational attainment and financial stability. Despite the increase in African immigrants in the United States, negative stereotypes about them persist. Dominant Western narratives often ignore their academic achievements and characterize them as welfare dependents, while also forcefully racializing many African immigrants (Arthur, 2010).

As African immigrants negotiate their various spaces in their new home, they build, create, re-create, and express a number of identities. These identities include, but are not limited to, gender, religion, class, and nationality. In *African Diaspora Identities: Negotiating Culture in Transnational Migration*, Arthur (2010) examined in depth

African migrations from various countries as they relate to African immigrant transitional identities, transnational networks in the United States, gender, and relationships with American-born Black citizens.

Arthur (2010) explored the cultural and social construction of identities of African immigrants who settled in the United States and how these identities manifested transnationally. In relation to transnational identities, Arthur specifically investigated transnational networks, cultural identity, family groups, hometown networks, and nationalism. Arthur further argues that a type of symbolic transnationalism is created by African immigrants stating, “the immigrants participate equally in fostering ties to the United States and to Africa, neither completely immersing themselves in one culture nor the other” (p. 82). Arthur noted that these transnational networks become a place where diverse and ever evolving cultural and social identities are expressed and formed. He also found that many African immigrants use their networks as a means to bind together to resist systematic racism and oppression.

At the broadest level, Arthur (2010) asserts that there are four types of African immigrant relational identities as they relate to African migration: 1) familial-based and kin group identity relationships; 2) tribal, clan, lineage, or hometown and village society immigrant relationships; 3) intra-national, Pan African-continental identity relationships; and, 4) the transnational immigrant community, alumni-based, and educational development associations (p. 85).

Family and kin groups “serve as the agency within which migration decision-making is formed, implemented, and sustained” (Arthur, 2010, p. 85). In addition, family members use their resources to help each other succeed. African immigrants also form

networks along lines of clan, lineage, hometown, or village where family surname, ethnicity, place of birth, language, and/or family lineage are used to affirm membership (Arthur, 2010). These networks help in affirming the cultural and economic identities of their immigrant affiliates, in addition to facilitating “cultural interconnections” for the purpose of lessening the distance between the immigrants and home (Arthur, 2010, p. 92). Further, the networks serve as, what Arthur (2010) calls, “information clearing houses” (p. 92) that send out information about employment and access to resources. Many of these networks serve a philanthropic purpose by aiding “in the socioeconomic and cultural development of their home communities and at the same time connecting these communities with the global marketplace of goods and services” (Arthur, 2010, p. 92).

Pan-Africanism is an important factor in African immigrant identity expression as it helps center anti-colonial perspectives, attitudes, and identities (Arthur, 2010). Pan-Africanism, in its variety of forms, challenges neocolonialism and is centered around the ideas and perspectives of Africans. Pan-Africanism also champions those in Africa and the African Diaspora by highlighting their capabilities to succeed without Western/European intervention. This means that a Pan-African perspective focuses on how those of African descent are living and negotiating their spaces in spite of discrimination and oppression. This perspective helps African immigrants because the focal point is not on assimilation, and those who are a part of their communities do not have an imperialist agenda. Immigrant national associations are another tool that helps immigrants, in a way, reconnect to home and establish “a sense of group cultural normalcy” (Arthur, 2010, p. 97). Along with transnational identities of immigrants,

Arthur (2010) also sought to better understand gender identities of second-generation African women.

a) **Gender.** Just as national and transnational identities are significant, gender identity and expression are also worthy of inquiry in relation to migration and immigration. Arthur (2010) found, through ethnographic methods and interviews, that racial and ethnic identities were salient identities of pride for many second-generation immigrant girls. Some chose to disassociate themselves from their African cultures, while others embraced them fully. However, they all renegotiated what it meant to be Black and a girl in the United States in a manner that may have differed if they were in the birth country of their parents. Arthur went on to insist, “No matter their countries of origination, the second-generation girls perceive that their blackness serves as the main marker, a common physical trait that will determine whether they will have limited or equal integration or incorporation into the core society” (p. 146). His study’s participants were more race conscious and worked to, in many cases, incorporate their racial consciousness with their African cultural traditions. They were born with their racialized identity unlike their parents who migrated into it.

b) **African immigrants and native Black Americans.** There has been a recent spike in scholarly inquiry into African and African American relationships. Arthur (2010) chose to explore these groups in an effort to understand their histories and perspectives beyond binary opposition. Utilizing a focus group, Arthur brought African immigrant women and African American women together to discuss their experiences.

Arthur (2010) concluded that many of those who participated had initial misconceptions of the other, but these misconceptions dissolved as they began to build

personal relationships. The African American women were able to see Blackness beyond African American culture and challenge their own beliefs of African cultures and the African diaspora. The African women were also able to reflect on their preconceived notions and challenge their stereotypes of Black Americans—stereotypes that U.S. mass media has produced for over a century (Gershoni, 1997). Overall, Arthur's study suggests that African immigrants seem to adapt to their new land better when they build relationships with native-born Americans, and specifically, with Americans of marginalized social statuses (i.e., Black, women) as they help them navigate systematic racism and discrimination.

Despite his apparent lack of understanding of African American heterogeneity and cultural diversity, Arthur (2010) highlighted positive relationships between African immigrants and Black Americans. His work demonstrates, to the contrary of much of the research that regards Africans and African Americans as opposing groups, there are positive relationships within and between the groups and that these positive relationships provide reciprocal benefits.

Arthur's analysis of a diverse group of African immigrants highlights the complexities of identity development, negotiation, and expression with African immigrants in the U.S. His work also sheds light on the diversity of African immigrants and African immigrant experiences because he worked with immigrants from different countries. Some of Arthur's participants were Ghanaian which adds to the discussion of Ghanaian immigrants who have their own experience in the U.S. Arthur's work was not location bound, but some of his findings are related to that of Moore (2013) who did work with African immigrants in Texas.

In, *The American Dream Through the Eyes of Black African Immigrants in Texas*, Moore (2013) sought to understand the perspectives of Black African immigrants in Texas and their opinions on the “American Dream.” She interviewed immigrants from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria. Her study found that economic opportunities were the primary motivator for the migration of most of her participants. She also found that many of them experienced racism and discrimination, but those characteristics of the U.S. society were worth overcoming in order to reach their goals. Finally, she found that many of the participants envisioned their “American Dream” in relation to material possessions. Most believed that they had yet to achieve their goals as they were still working on pursuing educational dreams, career targets, and other goals. Despite not yet reaching this “dream,” participants were still hopeful and willing to work as hard as needed. Moore’s framework centered around the idea of the “American Dream.” Many of her participants migrated to the U.S. in hopes of finding more economic opportunities. This is similar to Ette’s (2012) findings with his work on Nigerian immigrants in the U.S.

In *Nigerian Immigrants in the United States: Race, Identity, and Acculturation*, Ette (2012) explored the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in the United States. To accomplish this goal, he interviewed Nigerians who came to the United States as students, for family, as visa lottery winners, and who are permanent visitors. He then provided an analysis of their views on their adaptation to the U.S. society.

a) **As students.** Based on the narratives given, Ette (2012) notes that most of the Nigerian immigrants who attended school in the U.S. decided to remain in the U.S. because they believed there was more economic opportunity compared to Nigeria. He also found that those who decided to return to Nigeria found it difficult to apply their

skills. Many wanted to keep some type of relevance in Nigeria and possibly return to their country of birth, but economic security prevents many. Ette also found differences between men and women who sought higher educational opportunities in the U.S. because women are oftentimes marginalized due to cultural androcentricity, or the centering of men.

b) **For family.** Ette (2012) shared the stories of three women who immigrated to the U.S. to be with their husbands. The ethnicities of the husbands were not disclosed, but all of them were Americans who met their future wives while visiting Nigeria. The narratives revealed that all of the women married their husbands in Nigeria. They all had traditional Nigerian weddings, two also had additional Christian church weddings, and one had to have a second ceremony in the U.S. for legal reasons. All of the women were worried about how well they knew their spouses and were concerned that their spouses may abandon them in Nigeria after the spouses returned to the U.S. All of the women were college educated but found it difficult to find employment in the U.S. One woman described having a B.A. from a Nigerian University and being unable to find work. Her husband told her that it would be difficult to find work because she was a new immigrant, so she decided to start her educational career over and went to earn another baccalaureate and master's degree in the medical field. Another woman had a college degree and a successful career at a finance company while in Nigeria. When she moved to the U.S., she could not find work and decided to attend college to join the medical profession. Each individual described some instances of racism, immigrant discrimination, or both.

c) **Visa lottery winners.** The Diversity Immigrant Visa is overseen by the U.S.

State Department and is used as a tool to increase the diversity of immigrant populations (Ette, 2012). Ette (2012) shared the story of Lee, one man who received a visa through this program. Lee, who could not find employment in Nigeria even after earning a graduate degree, attempted to visit the U.S. through a student visa, but he was denied every time; so, the Diversity Immigrant Visa seemed to be the only other option. He was awarded the visa and borrowed money from his wife's family to pay for the visa and his flight ticket. He decided to travel alone because he could not afford a ticket for both him and his wife. When he arrived, he found it difficult to find a job, but he lived with friends who supported him and allowed him to stay with them until he got on his feet. Lee eventually found two jobs and worked until he could pay off his loans and send for his wife. He now has a second graduate degree and a career in the U.S. He noted that it was difficult adjusting to the U.S., but he found comfort and support with his friends and the Nigerian community, including Nigerian associations.

d) **Permanent visitors.** Some of the participants of Ette's (2012) study came to the U.S. on temporary visas but decided to stay in the country. One participant sought to move to the U.S. in hopes of finding better opportunities. She went to the U.S. on a tourist visa and stayed with her American boyfriend. Even though she had a tourist visa, her intentions were always to stay in the country. Her boyfriend was abusive, and she was able to remove herself from that relationship with the help of her relatives who also lived in the U.S. Once her visa expired, it was more difficult for her to find work, but she worked whenever she could find a job. She eventually met an American man and married him, but she did not say that she married him for security to live in the country although

she noted that it did help. She noted that she experienced racism and other hardships and plans to move back to Nigeria someday.

Showers (2015) sought to nuance the literature around race and ethnicity with Black immigrants in the U.S. based on in-depth interviews with forty-two women from Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone in her article “Being Black, Foreign and Woman: African Immigrant Identities in the United States.” She challenged previous research related to ethnicity and added depth to the literature pertaining to experiences of Black immigrants and West African immigrants in particular. Participants in Showers’ study gave vivid accounts of experiences of racism in the workplace. The racism ranged from interactions with patients to supervisors. The women identified as Black, but, counter to those that posit race and ethnicity against each other, the women also maintained salient ethnic identities.

In regard to the experiences of racism, many participants articulated specific examples of overt racism and microaggressions. Racial microaggressions are brief, commonplace, and subtle words, behaviors, and environmental spaces that are derogatory and aimed at people of color (Sue et al., 2007). Microaggressions may be intentional or unintentional. For example, Susan explained that if a Black woman is working in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), “they say wow, she’s smart” (Showers, 2015, p. 1821). In the case of Susan and other Black women in her workplace, they explained that a Black woman must be “smart” to perform the duties she is trained for as a nurse covertly signals that they do not believe Black women are capable of the work and that a Black woman in that space must be exceptional even though she has the same training as the other white nurses. Participants from different countries, describing racism that has be directed

towards them and directly impacts their work, challenge some scholarship that says Black immigrants are more likely to attribute discrimination to ethnicity rather than race (e.g., Kretsedemas, 2013).

Showers (2015) also discussed the significance of ethnicity in the workplace. Participants explained that they believed their birth country and ethnicity gave them a disadvantage compared to others. While some scholars argue that ethnicity is a tool used to guard Black immigrants from racism, Showers notes that for African immigrants, ethnicity may actually serve as a disadvantage. Showers agrees with many scholars that whiteness is equated to success and upward mobility for Black immigrants. I argue that this idea of whiteness being related to social mobility is not unique to Black immigrants. In the white supremacist society of the United States, laws and policies have been put in place to disadvantage people of color, and Black Americans in particular, while championing white Americans for even the most basic of accomplishments. Native Black Americans have been well aware of their place in the social hierarchy, which is evident by the various modes of resistance that began when our ancestors were first kidnapped and brought to this land and have yet to cease. For Black immigrants to wish to align with white society to increase their chances at a successful life is a logical strategy especially considering the lies about U.S. that dominate mass media. Unfortunately, as Showers articulates the ability to successfully achieve upward social mobility may be more difficult than some anticipate.

For Showers' (2015) participants, their ethnicity placed them lower on the social hierarchy because they were from the African continent. Participants believed that this disadvantage was due to the lack of knowledge and abundance of ignorant beliefs native-

born Americans had about Africa. Participants discussed how they were more likely to be stationed at less prestigious locations in hospitals or concentrated in nursing homes. To combat this cultural racism, some made a special effort to distance themselves from other African co-workers. Showers' study highlights how much Black African immigrants have to work to succeed in the United States due to racism and cultural racism. This study also demonstrates how solidarity with other Black people in the U.S. and African immigrants can be seen as a disadvantage in the workplace.

Derived from their interviews of 87 immigrants from eastern Africa in the Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan area, Guenther, Pendaz, and Makene (2011) found that their participants were surprised at the racialization of U.S. societies, and many described experiences of overt racism. Many participants also explained how they wished to distinguish themselves from native-born African Americans in an effort to avoid racial discrimination and social immobility, and some explained that they were culturally different from African Americans. Simultaneously, some participants described how those efforts were pointless because not being categorized as "African American" did not mean that they would not be categorized as "Black" and subsequently experience racial prejudice and discrimination. The majority of participants were also Muslim, and they described experiences of discrimination based on their religion from white and Black individuals. Despite their negative experiences, many participants still expressed pride in their religious beliefs and nationality. They described not just wanting to maintain a distinctiveness from American Americans but also from other groups to highlight their cultural distinctiveness.

All of the participants in Ette's (2012) study came from different backgrounds, had different motivations for migrating, and had their own unique experiences in the U.S. This study is useful because it demonstrates how diverse group experiences can be even if they are from the same area. Similar to Arthur's (2010) work, Ette's participants shared some similar characteristics but also different, and varied, social and personal experiences. Even with the varied experiences, the African immigrants in his study described similar sentiments and similar evolving themes (racism, classism, determination to be successful) in their experiences which is why an inquiry into the lives of Ghanaians is necessary because they cannot be grouped into a category of "African;" and within the Ghanaian-American community, there are different stories and experiences to be unearthed. Further, there are varied experiences and perspectives between generations.

The Second-Generation

Immigrant generations oftentimes have different experiences in the new country. For first-generation immigrants, the country is new. For their descendants, the country is now their birth country where they are raised and accustomed to. Waters (2014), in "Defining Difference: The Role of Immigrant Generation and Race in American and British Immigration Studies," advises scholars against homogenizing immigrant groups. She notes that age at time of migration and the year of migration complicate any singular assumption about immigrants. This is also true for the second-generation.

Descendants of immigrants in the U.S., or second-generation Americans, have different experiences than that of their parents. Part of the reason is that they were born and raised in the U.S. and become more exposed to the mainstream culture (Waters,

2014). This exposure to the U.S. mainstream culture may also be changed over time as the U.S. culture constantly evolves and social media provides faster access to a variety of perspectives. Social media platforms such as Twitter (founded in 2006) connect the world and allows users to discuss issues that range from global topics to topics that are of particular personal interest (Díaz-Faes, Bowman, & Costas, 2019). Since Twitter's advent in 2006, those who were coming of age during and after this time have had easier access to current news and opinions of others across the world. Since those of the second-generation have different experiences, literature related to second-generation Americans must be explored along with how their experiences relate to other immigrant generations. Emeka (2018) and Imoagene (2012, 2017) both specifically explored the experiences of second-generation Nigerian Americans, and Imoagene also worked with second-generation Nigerians in Britain. In "'Just black" or not "just black?" Ethnic Attrition in the Nigerian American Second Generation," Emeka's (2018) tracked identity association among second-generation Nigerian Americans and found that U.S.-born Nigerian children of lower socioeconomic standings and parents who had not attained high school or college certificates were more likely to identify as "African American" or "Black" versus "Nigerian." He noted that second-generation Nigerian Americans are Nigerian, American, and Black simultaneously and that due to the significance of race in the U.S., they are not afforded the option to be "just American."

In her book *Beyond Expectations: Second-Generation Nigerians in the United States and Britain*, Imoagene (2017) interviewed middle-class second-generation Nigerians in the U.S. and Britain. In her study within the U.S., none of the participants identified as African American, but some did identify as racially Black. The majority

identified as Nigerian or Nigerian American. She noted that the reason was because Black/African American was, in their minds, related to poverty and “is frequently synonymous with a lower/underclass African-American culture” (Imoagene, 2012, p. 2170). Her study also discussed experiences between second-generation Nigerians and African Americans. Again, while this is not the center of my study, it should be noted that many of her participants had expectations of “Black solidarity” but soon learned that there is no such thing since Black people do not support each other unconditionally just like whites and Latinos don’t provide unconditional support based solely on race, ethnicity, or nationality.

The scholarship pertaining to first and second-generation immigrants shows that there is no one way to experience the U.S. Tormala and Deaux (2011) helped show what factors may influence how one may identify and interact with U.S. mainstream society (see Table 1). Some of their research aligns with previous studies while simultaneously challenging singular narratives of adjustment. Overall, it is clear from the current research on African immigrants and second-generation Americans that there is no “correct” way to live in the U.S. The experiences of immigrants are varied, and the experiences of their descendants also vary due to socioeconomic status, exposure to different cultures, expectations of the U.S. societies, and individual perspectives.

Table 1

Psychological Processes and Cultural Practices for First-Generation, Second-Generation, and Native Born Blacks

	First-generation Black immigrants	Second-generation Black immigrants	Black Americans
Psychological processes and cultural practices	More likely to interact with outgroup members Belief that American ideals apply to self	Have possibility of strategic use of accents Salience of an American identity causes heightened perceptions of prejudice and lowered expectation for success than a salient immigrant identity	Less likely to interact with outgroup members Belief that Blacks are often overlooked in U.S. policy
	Unwilling/unlikely to view race as a barrier to success	Personal experience with race as a barrier; willing to acknowledge possibility	Personal and historical experiences with race as a barrier; willing to acknowledge possibility
Collective identity	Maintenance of ethnic identity can serve as buffer from stereotypes and prejudice associated with African American Collective identity tends to be high	Neighborhood demographics have large effects on self-identification Those who identify as African American show greater belief that race affects future outcomes than those who identify as immigrants	Identity is stigmatized and devalued in U.S. society Collective identity tends to be high
Negotiation within U.S. society	Fewer experiences with racial prejudice in countries of origin	Experience with instances of racial prejudice	Experience with instances of racial prejudice

Note. Adapted from “Black Immigrants to the United States: Confronting and Constructing Ethnicity and Race,” by T. T. Tormala & K. Deaux 2011, in Mahalingam (Ed.), *Cultural Psychology of Immigrants* (pp. 131-150). New York, NY: Routledge. Adapted with permission.

Coutinho and Koinis-Mitchell (2014) explored educational experiences from first and second-generation immigrants ages 13-19 from Cape Verde. They found that those of the second-generation were, overall, more engaged in school and were less likely to perceive themselves as experiencing ethnic discrimination compared to those of the first-generation. They found that for those of the first-generation, an American identity was correlated with their length of time in the U.S. The longer an individual had lived in the U.S., the more likely they were to identify as American.

Ghanaian Immigrants in the United States

According to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey, there are approximately 121,000 Ghanaian-born immigrants currently living in the United States (Gambino, Trevelyan, & Fitzwater, 2014). While in the United States, many Ghanaian immigrants attempt to maintain a sense of their cultural identity (e.g., Asante, Fante, Gã). The larger waves of Ghanaian migration to the United States began in the 1970s and peaked during the 1980s. Prior to the 1970s, Ghanaians, like other non-Europeans, were hampered by the prevailing racist and exclusionist immigration policies toward Black Africans (Gordon, 2004). Even though there is no solid evidence of any racial bias in U.S. immigration policy after 1965, certain practices have given Africans reasons to doubt the ingenuousness of the United States' legal and social acceptance of Africans in general (Opoku-Dapaah, 2006). Ghanaians seeking entry into the United States encounter long delays and reduced prospects in comparison with immigrants from Asia and Europe. Further, compared to immigrants from other countries, few Ghanaians are allowed entry into the United States under permanent immigration criteria such as family, independents, and personal investors (Opoku-Dapaah, 1997 as cited in Opoku-Dapaah, 2006). The

small numbers of Ghanaians who do gain admission into the United States are selected based on their professional experience and academic accomplishments which disqualify a large number of Ghanaian applicants (Opoku-Dapaah, 2006), and these accomplishments that are utilized to gain entrance into the country do not change the popularized negative narrative about African immigrants. Still, Ghanaians living in the United States are a heterogeneous group comprised of diverse professionals, families, (Opoku-Dapaah, 2006) and identities.

For a more nuanced analysis of the experiences of Ghanaian immigrants, I will provide a synopsis of the work of Biney (2011) and Adjepong (2018). Biney (2011) explored Ghanaian immigrant experiences in the U.S. in relation to religion and spirituality; but I will only discuss his broader findings. Adjepong (2018) examined the experiences of Ghanaian immigrants who were raised in the U.S. (1.25 and 1.5-generation), with a specific interest in identity politics. These two works exhibit the heterogeneity of Ghanaian immigrants across time, location, and age.

In his book *From Africa to America: Religion and Adaptation Among Ghanaian Immigrants in New York*, Biney (2011) worked with the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in New York (PCGNY) to gain the personal stories of those who fellowshiped there. Working with this church was unique because he argues that such religious spaces provide a safe space that balances ethnic identity and cultural adjustments that help immigrants adjust and thrive. Through personal narratives, interviews, and field observations, Biney highlights some of the experiences of Ghanaian immigrants. Many of his participants dreamed of migrating to the U.S. because they believed there was more economic opportunity compared to Ghana. One participant even disclosed that he had

dreamed of visiting the U.S. since the age of eight. Some of his participants did reach their academic and professional goals, but others struggled to find work. Many found that their education abroad gave them little advantages, and some either went back to school or worked minimum wage jobs to get by despite their higher levels of education. Nonetheless, those who participated in Biney's study explained that they were willing to work as hard as they need to reach their goals. They also discussed dealing with racism and anti-immigrant beliefs, but they refused to let this discrimination stop them.

Biney also found that, although many of his participants were permanent U.S. residents or citizens, they still called Ghana "home" and stayed up to date on current events and news in Ghana. He also found that while the PCGNY was an important factor for immigrants in their adjustment to U.S. societies, the church did not have many structures or programs in place for second-generation Ghanaian-Americans. This overlooking of the younger generation is what makes Adjepong's (2018) work vital to my work and future research because she worked with 1.5 and second-generation Ghanaian immigrants as am I, along with first-generation immigrants of the Millennial generation.

