Sexualized Black Bodies: The Lived Experiences and Perceptions of Diasporic Ghanaian Women within The United States as it Relates to Black Sexuality

Yaa Bempa-Boateng

Nova Southeastern University, yb176@mynsu.nova.edu

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Sexualized Black Bodies: The Lived Experiences and Perceptions of Diasporic Ghanaian Women within The United States as it Relates to Black Sexuality

By

Yaa Bempa-Boateng

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This dissertation was submitted by Yaa Bempa-Boateng under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

February 15th, 2018
Date of Defense

Ismael Muvingi
Ismael Muvingi, Ph.D.
Chair

Elena P. Bastidas, Ph.D.
Elena Bastidas, Ph.D.

Robin Cooper
Robin Cooper, Ph.D.

2/27/2018
Date of Final Approval

Ismael Muvingi
Ismael Muvingi, Ph.D.
Chair
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the two most influential souls in my life that have molded and shaped me into who I am today. I respectfully and with humble gratitude dedicate this dissertation to my Father, Akwasi Bampa-Boateng (R.I.P.) and my mother Harriet Bempo-Boateng. Without their love and support throughout the years I would not be here today. For their faith in our Father’s grace and love that they instilled within me that carried me through this process, I have salvation. For their strength in continually pushing me to strive for better and never making excuses for what can be done, I give thanks. For their sacrifices to make sure my siblings and I always had what was needed, I am awed. For their unselfishness in always helping others, I am inspired. For their insisting that education never be shirked (and the forced in house summer classes, when I would rather be playing), I am forever appreciative, and now understand the love that went into it. I pray to do justice to your dedication to my life and education. I love you, Thank you!
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I first acknowledge my strength throughout this process. My faith in God, our Creator, that saw me through the moments I was burnt out and wanted to give up. Although it is not always popular to admit that we all need guidance at different points in our lives, I freely admit to my struggle and the force that carried and lifted me through.

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Abstract

The central purpose of this study was to explore the conflict within the problematic racialized and gendered construction of black women as primarily sexualized objects. This study examined the impact of media cultural representations of black sexuality on identity formation, migrant integration (ethnic and cultural interactions within and between groups), and perceived social achievements of migrant Ghanaian women in the United States. The goal was to gain in-depth knowledge surrounding how media representations are resisted or internalized among Ghanaian migrant women. This research was designed to discover the conflict resolution process undertaken by Ghanaian migrant women regarding this struggle of resisting or internalizing media representations. This research is a qualitative research operating under the requirements of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and focusing on the population of migrant Ghanaian women. The phenomenon studied was the experience and perceptions of being exposed to media representations of black women. Participants were taken from the DC Metro Area, where a large Ghanaian population exists and is flourishing. Key findings discovered that for the participants studied there exist 3 prominent media representations perceived to directly impact lived experiences: Jezebel, Angry Black Woman, and Poverty/Ignorant representations. It is the researcher’s hope that this research will aid in improving the process of successfully empowering and providing positive integration for future black migrant women.
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Statement of the Problem

The politics of race and sexuality is embedded in the foundation of American society. It is at the core of the structural order that constitutes America’s racial establishment (Blair, 2014). Control over black sexuality greatly contributed to the regulation and propaganda of “black cultural deviance and sexual pathology” (Blair, 2014, p.7) that exists into present times. Particularly, the construction of black women’s sexuality enabled their placement in racial and sexual categories that defined who they must be. As argued by The Combahee River Collective (1978), the combination of black sexual identity and racial identity makes their struggle (political, personal, and collective) unique. More important to this study is the argument that further contends that the personal is political (The Combahee River Collective, 1978). The Combahee River Collective is a black feminist organization founded in the 1970’s to combat oppression based not only on race and gender, but also class and sexual orientation. They are credited with bringing the issue of sexual diversity to the black feminist movement (Burns, 2006). Their fight for black sexuality is still relevant today.

The personal as political, also asserted by Melissa V. Harris-Perry (2011), maintains that the struggle for adequate recognition is central to human and national identity. As correctly argued, it is in this realm that the important work within politics occurs. Supporting the Combahee River Collective perspective, Harris-Perry (2011) states that the struggles of black women embody the essence of the politics of recognition that is at the center of a nation. Studying black women’s lives gains insight into a group
of citizens’ fight for recognition. As maintained, black women’s lives are political due to assumptions about their identity that shape the social world and their placement within. It is a world that must be accommodated or resisted on a daily basis for black women in their fight for acknowledgement as citizens (Harris-Perry, 2011). Utilization of black sexuality maintains marginalized systems of oppression (Blair, 2014). As put forth, being a black woman has consequences that have racist and sexist root origins.

The inherent obstacles of being a black woman are daunting. Yet, there exists a continued struggle to alter this narrow construction of black women’s positions individually and collectively. More powerfully, the Combahee River Collective (1978) argues that black women’s freedom will instigate the destruction of all systems of oppression. The removal of constricts on black women is not a simple endeavor. Although black women have an understanding of the existence of racism and sexism in their lives, overcoming that impact often remains minimal in its effectiveness. The lack of value placed on black women’s lives, coupled with stereotypical attributes, demonstrate the need for a progressive movement that focuses on this specific oppression (The Combahee River Collective, 1978).

One of the major constricts upon black women is that of the sexual self as the defining identity of black women. Black sexuality within American history has arguably been a “historical misrepresentation in white patriarchal culture” (Hardison, 2014, p.89.) Dating back from slavery, sexual stereotypes were assigned and used to justify placement in society and contributed directly to black sexuality as a means for cultural, societal, and political oppression. Thus, it has been repetitively discussed, researched, and
documented, particularly, its impact on the African American population in America. Yet, are these misrepresentations transferred to African migrant women, as they are socialized into societal expectations? Research within this area of study is lacking and leaves questions to be explored. Inspired by Hardison (2014), this research puts forth the question; *Is the hyper sexualization of black bodies adapted for all black bodies, or do these migrant women have resources that negate their exploitation and defining of self as sexualized bodies? As such, are they able to overcome class, race, gender, and sexual boundaries?*

**Background**

It is the understanding of this researcher that migration has greatly impacted collective identity and group dynamics within many nations. African migration in the United States has historical roots in both the involuntary slavery and voluntary international migration. This influx of Africans and their descendants has become embedded in the very fabric of American society and dictates group relational interactions. Despite this, there appears to be a particularly large gap and silence present in the research as it relates to voluntary international migrant integration, black sexuality, and the politics of representations and identity in the United States. Often, discussions on black sexuality are centered on African Americans, and other blacks in America are negated as a default into this group. Therefore, research is needed to fill in the gaps missing from this population, particularly when it pertains to their conflict resolution processes on this issue. The first goal of this study is to examine the lived experiences and perceptions of migrant Ghanaian women within the United States as it relates to
black sexuality. This group was chosen due to their visible presence and being a population of interest for the researcher. This researcher sought to understand how this population was adapting to American culture.

The construction of black sexuality is rooted in narrative framings. This has been, and remains, problematic, since the framing of much of black sexuality has occurred outside the group (Blair, 2014). For autonomy to be established and ownership reclaimed, the framing must be retaken. Focus needs to be re-centered on the politics of representation, as representations are a crucial aspect of narrative framing. Problematic representation occurs when much of this outside framing is used for control, as is evident within representations of African and African descent populations. According to Cerulo (1997), the first goal of this research can be further analyzed using studies of identity, as identity studies often focus discourses on gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity, and class when dealing with group agency. In this manner, how dynamics are created, maintained, and changed are presented (Cerulo, 1997). The second goal of this research is to expose personal narrative framing for this group of migrant women of Ghanaian descent within the African Diaspora as it relates to black sexuality within America.

Collective identity of groups is impacted by representations of the group (external and internal narrative framing). These framings provide direction for inter and intra group relations (Cerulo, 1997). As noted, “sexuality, as well as other social markers, interweaves with one’s self-identity and societal structure…. provides an analytic lens for…highlighting multiple levels of oppression and resistance…” (Asencio & Battle, 2010, n.p.). Therefore, representations of sexuality are important for understanding both
the individual and collective identity. As argued, sexuality is not restricted to that of simply the physical body, but are shaped by and serve larger social and political agendas. (Asencio & Battle, 2010). In this manner, representations of sexuality guide racial interactions and social achievements. The third goal of this study is to understand the influence of representations of black sexuality on identity formation, migrant integration (ethnic and cultural interactions within and between groups), and perceived social achievements. It is the hope of this researcher to fill a gap in the research that unintentionally silences the voices of this group of Ghanaian migrant women within the United States concerning their sexuality and its impact on their placement as citizens. It is hoped that this research will aid in improving the process of successful integration for future Ghanaian women, that opens more avenues for the complete acceptance of their totality (intersectionality).

This study is needed due to the lack of research in this area. As noted by Kimberly Wallace-Sanders (2002), in the past, Women’s studies focused on White women, while Black studies focused on Black men. This trend has not altered much other than adding more research on women of color (Wallace-Sanders, 2002). Yet, focus on migrant populations within this particular area is still lacking. In addition, Wallace-Sanders (2002) found that the few studies of women of color often place black women’s studies as cursory afterthoughts and still centered as extreme sexual objects. As purposed by Wallace-Sanders’ (2002), this type of study is needed to expand the discourse on Black Bodies and their identities within the United States. As noted, when Black Bodies are at the center of their own discourse, research gains a deeper and more complete
understanding of historic and contemporary American culture (as well as politics). The practices, laws and norms within the sexual history of the United States has marginalized the black female body and rendered black sexuality invisible and needs to be dismantled (Wallace-Sanders, 2002). This study seeks to humbly follow the work of Patricia Hill Collins (2004) in Black Sexual Politics in its use of an intersectional paradigm of study. As argued by Hill Collins (2004), “an intersectional analysis of Black sexual politics has tangible political ramifications for antiracist scholarship and activism…Sexuality also can be seen as a site of intersectionality, a specific constellation of social practices that demonstrate how oppressions converge” (p.11.) As well, this study will heavily utilize the concepts of personal as political, as well as shame as a tool and the crooked room, as advocated by Melissa Harris-Perry, in analyzing black women’s (particularly migrant women) placement within the United States. These concepts will be discussed in further detail within the body of this paper.

Central Research Questions

Primary questions

How do second-generation migrant Ghanaian women living in Maryland, United States perceive (think, feel and see) the conflict within representations of black sexuality as they relate to their own sexual identity?

How do second-generation migrant Ghanaian women living in Maryland, United States perceive (think, feel and see) the conflict within representations of black sexuality as they relate to their interactions within and between ethnic groups?
How do second-generation migrant Ghanaian women living in Maryland, United States perceive (think, feel and see) the conflict within representations of black sexuality as they relate to their personal and collective social achievement?

Analytical guiding question

In what ways, if at all do themes that emerge from the lived experiences of Ghanaian women depict a pattern of how they are influenced by the portrayals of black women in America?

Theories

The use of appropriate theories is essential in aiding the purpose of this study. All theories mentioned below will be explored in-depth within the body of this paper. Exploration will describe how these theories relate and increase understanding for this research.

Social identity theory

Social identity theory is a framework that attempts to explain the dynamics of self-concept and the workings of normative behavior. It explores the social aspect of self and examines the multiple identities that incorporate the formation of the concept of self. Social identity theory focuses on group processes and intergroup relations. As described, it illustrates the self within its relationship to social structures and its individual behavior (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995). With roots starting in the 1950’s, social identity theory looks at social factors that influence one’s perceptions. Credited as having begun with H. Tajfel, and fully developed with collaboration with J.C. Turner, it views social actors as having multiple identities that are activated according to the social contexts that demand
it. As such, importance is placed on group memberships (Owens, Robinson, & Smith-Lovin, 2010).

**Theory of belonging**

The theory of belonging explores the connecting of self to society. It takes the process of social identity theory and reaches further in its exploration. The theory of belonging argues that belonging is not simply a social issue, but one of politics too. Belonging is stated to be an aspect that can often be contested socially and politically (May, 2013). Contestation can be both formal and informal (Brubaker, 2010). The focus of this theory is to understand what constitutes “we” and “other”. It is an examination of the relational self. In this manner, interactions and relationships are key features looked at (May, 2013). The politics of belonging is a question of whom belongs and what does that belonging look like. As argued, formal membership does not always correlate to substantive membership. Exploration of formal and informal aspects of belonging is important to this theory. This theory is often used when addressing the complex characteristics of migration.

**Black sexual politics**

As put forth by Hill Collins (2004), Black sexual politics is a collection of discourses that focus on the association of African descent women as being wild, animalistic, and overly sexual individuals. Black sexual politics argues that this association has resulted in perceptions that have shaped the lives and identity of black women. It evolves within an examination of the sexual stereotypes that have aided in the association of sexual immorality that is regarded as characteristic of the racial difference
of women of African ancestry. Discourse on Black sexual politics addresses black sexuality and identity along with its complicated accessibility of agency, self-definition, self-determination, and social practices that govern it. Hill Collins (2004) further asserts that Black Sexual Politics is grounded in critical theory that addresses representation and its historical meanings currently being played out in black women’s lived experiences. Black Sexual Politics is the elevation of race and sexual politics. Black Sexual Politics rests on the assertion that there exists a new racism that has not replaced, but contains elements of, past racial ideologies. This has resulted in the new racism that maintains the same racial hierarchy but in new ways. One key factor of this new racism important to this paper is the assertion of its heavy reliance on mass media to reproduce and disseminate ideologies of justification. As such, the new racism appears and is accepted as the norm (Hill Collins, 2004).

**Intersectionality theory**

Intersectionality Theory is a collection of discourses related to the intersections of oppressions (race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc.) and how they impact people’s lived experiences. A theoretical framework that builds understanding on how these factors shape people’s experiences, it reflects the complexities within human identities and requires the examination of various dimensions/otherness in order to confirm how they become organized. It is used to identify the multiple forms of inequality (Barnum & Zajicek, 2008). A Black feminist creation, intersectionality is perfect to explore what it means to be black, a woman, and an African in America. As a form of analysis, it reveals the silencing of black women in many aspects of society, including academic analysis
and literature. Intersectionality seeks to move away from the tendency to see sex and race as separate, and not entwining, factors that impact lived experiences. To combat this exclusion of black females requires a new approach that places them at the center of analysis and discussions, for “when they enter, we (all) can enter” (Crenshaw, 2011, p. 41).

**Black, A Woman, And A Migrant: Who Are We America?**

“Even if Black women in America are far more attuned to racism than sexism, in reality, of course, they’re constantly fighting against both of these dueling isms” (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003, p. 42).

Patricia Hill Collins (2004) notes that black sexual politics occur at the intersection of gender, race, and sexuality. As defined by Hill Collins, black sexual politics are a set of ideas and social practices that are shaped by gender, race, and sexuality. These factors impact black women’s treatment of each other and how they are perceived and treated by others (Hill Collins, 2004). As contended, intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality impact groups and individuals across various societies. The paradigm of Intersectionality perceives these different identities as mutual constructing systems of power (Hill Collins, 2004).

Hooks (1952) challenges literature on Black sexuality to be careful not to operate under an assumption of a “collective we” (p. 43). This ‘collective we’ can construct what is described as a monolithic paradigm of experiences that does not truly address blackness in its totality. Do black women from different cultures construct diverse black identities? Is our blackness enriched through intersecting aspects of location and cultural
backgrounds? This study attempts to meet this challenge by exploring the experiences of migrant Ghanaian Black women and expanding the literature on black sexuality. In this study, black sexuality is centered within the perspectives of African black women and analyzed by a black woman, one that is both truly African and American. As asserted, the sharing of knowledge by black women with black women develops radical black female subjectivity. In this manner, black self-determination is centered within the culture it primarily impacts. As a feminist consciousness connected to a larger feminist resistance, radical black subjectivity enables learning surrounding the social construction of black identity. Most importantly, agency is established when black females cannot only “interrogate the gaze of the Other”, but name what we see when we look at one another (Hooks, 1952, p. 116).

Another challenge to Black Sexual Politics emerges from a review of literature created under its ideology. As cautioned by Yancy (1994), Black Sexual Politics has the potential to maneuver under a divisive agenda that seeks to counterattack black male nationalist discourse. In reviewing Coffee Will Make You Black, Yancy (1994) points out the layers of black male resentment. He further examines the silencing of black male voices in the attempt to give black females voices. Yancy (1994) asserts that Black Sexual Politics carries the seed to disempower black male voices and create tension between black males and women. This is particularly relevant to this study as the focus is to empower and improve immigrant integration of black women. This study is not intended to bring, nor create, tension between migrant black women and their interactions with others. This argument by Yancy (1994) challenges this study to produce work that
unapologetically brings the voices of its participants to light while not inadvertently silencing or degrading the voices of others.

To name what we see when looking at one another, and also be able to interrogate the gaze of the other, we must understand belonging. Who is the “we” and who is the “other”? As defined by May (2013), belonging is the process of creating a connection to cultures, people, places, and objects. As a process of connection, it is susceptible to social change, and as such, so is one’s identity built on those connections. Belonging denotes one’s feelings of ease within the established connections. It has been argued that this is a basic human need (May, 2013). Citizenship and rights within society impact an individual’s sense of belonging. Interactions, habits, and practices of society create a social order that sets the norm for how things are done and the way of doing things. This relationship of how things are is crucial to our sense of self and how we relate to society in turn. Belonging is stated to have three overlapping important aspects: “relational (between people); culturally (the institutional order); and material (space and objects)” (May, 2013, p. 5). Belonging is important to this study, as international migration disrupts this sense of how things are for many. As such, belonging must be negotiated through in new ways. Finding belonging in an already hostile environment that dictates your identity provides its own challenges to be examined and addressed.

The politics of belonging, when looked at through its attachment to the nation-state, opens up exploration concerning the normative ideals and models of a state’s political, social, and cultural organizations. Through this lens, membership (citizenship) within the nation-state can be understood for its implication on migrants as they are
integrated into society. The nation-state is an internally fluid concept that provides a space for social mobility, yet access to that mobility can be determined by who is viewed as belonging (Brubaker, 2010). What the space for mobility is for migrant Ghanaian women as understood within their sense of belonging will be explored within this study.

Intersectionality, as put forth by Kimberle Crenshaw (2011), could be stated as further understanding the gaze on black women as operating under the same normalized implications that center on white women’s and black men’s experiences. As noted, black women’s protection and value (particularly academic and legally) lies only in the ability of their experiences to be categorized within these analyses. When their experiences branch off, this protection is limited without the purposeful interjection of intersectionality. Neither race nor gender alone can comprehend the lived experiences of black women (Crenshaw, 2011). All individuals have multiple identities that intersect and form the types of discrimination we encounter. As such, black women can be seen only as a whole and not through parts of their identity (Carbado & Gulati, 2013). This silencing of black women and the gaze placed on them do not simply come from those operating against them, but many times from those that seek to assist. As argued by Crenshaw (2011), both feminist and civil rights movements and critical analysis have done injustice to black women by placing their complexities into collective experiences of either blackness or womanhood. In other cases, their differences are so sharp they have been left on the margins as being too difficult for proper addressing or for later research (Crenshaw, 2011).
Intersectionality directly confronts the combined forces of social expectations of chastity and racist presumptions of promiscuity that are unique to the experience of black women. In addition, the intersection of gender with race challenges the notion of race as the primary oppression in black lives. This prominent belief places black women’s political consciousness to address their unique oppression separate from black men as oppositional to the racial movement. This in turn works to further marginalized black women. Their needs within the black community are therefore silenced when they should be centered. As argued by Crenshaw (2011), for black people to be free, theories and strategies engaged in must reflect analysis of both sexism and patriarchy.

Carbado and Gulati (2013) further our current understanding of intersectionality by placing identity performance theory within the crosshairs of intersectional analysis. While intersectionality operates under discrimination based on real and perceived inter and intra group differences, this theory ideologically states that a person’s placement within intra-group distinction must also consider awareness on how that person “works or is perceived to work their identity” (Carbado & Gulati, 2013, p. 529). Therefore, it is more than simply looking the part, it is how one is perceived to act the racial part. In application, it motivates one to work their perceived identities to their favor or resist stigmatized social categories. Carbado and Gulati (2013) note that all persons have intersectionality, even heterosexual men. As such, they call for a differentiation between intersectionally marginalized groups and intersectionally privileged groups (Carbado & Gulati, 2013).
Ferber (1999) backs up the argument that intersectionality should be applied to even heterosexual men in his use of this theory to examine white supremacist discourse. Through intersectionality, he argues the central position of gender and class along with race within the movement. He asserts that an exploration of these constructions explains the ideological argument for maintaining white male privilege. He contends that contrary to accepted opinions, the experiences of white males are not simply raceless. Looking through the lens of intersectionality, as argued, would shine light on why white supremacists are average Americans and increasingly being made up of women (Ferber, 1999).

Although intersectionality can be used in a universal manner, this researcher argues that this would in fact take the center focus of analysis (black women) off this theory and once again place its understanding within the framework of privileged groups (white men). As such, this researcher will not differentiate within this study between intersectionally marginalized groups and intersectionally privileged groups, as suggested by Carbado and Gulati (2013). Yet, the argument for identity performance within the understanding of intersectionality holds merit for its use. This concept of identity performance may explain the new African American female. Second generation African female’s adaption within the United States may incorporate their assumptions of identity performance of both black American identity and African identity as they form their own unique identity (citizenship). As noted by Halter and Johnson (2014), West Africans assimilate into three domains: the African ethnicity, within the environment of African Americans, and within the dominant American culture. Halter and Johnson (2014) go
further to say that as Africans fully integrate into the larger black community, they too begin to see themselves as African Americans. A study of their lived experiences can expand the needed understanding of black identity and citizenship within the United States.

Understanding identity is important when discussing the integration of migrant Ghanaian women into American society. As argued, identities guide social action. These identities come from role relationships, affiliation with social groups, identification with social categories, and/or personal narratives. As such, social identity theory, with its workings on categories of in-groups and out-groups, is needed to explore how migrant populations affect social action. In addition, this theory allows focus on the effects of society environments on cognition, thereby understanding identity formation processes in a social world (Owens et al., 2010). This can be particularly important when that environment is complex, as it is in many multicultural nations.

Memberships in groups that are deemed salient by the individual often means the individual adheres to perceptions and behaviors that are in-line with the in-group normative expectations. In addition, the perceptions of other groups are deemed out-group stereotypes (Owens et al., 2010). Yet, what happens when there are more than one salient group memberships? Furthermore, what happens when two group memberships are at odds with each other? How does that impact identity formation and integration? Social identity theory places emphasis on social contexts and the meanings attached to different identities. As noted, in-group and out-group perceptions frequently build different types of discrimination towards the other. As claimed, in-groups are motivated
by self-enhancement and will make comparisons that favor their in-group. As such, competition and discrimination arises. Within this environment, the question that then develops is that of its impact on mobility and social change (Owens et al., 2010).

**Chapter Summaries**

As discussed in this chapter, the population of Blacks in America has seen an influx of migrant Africans. This is reshaping what it means to be black in America or even African American. Yet, there still remains a gap in literature where the voices of this population are not heard. Particularly, this silence of black voices is that which is gendered and sexualized. This research hopes to provide a space that gives voice for the uncovering of the conflict resolution process for this population as they expand the discussion of what it means to be Black in America. The Black woman’s identity and citizenship within America is one that has been shaped for her. Chapter two will discuss how this identity has been historical shaped and how it is currently being represented. In addition, chapter two explores the presence of Africans within America and what it means for the possible redefining of the term African American. Chapter three details the study to be conducted. In this chapter, the methodology will be discussed as well as the steps that the research will follow. Chapter four will discuss the findings of the research, and chapter five will close with the interpretations of the findings, study limitations and implications.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The New African American?

“The phenomenon of African immigration to the U.S. is conceptualized as being composed of near-equal amounts of action and reaction from Africa and the Africans and the U.S. and its people” (Okome, 2006, p. 31).

Experiences of Africans in America vary in many ways, but the major difference lies in their entrance into the states. Involuntary and voluntary migration has impacted Africans and their descendants in ways that are significantly different. Those currently termed “African American” were forced through involuntary migration to be subjected to slavery and its oppressive and exploitative regime. The current Africans in America, although migrating voluntarily, did so as a means to escape the effects of a colonialized history of oppression, exploitation, and pursuit of an alternative life (Donkor, 2005). The reduction of restrictive laws against immigration in 1965 saw the arrival of increased numbers of Africans. The most significant arrival of Africans came between the 1980s-1990s. The African population represented mainly stem from The Republic of South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda (Konadu-Agyemang & Takyi, 2006). The most favorable law that assisted in this increase was the creation in 1990 of the State’s Diversity Program, better known as the Visa Lottery. This provided large amounts of Africans entrance into America, as Africa’s green card allowance was 42 percent (Konadu-Agyemang & Takyi, 2006).

To understand the increase of African immigration to the states, it is imperative for one to acknowledge the reasons an individual would consider leaving their family,
culture, and identity to migrate to another nation. Many scholars have simplified migration to being caused by push and pull factors. The paradigm theorizes that negative forces within the home country push natives to leave and seek improved conditions in other nations, which pull them in through their attractive opportunities. Conditions that push people out include: lack of sufficient employment, poverty, ethnic conflicts, political instability, and socio-economic factors. Pull forces include: job opportunities, education, and socio-economic gains (Konadu-Agyeman & Takyi, 2006). Yet, Konadu-Agyeman and Takyi (2006) maintain this theory is understated and often marginalizes the true oppressive forces that instigate migration. They argue that often, push factors alone do not create migration. In fact, they state that many of the push factors existed in Africa and did not lead to increased immigration until 1970, when these push factors, backed by oppressive interference from the world trading system and particularly the World Bank and IMF, forced the issue.

The Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) hurt Africa’s economy and worsened already dire situations. Coupled with increased socio-political problems such as military coups, and external political forces, such as the fall of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, this created conditions that fueled African international migration. This was crucial, as the super powers at that time supported governments within Africa that each nation benefited from militarily and financially. With the fall of the USSR, problems that were created during colonization and had been developing exploded. As such, the pull factors described by many scholars, while not as attractive before, became more so (Konadu-Agyeman & Takyi, 2006).
The next argumentative opinion against the simplified push pull forces theory is one that points out the exploitative nature of the migration. The flow of migration represents that need for developed nations to acquire cheap labor from less developed nations. Cheap labor is often needed to fill the gaps, which the local populations leave in unwanted jobs (Konadu-Agyeman & Takyi, 2006). Added to these less-discussed issues are those of the power and force of globalization. Globalization, as argued by Mojubaolu Olufunke Okome, (2006) helps explains the changes in African immigration. He states the increase in the United States is tied directly to globalization, in the intentional deployment by the government to reach the African continent mainly with technology. As such, Africans responded to this push and pull of globalization. In this manner, America was able to determine the destination of immigrations from any one nation. As such, globalization turns immigration into a tool for richer countries to meet their need for cheap labor through poorer nations (Okome, 2006). These arguments surrounding African migration to the United States show a continued history of exploitation of African descendants, which at first glance appears benign, but through further analysis shows more complexities.

The current African diaspora has been facilitated by the use of technology within migration. Technology creates and develops formal and informal migrant networks that lead to increased information concerning the process of migration and destination spots. Thus, migration flow to specific locations are increased as well (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010). Alonso and Oiarzabal (2010) put forth that historically, there has been a close correlation between technology and migration. They argue that advances in technology
accelerate population movements and the forming of Diasporas. People migrate from areas of low technology to more advanced nations. In addition, the increased visibility of a better life presented through media and the Internet became motivating factors (Alonso and Oiarzabal, 2010).

With the arrival of Africans, the diversity of the black population in America has expanded and developed in new ways as cultures have intermingled. This has created a space for research to expand in capturing this new phenomenon in learning about these new citizens and their impact on American society. Consequently, as the 1.5 and 2nd generations of these recent immigrants become even more embedded within American society, what are the inter-and intra-group relations that are occurring among these different groups of African descents? The need for more research on the totality of the African Diaspora cannot be ignored (Konadu-Agyeman & Takyi, 2006). While things have changed, certain aspects of society’s identification of blacks have not. There has been a trend to simply encompass black Africans into the racialized category of a collective blackness within the Diaspora. As such, research into how these Africans adjust is limited in numbers and scope. Further knowledge is critical to widen policies and social interventions to assist with more successful integration (Okome, 2006).

Data reveals that 58 percent of African immigrants in the United States came during the 1990s, with 55 percent coming from West and North Africa. Of this percent, 30.2 percentage came from West Africa. Prominent in West African migration to the United States is Nigeria and Ghana. African immigrants are stated to be concentrated in a few states: New York, California, Texas, Maryland, New Jersey, Massachusetts,
Virginia, and Georgia. It is believed this is due to Africans being drawn to states with already large populations of other black residents (Boate & Takyi, 2006). Often, there can be found a clash of cultures. Clashes also exist within ethnic groups that maintain their tight connection with their homeland. As those in the new world adapt their traditions to their new reality, those within the homeland fear the loss of authentic traditional cultural ways (Amoako, 2006).

Within the United States, it has been asserted by Dodoo and Takyi (2006) that Africans are often at a greater disadvantage than other black immigrants. It is suggested this is due to negative views of Africa, despite research showing that Africans are one of the highest educated groups of immigrants within the states (Dodoo & Takyi, 2006). Ndubuike (2002) furthers this statement by emphasizing that migration to America has been difficult for many Africans. While being highly skilled and educated, their experiences and degrees from home often are not accepted. As such, they are forced to remain within menial jobs. They face racism/discrimination from both the dominant group and African Americans who see them as different. In addition, they are faced with stereotyping of who they are. Thus, the influence of American culture has seen many conforming to new cultural patterns. They adopt and maintain Western values and modes of behavior (Ndubuike, 2002). While, Ndubuike (2002) argues this “Americanization” (p.50) is minimal, this researcher disagrees. While recent migrants’ assimilation may be minimal due to cultural barriers, these barriers often loosen for proceeding generations. In addition, assimilation for African migrants may have a gendered component. Female migrants may have a more compelling interest for Americanization.
On a deeper level, African immigration has had a negative gendered experience. The voices of women as active members within these processes have often been ignored. The circumstances that lead African women to migrate, as well as the factors that control their experiences, are rarely studied. Yet, there are some speculations. Due to this study’s focus on West African women (specifically Ghanaian migrant women), assumptions explored focus on this population. One explanation put forth by Donkor (2005) asserts that the 1980s was a bad time for Ghanaians in their homeland, particularly for women. During this period, women dominated the retail trade. The establishment of a military government, which then declared war against corruption, changed the productive environment. This political war was used to try, imprison, and execute many accused of illegal economic activities. The political climate, combined with the new regulations from the IMF and World Bank, meant that Ghanaian women lost their means of self-support, making migration the best alternative (Donkor, 2009).

Another factor proposed is the desire to escape traditional expectations in the homeland that control and influence female experiences. One particular question put forth by Agbajoh-Laoye (2006) catches the interest of this researcher and may form a basis for parts of analysis: “Does immigration relieve African women of the yoke/burden of tradition or present a solution for the socio-economic problems that besiege them in their home countries?” (p.236).

This question was explored by Agbajoh-Laoye (2006). To answer the question of whether migration to the United States offered female empowerment and independence for women, Agbajoh-Laoye (2006) drew from oral narratives, both written (fictional and
non-fictional) and real-life interviews of recent market women migrants. Her study participants were Ghanaian women. Those interviewed had advanced qualifications, yet upon entrance into the States, were unable to find employment outside of menial or minimum wage (a common occurrence for many African migrants). Unfortunately, Abajoh-Laoye found that recent female Ghanaian migrants still experienced oppressive and exploitative treatment, yet were reluctant to take actions against it, even within their new circumstances. Cultural practices and long-standing traditions and expectations remained strong influences in the Ghanaian female migrants’ lived experiences. In addition, they remained in the same gendered socio-economic patterns that they sought to escape. While they may be more present within public spaces of employment, this did not reduce their domestic employment (cooking, cleaning, sole care of children, etc.) (Agbajoh-Laoye, 2006). This study raises the question of whether the 1.5 and second-generation female Ghanaian migrants experience this same outcome of their mothers, or if they are more able to gain the empowerment sought by their mothers.

A study by Vivian Yenika-Agbaw (2009) examined the perspectives of mothers within the African Diaspora in the United States as it relates to child rearing. In this study, she attempted to answer the question “can African immigrants raise their ‘American’ children to adjust properly and succeed in their new home without necessarily sacrificing their African cultural heritage?” (Yenika-Agbaw, 2009, p. 4). Within this study, she utilized focus groups of African mothers within the states of Maryland, Ohio, Virginia and Washington, D.C. As reported within the study’s literature discussion, there are three sites of construction for shaping childhood, that of the home,
the school, and the media. What children experience and perceive in these domains impact their identity. It is noted that for African immigrants, tension can often be found within these sites. Tension arises from values that exist within these sites that undermine and demean African culture. It is asserted that if African parents are unable to assist their children in transitioning between the worlds they operate in (white mainstream, Black American minority, competing African cultures and competing minority cultures), these children are raised experiencing confusion, shame, and frustration (Yenika-Agbaw, 2009).

This study examined food as a cultural barrier and the concept of childified. Food is stated to be an important communication of cultural heritage. As such, it can be a symbol of cultural assimilation, resistance, or liberation (Yenika-Agbaw, 2009). It was noted that food can be used by African children as a means to assert or reject their African background and can be a place of discontent within the household. Food, as asserted, impacts the identity of African children within the United States as they negotiate who they are both within the home and in public. This study discovered that regardless of how African children within the states declined their African cuisine, participants often experienced this gesture to be insulting. The mothers reported taking pride in preparing meals and being able to feed their families. Refusal of meals as such was seen as inadequacy on the mother’s part, as well as a rejection of their culture (Yenika-Agbaw, 2009). Mothers who attempted to adapt to their children’s food choices or adapt African meals with new ingredients from the host country undergo what is termed “childified” (Yenika-Agbaw, 2009, p.10). This term is credited to Joe Kincheloe and explained by
Yenika-Agbaw (2009) as when the children known more than the parents and are tasked with teaching the parents the necessary knowledge. Yet, it is acknowledged this process of adaption can, from another perspective, play the role of bonding. It brings the child and mother together to learn each other’s experiences as they reflect and acclimate together (Yenika-Agbaw, 2009).

According to Ndubuike (2002), second generation African migrants are more tied to the American way of life than their mothers. Due to their parent’s voluntary entrance and ability to remain with family and maintain their language, cultural heritage and identity, and lived experiences have differed from those of their black counterparts in America (Ndubuike, 2002). Yet, their presence as African native-borns growing up alongside African Americans, Caribbean Americans, Latin American, etc. of the African Diaspora gives them a unique and challenging position as citizens; their identities are a mixture of the old and new. This unique group has the potential to be the bridge needed in the creation of policies and social interventions that benefit their group on the whole, as they are more likely to participate politically in the country they grew up within. Yet at the same time, they are also more susceptible to the very culture, ideologies, and oppression that marginalized their black counterparts. Africans, as argued by Ndubuike (2002), live in two worlds, switching between mainstream culture and African culture.

Second-generation African migrants operate more in the world of biculturalism than do their parents. Therefore, they are more impacted by the pendulum effect described: not being completely accepted by their new culture, yet not having been completely removed from their parents’ culture and still not being fully accepted within
their ethnicity (Ndubuike, 2002). A study of the second-generation African migrant population can answer parts of the question posed by Halter and Johnson (2014) concerning Africans in America being the “newest African Americans” (p.2): “What is the meaning of West African identity, and what are the claims of West African newcomers to the United States?... In short will they become the newest African Americans?” (Halter & Johnson, 2014, p.1-2). A study of this group can deepen the understanding of cultural identity formation (Halter & Johnson, 2014).

The increase in the influence of social media to connect various nations has been described as a political tool for the youth. As I engage in the use of social media, a change in black imagery can be seen. Particularly, the image of the young urban modern African woman appears at first glance to be transformed. The beauty of the African woman appears to have been awakened. Yet this newfound enjoyment of African beauty must be examined from a critical eye. While I embrace this recognition of our beauty, I find myself cringing at many of the images that have surfaced that appear to re-enforce the center focus on protruding African buttocks. The overwhelming message of lack of value creates avenues of escape that are destructive and re-enforces already negative impressions. A breakthrough requires full awareness of reality and denial. Self-value must be grounded in correct understanding of awareness. Hooks (1952) proclaims true love of blackness as a whole is a political tool of resistance that can overcome oppression. As argued, mass culture is one contemporary avenue that acknowledges the pleasure found in racial differences or the “commodification of Otherness” (Hooks, 1952, p.21). Within this avenue, ethnicity is the exoticism against mainstream white culture. As
argued by Hooks (1952), in this manner, what appears as an awakening to the true beauty with blackness is simply updated exploitation. Its popularity (a manipulation within the established patriarchal) is the commodification of Otherness (Hooks, 1952).

Bell Hooks (1952) argues this commodification of Otherness offers false assumptions of progress while maintaining the established placement of its citizens. Commodification of Otherness, as put forth, is done by the dominant culture in its consumption of mass media that idolizes racial differences (features, objects, celebrations, etc.) of out-groups without actual acceptance of the racial group (Hooks, 1952). In other words, this commodification might look like the wearing of cultural pieces (dashikis, waist beads, hairstyles, etc.) but is the rejection of the people that make up the culture. A critical exploration of this commodification of desire exposes the United States’ crooked room of sexuality. As put forth by Hooks (1952), often, despite visuals of beauty, exploration of black sexuality does not force the mainstream to relinquish their position. Instead, what is opened is a new playground for superficial adoration of black bodies that remains sexualized in its exoticness (Hooks, 1952).

Current representations of black female bodies continue to enforce past representations of sexualization where it is the icon for black sexuality as a whole. Images still exist where the black woman is not represented as a human being with complexities but as her body parts. Her beauty centered on the circumference of her protruding parts or the abundance of her parts is on visual display. An example of the current emergence of the world’s fascination of black buttocks is reminiscent of Sara Baartman’s circus display, even when the background is that of upscale social functions
(Hooks, 1952). While the argument does not assert all representations manifest this, enough do so that it sadly remains the accepted and rejoiced majority. This argument, when used to examine the positive life affirming natural hair movement currently making huge waves around the world, leads one to critically ask if it is the acceptance of self-identity or its exotic appeal to the mainstream that gives it its growing steam. Is the African texture mane a wild protruding physical display of blackness?

Halter and Johnson (2014) states black America is undergoing new meanings and interpretative frameworks for understanding the African Diaspora world we live in. The meaning of “African Americanness” (Halter & Johnson, 2014, p. 6) is changing as immigrants, particularly from West Africa, adapt and are incorporated into the United States (Halter & Johnson, 2014). Further knowledge of the African-born population unsettles accepted narratives of black identity and the meaning of race in America (Halter & Johnson, 2014). A quote found in a novel by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reflects the struggle:

Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing Stop saying I’m Jamaican or I’m Ghanaian. America doesn’t care. So what if you weren’t ‘black’ in your country. You’re in America now. We all have our moments of initiation into the Society of Former Negroes (Halter and Johnson, 2014, p.10).

The new African Americans, or Africans in America, must operate in an already established ideology of who they are. As mentioned previously, this is frequently tied to that of the old African American. It is the second generation that often must negotiate
through both worlds and determine who they will be (what citizen they will be).

Ndubuike (2002) states that Africans continue to struggle with the process of effective integration in American society. One major fear held is that of the acculturation of their children, the second generation. They worry that this population will lose their heritage and African values and insert American ideologies. Particularly, the fear is noted to center on the daughters (Ndubuike, 2002).

The next few sections in this discussion will focus on the history and culture the second-generation daughters must navigate to truly become the new African American. This is important, as Halter and Johnson (2014) note that 83% of West Africans self-identify as black Africans. Although they argue this does not translate to identifying as African American, to this researcher, it does mark a strong awareness of kinship and similar struggles within blackness, a factor acknowledged by Halter and Johnson (2014).

**An Issue of Identity: The African Diaspora**

“The basic idea is that a social category (e.g., nationality, political affiliation, sports team) into which one falls, and to which one feels one belongs, provides a definition of who one is in terms of the defining characteristics of the category—a self-definition that is a part of the self-concept” (Hogg, et al., 1995, p. 259).

As stated previously, black America is transforming into a new awareness of what it means to be African American. The influx of this new African migration is changing meanings and interpretative frameworks for the African Diaspora. Understanding the African Diaspora within the United States requires an awareness of identity and how the social world impacts identity formation. Social identity theory contributes to the
understanding of identity particularly in relation to the social order by articulating individual inner processes and larger social forces (Hogg et al., 1995). It addresses intergroup relations, group processes, and the social self. Identity is seen not simply as an aspect of the individual, but a relational development to one’s social environment (Hogg et al., 1995).

Social identity theory argues people’s membership in various groups is represented as a social identity within the mind of the individual, with already established attributes for being a group member. It ascribes to the individual accepted thinking and behavior guidelines. The salience of the group to the individual determines the degree of adherence to the group expectations. It guides the regulation of behavior to correlate to group norms within different contexts. It also determines the perceptions related to out-group acceptance (Hogg et al, 1995). Social identity not only prescribes accepted norms but also evaluates differences. Value is placed on diverse social categories. In-group members are motivated to favor self-evaluation that places the in-group higher than out-group members. Due to this, the space for discrimination and prejudice is created. The in-group’s belief structures influence behaviors and are the basis for self-enhancement, social mobility, and motivation for social change. In regard to out-groups, competition and perceptions based in stereotypes are normalized and occur in varying degrees dependent on the relationship between the two groups (Hogg et al., 1995).

Behavior within this framework is seen as being organized within the individual under meaningful units that have specific self-definitions. Behavior is seen in terms of norms, stereotypes, and prototypes. Large category memberships, such as ethnicity, sex,
etc., are seen as important basis for social identity. As such, intergroup relations are important to understand one’s identity, as out-group interactions play a role in identity. Society is seen as being structured hierarchal, and one’s placement within the structure affects social behavior. Due to the ability of one’s placement to change, identity within this framework changes, dependent upon intergroup relations and impacted by different contexts (Hogg et al., 1995).

According to Burke, Owens, Serpe and Thoits (2003), Stryker’s definition of self, although part of Identity Theory and not Social Identity Theory, is appropriate to review due to its awareness of multiple identities. As explained by Burke, Owens, Serpe, and Thoits (2003), this definition recognizes the multiple and diverse composition of self, reflecting the complex society an individual operates within. The multiple positions held within society correlates with the multiple identities possible for the self (Burke et al., 2003). Commitment impacts an individual’s degree of attachment to the social structure that any particular identity functions within. The salience of that identity becomes more attached as an individual becomes more tied to people due to that identity. This increases the likelihood of that identity being the operating identity used within different contexts. The meaning and expectations of that identity leads to the behavior that will be exhibited tied to that identity (Burke et al., 2003).

Self-identity, as put forth by McCall (2003), is the attempts of individuals to answer the question “Who Am I” (p.11). Essentially, one is figuring out who is “the Me and the Not-Me” (p.12) (as cited in Burke et al., 2003). Self-identity, according to Sparks (2000), influences one’s experiences, perceptions and behaviors. The self is realized
within society and society’s defined terms. These definitions than become reality. Self-identity, then, is important to attitude-behavior relations. It contributes to how behaviors are carried out independent to attitude. As argued, repeated behaviors influence one’s self-concept. The carrying out of any one particular behavior conveys meaning regardless of one’s attitude toward the behavior itself. If self-identity is important to the individual, then the performance of behavior validates that identity for the individual (Sparks, 2000). In this regard, social identity for the individual functions best if it is one that is positive. When that identity is not positive, the individual will seek alternative identities (Harwood, Giles, & Palomares, 2005).

Elizabeth Chacko (2003), in her study of young Ethiopian immigrants in Washington D.C., examined this 1.5 and 2nd generation’s ethnic and racial identity as they grew. For the purpose of this study, 1.5 generation was defined as “persons who immigrated with their parents to the United States when they were less than twelve years of age”, and 2nd generation was defined as “those who were born in the United States and have at least one parent who relocated to the United States” (Chacko, 2003, p. 491). Utilizing twenty in-depth interviews, it was discovered that race was more fluid and contested as an identity than their ethnicity (Chacko, 2003). In this study, twelve women and eight men were interviewed. Chacko (2003) reports that for this group of participants, race was not of concern until faced with experiences of racial classification and hierarchy within the host country. Participants conveyed that ‘African American’ was not a preferred label for them despite their African background and American citizenship.
African Americans were viewed as native Blacks and different from them (Chacko, 2003).

Chacko (2003) reports this desire to be identified separate from Black natives was often intensified by negative interactions with the group during middle and high school years. However, increased length of time within the United States also increased understanding of race and racial dynamics and how it impacts them. One participant within this study reported that as time passed, he became ‘Blacker’ than he thought (Chacko, 2003, p. 498). It was uncovered that in addition, Black music and African influences within became a center for the intertwining of race and ethnicity for participants (Chacko, 2003). In regard to ethnicity, participants held strong pride, attributed to their parents’ influences. It was reported that their parents were active agents reinforcing traditional culture of the homeland and maintaining connections to ethnic institutions such as church. When questioned about ethnic identity, 80% of the 1.5-generation participants preferred the label of Ethiopian, while all the 2nd generation preferred Ethiopian American (Chacko, 2003). This also endorses Ndubuike’s (2002) assertion that the 2nd generation is more tied to the American way of life.

Self-identity can contradict an individual’s interests or goals that are not in line with what is expressed by their attitude. Because of this, one’s attitude alone does not predict one’s identification and cannot be used to predict one’s possible behavior in any given context (Terry & Hogg, 2000). Sequentially, behavior is stated to be dependent on the salience of the social identity relevant to the environmental context. Therefore, an individual will act in the manner that fits the belief system of their larger identity group
As it relates to cultural identity, social identity entails the adaption of group based stereotypes and norms. This becomes the basis in which one interacts with others both within and without the cultural group (Harwood et al., 2005). As noted, “the role of identity and identity salience in the process of cross-cultural adjustments from an intergroup perspective is important” (Harwood et al., 2005, p. 24). Within a multicultural society, the level of salience of one’s in-group identity is stated to affect the acculturation process. Strong national identity can produce positive adaption when assimilation to the dominant group is highly possible or desirable. When this is not possible, nor desirable, the outcome of acculturation varies (Harwood et al., 2005).

**Can We Stay? We are staying!**

“The question “who belongs” can be contested-- and hence, in the broadest sense, politicized—at sites as diverse as cities, neighborhood, workplaces, clubs, associations, churches, unions, parties, tribes, and even families” (Brubaker, 2010, p. 64).

The politics of citizenship is one of belonging. It is a question of belonging that crosses from formal legal status to informal acceptance by the already established citizens within a nation, a belonging that determines access to rights and privileges (Brubaker, 2010). Brubaker (2010) makes a case that migration facilitates discourses surrounding politics of membership and belonging. New populations bring disturbance to established norms and systems. The resulting conflict between long-term residences and new admittances demands restructuring over terms of citizenship and access. Struggles over belonging in, and to, can be found on all sides of citizen membership (Brubaker, 2010).
Understanding the many aspects of belonging is crucial to this study, as it gives insight into who people are and their relationship to others (May, 2013). As explained by May (2013), belonging is a process of identification that works in a reciprocal manner. People identify with (the self), while they are identified as (categorized) by others.

Belonging does not operate outside of its relation to others. Society is seen as a product of interactions and relations between individuals creating spaces for various forms of belonging (May, 2013). The Theory of Belonging takes Identity Theory and goes further in its attempts to understand individuals. Belonging involves looking at individuals through “multiple solidarities and hybrid identities” (May, 2013, p. 8). The focus is moved away from Identity Theory’s singular outlook. Belonging acknowledges that most people experience connection through several groups, places and cultures. Connection, and therefore identity and belonging, is plural and overlapping and this is the norm for many (May, 2013).

The self, as reasoned by other identity theorists, is a phenomenon of the human mind. It is created through interactions with others. It exists within two concepts: “I” and “me” (Owens et al., 2010). “I” is dynamic and places the individual as the knower and the actor (the subject). “Me” (the object) is the learned perspectives and attitudes that the “I” assumes. The “me” is where the self-concept and identities is stated to reside (Owens et al., 2010). The self involves the thoughts and feelings individuals reflect about themselves. It is argued that people internalize how others see them. Therefore, social positions become internalized aspects of self-concept (Owens et al., 2010). This is why understanding one’s sense of belonging is important to this research in exploring their
integration into American society. Belonging, or lack of such, reflects people’s true
thoughts and feelings of who they are and who they are not.

Society is an important aspect of belonging. The Theory of Belonging centers
society outside of the traditional fixed social structures and within a framework of events.
Simply put, it is described as a series of actions that people engage in. The main focus is
the interactions between people that make society exist. In this manner, large social
formations, as well as small forms of relationships and interactions, are important.
Society is therefore resulted from the particular ways people interact with each other
(May, 2013). Furthermore, it is argued individual’s view of self is dependent on how one
believes they are perceived. This component, described as the “looking-glass self” (May,
2013, p. 44), has three elements. The first element is how we think others perceive us, the
second element is how we imagine they judge us, and the last element is the self-feelings
resulting from these thoughts (May, 2013).

May (2013) argues that we must consider how technological changes (such as
social media) can affect the ‘looking-glass self’ as it impacts our sense of who we are and
who we ought to be. Our sense of self is tied to collective understanding and meanings,
and thus reflects the groups we belong to (May, 2013). According to research, advances
in technology have played an important role in the social identity and belonging of
migrants within many Diasporas. Modern Diasporas are specified to be migrant ethnic
minority groups residing in various host countries that maintain strong sentimental and
material links to their home countries (Brinkerhoff, 2009). It is stated that identity is at
the core of Diasporas. It transforms “the physical reality of dispersal into the
psychosocial reality of diaspora” (Brinkerhoff, 2009, pp. 31-32). As noted by Alonso and Oiarzabal (2010), Diasporas “carries a sense of displacement” and is “about not being there” in relational to their origins (p. 4). It is within this space that their new identities must be formed.

A study by Jenna Burrell and Ken Anderson (2008) attempts to look further into the impact of technology and migration processes. Using an ethnographic approach, it examined the use of technology by Ghanaians living within London (Burrell & Anderson, 2008). This study involved informal in-home interviews of 17 Ghanaians along with participant observation at social events. According to this research, technology is used to expand opportunities provided by migration. While reasons for migrating differed among participants, technology offered visions of what was available elsewhere as well as provided connections towards goals. The Ghanaians interviewed reported using technology for inspiration that motivated them to move to their host country. Participants navigated the Internet to gain access to “global flows of media, information and, most importantly, people” (Burrell & Anderson, 2008, p. 217).

Once within the destination country, technology provided the means to stay connected to the home country as well within the host country (Burrell & Anderson, 2008). The Ghanaians studied within the Diaspora London used various technologies such as camcorders, digital cameras, sound systems and websites to maintain these various connections. As noted, this provided the Diaspora studied cultural continuity (maintaining lifestyle and cultural symbols) while living aboard (Burrell & Anderson, 2008). At social events observed within the study, it was found that videographers would
be hired to record many events. Others would then view these video recordings outside of London within Ghanaian Diasporas in various countries. In addition, it was found the reverse would occur, where videos made in Ghana would find their way to London (Burrell & Anderson, 2008). Websites would be made for some events that allowed Ghanaian Diasporas all over to watch events live and even participant in some ways for other events. It is reported that this use of technology overcomes many constraints placed by distance and time differences. In addition, it provided Ghanaians connections with each other, building a sense of belonging and cultural identity (Burrell & Anderson, 2008).

