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## Examining the Social Distance Between Africans and African Americans: The Role of Internalized Racism

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**EXAMINING THE SOCIAL DISTANCE BETWEEN AFRICANS AND AFRICAN  
AMERICANS: THE ROLE OF INTERNALIZED RACISM**

**PROFESSIONAL DISSERTATION**

**SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY**

**OF**

**THE SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY  
WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**

**BY**

**ADAOBI CHIAMAKA IHEDURU, PSY.M.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF  
DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY**

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**September, 2013**

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**WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

June 21, 2012

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY **ADAObI CHIAMAKA IHEDURU** ENTITLED **EXAMINING THE SOCIAL DISTANCE BETWEEN AFRICANS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS: THE ROLE OF INTERNALIZED RACISM** BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY.

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## **Abstract**

African immigrants are continuously migrating to the United States and comprise a major part of the immigrant population. In a recent U.S. Bureau of Census report on foreign-born residents in the United States, African immigrants numbered 364,000 out of 1.6 million foreign-born people of African origin living in the United States (Rong & Brown, 2002). Much of the psychological literature about immigration is framed in terms of issues of adjustment. (Ward & Kennedy, 2001). Despite the growing number of African immigrants and the awareness of incidents of acculturative stress and adjustment difficulties among various immigrant groups, there are limited studies that have examined the adjustment of African groups to racism and racial discrimination in the United States. This study explores the complex and what might be described by some scholars as the somewhat nonexistent relationship between Africans and African Americans within the United States. For the purpose of this discussion the author is hypothesizing that racism plays a prominent role in this dynamic of social “distance” between Africans and African Americans. An emphasis is placed on internalized racism as a variable in the divide that keeps these two groups with common African ancestry from being able to form a larger sense of community.

Separate focus groups were conducted with African American and African participants in an effort to better understand the nature of the relationship between both groups. During focus groups, the origins of prejudice and stereotypes about both groups were discussed, and ways of ameliorating existing social distance was explored. Participants also completed the Modified Natanolitization Inventory (Taylor, Wilson, & Dobbins 1972), an internalized racism scale that measures the presence of racist beliefs

among participants. Results from this study provides information regarding the role of internalized racism which arose from slavery, colonization, racism, discrimination, and white domination, as applied to the hypothesis of “social distance” in the relationship between Africans and African Americans in the United States. Suggestions for future research studies are also provided.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this project to my African brothers and sisters whom we lost through slavery, and all other Africans in the diaspora. I hope that this begins the process of uniting individuals of African descent all over the world. This work is also dedicated to my ancestors on whose shoulders I stand, for giving me the culture and traditions that I very proudly call mine. I also dedicate this to my village in Nigeria, from where my inspiration come.

## **Chapter 1: Literature Review**

In recent years, there has been a continuous emergence of immigrants in the United States (U.S.) of which Africans compose a majority. Immigrants are considered citizens of other countries who are admitted into the U.S. based on family ties, and educational qualifications (Darboe, 2003). Most immigrants enter the country on the premise of obtaining education and securing significantly better living. Africans have been found to constitute a significant part of the immigrant flow and represent a sizeable number of immigrants that permanently reside in the U.S. (Darboe, 2003; Kanya, 1997). In a recent U.S. Bureau of Census report on foreign-born residents in the United States, African immigrants numbered 364,000 out of 1.6 million foreign-born people of African origin living in the United States (Rong & Brown, 2002). Despite this, there is limited research pertaining to their acculturation and assimilation to racism and discrimination. Also, there is a lack of adequate documentation regarding their relational patterns with other populations within the United States. Thus, this study examines the relationship between Africans and African Americans with an emphasis on the social distance that exists between both groups.

Research indicates that in spite of their common ancestry, Africans and African Americans remain separated by myths, misperceptions, and negative stereotypes (Traore, 2003). Africans and African Americans embody a genetic link and tie to Africa that unites them both historically and psychologically. Both populations are also united by a

common struggle against European slavery and colonialism (Mwakikagile, 2007; Shaw-Taylor, 2007). In Eastern and Western Africa, several countries were colonized by European nations and remained that way until the 1950s and 1960s. In the United States, institutionalized racial inequalities were removed about the same time in the 1960's (Phinney & Onwughalu, 1996). African people have always been in a concerted struggle to gain total freedom and equality for themselves and their African continent (Jackson & Cothran, 2003). Although a similar struggle against white European power unifies both populations, the psychological dynamics of that struggle has also played a significant role in the enormous distance that continues to exist between them.

Both slavery and colonization are based upon oppressive strategies that denied Africans the opportunity to maintain a psychological integrity related to their cultural foundations. As such, one of the worst impacts of slavery and the social construction, which is colonialism, is the psychological impact on the oppressed. It is hypothesized by several authors that one of the remnants of colonialism and slavery evident at the end of colonial rule is a kind of self-loathing and dual consciousness or a kind of "self-not-self" persona, especially among African Americans (Dobbins & Skillings, 2000; DuBois, 1903). Thus, identification with the aggressor became the most rewarded form of psychological adjustment under the various forms of colonial rules. It is postulated that this self-not-self ideology is present in Africans who have similarly experienced the remnants of white domination.

There are also several other factors that perpetuate the disconnection that exists between Africans and African Americans. These factors include inaccurate portrayals in media and misrepresentation of the African continent in history as well as an absence of

authentic and historically relevant voice within psychology. The aim of this discussion therefore is to help psychology in gaining its voice by advancing the set of topics and discussion that follows.

### **The Psychological Impact of Racism on Africans and African Americans**

The critical point of this section is to highlight the proposition that African American resistance to identification with an African identity is somewhat based on messages internalized from a European dominated colonial experience that has been sustained by a race-based intrapsychic process. This author is concerned with how and why African immigrants and African Americans experience such great social distance. This proposition rests on the belief that social distance is created by history and the construction of an innate white supremacy.

In discussing the social distance that exists between Africans and African Americans, the issue of slavery, and its agents of racism and race supremacy, must be addressed in relation to its impact on the psychological mindset of both groups. Clark (1972) argued that slavery more than any other single event, shaped the mentality of the present-day African American. Akbar (1984) further explained that slavery constituted a severe psychological and social shock to the minds of African Americans who still carry the scars of the experience in both their social and mental lives. Consequently, racial supremacy has given rise to experiences of racism and discrimination, of which slavery is one of the most extreme examples.

The lived experience of slavery continues to negatively impact the self-concept of individuals of African descent who internalize concepts that suggest their inferiority relative to the dominant culture. In regard to this internalization, Akbar (1984) posited

that utter dehumanization of Africans was necessary for the supremacy of the slave master to exist, and in post-colonial times for internalized racism to affect the personalities of African immigrants and African Americans.

Race was used to justify the enslavement of Africans and African descendants (Harris, 2005). This led to the development of race-based discriminatory views and beliefs regarding people of African descent who come to the United States (Carter, 1995). Akbar (1984) asserted that the basis for the abuse and oppression of slaves was his or her skin color, and the way out of this condition was to change that color, psychologically since it could not be done physically. These internalizations have persisted through U.S. history, and several social scientists have validated these views (Guthrie, 2004; Smedley and Smedley, 2005). Critical to this discussion is the fact that internalizations also take root in the post-colonial mind sets of African immigrants who are re-victimized upon coming to America and being distanced by mainstream culture and Black cultural groups who have internalized racism.

Psychology also participated in the projection of inferiority of Black people. Although an emphasis on the incorrectness of blaming the victim and comparative studies has been exposed in more recent multicultural investigations, such race-based “scientific racism” (Dobbins & Skillings, 2005) is still apparent in professional scholarship. Asante (1980) asserts that regardless of their present geographical location and social position, people of African descent have historically been denied true and accurate account of their history due to a European model of social science. This European model of science has been used as the model of normality by placing Europeans and their culture as the world’s point of reference, thus, all behaviors and values of non-European people are

seen as either deviant or normal to the degree that these are similar or dissimilar to European culture and values (Akbar, 1984; Asante, 1980).

For instance, in psychology's history, differences in IQ scores between African Americans and European Americans have been argued as evidence for biologically based African American inferiority (Guthrie, 2004). A 1916 study on the psychology of the Black man concluded that,

Without great ability in the process of abstract thought, the negro remains capable in the sensory and motor power, which is involved in manual work.

Training should be concentrated upon this area because it promises the best return for the educative effort expended. (Nobles, 1986, p.15)

Various other early writings on African Americans perpetuated the rejection of Africans and black people by proposing an inferiority of individuals of African descent and significant deficits in their intellectual functioning. Lewis Terman explained that African-Americans are “uneducable beyond the nearest rudiments of training. No amount of school instruction will ever make them intelligent voters or capable citizens in the true sense of the word...their dullness seems to be racial or at least inherent in their origins, children of this group should be segregated in special classes.” (Nobles, 1986). Explicitly, this suggests the inferior nature of African Americans due to their race and genetic connection to Africa.

Similarly, educational institutions perpetuated beliefs of racial inferiority (Green, 2008; Woodson, 2008). For example, early in U.S. history it was illegal to teach enslaved Africans and African descendants how to read or write (Woodson, 2008). This could be attributed to their assumed low cognitive ability, making them incapable of being

educated. Furthermore, Woodson (2008) argued that the educational history of African descendants in the U.S. mischaracterized African cultures as worthy of shame and disparagement.

In further review of psychological research studies about blacks, there was evidence of a tendency to distort reports regarding the abilities of African Americans. As a result of this, the psychological literature has considerably contributed to the negative connotations associated with being African. From a psychological perspective, it is hypothesized that Black people have indeed been “brainwashed” or enculturated to think that Blacks are genetically of lower cognitive ability than whites as was particularly observed in studies performed in 1950’s and 1960’s (Jackson & Cothran, 2003). This enculturation causes some African Americans to glorify White people and dehumanize Black people in the process, which further reinforces the racial supremacy identity and values (Nobles, 1986). In fact, in rejecting an African identity, African Americans may begin to seek solace in a more culturally valued European identity. In this search of Euro-American values, African social values diminish, while the need for acceptance and the American dream increases (Iheduru, 2006).

African theorists such as Asante (1980) posited that African people have been operating under a system of White oppression and domination for hundreds of years, which has caused them to take on Western values and culture while devaluing African culture and history. This could manifest in different ways, such as in decisions to manipulate physical appearances through the use of skin lightening creams, hair extensions and relaxers to eliminate traces of an African identity. Asante (2005) explained that the nineteenth-century blacks saw themselves in an American context, not

as Africa's sons and daughters temporarily domiciled in a strange land. There was nothing so repelling to them than the insistence by some that they were Africans.