In their article "Afropolitan Projects: African Immigrant Identities and Solidarities in the United States," Adjepong (2018) explored how U.S.-raised Ghanaian immigrants situate themselves as "Africans of the World" (p. 249) by deploying an Afropolitan identity. Adjepong explains that Afropolitan projects attempt to advance a "modern non-victimized narrative about Africa" (p. 249). Afropolitan being situated as an ethnicity, Adjepong uses Treitler's (2013) work to explain how ethnic projects are social actions people take in an effort to be received as similar to those at the top of the

“racial hierarchy” and different from those of the bottom (p. 4). Treitler further explains that a successful project results in the group’s relief from discrimination and prejudice they would have experienced had they remained at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. Adjepong posits the Afropolitan as a Black ethnicity, noting that those who identify as Afropolitan sometimes make claims to being Black in different historical, cultural, and social ways.

Utilizing ethnographic methods and semi-structured interviews, Adjepong (2018) interviewed 15 Ghanaians who were a part of an association in Houston, Texas. All participants were raised in the United States, but they were not all born in the United States. Adjepong’s study uncovered that, despite being raised in the United States, the majority of the participants chose to identify as African because of their cultural and familial heritages. In addition, several participants discussed how they felt isolated in their predominately white neighborhoods. Adjepong drew connections with their experiences of isolation with race and racism because, while the participants described themselves as the only African, in these instances of isolation and discrimination, they were also the only Black person. Further, while some participants viewed themselves as culturally different from Black Americans, they did not disassociate themselves from a racial Black identity although they could choose to make their socio-political racial identity less prominent; they maintained their cultural uniqueness but still recognized and claimed the racial identity that results in daily systematic discrimination, and they used that awareness to build relationships with other Americans.

In contrast to an African ethnicity, the Afropolitan renews the meanings of African by presenting an identity that is rooted in contemporary Africa and its

interconnectedness with Western education, upward mobility, Black racial consciousness, and post-racial aspirations (Adjepong, 2018). This ethnicity remains racialized as Black and African, but also merges cultures and breaks down the boundaries of what these identities mean. In short, Afropolitan identity exceeds the geographical boundaries of the African continent to assert belonging in the world and global citizenship (Adjepong, 2018).

Adjepong's (2018) work demonstrates the variety of identities Ghanaian immigrants hold. This study also highlights how identities are not stagnant but change and are re-created. Considering Afropolitan an ethnic identity emphasizes the unique characteristics that some Ghanaians may hold that others do not. This further denotes the diversity not only within African immigrants communities but Ghanaian immigrant communities in the U.S. This study, along with the others presented in this literature review, provides a background for my interest in identity, culture, and Ghanaian immigrants.

Afropolitan identities may at first glance seem like a positive way of combating negative, dominant narratives of the African continent, but it is rejected by many. Dabiri (2016) argues that Afropolitanism is dramatically elitist and works so much to show how similar Africa is to the West, that it silences the voices and ignores the experiences of a great majority of Africans across the Continent.

Tomi (2019) argues that Afropolitanism is a responsive action where Blacks are defining themselves only in response to the other. This Afropolitan is not an organic, liberating concept which is why Tomi suggests Black people create their own spaces that

are unifying and diverse. Unlike the dominant narrative of the Afropolitan, this space suggested by Tomi embraces difference and different realities.

The research presented demonstrates the wide array of complications that partner with immigration for African immigrants in the United States. While many of these experiences are shared by African immigrants regardless of their nationality, African immigrants are not a homogenous group, and Ghanaian immigrants should, therefore, still be given specific attention. Further, the various ways in which Ghanaian immigrants and their children of the 21st century maintain and deploy their cultural identities are unique.

The literature review provides a backdrop that demonstrates the importance of my study and how it advances the previous research in diasporic studies, identity work, Africana studies, and Ghanaian studies. The gaps in the literature, including the lack of research given to Ghanaian-Americans specifically and the lack of research focusing on age as opposed to immigration generation, also make clear the necessity of my current study. The following chapter details the methodologies used to recruit participants and collect and analyze data.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study utilized anthropological, sociological, and psychological theories and approaches to understand the experiences of Ghanaian Millennials in the United States (U.S.). To better understand the complexities of identity related to this particular population, qualitative methods were used to gain extensive, detailed accounts and experiences of the participants. In this chapter, I will explain the methods used in this study with significant emphasis on what I hoped to achieve by using them and what was gained from those methods. Next, I will discuss the sample size, recruitment strategies, and data analysis.

Research Questions

The questions guiding this project were centered around identity development and cultural expression for Millennial first, 1.5, and second-generation immigrants. These questions were aimed at better understanding how these groups are raised and socialized and how they interact with the larger society where they reside. The specific guiding interview questions were:

- 1) Do participants perceive there are differences in their own home life and upbringing compared to the daily lives of other Americans or Ghanaians? (How are they raised in respect to being immigrants? Are their upbringings different from other Americans or Ghanaians? How so?)

- 2) How do Ghanaian Millennials define cultural identity? How important is the idea of cultural identity?
- 3) How are social and cultural identities shaped, maintained, negotiated and expressed for Millennial first, 1.5, and second-generation Ghanaians in the United States? What influences do race, racism, gender, and class have on their daily lives?
- 4) How are Ghanaian Millennials in the United States taught about race? What experiences influence their conceptualization of race and Blackness?

Methodological Approach

Qualitative methods were the best-qualified methodological approach to exploring the topic at hand. Qualitative work focuses on a specific population sample, context, or event and has an idiographic analytical style (Gerring, 2017). There are many methods that fall under the umbrella of qualitative (Mannin & Kunkel, 2014). For this study, a phenomenological theoretical perspective guided the methodological approach. Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault (2015) explain that the two prominent theoretical perspectives are positivism and phenomenological. Positivism is centered more on scientific evidence whereas phenomenology is concerned with the ways the world is experienced from the lens of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). Since this study is centered around the identities that are salient to the participants and how they negotiate different social and private spaces, the participants' perspectives are most critical. Therefore, a phenomenological approach deemed itself most appropriate.

Research Design

Phenomenology can be understood as a philosophy, research method, and approach (Dowling, 2014). This study employed an eidetic, or descriptive, phenomenological approach which seeks to understand the ways of knowing from the viewpoints of the participants (Dowling, 2014). Edmund Husserl is often referred to as the founder of phenomenology (Käufer & Chemero, 2015). Husserl's phenomenology is centered on experiences, the meanings of those experiences, and the conscious acts of those involved (Käufer & Chemero, 2015). Husserl's focus on meaning and individual acts of consciousness are vital to this study, but Husserl's phenomenology alone does not fully grasp the complexities of my participants.

Franz Fanon was interested in how people subjected to prejudice, discrimination, and systematic oppression navigate these social constructs. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1952/1967) describes the experiences of being Black in a racialized society. He speaks of the difficulties of negotiating spaces with the "Other," or the white, dominate society, where he must consider himself as an individual and Black. He describes how his identities are always at the forefront, and these experiences with the "Other" make it imperative to understand his story from his perspective.

Husserl's interest in the conscious acts of individuals is seen in Fanon's (1952/1967) work, but Fanon added another component—racism. Fanon specifically looked at race in predominantly white countries and the impacts of colonialism. Fanon's work can be extended beyond race to include systematic oppression by those outside of the dominant culture(s). Therefore, those who are not members of the racial majority social group, not citizens, and not multi-generational Americans fit into the category

presented by Fanon because those on the margins are forced to negotiate their spaces with the “Other.”

Consciousness is an experience (Cronin, 2017). It is an awareness that should not be confused with knowledge (Cronin, 2017). A phenomenological approach allows me, and my participants, to dissect the conscious decisions that are made by participants in relation to identity and different social spaces. Further, this approach gave room for interview questions that were exploratory and, at times, quite intimate and personal. Therefore, the study not only explored the experiences of participants but also how they themselves made sense of those experiences in respect to their sense of self consciousness.

Population

The general population for this study was first, 1.5, and second-generation Ghanaian-Americans in the United States. The method of sampling for this study was criterion-based, or purposive sampling. Patton (2002) discusses that a criterion-based sampling procedure involves studying cases that meet a predetermined criterion that is of some significance. There were two criteria established, and participants needed to meet them to be eligible for participation. First, this study looks specifically at the identities of Millennials, so being born between 1982 and 2002 is fundamental. Second, participants need to be first, 1.5, or second-generation Ghanaian-Americans. Initially, the requirement was that participants had to be born in Ghana or have at least one parent that was born in Ghana while they, themselves, were born in the U.S. I later found that this limited my population because some participants had two Ghanaian parents and were immigrants to the U.S. but were not born in Ghana or the U.S. Therefore, the participants needed to be

residing in the United States with one or both parents being born in Ghana. The participants' place of birth was not a criterion.

Sampling Procedure

This project utilized purposeful and snowball sampling. Purposeful sampling, or criterion-based sampling, requires participants to meet specific criteria to participate in the study (Palinkas et al., 2015) as previously noted. To recruit participants, I used two platforms (social media and community organizational outreach) to recruit initial participants. First, I posted a flyer on my personal Instagram and Facebook pages with the requirements for the study and my contact information for those who wanted to participate. Instagram is a global platform where people can share photos and videos, and Facebook is a global social network site where individuals, businesses, and organizations connect. Since my personal account is not private, individuals were able to share my flyer (see Appendix A) with their networks. Along with flyers on my personal account, I reached out to individuals I found online who fit the criteria. I searched #Ghana, #GhanaMade, and similar hashtags and sent individual messages to those who could be potential participants. The use of Instagram yielded seven (7) participants. The use of Facebook yielded nine (9) participants.

Second, I sent a mass email to Ghanaian community organizations around the U.S. I decided to reach out to these organizations because they were most likely to have members who met the criteria for the study. One limitation to this decision is that most of those who would be recruited via the community organizations would be more likely to have high Ghanaian identity saliencies since they were actively involved in an organization specific to Ghanaians. Despite this possible skew in participant diversity, I

determined it was a way to recruit more participants. Also, communicating with the community organizations coupled with the Instagram recruitment strategies had the potential to diversify my participant pool. Unfortunately, Zero (0) participants were recruited as a result of the community outreach method.

After recruiting participants, I used snowball sampling methods to reach more potential participants. Snowball sampling occurs when one participant works as a recruiter and connects more potential participants with the research (Merriam, 2009). Snowball methods recruited four (4) participants, and one (1) participant was recruited via “word of mouth” from someone who was not a part of the study. My initial goal was to interview at least 20 people in total. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2005) conducted a study to determine how many participants may be needed to provide valid nonprobability, qualitative data. In their study, they used interview data from 60 interviews in Ghana and Nigeria. They found that the majority of the codes (92%) emerged by the twelfth transcript. Their study demonstrates that a large sample size is not always necessary to gain detailed, in-depth qualitative data. I had 21 total participants.

Data Collection Methods

I deployed two strategies to gain the most detailed information as possible. I used a phenomenological approach to conduct one-on-one semi-structured interviews and asked participants to take part in a journaling exercise over the course of one month. These methods were combined with the goal of collecting sound data from the various experiences of participants. I wanted participants to feel comfortable discussing personal experiences, so the journaling method added to the research design.

Interviews

One-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. This study is designed as a phenomenological qualitative study. Loseke (2007) explains that narratives create identities at different social levels. The lived experiences of the participants and their interpretation of these experiences are fundamental to phenomenological studies (Merriam, 2009); therefore, this approach was utilized to aid in understanding how the participants interpret their own experiences as immigrants in the United States or individuals raised by immigrant family members.

The pre and post interviews were semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews are more flexible allowing the interviewer to ask more open-ended questions and in an order that works best for each interview (Merriam, 2009). This interviewing process was deemed viable due to the ability to ask participants follow-up questions. Since participants were asked to describe their personal experiences, the ability to ask for clarification was needed. The interview protocol consisted of two main sections. The first section asked participants about their experiences with their families as immigrants, and the second section asked about their cultural identity and how they deploy their identities while interacting with the larger society (see Appendix B). Semi-structured interview questions were generated from a comprehensive review of the literature.

Interviews were conducted after permission was granted by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Louisville. Most interviews were virtual and took place in a private setting. One interview was in-person in a private setting due to scheduling convenience. All participants were informed of their rights as a participant, they were informed of confidentiality clauses, and each granted my request to audio and

video record the interview. Each participant was interviewed once with the option of a second, follow-up interview. Interviews lasted between 35-116 minutes. All participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity and confidentiality. The pseudonyms were either a name they chose or their day name. In Ghana, it is common for an individual to refer to themselves by the name associated with the day they were born (Agyekum, 2006). For example, among the Akan, if a female is born on a Wednesday, she can be referred to as Akua. Since day names are so popular, they suffice as pseudonyms because day names are not typically on one's birth certificate. Further, there are only seven days in a week, so many people go by the same name. In the case of this study, there were a few participants who had the same day name, so we decided on different pseudonyms. Participants were also asked to participate in a journaling exercise. This exercise allowed participants to reflect on their experiences, track if their beliefs or ideals have changed, note experiences that may be useful for this particular study, and write thoughts as they reflect on the first interview. This exercise has the potential to provide more in-depth data and opportunity for triangulation between myself, the participants, and our interactions together (Janesick, 1999).

Journaling

Participants were asked to journal over the course of one month, or four weeks. Each week, I provided a writing prompt and asked participants to reply within the week. They were allowed to write as frequently as they wished as long as they responded to the prompts. Journaling, or diary keeping, is done in a private setting where participants can express their thoughts, emotions, and narratives of different events (Travers, 2011). Travers (2011) notes that diary keeping may be recognized as the "purest form of self-

reflection” (p. 206) because of its privacy. When comparing journaling to interviews, journaling is not typically a retrospective exercise and can add richness to data because of its capability of collecting sensitive, personal data that a person may not be comfortable speaking about (Travers, 2011). Meth (2003) found that the utilization of diary writing as a qualitative method provided participants a unique space to reflect, centered the voices of the participants and the description of their experiences, and provided the research with more extensive data with the expectation that participants would use this private space to describe current events, feelings, perceptions, and opinions while also reflecting on their discussion with me during the first interview.

Unfortunately, I did not have many who participated in the journaling exercise. In fact, only one person completed the exercise. There were many reasons that could have contributed to the lack of participation with the journaling, but I believe the biggest was the lack of incentive. Many scholars provide a monetary incentive to encourage participants to complete all requested assignments related to a particular study. This is frankly implausible for someone who has limited funds. I did not have money to give all of my participants even though I would have liked to have compensated them. This leads to a larger discussion about what constitutes in-depth research and how accessible it is for junior scholars with limited funds.

Gardner and Holley (2011) found that finances were a major obstacle for first-generation doctoral students. The participants in their study did not want to rely solely on loans to fund their degree, and those with assistantships often still did not make enough money to cover their school and living costs. Since it was difficult for many of these students to fund their coursework, it is easy to assume the difficulties they faced

conducting their research. There are highly competitive grants to apply for, but they must be done so far in advance that one must have a firm idea of their study at least a year before they begin their research. More research should be done on how financial barriers limit dissertation research and how institutions of higher education are working, or not working, to break those barriers in a practical way. I did receive a small grant from the University of Louisville Graduate Student Council, but it was not enough to pay for my coding costs and compensate all of my participants. For those of us in the humanities and social sciences, our funding opportunities are slim, and there should be more consideration of how to support us through this academic journey. Whilst the funding I received was limited, I was nevertheless fortunate enough to collect rich data. Although the journaling exercise was not successful, the interviews were still in-depth and detailed which provided enough for a substantial project.

Participatory Observations

All data were collected via technology. Most interviews took place via video conference services, and the one that was face-to-face was video reordered. Journaling was done via an online format. In 2018, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* generated a report on Generation Z (defined in the report as those born around 1995) college. In this report, they discussed how Gen Zers use technology to communicate with others, learn, and consume information. This is not unique to Generation Z and Millennials use technology more than generations before them (Au-Yong-Oliveiraa, Gonçalvesb, Martinsb, & Brancob, 2018). I decided to use technological resources because this generation, the generation I belong to, is more likely to be connected to technology (Au-Yong-Oliveiraa, Gonçalvesb, Martinsb, & Brancob, 2018) and it would allow me to make

more observations and collect data in a timelier manner. Utilizing technological resources also allowed me to deploy ethnographic methods to collect data. I was able to note environment, dress, facial expressions, and other qualities of the like that would not have been available if the interviews were via telephone. A face-to-face interview may have provided more data related to environment (e.g., housing), but I was still able to make some of these observations via video chat. The convenience of video interviews was essential.

During data collection, there was a reflexive process utilized to spark insight and develop meaning. Srivastava and Hopwood (2009) state that a reflexive process is iterative and consists of “visiting and revisiting the data and connecting them with emerging insights, progressively leading to refined focus and understanding” (p. 77). To help guide the reflexive process, I wrote down, or journaled, my reflections during interviews, after interviews, and throughout the research process.

Data Analysis

All data were analyzed by line-by-line coding. I began with the first interviews, then the journals, and finally the second interviews. I chose to code in order for the research project to find any progression of themes. The codes from the line-by-line coding were put into categories where themes and subthemes were drawn out. Themes and subthemes are found in Table 3.

Member checking was also utilized to analyze the data. Member checking is when the researcher presents their findings to the participants to gain more insight on their interpretations and hold the researcher, and their data accountable (Naidu & Prose, 2018). This was a critical point in the research process because the overall project is reciprocal,

and participants should ensure their accounts are accurate since part of the purpose of this study is to highlight their voices. The member checking process ensured the integrity of the study.

The next chapter presents participant profiles and findings from the study. This will then be followed by the analysis of the findings, analysis, and conclusion.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This study focused on the Millennial generation instead of immigrant generations, but the findings have been separated into immigrant generations. This chapter is divided into three sections: first-generation, 1.5-generation, and second-generation. The participants' names, birth year, country of birth, and other demographic information can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Participants

Name	Birth Year	Country of Birth (Region)	Relocation to U.S. A.	Ghanaian Ethnic Identity	“Racial”/ other identity or category	Generation	Recruitment tool
David (M)	1994	Ghana (G.A.) ¹²	2017	Ashanti	Ghanaian	First	Facebook
Eli (M)	1985	Ghana (Ashanti)	2009	Ashanti	Ghanaian	First	Facebook
Kyle (M)	1995	Ghana (G.A.)	2014	Akan & Krobo	Black & Ghanaian	First	Facebook
Morowa (F)	1987	Ghana (G.A.)	2005	Gã & Ewe	Ghanaian, Ghanaian-American, Black	First	Snowball
Akwesi (M)	1993	Ghana (Eastern)	2008	Ashanti	Ghanaian	First (1.25)	Snowball
Julian (M)	1993	England	2007	Ashanti	Black & African	First (1.25)	Instagram
Lydia (F)	1992	Ghana (Ashanti)	2007	Ashanti	Ghanaian	First (1.25)	Facebook

¹² Denotes Greater Accra Region of Ghana

Akosua (F)	1993	Ghana (Ashanti)	1996 & 2001	Ashanti	Ghanaian American	1.5	Instagram
Ama (F)	1989	Ghana (G.A.)	1996	Ashanti	African American	1.5	Snowball
Bob (M)	1995	Ghana (G.A.)	2007	Ashanti & Gã	Black & Ghanaian American	1.5	Facebook
Kofi (M)	1987	Ghana (Eastern)	1988	Ashanti	Black Ghanaian American	1.5	Word of mouth
Maame Aceso (F)	1995	Ghana (G.A.)	2006	Gã & Ewe	Ghanaian American	1.5	Snowball
Nanyanika (F)	1995	Ghana (G.A.)	2006	Gã & Ewe	Black & Ghanaian American	1.5	Instagram
Stella (F)	1990	Ghana (G.A.)	1997	Ashanti	African Ghanaian American	1.5	Facebook
Thema (F)	1992	Ghana (G.A.)	2004	Akwapim	Ghanaian; Ghanaian-American; African American	1.5	Instagram
Abena (F)	1994	Palau	2015	Ewe	Ghanaian & Black African American	Second	Facebook
Akua (F)	1986	U.S.A. (Midwest)	XX	Ashanti	African American	Second	Instagram
Kayla (F)	1997	U.S.A. (Midwest)	XX	Fante & Ewe	Black & Ghanaian American	Second	Instagram
Mary (F)	1994	U.S.A. (South)	XX	Ashanti	Gambian Ghanaian American	Second	Facebook
Richard (M)	1995	U.S.A. (South)	XX	Ashanti	Bi-racial	Second	Instagram
S (F)	1996	U.S.A. (North East)	XX	Ashanti	Black & Ghanaian-American	Second	Facebook

This study was centered the experiences and modes of identity expression for Ghanaian-Americans. Interview questions centered emigration experiences and identity. The findings are explained through seven (7) themes that can be found in Table 3. The themes, as explained in chapter three, emerged from codes derived from the interview with the participants. Each theme and subtheme does not align with each immigrant generation group, but they are the total sum of themes from all participants.

Table 3

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub Themes</i>
Moving to the United States	Motivating factors Expectations versus reality
Living in the United States	Learning “American” culture Ignorant questions Educating Americans
Home Life	Culture Strict parents Gender roles Language
Education	Bullying/making friends College transition
Learning significance of Race and Racism	Ideas of race before emigrating Distancing from African Americans Becoming “woke” Experiencing racism
Identity	Proving identity Code-switching Being Ghanaian Being American Being Black Visiting Ghana
Future Thinking	Raising children

First-Generation Ghanaian-Americans

Those who are considered first-generation were born in Ghana, or another country, and relocated to the United States as adults. Rumbaut (2004) notes that those who emigrate between ages 13 - 17 should be considered 1.25 generation because there were old enough to have memories of their birth country and are technically still minors even though their experiences will be more closely related to those of the first-generation compared to 1.5. Therefore, for this study, those who would fall in the 1.25 category are grouped with the first-generation.

Table 4

First-generation

Name	Citizenship	Visited Ghana since move to U.S.
David (M)	Ghana	No
Eli (M)	Ghana	No
Kyle (M)	Ghana	No
Morowa (F)	U.S.	Yes (multiple times)
Akwesi (M)	U.S.	Yes
Julian (M)	Ghana	Yes (one time)
Lydia (F)	U.S.	Yes (one time)

When interviewing participants, I noticed differences between the different generations and how they received me. During one interview, the participant continuously said, “in Ghana we” or “for Ghanaian culture.” I was not offended, but I felt as if she thought I was completely oblivious to anything related to Ghana. After that interview, I tried to make sure I told everyone I had visited Ghana multiple times, had numerous Ghanaian friends, and was familiar with Ghanaian cultural traditions. I found that for the first-generation, there was more excitement when they found out I had a

familiarity with Ghana. The information to follow discusses the themes that emerged from the first-generation Ghanaian Americans.

Moving to the United States

For the majority of those under the first-generation category, emigration took place in their adult life. For many this group, their emigrating to the U.S. was a conscious decision. Most of them moved to go to college, but that was not the case for everyone.