As explained by Brinkerhoff (2009), Diaspora identities are reported to be hybrid identities that are constantly being produced and reproduced. They are brought into existence through lived experience, perceived peer groups within the host society, the motherland, and the diaspora group within. As argued, Diaspora awareness is affected by experiences of discrimination and exclusion, as well as historical heritage identification and world cultural and political forces. It is further asserted that identities within Diasporas are also impacted by generational differences. Traditionally, it has been speculated that newer Diasporas maintain more of a connection to the homeland, while sequential generations within that Diaspora maintain their connection stronger to the host country (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Currently, it has been asserted that as Diasporas are generationally developed, ties to the host country are dependent on the opportunities (social and cultural) that are afforded them. This can be seen within the development of Diaspora communities that are generally self-governing with associations and formal
organizations, as well has rules and norms for behaviors (Brinkeroff, 2009). This sentiment is similar to Alonso and Oiarzabal’s (2010) argument that the concepts of nation, identity, and belonging take on new meanings when it comes to the integration of Diasporas. This is asserted due to the communities that are established. These communities that are created cannot be tied to physical boundaries, but are psychological and emotional communities that transcend space between the homeland and host country (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010).

Individual and collective Diaspora identities are emphasized to be formed through selection of both home and host cultures. These hybrid identities are negotiated through storytelling, consensus on shared understanding, and sense making. The Internet is a space where communities can exist and negotiate individual and collective identities. These communities and identities can then spread their values. It allows the maintenance of identities that consist of a mixture of homeland identity, along with reinterpretation and hybridity (Brinkerhoff, 2009). This is particularly relevant to the youth within Diasporas. It is a place for cultivating solidarity, “bonding, bridging, and especially bridging-to-bond social capital” (Brinkerhoff, 2009, p. 53). It offers a large space for mobilization, networking, information sharing, and capitalizing on collective identity (Brinkerhoff, 2009).

Similarly, Alonso and Oiarzabal (2010) also note that communication is important to Diasporas. This includes communication through various sources such as radio, television, the Internet, and print media. These forms of communication allow Diaspora communities to overcome barriers of distance. It creates capacities to “connect, maintain,
create and re-create social ties and networks” (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010, p. 9).

Therefore, it is asserted that time and space shrink, and these communications and communities thus redefine identity (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010). “Technologies allow us to re-create our own reality that even employs time that is long gone or space that is far distant, transforming both within an imaginary landscape” (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010, pp. 9-10). Technology is key to increasing the possibility of these migrant hybrid identities flourishing and changing societies and, in turn, the meaning of belonging.

Understanding Diaspora communities is important, as belonging operates not only through individuals and their attachments, but also within collective components (May, 2013). As noted by May (2013), belonging is also negotiated through interactions with others. True belonging must be reciprocated. Sustaining belonging requires the connection felt by individuals to be returned by their society. As previously mentioned, within belonging exists the element of political issues. This politics of belonging requires that to understand belonging, one must examine how native and long-term citizens view and interact with migrants. Belonging is negotiated within the process of claims making. This entails acceptance or rejection of another group’s claims. Issues dealing with “power, negotiation and conflict” (May, 2013, p. 84) must be examined. Belonging includes the ability to have a voice within that society that is adequately heard. “If belonging requires that one is able to participate in and contribute to the construction of society, it also requires mutual ‘seeing and hearing’, which, in turn, ‘depends on the recognition of both difference and identity among those involved in the interaction’” (May, 2013, p. 84).
A study by Osirim (2008) found that African women who experienced belonging within their host country were able to contribute to their civil society and business development. Similar to the study by Agbajoh-Laoye (2006), this study by Osirim (2008) found that African women migrants within the cities of Greater Boston and Philadelphia were able to gain greater freedom from the traditional values of their home country, which enabled them with greater access to opportunities. Utilizing in-depth interviews with 15 African women entrepreneurs, the study examined how their transnational identities assisted them in revitalizing parts of their cities and civil society. Participants conveyed a commitment to building and improving their communities within the United States. Using their intersectional (race, class and gender) identity, these women construct relationships with others, such as African Americans, to progress their communities. While building within the United States, participants also sent remittances, built homes, made visits and crafted US benefited business connections back within their home countries. As noted, remittances are major sources of financial contributions to many home countries. As such, participants’ contributed to growth of both host and home countries (Osirim, 2008).

**Politics of Misrecognition**

“*Blackness in America is marked by shame. Perhaps more than any other emotion, shame depends on the social context...This collective racial shaming has a disproportionate impact on black women, and black women’s attempts to escape or manage shame are part of what motivates their politics*” (Harris-Perry, 2011, p. 109).
Politics in America encompasses the struggle for recognition (Harris-Perry, 2011). Often this is accomplished through traditional concepts of political action: voting, public policies, representation, etc. This struggle is at the very center of not just national identity, but human identity as well. No struggle greatly highlights this than that of the lives of African descent women within the United States. Black women’s politics include not only traditional assertions of political action, but also their experiences. Within these lived experiences, political truths of hierarchy, oppression, and liberation are revealed (Harris-Perry, 2011). In agreement with political scientist Melissa Harris-Perry (2011), this study operates under the statement “the internal, psychological, emotional, and personal experiences of black women are inherently political” (p. 5).

Experience as political is validated under the assertion that it is part of the process of recognition as citizens (the center of political processes). Black women have historically lived under others’ assumptions of their humanity and identification of self. These assumptions are reflected in the social world and must be navigated and negotiated. Black women must learn how to resist or adapt these assumptions within society to ensure their place as citizens is secured (Harris-Perry, 2011). This is inherently done by examining the limited roles thrust on the shoulders of black women by the larger dominating oppressive world and recognizing preferred self-identification. It is only through this manner that the question of black Americans receiving fair treatment as citizens under a system that appears to hinder their progress can be addressed. It is often on the bodies, minds, and lives of black women that stories of the black community is written (Harris-Perry, 2011).
American’s political association with bodies as identities has been studied and explored by Oyeronke Oyewumi (1999) in her discourse on Multibodism. Oyewumi (1999) argues the constitution of womanhood is grounded in the politics of body parts. She asserts that Western society places value based on body parts within what she calls the “biology of social worth” (p. 182). As put forth, Western thought and social practices operate under the assumption that one’s biological makeup dictates their destiny. This led to the ideology where society as a whole is a body and lead by favored individual bodies. Each various type of body within the big body of society is valued with particular social rank and worth. The body is treated as an object that, by simply looking at, one can determine an individual’s social location and their thought processes. The body is asserted as always in view and on view and seen through a gendered gaze. Black women in this placement of rank and worth are the “Other” bodies (Oyewumi, 1999).

According to Harris-Perry (2011), African American women as United States’ citizens face unique expectations not imposed on others. Black women are forced within a specific citizenship created through combined forces such as slavery, racism, sexism, and patriarchy, to name a few. It is this conflict inherent in the “social construction of black women’s citizenship and identity” (Harris-Perry, 2011, p. 21) that this research seeks to examine. As argued by Harris-Perry (2011), the strong black woman functions as not only racial, but also as a form of citizenship inherently at the center of black women’s identity. This construction (strong black woman) as a political tool narrows placement within society to that of a citizen so resilient as not to be invisible or in need of recognition for survival.
Wyatt (2008) contends that the internalization of this imagery is a psychological process that accepts this representation as one’s self-representation. As such, internalization of gender roles serves as a political tool for the maintaining of power distribution. Established gender roles that operate under stereotypes are noted to exert power by normalizing gender arrangements. Moreover, it is asserted that the strong black woman works as a reaction to living within a racist environment. It is one identity that, many times, their families and communities place on the shoulders of women. This often requires black women to deny their feelings and needs to fit into this representation (Wyatt, 2008). Yet, as Wyatt (2008) argued, “The confession of pain is a political statement” (p. 62).

While Harris-Perry and Wyatt focus on the imagery of “the strong black woman,” this study will center on the representation that this image is in opposition to: a type of citizen that Harris-Perry argues is perhaps too visible, too loud, yet surrounded by silence as well. This study will focus on the sexualized representation of black women. Both misrecognitions create expectations of behavior that perpetuates limited status within political society (Harris-Perry, 2011). As claimed by Harris-Perry (2011), the politics of recognition can only be understood through historical analysis and its current impact on the lives of black women. Through an examination of history and present lived experiences, the resulting goal must be that of “a call for the creation of new forms of politics rooted in a deep and textured understanding of black women’s lives” (Harris-Perry, 2011, p. 22). As contended, access to the rights of citizenship must be expanded,
but first, black women’s lives must be exposed from the perceptions of that of black women themselves (Harris-Perry, 2011). This is the essence of this research.

This research will be based within the argument that Black women’s lived experiences operate within the concept termed by Harris-Perry (2011) as the “crooked room” (p. 29). In this room exist misrepresented proclamations of their identity that black women either bend to or resist. In this room black women face both race and gender stereotypes. Many times, public actions and political movements appear to reinforce the very negative stereotypes that created the crooked room. Yet, it is the structural manifestation of violence towards black women that in fact perpetuates behaviors. As argued by Harris-Perry (2011), in this crooked room it is hard to stand upright. Yet black women must not only accomplish this, but also find the appropriate upright position within a sea of distortions. As previously noted, the first step in this endeavor is to gain a clear view of the images and stereotypes that constitute the crooked room.

Research shows that three main stereotypes for black women predominate: Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire (Harris-Perry, 2011). The Mammy representation is that of the slave or domestic servant that serves her Master’s family before her own. She can be seen nursing the children of her Master, suckling their newborn. The Mammy character puts the needs of others before her needs. The Jezebel representation is exotic, promiscuous and over-sexed. She uses her sexuality to get attention and material goods. Her own insatiable sexual appetite is only achieved by pleasing men (particularly white men) (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). The Sapphire representation is loud, overbearing, and
often emasculates her spouse. She uses her mouth to verbally assault others (Nicol, 2012). This research will focus its discursive musings on the historical and current representations of the Jezebel imagery. While all three stereotypes continue to exist, the Jezebel focuses on the sexualization of the black female, and thus it is the most appropriate for this study to reference.

Consequently, this crooked room forces black women to shift their behavior to accommodate other’s expectations of their reality. Their perception of being negatively viewed contributes to self-identity, personal relationships, and work environments. Within this viewpoint, as correctly put forth by Harris-Perry (2011), it influences understanding of their citizenship, relationship with the state, and expectations of political participation. Images within the crooked room can be seen as a “problem of recognition” (Harris-Perry, 2011, p. 35) that is directly tied to the relationship between citizens and their state. Recognition and its adequate representation is desired by all citizens (Harris-Perry, 2011). It is further argued democratic citizenship is based in a social contract (rules, etc.) that individuals and groups conform to. Citizenship is noted to include, but is not limited to, membership in the nation as well as a community. Conformity to this contract requires the state to exchange safety and security. Within this exchange between the state and citizens, recognition is needed to ensure the correct enduring relationship. Systematic misrecognition disrupts this relationship and puts the contract in jeopardy. This has historically been violated for those of African descent within America (Harris-Perry, 2011).
Recognition is tied to citizenship, as it is declared to be directly a factor to self-actualization. Citing Hannah Arendt, Harris-Perry (2011), confirms that the public offers opportunities to be seen and recognized as individuals with unique characteristics to contribute. As such, people fall in line with requirements of citizenship. This in turn increases the collective contribution towards the state. It is through willing participation in the public sphere that the state is removed from the use of punishment to achieve collective contribution. Therefore, with recognition, individuals do not require coercion. This becomes highly problematic when recognition is denied or distorted. Citizens within marginalized groups lack accurate recognition granted to the dominant group. Denial of access to the public sphere or social achievement inherently deprives one of recognition, and thus full citizenship (Harris-Perry, 2011).

This is further problematized for black women. Black women are deprived of accurate recognition and placed under “hypervisibility” (Harris-Perry, 2011, p. 39) to further complicate their struggle. Not only is this attack public, but it enters into the private realm of their lives. As such, the need for both the right to privacy and adequate public recognition within the democratic social contract eludes black women. This scrutiny into all corners of their lives ensures that escape from the public eye, a privilege extended to other citizens, remains nonexistent. The misrecognition of black women is the crooked room. Challenging this misrecognition is appropriately emphasized as a critical step toward liberation (Harris-Perry, 2011). For black women to fully experience the rights of their citizenship, they must manage historical myths concerning their identity. It is through misrecognition (misrepresentation) that humanity, and in turn
citizenship, is denied. Correction of inaccurate recognition, as argued by Harris-Perry (2011), is important due to its ties with citizenship. Its fight is that of political activity. As rightly proclaimed, inaccurate recognition leads to distribution inequalities. When members are not seen in their totality, access to social, political, and economic goods become skewed (Harris-Perry, 2011). Understanding resources used by black women within the context of fighting for their accurate representation increases the glimpse of the complexity of black women’s lived experiences.

**Black Sexuality: What Does It Mean for Black Identity?**

“*Myths and stereotypes do much of their damage subconsciously. They seep into the inner psyche and take up residence, affecting how one thinks, feels, and perceives others, even while one purports to be unbiased and tolerant*” (Jones and Shorter-Gooden, 2003, p. 34).

Zack, Shrage, and Sartwell (1998) describe discussions of sexuality as falling under two main categories. The first category deals with the morality of sexual practices, while the second is centered on the nature of sexual desire and experience. When discussed in relation to identity theory, sexuality is proclaimed to distinguish people into different beings based on their behaviors and desires. Often, psychologically and sociologically described sexual behaviors that are deemed deviant or abnormal are based within cultural differences (Zack et al., 1998).

Ducille (1990) asserts that understanding of black sexuality (like recognition) is often distorted. Black sexuality has historically been explored through the lens of white male and female normative gaze. This scrutiny, therefore, becomes the center of
discussions surrounding black sexuality. In this manner, the cultural background and belief systems of Africans concerning their sexuality is sadly misrepresented. This center focus of white perceptions to study black sexuality is problematic and unfortunately widely employed. As a result, black sexuality continues to be marginalized under white normative assumptions. Ducille (1990) contends that this trend must be altered and Eurocentric paradigms critiqued. A space for the expression of black voices, where their own voices can be heard, is greatly needed. As argued, there is needed a methodological strategy where black voices are asserted and centered as subjects of discourse. In addition, Ducille (1990) argues that black sexuality can be considered in the context of a “culture of resistance” (p. 110). In this way, understanding of the diasporized experience of surviving an exploitative environment is exposed (Ducille, 1990). This study seeks to lend its voice to this call.

Ducille (1990) provides great examples to illustrate how sexual practices of Africans distorted by the normative white gaze can be better understood through re-centering African voices. For example, the practice of premarital intercourse, viewed within the Eurocentric lens, asserts the assumption of promiscuity and amorality. It is centered within a Puritanical religious requirement of marriage. Yet, legal marriage was denied to slaves, automatically defaulting relations as amoral. When centering Africans as subjects rather than objects, it is revealed as the perception of a natural view of sexual intercourse in which Africans viewed sex as part of life (Ducille, 1990). These distortions as a means of oppression are further supported by Wallace-Sanders. Wallace-Sanders (2002) points out that with the entrance of Europeans into Africa, it was their own
normative perceptions that were used to place racial and sexual assumptions upon Africans. Due to their differences being so great, extreme and negative identities were constructed and later used to justify slavery (Wallace-Sanders, 2002).

**Sexualized Black Bodies: The Black Female Identity**

“97 percent acknowledge that they are aware of negative stereotypes of African American women and 80 percent confirm that they have been personally affected by these persistent racist and sexist assumptions” (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003, p. 6).

Life opportunities for black women are explicitly tied to race and gender. This intersectionality strongly determines the very prospects and decisions encountered and executed. The meanings given to individual and collective experiences are often products of socially constructed ideas that hinder achievement and expectations. Consequentially, social constructs such as race, gender, and sexuality impact political activity (Harris-Perry, 2011). Particularly strong in the crooked room is the imagery of a sexualized self as centered to black women’s identity. These constructs have been shown to perpetuate ideologies that maintain marginalized structures within American society. As illustrated by Harris-Perry (2011), when policy makers operate under misrecognition and false ideologies of black women, choices are implemented that are disproportionate in negatively directing the lives of black women (forced sterilization, sexual abuse of slaves, etc.).

The myth of black promiscuity has been a powerful continuing narrative. The representation of the black woman as sexually immoral and hypersexual has historically functioned to oppress conditions of social, political, and economic opportunity (Harris-
Perry, 2011). This myth impacts interracial interaction where often, other races see black women as oversexed and interact based on these assumptions (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). It has been upheld against a backdrop of white female purity that can never be achieved for black women. The myth of promiscuity deprived African slaves of their humanity and justified rape, forced nudity, and general disregard of their femininity.

White male brutal treatment of African women slaves could only be reconciled with the stripping of their complex identities and its replacement of hypersexuality. In addition, the lack of empathy by white females reinforced the moral superiority of their race (Harris-Perry, 2011). This apathy may have roots in what has been asserted by Ann Ducille (1990) as the sins of society placed on black bodies. The wrongly perceived availability of black women’s bodies is blamed for the destruction of white male and female sexual relations: the causation of discord. Their enslavement and continued rape and exploitation was a source of conflict within the marital harmony of their masters and mistresses (Ducille, 1990).

Harris-Perry (2011) further argues that this rampant misrecognition was an intentional means of control over black women’s economic, social, and political status. Access to black women’s bodies against their will by white males during slavery continued throughout the later history of America. This perpetuated the vulnerability of the black community, even after ‘freedom’ was granted. It continued the lack of ownership over their bodies and identity. No legal actions could be taken concerning violations of their being. Full citizenship was not their right. As reported by Harris-Perry (2011), during the building of the nation, the myth of promiscuity continued to impact
public opinions and denied black women political participation. Black women’s role in American society was established and it was not one of a citizen supported by its state (Harris-Perry, 2011).

The misrecognition of black women was created and sustained due to the perceived attributes attached to physiological and anatomical differences. These differences (seen as exaggerated sexual organs) justified white moral beliefs of the black women’s seductive power. The body of the black woman was used to turn her humanity and complicated identity against herself. As noted, this myth justifies any sexual behavior of black women, otherwise normative, as evidence of their hypersexuality. As noted by Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003), this myth requires black women to scrutinize the motivations of those that show interest for their validity, with romantic interracial interactions becoming one of guessing hidden intentions. ‘Evidence’ of hypersexuality regulates black women’s status; as such, limitations put on black women’s sexuality can also be viewed as justifiable. It is often this justification that places blame on societies’ ills on the bodies of black women. Black communities’ downfall is the failure of black women. Addressing these issues and policies enacted to correct historical wrongs is perceived as welfare for unworthy citizens (Harris-Perry, 2011).

The sexual exploitation of black women as hypersexual can be seen throughout American’s culture represented through various outlets. As mentioned previously, during slavery, the assumption of loose sexual morals transferred from Africa condoned the availability of black bodies for the sexual gratification of white males. The 1970’s media showed the amoral black prostitute, the 1980’s the black teenager with multiple children
from various men emerged, and in the 1990’s the scantily clad, booty shaking video vixen appeared and continues to thrive (Jones & Shorter-Goode, 2003). Yet the misrecognition of black women as overtly sexual individuals are not simply external representations, but become internalized identity.

Politics of Respectability

“If a claim to full citizenship rests on the assertion of a narrowly defined, sexually repressive respectability, then black women must adhere to a rigidly controlled public performance of themselves. Such rigidity can leave little room for complicated realities” (Harris-Perry, 2011, p. 62).

In an effort to offset the destructive narrative of a hypersexual identity, the politics of respectability ensued. Within the politics of respectability, black women in leadership positions lead the movement to suppress displays of black sexuality behind a public image of moral uprightness. This was accomplished by either the status of respectable marriage or a somewhat asexual identity. This public display of “strict sexual respectability” (Harris-Perry, 2011, p. 61) sought to gain black women equal treatment that was sorely lacking. Harris-Perry (2011) argues that this was an attempt to gain ownership of the representation of their sexuality. Yet, as further expounded, it was in reality a reactionary movement that did not gain the desired full outcome. This narrow restriction (placed upon black women by other black women) instead resulted in alienating many of its members with identities that could not be forced within this box. Women not within this set definition of black femininity were ostracized by others seeking public reaffirmation of humanity from the dominant group (Harris-Perry, 2011).
Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) support Harris-Perry’s (2011) assertion that resisting misrecognition resulted in a limited avenue of expression of self. They argue that black women in America stifle themselves to meet racial and societal expectations. However, they dive deeper by asserting that it is not simply matters of sexuality, but those concerning the intersection of race and gender. In circumstances where their gender is attacked, it is ignored for the good of the race in maintaining public image. This silence reduces the shame that can be forced upon them by outside groups and members of their own racial group (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). As argued, ethnicity and gender are the central factors within the identity of black women, as well as the most controlling. It is through these identities that they are silenced on various levels. This silencing produces double lives: a hidden self and one of a public appearance (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003).

Kimberly Wallace-Sanders (2002) uses the term “culture of dissemblance” (p. 109), coined by historian Darlene Clark Hine, to describe this silence of the black woman. Similar to Harris-Perry’s (2011) crooked room, this culture operates under what is described as a politics of silence, evasiveness, and displacement in avoidance of sexual violation. The culture of dissemblance is centered in narratives by freed Black women within the United States, which self-imposed invisibility to combat previous narratives of rape within slave narratives. In this manner, they removed their blackness and gender from their identity within visual representations. As such, black women’s sexuality is suppressed with the goal of protecting their bodies. This was evident in the establishment of clubs focused primarily on challenging derogatory images of black sexuality. Similar
to the politics of respectability, public displays of sexuality were shunned and respectability and dignity was sought from the dominant culture (Wallace-Sanders, 2002).

The politics of respectability cultivated a culture that, instead of resisting, provided further degradation of the character of black women. In seeking to resist, those with perceived respectability undermined the plight of other black women who did not fall in line with the desired public representation by criticizing, silencing, or ignoring them altogether. According to Harris-Perry (2011), the politics of respectability allows the political tool of shame to control the lived experiences of black women in America. As a tool, shame utilizes the negative information found in the black women’s crooked room to internalize its concepts as upright reality. Therefore, it is not the room that is crooked, but that of the individual (i.e. black women). With the intersection of multiple avenues of marginalized identities, the experience of shame is particularly destabilizing for black women. Shame ensures that black women are hyperaware of how others view their presentation of self at all times. In addition, awareness of the distorted lens others use to interpret black female representations of race and gender is at the forefront of interracial interactions. As asserted, shame is the effect of repeat misrecognition of black women (Harris-Perry, 2011).

Shame functions as both social order control and that of a distorted attachment of meaning to lived experiences. Shame can be correctly asserted as being entangled with collective rules of behavior and shared expectations within American society. Therefore, it serves as society’s moral order. Social sanctions ensure shame retains its power of
control. When the state employs the power of shame, it maintains the identity of its shamed citizen, a constant problematic element with its governance. Within this ideology, shame enables the ignoring of the systematic oppression of groups and the redirecting of fault upon its members. In fact, after slavery, The Jim Crow Laws under white political structures used shame to ensure blacks lacked social, political, or economic equality. Under this racial system, blacks were disfranchised and segregated. Under this system, the very act of being black in public white spaces was a punishable offense (Harris-Perry, 2011). This underscored the unworthiness of blacks as citizens.

Shame as a tool of social control was not limited to the south. Blacks in the north were also targeted for shame tactics to control their behavior and status. Particularly, it was reported that white Americans in the north saw black female bodies as needing social and cultural policing. Both white and black institutions saw black bodies as the canvass for the corruption of black communities that must not be left unrestricted. Black women were failures at maintaining society’s moral order. Shame as a tool became even more powerful when operating within the concept of fictive kinship. Fictive kinship is the sense of connection felt by group members for other racial members. Therefore, when shame is introduced, it guarantees blacks take personal shame for the actions of other members. This results in an attempt to resist and members find manners in which they can separate from their race and gain approval of the dominant social structure; this is known as “racial distancing” (Harris-Perry, 2011, p. 120). This can be done through internalizing identities or behaviors that oppose negative stereotypes (politics of respectability) (Harris-Perry, 2011).
Media Representation: A Weapon against the Black Women

“The sexualization of women in popular culture had particular racial connotations...Western association of Africans with primitive sexuality created receptive audiences...” (Freedman, 2002, p. 209).

Hooks (1952) argues the collective crisis of African Americans are those centered in the image. Media has been critical to how black bodies are viewed and related to by both the dominant cultural and within black culture. The construction of images presents to the world the desired response to blackness (identity). Audiences are bombarded with “image-making” (Hooks, 1952, p. 5) with an ideological intent that is political. Not only does it depict how others should perceive blackness, but also how members within the black community should perceive self. Despite denial of many within the black community, imagery controls placement within society. It is the visible presentation of recognition (Hooks, 1952).

Commercialization has been credited with creating cultural meanings that placed the female body as a means of product marketing. The female body became the center focus of advertising through images that played on the sexual objectification of women. These images permeated through all forms of media. Predominantly, the direct association of black bodies as primarily sexualized bodies tied to their African roots of perceived primitive sexuality became an established reality. The representation of black bodies as sexualized transferred into the continued perception of the availability of black female bodies for sexual conquest of all. As a result, markets for Western media
throughout the world received the same message concerning black women. The black female body continued to be the sexualized commodity from slavery (Freedman, 2002).

To further capitalize on the sexualized control of black bodies, a social hierarchy was placed. Fat, dark-skinned bodies were reduced to remain in spaces of poverty and undesirability; economic advantages were the privilege of those with thin, white-able bodies. The American culture became obsessed with the drive for light-skinned, thin bodies deemed as perfect (Freedman, 2002). As such, black bodies that did not fit this mode were not privileged for economic gains, but instead faced oppression and exploitation. Their lack of standardized beauty did not protect them from sexualization of their exoticness. Ann Ducille (1990) explains that the sexuality of those considered “othered” (p. 103) within American society is linked to the attitudes and ideologies of the dominant groups. As such, views of sexuality are tied to that of the white middle class heterosexual perceived norm. It is through their experiences and meanings attached to sexuality that all others are judged and measured by. The resulting outcome automatically abnormalizes differences (Ducille, 1990).