This is additionally apparent in the persistent tendency to think of dark skin as unattractive, kinky hair as "bad hair," and African features as less appealing than Caucasian features, come from this sense of inferiority (Akbar, 1984). Akbar (1984) further explained that the African's black skin was considered evidence for his cursed state. Dark skin became equated with the reason for oppression. It is therefore conceivable that individuals of African descent living in a white dominated culture reject an African identity that was for them the cause of suffering and oppression.

To further underscore the internalized aspects of racial supremacy, one might examine the rejection of an African identity as observable in media outlets produced by African Americans. For example, Rapper Dwayne Michael Carter, Jr. (Lil' Wayne) exemplifies this in one of his songs by beginning with the statement, "A millionaire, I'm a young money millionaire, tougher than Nigerian hair (Carter, 2008)." Mockery of the African kinky hair is represented in these lyrics, thereby making the intent and its utility as a means of illustration or imagery, irrelevant.

Over the years, increased awareness of skin color and the degradation of African identity contributed immensely to the development of self-hatred and patterns of valuing the language, customs, and ways of the oppressor. The social and psychological implications of colonialism are evident amongst Africans and African Americans and yet there appears to be some differences as well. One of the differences is that Africans under colonialism were not called slaves and may feel different than their African American counterparts who during slavery were forced to cast off the robes of ancestry and carry

the badge of race (Ghee, 1990), as a substitute for their African identity. Thus, African Americans lack identification with the African cultural values and beliefs that Africans hold dear, thus when Africans arrive in the United States the potential for disconnect is almost immediate.

Shaw-Taylor (2007) explained that in black America, there is an absence of ethnic consciousness; instead there is an exaggerated form of race consciousness that includes other African Americans and presumably blacks everywhere. The colonization system of slavery and racial oppression is complex; it included slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and now modern racism that all serve the same ultimate purpose of promoting white supremacy (Bell, 1992). White supremacy has repeatedly been blamed for creating negative myths and stereotypes about African people as a part of the strategy of “divide and conquer or rule,” which in part blocks Black people from fully recognizing their strength in unity (Jackson & Cothran, 2003).

The domination of Africans through slavery and colonization has left a vast impact on the psychology and identity of individuals of African descent. Thus, responsibility lies on all forms of physical and psychological slavery (Akbar, 1981) for the disposition of individuals of African descent, their relationship to the African continent and to each other. The process of slavery established, cauterized, and continues to reinforce the enormous distance between Africans and African Americans. According to Na'im Akbar, while slavery is the tie that binds, it remains the legacy that also keeps the two groups apart (Mwakikagile, 2007)

African Americans have struggled against a racism that systematically disparaged Blackness, whereas Africans have grown up in cultures in which Blackness is the norm

(Phinney & Onwughalu, 1996). The African immigrant therefore experiences a deeper appreciation and acceptance of his/her African heritage and values. According to Phinney & Onwughalu (1996), “Blackness and Black culture are experienced in countries such as Nigeria and Ghana as part of being, No one stops to consider that ‘Black is beautiful’ it simply is beautiful, a value so deeply accepted that it hardly needs emphasis.” Obviously, societal values regarding Black individuals in the U.S. affect the views and predisposition of African Americans in relation to their African origin and history.

Slavery and long years of fighting for equality and against discrimination has resulted in a somewhat blurred vision on the meaning of the African in African American. African Americans are forced to juxtapose the ever-endearing vision of America and the devastated Africa in the process of establishing their identity. Africa appears to be the antithesis to America, representing everything that America is not (Mwakikagile, 2009). Hence, it does not present an attractive or accomplished history for those individuals desiring to establish their African identity. A strong correlation exists between the absence and lack of appropriate information on Africa, and the African American’s decision to reject his/her African identity. Through this, Africans are also rejected and intentions or desires to associate with them are extinguished as well. African immigrants are situated in the midst of this, and represent live images of the ever-distant Africa ravaged by diseases and primitiveness. Consequently, the hatred and distancing of Africa is projected unto the human representations of Africa, the African immigrants. This contributes to the rough relations that exist between native Africans and African Americans.

Africa in the media is presented from a European viewpoint. For most of history, Africa and Africans have been defined and presented through a Eurocentric lens and conducted research has been European-centered using European values for evaluation (Traore, 2003). This is a view that places a higher value on European White culture rather than on African or Afrocentric values. Because these research studies and views are not based on African thought and character, they exaggerate and devalue the African mind. Evidently, the process of establishing a health African identity presents an enormous struggle for individuals of African descent due to societal and psychological impacts of racism and slavery. Thus, in the next session, this author addresses the process of identity development for individuals of African descent, specifically explaining the various challenges that individuals may encounter during this process.

### **Racial Identity Development for African Americans**

Researchers have depicted the African American personality and identity as reflecting a pathological adaptation to white American society's racism, resulting in a low self-esteem and a heightened sense of self-hatred (Parham, White, & Ajamu, 1999). This is because adaptation to a white dominant society requires an acceptance of racist ideals that emphasize the inferiority of the African individual. Akbar (1991) asserted that, a consequence of this form of adaptation is that the African American suffers routinely from a number of clinical syndromes (i.e., alien-self disorder, anti-self disorder, self-destructive disorders and organic disorders) related to a dual consciousness. This section explores this intrapsychic process that the also author began to discuss in the previous sections, in regard to the internalization process.

This presents a dilemma for African Americans because while this process serves to increase the availability of economic and social resources, but in return proves detrimental to one's identity and psyche. It maintains a race-based social construct that requires a willing repression of macro/micro aggressions that occur in the everyday lives of African people and their descendants who live in the United States. Africans were made to believe that acceptance into the American society was possible if no traces of Africa remained, however, their experience still remains one of duality, of being American but not being completely accepted in American society (Asante, 2005; DuBois 1989). This internal conflict in the African American individual between what is "African" and what is "American" was termed double consciousness by DuBois, which connotes a kind of double personality or internal duality (Allen, 2003; DuBois 1989). This inner turmoil could become paralyzing in nature because the individual has to vacillate between two visions of who he or she is, one established by American society and one by one's culture (Taylor, 2004). This process of double consciousness forces African Americans to ask: "Am I negro or American," while also battling with the realization that a negro must live as a negro and as an American as well (Allen, 2003). This very confusing process tends to lead individuals to develop a double or divided self. The divided experience of being both black and American systematically creates eternal agony that is somewhat irreconcilable as long as the individual continues to live within this culture (Allen, 2003). This complex process of integration and adaptation has significantly contributed to the psychological makeup of Africans and African Americans, including the process of identity formation and the development of specific,

assimilation strategies, and coping styles for adjusting to an oppressive environment which is further discussed below.

For the individual of African descent, identity serves three major functions, it provides a social anchor for meaning to one's existence, it serves as a connection to the broader African community, and it serves as a protection or buffer against the social forces that continually bombard the psyche with non-affirming and dehumanizing messages (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1998). A successful identity formation therefore requires connection to one's African heritage, which proves extremely problematic in a white dominated society where this is both blatantly and subtly discouraged. Similarly, diminished desire to develop and maintain a strong African identity likely results from the considerable consequences by which it is accompanied. Developing an African identity leaves a person open to the argument of the American colonization society that he or she should be sent back to Africa (Asante, 2005). Thus, in order to successfully integrate into a white dominant society and maintain valuable economic resources, there may be a need to devalue one's African heritage.

Resistance to the establishment of an African identity began with slavery, where Africans were robbed of all traces of their ancestral heritage while placing the white dominant culture in high regard. A systematic process of creating a sense of inferiority in the proud African was necessary in order to maintain them as slaves; this was done through humiliating and dehumanizing acts combined with loss of cultural traditions, rituals, family life, religion, which all served to cement the loss of self-respect (Akbar, 1984). In today's society, this is maintained by the continued reverence of the white dominant culture in media and all other arenas. The images of Africa presented through

white media have been negative, and holds African Americans down, making acceptance of Africa difficult and almost impossible (Asante, 2005).

The fundamental lack of accurate history and presentations of Africa, whether intentional or unintentional, encourages the African American to reject African culture and value systems. Ghee (1990) points out that slavery forced African Americans to “Forget where you come from; your African ancestry, and identity, but remember your skin color and that you are black.” Irrevocably, Africa then becomes a distant memory and interest, only observed through documentaries in the media. Consequently, African cultural traits, become moderated by the propinquity of the dominant culture, however, “Africanness” remains an onerous heritage for the African American individual (Shaw-Taylor, 2007).

The persistent exploitation of Africa leaves an indelible mark on the hearts of African Americans, and denigrates the formulation of an African identity rooted in the culture and history of the African people. In his book, Mwakikagile (2009) relays his encounter with several African Americans who expressed their shame in relation to Africa by seeing Africans as a distinct “sub-species,” and preferring the identity of black American to “African” American. This can be attributed to the media portrayals of Africa’s devastation and primitiveness, causing the assumption that Africa is undeserving of pride. One argument against the use of the term “African American” emphasized that Black Americans have nothing (or no longer have anything) in common with Africans (Ghee, 1990). However, the problem lies in that most African Americans do not know enough about Africa, including the continent’s history, to be able to identify with it.

The African American ambivalence and distancing of self from Africa and its culture, negatively influences the formulation of an authentic Black identity. The models of black consciousness discussed earlier by this author explicitly explain the need for an acceptance of cultural heritage in order to establish a healthy ethnic and racial identity (Cross, 1994; Harrell, 1979). The ambivalence that most African Americans experience towards Africa may be influenced by the lack of adequate information and awareness within their white-dominated society. Countee Cullen (1947) expressed his love and ambivalence toward Africa in his poem “Heritage,” below:

What is Africa to me:  
Copper sun or scarlet sea,  
Jungle star of jungle track,  
Strong bronzed men, or regal black  
Women from whose loins I sprang  
When the birds of Eden sang?  
One three centuries removed  
From the scenes his father’s loved,  
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,  
What is Africa to me?

Many African Americans share the same ambivalence that Cullen expressed in his poem, supported by their negative image of Africa and persistent anger regarding the slave trade (Mwakikagile, 2007). Hence, a cognitive dissonance exists for the African American who wishes to identify with his/her African culture, but is afraid to do so due to shame, anger, and the threat of rejection.

Malcolm X conveyed his belief that an acknowledgement of Africa and understanding of its history and cultures was important in enhancing the respectability of the African in America (X, 1990). An examination of African history and culture potentially enables an acceptance and understanding of the African identity for an African American. Some psychologists have identified the denial and rejection of the

African identity with the presence of pathology. Akbar (1981) posited that African American insanity is the result of engaging in behaviors which deny one's African identity and survival imperatives.

Specifically, denigration and rejection of one's identity and history is indicative of a form of self-alienation. The Affirmative identification and commitment to our African (natural) identity provides for more effective mental functioning (Nobles, 1986).