Motivating factors. David, Eli, and Kyle all relocated in their college years. Many had scholarships which helped them decide which university to attend. Morowa did not plan on relocating to the U.S. She initially came to the U.S. to visit family, but during her visit, her father informed her that the family would be moving. When discussing how she initially planned to just visit she said:

You know, how my parents already had their plans. So, I got in. Well yeah, I thought I was just visiting family until I go back to university and stuff. But it didn't happen that way. My dad started looking for schools and it's like, okay. Fine. I'll stay. I mean, I didn't have a choice. African families, you don't have a choice until you have a choice.

She had no intention of living in the U.S., but she was following the orders of her family, which is why she stayed. The others, Akwesi, Julian, and Lydia emigrated as teenagers. They explained that their parent(s) wanted them to have more opportunities for success and saw the U.S. as the place to achieve their goals. Julian moved to the U.S. at the age of 14 with his mother. He stated:

So, my mom when I talk[ed] to her on the phone she said there's a lot of opportunities here to do better. "When you come here you gotta be careful,

everything stays on your record” [she told me]. When back home, not really. No police.

Julian’s comments were similar to that of Lydia. She explained that her parents, “saw it was a good opportunity for us. Not so much for them but for us.” For them, their parents were willing to move to a different continent and country to better their children’s chances for a successful future. This willingness of the parents also came with great responsibility and expectations for the children.

Expectations versus reality. When discussing their transition to the U.S., participants were asked about the expectations they had about the country and if those expectations were met when they arrived. For the majority of participants, their expectations of the social life of the U.S. were not met. Lydia discussed what she thought the U.S. would be like compared to her experience upon arrival:

Like when you go to Ghana, people view America kind of like a little heaven.

"Oh, there's no dirt like nothing. There's no people walking outside," everything like that. Just like walking in heaven, right? But when we come here, it's pretty much the same. People are crazy. People drive crazy. We all eat, we all drink, we all poop. Like, it's all the same.

She continued:

But I guess before I came here, they're like, "Oh my golly, you're going to America. You can just go to the..."Then you will think you can just walk in anywhere and grab anything. Like life is so easy here. But, no. I have to work harder here than I was doing in Ghana, but you know. So that was the expectation, like here should be easier. And it's not.

For Lydia, her expectations turned out to be quite an illusion of reality. For the participants who were older, their expectations were more related to opportunities and achieving certain goals. David was a graduate student at the time of our interview. He noted that his main expectation was the opportunity to grow professionally. Eli had similar expectations. He said:

So, yes, I had expectations. I set goals for myself, and thankfully, I've been able to achieve everything that I wanted to within the last 10 years...When I first moved here, it was a little bit different for me. Of course, culture shock, one, um, 'cause that was my first time coming to the United States, you know. So, when I got off the plane, everything was very different for me...One thing that I realized is that they use of your left hand.

Overall, those who emigrated expecting to have to work hard were more likely to have their expectations met compared to those who were under the impression that prospering in the U.S. would be simple. Those who were older had more realistic expectations.

Living in the United States

After discussing motivating factors that led to emigrate to the U.S., participants and I discussed how they adjusted to the social climate. Since this particular group had a more established Ghanaian identity and community in Ghana, they were not as eager to integrate into the U.S. mainstream society as the other immigrant generations. To adjust, some connected with other African immigrant populations. Morowa, for example, did not plan on relocating when she came to the U.S. to visit her family. When she was told that her family would be emigrating and she was expected to join them, she had a difficult

time adjusting. She explained that it was an “emotional rollercoaster” but that she found a sense of home with her church. Morowa said:

You know, you make pacts that you're gonna go to school together you know, so it was hard for a while; but after a couple of months in school over here, I made friends here too so...And I was technically in an African community as well... Yes, yes. My church was African and my school...I went to [a community college] first...and a majority of them were Nigerians...So, I didn't feel too out of place.

While Morowa found community when she was attending college in the Northeastern part of the country, she found it difficult to build community in her predominately white neighborhood in the Midwest. She explained that her family was the only Black family in their neighborhood, and that, “Even in my classes...I was used to seeing a couple of Black people in my classes, but here it was just like white. I would be the only female and the only Black person in my class.” David tried to connect with the African Student Council at his university, but he did not enjoy it. He said:

I was thinking that it would be more African than it was. It wasn't really African. You don't really feel like the African-ness of it. [It] just [ran] like a normal student organization. So, I left the first semester, but I'm going to the programs and events. But I didn't really feel like African, like the conversation, it wasn't centered around African and Black-ness, it was just normal. And even with our events, our food wasn't really like tainted African because there is this policy where every food has to be made by [the university] so it doesn't feel like the

African, it feels just like any other. I mean...maybe I'm too brutal with my criticism.

David did not connect with the student organization, but he did make friends with other international students and African immigrants. He said:

Well, I feel like people can stick with people who are more like them, culturally. Which is why you see not even like Ghanaian[s] but West Africans stand more closely and East Africans stands more closely together. So, I mean, which is normal...For me, I hang out a lot with African students and International students a lot. So, Indians, Nepali, African, Nigerian, I mean we hang out a lot.

David did not build meaningful relationships with a specific Ghanaian or West African community, but he did make friends with other international students who have similar experiences as he.

Learning “American” culture. Adjusting to a new society also means learning new cultural norms. For Eli, there were two main cultural changes that caught his attention. He stated:

When I first got here, when somebody tried to give me something with their left hand, I got very uncomfortable...I'll be offended. So, I'll ask them, “well why are you”...and they're like “it's just normal” you know. In Ghana, for you to give something to someone with your left hand is seen to be like you don't respect the person. [It] sort of is a sign of disrespect. That was one thing and the other thing is when I was on campus and I saw how people treated food...Some of my friends would eat bread and apples and stuff like that and they would throw it in the bin, you know. I was like, I remember we used to finish our plates [in Ghana].

Julian also noticed a difference in social behaviors, but he was most taken aback by the interactions between children and their guardians. He stated:

In high school...the way people talk to their parents. I go to their house, the way they talk to their [parents], yeah that's not happening in my house. Things like that. It's mostly the way people talk to their parents was surprising. How lazy people were at school and the way they treated teachers.

David also saw significant differences with how people conduct themselves in public, and he also discussed how he realized his outlook on life was different from many of the Americans he knew. He said:

I see freedom as having like economic freedom and...these people see freedom as not going to work and doing something...Yeah, I mean it's just so different. Maybe just because of where you are from. They want to live the life that we live in. Because they are not having that, it's different. Maybe I'm talking to a different set of people...but yeah that's what I get.

His sentiments were echoed by Eli who said:

Um, so the whole understanding or idea of privilege in the United States, when people talk about privilege and you're talking about a particular race. You know, white people. With me, when I hear the word privilege...I think about myself because there are so many people back home who would appreciate the little things that I have, you know. Even though I've done well for myself...I have a job, I have a nice apartment and was like, my life is on the right course, if I can say that. But even before that, I know there [were] some basic little things that...it was a privilege for me [to have] access to those things. Uh, which most people in

Ghana they will die for those things. So yeah, I, I saw the term privilege differently than how Americans actually, saw privilege...So the little things that we have here is huge for somewhere else...I see the world differently than how most Americans see. Yeah. I see it very differently, and I'm so glad that I was born somewhere else. In a society [where] I can appreciate things more.

For them, they quickly learned how U.S. societies are different compared to Ghana.

These differences ranged from mannerisms to philosophical ideologies.

Ignorant inquiries. While learning different American customs, participants also learned how ignorant Americans can be when it comes to Africa and Ghana in particular. As stated earlier, I connected more with this group when they learned that I was familiar with Ghana. Julian and I, for example, discussed the places we've both been in Ghana and he then began to quiz me on my Twi proficiency. I failed his quiz and felt his disappointment as he jokingly shamed me. I perceived that they were a bit relieved that they could speak with an American about Ghana considering how uninformed many people they have met have been. Lydia discussed questions she was asked in school. She said:

But I had the hardest time in high school, because everybody was like, "Oh, you have an accent. You are from Africa. You sleep on trees." All those kind of made it hard. It kind of, it still affects my confidence, because until now I don't even want to talk, because I don't know what people are going to say about my accent. I don't want to say certain words, because I don't want people to be like, "Oh what did you say?"

Lydia was in high school when she was asked these questions, but older participants were also asked ignorant questions related to Africa or Ghana too. Eli explained that, like Lydia, his Ghanaian accent piqued people's interest which led them to ask questions about his country of birth. He said:

Yeah. Most people do not pay [attention]...until you start speaking to people more. Oh, you have a village. Do you live in the village? We, in the city, we say this/that. And I'm like "oh my god" (laughs).

As we both laughed, he continued to say:

I always try to put myself out to people to educate. And I remember when I first got here, people were asking me some ridiculous question and I think that was in college or the college campuses...Somebody actually asked me, "Do you have any giraffe?" I'm like, "Do I have a giraffe? Do you think a giraffe can fit in my room?" You know, somebody was also asking do people wear shoes in Ghana, and I'm like "I brought Gucci shoes here. I'm talking about Real Gucci not like Chinese Gucci. I brought it here, so what are you thinking about? People wear shoes over there." Yeah. I know people who don't wear shoes in the villages. You know, it's literally everywhere. I was in [Washington], and I saw some white people walking without shoes on. People do that all the time. So, I think that the whole idea of, you know, Africa being some sort of...shitty place or some village with huts...That is not true...Anybody who's been there would tell you that is not true.

Julian also spoke on being asked ridiculous questions. He said:

You would think it would be shrinking, but lately I've been seeing a lot of people going there because it's what people see on TV; [it's] what they view Africa as.

You got people asking me how did you get here? Do you guys wear clothes? Did you see an elephant before? Lions? Which I have never seen none of those [things] before, you know?

These questions highlight how little Americans, in general, know about Africa. This also demonstrates what people imagine when they hear Africa or Ghana. They do not think about technology, infrastructure, or any modern advancements.

Educating Americans. As the participants discussed the outrageous questions they were asked, they were open and used those opportunities to teach people about their country and culture. David discussed how he works to teach people about the different countries in Africa. He said:

Well maybe, I don't really do that it just comes natural like there's this notion that you're from Africa, you are Africans you are all Africans, like no I'm from Ghana, I'm Ghanaian that's when it comes. Or I only go to Africa sometimes and is it beautiful there and do you want to live there, and no, Africa is not a country, it's a continent. And that's when it comes.

Eli explained that he liked to educate people, and David discussed how he had no hesitation correcting people when they misrepresent Africa. Kyle explained that he no longer has the energy to explain his life to people, so he often ignores the ignorance people demonstrate.

Home Life: Inside My House Smells Like African Food; Outside Smells Like American

Since most of this group moved as adults, they did not have much to say about their home life because they were living independently. For those who are considered 1.25, they did discuss how their homes were bicultural or Ghanaian. Julian explained that his home “smells like African food” and how he never spoke English at home. This was different from Lydia who felt that her home was more bicultural or Americanized. She explained that her parents were more liberal and that she did not feel that her upbringing was very different from the average American home upbringing/rearing.

Language: No one says “paanoo.” Language became a noteworthy topic in our discussions. Everyone in this group was fluent in at least one Ghanaian language. Lydia described her home as more American, but they maintained their native tongue, Twi, as the dominant language in the home. Morowa described how they mostly spoke English in her home but that she is fluent in Twi, Ewe, and Gã. Eli discussed how the Twi language is evolving and he is not in Ghana to stay abreast of language developments. He said:

Yes. I speak to [family] in Twi. That is the only time I can...when I speak to them in English they think I'm Americanized. Uh, so as I tend speak to them in the local dialects, that is how I keep up with the language. And the funny thing is that at times I'll be talking to one of my brothers and he's like, “Oh, we don't say that word anymore.”

Eli took his hands out of his coat pocket to fully express how significant language was while also laughing. He continued:

I've not lived there for almost a decade. And because of the fading away of the older generation and the newer generation coming up, some of the ways are changing. Like, let's see, uh, the local language for brand is called paanoo. But these days, if you say paanoo [they say], "Oh my God, are you from 1968?"...My thing [is that] when I speak to my mom and the older generation, they are ok with it. But when I speak to my brother and I was like, one time I called my brother and I was like, "Are you eating breakfast?" and he said yes, and I said "What kind of bread are you eating?" because we have different types of bread...I said it in Twi, And he was like, "Wait, what did you just say? We don't say paanoo. We just say bread, so say bread."

For the participants, language was something they wanted to maintain even if they were not up to date on the most recent slang or other conversational developments.

Education

Education was a noteworthy part of our conversations because school became a space where many were affected by their cultural identity. All of the participants had high educational expectations, but they also had very different experiences. Some experienced bullying in school, some had no social issues, and others had a mixture of both.

Bullying/making friends: Go back to Africa. Those of the 1.25 generation expressed different experiences of bullying in the K-12 educational system. Lydia described how she was bullied in a high school which was not ethnically or racially diverse:

I mean there [were] some Black people in there, which is sad because I was more friends with my white people than with the Black people because...the white

people were more willing to learn about my culture, but black people were like, "Oh, you're different from us. You don't count as us. You are from Africa. I'm from here." And I had a friend that was from Uganda. There [were] only [four] Africans...So, the girl I became really close with, and for her, she kept on telling them she's from Jamaica, but she's from Uganda. But they were cool with her because she's from Jamaica instead of Uganda. The islands are different from being really from Africa. But they were cool with her. I would be sitting with her, they would come talk to her, but they wouldn't talk to me.

For Lydia, being from the African continent made it difficult for her to make friends in high school. Her friend from Uganda realized this and lied about her country of birth.

Julian was also treated differently because he was from the African continent. He said:

But I got kicked out of school the first day I went there because I got into a fight because somebody was saying African jokes and I wasn't having it, so I got into a fight; so I got suspended indefinitely and my mom [said], "Hey, you can't stay home so you gonna go to [a different school]" which is a bad public school, but I liked it.

The classmate he got into a fight with was white, but he was bullied by people of all ethnicities. He continued:

And I tend to go more [to] the white events because, like I said, those are the people that accepted me for who I am. Anytime I was around the Blacks, they always [have] some African news happening...they just had those mentalities that's kind of like okay I'm going to stay away from you, but honestly, it all changed junior and senior year. They realized I was smart [and] I was athletic and

it kind of like changed a little bit...but I mingled with everybody at one point. I ended up even winning homecoming king.

Bullying was unfortunately a common experience. Between the participants of this group, the bullying was from all ethnic groups in their schools. Despite the difficult time they had in primary and secondary, all of the participants went to college and are doing well. Lydia has graduated with a degree in nursing (B.S.N.) and Julian is currently in medical school.

Learning Significance of Race and Racism

Racism is an unavoidable reality in the U.S. Whether or not one realizes and accepts racism is real, it happens every single day and in various contexts. For many of the participants in this group, their racial ideologies were shaped after they emigrated, but not all.

Ideas of race before emigrating. Many of the participants did not have any racial ideologies before emigrating. Eli, on the other hand, was well aware of race and racism because of the books he read and media he consumed in Ghana. He explained:

And most of the programs I watched in Ghana back then were African American programs. I used to watch 227, the Cosby show, Oprah...Like I knew Oprah, back in Ghana (laughs). I learned it mostly by the media and also, um, get TV, you know, paper media and stuff like that. And when I came into this country, I automatically felt attached to the black culture. Automatically. It's like, and it's so funny because a lot of Africans tend to acclimate to the white culture. A lot of them. And so, with me it just hit me that I just want to be part of Black culture.

Eli was the only person who claimed to possess a firm understanding of race and racism before emigrating. Others expressed how they did not know much about race, but they were aware of racial divides in the country whether it be from things their parents or family members taught them or what they saw on television.

Distancing from African Americans. Although many did not have a clear understanding of the dynamics of racism and systematic oppression, they did know that they did not want to associate themselves with African Americans. Julian explained that his mother told him he should distance himself from African Americans. He said:

She said there's Blacks and there's whites, but she did have the idea that the Blacks here don't accept us in a way; so, when I was coming here, I kind of had that in my mind but it was kind of true 'til I hit college and it all changed. High school kids tend to be a little ignorant. They have all these African jokes, which are a shock to me because I would think the ones that are black would be the ones that would hold me in but it was actually the other way around. So that was kind of a shocker. But then again every race has ignorance...but once I got to college it's completely different. I met a lot of Black people that were very intelligent. Most of them are my best friends now.

Kyle said something similar:

I think...in the beginning stages I thought, "Well, yes, I look like my African American friends, but my experience is not...like them." And in your mind when you come from a very majority culture, you think like, "Oh, this doesn't affect me." And so I, at the beginning it was like, oh, trying to establish myself away from it. And that also came with also trying to know how to hold the burden that I

know that minorities have to bear in this country. It's like I wanted a way out, but I soon realized that that wasn't going to happen in everybody's eyes. And in other people, I was always going to be a Black person firstly...and so I couldn't separate that identity.

Many of the participants held negative stereotypes of African (Black) Americans before relocating to the U.S. and before having met any in person. Unfortunately, some of those stereotypes were reinforced while others were dismissed. Eli explained that he was drawn to African/Black American culture even before emigrating, but he was the only participant who felt this way. Lydia did not forget her experience in high school, so she was more reserved around African Americans in college. She explained:

I feel like college was a different ballgame...I feel like [in] college nobody really cares about each other. I'm just there for myself, not really to make friends...I know [in college] they did a town hall stuff talk about this gap between Africans and the African Americans, and then we brought it up. I feel like because of how I was treated back in high school, it was so hard for me to be associative with the Black people. Just because I don't know how these...I don't know, what if I go to say something. How are they going to degrade me? So, I still held back a little bit from the classroom maybe in college. But I still have friends that are Black, like the African Americans, but usually I just chill with the Africans [at school]. Those are my people, so.

Even in spaces where people were trying to address real and perceived issues with African-born college students and native African American college students, Lydia still felt uncomfortable due to her previous experiences. She became close with some African

Americans, but it was on an individual basis. Regardless, she still felt more comfortable with Africans because of the cultural connection they had and similar experiences in the U.S.

Becoming “woke.” While many discussed their initial feelings related to African (Black) Americans and being grouped into the African American category, they also discussed how their ideologies slowly shifted. Julian, who has many African American friends explained how he learned about race from his mother. He said:

Honestly, when I came here I was ignorant [about] race and racism. I didn't know. Somebody [could] be racist to my face and I would be like “oh, he just don't like me.” I wouldn’t even connect it to skin. Not until my mom brought it up and I watched the news. That's when I started learning ohhh so people can be racist, huh? And I start[ed] noticing little thing[s] like people clinching on their purse when you walk by and I say “ahh okay so that's how we do it?” Because back there [in Ghana], everybody’s Black, so [we] don't have that issue.

While discussing how he learned about race, Julian and I went on to discuss where he believes the problem lies. He said:

I've heard a lot of African people say bad things about African Americans, and I've also heard a lot bad things African Americans are saying about Africans which makes no sense...I talked to a lot of my friends, and some of my friends say Africans discriminate against them so they feel like they have to push back. That's what one of my friends said. And another friend said it could be part of a jealousy thing too cause they feel like Africans come here and statistically Africans do much better than African Americans and educationally...and

Africans have...the culture so African Americans feel cheated out of it and that could be; so I don't really know what the reason is, but either way, my best friends are African Americans. I got over the hump. It's complicated. It's not [an] easy topic because me and my friends, we always try to figure out where did this start. [One friend said it] is a way a white man brought it to divide us. He said that's where it begins. I don't know. I think that could be true, but I think we passed that point where we should be trying to bring it together ourselves. But I don't know where to even start.

He continued by explaining:

And Africans do claim African American do this and do that. [They] have this picture of them, but I think Africans are just as bad because when we were in Ghana all we heard about [was], "oh yeah we gangsters we like African American," but like I said, I'd always tell my mom Africans are [also to blame] because they acting like they came here on a [pure] slate. I think it goes both ways.

Julian learned African American stereotypes back in Ghana, but learned about racism through the news. Akwesi also learned more about racism through the media even though he could not pinpoint a time he experienced racism. He said:

I feel like, if it happens, it happens. I haven't really experienced it. Maybe even if I have experienced it, it wasn't done in front of my face. So, since I haven't really experienced it, I don't have a say. But then, I also see it. In the social media you see people being racist to other minorities and stuff. I mean, it's bad, I don't support it. I wish something could be done, but I feel like, even if me, personally,

if somebody was to call me, screaming, "Blah, blah, blah, blah." [If] we had an argument [and] they called me a nigger or whatever they want to call me, I know myself. I know I wouldn't react to it as much as somebody else.

Lydia, on the other hand, learned through her experiences in college. She described how she has reflected on her college experience and now recognizes situations that were racially charged. She illustrated:

At first, I didn't really think race was a big issue, until college when I went to the community college down here. Which I didn't even think [it] was an issue for me. But then now, looking back, I just feel like one of my professors was really racist. And I told my sister, I'm like, "You know, now thinking back, I just notice how racist she was with me." Because when we're taking an exam, she will come just stand by me to see if I'm looking at somebody's work. And at first I'm like, you know what, I don't even care, because I don't look there. I'm not copying nobody. So, if you come stand by me, I'm doing my work, so I don't care.

Lydia, like many other participants learned about racism through personal experiences. Even if they did not recognize the discrimination they were facing at the time of the event, they have become more aware as time passes.

Identity

Identity and identity expression were prominent topics in every interview because these topics were central to the research questions and to the overall focus of the dissertation project. Most of the participants in this first-generation had a stronger memory of living in Ghana and being raised with Ghanaian traditions. Each participant had a strong affinity to Ghana and strong "Ghanaian" identity. The findings under the

identity theme demonstrate how participants reacted to identity threats while working to maintain and celebrate their identities and shielding themselves from sexism, racism, and xenophobia.

Code-switching. Code-switching can be understood as the shifting between language, dialect, and sentence structures (Goffman, 1981) and behaviors in different, isolated situations (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017). Participants were asked if they code-switched in different spaces, and the majority of them said yes. They were not just code-switching to fit into the U.S. mainstream society as immigrants. Many were also code-switching as a means to survive in the white supremacist society of the U.S. When I asked Kyle about code-switching, he said:

Yeah I do. How I react and interact with my white friends is very different with how I react with my black friends, how I react with my Ghanaian friends. Even at work, people of color are not so many. It's [a] very white dominated workplace... and so how I react with the white folks in our, um, in our work is very different. Even some of my other colleagues who are people of color at work, we always talk about the whole code-switching stuff. Cause like you might be laughing at something out loud like...you know that black people, we love to be exuberant and very like, out there...and a white person comes by or whatever and it just happens, we all change. It's just we just switched, and so code-switching is a huge thing that I had to like really learn. When sort of being like very much permanent here in the U.S. I had to be some like a valuable skill, which sometimes it's tiring because you just want to be yourself, be in your most comfortable authentic place, but you live in a dominant majority culture, which unfortunately is not your

culture, which is predominantly white culture so, you gotta work the system however it plays out. So, it's another thing that I had to like pick up really fast. Code-switching is a tactic to blend into the predominately white and white American culture for Kyle. Morowa has similar sentiments but added the component of avoiding clear racism and sexism. She stated:

So, I have a ton of personalities. Oh, with my friends it's like...All fun. Blah-blah-blah. With my husband, the trouble-maker and that kind of stuff. Work...