Media misrecognition of black female bodies can be traced back to Saartjie Baartman. Saartjie Baartman was a South African woman that in 1810 was put on display for the public viewership of Europeans. She was labeled “Hottentot Venus” and put within a cage as an exhibit for an animal trainer. Her black body was used as a means of scientific inquiry and justification of the differences between the races. Particular focus was given to her buttocks and nether regions. Artists captured her image to be further displayed. Even after her death, she remained ‘the other’, dissected and displayed within
a museum for the public. Throughout this time, she was labeled and presented as an animal with animalistic characteristics resembling that of a monkey and inherently ugly. Baartman, as analyzed by a prominent anatomist Georges Leopold Cuvier, was deemed the authentic representation of the African woman. The close connection to an animal established the sexuality of black women to be that of the passion observed within the animal communities. The displays of her genitalia and buttocks brings forth how often black women’s private lives are on permanent display under the public eye. Black women’s bodies are seen as lacking the sacredness of that of the white women and therefore denied respect. The black female body is constantly in the public, touchable and available. Her body is not her own, but that of the larger society, to be eroticized and exploited (Wallace-Sanders, 2002).

In the seventeenth century, the image of the black female body was depicted as a threat to patriarchy. While black femininity garnered desire, it was represented as unwomanly. Black femininity was not the proper female. As noted, early modern English discourse and material culture constructed a gendered racial environment within which the black female body was to be viewed. Her body shape was the defining identity of her sexuality, which was by nature deviant. The African women, as depicted by the writers of their time, were the ultimate representation of the deviant sexuality of the African people. Their ways were considered a breakdown of natural law and moral behavior. Even during the times of abolitionism, the body of black women within writings operated under normative white lens of acceptability. The black woman was not in control of her own
body and had no ability to rein in her sexuality. Her uncontrolled lusts were justification for enslavement either through chains or laws of civility (Wallace-Sanders, 2002).

The black female body represents a “racialized, sexualized, and exploitative history” (Wallace-Sanders, 2002, p. 103). The chained naked bodies of female slaves were printed in newspapers and art forms and used to fuel anger within the abolitionist movement. In the nineteenth century, the black female nude body was artistically used to evoke eroticism and exoticism. It continued the creation of a culture constructed to exploit the black female body, and placed its identity within that of servitude, erotic sexuality, and availability. As noted, within scientific texts, the representations of Africans simply enforced societal beliefs surrounding the inferiority of the African people both within the continent and aboard. This cemented the “Western exoticization of the Black female body” (Wallace-Sanders, 2002, p. 103).

Wallace-Sanders (2002) further asserts that the historic traffic in the black female body (visual and physical), created a crisis in representation. The depiction of black female bodies for art became one of friction in avoiding historical misrecognition while providing adequate imagery. In addition, the meaning attached to the black female body often imposed itself over the artist’s creativity and ability to expand on the totality of the black woman. In light of this, the black female body was often avoided within art. The inherent vulnerability and potential for exploitation, even by black female artists themselves, deterred many (Wallace-Sanders, 2002).

The construction of the sexualized body of the black woman has become the collective conscience that operates within the United States and around the world. The
black woman’s visual status has defined who she is. With the development of photography, that reality became further entrenched. Backed by supposed scientific analysis, these differences were denoted to support the association of deviances within sexuality and morality with that of the black identity. These photographs were trotted out to provide what was seen as evidence for their judgment of inferiority. Even within highly respected scientific avenues, the black body was to be displayed in various degrees of nudity, creating an element of pornographic nature within their pages. The lack of control with regards to their representations of self-removed true identity and power (agency) from that of black bodies (Wallace-Sanders, 2002). The media as an execution squad, operating as the killing ground for black female bodies, is also passionately asserted by Alicia Griffin (2012). In this space, the media, through negative representations, brings black women down as inferior and are not held accountable for their lack of positive representation (Griffin, 2012).

Patricia Hill Collins (2004) argues that mass media offers the world utilization of racial differences that is safe to consume, one that can be done in the privacy of home without having to be tinted in daily reality, if one chooses. As argued, media such as television and social media platforms can transmit fabricated images of black women and function under national and global agendas (Rogers, 2017). One can espouse an understanding of the nuances of another’s race by the visual representations consumed. Mass media continues to place black women as objects, objects whose purpose relies on their accessibility of “being seen, enjoyed, purchased, and used” (Hills Collins, 2004, p. 31). Mass media maintains and promotes this racial hierarchy. As a system, it
perpetuates justification for racial ideologies by reproduction and dissimilation. These images that are circulated into various spaces maintain status quo and creates barriers against mobility. Who they are and who we are is daily re-enforcement of one’s placement in society and as a citizen (Hill Collins, 2004).

Oppression does not always need force to operate. By regulating the images transmitted on various media platforms, this in turn influences the minds of those that consume the images. Mass media create mentalities that consent to their domination. Mass media’s realities become one’s truth. Questioning of these truths is often difficult for many to comprehend and, as a result, individuals engage in their own exploitation as their reality (crooked room) (Hill Collins, 2004). Hill Collins (2004) states that the United States’ oppression has taken a new form where it is a normalized war within the society. Normal structures with American society fight this routine violence against select citizens. This war operates most efficiently by being within the operations of daily life, instructing these selected citizens to stay within their placement (Hill Collins, 2004). Hill Collins (2004) rightly fights for the perspective that Blacks in America are engaging daily in an uncivil civil war that is fought through racial and gender meanings assigned to Black bodies that impact social meaning of Black sexuality. As advocated, progressive black sexual politics demands reclaiming by the individuals and groups directly impacted, who must redefine ideas about black sexuality and not simply embrace politics of respectability that mimic the dominant oppressive society (Hill Collins, 2004). Most importantly, she calls for more works that show how honest Black bodies feel, hear, and
move, and less about how they look and should be interpreted. Politics should be based on how individuals experience their bodies (Hill Collins, 2004).

**Conclusion**

With the increased presence of Africans in the United States, the dynamics of the black populations demands new literature that gives voice to the phenomenon of their experiences. Current literature’s focus on the singular African American population has created gaps in literature to be explored. Often, all diversities of black lives are incorporated and taken for granted as a collective African American identity. Although similarities are valid, differences expand our understanding. In addition, the unique intersection of culture, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality of female black migrants creates a space that offers rich experiences to further research. Within these intersectionality of identities comes conflict inherent in the balancing of identities and integration of the old with the new. Current African immigration is embedded within American society creating the concept of the possibly ‘New African American’ identity within a world that already has established their placement. Second-generation female migrant’s citizenship is a unique citizenship of conflicting worlds. Current Africans in America are often shoved into the generic term ‘African American’, where they are surrounded by representations of a sexualized identity that for the female migrant defines her lived experience and alters her meaning making within a crooked room with complex historic implications. At the same time, she must maintain the preservation of ethnic expectations that set her apart from both worlds.
At the heart of their integration into American society is that of the issue of identity along with belonging. Where do current Africans who have migrated fit into this society that host descendants of previous African slaves? Although there exists a connection through DNA, the passage of time and different experiences has created culturally and ethnically distant people. Where do they belong among the dominant culture, and in regard to previous migrants that are more established? How does their differences with current African Americans translate to their relationships with others outside the race? Most importantly, what does it mean for the migrant female’s sense of belonging, and who she must become within all these complex realities to define who she is?

While studies of sexuality have been done, they have been limited in their scope of exploring the totality of black bodies. As a citizenship that by nature is a political statement, exploring African black female bodies and their lived experiences surrounding a sexualized representation of identity expands the knowledge of black sexual politics and African female migrant integration into the crooked room of black women’s lives in America. As acknowledged, “…the bodies, experiences, and voices of Black women do the important work of communicatively carrying culture” (Griffin, 2012, p. 142).
Chapter 3: Research Method

Methodology

The key to producing a worthy study of this phenomenon experienced by this unique population that furthers the discipline of Conflict Resolution Studies, particularly a concentration in Culture and Ethnic Conflicts, is the methodology chosen. Previous research on this population has proven that qualitative research methodologies provide the level of in-depth analysis needed to understand identity formations (and inherent conflicts within) and the exploration of lived experiences (Halter & Johnson, 2014). It has been noted that in gaining a deeper and more accurate understanding of a study, there must be an integrating of diverse perspectives and an interdisciplinary collaboration. Studies of ethnic and racial identities and conflicts has been a place for this to occur. Scholars in this area have suggested a move away from dependence on measures that focus on self-report that only offers forced choice in which the researcher determines the dimensions of participant’s responses. They call for measures that allow more elaboration on the meanings and significances of their identities and experiences that they self-define. Previous methods have used narrative techniques to accomplish this (Quintana, 2015). Within basic narrative approaches there rises the chance for a more complex view of ethnic identity not previously seen in other research. Through this method the voices and stories as experienced by marginalized groups are reflected (Santos and Umana-Taylor, 2015). Yet, there remains an even more powerful methodology that takes the narrative approach and defines it further, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.
When examining dimensions in ethnic and racial identity, it is important to address primary and secondary cultural characteristics. Primary cultural characteristics are the traditions and practices that evolve within the culture of origin. These include language, social norms, and conventions specific to a group. It is strongly tied to immigrant and first-generation groups. It is noted that as generations pass, primary cultural characteristics often become weakened. Secondary cultural characteristics are practices developed within groups as a response to contact with another cultural group. They are developed as a means to deal with pressures to assimilate or being marginalized by another dominant group. As primary characteristics diminish, cultural characteristics rise (Quintana, 2015). This was important to this study, as the focus was the second-generation population. The examination of secondary cultural characteristics helped identify resources that were used to resist or increase internalization of representations of black sexuality.

Umana-Taylor (2015) argues that ethnic and racial identities are two separate factors that are closely tied and often used interchangeable (rightly or not). This has occurred due to the fact that an individual’s identity is formed through an intersection of ethnicity and racial identity. Racialized experiences in a sociohistorical context combine with socialization of cultural or ethnic heritage in forming identity. Thus, both must be examined (Umana-Taylor, 2015). Another factor important to this study was that of the understanding of ethnic identity content and ethnic identity process. Content refers to factors such as behaviors practiced or individuals’ affect toward their group. Process refers to factors such as the progression of learning and maintaining one’s identity. It has
been suggested that future research needs to focus on an examination of the interplay between process and content, and not the current heavy focus on process (Umana-Taylor, 2015). As argued by Syed (2015), the study of ethnic process and content can be taken further to include identity structures. Identity structures refer to the configuration of relevant identities within an individual (intersectionality) (Syed, 2015). Specifically, focus on these factors discussed can reveal, within this study, the conflicts within the second-generation immigrant’s integration into racialized America and their sexualized citizenship.

As asserted, qualitative methods of research is appropriate for measuring this. It is emphasized that individuals view their lives through stories, in which they are the authors of a life they integrate into internalized identity. These stories are combinations of past experiences with current beliefs and future aspirations that are constantly revised. To capture this reality, what is needed is a method that allows stories to be voiced that incorporates their complexity. In this manner, beliefs, values, and behaviors, as well as an individual’s cultural background, get placed within the analysis and can further research (Syed, 2015). When collecting data for this type of research, semi-structured interviews (SSIs) are advocated to provide how social identities intersect with each other in an individual’s identity. Through this use of data collection, Rogers and Way (2015) found that cultural stereotypes are the basis through which ethnicity develops. In addition, it was revealed that race, ethnicity, and gender intersect in constructing and maintaining identity. SSIs provide hidden patterns lost in surveys. They privilege the knowledge and perspective of the participant, which is key to this study. SSIs provide a standardized set
of questions, yet also allow for follow up questions. SSIs also are carried out within the analysis of the data. This can be done through open coding, content analysis, case studies, etc. (Rogers & Way, 2015). SSIs allow for the revealing of the intersectionality of identities. As sited in Rogers and Way (2015), they point to Shorter-Gooden and Washington’s 1996 research of black women. The study revealed that although black women rated race as center to their identity, gender, religion, and career were also used to make sense of what it means to be black (Rogers and Way, 2015). Importantly, SSIs have illustrated that ethnic and racial identity operates under how they are perceived in relationship to others. Additionally, ethnic identity is influenced by the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class (Rogers & Way, 2015). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis provides a method, data collection, and analysis that incorporates these advocated measures (narratives and SSIs) and are in-line with the needs of this research.

**Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Research Design and Rationale**

The center focus of this research was to explore the lived experiences and discover the conflict resolution processes of female African immigrants as it relates to integrating into a society that defines black female identity as sexualized black bodies. Important to this study was a history of representation and imagery of a sexualized citizenship. The goal was to gain in-depth knowledge surrounding how this system is resisted or internalized among Ghanaian migrant women. Due to its sensitivity in dealing with complicated matters, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a great methodology for this research because it can challenge preconceived notions and
understandings of what is deemed pathological behaviors (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). As such, IPA was the methodology of study chosen.

This study engaged in research that explored sexualized representations on the perceptions of 1.5 and 2nd generation migrant Ghanaian women. The goal was to examine the resources used by this population to either resist or internalize the conflicts inherent in narrow representations of a sexualized identity. This study followed the guidelines for an IPA study as defined and described by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009). IPA has three main components that define its conceptualization: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. Advanced by researchers Husserl, Heidegger, and Sarte, IPA focus on the lived experiences of its participants. As a lived process it reveals perspectives and meanings as it relates to the individual, as well as the writer exposing the participants’ lived experiences. It as an interpretative process in relation to the world lived in (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA is a qualitative approach that explores individuals’ experiences as defined by the individual. It is firstly a theory of phenomenology, as its focus is on the significance attached to everyday life as put forth by the participant: “experience on its own terms” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1). Secondly, due to its interpretative approach to studying phenomenology, it is tied to hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation. IPA sees the stories told by participants as reflecting their attempts to make sense of their experience. In turn, the researcher must take the interpretation given by the participants and try to make sense of their experience through further interpretation. As such, it is defined as a double hermeneutic study method. IPA is idiographic in nature, in that it is focused on
the detailed experience of particular individual. Although the number of study participants is often small in number to provide in-depth understanding of each experience as revealed, the number is flexible and can be increased to provide more data. The sample used is homogeneous to allow for detailed revealing of similarities and differences to be explored. Data collection is often done through semi-structured interviews (SSIs), where the participant leads the conversation. The interviews are then transcribed and systematically analyzed. This process produces a narrative account of the researcher’s analytical interpretation of the participants lived experience, supported by extracts from participants (Smith et al., 2009). Due to the components espoused within this methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was ideal for this research project. The participant, the researcher, and the world engaged within can be examined and hidden mysteries are revealed (Smith et al., 2009).

This methodology was chosen, as it allowed this researcher to study a culture and a phenomenon that she holds a personal interest in. IPA acknowledges the role of the researcher’s own explanations in the interpretation of lived experiences of participants. As a researcher with personal ties to the community being studied, this researcher provided both inside knowledge and meaning making, as well as new analytical perspectives provided by academic training to explore the society conducting research within. As a Ghanaian migrant woman, this researcher collected data immersed within the culture. As noted by Ndubuike (2002), this can strengthen the opportunity to explore past manifested behaviors shown to outsiders, as well as the inner patterns of a way of life (Ndubuike, 2002). It is through this personal connection that initial exploration for
gatekeepers was utilized. This researcher was the interviewer conducting all interviews with participants, as well as transcribing the recordings.

**Researcher Context**

This researcher’s biases were managed as they arose. As this researcher studied within her own culture, with similar lived experiences of attempts at integrating into American society, personal meaning-making of experiences was explored as they came up, so they were not transferred to research participants. This was managed more within the final writings of the research. The use of bracketing assisted with the management of bias, as well as the research committee’s inputs and questioning of the findings and analysis.

This researcher’s biases were centered more on her own personal viewpoint that sexualized representations of black bodies have a greater impact within the Ghanaian community than reported by participants. During the defense of the proposal for this research, this researcher was made aware of this bias by the question of one committee member. This particular question concerned what would be reported if it were found that sexualized representations had no impact on participants. This made the researcher aware that her biases already existed regarding a belief that sexualized representations would have a direct and paramount impact. As such, during the interview process, this researcher was vigilant to keep questioning open ended and focused on the direction of the participant’s responses. Other researcher biases were managed through the bracketing conducted during the initial transcribing process. A notebook was kept during this phase that held the researcher’s first observations that came up while transcribing. These first
thoughts, written down, contained the major perceptions of this researcher that may hold any possible biases. During the reading of the transcribed recording, further notes for bracketing was taken. This notebook was then put away to focus on the data present. This lead to the ability of the researcher to draw out the 3 major representations reported, as opposed to a singular focus on a presumed predominant sexualized representation.

**Ethics within Research**

This study was diligent in recognizing and protecting participants from ethical issues before and during the research process. Ethical issues require reflection throughout the process to ensure that no harm is done. When discussing sensitive issues, it has been noted that this can produce unintentional harm to some and must be monitored. This was part of the thinking process that shifted the focus of this research to not be singularly focused on one representation when participants presented other representations to be explored. This will be explained later within the following chapters. IPA requires not only informed consent for data collection, but also for outcomes of the analysis. Therefore, participants were informed of the topic to be explored and allowed access to the interview schedule before consent. This helped ensure protection from harm. The schedule for SSIs aided in increasing comfortable interaction with, and for, many of the participants. Additionally, it provided an opportunity for detailed accounts of experiences for some of the participants. Questions within the interview were open and communicative. The issue of consent was revisited during the interview process before questions were begun. In addition, as suggested by Smith et al. (2009), raw, unedited data was only reviewed by this research team. This was particularly crucial for this research,
as participants are members of this researcher’s community and their anonymity was needed.

Methodology: The Study

Central research questions

Primary questions. How do second-generation migrant Ghanaian women living in DC Metro Area, United States perceive (think, feel and see) the conflict within representations of black sexuality as they relate to their own sexual identity?

How do second-generation migrant Ghanaian women living in DC Metro Area, United States perceive (think, feel and see) the conflict within representations of black sexuality as they relate to their interactions within and between ethnic groups?

How do second-generation migrant Ghanaian women living in DC Metro Area, United States perceive (think, feel and see) the conflict within representations of black sexuality as they relate to their personal and collective social achievement?

Analytical guiding question. In what ways do themes that emerge from the lived experiences of Ghanaian women depict a pattern of how they are influenced by the portrayals of black women in America?

Population, Sampling, Method, and Sample Size

This research study engaged the population of migrant Ghanaian women (second generation). Participants were recruited from the Washington D.C. Metro Area, where a large Ghanaian population already existed and continues to flourish. Participants selected were women 18 and older, born within, or those that came at a young age to, the United States, with at least one foreign-born parent from Ghana. This study engaged in
purposive sampling to acquire participants (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Smith et al. (2009) state that when finding a sample, they must be purposively selected and homogeneous. Potential participants can be gathered through referrals from gatekeepers or snowballing. Gatekeepers can be utilized through one’s own contacts and snowballing can provide further participants through referral from current participants (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, initial inquiry for participants was generated through personal connections and word of mouth through the community this researcher has personal access to (gatekeepers). Additionally, inquiry was made through a Ga Association group this researcher is a member of on social media. As this researcher knew some participants, and received other participants from known associates, the criteria were known to be met before interviews began. IPA studies benefit from a small number of participants that receive concentrated focus (Smith et al., 2009). It is suggested that novice researchers not have a sample size that is too large, as it becomes problematic to meet IPA requirements at that point. It must be noted that as previously mentioned, although IPA often utilizes small numbers of participants, this is not mandatory and the number can be changed depending on the needs of the study. Using this approach, participants consisted of 8 interviewees. The small size provided a detailed examination of individual cases as well as similarities and differences among participants. Interviews were, as suggested, conducted in a semi-structured and one to one approach (Smith et al., 2009).
Research Design

This research is intended as a qualitative study operating under the requirements of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as primarily described by Smith et al. (2009).

Data collection methods

This research utilized in-depth interviewing as means of collecting data. Interviews were conducted using the interview schedule provided (See Appendix I). It must be noted that the interview schedule was a guideline and not a strict protocol that was followed. While both researcher and participant are to be active within the process, the participant was the center focus and her lead was followed throughout the discussion and analysis. An interview schedule allows the participant to be descriptive about their experience. Questions can range from descriptive to analytical and must be in an open format. It is suggested that 6 to 10 questions are sufficient and will provide for 45 to 90 minute interviews. Questions can be modified after the first interview is conducted if necessary (Smith et al., 2009). The questions followed this guideline. In addition, all the interviews were conducted using an audio-recorder for later transcription of the interview for analysis. This researcher produced the needed audio-recorder that was used. An audio-recorder provides accurate, real-time audio of the interview, and as such, was sufficient for collecting the needed data for transcribing. In addition, the ability to rewind and replay conversations provides a more adequate capturing of the whole interview (Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, recordings allow the research team access to check the validity of transcribed writings if needed. This research did not require the need for
follow up interviews, and although that option was open, as the research unfolded it was not utilized. Participants were questioned for consent for possible follow up interviews if needed. The original plan was if there arose the need for follow up, only 1 additional interview per interviewee was to be utilized. Follow-up interviews were to be utilized if recruitment provided too small of a sample. This was not needed. Participants remained a part of the process of the research until the final writing by being agreeable to further clarification when needed. Locations where data was collected varied, depending on the preference of the participant and privacy and confidentiality considerations. The interviewees chose all locations and 7 interviews were conducted face-to-face, while 1 interview was held over the phone, per the preference of the interviewee, to maintain privacy and anonymity. 1 interview was held within the researcher’s home and 5 interviews were held at the homes of the interviewees. The remaining 1 interview was held at a popular coffee shop’s conference room.

Data analysis

This research used the method of coding to analyze data received during the interviews. These codes assisted in the exploration of “broader categories of meaning” (Willis, 2007, p. 135) within the study. As noted, the use of symbolic words or short phrases to capture the essence of what the interviewees are conveying can be a powerful tool in addressing the conflict from the perspective of those most affected by it. In addition, a code represents and depicts the primary content within the data. Particularly helpful is the ability to use codes that directly take the words stated by participants. In Vivo Codes were utilized within this analysis precisely for this purpose, to bring to light
the plight as described by a participant. Another aspect of coding that was utilized was the attention given to emerging “repetitive patterns of action and consistencies in human affairs” (Saldana, 2009, p. 5). In this manner, the data was organized in a way to see the characteristics shared between participants that might shed further insight into the conflict. It is argued that through the use of codes, a theory can evolve to explain how themes and concepts that have emerged are related (Saldana, 2009). In addition, initial reviewing of data followed the exploratory commenting suggested by Smith et al. (2009), drawing out and differentiating descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments.

The process of initial noting is very important in IPA. It is claimed that it is the foundation on which analysis of the whole research rests on. In order to correctly interpret the content of the data received, the researcher must fully engage with the data. It is noted that this process of engagement is as important as the process of writing (Smith et al., 2009). It is in this level of analysis that the data is explored for how participants talk about, understand, and think concerning the phenomenon. The researcher must always have an open mind throughout this process, so as not to draw out only what they expect to find within the data. The noting in this initial stage has no rules about what can be commented on. This was particularly appealing to this researcher, as it does not limit what was found and later addressed. It truly allowed the voices of the participants to guide what was discovered, not preconceived academic notions or requirements. This drawing out of participant’s explicit meanings, along with looking at the language and context of the data, provided a clearer path for patterns to emerge (Smith et al., 2009).
As described, descriptive comments draw out key words, phrases, or explanations used by the participant that reflect their understanding of the phenomenon. Descriptive comments take things as they appear and highlight what structures the participant’s thoughts and experiences. These are the things that present as mattering to the participant (Smith et al., 2009). Linguistic comments concern the use of language by the participant. It reflects the way the content and meaning are presented. Linguistic comments can be as complicated as metaphor or as simple as pronoun usage, repetition, or tone (Smith et al., 2009). Conceptual comments go deeper than the other two types of noting and becomes more interpretative. As explained, this involves the researcher shifting focus from explicit claims to the participant’s larger understanding of matters being discussed. This commenting places more of the researcher into its process, where personal reflection can be drawn on. At this point, the researcher brings in their own experiential or professional knowledge to the interpretation (Smith et al., 2009).

The steps for analysis, as prescribed by Smith et al. (2009), are organized into 6 steps and that was followed within this study. The steps were utilized after all recordings were transcribed. Data was transcribed from 9 audio recordings into 8 written transcripts (One interview had 2 recordings). During the process of transcription, a notebook was kept that contained the originally perceptions of this researcher while listening to the interviews. Thoughts were written down during the first and final stages of transcribing. The notebook of bracketed perceptions was then referred to during steps 1-3, and this notebook was put aside during the process of working with the written data to develop superordinate themes.
Step 1 involved reading and re-reading the original data. This included the first written transcript and listening to the audio while reading that transcript. Step 2 was the initial noting that examined the content. Everything that was of interest was noted on this level. It was at this level that the previous discussed types of comments were also noted. Step 3 was where emerging themes were developed. Review of the comments noted in step 2 assisted in the revealing of the themes. It is at this point that details were drawn out and narrowed down to map key factors found in the exploratory notes. Step 4 sought connections among the themes that emerged. The themes were then organized in the manner that was observed to fit. Step 5 was the process of repeating steps 1-4 throughout the other participant’s transcripts. At this point, each individual case was treated as its own individual case. Step 6 was the final stage of the analysis procedure that brought all the individual cases together. In this step, patterns across the cases were explored and further connections made. Examples of each stage of analysis will be provided within Chapter 4.

**Expected Contribution**

This research sought to contribute the voices of a marginalized population to fill a gap in literature where they are often overlooked. Black sexuality has been repeatedly discussed, researched, and documented, yet it has been done primarily focused on the African American experience. In a current era of high African migration within the United States, there is a need for current knowledge to be expanded and encompass these new experiences. In particular, utilizing Conflict Resolution theories and tools to examine this phenomenon expands our understanding and can possibly create more effective
resolutions. Are current misrepresentations transferred to African migrant women as they are socialized into societal expectations? The new African in America, or, in the case of 1.5 and second-generation migrants, African American woman, can expand the discourse on Black Bodies and their identities within the United States. They can bring new perspectives to our understanding of historic and contemporary American culture and the conflicts that operate in daily lives.

**Conclusion**

Studying the formation and conflicts of ethnic and racial identities must be done through a method that allows a deeper understanding of its intersectionality. Identities are not created in a singular form but through various interacting factors. Tools that force limited choices of expression of individual identity run the risk of missing key factors that contribute to identity. The narrative approach emphasized within Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis opened the space for a more complex understanding of ethnic and racial identity. Narratives placed the voices and stories, as experienced and understood by this group of a marginalized group, in center focus, while providing critical analysis of these lived experiences from an academic perspective.