However, due to slavery, African Americans have been required to uphold the ideologies of the majority culture, causing them to ignore their true identity. This distancing from Africa hampers the process of developing an African identity. According to Asante (1980), African people have been "whitewashed" into thinking that the European perspective is the only world perspective and thus need to be psychologically liberated from this viewpoint. He further indicated that there is a need for Afro-Americans and African people to break away from Eurocentricism and begin to look at the world from their own African perspective and reality.

Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000) also argued that racism denies the social validation of African Americans' collective and individual self-definitions and abilities. Racism reserves social recognition and validation for African American behaviors and self-definitions that confirm dis-empowering racial stereotypes (Bell, 1992; Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Hall, 1993; Smith & Hattery, 2006). A popular method of black racial identity development reflects the harmful influence and process of navigating racial social contexts. Cross' (1994) nigrescence theory described a dynamic process of African American's acknowledgement and expression of their racial-cultural identity in four stages.

The first stage of Cross' (1994) racial identity model is Pre-encounter, which is characterized by a lack of recognition or acceptance of one's racial identity. At this stage, African Americans either have an Anti-Black/self-hatred identity, a Miseducation identity, or an Assimilation identity. A person with an Assimilation identity focuses on an American dominant culture identity instead of an African American identity. An African American with a Miseducation identity accepts negative stereotypes about African Americans. An Anti-Black identity favors European American culture over African American culture.

Next is the Encounter stage. This stage is unique because it is characterized by events that motivate African Americans to abandon the Pre-Encounter stage. Examples of such events are racial discrimination or exposure to positive information on African Americans. These events encourage African Americans to explore their racial identity.

Subsequently, the Immersion-Emersion stage is characterized by submergence into African American culture, literature, and history. In this stage, African Americans either have an Intense Black Involvement identity or an Anti-White identity. An Intense Black Involvement identity exclusively admires everything in African American culture. A person with an Anti-White identity admires African American norms and loathes European American norms.

Lastly, the Internalization stage is characterized by an Afrocentricity or Multiculturalism identity. An Afrocentricity identity focuses on the empowerment of people of African descent and can be accompanied by separatist or an inclusive attitude. Segregation is an example of a separatist attitude and integration is an example of an inclusive attitude. The construction of a Multiculturalism identity acknowledges and

integrates race/culture and at least two other identity variables such as sexual orientation and gender (Cross, 1994).

In Cross' model, individuals who successfully progress through all five stages are said to develop a health identity where black cultural ideals are accepted rather than rejected. However, African-centered theorists argue that this model of racial-cultural consciousness is rooted in a Eurocentric epistemological foundation (Kambon, 1998; Nobles, 1989). Kambon (1998) argued that people of African descent primarily exist at the Internalization stage throughout the life-span. In the context of considerable oppression, the African-American personality and consciousness evolve through a transformative process in which blacks struggle to move away from oppressor identification and move toward ethnic pride and internalization of positive racial attributes (Cross, 1971; Thomas, 1971; Jackson, 1976).

As previously stated, individuals of African descent often internalize negative views of Africa that results in psychological issues. Attitudes and behaviors that devalue one's Africanness, overassimilate white cultural values, and the like, can be seen as representing degrees incongruent between an African American's real self and idealized self because they violate the natural order of that person's African makeup (Parham et al., 1999). However, Asante (2005) explains that disparagement of Africa is not necessary for a healthy psyche; instead, rejection of ancestral heritage leads to a form of menticide, which he explained as the killing of the mind.

When negotiating this very complex process of identity formation and an oppressive society, Africans and African Americans develop specific coping styles that enable them to enculturate, but may in part impede the process of identity formation. The

next section presents a model of coping presented by Harrell (1979), which explains the various ways of coping that have been established and utilized by individuals of African descent to enable them to integrate into the larger white dominant society.

### **Coping Styles for African Americans**

Existing in a white supremacist society causes individuals of African descent to develop a specific way of functioning due to experiences of slavery, racism, and oppression. In a study conducted on the racism experiences of college freshmen, researchers reported racism as a trigger for psychological and physiological stress responses that pose significant threats to healthy development (Bynum, et al, 2007). Perceived racism and internalized racism may evoke psychological stress responses such as anger, paranoia, anxiety, helplessness-hopelessness, frustration, resentment, and fear (Clark et al., 1999). Hence, these experiences have the potential of affecting an individual's overall well-being. Additionally, physiological responses to stress have been reported as well. Physiological responses following exposure to perceived racism may involve immune, neuroendocrine, and cardiovascular functioning; increased high blood pressure levels have also been reported (Clark et al., 1999).

Evidently, racism has a negative effect on its victims, both psychologically and physiologically. This author believes that this can also be observable in cases of internalized racism due to its replication of the concepts of racism. Franklin-Jackson & Carter (2007) posited that racism embedded in American society and enacted by individuals, institutions, and systems can act as a chronic or life event stressor for Blacks. Chronic stressors are ongoing experiences that can produce problematic conditions for individuals (Franklin-Jackson & Carter, 2007). The persistent nature of racism in the

American society therefore poses a threat to the health and well-being of black individuals. Cultural racism has also been related to lower levels of quality of life (Franklin-Jackson & Carter, 2007).

Potentially, experiences of internalized racism have the same effect for Africans and African Americans. The continued expression of internalized racism may lead to a diminished sense of self and overall quality of life. Also, internalized racism has negative effects on its perpetrators as well that may impact them psychologically. Dobbins & Skillings (2000) conceptualized racism as a clinical syndrome that creates dysfunction within the individual. Internalized racism obviously carries several negative consequences that include the denigration of individuals, and psychological, and physiological stress responses. Thus, the problem of internalized racism as a potential cause of the prejudice, stereotyping, and social distance between Africans and African Americans requires adequate attention to increase more effective interactions and mental well-being among members of both groups.

Harrell (1979) posited six coping styles as a supplemental diagnostic system for assessing the impact of racism on blacks, which have both positive and pathological features. The first style is Continued Apathy, a situation in which one's response to racism is to have no plan of action. This describes an individual who may see no way of escaping the situation, and thus seeks no relief for himself or herself, thereby developing a form of learned helplessness. While this coping style results in a pathological consequence, it may serve as a positive coping strategy for avoiding unproductive confrontations, and conserving energy. However, in pathological applications of this

style, people fail to make use of available resources and engage in self-deprecatory attitudes and behaviors.

The second coping style is termed, Seeking a Piece of the Action, which involves making oneself marketable for the system. Positively, this style enables an individual to successfully acquire material goods, and enhances one's security according to the values of the mainstream culture. On the contrary, when individuals lose connection with their ethnic and cultural identity by placing personal goals ahead of group goals, this coping style becomes pathological.

Harrell's third style, Obsession with Counter-Culture Alternatives, is an attempt to escape having to deal with racism. In this mode, members of the nondominant group attempt to find a solution by altering their consciousness through the use of drugs and/or extreme religiosity. The fourth style is termed the Black Nationalist Alternative, which emerged from a debate about the depth of self-examination necessary for an individual to project a valid nationalist identity. The positive aspects of this style being that the individual is able to counter the system of victimization, however this style becomes problematic when individuals begin to ascribe to racism all manner of personal, social, and familial problems.

The fifth coping style Identification with an Authoritarian Solution, has positive impacts because it encourages the development of disciplined belief and struggle toward a common goal. However, the use of this style may encourage overidentification with ideology or group identity, with personal identity receiving less attention. The final coping style posited by Harrell is Historically Aware Cognitive Flexibility, which involves a grasp of the history of the struggle of black people, and especially of the

complexity of their present position. This is in accordance with other models of black consciousness, including the Cross' model of identity development, which was previously described. This final coping style reflects readiness to take action towards ending racism, and the positive impacts are that racism is responded to in a nonparanoid nondefensive manner. This however becomes pathological when flexibility descends into confusion (Harrell, 1979).

The six coping styles delineated above provide another approach to understanding the process of developing black consciousness for individuals of African descent. It provides a psychological correlation to the negative impacts of colonialism in the lives of individuals. Dobbins & Skillings (2000) explain that nondominant individuals frequently internalize racism, making it the focus of treatment seems overly simplistic because the effects of racism constitute a serious mental health concern for nondominant groups. While individuals of African descent residing in the U.S. encounter difficulties in the process of identity formation, African immigrants experience a more unique process in their process of integration and establishing an ethnic and cultural identity when they arrive in the U.S.

### **Acculturation Strategies for Africans**

This section briefly addresses the acculturation processes of African immigrants, which likely has adverse impacts their integration processes. Upon their arrival to the U.S., African immigrants are forced to adopt the identity of African Americans plagued by White domination, slavery, and an inferior status. African immigrants often come to realize that being a part of the black minority is associated with racial discrimination and the stigma of inferiority (Sellers, Ward & Pete, 2006). Thus, negative stereotypes

regarding Black people in the United States impacts an African's decision to reject the minority status and thus in the end, the social, spiritual, cultural, and experiential connection with African Americans whose identity is often far more compromised by the colonial mentality of their removal from a homeland, tribe, and collective ideology of peoplehood.

In brief, the daunting effects of being "Black" in a racially classified society diminishes the desire to accept the minority status, which is often imposed on African immigrants upon entry into the U.S. Pierre (2004) explains that assimilation is undesirable for black immigrants because it means assimilation into black America, a process that implies downward social and cultural mobility. African immigrants experience a shift in social status from majority to stigmatized minority when they arrive in the U.S. and are often subjected to the same racial discrimination faced by U.S-born black Americans (Sellers, et. al., 2006). This is likely to create a reactive anger as part of their acculturation and identity struggle.

In an effort to assimilate into their new society, African immigrants are left to define their identities based on how they are perceived by others or to strike a stance of defiance about keeping their cultural and ethnic identity. Upon their arrival in the U.S., the immigrant must decide how he or she self-identifies, because the host society has already constructed how they will categorize or identify the immigrant (Shaw-Taylor, 2007). Black African immigrants also experience a "triple disadvantage," a result of being black, African, and immigrant, which adversely impacts their relational experiences (Rong & Brown, 2002). Similarly, African immigrants encounter a "Double

Invisibility” as they are discriminated against on the basis of their race, and also their country of origin (Kanya, 1997).

In the face of this “duality of mind for the African immigrant, he or she encounters similar struggles as African Americans including some familiar aspects of racism and discrimination due to their color status. In assimilating into America, African immigrants are introduced to a heightened racial context, and settlement experiences are shaped by a low level of social pluralism and cultural pluralism (Van Den Berghe, 1967) High social pluralism assumes that there is strong affiliation across race and ethnicity lines, cultural pluralism assumes that there are many different ethnicities with very different languages, dress mores, family structures and foods or leisure activities. In the case of African Americans, there is not a great deal of social or cultural pluralism as a result of their enculturation. African immigrants on the other hand have diverse languages, food, family structures and leisure activities that define their identities in a culturally pluralistic way.