Reserved. [I] speak up when I have to. At home, I'm very reserved cause we can't have too many alphas in the family.

She discussed how she acts differently in different groups. She went on to describe how she has experienced racism at work. People have said things like, "Yeah, talk to the black girl," and other comments of that nature which is one reason she prefers to keep to herself while at work. She said, "The glass ceiling is real." Her codeswitching is a way to not only survive but also to have upward mobility in her workplace where she is often the only Black person and only Black woman.

When it came to identity and being in certain spaces, many of the participants discussed a sense of uneasiness in different spaces. Morowa and Julian also said that they feel most comfortable with their family members. One reason many participants felt most comfortable with their family members is because they could be their authentic selves. They did not need to code-switch or act differently to fit in.

Being Ghanaian. When discussing identity, it was important to learn how participants identified themselves as and what those identities meant to them. Being Ghanaian is more than having legal citizenship or Ghanaian ancestry for this group.

Being Ghanaian is about being deeply connected to the culture. Some were U.S. citizens while others were considering becoming citizens. Nonetheless, they maintained their Ghanaian identities and attributed their identity to their knowledge of the language and culture, and were proud of it. Being Ghanaian comes with a sense of pride. David explained:

But...when I came to [college] first I wore this African clothing. I just wanted to stand out, and I wanted people to know “hey, I am Ghanaian”...I just wanted to show that...I tried to dress more Ghanaian, and [even] tomorrow I'm...going to wear this African clothing and stuff like that. So, that's when I basically normally show [my cultural identity]. And at work when I wear that stuff they are like, “hey that's nice clothes you got there.” So, a few times at work [I will wear my Ghanaian clothes] but, not always.

Just like David, Akwesi proudly expresses his roots and identity. When asked how he expressed his identity, he said:

Good question. I mean, well, if it's not something I'm wearing...everywhere I go, I don't even speak English with my friends, so we're always loud and speaking the native language regardless. It seems to me, regardless, wherever we go we try to request a Ghana song.

Eli doesn't outwardly express his Ghanaian identity as much, but he still actively keeps up with Ghanaian news and the city of Kumasi. He said:

I am very proud [of being Ghanaian]. I tend to keep up with social media. I follow the Palace. So, the palace will share some traditional stuff, you know, festivals and stuff like that for me to catch up. And the people...I will often go through the

comments to see how people are responding to it. Just by the changing nature of Ghana, Asantes are, "listen, you're still the same." I've never gone through the comments and heard anybody to say, "oh, we should let this go." People are like, "oh my God I love this" you know? People are still enthusiastic to hear about the Asantes... You will see an Asante man who just came from Oxford University or Harvard or one of the top universities in the country and they will go to Kumasi and they will be rubbed up in the tradition and you know, um, I follow the Palace website. I tend to also watch a lot of YouTube videos from Ghana. We have a lot of programs in the local language that I watch... which I do watch religiously.

Another layer to the expression of identity was how they would sometimes be more outward with their Ghanaian identity to separate themselves from other Africans and Nigerians specifically to demonstrate their cultural uniqueness.

Being American. Participants were asked about if they had an American identity. Each participant rejected an American identity. Whether they were citizens or not, each participant's primary and most salient political and national identity was Ghanaian. Julian stated:

Maybe I'm Americanized in a way, the way I think sometimes but my backbone culture is all African.

Lydia expressed that she only identifies as Ghanaian. She said:

I feel like I don't want to associate with America. I feel like I like my culture too much, and I feel like everything that I do, I do it around my culture. Even how I study, how I talk, everything, even the food I eat is Ghanaian food. That's my culture. That's what I'm going to be. That's how I find myself.

Living in the U.S. does not make them align themselves with American ideologies or social norms. Neither does citizenship. Living in the U.S. does, on some other hand, have an impact on the saliency of racial identities.

Being Black. While each participant discussed the impact living in the U.S. had on their recognition of racism, it did not always have an impact on race being significant in their own personal lives. Lydia and Akwesi both explained that racial identities are not significant in their lives. Meanwhile, Kyle explained that he not only has a dominant racial identity but that he is an advocate for people of Color in the U.S. He said:

I join if I can [with] group[s] that do stuff together, like lunches and just like sharing stories of encouragement and how to deal with issues of race...I'm very active in like things outside of it. Again,...like I said I have had to reinvent my identity and the sense of to see myself like, "hey, you are a black person in America" and [I'm] supposed to handle all that connotations that having that label comes with. And so now I wear that strongly and proud...Any avenue to empower People of Color...is a huge like thing for me, and so if it's something beneficial [for People of Color, I will definitely be there...So, then I have now authentically lived into that identity as a Black person. You will find me at Black Lives Matter parades. You will find me there because it matters to me. I have friends and family who fall into this category as well. So in the beginning, yes, I will say I was trying to separate myself because I knew that yes, I didn't share those similar experiences, but now I consider myself like as a Black person in America. Like it doesn't matter if you are from, I dunno, the Caribbean. So, I got like race is just such an interesting concept here in America.

Julian also discussed how college became a time when he became more active with African Americans and how they supported one another. He said:

Everybody was mature. High school you know [you're] kinda immature. They just treat[ed] me different. I was in a Black community [in college], and it was just better and we worked together cause it seems like, you know how [my college] is. They don't really look out for the Black students, so we kind of have to take care of each other and that's how it got. There was also a lot of Africans, and I mingle with them [too].

Therefore, identifying with a racial group such as Black, defined by western society, was a personal decision for many participants.

Visiting Ghana. Participants discussed how they kept in contact with their family and friends in Ghana. Most of them used WhatsApp and Facebook to communicate with loved ones. Along with maintaining relationships virtually, some have visited Ghana since moving to the U.S. Morowa has visited Ghana a number of times since relocating to the U.S. She even got married in Ghana. Julian visited Ghana for the first time last summer since moving to the U.S. in 2007. He described his experience:

Things have changed. The sexism has gone down. I'll tell you that. I saw more women wearing whatever they want. They used to be covered up and crap. It's changing, my generation, the women are definitely stronger and they [are] not having it. With that also comes some bad habits. People are starting to lose their culture, trying to copy. It's good and bad. That's a problem cause you can't really lose your culture because that's what makes us; but people are not cooking as

much, they're eating canned food and are going through some health things out there...And they have McDonalds there now.

He went on to say:

Yeah, yeah. It's going downhill and we don't even have the tools or the screenings to get all [these] diseases. You know the morality rate [is] off the roof. It's that. Something I really didn't like growing up, I mean obviously I didn't know it was bad until I came here...But with that being said I love being down here I would never trade [it] for anything because honestly every culture has their fault...but one thing I do know is that Ghanaians are pretty nice, [hard] working, and they are very family-oriented. Cause I don't know if I'd be in med school if I didn't grow up in Ghana.

Eli, although he has not visited Ghana since moving to the U.S. in 2009 also discussed how the culture is changing and how Western products and lifestyles are becoming more prominent. Although Julian was saddened to see the difference in the culture becoming more Western, he still feels a sense of pride for his country. He, along with the other who visited Ghana, discussed how they felt comfortable when they were there. They did not feel disconnected or foreign.

Future Thinking

Participants were asked about how they envisioned their future in relation to their careers, family, and place of residence. Each participant had goals to continue growing in their profession. Some were considering pursuing graduate degrees, some had graduate degrees, and all had blueprints to have a successful future. Along with futures in relation to careers, we also discussed if they considered having a family.

Raising children. Each participant had plans to have a family. They all plan to teach their children the language (e.g., Twi, Gã, Ewe) and have them grow up with Ghanaian cultures. What separated this first-generation group most from the other two groups is that they were more likely to want their children to live in Ghana. Morowa was the only one who had a child. When I asked her about raising her son, she said:

No offense to my American people, but the American culture is not the best to raise a kid in if you really want them to be responsible. ‘Cause for me what I have seen is most of the Ghanaian families that have raised their kids over here, it's difficult. Not only just babysitting fees, but just being able to spend time with your family, I mean...They can say “no” to you and...Nah. I can't deal with that stuff...And I kind of wanted him to go to school in Ghana for a little bit. Then he can actually learn the language. And personally, when we come back from Ghana with Ghanaian education I think you're better here. You're much smarter here. So, I want that for him.

For Morowa, having her son live in Ghana seems like the best way to have him learn the culture and get a head start in education compared to the American educational system. David also wants to raise his children in Ghana. Eli, on the other hand, wants his child to have African American and Ghanaian influences, so he is considering having his future child live in both countries. He explained:

That is one of my fears because I would love my kid to speak the local language. You know, the Twi. So, um, that's something that I keep on thinking lately...I would love the kid to have both the African American and Ghanaian cultures. Even though I can instill those things in him because I listen to a lot of African

music as well. Maybe I can have a system where my child can live in Ghana for some years, you know...So, I would want the child to grow up here [in the U.S.]. So, like maybe when he is maybe five or six and then I will end up taking him to Ghana to study there as a kid...So then during his breaks he would come here to stay with me if I have a husband or partner...he will stay with us here. And then when school resumes, he will go back to Ghana. I will probably end up doing that for a number of years so that he can actually get adjusted to the culture and everything, and then I'll have to bring him back right before high school or something. So those are, those are all in the plan.

Moving to Ghana. As many discussed sending their children to live in Ghana, I wanted to know if they themselves would ever consider living in Ghana. Akwesi explained that he will never live in Ghana again but that he has no problem visiting. On the other hand, Julian, who is studying medicine, wants to move to Ghana to help support the healthcare system. He also recognizes that the high rates of diseases in the U.S. reflect a poor system that ranges from the agrifoods system to healthcare. He feels safer in Ghana. He said:

Yeah, man. It's too many cancers and stuff here, man. Something ain't right over here. I gotta make money first and pay some loans off or maybe I'll just run and don't pay the loans. Who knows.

Julian plans to relocate to Ghana after paying off some student loans. Morowa did actually move back to Ghana but returned to the U.S. when she could not find a job, even with a Master of Business Administration. While the majority of this group discussed their prospects to move to Ghana, it was different for Eli. As a gay man, Eli would not be

able to live a comfortable life in Ghana due to the homophobia and oppressive laws against those who are LGBTQ. When I asked him if he would ever move back to Ghana, he exhaled and dropped his shoulders. He then said:

That's a good question. I have thought about it, but I have not thought about it...in a very interesting way. So anytime I think about one day moving to Ghana and just being part of the society and all of that, then I think about "oh my gosh I'm so used to life in the United States, so when I go back it might be different." And I'm like, "wait a minute, I'm a gay man." So, when I go to Ghana and I have a husband it will be very difficult for me to be there as a family. You know? So, I'm thinking about all of those things and I'm like me moving back to Ghana would mean I would have to change so much. Especially, I cannot live my true, authentic self. You know, I have to probably be single or maybe force myself to have a wife. You know, you cannot be married with a...Let's say if I have kids with my husband, it's not going to be a good scene in Ghana. So anytime I look at myself, I'm like...If I was a straight man, yes that would be no problem. Yeah. At some point. However, being gay even, let's see if I get kids and maybe I'm in my mid-fifties sixties there about, I would want to retire in Ghana. Yeah. I'm not going to retire here [in the U.S].

While moving to Ghana may seem like an ideal situation for some participants, the logistics and reality of living in Ghana are complicated.

The 1.5-Generation Ghanaian-American

The 1.5-generation was the largest population for this study. Like the first-generation, I felt I needed to explain to them that I was familiar with Ghana. It was

interesting because some replied “you know more about Ghana than me” because they moved to the U.S. and were acclimated to U.S. culture at a younger age and have just recently begun to learn more about the deep histories of Ghana. Participants within the 1.5-generation are listed in Table 5. Themes found amongst this generation of participants are discussed. Some themes differ from the first-generation because of their different experiences.

Table 5

1.5-generation

Name	Citizenship	Visited Ghana since moving to U.S.
Akosua (F)	U.S.	Yes (multiple times)
Ama (F)	U.S.	Yes
Bob (M)	Permanent U.S. Resident	Yes
Kofi (M)	U.S.	No
Maame Aceso (F)	U.S.	Yes
Nanyanika (F)	Ghana	Yes (multiple times)
Stella (F)	U.S.	No
Thelma (F)	U.S.	Yes (multiple times)

Moving to the United States

All of these participants moved to the U.S. at a young age (i.e., 0-13). They all emigrated with one or both parents, and each parent had a different reason for emigrating to the U.S. Some parents moved to the U.S. for school or work. Some were recipients of the visa lottery. Whatever the reason or means of emigrating, the transition had a significant impact on the lives of all participants in this group that differed from that compared to the first-generation.

Motivating factors. Each parent had a different reason for emigrating to the U.S. Some emigrated to complete school, some won the lottery, and others found other opportunities. Akosua moved with her parents because her father was finishing his

medical residency in the U.S. Nanyanika emigrated with her family because her father wanted to expose his children to more opportunities. Thelma, on the other hand, came to the U.S. with her mother thinking it was just a visit. She was not told that they would be moving permanently. Her mother decided to stay in the U.S. during their visit so her brother, who had health problems, could get the proper medical attention he needed.

Expectations versus reality. Since these participants migrated at a younger age, their expectations were less realistic than the first-generation. Nanyanika considered the U.S. to be the land of money. She said:

I thought America was rich. I thought I would be finding money on trees. I thought [the] Dollar Tree [store] was literally a tree full of dollars. I thought the Super Bowl was a big bowling league...And I thought that people...and even when people were nice, they weren't genuine. So, that was another thing that I learned. That someone literally could smile to your face, but then really not like you.

Stella also had expectations. Her expectations were also more related to physical things and not related to culture. She said:

I expected things like pizza and snow. I didn't think a lot about the cultural differences, which I guess is why when I came here, it was a little bit harder. It was like a...I don't want to say a slap in the face, but it was like why is everybody asking me these obvious things about my culture?

She continued:

And I guess I didn't really think about it because in my head I didn't think about the everyday things. I was more so focused on things like having pizza for the

first time and seeing snow for the first time and things that I was just aware of as traditional American things and seeing white people. I think I only saw white people when my dad had visitors from work come, and he always had a dinner or something. But they were always this kind of fantasy, this upscale thing, that if I were older I'd meet more white people because my dad would let me come sit [at] the dinners or something.

While Stella was mostly concerned with on pizza, snow, and the ability to see more people who were different from her, Akosua did not have many expectations the second time she moved to the U.S. She moved to the U.S., then South Africa, and then back to the U.S. When discussing her second move to the U.S., she said:

It really wasn't that much different. South Africa is really...they were colonized by the Dutch, so they have those influences, they have British influence. It wasn't a culture shock or anything. It was fine. I think the only thing for me was school was different, because in South Africa I went to [a] private school. When we moved back, I went to [a] public school.

Each participant had different views of the U.S. Although their expectations were different, they had similar experiences living in the U.S.

Living in the United States

The transition to the U.S. was different for this group compared to the first-generation. They began learning about mainstream American culture at a younger age. Most of their experiences of learning about U.S. cultures took place in school, and their stories will be discussed under the education subtheme. They were also exposed to the American ignorance as it pertains to Ghana.

Ignorant inquiries. Many of the participants discussed how they were constantly reminded that they were different compared to native born Americans. They also learned that when people think of Africa, they think of animals and pre-modernity. Stella explained:

So, for me, how I learned what racism is was people didn't just notice that you were different than them. They had to dive deep into how different we are. So not just saying, "Hey, you're from Ghana," but "Have you seen...?" Asking you things about Ghana that remind you that you're significantly African for some reason. So, "Did you see wild animals on the street?" No. You've probably seen more wild animals than me first of all because you've been to a zoo! I have not. Just those kinds of things...The weirdest questions [like], "do you have sidewalks or cars? Were you living in huts? What was your house like?" And I'm like no. My dad had a car. He drove me to school every morning. We drove by the beach on our way to school. I had a bed. I don't know why you're asking me these questions. I didn't come from a village. So, it was more than just you and I different skin-wise. It was like establishing that cultural difference was a little bit hard. We spent a lot of our time in terms of socializing to American culture. We spent a lot of our time trying to normalize ourselves in terms of just because we're from this country you've never heard of doesn't mean we grew up in a village, we don't wear clothes, and we don't know what shoes are. I know how to read. I grew up bilingual. I could talk by the time I was two years old. Seriously. So, it was like having to resell my intelligence. It happened even in school. My brother

because he was very athletic and fast, they were stereotyping him that way. For me, they would stereotype me in terms of lack of knowledge.

These questions began to overwhelm Stella to the point where she removed herself from socializing in school. She did not want to be known as the girl from Africa, so she made herself small to avoid hearing stereotypes and having to constantly defend herself. She continued:

So, my first semester in third grade, my first time in American school, I didn't speak for the whole three months the first semester, and the teachers were worried. They were like, "She's not talking. Does she not speak English? What's wrong with her?" But I was getting A's on all of my assignments. They even contemplated putting me in remedial class, but they couldn't justify it because I was doing really well in school. But the reason I wasn't talking was because my first day everybody bombarded me with all these crazy questions, and I was so different, and I became so nervous that whenever I opened my mouth, I just wanted to cry. So, I didn't talk for three months. So, it was things like that, just really having to normalize people. Well not really. I guess normalize but also convince people that I was just as average and no different than them in terms of my lifestyle and how I live.

Akosua said:

It was being the new kid, so people don't really know. It was presented as, "She's the new kid from South Africa." I just got a lot of those stereotypical questions like, "Oh, did you see lions and giraffes? Did you live in a hut?"

Bob also said his classmates were ignorant about his birth country. None of the participants of the 1.5-generation described their eagerness to explain their culture and birth country to classmates. This is likely due to their age, and many became more reserved as will be discussed later.

Home Life

Everyone has a unique homelife experience. Participants were asked about their homes growing up and how it was related to a “traditional” American home. Each varied in its relation to what would be considered an average Ghanaian home, but they all maintained at least a small bit of Ghanaian culture.

Culture. One of the most prominent differences between participants’ home and an American home was the culture. Stella described how her mother maintained Ghanaian traditions in the home. She explained:

Yes. She did, she did. She only speaks to us in Twi. Sometimes she doesn't even realize it when she's talking to us between languages. So yeah. She only speaks to us Twi. She doesn't really cook American food ever. Every once in a while she does, but it's not on her list of things she does. She prays a lot. We're a very religious family, so having a church family and church community is really important to her and us.

Just like Stella’s mother, Nanyanika’s father was intentional on maintaining Ghanaian traditions. In reference to the Ghanaian traditions and culture in her home, she said:

Oh yes. With foods, or clothes. My dad never let us forget. It wasn't, maybe it's just how they raised us, but it wasn't forced on us. But, at the same time, it was like we weren't really allowed to forget.

Akosua's father also tried to maintain Ghanaian traditions, but she did not like how strict he was. She said:

I think that my dad for the longest time tried to...raise us the way that he would if we were in Ghana, but I'm the oldest. With me, I wouldn't say I'm a rebellious person, I won't do anything crazy, but I think in my dad's eyes, because I wasn't going along with those things, I was seen as rebellious. It was a point in time when my dad and I would butt heads a lot because I just, especially when I got to college, I just wanted to explore me and figure out me.

Akosua was not the only person with strict parents.

Strict parents. Many of the participants described growing up in a home with at least one strict parent. Ama described how she realized her mother was stricter than her friends' parents. She stated:

I thought all African parents were like this, but like as I got older...I realized my mom was like probably a little bit stricter than some Ghanaian parents...So my mom was like, "You're not going to your friend's house. I don't know. I don't trust [them]." Like, the only person I've ever slept over their house as a kid was [my cousin's].

Beyond not being allowed to visit friends, Ama's mother was also strict in relation to behavior. Ama's older brother was misbehaving in school, so her mother made Ama and her younger brother go to Ghana to live for a while. She said:

But I always like to joke around and say that my mom deported me. Because African parents, like if you start misbehaving in any ways, they're always like,

"I'm going to send you back to Ghana. American kids are spoiled." My mom like sent me back when I was like 16...

Nanyanika also described her strict parents. She said:

I think I just expected there to be more things that I could do in regard to fun and stuff; and they were available. It's just my parents were too strict. They were like, "Yeah, no you're not doing that." I could have [done more social things] if they would have let me.

While discussing what rules were enforced in the home, it became clear that there were more rules for the girls compared to the boys.

Gender roles: Mame jata. Gender roles are not unique. Many societies enforce strict, binary roles based on gender. These participants discussed gender roles in their homes and how they affected them. Ama, who has a younger and an older brother, was expected to abide by gendered rules that were more restrictive than those of the boys. She explained:

So, like I said, my mom's was like traditional African. And even for me, it's like one of the reasons why in certain, in gender roles, I dislike them even more... Yeah, because I was like, for me, as a woman, why are you trying to like push these on me? [The adults would say] you should be like, go out there and do this, do that, do that, blah, blah, blah... I grew up just believing that like women ran [things]. You know? Especially with my mom. So, for me, I was like, women are in charge, like, that's just how it rolls, you know? They were strong women in charge, but there was also like, "you need to know how to cook because you're a woman. That's part of being a woman." But I was like, "Dude, you're like the

breadwinner. Like, you're defying all these [stereotypes], you're playing both gender roles. You're playing the gender role of the male, of the breadwinner in the family, but then you're still trying to push these archaic gender roles." I think it was really like the cooking part that I really hated. I didn't dislike cooking, but like I would be like upstairs doing something I wanted to do like reading or something else. My mom would literally be like, "Come sit here and watch me cook."

Ama was forced to learn gender roles even though she preferred to do other things. In her home, she was also the only sibling who was required to learn to cook and perform other duties. Stella also discussed how she was groomed differently based on her gender. She said:

Family dynamics. I always feel like a lot of gender roles come into play. My mom was very adamant about raising me a certain way and raising my brother a certain way. Even now when we go to family events, [she's] always like, "You're the girl. You're supposed to be doing this. And you're the guy. You're not supposed to be doing this." So, my mom did a whole lot of training in terms of cleaning, cooking, preparing to be a wife. But she gave my brother a lot more freedom because he was a guy, so she always worried about me. Well, no. She worried about both of us.

Stella, just like Ama, was raised differently from her brother. The women discussed their subjugation to more chores, and Ama was very vocal about it not being fair. Kofi, who is a man, also discussed gender roles. He told a story about a specific situation with his family. He said:

My family was here this weekend and my parents are divorced, and my mom still got my Dad's plates and his table up and all of that type of stuff and that's just what she does. Then, my little sister's asking me, I'm her brother and her husband's here, she made his plate and then she's asking me what do you want to eat? I'm like, "Yo, chill out, I'm good."