As such, it was ideal in contributing to the gap in literature surrounding female African immigrants as it relates to integrating into a society that defines black females identity as sexualized black bodies. Semi-structured interviews allowed stories to be heard that explored beliefs, values, and behaviors within this population. As a result, social identities that intersect with each other in their individual’s identity were gathered for analysis. The small number of participants involved within the methodology granted
access to detailed examination of the data collected. As well coding within IPA, directly utilizing participants’ words brought their voices into a larger platform to be heard. The purposive selection of participants contributed to the importance of these particular voices. Additionally, it supported previously discussed academic calls for this type of research that expands our knowledge and placed participants front and center.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

“Now it’s more like it’s more macro versus when I was a child when it was micro”

(Keke)

IPA is the most appropriate analytical tool for the purposes of this research. This is due to IPA’s commitment to an inductive approach that centers the participant as an expert in the lived experiences and perceptions of their world. This approach allows participants to use their own terms in bringing forth their priorities (Smith et al., 2009). The ability to use one’s own terms, in turn places conflict resolution developments directly within the perspective and analysis of the participant. However, it has also been noted that there is no single way to write up an IPA research analysis. IPA suggests this must be a creative process for the researcher that opens up an avenue for the voice of the researcher to also be heard through the constructing of the accounts. In addition, analysis of the collected data continues into the writing up of findings, as further interpretation continues to be developed during the writing phase. As such, there is no rule about how the writing must be structured; despite this, it is suggested that findings be presented in a full narrative account that is comprehensible and systematic (Smith et al., 2009). It is further suggested that IPA’s write up of the results of the conducted research begin with an overview of what was found. Use of a list or an abbreviated table of grouped themes is advised (Smith et al., 2009). Box 1 is the table of this research’s features that will be found within the results and findings. Box 1 describes the structure of how the results and findings will be reported.
Table 1

**Box 1 Particular Features of This Study**

- Presents in-depth analysis of 8 cases.
- Themes were developed underneath corresponding research questions.
- Themes grouped under two major levels of analysis Micro and Macro (*See box 3.10, Appendix D*).
- Use of overall Superordinate Themes for Superordinate Micro and Macro Themes under research questions RQ 1-IGQ 2.
- Use of IPA style of Superordinate Themes (*See box 3.9, Appendix C*).
- Strong use of In Vivo Codes within analysis and transcript excerpts within findings/results to maintain participants’ own words as much as possible to be in line with IPA goal of centering the participant with the study.

### Background

The central purpose of this research was to explore the problematic racialized and gendered construction of black women as primarily sexualized objects. The object was to acquire a deeper understanding of how this narrative impacts migrant Ghanaians within the United States. By examining how this narrative impacted migrant Ghanaian, this research was able to explore the conflict resolution processes and systems negotiated through by participants. Therefore, this study examined media cultural representations of black sexuality on identity formation, migrant integration (ethnic and cultural interactions within and between groups), and perceived social achievements on 8 migrant Ghanaian women in the United States. This research sought to gain in-depth knowledge surrounding how this system is resisted or internalized among Ghanaian migrant women. To achieve this goal, this study utilized 3 Primary Questions, 7 Reserve Follow-Up Questions, and 2 Interview Generated Questions. This allowed the study to maintain a
semi-structured format led by the participants while still focusing on the purpose of this research. This chapter will be organized into 7 leading categories: Setting, Demographics, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Ethical Procedure, Researcher Role, Ethics, Results, and Summary.

Settings

Although all participants are Ghanaian females residing in the United States of America, their motivations and influences for participating in the research varies. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 37. As such, all are in various stages of life and influential factors for participating will vary. Some participants are beginning their early stages of adulthood, while others are well established within their adulthood and are raising children of their own. Some participants are just starting their higher education, while others have completed graduate courses. These life experience factors may have contributed to the responses given by participants. Due to this researcher already being a part of the community this study was engaged within, the researcher knew 7 out of the 8 participants before she conducted the study. All participants were gathered either through direct or gatekeeper connections or were themselves gatekeepers turned participants. Thus, one motivation for participating in this research may stem from connections to this researcher and desire to assist. Tina Miller and Linda Bell, in Consenting to What? Issues of Access, Gate-keeping and 'Informed’ Consent (2002), argue that although there is an assumption that providing consent negates coercion, as received consent is deemed voluntary, this can sometimes blind researchers to complex power dynamics that exist around access and consent, particularly in connection to gender and ethnicity. They
implore researchers to be concerned about the motives surrounding why potential participants chose or resist participation (Mauthner, Birch, Jessop, & Miller, 2002). With this at the forefront, all participants were made aware of the voluntarily nature of this research and throughout the process, participants were reassessed for voluntary willingness to participate. Emphasis was placed on participants’ ability and right to refuse and to leave this study at any time. Connection to the researcher is assumed not to be the only motivating factors for participating, as 4 other potential participants with connections to the researcher dropped out of participating after the initial statement of interest and receiving of consent forms. One participant stated influence to participate stemmed from the opportunity to have her voice heard. “I think it’s rather interesting cause it's my first time someone has ever asked me such a question. I didn't even think people differentiate us” (Amandla).

**Demographics**

The participants in this study consist of 8 Ghanaian descendant women. Participants were recruited through personal connections, gatekeepers within the community, and the use of recruitment flyers. Flyers were used to recruit all participants, regardless of connection to this research, to maintain the same procedure used for all participants. Consent forms and discussion of the purpose of the research were covered prior to the confirmation of an interview date, time, and location. All Participants were within the age range of 18-37 and reside within the D.C. Metro Area of Maryland, District of Colombia, and Northern Virginia. All participants were required to fit within the following inclusion criteria: self-identify as a woman; self-identify as black; have a
Ghanaian-born father or mother; read, write, and speak English; self-report exposure to media representations; and willingness to be interviewed about perceptions on sexualized media representations. Participants within this study all have high school diplomas received within the United States and completed, or are in the process of completing, further higher education. 4 of the participants have specialist degrees and are currently working in their fields of study. 3 participants are working towards an undergraduate degree and 1 participant had taken undergraduate courses. The participant’s economic backgrounds range from working class to middle class families. 6 of the participants, at the time of this study, were single, and 2 married. Additionally, 2 of the participants had children, while 6 were childless. This collection of demographic data illustrates the possible personal and collective social achievements of participants. 4 participants were native-born Americans, while the other 4 participants arrived in the US at a young age and were raised in the D.C. Metro Area. Originally, this researcher sought to only interview US native born participants with Ghanaian parents, but due to lack of interest and recruitment, the inclusion criteria was changed to fit the population available to be researched and still maintain the purpose of this study. 6 participants had both parents born and raised in Ghana, while 2 participants had one parent born and raised in Ghana. All participants have some level of engagement within the Ghanaian community, ranging from minimal to fully active. For the purposes of this research, fully active will be defined as associating personal and friendship ties primarily within the Ghanaian community, attending majority Ghanaian functions, and being an active member within Ghanaian churches. Minimal engagement will be defined as associating with personal
and friendship ties to some degree within the Ghanaian community and attending some Ghanaian functions.

Data Collection

Data collection was taken from 8 participants utilizing a semi-structured format interview. One interview per participant was conducted. Data was collected using an audio recorder purchased by the researcher. Interview durations ranged from approximately 20 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes. Originally, the number of participants sought by this researcher was to be 8 to 12 participants. During the recruitment process interest was low, and as such, the research was concluded with the lowest possible requested participants. It must be noted that although recruitment was attempted through social media, no interest was garnered through that avenue. Interviews were conducted using the interview schedule provided (See Appendix I) and adjusted as the interviews progressed.

Data Analysis

The process for data analysis for IPA is described as not consisting of one single method for working with collected information. Despite this, steps are given as a guideline for the processes of remaining true to the analytical focus of IPA: the participant. As stated by Smith et al. (2009), attention should remain on the participant’s attempt at making sense of lived experiences. Hence, the analytical process employed in this research strived to remain focused on the participants meaning making of the phenomenal being explored. Strong focus was given to the psychological processes of the participants. Notwithstanding this, as noted previously, interpretative accounts of
collected information will not be void of the researcher’s own psychological and analytical processes. The use of a notebook that kept original thoughts during the first and final reading of recordings during transcribing also assisted in acknowledging this researcher’s own perceptions or possible bias. This notebook was then put aside during the development of superordinate themes, so this researcher could work strictly with the data presented. Still, one’s perception and bias are ever present, simply within the act of what information is pulled from data. It is our perception that draws what we assume is important. According to Smith et al. (2009), IPA is a complex process that involves personal, intuitive and creative paths. As such, there is no clear-cut way to conduct analysis of data (Smith et al., 2009).

Although IPA analytical process has no specific order, this research relied heavily on the steps provided for new IPA researchers. Data analysis for this study followed the previously described 6-part steps suggested by Smith et al. (2009). Although already covered in Chapter 3, the steps will be restated in this section with more detail to additionally highlight the process through which the results were extracted. Step 1: Reading and re-reading; this first step requires the gaining of comprehension of the original data. The original data within this research consists of the written transcripts. Transcripts were formed through the transcribing of interviews recorded on an audio recorder. All participants were given fabricated names during transcription for privacy reasons. The audio recordings were transcribed using Dragon Professional Individual for Mac users, part of the Dragon NaturalSpeaking Speech Recognition Software. All transcriptions were conducted by this researcher and transferred to Word Documents for
a further manageable system. As transcribing was being completed, during the 3\textsuperscript{rd} interview, this researcher noticed some recurring responses and started to jot down notes throughout the rest of the transcribing. Interview 1 and 2’s notes were taken during the second round of checking the accuracy of transcribing with audio recordings. On the final round of checking transcribing, the audio recordings were listened to while reading the completed transcriptions (Smith et al., 2009).

At the completion of all transcribing and transfer to Word Documentation Software, transcripts were printed for the initial start of step 1. Each written transcript was read at this time, and passages deemed important were highlighted. Further notes were added to previous notes taken during transcriptions. These notes were kept within a notebook for possible bracketing. As stated by Smith et al. (2009), recording initial observations concerning the transcript in order to bracket them is a useful technique. Once all printed written transcripts were read, highlighted, and bracketed within the notebook, highlighted sections were duplicated within Word. As duplication of important highlighted passages were being organized, adjustments were made as needed if new important information was revealed or deemed not necessary. At the completion of this process, Step 2: Initial Noting was initiated (Smith et al., 2009).

The start of this step required the transferring of important highlighted excerpts from the original transcripts onto a table format. Each of the 8 transcripts had their highlighted passages extracted and placed into tables for initial noting. Smith et al. (2009) suggest this part of the analysis to be the most detailed and time consuming. This researcher must note a deeply felt agreement with this assertion. Each table within this
process was divided into two columns. Column one housed transcript extracts while column two contained initial exploratory comments. Exploratory comments were further broken down into three types of commentary: descriptive, linguistic and conceptual. Following the recommendation of Smith et al. (2009), descriptive comments were in normal text, linguistic comments in italic text, and conceptual comments were underlined. During this stage, In Vivo Codes were also utilized and were placed within bolded text. Box 1.2, a short passage from this research, provides illustration of this process.

Table 2

**Box 1.2 Initial Comments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Transcript Excerpts</th>
<th>Exploratory Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I: Is there any questions you have about the process itself?</td>
<td>“First time someone has ever asked me such a question”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R: I think it’s rather interesting cause it’s my first time someone has ever asked me such a question. I didn’t even think people differentiate us.</td>
<td>Expressing thoughts concerning generalized opinions of others about black people and the lack of awareness of the cultural differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R: In the African-American community um all also mixed with the people of African descent and I mean that as an Africans and Afro-Caribbeans you know that's where there is a distinguish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R: On the national level I don't…never thought that they ever classified us differently.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: how have you experienced the representations of African women in America?</td>
<td>Generalized thoughts on portrayal of African women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R: If I look at TV you don’t really see Africans. And when you do see Africans it's usually commercials that is geared towards oh lets help them they’re you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
know in extreme poverty um, you know they're the most helpless um human beings in the world you know. On… even in an international system that's how they usually have rep… representation of us

R: You see Black Americans, you may see other people but you never really see specifically Africans

R: It's more specifically in our own community that we can be able to differentiate ourselves but usually when I see um people of African descent specifically that you know migrated out of Africa grew up in an African um migrated here in the United States. Its and I see a commercial of us its always you know those poverty-stricken videos. I don’t really see an African person being you know represented in a great way.

I: Can you tell me a little bit about how that makes you feel?

R: It upsets me.

R: I feel like the next person sitting next to me who is not African will probably be like oh okay well they struggling they poor all the time. They don’t know how to speak English (laughter) you know they are totally ignorant. That's how people have this preconceived notion of us

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“They’re the most helpless um human beings”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representations of Africans based in poverty and helplessness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Lack of visible African representation outside of being incorporated within general Black American. |
| Only within community is awareness of differences apparent. |
| Representation of African people seen as negative |

| “It upsets me”. |
| Expression of emotional attachment to representation. |
| Laughter usage while describing negative representations. |
| Awareness people operate on already established view of Africans |

The conclusion of Step 2 began the process for Step 3: Developing Emergent Themes. Tables utilized for step 2 were further divided into three columns, with the heading emergent themes added. During this stage, Smith et al. (2009) describe the developing of themes as coming from attempting to reduce the data while maintaining its complexity. This is done by working mainly with the initial notes and shifting away from
the transcript (Smith et al., 2009). Notwithstanding this, the researcher found that in developing themes for this study, the use of both initial notes and transcript excerpts were needed for the development of themes. Within the emergent themes columns, relevant In Vivo Codes were utilized as theme headings themselves. Underneath In Vivo Codes, further themes were developed using Descriptive Codes and Process Codes. During this activity, the thinking process of the researcher becomes more visible and interpretations transform into collaboration between the participant and the researcher (Smith et al, 2009). As seen Box 2.1, another sample table from this research, themes incorporate the words of the participant but the interpretation of this researcher illustrates the process.

Table 3

*Box 2.1 Developing Emergent Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
<th>Original Transcript Excerpts</th>
<th>Exploratory Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“They show us to be uncivilized”</td>
<td>I: Oh Great! Ok. How have you experienced the rep…representations of African women in America? R: I believe that African women have been portrayed to be not in a nice light…. R: They show us to be uncivilized. In America, I believe that the African women and black American women have been portrayed in the same light. Ummm and we’ve been sexualized just as any other women in America. Ummm I believe that African women have been seen to dress a certain way or behave a certain way and this has also</td>
<td>Generalized thoughts on portrayal of African women. <em>Language used appears to be a soft response (not in a nice light) lacking strong emotion.</em> “They show us to be uncivilized” Comparison of how African and Black American women are seen in similar light. Comparisons of how ALL women are portrayed in a sexual manner. Answer to experience of African women in America is that of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
other women in America” Oneness in sexualization

“We dress just like anyone else” Inadequate visual representation
Statement of normality

“We are Told” Forced representation of self to public Placement in society (self worth)

“We people that are more vocal”

been portrayed in media as well and some music.

I: Can you tell me a little about the way they was dress you was talking about?

R: I think they view African to wear certain material, clothing, all…umm like kente cloth, specifically from Ghana, ummmm or just clothes that don't match or just looking a certain way I think there's a view of how Africans looked that is not how we look. We dress just like anyone else dress, we wear jeans, we wear shirts

I: Okay. And when you say that we’re sexualized like anybody else in what way do you mean?

R: As women, just in the media in general, ah I think we are told to dress a certain way, showing more of our bodies ummmm, and videos or on TV and the way they talk about women, we’re just sexualized (laughter), like that's what women are for. We’re sex objects if we’re not home cooking (laughter) and cleaning. They’re, we’re viewed as sex obj… sexual objects.

I: Do you feel there is conflict in how these images, these representations are ummmm displayed in the media? Do you think there is conflict between you and the media representations or just the American ummmm African… African females in general and representations. You think there is conflict?

R: I would say I guess for people who speak out on it, there might be conflict
descriptions of both African and African American women.

Separation of media and music as same avenue of information dispensary.

More detailed commentary of the visual representation of African women in the media.

Reflection on the accuracy of the representation. Disagreement with what is shown. Pointing out the sameness of Africans in America to other Americans when it comes to appearance.

Uncertainty? (‘I think’)

“We are told” Speaks to the belief that this is something forced upon African women.

Use of laughter a means to lighten the topic being discussed?

Tone of uncertainty again (‘I guess’)

Thoughts that conflict exists for those who speak out against imagery.

Going against imagery and being vocal, as well as taking imagery as a personal insult brings conflict to the person.

Assertion of not being personally affected by imagery and denial of personal conflict.
Vocal voices against imagery internalize conflict

“**I know who I am**” Affirmation of knowledge of self

“**With my African last name**” Separation from peers

| Vocal voices against imagery internalize conflict | ummm... in different ways cause you know there’s people that are more vocal or… or take into account the things that are shown and take it per... more personally. |
| “**I know who I am**” Affirmation of knowledge of self | R: I don’t have any conflict with it because I don’t personally take offense to it. Because I, I know who I am! |
| “**With my African last name**” Separation from peers | I: So how have these representations affected your own self-perceptions? |
| | R: It affected me more when I was younger, like growing up in school with my African last name, being teased |

**“I Know who I am!” Affirmation of self.**

Despite pervious statement of denial, admittance of impact at young age.

Being teased for being African.

Step 4, Searching for Connections Across Emergent Themes, began after all 8 tables were completed. Themes from each interview were extracted and placed within a new chart. This chart was organized under categories of the research questions asked for a total of 12 questions. This process was a deviation from the analysis method prescribed for IPA studies. The inspiration for the method used was taken from the NSU Dissertation Review Checklist and the Qualitative Dissertation Checklist Items. This assisted this researcher with making review of the vast data more manageable and provided a clearly picture for the researcher. This was possible as the questions were already grouped to draw out objectives and goals of the research. 8 complete charts were created and utilized for additional analysis. During this stage, all 8 charts were printed and worked on individually. Themes under each question were then evaluated for connections across themes. This process engaged abstraction to identify patterns and
develop superordinate themes. To accomplish this, themes were highlighted with two separated color schemes. Themes were grouped into the context of the connections interpreted. Themes were then written out on the printed charts. The first color scheme organized themes under the context of micro level processes, while the second color scheme was organized under macro level processes. As a result, the majority of interviews had a total of two superordinate themes per research question. The development of Micro and Macro superordinate themes was an inspiration sparked from the comments of one participant. One of the participants suggested that her life experience meaning making evolved from micro to macro issues as she matured in age.

It must be noted that not all themes for each question could be grouped into micro or macro themes. During this process, themes that did not match the overall theme for the majority of themes grouped were discarded. Smith et al. (2009) allow for this, stating that not all emergent themes need to be merged and can in fact be casted off. Some questions were found to be only micro or macro. The final sub-ordinate themes from each interview were then transferred to a Word document into a final master list table. The master table was further organized into two final superordinate themes per research question. After the superordinate themes were finalized, the themes under RQ1 to IGQ2 were condensed into further overall superordinate themes reflective of the common concept they operated under. This resulted in a total of 9 final themes. Box 3.9 below, a sample table from the Master Table within this research, illustrates the abstraction process.
Table 4

Box 3.9 Abstraction Leading to the Development of a Superordinate Theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PQ1: How have you experienced the representations of African women in America?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Micro Themes: Psychological Narratives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisible citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface Acceptance of Narrative (Appearance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalized Acceptance of Narrative (Behavior)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Struggles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False Personal Assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro Themes: In The Public Eye</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative External Imagery of sexualized African Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation in Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative or None at All External Representations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Much Visibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger Visible Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal Perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Media Representations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process of Societal Acceptance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PQ2: For you do you feel there is conflict in how these representations exist?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Micro Themes: Process Of Self Development Through Conflict</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affirmation of Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established Narrative of A Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Misgivings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggles With Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Struggles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro Themes: Conflict With A Hostile Society</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking up Against Injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal Paradigms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal Misdirection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Societal Surface Reception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggles With Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal Perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media as A Reference for Media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(See Appendix C For the Complete Master Table List)

Within this research, Step 5, Moving to the Next Case, and Step 6, Looking for Patterns Across Cases, were not treated as separate steps, and were also not utilized in a
linear organization but instead in a circular process. These two steps were conducted congruent with the previous steps 1-4. Step 5 involves moving on to the next participant’s transcript after the completion of each interview. Step 6 entails the looking for patterns across cases. This is best done by comparing each table against each other one (Smith et al., 2009). As such, this research found it best to do these two steps throughout each previous step. Once each step was conducted for the first transcript, it was then shadowed in example for the next 7 transcripts. In this manner, Step 1 was completed for all 8 transcripts before Step 2 was commenced, and so on. Therefore, Step 6 could be completed along side Step 4 for the end result of the Master Table. Charts A-L (in the beginning of each discussion of themes) depict each micro and macro themes as they fit under its’ superordinate theme.

**Ethical Procedures**

To maintain the protection of participants from ethical issues within this study, before and during the research process, informed consent was an important point stressed to all participants. As this research was conducted within this researcher’s own community, and many participants had direct or indirect connection to the researcher before the start of the research, it was especially important to this researcher that research rights were known and understood. Informed consent was covered twice with all participants. At the initial claim of interest in participation, brief information concerning rights were explained to those interested over the phone. Then, potential participants were emailed the full consent form for review for a period of up to 7 days to decide if they still wanted to participate. At the date and time of the confirmed interview, the informed
consent form was again reviewed with participants, and their signature was received before the start of the interview. 1 participant, to maintain her privacy and anonymity, was unable to do a face-to-face interview, but instead conducted a phone interview. Thus, informed consent was read over the phone and her signature received through email before commitment within the process.

**Researcher Role**

All participants were given the opportunity for access to the interview schedule before the date and time of the interview to further assist in protection from harm. This allowed participants a level of comfort with the process and allowed thoughts to be collected. Questions were prepared beforehand and remained open and communicative. In addition, as suggested by Smith et al. (2009), raw, unedited data remained reviewed only by this researcher, yet open to review by the committee chair at a later date as needed. It must be noted that this study found out during the recruitment phase that participation interest was minimal. Many that expressed interest would not fit within the criteria first envisioned. As such, recruitment criteria were adjusted to allow participation of individuals who arrived within the United States as a youth, were raised within the country, and had at least one foreign-born Ghanaian parent. Additionally, the search for participants was expanded outside the state of Maryland to include those within the D.C. Metro Area. In addition, interviewees were not required to show proof of citizenship for participation.

This researcher’s bracketing of preliminary thoughts on the content of the data during the initial transcribing period and the first reading of transcripts managed
researcher biases within this study. Bracketing is an important part of the research process, as it is through bracketing that the researcher exposes individual thought processes, feelings, experiences, and possible biases. By putting this down on paper, the researcher is better able to focus on the participants and the data itself (Bednall, 2006). Bracketing was done by placing initial thoughts down within a notebook down during the transcribing period. Each interview was bracketed separately. The first transcribing bracketed thoughts and perceptions that included first reactions on what was said by the participants. The second round of bracketing was done during the final transcribing stage and included possible themes that appeared to emerge after listening to all recordings. The last bracketing notes were done during the initial reading of the written data in transcript form. This bracketing simply included thoughts on what message seemed to be appearing. As a result, these notes held any biases this researcher may hold. The bracketed notes were then put aside during the initial commenting of transcript excerpts. Bracketed notes were reviewed again during the completion of each consequential step for its accuracy in meeting the actuality of the collected data.

During the abstracting of emergent themes to develop superordinate themes, this researcher found the reviewing of bracket notes created difficulty in seeing the data presented. Subsequently, the bracketed notes were set aside, and focus was put solely on the data presented with emergent themes. This was done so that this researcher’s initial thoughts did not transfer to the final results in creating an interpretation that was no longer applicable. The final Master Table was developed based on what was interpreted
from developed emergent themes within the chart. This helped ensure that the results and findings reflected participants’ truth and experiences as expressed by their words.

Results

The final micro and macro themes constructed from the collected data can be viewed as fluid themes that are connected to each other and can often become transposable. This reflects the nature of the interview organization, which was semi-structured and led by participants. Therefore, questions often flowed into each other, and sequentially, responses did as well. This has resulted in themes that can be applicable and relevant to other themes. Overall, it reflects the larger concept of various processes and systems occurring within the lived experiences and perceptions of this group of migrant Ghanaian women. The themes can be seen as developments these migrant women experienced as they were integrated into American society.

Micro themes predominantly reflect individual and psychological processes. Macro themes reveal societal and cultural systems. Interview questions PQ1 through PQ3 (Primary Questions) will be greatly detailed, as they are the primary questions for this research. Interview questions RQ1 through RQ7 (Reserve Follow up Questions), as well as IGQ 1 and 2 (Interview Generated Questions), will be explored in a lesser capacity. Responses and themes for these follow-up questions fall under the three primary questions and therefore will be referenced, but not fully detailed, in this report. In writing the findings of this research, the Master Table of Final Themes (Box 3.11) was used as a guide for overall themes, and the Master Table Abstraction Leading to the Development of a Superordinate Theme (Box 3.9) was used for an example of excerpts that fit into the
overall theme. Analysis was further organized and structured for meaning during the writing process of the reporting of findings.

To increase the validity of qualitative research, it is asserted that sensitivity to context be an important consideration. Intrinsically, a good IPA will be sensitive to the data collected. This is done within an IPA study by containing verbatim extracts from the data within a considerable amount of text. This gives participants a voice, as well as allows interpretations to be checked by the reader. In addition, interpretations are written as possible readings and general claims are given with caution (Smith et al., 2009). This study is written to remain sensitive to the context and not silence the voices of its participants. This study through narratives (storytelling) unfolds how conflict is negotiated for the participants interviewed and the resolution created.
Figure 1. Chart A: Themes on Navigating Sexuality

Superordinate theme: navigating sexuality

Navigating Sexuality reflects participants’ overall perception that through representations, expectations of sexuality are taught and reflect participants overall lived experiences being exposed to sexualized representations. It depicts participants’ levels of internalization of these images through their developing of an established identity outside of that sexualized narrative. Within Navigating Sexuality resides the micro themes
Learning Sexuality and I Am Not My Sexuality, as well as macro themes Sexuality As Societal Identity and Sexualized Society. Learning Sexuality reflects the lived experience and perception of participants’ that through representations, society teaches expectations on sexuality. Participants’ accounts describe how the teaching of sexuality begins with youth through avenues of media (particularly music videos) and guidance from friends and celebrities. It is through these means that expected sexual norms are first internalized. During this learning process, participants report being surrounded by influences that promote media representations of the ideal beauty. This beauty is one that closely resembles that of a European image of beauty, being fair-skinned and having long hair. This perception that lighter skinned is more attractive is reported to stem predominately from assimilation into the African American culture. Yet, one participant did note that within the African community, it has impacted the community in the manner of skin bleaching that is not seen within the African American community.