However, the stereotyping among black and other races as they pursue opportunity in America leads to apperception, mocking and forces of assimilation as an inferior group that represents either what they choose to leave behind in post colonial Africa, or an insult to the personal and cultural liberties that they believed the United Stated represented (Shaw-Taylor, 2007). Therefore, African immigrants might take extra efforts to separate themselves from the larger minority population, specifically African Americans by establishing social and religious groups in order to maintain traditions and ties to their homeland (Jackson, 2007).

Researchers have explained that Africans sometimes separate themselves as a result of the difference in history with African Americans, which may also impact the ways they are viewed by the majority culture. In an effort to explain this phenomenon, Blum (2002) stated:

In practice, most white U.S. Americans regard African Americans as more paradigmatically black than Afro-Caribbeans and even Africans. When they think of race, and who is a racial group, African Americans provide the standard. It is to this group that white Americans most commonly attribute racial characteristics – “otherness,” homogeneity, certain mental and temperamental characteristics. The act of immigration tends to erase the slave narrative and replace it with an immigrant narrative. That is, an immigrant narrative is in part an alternative to a racial narrative, deemphasizing victimization and the sense of inferiority bound up in race. In these ways an immigrant identity can weaken, at least to some extent, the racialized sense of the group in question (Blum, 2002, pg. 154-155).

While this process proves beneficial for the acculturation process of Africans, it could serve the purpose of separation and maintenance of the social distance with African Americans. Choosing to maintain an ethnic or national identity as “Ghanaian American” or “African” or “Nigerian American” is portrayed as a lack of identification with native black Americans, another indication of disaffection and distancing (Jackson, 2007).

Although this might create a social distance between both groups, it is however notable that this complex process of acculturation is the African immigrants’ way of making meaning of what it means to be black in his or her new society. It can therefore be concluded that social distance may be a direct result of experiences of racism and

discrimination within the larger culture. This issue will be further explored in the next two sections, with a particular focus on the history and nature of the relationship between Africans and African immigrants.

### **Current Relational Patterns between Africans and African Americans**

The white dominant society portrayed and still portrays Africans as primitive savages, while black Americans are projected as “advanced savages” because they live in a civilized “White” society. The media is said to portray African Americans as determined to destroy themselves and the society with their propensity towards violence encoded in their genes and rooted in their African origin (Mwakikagile, 2009). This has resulted in the development of stereotypes and misunderstandings perpetuated by media representations for both Africans and African Americans about Africa and about the United States, presenting each other as different ethnically and historically.

The Western media penchant reports on Africa’s disease, hunger, and war rather than the continent’s successes (Mwakikagile, 2009). The rich history and culture of the African people are often excluded from media representations of the continent. As early as elementary and high school, education regarding African history is either excluded or scarcely discussed in the United States. In a study on the images of Africa, U.S. seventh and twelfth graders associated Africa with wild animals, jungles, naked people, huts, diseases, and primitive uneducated people who believe in witchcraft (Hicks & Beyer, 1970). Such negative perceptions arise from the misinformation presented by a majority white society and from a “White” colonial worldview. This stereotypical view of Africa is a by-product of slavery and racism in the minds of many people, which proves difficult

for African immigrants to dispel upon their arrival in the U.S. (Mwakikagile, 2007; Traore, 2003).

Unfortunately, the representation of Africa as the “Dark Continent” has negative impacts on the African Americans’ view of Africans. If the images predominated in the minds of African Americans include that of wild animals and Tarzan, it makes the “African” in African American something to be avoided or reviled (Traore, 2003). As a result, a negative perception of Africa is formulated, which includes a view of the ancestral homeland, as a “primitive,” “backward” people and place in need of civilization. Consequently, African Americans may wish to separate themselves from the only Africa they know, which is termed “wild”, “primitive” or “third world.” The Modern Afrocentrist, Malcom X, asserted that the Negro hated Africa because he was made to hate it and unconsciously was made to hate himself or herself (X, 1990).

African immigrants who journey to the Western world often experience discrimination and mockery at the hands of their black counterparts. African students in an urban high school stated that they were called denigrating names such as “jungle boy or girl,” and were sometimes physically and/or emotionally abused (Traore, 2003). Evidently, the hatred and rejection of Africa developed by African Americans is projected onto Africans, which serves as a tool for reinforcing the scarred relationship that exists between both groups.

In a similar manner, over the years Africans have been provided with erroneous information regarding their ancestral brothers and sisters, Africans in the Diaspora (African Americans). For Africans, the bewildering images of African Americans living on welfare, being violent toward others and uncommonly rude to their own people, have

contributed to negative reactions to African Americans (Traore, 2003). Thus, Africans may develop negative views of African Americans based on their observations, which they continue to hold post-immigration to the United States. The mere use of the term *akata*, exemplifies the negative view that African immigrants hold of African Americans. This term describes African Americans as brutal wild animals, which is assumed to be the opposite of the African immigrant (Mwakikagile, 2009).

Individuals from West Africa, including Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone, frequently use the term *akata*, which is fueled by stereotypes manufactured by the white dominant society about African Americans (Mwakikagile, 2009). Thus, stereotypes regarding African Americans critically impacts the interactional patterns of African immigrants when they arrive in the U.S. Attitudes about blacks present in their home countries make African immigrants more likely to see black Americans negatively and increase a desire to create a social distance from them (McClain et al, 2006).

Accordingly, African immigrants have incorporated negative perceptions of African Americans that result in a clear social distance and mutual rejection from both groups. For example, investigators report that Africans frequently choose to establish closer relationships with other African immigrants, or even White Americans, and individuals from the Caribbean as opposed to African Americans (Jackson, 2007). One hypothesis is that a quest of behavioral enactments of separation from African Americans is suggestive of a desire to hold on to the esteemed and authentic African self while distancing the socially constructed and implied negative nature of the projection of Africa in African Americans.

When African American individuals discover the views of Africans, a decision to separate from them is made. Several reports by African Americans have indicated that Africans seem to feel or act superior to them (Traore, 2003). This is attributable to several factors, including cultural differences, and the lack of an African identity among African Americans. Africans who were born and raised in Africa have been found to believe that they are the only “True Africans” because African Americans lack their true African identity, which was in part destroyed during slavery (Mwakikagile, 2007; Mwakikagile, 2009). For some, this may serve the purpose of protecting their African identity although it also echoes rejection and hatred. Mwakikagile (2007) indicates that Africans owe African Americans for their sacrifice during the civil war and the civil rights movements, being that Africans benefited from desegregation as well due to their own experience of white domination experienced during colonial rule.

Notably, there are significant differences between the cultures of Africans and African Americans that may influence the interactional patterns between both groups. However, the blame cannot be placed on African Americans since they were forcefully stripped of their African culture, and then immersed and submerged in a European culture (Mwakikagile, 2007; Shaw-Taylor, 2007). Several African Americans realize this, and do indeed desire to develop their African identity, but still experience ambivalence. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King explained this by indicating that “the Negro is an American, and knows nothing of Africa. He’s got to face the fact that he is an American,” (Rhea, 1997). African Americans may experience significant struggle regarding the development of an African identity, which carries negative consequences within their

society. This critical process of establishing a balance between an African identity could be exacerbated by rejection from Africans expressed through prejudice and stereotypes.

Africans have been termed as “arrogant and pompous” by African Americans due to their behaviors and lack of willingness to interact with them (Jackson, 2007; Mwakikagile, 2007). Therefore, it is presumable that the social distance that exists between both groups is perpetuated and encouraged by the behaviors and actions of Africans, which stems from already established views and stereotypes regarding each population. Jackson (2007) also explains that the boundaries that black immigrants form in the process of negotiating belonging in America could be understood as a process of defining the meaning of their black identity in America. As such, the role of social distancing for Africans appears to be two-fold. First, it creates an understanding of their Black African identity in America. Second, it enables a retention of cultural values by avoidance of stereotypes that come with the Black identity in America, which is expressed through rejection of \ African Americans.

Although social distance for both groups serves various functions such as maintenance and protection of one’s identity and fear of rejection, it also perpetuates social distance, stereotypes and prejudice between Africans and African Americans. The social distance apparent in the relationship between both groups stems from the influence of a white dominant culture, which separated the two by positing inaccurate views and images. Thus, the remnants of colonialism in the form of slavery, racism, and discrimination play a major role in the observed social distance, which this author wishes to explore in this work.

## **The Role of Internalized Racism**

In this section, this author addresses the role of racism and internalized racism in the development and maintenance of stereotypes and prejudices that exist between Africans and African Americans. A growing body of literature has focused on the significant impact of racism on dominant and non-dominant individuals. According to Watts-Jones (2002), racism means the institutionalized emotional, cognitive, behavioral and social policy practices that assume and/or promote the cultural, biological, and socioeconomic superiority of people of European descent. As such, racism benefits individuals of European descent while dehumanizing others.

Racism depersonalizes and dehumanizes and its core is a violent form of social distancing with overt and covert manifestations (Dobbins & Skilling, 2000). Therefore, racism serves as a tool used to gain dominance and superiority over other groups in order to assert power, control, and dominance. This becomes evident in the society and is also presented in the media. However, children of non-dominant groups encode and decode subtle messages regarding their similarity to heroes and power figures presented in the media (Dobbins & Skillings, 2000).

The dominant group has the power to define and name reality, determining what is “normal,” “real,” and “correct,” (Speight, 2007). Minority individuals are left to reject or accept and internalize the dominant group’s ideals and assumptions over the normalcy of their cultural variables. The dominant group’s culture is imposed and is seen as normal, while the subordinate group is seen as other, less than, and inferior (Speight, 2007). In this case, due to slavery, colonization, and racism, African Americans and Africans are informed of the inferiority of all things Black and African. Thus, individuals

from both groups begin to believe that Eurocentric ideals are represent superiority and positivity.

Internalized racism evolves from negative personal experiences of racism and discrimination that ultimately lead to an acceptance of stereotypes and prejudices against a person's race and ethnicity (Hipolito-Delgado, 2010). Over time, black individuals begin to accept the stereotypes posited by the larger society regarding their race. Black communities have endured a legacy of racism dating back to slavery and the constant barrage of negative message has resulted in the acceptance of racist beliefs as reality (Hipolito-Delgado, 2010). The accumulation of negative images presents black individuals with one massive destructive choice, to either hate one's self, as culture demands, or to have no self at all, to be nothing (Kovel, 1970).