Growing up in a home with strict gender roles has also impacted Kofi's relationships as an adult. He explained:

Definitely and there's part of me that struggles with that now because, that doesn't mean I don't believe in gender roles. I think people have different things that naturally they just do but I think that I see it now more so myself that I'm older. Dating becomes difficult because part of me is like, "well why don't you adhere to x,y,z gender roles versus people that don't", it's problematic. I mean, my mom and my sisters, they cook, and they clean. We cleaned as kids, you do the kids cleaning, but they did the bulk.

Thema also explained that she has different views on gender compared to her parents. She said:

My dad at some point said, "You need to tone down the way you interact with men because you act like a tiger (mame jata) and not every man is going to be ok with a woman as vocal and dominant as you. So, you should probably learn how to adapt." And I'm like no, I'm me, I'm going to be me, and if somebody cannot accept that, then too bad. It is what it is. So, I don't subscribe to any gender roles. I don't think women should do x and men should do whatever. I think it's a mutual partnership.

Gender roles were a significant part of growing up for many of the participants. Another component of their home life was language.

Language. Many of the participants do not speak Twi, or any other indigenous Ghanaian language, fluently. Kofi began speaking when he moved to the United States, and he had to speak English in Daycare. If he mixed up his words between English or Twi, no one at his school would understand. He was forced to speak primarily English, but he does know a bit of Twi and even Swahili. English was the primary language spoken in Akosua's home also. She said:

[My] parents both speak English very fluently. I think also for a matter of convenience, it's just easier to say something in English than sitting there trying to have a whole conversation in my native tongue. And also, I think because my dad was in medical school and my mom was just starting in her nursing career [it was more convenient].

Bob, who lived with his father in the U.S., is fluent in Twi and English. He said that he primarily speaks to his father in Twi and that he speaks to his mother, who lives in Ghana, in Twi. Thema also explained that she is fluent in Twi, Gã, and English.

Education

Experiences in educational settings were quite significant for this group because many of them went to school in both Ghana and the U.S. School, for many, was their initial contact with American culture, and this was more often than not a time of pain and hurt for this group. The experiences of the 1.5-generation were different from the first and second-generation because all of them began school in elementary or middle school when they relocated to the U.S. They came of age while in the U.S as immigrants

whereas the majority of the first-generation were adults when they moved to the U.S. and the second-generation are all natural born U.S. citizens.

Bullying/making friends. Unfortunately, bullying and teasing were a significant part of this group's K-12 educational experience. The teasing ranged from their accents to their ethnicity. Bob discussed how he experienced culture shock in school. He explained that everyone was friendly in Ghana, and he did not have the same experience in the U.S. he said:

Here, if they don't know you, no one really makes you feel welcome....me being an African kid, you know, black as hell with a thick accent. The kids made fun of me because at that time no one really had that knowledge of where we're from, where their background is. So, Africans were not respected. Me being in elementary and middle school, I was so angry. I would hate myself for being an African. I would hate myself for having an accent. So, I mean, the transition has some good parts about it and some bad parts obviously. So, overall, I would say the bad [outweighed] the good because, how much the kids were ignorant about where I was from. But, apart from that, everything was okay. It's good, I never hated the people that [were] there and how much people made fun of me and stuff like that. So apart from that, everything was okay.

Bob went to an ethnically diverse school but was teased because he was African. He said that the African American kids were more animated with their teasing. Even though some African Americans teased him more than others, his friends were mostly Latino and African American. He said he was drawn more to African Americans and played soccer

primarily with Latinos. He also went on to describe how he began to gain more confidence. He explained:

I will say when I was little kid obviously some kids don't look the best...and I was one of those kids. As I was growing, my body start[ed] to fit into each other and [my head to body ration became more proportionate]. And obviously, I started to [become] more confident in myself because I began to realize this is me and I have no choice but to embrace what I have. So, as I began to gain more confidence in myself, other people started to take notice and they began to notice that, okay, you know, this guy is not what we have been talking about. I guess my American knowledge also grew and I knew how to handle myself [in] certain situations and all of that. So, and obviously, I mean my, my accent subsided just a little bit, but when I get serious it kind of like comes off...but, I mean, it's just over time...people began to grow, people began to understand the African culture and understand the African man. And they began to basically see my culture in a different light. So, I guess that's how it got better.

Stella also experienced bullying. She said:

Oh. Yeah, yeah, yeah. That never stopped. No. That never ever stopped, and [teasing] even turned into bullying. The way I wore my hair. I got a lot of...My hair has history. In elementary school, my mom used to braid my hair in pigtails. And the popular girl, she was like,

"You can't wear pigtails." She literally called me outside of the room with her entourage, and she asked like she wanted to talk to me. And she was like,

"[Stella], you can't wear pigtails anymore."

And I was like, "Why?"

"Because I wear pigtails. And it's only my hairstyle. You're copycatting me. You're not allowed to wear them anymore."

And I was like, "Oh okay." And then just to be icing on the cake, she was like,

"By the way, you wear a bra to school?"

And I was like, "No, I don't need a bra."

[She replied] "Well, you should start wearing one."

In middle school, I got braids for the first time, [I] regretted that decision immediately. For a whole month in school, everyone wanted to touch my hair, ask me about how I got the braids in there, how did my hair go from long to short. It was horrible. So, I was like [forget] it. I'm getting a relaxant. I want to look normal. Not anymore. And then in high school, I got a lot of, "Wow, you're like the whitest black person I know," "You're really smart and articulate," "You're so

pretty for a black girl," "I was not expecting you to look like that," all of those things.

Stella described her experiences of bullying in a predominately white middle school. She explained that she may not have gotten the “Black girl questions” if she attended a more diverse school. She also explained how she was once ashamed of being Ghanaian. She said:

I think there's been lots of times where I've tried to hide it. I haven't been able to. And because of that, I think I recognize all the ways in which I am Ghanaian. I can't hide my name, so that in itself calls me out. I think when I was younger, I did not like being seen as the African girl in school. Everybody just reminded me of how different I was from them right down to the kid that I had a crush on. I think that was the only time that I wished I wasn't Ghanaian. I was just so sick of being seen as the girl who doesn't know anything about U.S. culture when I actually did. If I get asked one more time how I learned English. That was the worst. I had to explain Ghana is a [former] British colony. Everyone is bilingual. We all speak English. Stop asking me how I learned English. I woke up one day, and I spoke English just like you.

Overall, things changed in high school, and she did not experience the same amount of teasing in school. Stella and Bob have vivid memories of bullying in school, but of all of the participants, Ama was the most passionate about how bullying impacted her life. She explained that her older brother was more outgoing than her, so even though they attended the same schools, she received more bullying than he did because she was more reserved. Her brother would laugh with people who teased him and also make jokes

about them, but she preferred to stay to herself. She described a situation where they watched the television series *Roots* in school, and she was teased after it. She said:

Like, after [*Roots*], everybody was like, "Kizzy. Kizzy." And I'm like, "Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you." But I'm like, "You watched that whole movie. Seen all that fucked up shit and that's what you pulled up out of it." And like I said, it was always like the black kids. Like, as far as like being bullied and for like, my looks and stuff like that, and like I feel like the white kids were more like, "You're annoying." You know? Because I talk too much. And then from the black kids it's like, "You're ugly." You know, like, "Your hair's bad," or something like that. "You're dark. You're African."

This part of our conversation was very emotional. Her eyes began to water as she described more experiences of not fitting in. She described a time that she was invited to a birthday party. She said:

There was some girl who invited me to her birthday party, and like I showed up, and she was like, "I didn't invite you." I'm like, "I brought a present and everything!" And the crazy thing is like a lot of these things, I like forgot about them until like I was older and then [I realized] "Oh, I have a fear of rejection." ... And so I think I kind of still carry that...When I remember it, like it hurts, but I...don't stew in it. I moved past it. But then like when it comes up in a situation like this, I'm like, "Damn, that hurt." You know? And it still hurts, and it makes you like analyze why sometimes you are the way that you are.

Ama has been intentional about addressing the trauma she experienced in grade school. She, just like the other participants, has memories that have shaped who they are. Some

of these memories are more hurtful than others. Thema explained that she did not enjoy school at all when she first moved to the U.S. She did not know her family would be relocating when they came to the U.S., and she held a bit of animosity for being forced to live in the U.S. and being unprepared for the transition. She attended a predominately white middle school and high school. When discussing her grade school experiences, she said:

It was difficult at first. I used to get picked on a lot or people asking me silly questions. People didn't necessarily want to be friends with me until they realized that I was probably good at something and then they wanted to use me for that particular class or whatever...I didn't make any real friends until high school I would say.

She continued:

I feel like I gravitated toward Latino students in the beginning because we were all lumped into the "foreign" category. But then I started making friends with the Black students because inherently when you look at us we look the same until I say something...or I wear something different. So, I made some Black friends and they treated me like one of them. I never really had any real white friends until my adult life.

Thema also discussed how her Ghanaian accent would set her apart from other people, so she worked hard to sound more American. She said:

I used to watch PBS a lot so that I could perfect my accent to sound less foreign and more consistent with what the other people that I heard talk sounded like.

Her Ghanaian accent made her more noticeable which also led to her being asked questions about her birth country and so on. Thema also explained that the graduate chapter of a historically Black sorority held programs at her school, and this group helped her adjust to the U.S. She said that they made her feel more comfortable and more confident. Even though the participants have moved past these negative memories, we must address not only what is being done to prevent these experiences, but also how these experiences impact their sense of self: their identity formation and expression. For many, college was a completely different experience.

College transition. Just as Bob described, the mindsets of many Americans changed in college once they began to learn more about different cultures. Akosua joined the African student organization at her institution and joined a historically Black, or Divine Nine, sorority. She believes people were more open in college.

Learning Significance of Race and Racism

Since most of the participants emigrated to the U.S. at a young age, and they often did not have a conception of race before moving to the U.S. Nanyanika explained that because people in Ghana are usually separated by ethnicity or socioeconomic status, race was not a popular discussion. In Ghana, most people would be considered racially Black.

Distancing from African Americans. Despite not understanding the complexities of race, many were intentional about distancing themselves from African Americans. Some participants expressed similar feelings with those of the first-generation. Nanyanika believed that her father had a significance influence on her desire to not associate with African Americans. She said:

Yeah I think because he had been traveling before and a lot of the churches he visited were African American churches. And there were things that he didn't agree with. So yeah, I think he had the perception that...And just the media we were exposed to in Ghana. A lot of the TV stations that we see in Ghana, on the basic, is MTV. I remember watching Flava Flav...And even in the movies that we saw, they were either in gangs, they were very aggressive and combative. And Ghanaians, we're very docile, for a lack of a better word...So I think being exposed to African Americans in that sense, made it, made him feel that way.

Nanyanika's father was skeptical of African Americans based on things he saw through the media, and these stereotypes were reinforced by the few African Americans he knew. For Nanyanika, who grew up in a white neighborhood in the U.S., the stereotypes were reinforced when she experienced bullying by African Americans. She explained that the white students would more or less ignore her while the African Americans would tease her. For her, due to the overwhelming percentage of African Americans she knew her age making fun of her, distancing herself from African Americans was a way to protect her feelings from negativity. Her story was similar to Ama's. As Ama discussed, she experienced bullying which made her want to distance herself from African Americans.

For Ama, there is still a bit of bitterness today in relation to African Americans. She said:

But, I mean, even like the stuff too being teased more by black kids than anyone else, like to this day...there's a certain level of resentment, you know? Like I said, white kids like I got made fun of for different reasons. You know, it was more personal. Which I guess can be bad, but I'm like, "That's me." Okay, I can face that. But like, I feel like I was targeted for what I was, not for me as [Ama], for

what I was by black standards more. And so now for them to turn around and be like, "Wakanda forever." It's like, "Dude, first off, fuck Wakanda. That's some fake shit." You know?

The more recent trend of African cultures becoming popular in the U.S., especially among African Americans, is a sore spot for Ama because there has been no reconciliation. It is the memory of childhood that still has Ama distance herself from African Americans. She has a diverse friend group, but she is skeptical of some. Kofi, on the other hand, has never distanced himself from African Americans. He grew up in a diverse neighborhood in a large Midwestern city. He joined a historically Black, or Divine Nine, Fraternity and most of his friends are African American. Unlike Nanyanika, his parents did not tell him to stay away from African Americans, and he did not experience cultural bullying in school.

Becoming “woke.” Bob explained that he learned about racism at a young age, but he began to understand how it manifests as he got older. He said:

When, I first came here. I came in the fifth grade and I think I started classes in January. So, February was Black History Month and we got some homework about Martin Luther King. [My father’s friend] would come over and tutor me a little bit and she asked me, “do you know, who this man is?” And I was like, “no, I don't know. I don't know who he is.” And she was like...“So, if it wasn't for this man, you can't, you, you wouldn't be able to go to the school that you're going to because white people wouldn't be allowed to be in the same room.” I was very confused, you know, like, why not? She [said], “Well, you being black. The white people think that they're better than you, so they don't want to be anywhere

around you, and they would look down on you.” So, it was more like she was educating me...I was younger and it wasn't really a problem with me because me being a soccer player. I dealt with a whole bunch of racists, Black, white, Hispanic, European, I've met so many racist and it's not too recently where when like I think me growing my eyes [are] opening up a little bit and that's what the things people say, the news or stuff like that. So, I think I'm becoming more aware of race now than I, than I did before. I haven't been in a situations like that, but at the same time I'm still aware of the way people look at me, the way things are said and the context of things that are said. I laugh and blow it off, but in the back of my head, I know that the context that was used was a little racial.

Experiencing racism. Race and racism is something this group of participants experienced at younger ages compared to their first-generation. While some discussed not learning the significance of race and racism in the U.S until they went to college, others described experiencing racism in the form of overt and covert forms in grade school.

Akosua described microaggressions in high school. She said:

It was microaggressions about my hair or the way that I dressed or the way that I talked, especially because I was in advanced classes. It was really microaggressions about hair, different things. I was in the choir and I was being a kid, so we would take a lot of trips to New York and I remember one moment, the girl that I had to room with on the trip in New York. We'd be walking in certain places that were dark, and I'm a dark-skinned girl, so they would be like, "Smile, [Akosua], because we can't see you."

Akosua did not attend a diverse school, and she learned what racism was by attending a predominately white school. She explained how she learned more about racism in college:

In that moment, it bothered me, but I never knew why it bothered me until I got to college and I started learning about those things. I was like, "Oh, these people were [racist] the whole time."... I really couldn't expect anything less. It really became even more of a factor when I went to college because I went to a PWI (predominately white institution). Race is a never-ending thing. It always comes into play. Always and forever. And prior to coming to college, I had white friends. Then I got to college and I don't have any. I didn't have any white friends because I feel like my eyes were opened to the foolishness. It wasn't like I didn't talk to white people but my close friend group and things that I was associated with, it did not involve white people at all. The race relations, it was just too much.

Nanyanika also described bullying and racism in grade school. She said:

So, at school, I know I was getting racist notes for a lot of my, I think seventh or eighth grade, people were dropping racist notes in my locker...They were saying like, "Go back to the jungle" and things like that. And then I reported it to the administration, but the principal didn't take it seriously. He just said, "Oh okay." That was the second principal. The new principal that came in...he just said, "okay" and never followed up. [He] never asked me how it was going.

For some participants, their first experiences with racism were mixed with bullying.

Stella explained that she learned about racism at her predominately white school because

they stereotyped her brother and his athletic abilities. Kofi explained that he experienced racism in different forms while living in the South. Throughout all of their experiences, participants also discussed how their understanding of systematic racism has developed.

Identity

How participants developed and negotiated their identities were of great significance in this study. For many of the participants, they found certain spaces more welcoming than others.

Proving identity. Participants discussed how they were oftentimes confronted about their identities. Kofi described how his Ghanaian identity is often up for debate among strangers, both Ghanaian and non-Ghanaian. He said:

Oh yeah. Definitely. So, growing up, even with the ability to switch cultures back and forth, there's times that I would have [to explain myself]...One of the things was, some [of the Ghanaians in my town] rocked with me, and some didn't because my Twi isn't the best. It's like you can hear my Twi with an accent, and one of the things about it is...I was almost too African American, too Black for them. Which was funny because growing up as a child I was too African for the Black Americans. I was somewhere in between. It's funny because the core of my friends are actually guys that are kind of like me...we [are] able to connect with one another on that shift of being in between African and African American.

Kofi finds himself betwixt Ghanaian and African American cultures. He is in a constant space of negotiation. Stella also discussed times other Ghanaians questioned her identity. She said:

Yeah. People question my Ghanaian-ness when they meet me in the terms of when I was born. So how long you've been here matters because it tells people just how Americanized you are...When I'm by myself, I have [been questioned]. One of my best friends who's also Ghanaian...moved here when we were in college, so she's the only person who can call me out essentially. But her first thing was like, "You're not Ghanaian. You've been here since you were a baby." And I was like, "Char, I speak Twi. Shut up." So, it's like that. Other Ghanaians who meet me and they judge me based on how long I've been in the U.S. If they don't hear my accents, they're usually like, "Oh, you're more Americanized, so that makes sense." I used to take it offensively. I don't anymore just because I'm at the point where I don't give a fuck. Whether or not I'm Ghanaian has nothing to do with the person who's talking to me, so it's part of who I am. Take it or leave it.

Just like Kofi, Bob felt like he was in-between cultures. He said:

So, I became very Americanized. [I] speak Twi at home [and] eat Ghanaian food and stuff like that, but when it comes to culture, stuff like that became very American. Sometimes I feel like [my father] did me wrong because I'll meet some Ghanaians and the way that they act, I don't act like that. I mean it's not just being Ghanaian, it's not, a group of Africans all get together and they talk about certain music and talk about [certain] movies and I'm like, damn, I've never heard his music, I've never seen this movie. I feel like I'm not African enough. And then when I'm with the Americans and to talk about this and this and that and I haven't experienced that like, well shit. Basically in all, I'm just in the middle.

Nanyanika has had similar experiences of other Ghanaians questioning her identity even though she visits Ghana often and is fluent in Twi. She said:

Another Ghanaian has told me I'm not [in Ghana], so I possibly couldn't know what's going on there. And they are like, even though I'm in the US and I'm plugged into Ghana, I'm still not really Ghanaian because I'm not living the day to day life. I'm like, "oh okay". Even if I was in Ghana, I still would not be living the life that you're living, just because of we're, we're in different social classes...So, I just thought that was unfair for him to categorize. And I really hate it when they call me American girl. Or they say Trump's my president. That shit is the quickest way to piss me off, so.

Akosua discussed being questioned by other Ghanaians and Africans in college and how she responded by trying to learn more about Ghanaian cultures. She said:

I never really had to prove that. But when I joined [the African student organization], I had to prove myself because I was dealing with a lot of Ghanaian and other Africans [whose family's] connections and their ties were heavily invested in their African communities back home...I had a more diverse friend group, so when I joined that it was like, "You don't even look African," or, "You don't even look like you're from Ghana." I was like, "I don't even know what that means." So, they're like, "Do you speak the language?" I was like, "No, not very well. I understand what you're saying but I have to respond in English." It just became this constant thing of having to prove myself, crazy enough, to other Africans...That was really hard. I was like, "I've never had to do this before. I've never had people from my own background question my identity." And I felt

because of that, it forced me to, I was trying to learn the music. I was like, "Okay, I'm going to get hip to this little Afrobeat." And then I was like, "I need to learn my language more." So, then I would go home and, "Mom, I need you to teach me, because these people at school are really coming for me because I don't know anything."

She eventually grew tired of trying to prove herself and told people that she was Ghanaian whether they believed her or not.

Code-switching. A few participants discussed code-switching in different situations. Nyanika describe how she code-switches for convenience. She said:

Yeah. I code-switch a lot. And that is not out of un-comfortability. But it's more so out of convenience and understanding for the other person. I can't talk in Pidgin to a white person.

She also discussed how code-switching is also a method of challenging stereotypes. She continued:

Yeah. I do. One, just concern for, with white people, just concern for helping them reinforce negative stereotypes about black people. So, when I'm more jovial and louder with my black American friends or my Ghanaian friends, I wouldn't necessarily do [that with a white person] because one, that makes them uncomfortable, and then they take that un-comfortability and translate it into a stereotype and reaffirm whatever bias they already have. So, it's in my little way, I'm stopping the continuation of whatever that they think that black people are. I do act differently but I don't know. I also don't. I'm not fake, if that makes sense.

I'm not being fake with it. It's just, again, communication and just making sure that things are not being misrepresented and misunderstood.

Stella on the other hand feels that she code-switches at home more with her mom. She explained that her mother is more traditional as it relates to Ghanaian culture, so she tries to slowly show her mom that she holds different values that do not align with those traditional ideologies of her mother without causing too much conflict. For many in this group, code-switching took place inside and outside of the home to avoid conflict with their parents and also to defend themselves against racism and cultural discrimination. Participants in this group had some different identities than the first-generation. Unlike any participants in the first-generation, some of the 1.5-generation identified as American; and those in the 1.5-generation were more likely to identify with race. Since this group is negotiating multiple identities simultaneously inside and outside of the home, I wanted to know when they felt most like themselves. Akosua said that she feels most comfortable and authentic with her friends. She said:

I think with my immediate friend group. My friend group consists of people who identify as African American and then I had friends who were Ghanaian and then I have friends who are East African. That friend group, I felt like I could be myself because it wasn't like I had to pick and choose, are you going to put on and be like extra Ghanaian?

Others described feeling free and authentic with friends and some mostly with family.

Being Ghanaian. When discussing identity, it is impossible to avoid a Ghanaian identity. When I asked Kofi what makes him Ghanaian, he sat back and took a minute to think about the question. He answered:

What makes me Ghanaian? To me a lot of it, outside of being born there, a lot of it is just culture. When I get off the phone I'm about to go eat some rice and stew. You know what I'm saying? [I also know the language which I want to pass down to my children].

Stella was also taken aback by the question. She said:

What makes me Ghanaian? Well, I speak Twi regularly. It's part of me. I mean Ghana is just part of my identity. I feel like even...regardless of how. I could never go back there again, but I think I could never remove it as who I am because obviously my everyday things are in culture right down to how I live at home. So Ghanaians, when we're at home, we're dressed down, as down as possible, which I think is also a Black thing here, where White people are always dressed up. Why are you in your house in a fancy shirt? You need to be in your pajamas. So that's something that I still do. It's weird having to whenever I'm in a relationship, like seeing a guy, having to even explain that little thing. I'm very religious. I will say I have not met an African who is not highly religious. That's just part of us. I'm not saying they don't exist. They probably do, but I haven't come across one.

She continued:

Also, the food. Having access to Ghanaian food is important. Moving to Wisconsin, that was hard, but luckily there is a store here, so that's been nice. As far as conversations go, I speak Twi. How I describe my fluency in Twi is that there are words that you'll say that I totally understand that I can't come up with. My mom would speak to me in Twi. The word for Friday. I don't know it. My

mom will say it, and I know exactly what she means. So, I'm fluent but just to an extent. And it's gotten a little bit harder because we really only practiced it around our mom. So now that we're not with her, so we speak it less. But it's still there.