Sexuality as Societal Identity reveals the finding that participants experience black sexuality within America as one type of an established public identity, an identity that they observed as seen in the public appearance and accompanying behaviors of others within their environments. Participants understand this identity as a narrow representation that reflects society’s limited reception of African descendants. Sexuality as an identity, as expressed by participants, centers on African Americans and has encompassed other black ethnic groups, who are in turn socialized into this narrative. An aspect of this sexualized narrative takes the perception that lighter skin is better and amplifies it. Findings indicate that their understanding is that features and physical attributes that are
commonly associated within African ancestry are shunned on African descendants themselves. Despite being shunned on African descendants, participants realize these features are praised on other ethnic groups that are of lighter, more accepted complexions. Participants report African features are viewed as so pleasing on other ethnic groups that this has led to other ethnic groups seeking to gain this appearance, even through physical altercations.

*I Am Not My Sexuality* is indicative that participants view sexuality as not being a defining quality for themselves. Sexuality is experienced by them as an identity posited by society that must be circumnavigated through during their process of acceptance. Vulnerability to this representation varies for each participant. Internalization for this narrative varies from none to limited influence during their youth and process of assimilation. The perception that this representation is the most prevalent, or one of the other two previously cited representations, determined the level of internalization for each participant. Participants experienced a sexual identity that is felt to hold a strong emphasis on body parts deemed characteristic for black women and one that promotes an ideology of attractiveness based on skin tone.

*Sexualized Society* embodies that all participants perceive levels of sexualized representations impacting their communities. As such, these representations have direct and indirect influences. How much their Ghanaian community is impacted is based on the participants’ perception of the dominant representative narrative between the three recognized representations. Participants’ narratives place society and media (particularly music videos) as the medium through which the representations become reality for people
in society. Participants felt that society places expectations that demand a level of adherence to these sexualized representations, yet participants report refusing to meet these demands. It is in their youth that many of these expectations are predominantly experienced. They faced these demands through the scrutiny and guidance from those they interacted with as a youth. As adults, they report that the ability to resist sexualized images is stronger. Participants reduced exposure to such content within the media and self-regulated their friendship groups. Overemphasis on sexuality within society is seen as predominantly encased within the African American community. Participants report that within their communities, they have seen an increase of Ghanaian females within the African community following what is seen within the media and from their interactions with African Americans.
Figure 2. Chart B: Themes on The Power of Perceptions

Superordinate theme: the power of perceptions

*The Power of Perceptions reflects* participants’ experiences of how media representations impact their perceptions and behaviors, as well as others within and without their communities. *The Power of Perceptions* also reflects participants overall
view that ethnic representations in general are negative within the media. The Power of Perceptions contains the micro themes As Affected by Societal Perceptions and From Perceptions to Response, along with the macro themes Acting Out Societal Perceptions and From Representations to Perceptions to Application. As Affected by Societal Perceptions is representative of participants’ perception that differences between ethnic representations do exist but are felt to be dependent on larger societal perceptions. Participants overall view a general negative trend for ethnic representations within the media. Representations are reported to be very stereotypical and seen through a negative light. Findings indicate representations for African descendants are perceived as being the most negative. As reported by participants, those outside the ethnic group place African descendants under constant supervision, even in situations they feel their responses would typically be regarded as normative responses.

Acting Out Societal Perceptions reflects what is felt as larger impacts of societal perceptions and how the limited representations impact their reality. Participants have experienced altering their behaviors to resist the representations regarding African descents that are negative. They often will adjust their own actions so as not to fit into false stereotypes. Depending on what each participant experiences as being the dominant type of representation, their adjustments would fit in opposition. Participants that view a sexualized representation being dominant adjust behaviors to meet respectful behaviors or public decorum. Participants that view angry/sassy representations being dominant adjust behaviors to appear calm and approachable. Participants that perceive a poverty/ignorant representation being dominant focus on presenting an opposite
appearance. Thus, participants’ behaviors are directly tied to the perceptions of the societal members that they interact with the most.

*From Perceptions to Response* encompasses the process in which participants’ perceptions create internal responses in reaction to the representations they are most exposed to. Due to the negative nature of representations, participants experience a range of responses from dislike to extreme emotional responses. The level of emotional response impacts how participants adjust to accept or reject representations. When weaker emotional responses are experienced, acceptance of representations is usually the end result. Stronger responses mean participants will reject the representation. Acceptance of representations does not indicate willingness to adhere to representations, but simply accepting its existence. Despite this, predominately, participants mainly experience hyper self-awareness of their own emotional responses. In this manner, participants were in a constant awareness of their reactions and the need to adjust those responses and behaviors as well.

*From Representations to Perceptions to Application* goes further with perceptions in addressing its application in the lived experiences of participants. Participants report that they perceive the incomplete nature of representations to control many societal paradigms concerning them. They view others within American society as basing their perceptions and reactions to Africans and their descendants on incomplete and predominantly negative representations. As such, when participants interact with others, those faulty paradigms results in societal actions directed towards them that create further emotional responses. These responses are often negative in nature.
Figure 3. Chart C: Themes on Finding Identity and Belonging (1)
Figure 4. Chart D: Themes on Finding Identity and Belonging (2)
Figure 5. Chart E: Themes on Finding Identity and Belonging (3)
Figure 6. Chart F: Themes on Finding Identity and Belonging (4)
Superordinate theme: finding identity and belonging

*Finding Identity and Belonging* represents the overall lived experiences as presented by participants regarding their exposure to media representations within the United States. It explores participants’ struggles as they are integrated into a society they deemed riddled with inadequate representations of who they are. Within this theme is the micro themes *Silent Guiding Narratives, More than Culture, Invasive Belonging, From Individual to Group Differences* and *Self As A Resource.* Macro themes within this overall theme include *Narratives As Societal Placement, Cultural Adjustments, Interactive Cultural Bridging, From Group to Societal Difference* and *External Supports As A Resource.* *Silent Guiding Narratives* focuses on what participants view as the opinions of society, which they receive from media representations. The active narratives participants view others as having colored how the larger society receives Ghanaians. Participants also see Ghanaians themselves as having internalized some of these narratives. The active narratives, as reported by participants, operate as a silent guiding force that can alter interactions with others. In fact, just the perception of its existence altered the behavior of participants themselves. Some narratives participants view this as passive, while others offer a more aggressive impact. All guiding narratives influence acceptance of self for participants, as well as influencing cultural and societal acceptance. While external media representations remain negative throughout the years, positive representations are experienced as having emerged. Narratives are believed to have changed from when they were young until now as adults. Media representation based
narratives are often pitted alongside cultural narratives as guiding experiences and perceptions for participants.

*Narratives as Societal Placement* details how guiding narratives to participants represent one’s placement in society. The manner in which Ghanaians are perceived is thought to impact their achievement within American society. Although this group of participants all describe successful navigation of the negative narratives, it is not believed to be the case for all within the Ghanaian community. While it is perceived by participants that education within the community is pushed to counteract negative representations, many individuals within the Ghanaian community have already become susceptible to the narratives. Some are reported to follow what is expected of them. In this manner, participants see narratives as weapons that impact Ghanaian adaption to societal expectations. Negative narratives for participants have been equated to limited reception by the American public. Limited reception was experienced in the past during youth for participants as restrictions on cultural expressions. Yet, responses given by participants illustrate that this restriction for many may have been self-imposed. This has changed over the years with participants seeing more expressions of Ghanaian cultural in the public; still, it is reported to remain limited in its acceptance by others.

*More than Culture* explores the seeking of belonging that is undertaken by Ghanaian 1.5 and second generation migrant women within this study. Through the process of attempting to assimilate into the dominant black culture (African American), participants created a unique citizenship. Assimilation brings the loss of many cultural markers and, for many participants, struggles with identity. The struggle is triggered as
participants attempt to maintain cultural expectations and demands as they also become integrated into American society. During this process, a new intersectional identity is formed that blends the two cultures as appropriate for each participant. The blending of the two cultures embraces regaining the cultural ways that are lost during assimilation. It is during this process that interactions with members within the culture are crucial. The level and type of interaction determines the degree to which participants regain cultural ways. The end result findings show a strong sense of self and acceptance of unique citizenship by participants.

Cultural Adjustments tracks the slow paradigm shift that is reported to be occurring within the Ghanaian community as it seeks belonging within American society. Based on participants’ reports, as the Ghanaian community is growing, it is creating its own niche. Yet, the foundations of some of these changes are experienced by participants as rooted in incomplete media representations that have created cultural judgments about them. Despite affecting the larger community, experiences, as told by participants, illustrate this second-generation population feeling that they are being held responsible for changes. As such, participants report pressure to prove how Ghanaian they really are. Participants recount scrutiny of behaviors by members of their own community and the push to confirm their behaviors accordingly. Cultural scrutiny ranges from friendly jokes about not being Ghanaian to the distancing of interacting with participants by others.

Invasive Belonging reviews the belonging process participants maneuver in finding their identity and belonging. Identity and belonging operate in relation to interactions with others outside the cultural community. This involves working through
conflicting racial and cultural perceptions. Belonging in American society is not necessarily benign; as the findings illustrate, there is a level of invasion of personal space by the larger society. Invasion of personal space ranges from physical touches to constant, and sometimes provoking, public scrutiny of behaviors. Moreover, this belonging is reported to be selective and hinges on behavioral outcomes that meet societal approval. For the participants, belonging in American society comes at the expense of internal psychological adjustments and demands on the person.

*Interactive Cultural Bridging* examines the belonging process participants operate in finding their placement in society. Placement in society occurs as participants steer through interactions with American society at large. Findings show that perceptions guide interactions. As societal perceptions reported are predominately negative, participants describe being placed in positions of cultural educators and representatives. Due to societal judgment and policing, participants must explain their culture to outsiders, as well as stand as representations for the cultural and even racial group. In this manner, they are the bridge that brings together two cultures. Additionally, it is through the bridging, provided by participants, those false media narratives are combated. In fact, many participants report the altering of their own behaviors to accomplish this exact goal. Yet, this position is not always chosen, but placed upon participants by other ethnic groups in order to better understand the group.

*From Individual to Group Differences* focuses on the personal cultural nuances that exist between Africans and African Americans. It reflects how participants see the differences between the two groups and the manner in which they move between the two
groups. Moving between the two groups goes from surface appearance, centered in imagery and perceptions, to behaviors. This process is fluid and, for each participant, determines the identity they build. Participants generally accept that African Americans are viewed in more of a negative representation than Africans in America. Participants feel this to be in part due to the lack of visibility of true African representation within the media. Due to the take of African representations, participants report many representations of African Americans are incorporated into their general identity formation. In fact, when speaking on African representations, it was sometimes hard for participants to separate African American culture representations from their responses on Africans.

*From Group to Societal Differences* examines the findings that participants view significant differences existing between culture groups within the racial categories under the common term ‘Blacks’. This particularly addresses participants’ lived experiences and perceptions surrounding Ghanaian and African American differences. Despite awareness of the common ethnic background, participants report that both groups do not view each other within the same light. Furthermore, both groups view each other through hostile lens. The lenses are said to be products of both media representations and cultural interactions or lack of in-depth engagement. Although media representations for both groups are seen as negative, cultural nuances exist within representations and in reality. Findings of participants’ stories shine light on the awareness that differences in historical oppressions have created variants in what is considered behavioral differences.
Participants experience this combination of history and behaviors as part of the source that has created the conflict that exists between the two groups. Despite this, in some instances, media representations group Ghanaian representations under that of African American as one big Black group representations. Additionally, participants report that in the case of second generation Ghanaians, the ability to differentiate them from African Americans is visually minimal. As such, they are often treated under both operating perceptions for African and African Americans, depending on the knowledge of their ethnic background others hold. In fact, for many participants, their identity is tied within both cultures.

*Self as a Resource* speaks to the internal process of participants that assisted in the findings of a successful affirmation of self. This process comprises participants’ reported development of gaining self-awareness while resisting negative representations. Self as a resource is the individual responses of each participant as they negotiate systems of integration. Internal motivation and self-acceptance for each participant increases the power of self. All participants report strong sense of self. This sense of self also factors into how interactions with others are carried out. Findings show this strong sense of self aid in successful interactions with others and within the group that question participants’ identity and placement in society. This strong sense may also allow the ability to ease through different social environments. Important to this process is the external supports that are available to the participant.

*External Supports as a Resource* addresses the main support systems reported by participants: family, friends, and education. Findings indicate that these supports are used
as tools to resist negative representations. Likewise, these tools are part of the process for self-acceptance for participants. Supporting systems enable participants to be able to push past societal limitations on their potential. Education is particularly reported to be a strong motivational factor that is pushed within the Ghanaian community.

**Figure 7. Chart G: Themes on Psychological Narrative**

**Micro theme: psychological narratives**

*Psychological Narratives* relates to the psychological storylines migrant Ghanaian women either internalized as they become part of their sociopolitical reasoning, or resisted as false narratives that nonetheless impact societal perceptions. This is part of the
process of understanding the representations they are exposed to. These narratives range from personal perceptions concerning the type of representations presented to the influence on forming the perceptions of others. Psychological narratives for several participants centered on statements of lack of visible representation.

**Keke:** I’ve seen… not much positive representation, mostly like sometimes you’ll see where they show people in villages um sometimes not that well cloth, um you don’t even… and you… and to be completely honest I don't see that many images of women, I feel like you see a lot of children um sometimes you see men, but I don't see a lot of like African women being portrayed especially in Africa.

**Keke:** Other than like movies you don't really see, they don't have a huge role in whatever the… the… whatever's being portrayed and… and if they’re seen but like not um discussed or interacted with they’re often just kind of like portrayed like, like Africa is portrayed.

**Amandla:** If I look at TV you don’t really see Africans.

**Amandla:** You see Black Americans, you may see other people but you never really see specifically Africans.

Keke’s first statement addresses the general lack of adult feminine representations, while her further comments suggest that even within the minimal visibility, African women are placed in roles where they have to maintain a certain level of invisibility within that role. Amandla’s statement suggests that African representations are engulfed within the larger narrative of Black Americans, which typically is assumed to be the cultural significance of African Americans.
Other participants’ psychological narratives focus on what is perceived as
negative representations. This can be seen within Keke’s comment, which addresses the
lack of clothing placed on the representations seen, and actually starts with the statement
“Not much positive representations” (Keke). While Keke’s tone reflects an indirect
opinion of negative representations experienced, various participants offer a more direct
response. Negative representations experienced by participants emphasizes three types of
representations: that of the sexualized imagery, that of an angry or sassy imagery, and
that of poverty or ignorant Africans.

**Skai:** I’ve seen um African… African-American women being portrayed as let's
say sex symbols.

**Skai:** By how they dress and how they act in the media.

**Skai:** Videos, music videos, um movies and at even events, parties.

**Zendaya:** They show us to be uncivilized. In America, I believe that the African
women and black American women have been portrayed in the same light.
Ummm and we've been sexualized just as any other women in America. Ummm I
believe that African women have been seen to dress a certain way or behave a
certain way and this has also been portrayed in media as well and some music.

**Chloe:** I mean but then you also do have other um you know perceptions of
African American women such as in the music videos or you know just I would
say just negative as um and and what I mean negative such as you know being
seen as you know angry or you want you know a hand-me-downs or you feel
someone owes you something you know.
Chloe: It’s not so much that you display angry or you know it's just the fixed image.

Chloe: I feel like you’re, you’re, you’re seen as oh you know another angry black woman.

Keri: When I was younger I would say most of my um depict… most depictions that I would see of African American… African women in America um or in the Western culture at large I would say would be negative. Um I remember being young my very first images of African women outside of people that I knew, obviously, um the depictions in the media, most of them were negative. It was people impoverished, people living in poverty and um I would say that was what I saw.

Skai and Zendaya’s remarks suggest the prevalence of a sexualized image imposed on African and black American women within media representations. This sexualized representation portrays a certain manner of dress and behavior that can be associated with black women. Skai and Zendaya’s statements also reveal how several participants, when discussing negative representations, particularly when discussing sexualized imagery, reference music and music videos as sources where these representations are displayed. Yet, three participants, illustrated by Chloe’s observations, discuss the duality of representations within the media that they experienced. Chloe’s clarifications show how other representations (angry black woman) run alongside the sexualized imagery. This is also seen in Keri’s observations of the poverty imagery
present. Keri’s comments reflect the strong view held by participants that media imagery of Africans and their descendants are largely negative.

While all agree that predominately media representations have been experienced as negative, it has been noted that positive representations exist alongside the negative representations.

**Yara:** I mean it's a mix. You have strong black women in politics and some in um private sectors as well as civic um duties that they have around especially DC, um but then you have the entertainment side where there's twerk videos and then you have Beyonce who tries to be you know strong black woman but still you know shaking all this.

**Yara:** A mix from strong black woman to aahh I guess you could say the demonized woman of hoetry and what have you.

**Keri:** I would say now, um it’s probably a lot better, it’s a lot more positive. Um you see folks that are models they’re being looked at as actually um objects of beauty as opposed to having the…um what for a long time the…the ideal aesthetics was more Western or more European.

**Keri:** I just think that there’s more images, there’s more examples of women that are African that are…that are doing well, that are successful, that are education, that people respect and look up to as opposed to before people just thought that we were all you know sitting in a hut waiting for a coconut to drop on the top of our heads
**Chloe**: I mean we have a lot of positive role models I would say um such as you have Michelle Obama who is an African American woman who has been identified as you know a leader in a very positive role model.

Yara, Keri, and Chloe’s comments illustrate the acknowledgement by participants that positive imagery are present alongside the negative, yet these positive images are noted be a recent occurrence, not as prevalent within their youth. Yara and Chloe note the polar opposite range of imagery, from the “demonized woman of hoetry” (Yara) to that of a professional “Michelle Obama” (Chloe). Keri speaks on not only the increased positive representations, but also on what appears to be a gradual embracing of the beauty of Africans and their descendants.

Notably, the question of African representations revealed an interesting aspect of the psychological narratives experienced by migrant Ghanaian women. Throughout the interviews, African women and African American women references often became interchanged in giving responses to questions directly asking about African women. This suggests that for this population, the issue of identity is fluid depending on circumstances. In fact, out of 8 participants, when asked about how they have experienced the representations of African women in America, 4 participants answered with examples of either African American representations or both ethnic groups, as opposed to simply African.

An important aspect of the psychological narratives experienced is that of its perceived impact on the psychological narratives of those outside the culture.
Keke: …In talking to like Americans I feel like they don't see… like they don't see that like you know that Ghana for instance is like… they have Internet, they have Wi-Fi, they have all things that we have here because of the portrayals that they see. So I… I guess I don't feel that they’re representative. Um and that you're really getting to see all the things that, like Africans have to offer.

Zoe: I've seen a couple friends like when…when I’m in school. When I’m in high school, most people will be like oh your from Africa and they’ll be like oh what’s wrong with you I thought all African women was supposed to be like big you know. And have a lot of meat on their bones. And I’m just like no, you need to go to Africa we all don't look like that and just stuff like that.

Zendaya: I think there's a view of how Africans looked that is not how we look. We dress just like anyone else dress, we wear jeans, we wear shirts.

Amandla: I feel like the next person sitting next to me who is not African will probably be like oh okay well they struggling, they poor all the time. They don’t know how to speak English (laughter) you know they are totally ignorant. That's how people have this preconceived notion of us.

As argued by participants, representations are experienced as giving false assumptions about Africans, which impact how participants are viewed within their daily lives. Keke and Amandla describe these assumptions as creating a space where Africans are not seen as having anything relevant to offer the world. The similarity Africa has to America is overshadowed by the representations prominent in the media. Zoe and
Zendaya focused on the appearance expectations media representations place on how others believed they should look.

*Figure 8.* Chart H: Themes on In The Public Eye

**Macro theme: in the public eye**

*In the Public Eye* reflects how representations are experienced as moving from personal psychological narratives to impacting participants’ public sphere. Levels of impact vary, evolving from societal perceptions on appearance to presentation in public. The impact of societal perceptions moves away from cultural invisibility to the overabundant negative representations that saturate the media. This negativity is experienced as the normative framework of society in regard to African descendants.
Keri: I still think they’re very negative, I mean not to say that Michelle Obama is African but nonetheless she is a black woman. You still see that a very fully accomplished woman today still gets called a monkey. And she is gorgeous and she’s accomplished and you know just as a woman not as a black woman just as a woman period she’s done a lot for herself. And you can still see that negative um, um depictions of… of her aesthetics because it’s not the European or Western look. And I think that that can also be said for um again black women at large, either African or of African American descent.

Zoe: And some of my friends don't like their body types because people are like oh you’re to big to be an African, stuff like that.

Amandla: That when I see you know TV shows like that or commercials like that persistently, it's extremely difficult because it's kinda like heartfelt because its like oh my God this is how people really view us. They think that that’s all we are but really that's not the case.

Amandla: Africa is not all poverty-stricken as it is. So seeing commercials like that makes me feel like more on a global scale people think we’re starving, we’re totally ignorant.

The impact of representations of appearance is further highlighted within Keke’s assertion on how even when African descendants reach a level of societal achievement, they are still seen through the lens of negativity. The description of Michelle Obama being called a monkey brings to mind that of the perception of participants of prevalent disregard of black aesthetics. While it was previously mentioned, this disregard is
deemed a gradual change that is still being undergone. The emphasis on appearance can also be seen in Zoe’s talk of other’s perception of how an African should look has impacted the self-perceptions of her friends in regard to their own bodies.

Presentation in public involves the roles migrant Ghanaian women perceive as expected by society.

Zendaya: As women, just in the media in general, ah I think we are told to dress a certain way, showing more of our bodies ummmm, and videos or on TV and the way they talk about women, we’re just sexualized (laughter), like that's what women are for. We’re sex objects if we’re not home cooking (laughter) and cleaning. They’re, we’re viewed as sex obj… sexual objects.

Skai: Both African Americans and Africans. Um that came from… from um Africa and they're living here in America because a lot of Africans see um other African-American women and how they dress and they want to look like them and they went to um dress like them as well.

Skai: On TV, magazines, um movies of course ah, even when you're physically walking you see an African-American woman um during summer time how their be um showing cleavage and legs and all parts of um their bodies.

Chloe: Because of this perception that the media sometimes shows African American women to be, you find yourself trying not to be that.

Chloe: You find yourself trying to you know talk a little bit calm, or express yourself you know a little bit more gently, so I feel like you know sometimes the media will show you know you being negative or angry for no apparent reason at
all, that's just the association they put so you know it's not… I don't think it's true you know but that's just how I see it sometimes.

Zoe, Skai, and Chloe bring up points about how societal perceptions and expectations within the public sphere alter the internalizing narratives of Ghanaian migrant women. This insight appears in several participant accounts. Attitudes and even behaviors are adjusted to fit or resist the narrative that is perceived as being most influential, whether it is that of a sexualized representation, angry black woman, or poverty stricken and ignorant imagery.

*Figure 9*. Chart I: Themes on Process of Self Development Through Conflict
**Micro theme: process of self development through conflict**

*Process of Self Development Through Conflict* reflects the Micro levels of conflict as experienced by participants regarding the representations that are present. Conflict is seen as existing within all participant responses and is internalized differently. Chloe speaks on conflict as a process of identity that demands a struggle with how one defines who they are. This struggle is both an internal response as well as external. Psychologically, representations bring doubt on understanding of self. As such, behaviors undergo self-scrutiny for authenticity.

**Chloe:** You just you find yourself sometimes, you know not being who you really are you know what I mean. Or you know you find yourself trying to be accepted, you know what I mean. So that’s where you find yourself at conflict with, with your own… within your own self, you know what I mean. Ok well you know well who… who am I? Am I… should I be upset? You know you see something on TV well you know should I not react? If I react what will people say? Will I just be seen as angry you know, so that’s…that’s what I’m saying you have, you have this self-conflict, you know what I mean?

**Yara** also speaks on the same struggle, suggesting overcoming this conflict of self-identity must be gained separate from media narratives.

**Yara:** Men hold a certain view of a woman and media portrays that view that they want but in reality it's only part of the package

Yara: Yes you could be beautiful, sexy and um confident but then you need to be confident in your skin not what the media makes you think you should be.
Zendaya proposes that conflict exists mainly for those who choose to vocalize their displeasure with representations. This statement suggests that ignoring media narratives is the best course for retaining a positive sense of self.

**Zendaya:** I would say I guess for people who speak out on it, there might be conflict uummm in different ways cause you know there’s people that are more vocal or… or take into account the things that are shown and take it per...more personally.

**Zendaya:** I don’t have any conflict with it because I don't personally take offense to it. Because I, I know who I am!

All participants report this level of conflict is predominantly negotiated through as a youth, and within this group of migrant Ghanaian women, successfully (not perfectly) conquered. This will be discussed later in this study under PQ3.

*Figure 10. Chart J: Themes on Conflict With A Hostile Society*
Macro theme: conflict with a hostile society

Conflict With A Hostile Society addresses societal conflict. This level of conflict assesses how negative imagery is not representative of the culture it portrays. As a result, societal paradigms lack substance as they are applied to Africans (Ghanaians in particular).

**Keke:** The conflict against reality I guess yeah because it’s… its not the way that things truly are so its not giving people the full message.

**Keke:** You are not hearing about like even all the great things that are happening in Ghana for instance.

**Keke:** The way that African people our cultures is, is portrayed isn't based on all the successes it’s more like the negatives.