Watts-Jones (2002) explains that internalized racism has emerged as a way of referring to the phenomenon of people of African descent, or people of color having taken in and internalized aspects of racism. Several researchers have attempted to define internalized racism with a somewhat overarching concept of the acceptance of beliefs that denigrate one's racial group. Speight (2002) defines internalized racism as the agreement, by marginalized racial populations, with the negative societal beliefs and stereotypes about themselves. When people of African descent internalize racism, it is an experience of self-degradation that induces self-mortification, and self-alienation; one that promotes inferiority (Watts-Jones, 2002).

Furthermore, internalized racism compels people of color to adopt strategies of rejection as privileges are only accrued by virtue of abandoning their identity to approximate that of the extolled group (Watts-Jones, 2002). The African identity is

forgone for the dominant culture ideals. In this process, individuals of African descent end up colluding with their own oppression, and begin to act in ways that demonstrate the devaluation of their group and of themselves as members of that group (Speight, 2002). Internalized racism thus leads to prejudice, stereotyping and the internalized oppression of individuals of African descent by Africans and African Americans.

Seemingly, prejudice towards individuals of African descent results from the experience of racism and the internalization of stereotypes regarding Black people in the U.S. According to Dobbins & Skillings (2000), prejudice is a human phenomenon that represents a preference and appraisal of the superiority of one's own cultural values over others. With Africans and African Americans, this entails a preference for the dominant culture and disregard for the African and/or African American culture, which in turn supports the use of power to oppress others. Internalized oppression is the incorporation and acceptance by individuals within an oppressed group of the prejudices against them within the dominant society (Tappan, 2006). When racism is internalized, the African American or African assumes the white dominant role and engages in the oppression of individuals of African descent. In the process, they denigrate their African culture and history.

Internalized oppression is often manifested in self-hatred; feelings of inferiority, isolation, powerlessness, and internalized oppression can prevent people of the same oppressed group from connecting and supporting each other (Gainor, 1992). It is therefore safe to say that the effects of racism, internalized racism and oppression exacerbate the social distance that exists between Africans and African Americans. Internalized oppression is the mechanism within an oppressive system for perpetuating

domination not only by external control but also by building subservience into the minds of the oppressed groups (Tappan, 2006). Internalized racism and oppression indeed reinforces the domination of the white European society in the process.

In support of this, Hipolito-Delgado (2010) posited that people of African descent, living in the Western society, are forced to adopt values and preferences consistent with White culture and, simultaneously, develop a hatred for their own ethnic background. This provides supportive evidence for the behaviors of African Americans toward Africans and vice versa. The mutual rejection seems to have evolved from experiences of racism as well as internalized racism, and leads to reciprocal oppression. It is likely that higher levels of acculturation for the African immigrant equally lead to higher levels of internalized racism (Hipolito-Delgado, 2010). With time, African immigrants acquire and internalize the racist values present in their host culture. When the prejudices and misinformation about one's own group have been internalized, then spending time with others like oneself can stimulate self-loathing and lead people to be suspicious of each other (Gainor, 1992). Consequently, individuals of African descent begin to avoid each other because others may represent the negative stereotypes portrayed in the dominant culture. Gainor (1992) also explains that when oppressed people feel powerless to challenge or confront the agents of their oppression, they often take out their hurt and frustration on each other, where it is safe.

Evidently, internalized racism plays a dominant role in the apparent social distance between Africans and African Americans. Internalized racism can also be considered a direct effect of slavery, colonialism, and racism. The term "posttraumatic slavery syndrome" best describes this and refers to the physiological and psychological

toll of slavery and racism (Watts-Jones, 2002). There is no doubt that slavery and colonialism has left an indelible mark on Africans and African Americans, including that of internalized racism. The pioneer of Jamaican reggae music, Bob Marley (1990) addresses this concept in his Redemption Song by stating “Emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but yourselves can free your minds (Jackson & Cothran, 2003).” According to Watts-Jones (2002), internalized racism involves the shame associated with our African-ness, as a result of slavery and racism, and the shame of being shamed and victimized. Therefore, it is a response to victimization and domination by white European society.

The experience of racism has been found to cause distress and impact mental health (Kreiger, 1999). This author believes that internalized racism probably may have the same negative impacts on individuals due to its similarity to racism. Pyke & Dang (2003) argued that because internalized racism is an adaptive response to racism, compliance and resistance, which in their own ways reproduce or replicate racism, are interrelated processes. Consequently, internalized racism occurs out of a need to either resist or accept racism. While internalized racism is rarely a presenting problem in therapy, it is important to note that it is embedded in issues of self-esteem, self-confidence, depression, and anxiety (Watts-Jones, 2002). Internalized racism leaves a deeper impact on individuals than is observable, and these significant problems should not go ignored. In fact, Africans and African Americans have experienced a long history of European domination that has negatively impacted their disposition towards each other. Also, slavery and colonialism contributed to the images portrayed to both groups about each other, which has perpetuated and encouraged internalized racism, oppression,

and social distancing. Therefore, there is a need to resolve the distance between both groups as it contributes to psychological problems and obstructs the process of developing a healthy racial and ethnic identity.

## **Chapter 2: Focus Groups**

The proposal for this study was presented to the Wright State University Institutional Review Board and approval was granted to this investigator to conduct the study based on submitted guidelines.

### **Method**

**Participants.** Participants for this study consisted of seven self-identified African Americans and four African immigrants for a total of eleven participants. African American participants were recruited from Ohio, while African participants were recruited via the web from all over the United States. An age limit was not established for these individuals. Participants ranged from 23 years to 30 years, the mean age of participants was 26. For the African American group, there were six African American females, and one male, which could likely skew the directions of the results.

For the African group, there were two males and two females. African immigrants who chose to volunteer for this study have lived in the United States for at least one year. The average number of years in the United States was six. Due to geographical restrictions and lack of participants, the only countries of origin were Nigeria and Zimbabwe. It is therefore important to note that the views of these individuals does not represent the views of all Africans in the United States and otherwise. Participants were either actively involved in an educational institution or employed. This was set as a requirement to ensure that participants had received some level of interaction with African Americans. A majority of the participants reported current enrollment in a

graduate program. While random sampling was used to obtain participants, it is not considered internationally, nationally, regionally, or locally representative of the African and African American population.

Enormous efforts were made to recruit participants representative of the African and African American populations through emails, social media outlets and verbal communication. However, there was little success, especially with the African population. Potential participants cited video recording, discomfort and fear of interacting with members of the African American population regarding such critical issues.

**Materials.** Data was collected through various mediums including the use of questionnaires, and focus group. First, a Demographic Sheet (Appendix B) was used to gather basic information about the participants. The demographic sheet included questions related to a participant's demographic variables. Then, a racial attitudinal survey (Appendix C) developed by the investigator was administered to participants. This survey was used to measure the level of interaction between both groups, and also includes questions pertaining to social distancing. Examples of some of the questions include, "how much interaction have you had with Africans/African Americans," "would you date or marry an African/African American," "in general what do you think of the relationship between Africans/African Americans," etc.

Next, an adaptation of a scale developed by Taylor, Wilson, & Dobbins (1972), the Naganolization Scale (NAD) (Appendix D) was used to measure internalized racism prior to participation in the focus group. However, the original NAD scale was modified with permission from one of its original authors, James Dobbins, Ph.D. The questions on the original scale solely referred to African Americans, and were reworded to encompass

Blacks as a whole to ensure inclusion of both Africans and African Americans. This measure consisted of 49 items, each to be chosen as either true or false. Taylor (1990) indicated that blacks with higher NAD scores reported more depressive symptoms, lower self-esteem, and impaired relationships with other Blacks.

**Procedure.** The focus group was completed separately due to a lack of participants to complete a combined focus group. For the African American participants, a focus group with seven participants was conducted. During the focus group, an informed consent that explained the purpose and procedures of the study was provided to participants to read and sign. This form also included a confidentiality statement and community resources for those participants who may need additional mental health help after the group. The adapted version of the NAD scale, the demographic sheet, and the attitudinal survey were administered individually to each participant. Codes were assigned to each participant's form to ensure anonymity.

To facilitate openness and honesty, participants were informed of the confidential nature of the group. As an African immigrant, I realized that my identity could potentially impact the group process in a negative manner by making it an uncomfortable environment for participants to fully disclose their views of Africans. Therefore, I chose a Caribbean immigrant, also a graduate student to facilitate the group. However, it is likely that this may have had the same impacts on the group because participants may not feel aligned to her. The group facilitator received some training regarding the current study and understood the goals and need for the study to be completed. Although I did not facilitate the group, I served as an observer and note-taker for the entire process, thus my presence in the room could have made the space feel unsafe for the participants.

During the group, participants were presented with several questions, which are included in Appendix E. These questions addressed the level of social distancing between Africans and African Americans, the role of racism, slavery, and colonization, and the need to improve this relationship. The focus group was video recorded to ensure an accurate analysis of participants' responses.

For the African group, an internet-based focus group was conducted due to inability to secure participants in the area for the focus group. The participants were randomly selected from the investigator's pool of friends and a social networking site. The use of the investigator's friend could possibly impact the responses provided by participants for this portion of the study. Electronic copies of the informed consent, demographic sheet, racial attitudinal survey, Modified Nadanolitization Scale, and the focus group questions were provided to participants via email. Participants were informed of the anonymity of their responses and were urged to provide detailed responses to the questions, as they felt comfortable.

## **Results**

Results are presented in two sections, first the results obtained from the African American focus group are discussed, and then information from the African group is presented.

### **African American Focus Group**

On the racial attitudinal survey, all participants reported limited interactions with Africans except in the realm of higher education, and professional relationships. Africans were reported as roommates, friends, classmates, teammates, and romantic partners for two of the participants. The level of interaction appears to be based on higher education

opportunities, which brings African Americans in contact with African immigrants. In responding to interpersonal conflicts with Africans, three participants stated having had no negative experiences with Africans, while three reported having minor disagreements with Africans. One participant stated, “Yes, I have had interpersonal conflicts with them, but no more than with other ethnic groups.” However, one of the participants reported having several interpersonal conflicts with Africans in various different situations.

This participant stated “I had a positive relationship with my Nigerian friend, until she married a traditional Nigerian man, who did not approve of her being friends with me.” Thus, there appears to be a genderized bias in the social distance where African men tend to establish and maintain stereotypes due to preconceived notions regarding African Americans. Furthermore, this participant explained that in her experiences with a Nigerian man he specified that he did not intend to marry an African American woman. This participant also reported other negative experiences with African men whereby they were sexually explicit with African American women and treated them more disrespectfully than African women. This seems to support the hypothesis that men tend to be the keepers of culture in African societies as well as family and tribal boundaries, hence, the social distance serves as a way of protecting and maintaining cultural traditions.