Language and maintaining cultural traditions was a prominent symbol of Ghanaian identity for many of this group. Thema said:

I still ascribe to most of my traditions. I still have family that live there. I still visit. I still have my Ghanaian name and find myself gravitating [toward] people of Ghanaian or West African culture in a space at first glance. I still eat the food. I still speak the language. And now, more than ever, I realize and recognize the power of being an individual from Ghana, and it makes me proud, so I don't try to leave that out of my story.

Being Ghanaian also comes with a sense of pride. When discussing what she loved about Ghana, Nanyanika said:

I think the friendliness. I like that, I like that Ghanaians are very friendly. That we're very peaceful. There's not...when you think of Ghana, I don't think I've ever really heard of the negative a response, that when someone says they're Nigerian, they get. You know? I just find our culture and history so rich...Even though I feel like we're trying to become more westernized now, at the expense of losing ourselves. Ghana's one of the first things that I'll say right after I tell you my name, so. It comes out without me even expecting, without me trying.

Being American. When it came to maintaining an American identity, there were mixed feelings. Nanyanika explained how she pulled away from her Ghanaian identity a bit when she was younger, but that soon changed. She said:

When I was trying to figure out my Instagram profile, I was like, "Oh let me put Ghanaian American [in my bio]." But other than that, I never identify as a Ghanaian American. Just Ghanaian. Or African. That much I'm pretty adamant about...I just pulled away [from my dad's tribe], but then I came to America and I was like, "wow! these people are culturalist as hell." And then I found some sort of pride in [my identity] especially when I found out the negative connotation that is associated with Africa.

Ama felt differently. She maintained an American identity. Even if this identity is not salient, she believes that her new revelations since living in the U.S. have impacted her outlook on life. She said:

I think what makes me American is my...maybe my accepting nature [or open-mindedness]. I think being a Ghanaian in America, kind of made me see the different ways in which other people face adversity in America, and what America is supposed to stand for, you know? For me, it was like...Okay, in other places, you don't have some of the same options that you have here. In the US, you have so many more options. Even when it's bad, it's not as bad as it is in other places. I think for me, kind of having that perspective of seeing...Understanding how awesome America and its democratic nature, not is, but can be, could be. Just the potential of it. I think that's what makes me American. That hopeful optimism.

Participants have negotiated their American and Ghanaian identities throughout the years and have learned to balance all of their transnational and cultural identities in a manner that expresses them all. While reaching this stage of acceptance and self-esteem has not been easy for all, time has helped participants realize the value in their identities.

Being Black. The majority of participants in this group identified with a race, and their racial identities could not be removed or separated from their Ghanaian or American identities. Along with being proud of being Ghanaian, Nanyanika also described her racial pride. When asked about her racial identity, she said:

Because I'm Black...I'm not Rachel Dolezal...I've never wanted to be white or anything like that. Honestly, I've been trying to be in the sun for the last four years, so I can get darker. And it's not working. And it really saddens me but, I don't, just as arrogant as I am about being Ghanaian, I'm arrogantly proud about being Black. And we don't get credit for it. And all that stuff, it's like damn. We really are dope. Just all come together and all that stuff...We really are dope, and that's how I've kind of grown in my pride to be Black.

Stella also discussed how her sense of American-ness is related to race. I asked if she considered herself Black, and she explained that she prefers to be identified as Ghanaian or African American. She explained:

I guess for me, it depends on the context or the setting that I'm in. I like to say that I'm purely African American racially also just because...everything is just socially constructed. When most people think about Black, they think about Black culture. So, I try to emphasize both my race and my ethnicity as African American just to let people know. If my name doesn't tell you, then I try to emphasize it as that way as well....And a lot of it is also out of respect. Being Black in the U.S. is a very distinct experience, and that gets put on me, and I can own that in certain contexts. But when I leave the U.S., I can claim my Ghanaian identity whenever I want. So, I think for me I try not to put those same

connotations on myself unless I'm in a setting, which this is usually what happens.

Unless I'm in a space and that identity is put on me, I try to distinguish as much as possible.

Living in the U.S. has helped Stella recognize the country's obsession with categorization. Her efforts to separate herself from Black Americans is not because she does not want to be associated with them but rather because she recognizes the cultural differences and does not want to claim a culture that is not hers. She identifies as African American because she was born on the African continent. For her, African American and Black American are, or can be seen as, different identifying categories.

Visiting Ghana. Most of the participants had visited Ghana since relocating to the U.S. Bob keeps contact with his family members mainly through the WhatsApp cell phone application. He maintained those connections, so it was exciting to see how much his younger family members had grown since he had not seen them in person. He also got to see his mother whom he had not seen since moving to the U.S. He was around 16 at the time of his visit, and he said the country was still as he remembered it when he left. Akosua has visited Ghana three times since moving to the U.S. Kofi hasn't visited because of financial constraints, but he wants to visit home. He said:

Yeah, I've thought about that plenty of times. So, a part of me wants to go home.

We talked about building your community, at the end of the day those are my people and I'd rather go home, I feel like America's a different pace than a lot of countries and I'd love to go home and just experience that pace and experience that energy and also potentially build something that's advantageous to everybody

there. So, I think long term, my ideal situation would be to have a spot in Ghana and a spot here and just come and go as I please.

Kofi has not visited Ghana, but Nanyanika and Thema visit as often as they can. Thema explained that she has been visiting Ghana for the past seven years. When asked about her experiences, she said:

My dad is still there, so it gives me a chance to see him. My grandma is there. My only living grandparent lives in Ghana, and that also allows me to see her...[I'm still close to] people that I grew up with, so we get to hang out...For the most part, I think it's important for me to still keep up with my family because at the end of the day, they are my family and I find them important in my life. So, when I go back to Ghana, it's a way for me to keep that going. And also, honestly, finding ways to improve the country because once you get enlightened or you get a chance to go elsewhere and live, you get to see the nuances that make a place different from another place and when you immerse yourself in that culture, you try to find ways to better the culture.

She is the founder of a non-governmental organization (NGO) that takes medical supplies to areas in need in Ghana. I asked her how her interactions were with other Ghanaians since she has lived in the U.S. for so long. In one instance, she replied:

I feel Ghanaian [when in Ghana], but other people view me as Americanized, not necessarily American. "Oh, you have changed, or you've become a little bit more modern."...I see myself as Ghanaian because I am. I was born there, but my views definitely do differ from a good majority of the population there.

In another instance, she stated:

So last time I was there I got into an argument about the LGBTQ rights in general. And I was upset because I had read an article that said some of the people in the community were taking matters into their own hands and beating people or killing people who they suspected to be in the LGBTQ community. And I was like even if they told you that they were a part of that community, you have no right to do anything about that. Like what? I'm so confused, and people are like "well, we don't want that gay stuff in Ghana" and I'm just kind of like you people are the same people that preach the whole love your neighbor and whatnot. You can't pick and choose how you want to share the message of love. You let people live their lives as true to themselves as they can, and people get really upset like "ahhh that's that American talking. That's that American lifestyle you guys have chosen over there." And I'm like no it's just human nature to treat people nice and as regular people regardless of who they find attractive.

While all participants who have visited Ghana explain that they do not feel any less Ghanaian even though they have been away, they are sometimes viewed differently by other Ghanaians.

Future Thinking

When it came to thinking about the future, all of the participants had high goals to achieve. Most of the participants described how their parents expected them to maintain exceptional grades in college. Akosua in completing her master's degree program. Stella is in a PhD program, and Thema is currently in medical school. Others have described their desire to earn advanced degrees and excel in their career fields.

Raising children. We also discussed if they intended on having children. All of them have considered it, and Kofi has two children already. I asked if they wanted to pass down Ghanaian traditions to their children, and all said yes with the exception of Stella. They plan to pass down the language if they are fluent themselves, and they discussed how they wanted their children to grow up eating traditional Ghanaian foods and learning about Ghanaian histories and cultural traditions. Stella wants her children to know about their cultural heritage, but she does not plan to have a strictly Ghanaian household. She wants them to decide how important a Ghanaian identity should be for themselves. Akosua said, “The legacy gotta go on” when she described how she plans to raise her children. This group differed from those of the first-generation because some of those of the first-generation were more willing to relocate their children to Ghana to ensure they had a firsthand experience to learn about the country and immerse in the culture.

Moving to Ghana. When it comes to moving to Ghana, there were mixed reactions. Bob and Stella were adamant on having no intentions of moving back to Ghana. Nanyanika, on the other hand, discussed how she plans to move back. She explained that she feels more at home in Ghana and would like to live a less stressful lifestyle. She explained:

I'm trying to move. We're moving to Ghana for the same reasons my parents want to go back. Because it's just so, it's stress free. I don't [have] to think and I can ball on a very low budget.

Thema, on the other hand, explained that she had no intentions on moving to Ghana because she will not be remunerated the way she needs to sustain the lifestyle she wants.

Even though she does not want to move to Ghana, she plans to continue supporting the country from abroad.

The Second-Generation Ghanaian-American

Those of the second-generation group have at least one Ghanaian parent and were born in the United States. The only exception was Abena. She was born in Palau, and both of her parents were Ghanaian - born and raised in Ghana; but her story is similar to that of the second-generation. Since this is not an immigrant group, questions pertaining to emigrating and adjusting to American mainstream culture are not as significant compared to the other generations because they were raised with Ghanaian and American cultures simultaneously. Therefore, they did not have a specific moment when they began adjusting to American mainstream culture because they were in the U.S. their entire lives.

Table 6

Second-generation

Name	Citizenship	Visited Ghana since [parents'] move to U.S.
Abena (F)	Ghana	Yes
Akua (F)	U.S.	Yes
Kayla (F)	U.S.	Yes
Mary (F)	U.S.	No
Richard (M)	U.S.	No
S (F)	U.S.	Yes

Home Life

Growing up with one or two Ghanaian parents could be significant as far as home life is concerned. Participants were asked about their experiences growing up and if they felt those experiences were significantly different from what they would consider a typical or average American home.

Culture. One of the most significant differences participants noted compared to the average American home was the home culture. Many discussed how they ate

Ghanaian cuisine and learned different Ghanaian cultural norms from their parent(s), but others discussed their homes being more similar to an average American home. Abena grew up in Palau and moved to the U.S. as an adult. She was second-generation in Palau, so her experiences relate to the second-generation American group. Since she was more isolated in Palau, she discussed how different her home life was compared to the average Palauan home. She explained:

Yeah, no one else looks like you, no one else understands the same culture. So, [it] basically was Ghanaian in the home and then at school and everything else it was Palauan. Yeah, I learned like two different cultures growing up my whole life. And then so as I identify as third culture kid bringing the different cultures to formulate my own culture.

Mary's father is Ghanaian, and her mother is Gambian. She discussed how her parents maintained their traditions and cultures in the home and continuously reminded the children about their heritage. She said:

I would say that it was more African, so like more of my parents' heritage and their values and stuff like that. They would always tell us that even though we were born here, we are not from here and not to behave in the ways of like my white friends and stuff like that.

While Abena and Mary had a more Ghanaian, or African, home, Kayla did not have the same experience. She said:

It's not that they didn't try, but I feel like they were more concerned with us acclimating. We...yeah, we would hang out with their Ghanaian friends like, wear

the clothes and do certain ovations, but it...wasn't really that imprinted. Part of it is by the time they had us, they had been here for like ten years or so.

Her parents wanted her and her siblings to be more acclimated to mainstream American culture than Ghanaian culture. Akua also explained that her home seemed like a typical American home. The only difference she really noted was gender roles and respecting elders. She said:

My [older] brother had a little bit more freedom than me, because he's a boy and he's the prince, whatever...I mean, when I was little, my dad and I were closer, and then as I got older and more, I guess, opinionated, we started to have some issues, but...because, you know, kids in general are supposed to be quiet unless you're told to do something. You're kind of, I don't want to say mini-servants, but it's like, "Go get me that thing that's literally sitting next to me."

Considering home culture led to the discussion about gender roles.

Gender roles. As Akua discussed, her brother had more freedom because he was a boy. She was not the only person to experience this. While I was interviewing S, her father called her to find something for him just as Akua had described. Once she found the item he wanted, she returned to the computer for the interview. When asked about gender roles in her home, she said:

Oh my god, yeah. Yeah, [our home was] super gendered...I think it might also be partly because he's much older. He's a senior citizen, so that might be part of it, but understanding that chores are mainly my responsibility as a woman and always talking about, "Oh, when you get married..." And I'm like, "I don't even know if I'm going to do all that." So, that was a part of it and while I'm not the

oldest, I'm the oldest girl. So, I think that's another element of responsibility because when we were younger, my sister...I was almost like a surrogate mother; cooking for her, doing her laundry, cleaning our room, helping her with her homework, and that's not something my dad did...much of. Even though, we were both kids, but that's supposed to be my responsibility. Whenever my little cousins come over, I'm the one who is supposed to entertain and do all this other stuff.

I asked her if she agreed with the gender roles, and she said:

Definitely not. Not because I was some enlightened feminist. It was just that I was a teenager. So, I was like, "I don't want to do these chores."

Gender was more significant for some than others. Many participants explained that they recognized gender roles in their home but that they did not feel that their parents were as strict as some of the first and 1.5-generations. One who discussed their parents being more strict was Mary who explained that she could spend the night at friends' houses but only if they were Black. Many of the first and 1.5-generations recalled not being allowed to spend the night with any friends. Mary's family was less strict, but they still had stipulations that restricted which homes she could go to.

Language. Participants were asked if they were fluent in any indigenous Ghanaian language. Richard does not have a strong relationship with his father because he was incarcerated for a large part of his life. As a result, he did not have anyone to teach him the language. Abena is not fluent in Ewe, but she can understand the language. Akua is not fluent in Twi, but she has been trying to learn for the past few years with her cousin and close friends. Just like Akua, Kayla is interested in learning Twi. She explained:

I wish [my parents] woulda taught me, but honestly when I was younger I wasn't really having it, so it wouldn't have worked. And because they actually speak different languages, they speak Ga to each other, 'cause they both knew a little bit of Ga. So it's like, it wasn't even like there was really that much of an opportunity for me to learn. When I was in college, I actually took two Twi classes, 'cause I wanted to learn, but...yeah it was kinda like an easy “A” type of class, so I didn't take it seriously and unfortunately didn't learn that much. I tried.

Just like the other participants, Kayla found more value in knowing a Ghanaian language as she got older.

Education

The K-12 educational experiences of this group were different from the other groups because they were not immigrants. Dominant western norms governed these educational experiences for participants born in the United States. Many did discuss how her parents had high educational expectations and worked to ensure she had all of the resources needed to be successful. Mary, who has 3 other siblings explained:

One other thing about my parents and other African parents was that they put a big stress...a big importance on schooling and trying to get the best grades and stuff like that. It was always implied that we needed to get good grades and good jobs to make our parents proud; and being a child of immigrants, it's almost like we are our parents' retirement plan. So, other people won't really understand why, in 9th grade, I was so stressed on trying to get into the best schools and stuff like that and trying to find a good career.

Educational excellence was always on her mind as she wanted to make her parents proud.

Bullying. Abena, who was born in Palau, had a very negative experience even though she was born and raised in Palau. She described her experiences by saying:

Uh, It sucked. Honestly, so bad...I cannot count the number of days I was like going home crying and just like if my parents would pick me up and I'm just like, why are we here? Like I literally asked them...flat out. I'm like, why are we here? This doesn't make any sense to me. And this is me at probably like seven or eight years old. Bullying was really, really bad. And the thing was like, not many people knew I was born and raised there or that I knew Palauan more fluently. I know more Palauan fluently than Ewe.

She continued:

I was called Black a lot. My hair was really short when I was little because my dad was tired of me screaming in the morning when my mom was trying to do my hair. So that always resorted to just shaving it all off, and I hated it then...I would be called like “Black” or a “boy” or like sometimes even like “go back to Africa” or, “you're not from here.” Um, “charcoal.” Yep. They were not nice at all.

Abena faced a significant amount of racism and bullying in school even though she was born in the country. This form of racism or introduction to discrimination was prominent for other participants once entering higher education.

College transition. For the other groups, the college transition was when participants noticed how Americans seemed to become more educated and open about African cultures and histories. For this group, transitioning to college signified a coming of age and more openness about the diversity of U.S. cultures. Richard did not learn in detail about Ghanaian cultures, so he decided to enroll in an African Studies course to

learn more about his family's heritage. For him, he made an effort to learn about his culture in an academic space since he did not have much of an opportunity growing up. Mary explained that the majority of her friends were second-generation African Americans, and that she became friends with more Black/African Americans in college.

Learning Significance of Race and Racism

For some participants, they learned about race at a young age. For others, it was during their college years that they became “woke” or aware of the workings of racism and white supremacy.

Distancing from African Americans. In terms of race and Black America, some participants received different messages from home and from their friends. S described how she believed her father wanted to distance himself from race, racial politics and African Americans in general. She said:

Yeah, I think a lot of Ghanaians [do]. I don't mean to do too much conjecture, or whatever, but I think a lot of them have definitely subscribed to that minority status. So, if they don't want to associate themselves with blackness, which is just ...yeah. It's frustrating sometimes and it's really discouraging to see just because I don't really feel like there should be any beef between Blacks and Africans. Black people and Africans who immigrate here, that just doesn't even make any sense to me. We are the same, we should be in solidarity. I just think a lot of us [have] really subscribed to this idea that we're supposed to get our education and keep our head down and be apolitical. My dad is explicitly...and I kind of get why, because he grew up in a politically tumultuous time, but really he always gets worried about me speaking my political beliefs. I once, when I was in high school

and was like, "Yeah, fuck Ronald Reagan. He's the devil." Or something. Dad was like "don't say that before someone comes and snatches you." Yeah, so. That might actually be it, but I just think a lot of us move really apolitically and I think it's ultimately really dangerous and I think it's a really bad thing to do. But because we keep getting our degrees, or whatever, and are among some of the most educated immigrants in the United States, I don't think we're going to pull away from that, but I would really like us to understand that no matter how many degrees, you're still a Black person in the United States and you should move accordingly.

For S, she does not distance herself from a racial identity, but she has been encouraged to by her father to minimize her racial and social justice activism for her own safety. Abena discussed her initial intentions to distance herself from African Americans. She stated:

I would say that there were times, especially when I first came that it was, I had to feel like I had to distinguish myself from the African American experience – set myself apart... Yeah, because just because of the negative stigmas that existed, you know, you are black, that's what I am Black in America, but at the same time being black versus being African is two very different things. Like you can say you're African American, you can say you're Black American or just Black or you're just African. So there are different, definitely different labels that exist. But with being Black, it was associated with the culture And...with the issues with police officers...issues with racism and discrimination. So, you kind of want to like step out of that to make yourself a little different and hope people recognize you're not like them in order to get somewhere in life.

I was intrigued by Abena's comments, because they aligned with much of the research on Black immigrants, but I wanted to dig deeper. I asked her if she accomplished her goal by distancing herself from Black Americans. She replied, laughingly:

I'm still trying, but no...I wouldn't say...I feel like then I definitely wasn't woke to the experience of black brothers and sisters in America my first year... definitely not.

Abena learned in college that race was more than skin color but was a form of systematic oppression. She, like others, became more aware in their college years.

Becoming "woke." Woke is more of a Millennial expression of gaining knowledge. Many of the participants discussed how they became more woke through friendships, college courses, and personal experiences. Abena explained that her participation in various student organizations helped her learn more about the functionality of systematic racism. She explained:

I think because I joined a few organizations like African student council, um, and some Christian fellowship groups that their purpose was to have racial reconciliation...and so being in some of those spaces help me actually become more woke, um, and learn about the experience and not want it to, like, I didn't feel the need to want to separate myself from them...You become brainwashed into thinking that crime and all these different things are only associated with the label of being black, but in reality, systematic like that's exactly.

Abena learned the realities of race and racism in the U.S. which also helped her reflect on her perceptions of Black Americans in a different way. Kayla also discussed how she became more aware about the innerworkings of racism in college. She said:

Yeah, so I never had those thoughts until college. So, college was definitely an eye-opening experience, as it is for most people I guess, and that's why...like wow, this is real out here and I didn't realize it, y'all weren't playin'. I felt like I had been so sheltered in high school and stuff, so when I was out in the real world I was like, so racism is real. I am blackity-black, and...all those types of thoughts and so, yeah...so that's when I realized and had all those things, I'm like, you know like different layers.

College was a significant time for many of the participants as it relates to learning about race. Many have also experienced racism.

Experiencing racism. When asked about their personal experiences with racism, Akua had an interesting story. She is from an ethnically and racially diverse family. Her mother is Caucasian American, and her father is Ghanaian. She explained how she realized how people would stare at her and her family members. She said:

I was lucky that the only time it was really obvious would be when we would go up north and people would stare at us. Even my mom, she'd be like, "I never think that you guys..."She doesn't think about it that we look weird to people, I guess. So, we go north and she's like, "What's everybody...Oh, right. We're not all the same color."

At a young age Akua was forced to see how her family was considered abnormal to some. This mainly happened in predominately white areas. S discussed how she experienced racism at a young age which is another reason she refuses to try to separate herself from other Black Americans. She stated:

When I was a teenager, I would be around my other black friends, we would definitely get stared at and followed around. Cops would approach us, on edge already. So, what good does it do for me to be like, "I'm actually a first-generation Ghanaian-American, one of the highest educated group." ... It doesn't do anything for me to do that. So, people with those ideas, you have to understand you're fitting into a very anti-black U.S. framework that has killed people before and it really could.

Participants of the second-generation were more likely to readily identify as Black Americans based on their firsthand experiences with discrimination and being “othered.”

Identity

When I asked participants about identity, they described a complex battle between their identity saliency in different spaces. Participants wrestled with the need to demonstrate their ethnic roots amongst both American and Ghanaian individuals.

Proving identity. Many participants discussed how they were oftentimes questioned about their Ghanaian roots. I asked Abena if she was ever questioned about being Ghanaian, and she said:

A hundred percent and possible a thousand percent. I have been told I am not Ghanaian enough, and in other cases not Palauan enough because I don't look Palauan. Um, I have a friend that calls me, she's from Palau, but she calls me coconut because I'm like Brown and black on the outside and then on the inside... And so it was just like definitely it hurts a little bit more when it's coming from your people, but like, oh, you're not even Ghanaian enough. And I'm just like, okay, go ahead and take that from me at this point. I am what I am. Just being at

peace with that. But yeah, because I don't speak Twi, I don't speak all the other common languages. Um, my accent is different. Maybe I walk different, I don't know all of these different little pieces of the puzzle. So that's kind of where I feel less of an identity that I can prove more...I feel like more of those conversations happen with West Africans.

She continued by saying:

How do you prove yourself? Right. I don't know how, but it's like, this is who I am and then you're going to tell me I'm not. So, it's kind of like, okay, then what am I, since you have all the answers, go ahead and explain to me what I am if this is what I'm not.