As described by Amandla, societal conflict on another level is a social conditioning of society by the media to hold a view of the culture. This can be seen as significant to the lack of substance held within societal paradigms. ‘Conflict against reality’ (Keke) distorts societal paradigms. While this sentiment is present in all participant accounts, none are as passionate on this subject as Amandla.

**Amandla:** Absolutely I think it’s definitely a conflict and… and I mean that on…in a global scale.

**Amandla:** They have been conditioned to think you are ignorant, you stupid, you stink or you know just negative um connotations that they have of us.

**Amandla:** We have been institutionalized but now we’re starting to understand that we are not just of what slavery has done to us or colonization has done to us.
Conditioning is implied not only for persons outside the culture, but also those within the culture. Zoe’s statement also illustrates the social conditioning nature of media representations.

**Zoe:** I feel like we’re disconnected because most of the people that are writing this stuff or most of the stuff that people see in on media half of them have never been to an African home or half of them have never like had maybe an African women as friend or anything.

**Zoe:** It doesn't bother me that much but when I see people be like oh you’re this because you are African you know, you do this because you're African. When people say stuff like that then that’s when my mood kind of shifts. Because it’s like you know nothing about me, you know nothing about my culture but you want to put your input on something you don't know. But whatever you see you just gonna take it and It’s not cool.

This conditioning has also generated conflict between Africans and their descendants, African Americans. While several participants view this conflict as active and ongoing, others see a passive or diminishing conflict.

**Zoe:** I definitely think there’s a conflict. I feel like African-Americans in general just don’t know their roots. Even some of them now are getting to that point where they’re like okay well I know my ancestors are Africans, I may not want to accept it but I know that my ancestors are African.
Zoe: I just feel like both um African-Americans and Africans are just like we’re not the same people. You African-Americans are rowdy and us Africans are quiet. You know just two different things.

Keke: I just feel like especially like African-Americans don't view Africans as equal.

Keke: I wouldn't say like active conflict like they’re fighting in the streets or anything (laughter) but I think that there’s um that they’re not necessarily like on the same team.

Keri: I would say that Africans in America were more likely to be ostracized or looked at as other.

Keri: I think on the African American side there is still the perception that Africans may look down on them and think that oh they’re this or you know they’re… I don’t know they just have a negative feeling towards Africans Americans. And I think over time not to say it doesn’t exist, but I think over time that's started to melt away. But I can say that being younger I think that both sides were definitely you know this is how we feel about you and this is how you feel about us.

Zoe, Keke, and Keri’s statements demonstrate the awareness of disconnect between Africans in America and their descendants, African Americans. As presented, Africans in America and African Americans view each other as fundamentally different, yet it is a difference based in behavior, not physical appearance. Zoe places some of this disconnect on what is seen as lack of knowledge by African Americans with regard to
their historical roots. Keri, in contrast, places how Africans appear to look down on African Americans as contributing to the conflict. Keke simply acknowledges the gap between the groups that places them on opposite teams. Keri is one of the few participants who believe that the gap is slowly closing.

The posing of question PQ3 proved to be one of the most insightful in bringing understanding to the lived experiences and perceptions of diasporic Ghanaian women within the United States as it relates to black sexuality. The next two themes explored responses that exemplified the principal meaning-making for all participants within this study. While describing one’s own self-perception and its potential influence by media representations, this researcher was able to see the nature in which each participant told their stories. Lived experiences and perceptions throughout the participants flowed from a focus on psychological processes to its behavioral outcomes, as was also present in the previous themes. This remained true both within intrapersonal musings, interpersonal relationships, and societal interactions. However, it is within these two themes that the transformative conflict resolution process that develops a unique citizenship based in intersectionality is brought to light and illustrated beautifully.
Figure 11. Chart K: Themes on Realization of Self

**Micro theme: realization of self**

*Realization of Self* for participants explores the path from youthful attempts at assimilation to becoming aware of societal opposition and developing an established adult identity. This identity is one that embraces the intersectionality inherent for each participant. Despite the negative nature of representations, they in fact play an important part in the successful navigation for many within this research. The most striking finding within this theme is the strong conveyed sense of self that is reported by participants. This theme begins in youth.
**Zendaya:** It affected me more when I was younger, like growing up in school with my African last name, being teased

**Zendaya:** Being told to go back to Africa, when I was born in America.

**Skai:** When I was back in high school yes because I’ve seen um… I’ve seen many young girls react in a… in a way that I wanted to follow um that I wanted to follow but now ah my mind is set on a whole different perception of um how to um take care of myself and how to… um how to pretty much just live my life in a more responsible um way.

**Chloe:** I mean coming to this country when you're very young I would say um you know you can lose a lot of your own culture, you can. You lose a lot of your own culture and you find yourself especially when you're young trying to assimilate and identify with the American culture um so it's easier to not understand you know why your parents are doing certain things because of the friends that you're around. You’re young so you’re following what you see in the media.

**Zoe:** In elementary school people always be like oh you’re an African booty scratcher and I’m just like where do you get this stuff from? Like I've never… what does an African booty scratcher look like is what I want to know. So from there on when people say that I’ll just be like I’m not African because I don’t want anyone to insult me and be like oh you African booty scratcher whatever that means. So I would just told them I was just black.
Participants noted that their experiences as youth was a process that included repeatedly being rejected by their peers. Participants were teased in references to their heritage, ‘African booty scratcher’ (Zoe), and even were told to go back home, despite some being born within the States, like Zendaya. Skai and Chloe recount how pressures of youth to assimilate would result in adapting and often losing some aspects of their Ghanaian culture. This seeking approval could even lead to the rejection of their African background: “So I would just told them I was just black” (Zoe).

*Realization of Self* continues into the struggle for self-identity.

**Amandla:** Sometimes its hard for me to classify myself as African American but also hard to classify myself African. Because I know I am African but the culture has changed… shi… shifted… its like a paradigm shift for me now.

**Keke:** I think because of the way I was raised in like America that I tend to gravitate towards the African-Americans and don't feel as much acceptance in the African but then like I said when I'm in the African-American it's kind of like, there can be some ignorant um opinions of the African so its kind of like you don't really fit anywhere.

**Chloe:** Um you know and I would say that's how it is while you growing up in your teenage years, even a teenager who comes here for when they’re 16 or 17 it seems like sometimes they have to make up for lost time (laughter) so you know they, they try to more so identify with the Americana culture, try to assimilate, you know try to lose their accent, losing themselves in this culture.
Zoe: It took me kind of a long, a very long time to even tell people that I was probably African or even Ghanaian for that most. Like when people be like oh where you from or what are you, I be like I'm Black, I'm like African American. Like it took me probably until my senior year in high school when I saw people finally like embracing like the African roots like having ASA teams and stuff like that. And like now when I go to school they’re like where you from and I’m like of I’m Ghanaian. And they be oh you speak Twi, yeah I’m like yeah. And we just go on from there.

Keri: Growing up in a culture where your African in one moment and then no your American the other its it’s hard to um and I guess impress upon people how important your culture is so a lot of times you just blend into the more dominant African culture which would be the African American experience if that, if that makes any sense. Um because you don’t have those other images to substantiate that yea we’re doing things too.

For the participants, the process of establishing their self-identity illustrates the challenges of living in two worlds. Balancing both aspects of their upbringing presents a conflict in not rejecting crucial parts of who they are. Amandla speaks on the difficulty of classifying self as either African or African American. Keke and Keri place the feelings of not completely fitting into either world contributing to the issues of self-identity. This is exaggerated by what appears to be rejection from the two worlds they seek to belong in. Chloe and Zoe’s comments show how their youthful search for identity required the rejection of African ways. As noted by Zoe, it was not until the recognition of African
culture, and its rising visibility and reception within the larger culture, that her own self-acceptance of her heritage started to form. This implies that rejection of one’s own culture within this current era may no longer exist.

The transformation continues and is reaffirmed in adulthood.

**Zendaya:** I feel now that I've grown up and I've got to know myself more it doesn't really affect me. Because I (laughter) know who I am, like I said before.

**Keke:** I think now it’s more like it's more macro versus when I was a child when it was micro. So what do I mean? When I was a child it was you know where do I fit in or you know what do people think of me in this like schoolyard right and now it's kind of like… I think I’ve as an adult I've accepted who I am.

**Yara:** I try to blend it, because I know I’m… I’m blended. I am very much blended. Um I am American I was born and raised here but, um at the same time I do try to teach at least my kids that this is where you know your family’s from and that you know I expose them to foods, I expose them to family member who still speak the language, we still keep in contact with family back home.

**Skai:** Now that I'm more matured, um I…I really think about um family and um more of adulthood then going back to living my life like how it was before.

Adulthood, as described by participants, appears to be the space where their previous negotiation of their worlds cumulates into a strong sense of self. Within this space, Zendaya voices now knowing herself and, as such, being less affected by external factors. Yara asserts the blending of all that makes her identity being part of affirming
self. Keke and Skai both speak on the shifting of perceptions (Keke) and values (Skai) that comes with acceptance of self.

This process looks different for each participant:

**Amandla:** After reading from World History to African Diaspora, I was like oh my God, I came from great (inaudible) ah um great um scholars too who were African descent.

**Amandla:** And that make me start to like wow I’m proud of myself, I’m proud of what my people have done. So now I’m comfortable with myself. I’m comfortable as a strong black independent Ghanaian American if I should dare say that.

**Yara:** I express myself, I see myself as an African and as an American.

**Skai:** How I identify myself is, is different from what I’ve seen or what I’ve experience um in the past, um because I know myself and I know what I represent.

**Skai:** I know the goal that I’m, I’m…I want to accomplish and the career wise I know where I’m heading.

**Chloe:** The culture I identify with is um I would say Ghanaian American because though I was born in Ghana um I was raised in America so there's certain things um you know in the American culture that I really like and I accept and certain things in the Ghanaian culture that I really like and I accept.

**Chloe:** It's okay to be from Ghana and still living in America.
Keri: I was always taught to be proud of who I am, African, Black, all of that. But at the same time don’t let that just be the sole definition of you. Like, you’re more then that, that’s definitely important and that’s who you are but you are more then that. So you do you, you let people see that through you know getting those straight A’s and getting the A+’s and that, and that type of thing.

For Amandla, it took one class teaching the history of Africa and its contributions to the world for her perspective to be shifted and her transformation achieved. Yara and Chloe’s ability to express themselves as both African (Ghanaian) and African American enables them to reaffirm who they are. Skai acknowledges the maturity of adulthood and having direction and goals to accomplish as a supporting effect on her identity. While Keri reinforces the value of having goals on strengthening identity, she notes the impact of parental support in creating those values. While participants have taken different paths to construct their sense of self, it is the process of seeing that is crucial for this defining.
Macro theme: finding placement in world

While the previous theme under this question focused on the psychological aspect, this theme focuses on the behavioral outcomes. Behavioral outcomes range from the self-scrutiny of personal behaviors to societal scrutiny of participants’ behaviors. This scrutiny is done in a circular activity in response to each other. Societal scrutiny involves both participants’ own cultural guidelines and the larger American directives. Both types of scrutiny are led by the various representations reported (sexualized, angry/sassy, poverty/ignorant).
American societal scrutiny is experienced as judgment; as such, a need to prove that judgment wrong is strongly felt.

**Amandla:** Here it's like oh black people aren’t civilized.

**Amandla:** You know not necessarily civil society yet. That's how it is. That’s how I feel like we are representative here. And I just was used to the American way you know, have to look a certain way, you have to you know. My natural hair I felt like I had to perm my hair to kind of you know fit in the group.

**Keke:** Someone may not know that I’m African, so they might just say something and put me in a position where I'm uncomfortable or have to like (laughter) kind of correct them to their ignorant um opinions based on the representations.

**Keke:** I do worry about portraying myself as like either angry or to sassy in like a work environment. Um around people who are not um mainly around people who are not my race right. Um so yea that does impact me.

**Keke:** It kinda sucks. I mean because you, you feel like you're always on eggshells. You're always trying to make sure that you, you represent…like you represent everyone right.

**Yara:** I don't want to be the one that you say look, look at that person. I want to be as, as vanilla as possible, as blended in as possible.

**Yara:** I don't want to seem suspicious or weird. Its sad that we are considered suspicious or weird (coughing) but I still don’t want to seem that way. And then at the same time I don't want to be itemized. I don’t want to be ogled. I don't want to
be um fetishized or looked at in a way that is extremely sexual manner if I'm just walking done the street.

**Yara:** It’s not like I'm forcing myself because this is part of the norm um but I… I know what I need to do, like I said its based on represent… representation and that representation um it fuels how people perceive you. So I understand that I have to make sure that I represent myself in a certain way to make sure that I get the out… income not the… the outcome that I’m looking for.

**Chloe:** You tend to view yourself is that you feel like you need to prove yourself, you know what I mean. If you're talking to you know maybe your white counterparts you need to prove well I've done this and I've done this and I've done that.

**Chloe:** Sometimes you even accomplish more then a lot of people so you know the way you perceive yourself I guess is you know trying to be more cautious or walk on eggshells depending on who you are talking to.

**Keri:** I think particularly being a woman, being an African American, being an African, all of those things, you find yourself… you find yourself in different situations where you need to adapt so. And not so much I’m adapting and changing myself but I understand what the situation is and okay I embrace it.

While cultural scrutiny is also seen as judgment, participants report less of a desire to engage in behaviors that prove themselves to their ethnic peers. Musings on cultural scrutiny address the complexity of dual existing cultures. This complexity centers
on behaviors participants exhibit that are viewed as not Ghanaian enough for their Ghanaian community.

**Amandla:** I don’t feel like I have to wear those physical things to illustrate how I really feel. But unfortunately that’s part of the culture so because I have slowly eradicated out of my life which I haven't, I just have assimilated to another culture (laughter) so it makes it seem like oh you… you don't care. You don’t care.

**Chloe:** Once your raised here I feel like people, you could never be, you could never be a same Ghanaian, as they would portray you as Americanize.

This theme also addresses the resources and motivation for adjustments to societal behaviors. Resources for all participants were reported to be family/social supports and education/career.

**Yara:** My family have made sure to point out how beautiful I am. Um I… and not just my family um friends, people I hold dear. They see that beauty is more inside than external

**Yara:** I was raised with the strong backing to know myself um and I make sure that I try to at least put that face forward.

**Skai:** The crowd that I hang out with now it's pretty more educated, their more educated um in school or even going after their education um finishing up their degrees

**Skai:** So those that are, are motivating um for…for… and also supporting me to push forward in my education, career.

Motivations range from internal processes to external circumstances.
**Keke:** I like succeeding

**Keke:** I think I like the feeling when you do something and you do it well.

**Amandla:** What it does is its creating conflict not even just Africans also Afro-Caribbeans, Jamacians, they hating African Americans. They call them lazy, constantly dependent on government assistance. It creates more conflict but at the same time and ironically what is it its motivating the Africans. You see most Africans here trying to get PhDs. You see most Africans here trying to get Masters, get at least a college degree, nurses, nurse practitioners, physical therapists, pharmacists, doctors, lawyers, engineers, its, it’s a motivation for us.

Amandla’s comment was made in reply to the discussion on the reported conflict between Africans and African Americans. Within that discussion, she reported the use of that conflict to rise above societal expectations. Chloe also discusses the use of societal conflict as a motivation to succeed.

**Chloe:** They, they want to get a reaction out of you um and you know seeing people like Michelle Obama um you know standing up there and speaking so well and so accomplished you know when so much sometimes is against her so much negativity is brought to her you know and Obama you know those are the people that you look at and you be like wow you know if, if she can do this, if she can be in the limelight of the media and so much negativity and not let it bother her um you know then why can’t I do it.
Chloe’s example illustrates the power of seeing positive representations. Michelle Obama’s negative reception, and her ability to successfully navigate that negative space, inspired Chloe to also put in her own efforts.

Summary

The reporting style for the findings of this research is one that focuses on the processes and systems participants conveyed that are found within the data. Therefore, findings are written in a generalization of the overall discoveries. Consequentially, discrepant cases and nonconforming data do not manifest, as all participants have processes they undergo and systems they must negotiate through. In this manner, the voices of all participants could be clearly conveyed and no one voice dropped. Due to this, there was no use of recurrent themes, so a sense of the fluidity of the experiences and perceptions can be felt.

The lived experiences and perceptions of this group of 1.5 and second-generation Ghanaian women concerning black sexuality are examined within the process of identity formation and belonging. The systems explored are those cultural and societal schemes that are wrestled within their seeking of placement within their worlds. Lived experiences and perceptions have flowed from narratives imposed by the media to directly impacting societal achievement. This encompasses the perception that media representations are predominately negative in nature. While this research originally operated under the assumption that the strongest representation that would be operating was one of a sexualized representation, findings indicate this is not the case. Instead, the findings show that two other representations (Angry/Poverty) run alongside the sexualized imagery and
impacts just as strongly. Therefore, the reception within American society towards Ghanaians and others of African descent are deemed limited and turbulent. Through negotiation, participants must struggle with dynamics of psychological and behavioral trappings. It is through the use of both internal and external resources that navigation is successful for this group of women. Findings reveal the end results are a unique citizenship forged by participants that embraces their intersectionality.
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Voluntary international migration into the United States has created an influx of Africans who are slowly becoming deeply woven into American society. Yet, research lacks abundant in-depth documentation on lived experiences and perceptions on a wide range of issues relevant to their integration into American society. One particular area missing in-depth knowledge is discussions on black sexuality. Black sexuality within African studies in America is centered on African Americans. The vast array of various cultures within other blacks in America is negated as a default into this group. This research sought to help fill in the gaps missing from this population. By filling this gap discourse on conflict resolution processes for migrants can also be expanded.

The construction of black women’s sexuality is one factor that can determine their placement and, often, who they must be. As such, this study sought to explore this problematic construction of black women as primarily sexualized objects. This research stands on the belief that this construction has led to narrow avenues of individual and group actualization of societal potential for many African descendants. As put forth, the American media promotes construction of a black sexual identity. Hence, this research examined the impact of media cultural representations of black sexuality on identity formation, migrant integration (ethnic and cultural interactions within and between groups), and perceived social achievements on 8 migrant Ghanaian women in the United States. This produced in-depth knowledge surrounding how this system was resisted or internalized. Studying this group of black women’s lives provided insight into a group of
citizens’ fight for recognition. This research focused on the conflict inherent in the migrant integration process. Particularly, this research examined conflict with identity formation and belonging when it comes to integration into a new society. This study explored integration placed within a context of an established sexualized identity as a normative identity for black women. This research attempted to understand how this population negotiates this conflict.

Findings show that overall, the conflict resolution evolution for participants undergo various processes and systems development as they are integrated into American society. A society they deemed riddle with inadequate African representations. Findings indicate these processes and systems occur under Micro and Macro level dynamics. Reflected are individual and psychological processes, as well as societal and larger cultural systems. Perceptions are examined within the processes of identity formation and belonging. Lived experiences are explored under systems of cultural and societal schemes that address seeking of placement and achievements within American society. Key findings show that participants move continually through various processes and systems developed under 9 inclusive themes: Psychological Narratives, Process of Self-Development Through Conflict, Process of Realization of Self, In the Public Eye, Conflict with A Hostile Society, Finding Placement in World, Navigating Sexuality, The Power of Perceptions and Finding Identity and Belonging.
Interpretation of the Findings

Connection to theories

Social Identity Theory, Theory of Belonging, Black Sexual Politics, and Intersectionality proved to be appropriate theoretical frameworks for the analysis of this study. These theories allowed in-depth analysis of the lived experiences and perceptions of this group of migrant Ghanaian second generation women. The use of these theories allowed themes to develop that focus on the discourse of sexuality and how it guides their placement in society, as well as intersectionality and how it defines who they are. Therefore, an exploration of the type of citizen this population represents could be developed. As previously put forth, the analysis through processes and systems permitted these theories to be examined in its application. This produced a rich overview of the conflict resolution development for participants as it relates to conflict within media representation and their integration into American society.

Social Identity Theory asserts that membership in various groups comes with already established attributes for being a group member. These established govern behavior and thoughts to its members. As argued when one is particularly attached to a group their acceptance of group guidelines is greater (Hogg et al., 1995). Social identity guides individual’s self-identity. It is part of one’s understanding of who they are and who they are not. It is their own internalized rulebook for behaviors and perceptions. Self-identity, as defined in the literature, is created within interactions within society and society’s expectations (Burke et al., 2003). Because of this, belonging within society is important to the self. The Theory of Belonging accepts that belonging occurs through
experiences of connection to groups. Belonging occurs through multiple avenues of group membership, including places and cultures. As such, The Theory of Belonging asserts that identity can be plural and overlap (May 2013).

Analysis of the data illustrated that social identity is an important aspect of lived experiences for this group of Diaspora women. Group membership expectations had to be navigated for all participants to develop into the citizenship they later accepted as their own identity. For this group, social identity indeed appears to be multiple and overlapping, as previous research has concluded. Findings show that having membership in more than one culture membership may actually have been beneficial (although challenging at the same time). Participants claimed membership in the African American, African, and dominate American culture in varying degrees. Having overlapping and sometimes conflicting rulebooks, expectations, and perceptions to choose from may have allowed a more centering of self-identity for participants that might not have been possible with only one culture group membership. An identity unexpectedly created out of conflict may also have contributed to the resources needed to reject expectations and perspectives deemed negative.

For participants, belonging was established through the conflict found in membership within multiple groups that seem (from perspective of participants) to be in conflict with each other. Belonging findings illustrate the acceptance of all factors that contribute to their sense of self. Participants claimed an intersectional identity that is their belonging in their world. It is a relationship to various members of society in varying degrees. It is a belonging that is dependent on acceptance from those around them. It is
the level of connection for each participant that determines the degree of belonging and
which membership is stronger. Belonging for participants is a process developed over the
years and experiences received through interaction within society. Belonging for each
participant is also a development that evolved from childhood to adulthood.

As previously discussed, Black Sexual Politics addresses discourse on the
sexualization of black bodies. Black Sexual Politics examines the stereotypes that
contribute to the associating of black bodies with a sexual identity. As such, it is ideal for
exploring sexuality and identity. Particularly relevant to this research is the assertion of
media in promoting ideologies that justify this ideology and normalize it (Hill Collins,
2004). Intersectionality explores the connections between race, ethnicity, gender, and
sexuality. It moves away from seeing sex and race as separate factors. It is utilized to
understand how these factors impact an individual’s experiences. It allows the
examination of the various dynamics of identities. Intersectionality removes the silencing
of black women in society and creates a space for their voices to be heard (Barnum &
Zajicek, 2008).

Analysis of data found that psychological narratives for several participants
centered on statements of lack of visible representation of Africans within the media.
Within this invisibility there exists a lack of adult feminine representations. When
representation does exist, African women are placed in roles where they have to maintain
a certain level of invisibility and receive minimal interactions. Invisibility of
representation has also occurred due to African representations being engulfed into the
larger narrative of Black Americans, that of African Americans.
Other participants’ psychological narratives focused on negative representations within the media. As previously mentioned, the original running narrative for the conduct of this study was that the prevalence of a sexualized representation within the media operated as the main narrative impacting black female identity. Therefore, this research sought to determine how migrant Ghanaian women internalized that narrative. However, the findings showed that negative representations experienced by participants emphasize three types of representations, that of the sexualized (Jezebel), angry or sassy (Sapphire), and poverty or ignorant. Although the original intent of this research was to solely focus on the Jezebel representation, the seed for departing from this singular focus was sprouted during the initial proposal defense. A committee member brought up a question about if the findings show that Jezebel representation had no impact, would it be reported? This question remained on the mind of this researcher as a warning to not start this research under an already assumed outcome. It also reasserted the need to not direct interviews under any one direction but maintain participant focus. As such, interview questions were constructed to be open and represent participant's truth. Responses given by participants during the interviews confirmed that the central focus on the Jezebel representation must be departed from to truly give voice to the lived experiences as presented by participants.

All three representations were perceived as equally having influence within Ghanaian communities and African descendants within America. Impact on the participants was determined by which narrative they deemed most prevalent. Sexualized and ignorant representations were found to be most influential during childhood. The
angry or sassy representations were more predominant within adulthood. All representations were found to determine role performance of the participants. Participants assert that a sexual identity is not the defining measure of who they are. Regardless of exposure to sexual representation and impact in youth, as adults, participants are instead defined by their intersectional identity: Black Ghanaian American Women.

Participants saw media representations as giving false assumptions about Africans to those outside the culture. This in turn impacted how participants are viewed and interacted with by other ethnic groups within American society. Participants indicated societal perceptions held false assumptions from African appearance to presentation in public. Societal perception was found not only to hold false assumptions, but also attempting to place those false assumptions onto participants. Participants report the scrutiny of their behaviors by others in attempting to match expectations. Societal perceptions create expectations that participants see as expected of Ghanaian women. As such, attitudes and behaviors of participants are adjusted to resist the narratives that are perceived as being most significant in representation, whether it is that of a sexualized representation, angry black woman, or poverty stricken and ignorant imagery.

As asserted in literature, belonging involves the process of claims making. Claims of identity and place in society must be either accepted or rejected. Belonging demands having a voice within that society that is adequately heard, that an individual must feel not only seen, but heard as well. For this to occur, society must recognize both differences and identity within all interacting members (May, 2013). Data analysis illuminated that participants perceive that they are not truly seen or heard within their
society. Instead, participants report adapting behaviors to not be seen in a manner that is already established for them. Interactions with others, and even members of their ethnic culture, involves not being adequately heard nor seen. Their intersectionality is often taken apart and dealt with in a manner most comfortable for the other.

Participants describe media representations as conflict that is internalized differently. Media representations, along with its influence on societal perceptions, creates a questioning of self. Participants, in developing self through experiences and perceptions, pinpoint a struggle with how one defines who they are. This struggle is activated during youth and is reconciled at adulthood. It is during the process of assimilation during youth that much of this doubt exists. Yet, even with the maturity of adulthood, while many of the doubts are eradicated and replaced with a strong sense of self, participants still experience levels of doubt. This is demonstrated in the various self-scrutinies of own perceptions and behaviors reported. Participants describe the consistent monitoring of their behaviors to ensure that they do not appear to confirm negative representations to outsiders.