An overall theme was present when participants stated their personal views of Africans as a whole. Africans were described as “having a rich culture and fierce pride in their culture and are open to teaching others about it,” “a strong people with a great respect for family,” and “hardworking, fun, and cool to be around.” However, participants also stated that Africans appeared to be exclusive in their social interactions

with African Americans. The following statements were made by African American participants “Africans sometimes think less of African Americans, as though we have no culture,” and “I do believe that some Africans dislike African Americans.”

Participants reported an overall openness to working with Africans, mostly stating that it presents an opportunity for growth and cultural awareness. However, one participant explained that working with Africans would require a lot of patience, just like when working with individuals from any other culture.

When presented with the question about dating an African, responses varied from no social distancing conditions to conditions for relationship that reflect distrust and social distance as a preferred if not prejudicial stance. Four of seven participants stated that they would date Africans with no reservations. Other participants expressed different viewpoints on this. One individual stated “I am not sure because I have heard that the men can be aggressive (I know probably a stereotype), but I am open to dating anyone including an African if he is nice and treats me well.” Another individual explained “If they were not a very strict traditional person, I may date them, but I would probably be more inclined to date them if they were more “Americanized” but still had strong ties to their roots and culture. A final participant stated that “I might date them, but with the understanding that it would be casual, rather than long-term.”

In regards to maintaining friendships with Africans, social distance boundaries seemed less rigid, and all participants reported openness to having African friends. However, there seemed to be conditions for maintaining a serious romantic relationship. Most of the participants also stated a willingness to marry Africans, as long as Africans were open to marrying them as well. One individual response was, “Based on my

previous dating experience, I do not think the choice would be up to me because I would have no problems with it, but it appears that dating a black man has the same stigma as me dating a white woman. Therefore, it is received negatively in the African community.” Another participant responded by saying “I wouldn’t not marry someone who is African, but again I do not think they would marry me.”

Every participant provided detailed information regarding the nature of the relationship between Africans and African Americans; these specific statements are included below.

“I think stereotypes from both ethnicities lead to the ignorance that separate and force them not to get along.”

“Originally, I thought there was a positive relationship but the more I learn, I am recognizing that there are some conflicts between the groups, and I think that is unfortunate.”

“I think it could be a lot better. There needs to be efforts to bridge the gap and knowledge given to both populations.”

“I did not realize there was “beef” until the whole wedding incident and since then I have been much more cognizant of the relationship between the two groups.”

“I feel that it is sometimes strained, which may be partially due to a cultural clash.”

“There continues to be some level of difference but it overall tends to be good.”

“I think that we are very much divided. I feel that not many African Americans are open or receptive to their culture and tend to be stuck in this “box”. Get too

caught up in stereotypes, and I think that as a whole affects both cultures. I feel that both Africans and African Americans are left to fight alone.”

### **Responses to Focus Group Questions**

This section includes responses to focus group questions, which was obtained from the focus group session. Group participants explained that intergroup racism definitely exists and manifests itself in various ways, especially in the concept of colorism. This was described as a situation whereby the lighter you are, the closer you are to being white, therefore, lighter individuals are held in higher esteem than darker individuals. One participant reported that she has received statements such as “you are pretty for a dark skinned girl” and “you are so dark, are you African.” This individual reportedly felt offended by this statement, and explained that she did not understand why being dark skinned automatically made her African. However, another participant stated “I have sometimes been told that I was not black enough because I was light skinned.” The conclusion was drawn that colorism is a double-edged sword and a direct evident of internalized racism, which resulted from slavery and discrimination.

In describing the relationship between Africans and African Americans, participants unanimously agreed that a form of distance exists between both populations. “Africans tend to view African Americans as lacking culture because basically everything we have has been given to us by the white man.” This statement was made by a participant when describing the ways Africans view African Americans. Media was reported to play an enormous role in the distance that exists between both populations. One participant explained that the media presents us in a certain way to those in Africa, and presents Africa to us in a less favorable manner. Hence, we develop inaccurate

attitudes and views of each other, which impacts the ways we interact when we come in contact.

Participants explained that this leads to the stereotypes that influence interactions with Africans. For example, one participant explained that while walking bare feet outside as a child she was told “Go into the house and put on your shoes, you are not African.” She further indicated that this stereotype evidently arises out of the images of Africans that are provided in the media. Similarly, one participant explained that an African friend reported lacking any real knowledge of African Americans, except for what she saw in the music videos presented on the television. Overall, participants indicated that both groups lack an awareness of each other, which in turn leads to the stereotypes that are developed. One individual stated, “I mean we are not taught African history in schools, and no one tells us this when we are growing up.”

Although not a part of the questions established by the investigator, participants also discussed their individual processes of developing an African American identity. According to one participant, “I have always felt that I had African roots, like my people came over from Africa, never doubted that.” On the contrary, another participant explained “I choose to be identified as Black rather than African American because I do not know exactly where I am from in Africa and if I am even from Africa.” This participant proceeds by indicating that Black people came over to America from all over the world, and not just Africa. It was also stated that “It appears that they do not want us in Africa, and they are trying to kick us out of here as well (meaning the United States).”

In exploring resolutions to the social distance that exists between Africans and African Americans, participants agreed that there is a possibility that both groups may

never be able to get along until stereotypes and prejudices regarding each other are resolved. However, they also agreed that there is a need for individuals from these groups to co-exist respectfully.

### **Nadanolitization Scale (NAD) Results for African Americans**

Participant responses on the NAD scale are presented based on the frequency of internalized racism endorsements. Thus, the number of participants who responded to items in the direction that suggests internalized racism is noted. High scores are considered those questions to which more than half of participants within a group responded positively, which would be scores of four or higher for this particular group.

Question thirty-seven had the highest number of responses, with six out of seven participants answering “True” to the statement that “Black people are born with greater rhythm than White people.” Five out of seven participants endorsed internalized racism features on items 1,8,10,16, and 45. These specific items can be found on Appendix C, however, it is pertinent to note that these items measured specific beliefs regarding black people such as “having beliefs in superstition”, or “better and more exciting sexual interactions”. Critically, these items echoed a feeling that blacks are disrespected in social and work interactions as well.

Finally, four out of seven participants responded in a manner suggestive of internalized racism on items 11, 19, 27, and 38, which contained themes implying that black people have a “higher physical ability and performance” than whites. These items also indicated blacks as being “more religious” and experiencing “more difficulties within the workplace”. These results are presented in graph format in Figure 1, which presents a comparison of scores for both the African American and African groups.

## **African Focus Group**

On the racial attitudinal survey, participants specified having a wide range of experiences with African Americans. Some individuals reported having African Americans as partners, roommates, business partners, classmates, and friends. In regards to experiencing interpersonal conflicts with African Americans, only one participant reported this. This individual stated “One time when I was fresh off the boat, two African American girls laughed at my sneakers.”

When describing their personal view of African Americans, one participant stated that “They are nice, but a bit Naïve about anything Africa and its tradition.” Other individuals provided a detailed explanation of their views of African Americans. Another participant explained two views of African Americans, the first group is composed of those he comes in contact with in the school community and the second group are friends that he meets casually in clubs, bars, and football games. This participant stated that “the first group strives to be a source of inspiration to their communities, and are less oriented towards being African Americans, while the second group do not look forward to accomplishing anything, represent a large percentage of the population, and are a reflection of the typical Africans Americans you may run into in a barber shop.”

Another participant provided the following statement in response to the question “I see African Americans as people with two legs, but refuse to walk. I think there is a mental stunting that comes with years of slavery and racism that is hard (but not impossible) to shake. Some have shed the self-doubt that comes with years of being told you are not equal to or as deserving as your white counterpart...some are still trying to believe while some never got the message.”

Participants reported no problems regarding working with and maintaining relationships with African Americans. However, it was specified that working with African Americans could create an unhealthy competitive atmosphere, which could prove challenging. One participant explained that working in a hospital setting provides an opportunity to interact with professional black people who do act respectable. This participant however stated that “African Americans in certain positions are loud, inappropriate in their attitude, choice of topics for discussion, and even in their dressing, which is embarrassing.”

In responding to the question of marrying or dating an African American, participants were unanimous in their responses. All of the individuals indicated that they would not marry or date an African American. One individual stated “NO, the cultural differences are GLARING and feel like a LARGE ocean,” while another reported “No because I think that we have a lot of differences and these differences are sometimes quite irreconcilable.”

Participants described the relationship between Africans and African Americans in various ways. One individual stated, “I think the relationship between Africans and African Americans is not very healthy. Africans think that African Americans do not like them or at least resent them because they believe Africans are taking jobs that were originally reserved for African Americans.” Another participant explained, “The relationship is a bit too distant, with naïve outward discrimination.” One of the participants described the view of participants in great detail by providing the statement below.

“African Americans often see Africans as competition for employment and educational opportunities. However, this is because Africans work harder than African Americans, which makes them more attractive to employers.” This participant proceeds by stating, “Many Africans think they are better than African Americans, inventing pet names for them like “akata,” which essentially means ‘dog’. Most Africans feel they are culturally a very watery group of characters. In America, you can find a 33-year-old black grandmother, a black man with five children from five different black women, an able bodied man with no ambition other than to smoke and sleep all day. I think Africans come here with hopes of making a better life through hard honest work. Yet they see African Americans with every opportunity at their footstool wasting those same opportunities every single day. It is hard to have respect for a person who wastes the very thing you want and need. The relationship is one marred with misunderstanding because African Americans think all Africans are the same. That we are either kings/princesses where we are from or that we are all looking for “papers.”

### **Responses to Focus Group Questions**

African participants explained that within group discrimination manifests itself in the relationship between Africans and African Americans. This is reportedly evident in the way that African Americans treat and view Africans. For example, one participant stated “African Americans are too quick to point out that someone is “an African Dude”. This is an attempt to make African Americans feel good or at least have a perceived sense of superiority.” Similarly, another participant explained that African Americans usually talk down on African immigrants during social interactions.

One of the focus group questions asked participants for stereotypes regarding their specific ethnic group that they do not wish to hear anymore. The responses are reported below.

“I do not wish to hear that Africans are too eager to pick any low paying job under any condition because of the poverty in Africa.”

“I do not wish to hear that African immigrants are backward and lack proper civilization to function in the American society.”

“I never want to hear you are African, do you have a lot of giraffes on the streets.”

### **Nadanolitization Scale (NAD) Results for Africans**

Participant responses on the NAD scale are presented based on the number of participant endorsements on internalized racism items. Thus, the number of participants who responded to items in the direction that suggests internalized racism is noted. High scores are considered those questions to which more than half of participants within this group responded positively, which would be scores of three or higher.