Akua also discussed being questioned about her Ghanaian-ness but other Ghanaians. She explained:

Sometimes I feel because I'm lighter that people might not think...you're not really Ghanaian because you're lighter. And I was like, "No, but I am," like even though I'm only half, I'm Ghanaian. It is hard not speaking the language. I feel like people do think because I don't speak the language, too, that that might make me less Ghanaian, which is kind of a struggle...It makes me feel terrible, because I know I'm half, and I'm lighter and everything, but being told that you aren't really a thing because you are different, maybe, than normal Ghanaian or standard Ghanaian, it kind of messes with you, because it's like, "No, but I am, and you're not telling me that what I'm not because I don't fit all of the things that you say I should." So, yeah. It's not a good feeling, for sure.

Just like Akua, S believes that not speaking the language in certain spaces makes her more of a target for jokes. She said:

I remember people used to make jokes about me being the Jamaican girl in the space, just because my mom's from Jamaica. It's also funny because I know that there's a tension between Caribbean-Americans and Ghanaian-Americans. Yeah, Caribbean-Americans and Ghanaian-Americans are just really funny. There was this joke about being half Jamaican, which I think is really... That's funny, but in those spaces it's much more charged... Honestly, I think partially because I can't understand the language. I pick up on some little snide remarks.

Kayla also discussed how she felt less Ghanaian in certain spaces because she experienced microaggressions and other tensions because she was second-generation. She said:

Definitely, yeah. I mean, not as much as my more immediate friends, but even when I was like on board for [my school's African student organization], it was weird 'cause I'm like planning all these things for the African students at [my school] and I'm like, I don't even know if I can relate to a lot of the things that were discussed. And it was also a really big divide between the first or second-generation Africans and the international [African students] because I feel like they felt like we're the real Africans over here and...it might not have been said explicitly, but it was definitely a divide and even like a cultural divide because I feel like they would just stay in the corner, they weren't really a part of [the organization] at all. And they actually ended up forming their own group which

was like, why are we divided ourselves, but that's what they wanted to do, so...it was a mess, but anyways...yeah.

Despite the microaggressions and questioning they received, each participant was still proud of their Ghanaian identity. Each participant also discussed where they felt most comfortable and where they do not feel as if they need to pretend or act a certain way. For most, they felt more comfortable around their unique friend group. Many of these friends included African Americans and other second-generation Americans.

Being Ghanaian. Although born in the United States, second-generation participants still highly identified and could described what it meant for them to be Ghanaian through their experiences within the home. When asked what makes her Ghanaian, S took some time to think and said:

I mean, that's really hard. So, I think obviously, ethnically I know my ethnic heritage and I know my tribe...I also think just the way that I grew up at home, just certain things that I noticed other kids didn't go through... There's specific things that when I talk to my fellow Ghanaian friends, I was like, "Oh, this is unique to us." And I think that experience, even though it's really hard to articulate the specifics of it, knowing that there's commonalities I can really only find when I talk to other Ghanaians.

Even though she does not speak a Ghanaian language, she still feels that her knowledge of her ethnicity and upbringing was uniquely Ghanaian which helps her reinforce the significance of her identity. Akua echoed these sentiments. Even though she was not raised with strict Ghanaian traditions, she believes her knowledge of her family's

background and blood running through her veins makes her just as Ghanaian as anyone else, and she is proud of her heritage.

Being American. Most participants of the second-generation were born in the U.S., and all except Abena maintained an American identity. While the idea of being Ghanaian or American is not limited to legal nationality, most participants of the second-generation proudly claimed both cultural identities regardless of their nationality or if they had visited Ghana. For Abena, this was the case for Ghana and Palau. She was born in Palau and held a Palauan identity along with a Ghanaian identity. This generation demonstrated how one can maintain a transnational identity or diasporic identity. This was true for those who had even never visited Ghana.

Being Black. Many of the participants discussed how they maintained a positive racial identity. Richard and I joked about how people oftentimes assume his is Latino. As a bi-racial man, he described how he navigated different cultures in the U.S. he said:

Honestly, it's kind of like being mixed, being in the middle. I feel like all the time, and less so now that I have a lot more knowledge and I've been taking these [Black Studies] classes, but I've just always felt that I'm like a rope in a tug of war or something. You got people pulling me this side to be like this and this side to be like this, and I'm like why can't I just be like this (pointing to himself)? I like being in the middle. I like being able to observe and appreciate both sides of the spectrum.

Being bi-racial, for Richard, means being a part of two racial groups. Even though he is pressured to "act more Black" or "act more white," he has chosen to just be himself and

fully accept and appreciate both racial identities. S is more active and radical with her racial identity. When asked about how she identifies with race, she stated:

Gosh, really good question. I really do consider myself Black, but in terms of African-American, I think that's also because of my political identity. I am pretty left leaning, so I feel like there's really a lot of power in saying, "Yeah, I'm Black."...I put myself in the black category because racially, I am Black. I grew up with Black women who really taught me a lot, they were mostly my teachers. When I was in elementary school, I politically really tried to identify with the things that are the best for Black America. Obviously, not to pin down to one thing, but I feel like...yes, I am Ghanaian-American if people were to ask me [about] my upbringing, I would gladly volunteer like, "Yeah, I'm Ghanaian-American. I grew up with all these Ghanaian customs and it comes out pretty easily," but I think I really do just identify as Black. Especially because I don't like to subscribe to some of the ways in which Ghanaians, especially older ones, really perpetuate this sort of anti-Black American sentiment. Me and older family members have started to get into a lot about that stuff just because their ideas of Black people are really anti-Black and just trash.

S finds power in identifying as Black versus a particular ethnic group, even though she does identify as Ghanaian American too. Her alignment with Black American has also caused contention between her family members because they view "Black" in seemingly opposite ways.

Visiting Ghana. Akua visited Ghana once in 2007 during Ghana's 50th independence celebrations. She described her experiences as fun and enlightening. She described some of her travels:

Yeah, the head king or tribe chief of our people. My dad always said he knew him, but dad says lots of things and it's like, "Okay, Dad." But apparently, my dad's mother and Asantehene's mother were best friends. My dad had gone with his mom to the palace a lot and had hung out with Asantehene when they were kids, which is crazy. So we went to a state dinner. Somehow we snuck into that, and then we got invited for a private hangout the next night with just him. So that was pretty cool.

She also described visiting some of the former slave castles:

Yeah, Elmina. So that was an emotional thing. And then, talking about the jail cell that has a tiny hole for light and air and they would put slaves in there if they were being bad and they put you in there and shut the door for two minutes and you're just thinking about it and all the people that were in there, and it freaks you out and really kind of messes with you. And seeing the "Door of No Return" and stuff, that was intense. But I'm glad I got that experience and to see that kind of thing and be there, kind of feel that emotion. It was an interesting experience, for sure.

When it came to her identity, she explained:

I felt more American and it was mostly because I don't speak [Twi], and I had never been there. It's kind of so different from the U.S. in some ways, and then not in others, because they have so many of the same things. But when we went

there, they were having an energy crisis, so they would have to ration out the energy, which is not something I'm used to... So there was one morning where there was no electricity, so the water pumps couldn't pump the water up to the second floor, so we had to do bucket baths. And I was like, "Just a minute," like, "This is different." I guess [I] felt more American because I just felt, I guess, out of place a little bit there. I got more comfortable as the weeks went on.

The culture was different as it relates to language, conveniences, and simply daily life (e.g., bus system, shopping experience) which made Akua feel discomfort at first until she became more accustomed to it. She also discussed how powerful the experience was being away from racism. She described:

And nobody's saying really crappy to the people of color. It's wild. It's a different experience, so I feel like that part was just like, "Wow, there are so many people that look like my dad walking around. It's so different." Yeah, I was happy. I feel like when I came back, though, I felt more Ghanaian. Around my friends, I was like, doing that more and stuff, but when I was there, I felt very American.

Kayla also described how she has visited Ghana multiple times. She explained that she appreciated her most recent visit to Ghana because she was older. She said:

Like this most recent time I appreciated it a lot more 'cause I was older and could actually...appreciate the culture and want to learn more. The previous times, I didn't even want to be there, [to be honest].

She also discussed how she often feels more American when she is in Ghana mainly because she does not speak the language. She said:

Definitely more American 'cause as noted, I don't speak any of the languages and that's all everybody would ever speak, so I was just sitting there awkwardly. And I also...I do like the food, but I don't like spicy foods, so that was a struggle. There was just a lot going on and I feel like, since the visits were always so short, it was kind of like a culture shock, like oh it's just so different, it was so hot...all those different things going on.

Kayla and I continued to joke about how when we are in Ghana we sometimes feel awkward watching everyone else laugh while we are left out because we do not speak the language.

Future Thinking

Just like the other participants, those of the second-generation were working to create a prosperous future for themselves. Some were in graduate school, and everyone had a job. In fact, Mary was on her lunch break at work when we conducted her interview.

Raising children. When asked about how participants wanted to raise their future children, they explained that cultural identity was important to them, and they wanted to ensure their children knew their cultural heritage. Some even explained that they wanted their children to learn Twi or another Ghanaian language. Some jokingly explained that they don't know who will teach them the language since they themselves are not fluent in Twi, but they still want their descendants to learn about Ghanaian cultures.

Moving to Ghana. I asked participants if they would consider living in Ghana. Abena and Akua were interested in living in Ghana for a short period of time. Akua said:

[Student loans are] kind of an issue. So, it'd be kind of cool to do something in Ghana for a few months or a year or something to...I don't know what I would do, but it would be kind of cool and spend time with family and kind of get more immersed in our family and learn cooking and stuff like that from aunts and just be around that more would be cool.

Abena also discussed how she wanted to live in Ghana for at least a year to learn more about the culture, learn Ewe more fluently, and be home.

The findings detailed in this chapter suggest a number of similarities and differences among Ghanaian-American Millennials. The findings suggest that grouping people based on place of birth, immigrant generation, or birth generation (e.g., Millennial) can reduce the significance of individual experiences. The findings will be further discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of Ghanaian-Americans and how they develop and negotiate different identities in various spaces. Participants were first, 1.5, and second-generation Ghanaian-Americans. Participants had to be born in Ghana or have a Ghanaian parent and be residing in the United States. For this study, the category "American" was not based on citizenship status. Participants simply had to be living in the U.S. at the time of the study with plans to continue living in the country. This chapter provides a summary of findings along with how they connect to the original research questions.

Summary of Findings

The findings demonstrate the variety of experiences Ghanaian immigrants and second-generation Ghanaian-Americans have in the U.S. The findings specifically unveil the complexities of identity formation and saliency for this group. Further, there are clear connections between social consciousness and identity.

Analysis

Those of the first-generation were more likely to maintain the same level of saliency with their original home cultural identities. Meanwhile, those of the 1.5 and second-generations fluctuated more with their identity saliencies and appreciation. Many of the 1.5-generation reached a point where they wanted to conceal their Ghanaian identity as a means to fit in and avoid discrimination. Many would avoid speaking in an

effort to hide their Ghanaian accent and not talk much about their heritage because they did not want to face discrimination. Some of the second-generation did not find much significance in their Ghanaian heritage and the cultural traditions they were raised with until their older years.

Their behaviors demonstrate how there are no stages of identity formation because it is, as Breakwell (1986) explained, contingent on various factors such as time and social environment. The actions of the 1.5 and second-generation participants are most telling about the influence social environment plays in relation to identity. Many in these two generations were teased for being Ghanaian by Americans, so they wanted to mask what attributes they felt stood out as Ghanaians. By the same token, they were often teased for not being Ghanaian enough by other Ghanaians and West African immigrants, which made them want to express their cultural heritage more. Identity is both personal and social, and the degree to which any particular identity is salient depends on the value the individual places on said identity. The value dimension, as explained by Breakwell (1986), varies in different settings.

Those of the 1.5 and second-generation were more likely to find the most value and appreciation in their cultural heritage and identity at an older age. This could be because of two factors: personal growth and social influence. Changes in ideologies and perceptions are a part of human growth and development (Young, 2018). Therefore, it was practical to see participants have a newfound sense of enthusiasm and pride for their cultural heritage and identity through the years. Cultural influences in the U.S. have also shifted. As Ama explained, she was bullied in school because she was Ghanaian, yet, in 2019, she has seen a shift in how people think about Africa – especially African

Americans. She believes that part of this trend is because of the popularity of the 2018 film *Black Panther*. Another factor could be the more recent popularity of ancestry DNA testing.

In an interview with NBC journalist Dana McMahan,¹³ Robin Hauck explained that there have always been individuals who wish to travel to the land of their ancestors, and ancestry testing has increased that population because they have easier access to learn about their ancestral histories. Africa is not exempt from this trend, which has added to the popularity of learning about Africa and Africa traditions. Participants who were once publicly teased because of their cultural background in grade school are now publicly celebrated by their peers. This public celebration can boost self-esteem and pride.

Themes and Identity

Overall, each theme spoke to a different tactic regarding identity. They demonstrated how one could be in constant negotiation to appease different groups in the home, with friends, and at school. Individuals had to learn to navigate household rules they did not agree with, such as gender roles. Some explained that they were social activists, but their activism was frowned upon in the home. They were forced to make certain identities less visible, or prominent, in the home as a means to avoid conflict.

While this was more prominent with the 1.5 and second-generation participants, it was present with the first-generation also. For example, Eli has not explicitly told his family about his sexuality. He is not ashamed of his sexuality in any way, but when I asked him how he thought his family would react, he noted that they would still love him

¹³ McMahan, D. (2018, December 9).

but possibly be disappointed because of their religious views. He has avoided certain conversations simply to maintain peace within his family and preserve relationships. Identity saliency and disclosure are always taken into consideration with family members because the participants of this study had different experiences than their parents, and their parents did not always understand the perspective of the participants.

This trend was also noticeable in relation to race and racism. Many of the participants relocated to the U.S. or were raised in the U.S. with their parents' understanding of race and racism. Most didn't understand the nuanced realities of racism and prejudice toward African Americans. Many of these prejudicial views were reinforced in school due to bullying, but most participants explained that they eventually realized how significant systematic racism is and how they themselves have been affected by it. Every person I interviewed was an adult, and many still believed that their parents held different views from them regarding racism. This was across all immigrant generations.

In essence, identity formation was different for each individual, but there were more similarities based on generation. While each generation was different, they all, at one point or another, explained how they were connected to family, friends, and news through social media which is a tool their parents did not have access to at this age. Most of them also described themselves as more open-minded than their parents in one way or another. Many explained that they disagreed with gender roles, were LGBTQ+ rights advocates, and did not hold negative stereotypical views of other groups that were mainly based on what they saw in the media, among other topics. This could be attributed to the current social trends and living in the U.S. to some degree. Many of those particular have

been popular in U.S. media in the past years. Besides topics being discussed in the news, there have been various social media campaigns and discussions, community dialogues, and discussions on various college campuses. Overall, participants may have been more exposed to topics, cultures, ways of living, and ideas that were different than their own.

The research questions guiding this study were related to upbringing, the significance of cultural identity, and modes of identity expressions. The majority of participants believed that their upbringing was different from the mainstream American home. The participants explained that their parents instilled some form of Ghanaian tradition that ranged from food to language. Some even described that they believed the ways their parents enforced gender roles and how strict they were with rules were forms of cultural expression that was unique to their homes compared to that of a mainstream American home.

When asked about their identities and what it meant to be Ghanaian, the answers given by participants varied. Those who held a memory of living in Ghana were more likely to discuss how their culture was a part of their daily lives, and they could not remove themselves from it. Those who did not have this memory were more likely to discuss their upbringing and heritage while also acknowledging their upbringings in the home were different from their peers and the dominant culture. Although to varying degrees, cultural identity was important for all participants. Based on the participant interviews, cultural identity can be defined as *expressions of upbringing and cultural heritage*. Cultural identity did not have to be highly visible to still hold significance in the lives of participants. Identities include how one views themselves and also how they are viewed by the world. Many participants, especially in the second-generation, explained

that they felt they had to prove themselves to other Ghanaians because they did not express their Ghanaian cultures in the same manner. Those of the second-generation were more likely to hold multiple cultural identities since they were raised with Ghanaian, American, and other cultures simultaneously. Their Ghanaian cultural identity being less salient does not mean they are not Ghanaian or that they are utterly ignorant as it relates to Ghanaian cultural norms. Their decisions to present their Ghanaian identity is their prerogative, and no one can determine their identity for them or take it away from them.

This leads one to the understanding that cultural identities have no specified ways of being performed or expressed. Further, cultural identities are, in some cases, related to a particular country even though an individual does not have to be a citizen of said country. Most of the participants were U.S. residents or citizens, yet they still considered themselves Ghanaian. This was even true for those who have never lived in or visited Ghana. While they may not hold citizenship in Ghana, they still feel connected through heritage and culture. Most participants related their Ghanaian identity to different cultural norms such as food and language.

The construction of various identities for participants did not have any common roadmap. At different points in life, participants made individual identities more significant, felt more enlightened about the ways of the world, and began being their authentic selves where they did not feel the need to codeswitch in different settings. Breakwell's (1986) Identity Process Theory was used to frame this project. Based on the experiences of the participants of this study, Breakwell's conceptualization of identity as a social product that is relational to the social and historical perspective is indeed correct. Identities were built, dissolved, or strengthened for participants as a result of different

social contexts and time. For example, the heightened publicity of police violence in the U.S. of the past ten years influenced how participants wished to identify. Many wanted to disassociate from Blackness in an effort to avoid such discrimination, which demonstrates how the social and historical contexts are both equally influential in identity saliency.

Accommodation/assimilation and evaluation are the universal processes within IPT. Participants of all immigrant generations were in a constant state of accommodation/assimilation and evaluation, whether it was in their home, at school, or at work. Those of the 1.5-generation were more likely to make more adjustments to their daily behaviors as it related to social and private spaces. The three identity principles that drive the accommodation/assimilation and evaluation processes are continuity, distinctiveness, and self-esteem.

Participants in this study maintained their cultural identities across time, but the prominence of said identities shifted in different social settings. This was directly related to their self-esteem in those spaces. For example, many in the 1.5-generation experienced bullying and discrimination because of their country of birth. This affected their self-esteem, which led them to negotiate how they expressed their cultural identity or heritage. For many, being more reserved, not speaking, and avoiding being in the spotlight were defensive mechanisms to prevent adverse interactions. Their self-esteem was a principle that caused them to evaluate their place in public social settings and even caused some to want to assimilate as much as possible. Further, some of the 1.5-generation and second-generation discussed wanting to accommodate to present themselves as "more Ghanaian" in spaces that were primarily Ghanaian or West African.

Some felt they were being judged too harshly because of their lack of knowledge of current Ghanaian events or popular culture, so they attempted to be more overtly Ghanaian in an effort to fit in and not be insulted.

In relation to distinctiveness, participants explained that their “Ghanaian” cultural identity, in many ways, was advantageous to them, making them stand out from other candidates when searching for a job. As noted by Breakwell, the saliency of different identities, including cultural identity, shifted in different spaces. Participants were intentional about when and where different identities were highlighted in an effort to shield themselves from discrimination and to use their identities as a signifier of uniqueness in other situations.

Breakwell also discussed that when identities are threatened, individuals are likely to isolate themselves, challenge those who attack them, attempt to pass as member of another group, or comply. In this study, many participants, especially of the 1.5-generation, expressed moments of isolation in an effort to avoid being a target of bullying. Passing was more prominent with the second-generation as they would work harder to demonstrate their Ghanaian heritage in situations where they were questioned or not fully welcomed. In a few instances, there were attempts of misidentification. For example, Kyle explained that he would not correct someone if they misidentified him as African American because he did not have any interest in explaining his background or being bothered with the questions that would follow after he disclosed his nationality.

This study aligned with the theory of Breakwell as it relates to how identities are developed and maintained in various settings. This study also aligned with and challenged other research. Just as Smith, Cordero-Guzman, and Grosfoguel (2001) and

Spickard (2007) argue, race and racism have an influence on how immigrants and their families adjust to the U.S. mainstream culture. Further, Kretsedemas' (2013) articulation of cultural racism was quite significant in the lives of my participants. Participants discussed how in their social interactions with mainstream America, race cannot be overlooked. Their various cultural identities (i.e. "Ghanaian" and diasporic), as well as racial/ethnic identities were also a factor in many interactions. For many participants in this study, racism influenced their mannerisms in the workplace, and some have been more intentional with working to destabilize systematic oppression. These are efforts that are unlikely to have taken place if they were not Black and if they were not in an overly racialized society like the U.S. Similar to the experiences of Chacko's (2003) participants, cultural racism mostly affected those of the 1.5-generation in grade school. This specific type of discrimination affected their self-esteem, which in turn affected their overall relationships with U.S. societies in general. Further, the more recent anti-immigrant sentiments championed by the racist U.S. federal government has impacted participants. Some participants explained how they are starting to seriously consider becoming U.S. citizens because the state of immigrant affairs, more specifically Black and Brown immigrants, is unpredictable.

Based on the data, the term "cultural racism" does not fully capture the experiences of the participants. They were not discriminated against because of their cultural practices. They were discriminated against because of their country of birth. As Lydia described, her friend was not teased because she told people she was from Jamaica instead of Uganda. The students were not being teased because of cultural differences but rather for being African. Therefore, cultural racism is not an accurate term. Instead, the

participants faced regional-based discrimination specifically targeted toward Africa - *African discrimination*. They were discriminated against simply because they were born in an African country and not because they had different cultural traditions.

Shaw-Taylor (2007) argued that many Black immigrants attempt to separate themselves from native African Americans in an effort to avoid discrimination. This study proved this to be partially correct. Many participants separated themselves from native African Americans before they were aware of racism. This separation was because of the bullying they faced in school. Many were bullied by native African Americans and teased because they were born in an African country. When participants were most vulnerable and seeking friends, they had a difficult time from the group they thought would accept them. Therefore, it is not surprising that they would want to distinguish themselves from a group they were not welcomed into. Some of the participants who emigrated to the U.S. at an older age did discuss wishing to separate themselves to avoid racial discrimination. They, however, explained that their attempts were in vain. Participants explained that they are culturally different from native African Americans, but that does not mean they need to separate themselves. Many, since becoming more aware of racism in the U.S., are in solidarity with native African Americans and see themselves as part of a larger struggle against inequality. Some participants are even a part of historically Black fraternities and sororities. This was also in contradiction to Imoagene's (2011) work because her participants did not identify as African American, but I had multiple participants who identified as both Black and African American.

Donkor (2005) and Pieterse (2009) both argue that globalization's primary function is the economic development of the West. Donkor (2005) argues that this

imbalance of power and wealth influences why individuals choose to relocate and later how they choose to identify. Many of the participants explained that their parents decided to emigrate because they felt the U.S. had more resources and opportunities for success. This could be directly related to the exploitation of African nations in the name of globalization. Participants, however, did not discard their Ghanaian identity or cultural traditions. Some did recognize the impacts of economic exploitation and are working to participate in building the country they call home.