Conflict exists for participants on the societal level as a negative paradigm that lacks depth in understanding and embracing Africans, particularly Ghanaians. On another level, societal conflict is a social conditioning of both the larger American society and that of the Ghanaian community. Americans are conditioned to see Africans and their descendants as degenerate citizens, while Ghanaians are conditioned to see themselves, as well as their counterparts-African Americans- in a negative light. This conditioning is also credited with facilitating conflict between the two groups, despite racial ties.
Societal conditioning of Americans and Ghanaians places this group of women in positions as cultural educators and representatives for both their Ghanaian culture and their race. In this position, they are in essence bridging various communities within American society due to their own unique intersectionality. This is not a position joyfully entered into, but one that is felt as an obligatory job. Congruently being placed in this position sometimes creates the requisite to prove who they are to other Americans, African Americans, and their own Ghanaian community. It appears that all interacting groups want to know how strong this groups’ ties lie with, within each community. Not only are participants bridging their various communities, they are also managing the spaces of conflict between their group and others, including African Americans. In essence, participants operate as cultural peacemakers.

As noted by May (2013), belonging is developed through an individual’s interactions with others. Thus, for what is believed to be true belonging to exist, that relationship must be a reciprocated one. As such, society must also accept that individual for it to be sustained. Belonging requires examination of how native and long-term citizens view and interacts with migrants (May, 2013). This makes this researcher question the possibility that for this group, there exists the perspective that for reciprocity to be achieved, they must take on this role of peacemaker, and that the only way for their unique identity and citizenship to be accepted is by them being that middle instrument others in society need.

Key findings all converge to demonstrate that identity formation for this group of migrant Ghanaian women was strongly impacted by the motivation of each participant to
resist the negative representations forced upon them, as well as the tackling of the psychological and societal conflicts that exist within their world. For participants, this forged a strong sense of their intersectional identity, one that accepts all aspects that contribute to their existence. Two external resources play into the establishing of a strong knowledge of self for participants: family/friends support and education/career. Inner psychological struggle and its overcoming was another resource that assisted this group to resist negative representations.

**Connection to literature review**

This study confirms many assertions discussed in Chapter 2. As previously argued, Africans face racism/discrimination from the dominant American group and African Americans who see them as different. In addition, they are faced with stereotyping of who they are. As such, the influence of American culture has seen many conforming to new cultural patterns. They adopt and maintain Western values and modes of behavior (Ndubuike, 2006). As shown in the findings, participants experienced the struggles of assimilation, belonging, and search for identity. Participants underwent assumptions about who they are, and many spoke on the existing disconnection with African Americans. Through this process, they report adopting values and behaviors of the larger society separate from their cultural roots. Yet, the maintaining of those values and behaviors was not uniform, as many perceived societal values and behaviors gained in youth were dropped in adulthood. Additionally, it was found that traditional values and behaviors remained just as influential to participants, creating a hybrid of patterns. This
extends knowledge on the concern that Ndubuike (2002) shared, as worry for this population losing their heritage and African values and simply inserting American values.

This research was able to answer the question this researcher pondered from the study conducted by Agbajoh-Laoye (2006). The question, “does immigration relieve African women of the yoke/burden of tradition or present a solution for the socio-economic problems that besiege them in their home countries?” examined by Agbajoh-Laoye (2006) prompted this researcher to wonder whether the second-generation female Ghanaian migrants experienced the same outcomes of their mothers, or if they are able to gain the empowerment sought by their mothers (Agbajoh-Laoye, 2006, p. 236). While within that study migration did not offer Ghanaian women empowerment and independence (Agbajoh-Laoye, 2006), within this study the opposite result was discovered. Participants within this study reported empowerment and independence, despite conflicts experienced within society and internally. This study cannot determine whether this empowerment and independence is greater than that of their mothers, as the questions did not explore their mothers’ position in American society.

This study is supported by, and confirms the theory of, the ‘crooked room’ espoused by Harrris-Perry (2011). As previously discussed, the ‘crooked room’ operates as spaces where black women exist that house false assumptions of race and gender concerning their identity. In this space, black women resist or bend to the false truths of their lives. Public actions often reinforce these spaces. It is in this environment that black women must develop their identity. Due to this, black women often shift their behaviors to accommodate the expectations placed on them. This affects all aspects of their life,
including self-identity, personal relationships, and work environments (Harris-Perry, 2011). Parallel to the ‘crooked room’, it was argued by May (2013) that an individual’s view of self is dependent on how they believe they are perceived. As previously described, the ‘looking-glass self’ has three elements: how we think others perceive us, how we imagine they judge us, and the self-feelings resulting from these thoughts (May, 2013). When this ‘looking-glass self’ operates within a crooked room, finding identity and belonging becomes more challenging. As the findings indicate, participants do indeed operate their lives within the crooked room. Yet, this crooked room is not filled with just false assumptions of their race and gender, but also their ethnic culture as well. In forming their identities, participants worked to reconcile all the parts of their identity. To do this, they rejected false stereotypes of who they were, while navigating public scrutiny.

While traversing the crooked room, participants experienced the commodification of Otherness discussed in Chapter 2. As discussed under the themes Learning Sexuality and Sexualized Society, the black women’s body is seen as being praised for its physicality, but not accepted on black women. Instead, other, lighter skin races are given praise and approval for these same African features. Hence, society does not have to give up their position of the undesirability of black women while maintaining enjoyment of their physical features. In this manner, superficial acceptance and approval of their beauty is still based in what makes them exotic as ‘Other’.

This study also proposes the possibility of the theory of politics of respectability being strong for 1.5 and second-generation migrant Ghanaian women. Politics of
respectability intrinsically creates what Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) consider a double life, one that has a hidden self and one that is a public appearance. In discussing their lived experiences, participants indicate presenting a public image that is purposely exhibited to counteract negative representations. This public presentation is a means of being a tangible and visible positive representation of their culture, gender, and race, depending on the environment. Politics of respectability appears to be firmly integrated within Ghanaian culture expectations. This is suggested by the strict scrutiny of their behaviors by members within the community, particularly when behaviors are believed to not match expectations.

As shown within the findings, media is indeed seen as a weapon that uses representative images to tell the world what is blackness. This confirms Hooks’ (1952), argument that the dominant culture receives its understanding of black bodies by what is constructed within the media (Hooks, 1952). In this manner, the dominant culture is taught, or, as asserted by one participant, conditioned, on how to perceive the black population. Findings illustrate the lived experiences of participants that show how their interactions with others outside the culture are guided by media representations of who they are. This is supported by Hill Collins (2004), who contends that media reinforces one’s placement in society and as a citizen (Hill Collins, 2004).

This research confirms the assertion that for this group of participants, Diaspora identities are hybrid identities. Participants reported an identity that was produced and reproduced from childhood to adulthood, an identity that had them belonging to predominately one group (African American) as children and forming a new belonging
consisting of multiple culture identities (Black Ghanaian American Women) as adults. As noted, participants’ identity and belonging were created through lived experiences, the host society, their ethnic group, and the diaspora group they are within. Through their storytelling, participants have been able to share their understanding and sense making to be examined (Brinkerhoff, 2009).

**Limitations of the Study**

As specified in Chapter 1, this research had three main goals. The first goal of this research was to examine the lived experiences and perceptions of migrant Ghanaian women within the United States as it relates to black sexuality. The second goal was to expose personal narrative framing of migrant women of African descent within the Diaspora as relates to black sexuality within America. The third goal of this study was to understand representations of black sexuality on identity formation, migrant integration (ethnic and cultural interactions within and between groups), and perceived social achievements. While this research sought to increase the knowledge within Conflict Analysis and Resolution on the topic of Black Sexuality, this researcher acknowledges it was not done to the degree initially sought. As research was conducted and analysis developed, this study developed into a stronger focus on identity formation and societal integration for migrant Ghanaian women.

This researcher has concluded that a more structured methodology would better construct this type of knowledge for the field. A larger longitudinal study that utilizes structured interviewing technique focused solely on Black Sexuality would produce more defined and rigid lines of experiences and perceptions for exploration and extracting of
data. Even a longitudinal study that is also conducted with a semi-structured interview style would produce more in-depth knowledge. A longitudinal study would also allow for the correction of another limitation to this study, that of the number of participants. This study was originally seeking 8-12 participants, but recruitment did not produce the maximum number of possible participants. The resources of this study did not allow for additional time in conducting the study, and consequently, it was completed with the minimal number of allowed participants. Moreover, the small sample did not allow for a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds to increase the validity of findings.

While this study produced a wealth of information that still contributes to the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, it developed into a foundational study that needs additional resources. A longitudinal study would be able to track attitudes and perceptions more concisely, as well as lived experiences on sexuality. It would allow, over time, the rapport needed to be built between participants and the researcher to explore more sensitive areas not explored in this research on black sexuality. As participants were leading this study, the overall flow moved in the direction given by participants. A longitudinal study would allow participants to partake in more interviews that explore changing perceptions. Participants would have the chance to self-analyze responses and take deeper looks into their own communities and surrounding communities, as well as lived experiences to assess the true impact of sexualized representations.

Research by Duck, Hogg, and Terry (2000) suggests that mass media plays a large role in shaping attitudes and behavior both directly and indirectly. Third person
effect regarding media-persuasive messages states that often, people expect media and its messages to have a greater effect on others than themselves. This is considered a systematic perceptual bias that people often act or behave on by overestimating influence on others, while underestimating that same influence on themselves. Arguments for this effect declare it to be more pronounced under conditions where media content is negative, individuals have personal attachment to the issue, and/or the source is perceived to be biased in itself (Terry & Hogg, 2000). A longitudinal study would give space to determine if the third person effect played a role in the responses received within this study. With further exploration by both participants and researcher, observing Ghanaian communities under a more aware perspective may produce greater understanding of lived experiences surrounding the impact of sexualized representation on this population.

**Recommendations**

Two findings occurred within the analysis of this study that demand further in-depth research to understand this population. One is directly tied to perceptions and lived experiences related to black sexuality. Discussed under the micro theme *Learning Sexuality*, participants’ accounts of being surrounded by the ideal beauty, that of a fair-skinned and long-haired individual, would benefit from more exploration. Exploration of this would impart further insight into understanding black sexuality. This preference for fair-skinned beauty is a trend learned through association within the African American community, but, as reported by one participant, has its own impact within the African community.
Colorism is a term used within African American studies that refers to a pattern of treatment based on skin tone. Colorism, as affirmed by Monesca Smith (2015), is a topic considered taboo. It is asserted that Colorism prevents those with African features (curly hair, wide nose, thick lips, dark skin, etc.) from being comfortable within their skins. Moreover, it is claimed that throughout history, due to Colorism, dark-skinned African descendants faced more obstacles to achieving success (Smith, 2015). Further research to determine the extent of this phenomenon within the African community is needed to contribute to the knowledge regarding African integration into American society. Further research, when conducted, should confirm if this is an influence of integration or an element carried over during migration. Understanding how this taboo topic fits into identity development and achievement for Africans within America would increase Ethnic and Cultural Conflict Studies.

Conflict between Africans and African Americans is a crucial finding that must be further researched and analyzed for its dynamics to decrease the strained relationship between the two groups. It is a finding that is supported within various literature and requires extensive research in gaining a more in-depth analysis of its makeup. Further research will enable programs to be created to assist in the healing of wounds that exist between the two groups. As indicated by the participants, the conflict is fueled by the perceptions of not being accepted, held by each group, with regard to the other. Each comprehends that the other holds false ideologies concerning the other. Despite the reported increase in acceptance of Africans and African features, the relational aspect between the two remains dismal. While literature acknowledges the existence of the
conflict, it does so without in-depth analysis. As such, further research to close the gap and increase knowledge would be beneficial to the field.

This researcher would like to humbly recommend that Conflict Resolution researchers and practitioners tackle more uncommon topics such as these through programs, classes, and curriculums. When focusing programs, courses, and events on African American studies, do not limit conversations, but delve into more complex and honest discourse outside of slavery, historical figures, and current social status. There needs to be a creation of a space that brings the two populations together for frank and direct discussions concerning the current relationship and issues between the two. When conducting African studies, do not limit studies to active conflicts such as wars and genocides, but address the process crucial to Diaspora identities. Explore integration, identity, and belonging that include psychological and culture conflicts present in an intersectional ethnic identity (traversing two or more cultures).

Implications

While this research is limited to this cohort of 1.5 and second-generation Ghanaian women within the D.C. Metro area, this study is transferable, both methodologically and theoretically. The methods and theories used are applicable to further studies of other lived experiences and perceptions concerning integration processes within various nations. Studies with other ethnic groups concerning media representations will benefit from the methodology used, as well as the manner in which the analysis was conducted. While representations may change, as well as specific responses, the overall processes and systems that are worked through psychologically and
socially are still relevant. Therefore, all the themes are very crucial to understanding migrant integration processes.

Implications for this study regarding social change are simple and require time. As this study developed into a foundational research, profound propositions for change will not be asserted. However, findings from this research suggest the possible importance of ensuring the placement of appropriate support systems for the successful integration of second-generation migrants. Policies and programs for second generation women may require increasing attention and focus. Policies should not be simply focused on legal standings, but ones that create supports and spaces of safety and security. Findings indicate the need for spaces where second generation migrants can form identities outside the expectations of a conflicting society. While this group of participants was placed into positions of cultural educators and bridging disconnect between groups with their intersectionality, their psychological development was important for the resolution of their integration. This may be true for other second-generations not studied within this study, and should be explored for clarity.

At the same time, findings indicate those that worry about their second-generation daughters may breathe a small sign of relief. While avoidance of assimilation is impossible, loss of tradition was neither permanent nor detrimental to this group of participants. Instead, it was the process that led to a stronger sense of identity through the regaining of culture. As participants reconcile the many parts of who they are, the blended outcome appears to have created an adult secure in their identity and unique citizenship.
Contribution to the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution

Giving voice to a group of participants from a population often overlooked and under researched contributes to growth in the field of Conflict Resolution Analysis and Resolution. By utilizing Conflict Resolution theories and studies, this research expanded the discourse, opening space for deeper understanding on how the migration and integration process, identity formation, and belonging were impacted by media representations for these 8 Ghanaian descendent women. The processes and systems discovered within this research provided more understanding of the gendered diasporic culture of this group of participants.

To further underline the need for a larger sample outside of this group, more studies must be conducted under this topic that also look at the processes and systems uncovered to assess similarities and differences. This will assist in creating possible programs and policies to increase understanding of integration of Diaspora populations. While this group of participants appears to have done so successfully, other members of this diaspora may have a different story and understanding to bring. Lived experiences and perceptions may vary when a larger population is studied with a more diverse demographic. How current representations impact large and diverse groups studied within the processes and systems presented in this research would continue to benefit the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution by delivering new perspectives to create more efficient, and, importantly, effective resolutions.
Conclusion

The essence of this study is to give a voice to a silent group. This research gave voice to the conflict resolution process undergone by this group of young Ghanaian women as they integrated into American society. Therefore, this research will conclude with potent messages from the study’s participants. It is their voices that will share what this study sought: to extend knowledge in their lived experiences and perceptions on Sexualized Black Bodies.

“People generally treat people the way that their viewed, just like with other cultures you might see something on TV and assume that's how all people of that culture are behaving when it's not necessarily so that way” (Zendaya)

“I just feel like sometimes African females like maybe younger females like my age group are just like oh well our media portrays us like this or our men see us like this in the videos so why not just dress like that you know.” (Zoe)

“What an impact does is that is socializing us. It’s socializing our children and socialization is caused directly... they have something called agents of socialization which is schools, education, parents, religion, community, media. Media as we just talked about it. It’s socializing us to think oh that's all we are good for. You have a few black leaders yeah but not so much.” (Amandla)

“I know that the media will not want to show me, you know as their face of what... whatever they're selling, where um especially for black women aahh I notice that black features are praised on um other bodies as on white bodies or what have you, Hispanics. I know that a lot of people have their variances in races and body shape but
for some reason they are exclusively saying these black features, black features look best on
another race even though those races have those features too.” (Yara)

“I think to me its um its validation of what I’ve already have grown to love and accept um. That we are beautiful in all of our shapes, sizes, curves, whatever the case may be that um we’re beautiful and now Western or other cultures just now starting to, to recognize it. They’re starting to recognize it but still not recognizing it on us. So I think we’ve made... made... I don’t even know if its necessarily making progress because its still like its not accepted on us but its still accepted on you know these other... other ethnicities.” (Keri)

“I view myself as like African and I view myself as an American so if so when you portray an African woman as weak or impoverish or not as intelligent that hurts me because I feel like that you are talking about me (laughter). And when you talk about a bla... black woman as you know maybe over sexualized or unwanted, maybe successful but nobody wants to be with her that I feel like your talking about me, so both ways.” (Keke)

“I believe that is has impacted them a lot because we talk about it um when where together we talk about how um certain things are influencing others um in the um in the African... African-American community and also in the African communities as well. Um we do have conversations on those type of issues where ah we see things on TV and magazines and how other Africans are also following in that um ah in…in... in that order” (Skai)
“You can take you know what you know of America and what you know of your own culture and really blend yourself and be you know the best you can possibly be. And I mean the best that you can be is um you know learning your culture um appreciating your culture for what the women can do for the culture. But also you know realizing that it's important to educate yourself you know. Realizing it's important to be you know a leader you know in your workplace you know even if you are woman you know. Or be a leader you know to your children even if you are woman um and just realizing the opportunities that you have in this country.” (Chloe)
References


Appendix A: Tentative Timeline

***The Dissertation Proposal Timeline was developed by Ms. Terre Bethea, under supervision of Dr. Claire Michele Rice, Department of Conflict Analysis & Resolution, Graduate School of Humanities & Social Sciences (Fall, 2007). Modified for general use, Fall 2008. Adapted for Yaa Bempa-Boateng, Winter 2015

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**Dissertation Proposal Timeline**

Chair: _____Dr. Muvingi, PhD______________________________

Committee Members: 1. _Dr. Cooper________ email:____robicoop@nova.edu_____________

Committee Members: 2. _Dr. Bastidas________ email:____bastidas@nova.edu___________

Working Title: _Sexualized Black Bodies: The Diasporic Gendered Identity?__________

Date Signaling Start of Proposal Writing Process:  ______May 1st, 2015______________

Projected Proposal Defense Date:  ____December 2016________________


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**Dissertation Proposal Timeline**

**Chair:** Dr. Muvingi

Committee Members: 1. Dr. Cooper email: robicoop@nova.edu

Committee Members: 2. Dr. Bastidas email: bastidas@nova.edu

**Working Title:** Sexualized Black Bodies: The Diasporic Gendered Identity?

Comments on current progress/status: N/A

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**November 2016**

- Dissertation
- Meet with Committee
- Schedule defense

**December 2016**

- Defense
- Final Dissertation
Appendix B: Master Table of Superordinate Themes

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<th>Box 3.9 Abstraction leading to the development of a superordinate theme (Master Table)</th>
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<td>PQ2: For you do you feel there is conflict in how these representations exist?</td>
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<td><strong>Micro Themes:</strong> Process Of Self Development Through Conflict</td>
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Personal Impact
Ethnic Identification Issues
Process of Reaching Potential
Process of Self Acceptance
Process of Youthful Assimilation
Internal Process of Acceptance
Reaching Adult Potential

**Macro Themes:** Finding Placement In World
Societal Reception
Process of Assimilation
Societal Impact
Behavioral Navigation
External Motivator for Potential
Resources to Achieving Self Acceptance
External Process of Acceptance

RQ1: How have you experienced the sexualized representations of African women in America?

**Micro Themes:** Learning Sexuality
Internalized Sexualization
Personal Direct Experience

**Macro Themes:** Sexuality As Societal Identity
Societal Limited Reception
Sexualized Societal Representations
Sexualized Media Representations

RQ2: To what extent does these sexualized representations conflict with your identifications of self?

**Micro Themes:** I Am Not My Sexuality
Process of Acceptance
Just Emotions
Process of Self Acceptance
Process of Seeking Acceptance

**Macro Themes:** Sexualized Society
Process of Acknowledgement
Societal Demands
Societal Expectations

RQ3: For you, are there differences between black representations and other ethnic groups’ representations?

**Micro Themes:** As Affected By Societal Perceptions
Personal Impact

**Macro Themes:** Acting Out Societal Perceptions
Societal Impact
Societal Reality
Limited Media Representations
Physical Altercations of Others
Societal Perceptions
Societal Opinions

RQ4: Can you tell me how you feel about these representations?

**Micro Themes: From Perception to Response**
- Dislike
- Internal Adjustment
- Over Hyper Self Awareness
- Internalized Emotional Responses
- Negative Emotional Responses

**Macro Themes: From Representations To Perceptions To Application**
- Incomplete External Representation
- Societal Paradigms
- Leading Paradigm Shifts for Others
- External Actions
- Societal Judgment/Policing
- Importance of Public Representations
- Societal Demands
- Societal Contributions to Emotional Responses

RQ5: To what extent has representations affected your African community?

**Micro Themes: Silent Guiding Narratives**
- Internalizing the Narratives (Passive)
- Just Opinions
- Passive Paradigms
- Cultural Values (Internal)
- Internalization of the Narratives
- Process of Cultural Self Acceptance
- Process of Adapting to Societal Expectations

**Macro Themes: Narratives As Societal Placement**
- Media as a Weapon (Action)
- Active Paradigms
- Forced Societal Limitations
- Process of Societal Incorporation
- Societal Negative Reception
- Cultural Behaviors (Public)

RQ6: Can you tell me how these representations guide how others within your group interact with you?

**Micro Themes: More Than Culture**
- Personal Impact
- Internal Expectations
- Youthful Seeking of Belonging
Macro Themes: Cultural Adjustments
Incomplete External Representations
Cultural Discussions
External Cultural Judgment
Larger Cultural Expectations
Shifting The African Character
Larger Group Seeking of Belonging

RQ7: Can you tell me how these representations influence how other ethnic cultures interact with you?

Micro Themes: Invasive Belonging
Invasion of Personal Space
Process of Finding Placement
Internal Adjustments
Racial Perceptions
Selective Belonging
Internal Demands on the Person
Conflicting Perceptions

Macro Themes: Interactive Cultural Bridging
Societal Educator
Internal Community Impact
External Community Interactions
Guiding Societal Interactions
Societal Judgment/Policing
Racial Interactions
Cultural Representative To the Public
Societal Demands on the Person
Impact of Perceptions

IGQ 1: Are there differences between African representations and other black groups representations

Micro Themes: From Individual To Group Differences
Individual Adaption to Changes in Societal Perceptions
Personal Reflections
Private Space Process
Surface Imagery/Perceptions

Macro Themes: From Group To Societal Differences
Societal Changes in Representations
Historical Reflections
Public Consumptions
Cultural Nuances
Larger Societal Impacting Issues
Reality/Tangible Impact
Societal Perceptions
IGQ2: What are some of the resources you had growing up?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Micro Themes: Self As A Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Responses to Societal Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Motivational Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process of Internal Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Support on Process of Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Process of Self Awareness of Potential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro Themes: External Supports As A Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete External Representations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Factors for Societal Potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Motivational Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools for Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Tangible Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Factors of Motivation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix C: List of Micro and Macro Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3.10 Master Table of Micro and Macro Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PQ1: How have you experienced the representations of African women in America?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Micro Themes:</strong> Psychological Narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro Themes:</strong> In The Public Eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ2: For you do you feel there is conflict in how these representations exist?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Micro Themes:</strong> Process Of Self Development Through Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro Themes:</strong> Conflict With A Hostile Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ3: How have those representations affected your own self-perceptions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Micro Themes:</strong> Process Of Realization Of Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro Themes:</strong> Finding Placement In World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: How have you experienced the sexualized representations of African women in America?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Micro Themes:</strong> Learning Sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro Themes:</strong> Sexuality As Societal Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: To what extent does these sexualized representations conflict with your identifications of self?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Micro Themes:</strong> I Am Not My Sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro Themes:</strong> Sexualized Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3: For you, are there differences between black representations and other ethnic groups’ representations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Micro Themes:</strong> As Affected By Societal Perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro Themes:</strong> Acting Out Societal Perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4: Can you tell me how you feel about these representations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Micro Themes:</strong> From Perception to Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro Themes:</strong> From Representations To Perceptions To Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ5: To what extent has representations affected your African community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Micro Themes:</strong> Silent Guiding Narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro Themes:</strong> Narratives As Societal Placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ6: Can you tell me how these representations guide how others within your group interact with you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ7: Can you tell me how these representations influence how other ethnic cultures interact with you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGQ 1: Are there differences between African representations and other black groups representations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGQ2: What are some of the resources you had growing up?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Micro Themes**: Individual/Psychological Processes  
**Macro Themes**: Societal/Cultural Systems
### Box 3.11 Master Table of Final Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PQ1: How have you experienced the representations of African women in America?</th>
<th>Micro Themes: Psychological Narratives</th>
<th>Macro Themes: In The Public Eye</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PQ2: For you do you feel there is conflict in how these representations exist?</td>
<td>Micro Themes: Process Of Self Development Through Conflict</td>
<td>Macro Themes: Conflict With A Hostile Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: How have you experienced the sexualized representations of African women in America?</td>
<td>RQ2: To what extent does these sexualized representations conflict with your identifications of self?</td>
<td>Superordinate Theme: Navigating Sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3: For you, are there differences between black representations and other ethnic groups’ representations?</td>
<td>RQ4: Can you tell me how you feel about these representations?</td>
<td>Superordinate Theme: The Power of Perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ5: To what extent has representations affected your African community?</td>
<td>RQ6: Can you tell me how these representations guide how others within your group interact with you?</td>
<td>RQ7: Can you tell me how these representations influence how other ethnic cultures interact with you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGQ 1: Are there differences between African representations and other black groups representations</td>
<td>IGQ2: What are some of the resources you had growing up?</td>
<td>Superordinate Theme: Finding Identity and Belonging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PQ: Primary Questions
RQ: Reserve Questions
IGQ: Interview Generated Questions
Micro Themes: Individual/Psychological Processes
Macro Themes: Societal/Cultural Systems
Superordinate Themes: Overall Common Concepts