On item eight, all four participants responded “True” to the statement that “Making physical love with a Black person can be exciting,” which is indicative of a belief system that views blacks as generally more sexual than other races. This adheres to an established stereotype that often sexualizes black people. Furthermore, three of four participants all endorsed internalized racism on items 14, 16, 19, and 39. These specific items can be found on Appendix C, and contained an overall theme of the successes and opportunities open to black people. Participants endorsed a belief that black people are somewhat less industrious than whites, more sportsmanlike, and usually the work of blacks are seen as less valuable than those of whites, which is viewed as a reason for their

lesser level of success than whites. Results from both NAD scales are presented in Appendix A in graph format.

## **Discussion**

The present study investigated the social distance that exists between Africans and African Americans. In specific, this author's objective was to determine the role of internalized racism in perpetuating the enormous distance that exists between Africans and African Americans in the United States. The results of the study are further explained in this section.

The findings from the focus groups conducted provide supports the author's hypothesis that the social distance existent between Africans and African Americans is reinforced by the presence of internalized racism within members of both populations. Based on participants' responding, various themes are apparent in the relational patterns of both populations. These themes include: cultural pride, romantic and interpersonal relationships, and competition for employment. Participants response patterns categorized within these themes and provide additional explanations of the origins and maintenance of the social distance between both groups.

**Cultural Pride.** Cultural pride was identified as a major factor in the relationship between both groups. Information obtained from the study suggests that participants believe that the loss of African culture and traditions through slavery negatively impacts African Americans. Reportedly, this causes African Americans to adopt the majority white culture without an opportunity to develop a strong African identity. On the contrary, both groups viewed Africans as exhibiting a well developed African identity and cultural pride. Although this is seen positively, it was reported as having a negative

impact on the ways that African Americans are viewed by Africans. Participants agreed that African Americans are often viewed by Africans as “lesser than” due to their perceived lack of a strong cultural background. Taylor (1980) cited the sociogenic variable of “Ego defense” as a contributor to the use of racist beliefs, whereby individuals project nondominant status onto others as a way of feeling better about themselves, even when their own status is also marginalized.

Furthermore, the concept of internalized racism was cited as a significant factor in widening the gap between Africans and African Americans. Responses imply that the impact of slavery on the American culture has affected the ways in which African Americans view Africans. Ideals established by the majority culture were reported as taking on more value than those presented within the African culture. For example, participants explained the concept of colorism as a direct impact of white domination whereby a lighter skin color is more revered than a darker one. This creates dissonance for African American individuals who desire to successfully integrate into the American society, while also maintaining strong ethnic pride. In this process, African Americans are often forced to deny a part of themselves, which consequently means denying their African counterparts. Internalized racism in this form may provide powerful rewards or incentives for adopting or changing one’s beliefs to conform to those of significant others (Taylor, 1980). For Africans and African Americans, this might involve adopting the belief system of family members and possibly the dominant culture in order to gain acceptance.

**Romantic and Interpersonal Relationships.** Responses from participants indicated a minimal level of interaction between both groups, and somewhat hostile

interactions as well. Individuals from both groups reported having positive experiences with each other, which were however surpassed by negative experiences. These negative experiences were reported as consisting of high levels of disrespect, and demeaning interactions in romantic relationships. Taylor (1980) explains that race-related behavior serves a need to create a favorable impression in a valued social context, therefore playing a major role in gaining and maintaining social desirability. Africans and African Americans who face a constant struggle of acceptance in the U.S. society may thus be forced to shun an African identity while displaying behaviors affirmative of the white dominant culture in an unsuccessful attempt to gain social status. This reinforces the internalization of ideals of racism, and the social distance between both groups.

Participants attributed this to misinformation about each other. Both groups indicated that the lack of accurate information about each other has reinforced the stereotypes and prejudices evident in interpersonal interactions. It appears that the media serves as the major medium that perpetuates the negative perception of Africa that African Americans exhibit and vice versa. Thus, both populations are equally subject to the exclusive information provided in the media about both groups, which is mostly inaccurate. Researchers have found this to be the reason why Africans and African Americans develop stereotypes and prejudices about each other. (Hicks & Beyer, 1970; Mwakikagile, 2009)

This was evident in participants' responses regarding romantic relationships, both groups indicated a diminished desire to engage in long-term romantic relationships with each other due to observed cultural differences. Majority of the participants reported having stereotypes regarding the relationship patterns of opposing groups, which

negatively impacted their interest in establishing intimacy. However, a willingness to engage in romantic relationships with African immigrants who have adopted ideals of the American culture was voiced. This larger American culture is highly representative of the white majority culture, thus this statement points to an internalized oppression which leads to devaluing of one's African heritage expressed by Africans.

**Competition for Employment.** Results suggest that Africans and African Americans are constantly forced to compete for resources within the community, which consequently leads to animosity between both groups due to the lack of opportunities for minorities as a whole. Banton (1998) and Wellman (1993) noted that racial differentiation occurred in an ecological context as different human groups competed for resources, thus racism was been utilized to ensure that races be differentiated so that they occupy different positions within social orders even when there was no biological justification for racial inequality. Banton (1998) further explained that in regard to social distance, a group may regulate the kinds of relations they would enter into with varying sorts of non-members as a means of maintaining and defending a privileged position. This supports participants' reports that the social distance existing between Africans and African Americans can be attributed to competition for resources.

The African's separation from African Americans may be due to a desire to effectively assimilate into this culture without acquiring the stereotypes associated with being black in American. In the same regard, African Americans might maintain a social distance from African Americans as a way rejecting an African identity, which is viewed as unacceptable within the American culture. However, this process is not effective as it does not allow both groups to acquire a dominant social status within the American

society. Through this process, rather than working together as a unified group, both groups are forced to work against each other in order to secure an economic status within the society. In their article, Jackson & Cothran, (2003) discuss this by indicating that through their experiences with white supremacy Africans and African Americans are forced to forget the strength in unifying as one powerful force. However, various researchers have indicate the need for Africans to join forces rather than working against each other. Asante (1980) uses the term “collective consciousness” to emphasize this need by indicating that:

This collectiveness is the ability and power of a group of people to think in the same direction, a positiveness of mind that stresses victory over any form of oppression, This consciousness among African people has developed and is only perpetuated as they understand the relatedness of their history to their present and future reality. (Asante, 1980, p. 79)

Thus, he suggests that it is essential that individuals of African descent develop a uniform way of thinking, which will enable them to recognize the role that Africa plays in their lives and develop and also resisting oppression.

### **Clinical Considerations**

Internalized racism is relevant in the intercultural relationships of people who are of the same color as well as those who are different in color. If they can impact day-to-day dynamics between persons, it is logical that it can also affect relationships that occur in clinical settings. It is believed that they can especially impact transference that can lead clinicians and clients to react in co-dependent or counter-dependent ways in which it impacts an individual's overall well-being. The clinician must be able to operate above

their own racial dynamics in order to help a client who endorses a high level of internalized racism, because such persons are likely to experience feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. These variables are particularly pertinent in Africans struggling with acculturation issues and African Americans who are experiencing difficulties with their ethnic identity development process.

Socially embedded experiences of racism and discrimination might be internalized to the point of internalizing negative belief systems regarding self.

Symptoms related to these internalized messages may be found in individuals diagnosed with a host of psychological disorders, including depression, anxiety, interpersonal difficulties, and relational problems. Resulting problems include self-disparaging statements, hopelessness, negative self-fulfilling prophecies, learned helplessness, which could all impact levels of anhedonia, apathy and motivation. Africans and African Americans lacking a well-developed sense of ethnic identity that is integrated into a system of ego strength and self efficacy are likely to develop inadequate and ineffective coping skills.

This study suggests that the internalized racism experienced by Africans and African Americans negatively impacts the relational patterns between both groups. While this is applicable to interpersonal relationships, it can also be translated to the therapeutic relationship and therapeutic alliance. Due to the apparent social distance existing between both groups, it might be difficult to form a therapeutic alliance, which has been found to be a significant predictor of therapeutic outcome. Therefore, this will likely disrupt the therapeutic process and negatively influence the outcome of psychotherapy for both client and therapist.

A similar phenomenon is likely to occur in educational and training relationships between Africans and African Americans. This includes in scholarly and supervisory relationships where prejudices, stereotypes, and internalized beliefs might underlie the ways that individuals interact. Internalized racism concepts could impact how individuals are treated and viewed in these settings. This could also negatively impact evaluative situations where internalized negative views of self and others similar to self, may cause trainees and students to be viewed as less adequate than their majority culture counterparts. Thus, it is important to address this relational pattern and the interplay of power dynamics between both groups within these relationships.

This author hopes that this study provides some guidance, and serves as a helpful deconstructive tool, that could aid both clinicians and educators in further understanding the role of internalized racism in the lives of Africans and African Americans within the U.S.

Some recommendations are provided below for African American clinicians working with Africans:

- Address the power differential between client and therapist.
- Allow African clients to explain their cultural histories and traditions rather than approaching the therapeutic interaction with preconceived notions.
- Address client's social location and the impact of sociopolitical factors such as colonization and racism on the client's view of self.
- Identify barriers to the formulation of working alliance, and factors that could impact the therapeutic relationship, including internalized racism.
- It is important for African American clinicians to address own biases and

stereotypes regarding Africans prior to and while working with Africans.

Some recommendations are provided below for African clinicians working with African Americans:

- Clinicians should approach therapy with non-judgmental attitude that also allows clients to be the expert on their stories.
- It is pertinent that clinicians discuss the interplay of power and prejudice on the therapeutic interaction.
- When working with African Americans struggling with identity development, it might be beneficial to incorporate psychoeducation regarding African history, while also pointing clients to appropriate resources.
- Due to a potential lack of knowledge regarding the history racism and discrimination in the U.S., African clinicians should always seek appropriate consultation and guidance when necessary.
- African clinicians should also engage in their own therapeutic work regarding experiences of discrimination to avoid translating their biases to the therapeutic environment.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the reported social distance that exists between Africans and African Americans is continuously reinforced by societal forces, such as internalized racism and discrimination. On a daily basis, Africans and African Americans are subjected to discriminatory experiences that reinforce ideals of white domination. These experiences subsequently lead individuals to the process of devaluing themselves and the ideals that represent the African culture may then become a distant image.

Variables such as misinformation through negative portrayals of both cultures and the absolute lack of communication, reinforces the animosity between groups. Thus, prejudices and stereotypes play a role in how both groups treat and interact with each other. However, based on participants' reports, this relationship is likely to be enhanced through increased social contact between groups. Imperatively, both populations would likely benefit from accurately educating each other on their cultures and traditions. This would ensure a better understanding and possibly secure more effective and conflict-free interactions.