As it relates to globalization and migration, participants, as a whole, shared a sense of transnationalism (Lee, 2008) and Anthias' translocational positionality (2001). Transnationalism is when an individual holds multiple national identities and travel between countries. Financial barriers, along with other personal reasons, have prevented some participants from traveling to Ghana, but they still maintain their Ghanaian identity. Tölölyan's (2010) diasporic transnationalism was not very prominent with participants in this study. There were a few who wanted to live in Ghana or provide resources to the country to assist in its development, but participants with these views were few in number.

The findings of this study emphasize the need for new ways to theorize, not only identity formation and expression in a predominantly Eurocentric society, the U.S., but also globalization and transnationalism in the 21st century with Millennials and the generations to follow. The following chapter concludes the study with implications for practice and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This study highlighted the significance of identity and how identities are constantly being developed and negotiated in various spaces. Cultural identity development, negotiation, and expression was the primary focus of this study. Each participant had a different experience. Some had their Ghanaian identities questioned by other Ghanaians and felt that they needed to prove themselves. Others have never been questioned. Despite not being fully accepted by other Ghanaians or West Africans, the participants in this study show that culture is a way of life and not a set of rules one must follow. There are no degrees of Ghanaian cultural identity. Those who were raised with cultural traditions, even if it was not in every aspect of their life, and had a Ghanaian parent are Ghanaian whether or not they are recognized as such in different spaces. No one can give or take away their cultural identity.

Implications for Practice

Part of the goal of this project is to use the stories of participants to help highlight how individuals who are considered Ghanaian-American have various social experiences that impact identity expression. With this goal in mind, there are a number of suggestions that can be made as a direct result of the findings of this study.

Many participants discussed bullying and teasing, particularly in school, but none discussed how their schools supported them through these difficult times. Trained social workers should be housed in schools with large immigrant and refugee populations, and schools with lower numbers of immigrants and refugees should have access to a trained

social worker even if they are not housed in their particular school. Some of the trauma participants endured could have been addressed and worked through at a younger age. To be an immigrant in a country with drastically different cultural norms is a difficult transition, and encountering isolation and loneliness with peers makes this transition even more frustrating and taxing on the mental and emotional well-being of the immigrant.

Further, faculty and staff at K-12 schools should be required to attend ongoing cultural competency trainings to support a diverse student population better. The experiences of many of the participants were a combination of racism and xenophobia, explicitly targeting the African continent. Teachers should be more aware of different forms of bullying and understand the significance of microaggressions. Their cultural competency trainings should also explore how their curriculum may reinforce such racist and xenophobic ideologies in their classrooms and the local community.

A similar set of cultural competency trainings that reaches beyond race and includes nationality, immigration status, and other identifiers of the like should be required in every public institution of higher education and should be required for faculty, staff, and students. Some participants discussed racial inequality at their institutions, and some explained how they wished there were better understandings of different cultures among ethnically diverse Black populations. If all members of university communities were required to learn more about different cultures and how their actions impact the lives of others, there could be more solidarity and friendships throughout the campus community that transcend race, ethnicity, and immigration status. Beyond education, there are a number of actions that community members can take to ensure immigrants have a better transition.

First, community organizations can do more to support immigrant groups. Many participants discussed being connected to a local church, which helped them feel more comfortable in the U.S. These organizations should have priority when it comes to local grants to better serve the community. Since many of the churches the participants attended were led by immigrants, they had a better understanding of their personal experiences. Therefore, organizations should let these churches and other immigrant-led organizations develop community outreach programs and resources for other immigrants.

Second, individual community members need to take responsibility for their actions and how they affect the lives of others, particularly as it relates to politics. While some would suggest that individuals and groups pressure their legislative leaders to prioritize the welfare of immigrants and refugees, those who do not find the lives of the latter of particular interest should never be voted in to lead in the first place. Therefore, individual community members along with local, state, and national organizations should support political candidates that genuinely care about the experiences and well-being of immigrants and refugees. Additionally, political organizations should better support and fund immigrant and refugees who are running for public office who plan to support the international community. U.S. residents need to be informed and proactive instead of reactive as it relates to politics.

Suggestions for Future Research

The current study reveals the complex dynamics related to identity and immigration. This study also nuances immigration discourse by focusing on age instead of immigration generation. One underlying similarity with all immigration generations was the role of social media. Participants were able to learn more about U.S. culture

through social media and learn about the experiences of people of color. Participants also used social media as a way to stay connected to news, family, and friends in Ghana. Research focusing on the impact social media has on immigrant transitions and identity would help unveil the complexities of immigration and identity in the 21st century.

Another unfortunate theme related to this study was bullying in K-12. While differences between native African Americans and Black immigrant groups have been the center of attention for a number of research projects, the roots of the various stereotypes amongst one another, and others who are considered “different,” should be explored. Research should be done to explore how the K-12 educational system teaches about the African continent and what that means for African immigrant children and their interactions with classmates. A longitudinal study on the identity development of K-12 school children as it relates to how they identify with Africa and Africans could highlight the importance of education and demonstrate a correlation between school curriculum and prejudice or bias to particular parts of the world. Researchers could also explore the impact after school programming has on Black immigrant children and how said programs create welcoming, or discriminatory, environments for immigrant children. Finally, researchers should conduct a longitudinal study on Ghanaian immigrants who experienced bullying in school to explore how they cope and heal from such experiences in their adulthood. Much of the research concerning native African Americans and Black immigrants have been shallow and mostly concerned with disagreements and discrimination between the two. More attention needs to be paid to the lasting effects of continued discrimination and how individuals work through these experiences in their adult life.

Another topic that should be given more attention is the experiences immigrant parents have raising a Millennial. This study revealed how the Millennial generation is different from their parents, and how there have been many disagreements between the parent and child as a result. The Millennials in this study were overall more open-minded, more willing to incorporate different views and customs into their lifestyles, and more willing to speak against rules they believed were unfair. Understanding how the parents react to such situations could aid researchers, educators, and community leaders in better understanding home dynamics based on generation.

Those of the second-generation were more likely to express conflict in their student organizations on their college campuses. They specifically mentioned African student organizations when explaining how they felt they did not belong and were sometimes treated differently or told they were not "Ghanaian" or "African" enough. A study that focused on 1.5-generation and second-generation Africans in the U.S. and their involvement in African student organizations could show how African identities are negotiated in predominately African spaces. This study could also determine who are the gatekeepers of such organizations and how those who share similar cultural identities but do not speak a native African language are isolated.

While this study focused specifically on Ghanaian Millennials, it has set the groundwork for researchers to explore other Millennial groups from the African continent residing in the U.S. West African cultures have been popularized in the last five years with the help of social media and popular artists such as Davido and Wizkid (both are Nigerian). Research examining Sudanese Millennials or Congolese Millennials could yield different results. The final suggestion is that researchers can take this study and add

to the findings through different methodological approaches. Focus groups would have provided a different dynamic to this study. Quantitative research could also provide greater detail to this study.

In closing, Ghanaian-American Millennials have a unique, complex experience in the U.S. that cannot be summed into an "African" category. The participants' cultural identities have gone through different phases, but all were proud of their heritage and excited to highlight their "Ghanaian" culture. This study demonstrates how Ghanaian-American Millennials do not have the same views as the generation before them. This study, through the use of cultural, psychological, and social theories, also showed that the first, 1.5, and second immigrant generations of the 21st century, to varying degrees, have more in common as it relates to race and identity than previous research has suggested. Participants had to undergo a number of experiences and feelings to feel comfortable with their various identities, but they have learned to love themselves without worry of the thoughts or opinions of others. To get to where they are today demonstrates strength and tenacity, and their stories should not be overlooked.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Flyer

SEEKING PARTICIPANTS

FOR A DISSERTATION PROJECT ON GHANAIAN-AMERICANS

The purpose of this study is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role multiple identities and factors (i.e. age, race, gender, ethnicity, nationality) play in formulating and expressing cultural identity and negotiating social and private spaces.

REQUIREMENTS

01

BORN BETWEEN 1982-2002

02

FIRST OR SECOND-GENERATION
GHANAIAN-AMERICAN

All interviews will be in-person or virtually. Interviews are expected to last about 60 minutes, and participants will have the option of a follow-up interview

IF INTERESTED, PLEASE CONTACT

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Appendix B

Interview Questions

Background Questions

I have a series of questions I'll be asking you about your experiences and thoughts about identity. To start, can you tell me about yourself? Just a quick introduction so we can get to know each other a little bit.

Where were you born? (city)

Tell me about your immigration experience here.

- How old were you when you came to the United States?
- What was the transition like?
- Did you want to move?
- Why did your parents relocate?
- What were your expectations?
- Did your experience match your expectations? How?

If participant was born in the U.S.

- Why did your parents relocate?
- Did they relocate specifically because they wanted to raise their children in the U.S. instead of Ghana?

How many siblings do you have? What is your birth order?

Do you think your transition to the U.S. was different from that of your siblings? If so, how?

Where do your parents currently live? Do they plan on retiring where they currently reside? Do they plan on returning to Ghana if they have not already?

Where do you currently live?

Family/ Home Life

Tell me about your family and your experiences growing up.

- Who do you consider "family?"
- How are the family dynamics?
- Did your parents work? If so, where
- Who did you spend most of your time with at home?
- Do you have any childhood memories you would like to share?

How would you describe your upbringing?

- What language was spoken at home?

Do you think your parents tried to maintain Ghanaian cultural traditions in the home? How?

Do you try to maintain Ghanaian cultural traditions in the home? How?

(If born here) Have you learned more about Ghana as a result of your family's home environment?

Do you think your home life was different from an average American home? How? What makes you think this?

Do you currently live with your parents?

- If not, how old were you when you moved? Why did you move? What were the reactions of your family members? Did you agree or disagree with them? How has your relationship with them been since you moved?
- If yes, do you enjoy living there? How have things changed since you've grown into adulthood?

Did your parents have different rules based on gender? If so, what were they and did you agree with them? Would you characterize these rules as Ghanaian or American (U.S)? Why?

Do you maintain those gendered and cultural expectations? Why?

Identity

What identities are important to you? Why?

Do you have a Ghanaian ethnic or U.S. identity? If so, what is it?

- What does your ethnic identity mean to you?

Do you consider yourself American? Ghanaian? Ghanaian-American? Why?

Is it important to maintain a Ghanaian identity? Why?

What makes you Ghanaian?

Is it important to highlight being American? Why?

What makes you American?

If you had to describe yourself in relation to identity, how would you?

Is your "Americanness" or "Ghanaianess" ever questioned? If so, by whom or in what contexts?

Do you ever feel the need to -- or are pressed to -- explain your identities to people? If so, why?

- How did they respond?

Do you identify with a race? If so, what race?

Is a racial identity important to you?

How did you learn about race?

Have you every wished you didn't have certain identities? Why?

Has there ever been a time when you hid your ethnicity/race? Why?

Do you feel that you have a social connection with Ghanaians in the U.S. and Ghana?

- If so, how do you maintain those relationships?

Do you have any business or other connections to Ghana?

- Do you plan to have or maintain an interest in Ghanaian politics and current events?

Identity Expression

- Do you feel it's important to express your various identities? Why?

- How do you express your ethnic identity, and a U.S identity?
- How do you express your gender identity?

Do you code-switch or act a certain way when you are with your Ghanaian friends and family versus others? If so, how?

- Do you speak differently or intentionally act differently?

Do you ever change which identities will be more visible (saliency of identities)? If so, in what situations were they? Why?

When do you think it's important to express your Ghanaian identity?

How do you show people you are Ghanaian?

- Why is it important to you?

Do you see your expression as a form of resistance? How/why?

- Do see your expressions as making a wave in different spaces?
- Do you think you are making a "statement" about who you are?

Do you ever feel you need to express your American identity at home? If so, why?

Do you ever feel you need to express your American identity in different settings? If so, why?

How do you normally act around Ghanaians vs. Americans (of various ethnicities)?

Has your Ghanaian accent, or lack thereof, ever been questioned? If so, where, by whom, and why?

Do you make an effort to distinguish yourself from other Black people? If so, why?

When do you do this most?

Other Questions

Do you participate in Ghanaian events? (Example: Ghana Association, Ghanaian/African Party, church with Ghanaian pastor)

Have you ever been to Ghana?

- If so, what was that experience like? Did you feel out of place? Why/how?

Where do you spend most of your time when in Ghana?

Do you speak the language when in Ghana? (Twi, Fante, Ewe, Gã)

Do you feel more Ghanaian or American when in Ghana?

Do you prefer living in Ghana or in the U.S.? Why?

Do you ever plan to live in Ghana? Why?

Where do you feel like you can completely be yourself? What makes this space so special?

Do you feel you have met your parents' and family's expectations?

Future

How do you envision your future? (Career, education, etc.)

Where do you want to work (location)?

If you plan to have children, where do you want to raise them? Why?

How do you envision yourself raising them? Will you teach them any Ghanaian language?

Will you expect them to develop a Ghanaian or U.S. identity?

Why is raising your children this way important to you?

CURRICULUM VITA

Jakia Marie

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. candidate, Pan-African Studies, University of Louisville, Expected Graduation Date: December 2019

Dissertation Title: Denkyem: Identity development and negotiation among first and second-generation Ghanaian American Millennials

Committee: Dr. Mawuena Kossi Logan, Chair
Dr. Kwame Essien
Dr. Tyler Fleming
Dr. Ricky Jones
Dr. Angela Storey

M.A. candidate, Anthropology, University of Louisville, Expected Graduation Date: December 2019

M.Ed., Higher Education, College Student Affairs Leadership emphasis, Grand Valley State University. April 2016.

Thesis: Racial identity development with African American students in relation to Black studies courses ***Passed with Distinction***

B.A., Liberal Studies, Grand Valley State University. April 2013.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Race and Ethnicity with an emphasis in Cultural Identity, Immigration, and International Education; Identity Development and Experiences of Minoritized Students in Higher Education

RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

Edited Books

- 2019 Mitchell, D., Jr., **Marie, J.**, & Steele, T. (Eds.). *Intersectionality & higher education: Theory, research, and praxis* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Refereed Publications

- Byrd, W. C., Luney, L., **Marie, J.**, Sanders, K.N. (In Press). Demanding attention: An exploration of the institutional characteristics of student demands, 2015-2016. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*.
- 2018 **Marie, J.**, & Sanders, K. N. (2018). Diversity competence within faculty-led study abroad programs. *Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity*, 4(2), 90-111.
- 2017 Mitchell, D., Jr., Gipson, J., **Marie, J.**, & Steele, T. (2017). Intersectional value? A pilot study exploring educational outcomes for African American women in historically Black sororities versus non-historically Black sororities. *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors*, 12(2), 44-58.
- 2017 Mitchell, D., Jr., Steele, T., **Marie, J.**, & Timm, K. (2017). Learning race and racism while learning: Experiences of international students pursuing higher education in the Midwestern United States. *AERA Open*, 3(3), 1-15.
- 2016 **Marie, J.** (2016). Racial identity development with African American students in relation to Black studies courses. *Africology: Journal of Pan-African Studies*, 9(8), 63-83.

Refereed Presentations

- 2019 **Marie, J.** "Black and multicultural fraternities: Experiences of African-born members." Paper presented at the 43rd National Council for Black Studies Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.
- 2018 **Marie, J.** "Kwame Nkrumah and Black popular media." Paper presented at the 61st Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Atlanta, GA.
- 2018 **Marie, J.** "The other Black Greeks: African students in Black and multicultural Greek-lettered organizations." Poster presented at the 2018 Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Conference, Tampa, FL.
- 2018 **Marie, J.** "Diversity competency in study abroad programs." Paper presented at the 21st Annual American Association of Behavioral and Social Sciences Conference, Las Vegas, NV.
- 2017 **Marie, J.** "Intersectional revolutionaries." Paper presented at the African Studies Association annual meeting, Chicago, IL.
- 2017 **Marie, J.** "African American: An ethnic group." Paper presented at the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), Cincinnati, OH.
- 2016 **Marie, J.** "Racial identity development with African American students in relation to Black Studies programs." Paper presented at the 40th National Council for Black Studies Conference, Charlotte, NC.

Also presented at the 19th Annual American Association of Behavioral and Social Sciences Conference, Las Vegas, NV.

- 2016 Mitchell, D., Jr., Gipson, J., **Marie, J.**, & Steele, T. "Intersectional value? Comparing outcomes for African American women in historically Black sororities and non-Black sororities." Poster presented at the 19th Annual American Association of Behavioral and Social Sciences Conference, Las Vegas, NV.
- 2016 Mitchell, D., Jr., Steele, T., **Marie, J.**, & Timm, K. "Learning race and racism while learning: International college students' learned racial awareness and college experiences." Paper presented at the 28th Annual Ethnographic and Qualitative Research Conference, Las Vegas, NV.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2019 **Lecturer**, PAS 200: Introduction to Pan-African Studies, University of Louisville, KY. (Spring 2019).
- 2019 **Lecturer**, PAS 506: Ghanaian Histories and Culture, University of Louisville, KY. (Spring 2019).
- 2017 **Lecturer**, PAS 204: Introduction to African Studies, University of Louisville, KY. (Fall 2017).

Public Lectures and Invited Talks

- 2019 **Marie, J.** Keynote speaker at MLK Day of Service, University of Louisville, KY.
- 2018 **Marie, J.**, Sanders, K. *What can I do with a degree in Black Studies*, University of Louisville, KY
- 2017 **Guest Lecturer**, AAAS 301: Understanding Africa: AAAS 335: Introduction to African American Studies, "Raindrop, drop top, I found my love in the bookshop: How Epistemology and Mentorship led me to Black Studies" Grand Valley State University, MI. (Spring 2017).
- 2016 **Marie, J.** Keynote speaker at UNITE: Uniting Neighbors, Ideas, Thoughts, and Emotions for an Evening of Celebration and Inclusion, Grand Rapids, MI.
- 2016 Steele, T., **Marie, J.**, & Stoetzner, K. *Developing cultural competence*. Presented at the 3rd Annual Teach-In at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI.
- 2016 **Marie, J.** *Critical issues and dope*. Panel discussion hosted by the Partners for a Racism-Free Community, Grand Rapids, MI.
- 2015 **Marie, J.** *Showing love in the workplace: Using the 5-love languages in a professional setting*. Presented at the 19th Annual Leadership Summit at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI.

HONORS & AWARDS

- 2018 Dr. Charles Eberly Oracle Award for outstanding written contribution to *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority*, Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors
- 2016 Graduate Dean's Citation for Outstanding Graduate Publication, The Graduate School, Grand Valley State University

- 2016 Graduate Dean's Citation for Service to Grand Valley State University,
The Graduate School, Grand Valley State University
- 2016 Second Place, Inaugural 3-Minute Thesis Competition, The Graduate
School, Grand Valley State University
- 2014 Second Place, MCPA Graduate Student Case Study Competition

GRADUATE APPOINTMENTS AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2016-Present **Teaching Assistant**, Pan-African Studies, University of Louisville, KY.

Works alongside faculty members in the department of Pan-African Studies to support the program through research and website development. Duties include lecturing and website content development.

2016 **Co-Director**, Honor's College Faculty-Led Study Abroad Program, Grand Valley State University, Winneba, Ghana. June-July

Chaperoned 14 undergraduate students throughout Ghana for 7 weeks; coordinated arrangements with partner institutions; arranged all pre-departure meetings; facilitated service learning meetings at service sites.

2015 **Graduate Assistant**, Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarship, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI.

Assisted the office in recruitment of undergraduate students in research with faculty mentors, targeted specific groups with low representation in programs (i.e. first-generation college students, transfer students, conditional admit students), assisted in planning for our two annual events, gave presentations to various classrooms and groups, and assisted in the implementation of the 5-year self-study.

2015 **Graduate Orientation Leader**, Padnos International Center, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI. August 20th-26th

Served as the primary leader for orientation for graduate international students; lead various sessions that included information on adjusting to the American culture, immigration policy, academic honesty, and student support services at Grand Valley State University.

2015 **Intern, Practicum and Field Experience**, TRiO Student Support Services, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI. June-August

Developed programs, organized graduate school visits, and coordinated new student orientation for program participants.

2015 **Intern, Practicum and Field Experience**, Centre for International Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana. April-June

Assisted the office in implementing new programming for exchange students.

2014 **Graduate Assistant**, Kutsche Office of Local History, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI.

Researched various histories of marginalized groups in West Michigan; taught a weekly leadership class to high school students at community sites; promoted the programs of the Kutsche Office through various social media outlets; developed and maintained Youth Leadership website.

2013 **AmeriCorps*VISTA Member**, Michigan Nonprofit Association – Jackson College, Hillsdale, MI.

Presented to over 200 middle school and high school students about the importance of post-secondary education; created after school programs to improve reading and math for high school students; coordinated and facilitated various events on campus that promoted academic success, student engagement, and volunteering; created, organized, and promoted community service projects for high school and college students during the academic year; created the first service-learning and leadership student organization, LeTarte Center Leaders at Jackson College.

2013 **Advisor (Adjunct)**, Student Academic Success Center, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI. April-August

Provided academic advising for incoming freshmen who were also in the Freshman Academy program.

GRANTS & FUNDING

2018 **Marie. J. College of Arts and Sciences Research and Creative Activities Grant** (competitive), The University of Louisville **\$500 awarded.**

2017 **Marie. J. Diversity Fellowship**, The University of Louisville

2015 Messner, M., **Marie, J.**, & Nadaaf, M. *Grand Valley State University TRIO Student Support Services - STEM/Health Sciences program*. Grant proposal submitted to the U.S. Department of Education Federal TRIO Programs. **\$1.1M awarded.**

2014-2016 **Marie, J. King, Chavez, Parks Future Faculty Fellowship**, Grand Valley State University

UNIVERSITY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

2018-2019 President, Pan-African Studies Graduate Student Association, University of Louisville

2018	Reviewer, 2019 American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting
2017-2018	Director of Communication, Graduate Student Council, University of Louisville
2017-2018	Senator, Student Government Association, University of Louisville
2017-2018	Secretary, Multicultural Graduate Student Association, University of Louisville
2017-2018	Vice-President, Pan-African Studies Graduate Student Association, University of Louisville
2016-2017	Advisory Board, College Student Affairs Leadership Journal, Grand Valley State University
2016-2017	Editorial Board, College Student Affairs Leadership Journal, Grand Valley State University
2016	Committee Member, Black Graduation Planning Committee, Grand Valley State University
2016	Reader, Thomas Jefferson Scholarship Program's Tunisia Undergraduate Scholarship Program
2015-2016	Graduate Faculty Teaching and Learning Center Advisory Committee, Grand Valley State University
2015-2016	Graduate Council Policy Sub-Committee, Grand Valley State University
2015-2016	Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Week Committee, Grand Valley State University
2015	Facilitator, Grand Valley State University Greek Presidents' Leadership Workshop
2014-2016	Mentor, Niara Women of Color Mentoring Program, Grand Valley State University