Based on research from African theorists, increasing awareness of one's African heritage is likely to encourage the development of a healthy racial and ethnic identity, which proves beneficial in the development of a healthy self-concept. It is therefore critical that measures are not only taken to decrease the social distance between both groups, but to also disrupt the process of internalized racism by encouraging accurate education and increasing awareness about ethnic identity and African cultural values. This encourages the effective reduction of the psychological impacts of slavery, which remain ever-present in when conducting psychotherapy with individuals of African descent.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Several limitations were evident in this study. The lack of an adequate number of African participants for this study served as a significant problem. Although all participants were recruited through random sampling, majority were friends of the investigator. It is likely that participants may have provided responses in a favorable manner due to the existing relationship with the investigator. Additionally, participants

were not representative of the entire African and African American population in the United States. Hence, results cannot be used as a sole basis for comparison and reference to the entire population, thus they should be utilized and interpreted with caution.

Additionally, video recording was proposed for the study, however, due to equipment failure and unforeseen circumstances this did not occur. Therefore, information gathered from the group was based solely on investigator's written notes. There is a likelihood that this investigator may have inadvertently selected themes due to own biases and stereotypes. Exact transcripts of the focus group would have provided more accurate results of the group process.

### **Chapter Three: Recommendations for Future Research Studies**

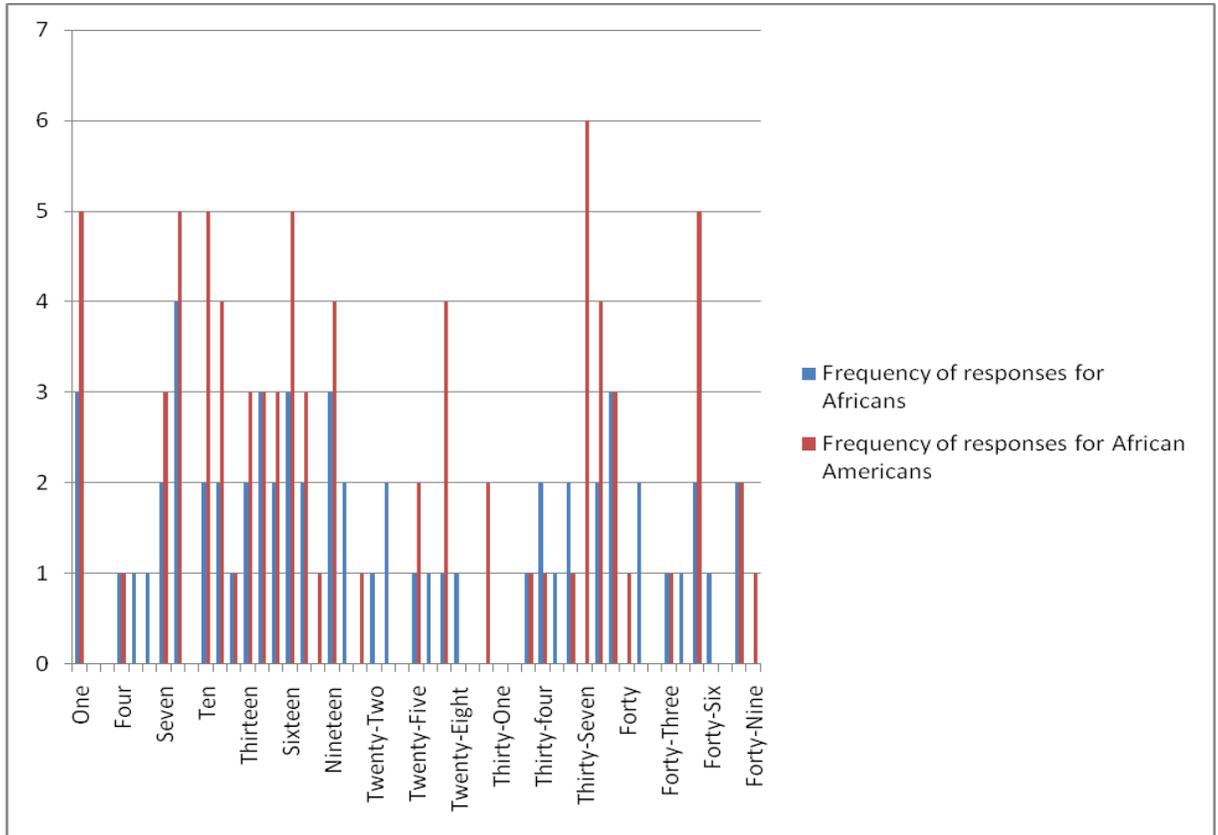
To increase participation in future studies, it is recommended that investigators visit various locations such as local community centers, schools, churches, etc. There will be a need to conduct research in geographical locations with a high African and African American population. When conducting focus groups, the use of Audiotaping is suggested in order to decrease the fear of video recording which was indicated by participants as a concern.

For future research studies, it is recommended that a combined focus group be conducted with Africans and African Americans facilitated by two investigators, one African and one African American. This is in order to decrease the possibility that participants might feel misunderstood and unsafe within the focus group. Randomly selecting African and African American participants representative of various demographic variables, such as race, religion, disability status, gender, and sexual orientation will provide a forum for a more extensive discussion between both groups.

This could also increase contact between both groups, which could possibly enable the process of dispelling myths and stereotypes. Participants for this research study suggested that both groups participate in one combined focus group to provide an opportunity for discussions and exchange of information with members of each group. It is suggested that this would provide some clarity and closure regarding the existing social distance between both groups.

Suggestions for future studies were made and participants indicated that more discussions like the current focus group need to be conducted. It is hypothesized that this would enable individuals from both groups discuss this social distance and dispel myths and stereotypes. Furthermore, participants explained that education also plays a significant role in the process of bringing both groups together. This is because misinformation by the media and the majority culture plays a major role in maintaining the social distance between Africans and African Americans.

## Appendix A



*Figure 1.* Frequency of African and African American participant responses on the Nadanolitization scale.

## **Appendix B**

### **Demographic Sheet**

**Age:**

**Race:**

**Country of origin:**

**Year of Immigration:**

**Number of Years in the U.S. (If African Immigrant):**

## **Appendix C**

### **Attitudinal Survey/Questionnaire**

1. How much interaction have you had with African/African Americans?
2. What is the nature of this interaction?
3. Have you experienced any interpersonal conflicts with Africans/African Americans?
4. Describe your personal view of Africans/African Americans?
5. What do you think about working with Africans/African Americans?
6. Would you date an African/African American?

7. How do you feel about having African/African American friends?

8. Do you currently have any African/African American friends?

9. Would you marry someone who is African/African American?

10. In general, what do you think about the relationship between Africans and African Americans?

**Additional Comments:**

## Appendix D

### Modified Nadanolitization Scale (Please Circle either True or False)

1. Black people are superstitious (True/False)
2. Black people can be accepted as intimate friends (True/False)
3. Attending a dinner party in honor of a famous Black person would be fun (True/False)
4. Black people are born with greater sexual desire than White people (True/False)
5. Racial differences explain why Blacks don't live as long as Whites (True/False)
6. It is difficult to tell one Black person from another Black person (True/False)
7. Voting for a Black politician seems only right (True/False)
8. Making physical love with a Black person can be exciting (True/False)
9. Differences in inheritance is a main reason why Blacks and Whites should remain separated (True/False)
10. It is more embarrassing to lose a game to a White person than to a Black person (True/False)
11. It is easy to work for someone Black (True/False)
12. Blacks are always welcome at my house (True/False)
13. Black men have greater sexual drive than White men (True/False)
14. Blacks are more industrious than Whites (True/False)
15. Voting privileges should be extended more actively to Blacks (True/False)
16. The ideas of Blacks are admired (True/False)
17. Blacks are born with greater physical strength and endurance than Whites (True/False)
18. Eating in a Black person's home can be interesting (True/False)
19. Blacks are more sportsmanlike than Whites (True/False)
20. When it comes to figures and figuring, Blacks seldom are able to measure up to Whites (True/False)
21. Whites are superior to Blacks (True/False)
22. Blacks are more sloppy than Whites (True/False)
23. Blacks act alike (True/False)
24. Working for a Black person would be acceptable (True/False)
25. Blacks are less reliable than Whites (True/False)
26. Racial differences explain why Europeans are technologically more advanced than Africans (True/False)
27. Blacks are more religious than Whites (True/False)
28. Genetic inferiority explains why more Blacks than Whites drop out of school (True/False)

29. The school dropout problems among Blacks is due to their not having the mental power of Whites (True/False)
30. Blacks are born with more musical talent than Whites (True/False)
31. The Black race is mentally unable to contribute more towards the American's progress (True/False)
32. Blacks are mentally unable to assume positions of high responsibility (True/False)
33. Being in the company of a large number of Blacks can be frightening (True/False)
34. Blacks are just as smart as Whites (True/False)
35. The high percentage of Blacks in jail reflects inborn tendencies toward criminality (True/False)
36. Whites are better at reasoning than Blacks (True/False)
37. Black people are born with greater rhythm than White people (True/False)
38. The inborn physical ability of African Americans makes it hard to beat them in athletics (True/False)
39. Race is an important factor in explaining why Whites have succeeded more than African Americans (True/False)
40. Being partners with a Black in an athletic or card game is O.K. (True/False)
41. Blacks are more ignorant than Whites (True/False)
42. Working for a Black person would create inner tension (True/False)
43. Blacks are carefree, happy-go-lucky (True/False)
44. The high incidence of crime among Blacks reflects a genetic abnormality (True/False)
45. Black men are better at sex than White men (True/False)
46. The Black man's body is more skillful than his mind (True/False)
47. The larger number of Blacks addicted to hard drugs suggests a form of biological weakness (True/False)
48. Giving a Black person top priority for employment/education seems only fair (True/False)
49. Black women are more sexually open and willing than White women (True/False)

The original Natanolitization Scale (Taylor, Dobbins, & Wilson, 1972) was modified with permission from one of its authors, James Dobbins, Ph.D, ABPP at the Wright State University School of Professional Psychology.

## Appendix E

### Focus Group Questions

1. How has racism and discrimination impacted your life?
2. Discuss the specific negative and positive stereotypes that you have heard about your race/group from the general population?
3. How did these stereotypes affect you?
4. What do you know about intergroup and within-group racism and discrimination?
5. Have you ever experienced this form of discrimination before? If you have, how so?
6. Have you ever experienced discrimination from Africans/African Americans?
7. If you have, in what areas of your life? (i.e., work, personal and family relationships, school, etc).
8. What specific statements about your race/group have you heard from Africans/African Americans that you do not wish to hear anymore?
9. How do you think the relationship between Africans and African Americans can and should be improved?
10. Is there a need to improve the relationship between both groups? What are some benefits to doing so?
11. What did you gain from this experience, both positive and negative?
12. Any recommendations or thoughts regarding future research studies?

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