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## Exploring Generational Difference of Acculturation, Ethnic Identity and Racial Identity in Liberian Immigrants and Their Children Living in the United States

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EXPLORING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCE OF ACCULTURATION, ETHNIC  
IDENTITY AND RACIAL IDENTITY IN LIBERIAN IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR  
CHILDREN LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES

by

Breezie J. Gibson

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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Doctoral Committee:

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# EXPLORING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCE OF ACCULTURATION, ETHNIC IDENTITY AND RACIAL IDENTITY IN LIBERIAN IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR CHILDREN LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES

Breezie J. Gibson, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2021

Prior literature on immigrants has focused on the impact of acculturation for groups such as Asians and Hispanic or Latinx immigrants (Orjiako & So, 2014; Sall, 2019). Compared to these two groups, the literature on Black immigrants' experience of acculturation is scarce. In addition to the minimum visibility of Black immigrants in the acculturation literature, there is also limited knowledge relating to differences in the ethnic identity and racial identity of Black immigrants because these immigrants are often grouped monolithically with minimum attention to their diverse countries of origin. Understanding the influence of acculturation, ethnicity, and race is important because Black immigrants undergo significant changes in their transition to the US in addition to their new status as racial minorities. Past scholarship has found that living as a racial minority in the US society may heighten an immigrant's sense of ethnic identity, which may increase or decrease at various periods in one's life (Choi et al., 2001; Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2010).

Due to the gap in the literature on acculturation amongst Black immigrants and the monolithic approach to understanding ethnicity and race in these immigrants, the present study explored acculturation, race, and ethnicity in three generations of Liberians and Liberian Americans in the US. More specifically, the study examined differences in acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity between first-, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian immigrants and their children.

The study's sample consisted of 277 participants (168 male, 109 female) who self-identified as Liberian or Liberian American residing in the US for a minimum of two years and under an immigration status of non-visitor. The instruments used in this study included a demographic questionnaire, Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale (SMAS; Stephenson, 2000), The Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS; Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bámaca-Gómez, 2004), and Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS; Vandiver et al., 2000). Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) as well as Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) tests were conducted to test the study's hypotheses.

Results indicated there were statistically significant mean group differences between first- and second-generation Liberians on the acculturation (Ethnic Society Immersion, Dominant Society Immersion) subscales with first-generation immigrants scoring higher on both the dominant and ethnic subscale than second-generation. Additionally, the 1.5-generation Liberians had higher scores than second-generation Liberians on both subscales. In terms ethnic identity (Exploration, Resolution), results showed statistically significant group differences between first- and second-generation, with first-generation Liberians scoring higher than second-generation Liberians on the exploration subscale. For the resolution subscale, there were also statistically significant mean group differences between first- and 1.5-generation, with first-generation Liberians scoring higher than 1.5, as well as first-generation scoring higher than second-generation Liberians on the same subscale. Finally, results from the racial identity measure showed differences between first- and 1.5-generation Liberians on the Pre-Encounter Assimilation subscale, first- and 1.5-generation Liberians on the Pre-Encounter Self-Hate subscale as well as first- and second-generation on the same subscale. On both subscales, first-generation scores were higher than 1.5- and second-generation Liberians. The Immersion-

Emersion Anti-White subscale showed group differences between first- and 1.5-generation Liberians, and first- and second-generation Liberians. On the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White subscale, 1.5- and second-generation scored higher than their first-generation counterparts. Additionally, there were mean differences between first- and 1.5- generation Liberians, as well as first- and second-generation Liberians on the Internalization Afrocentricity subscale with 1.5- and second-generation scoring higher than first-generation. Finally, there were mean difference between first- and 1.5-generation Liberians on the Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive subscale as well as first and second on the same subscale. First-generation scores were higher on the Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive subscale than both 1.5- and second-generation Liberians. Additionally, other results from a MANCOVA indicated that age at the time of immigration did not influence acculturation, ethnic identity, or racial identity. However, there were group differences between length of time lived in the US and generations acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity.

These findings suggest that different generations of Liberians and Liberian Americans in the US hold different perception of themselves. These various perceptions provide insight to how they experience the world in which they live in versus how the world experiences and perceives them. Furthermore, these findings also suggest that the differences between generations of Liberians can potentially impact identity development as well as intergenerational family dynamics. Interpretation of the findings, study limitations, research and clinical implications, are further explored.

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Breezie J. Gibson

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The United States has been referred to as a melting pot, which is an attempt to describe individuals from different countries and backgrounds as they merge and unite as one in a harmonious culture. It has also been described as a salad bowl to recognize the uniqueness of each culture of various nationalities and ethnicities (Berray, 2019; Gloor, 2006; Zangwill, 1909). Both of these phrases are said to reflect the diversity of those living in the US. From the settlement of the first passengers on the Mayflower in 1620 to the refugees of Syria in 2011, people have sought entrance to the US for a variety of reasons: fleeing from war, escaping poverty or oppression, seeking a better education or more opportunities for themselves and their children, and seeking religious freedom (Imungi, 2008). For these reasons among others, since 2018 the number of immigrants residing in the US hit a record high of 45.4 million, an increase of 1.6 million over the prior year, 4.6 million since 2010, and 13.4 million since 2000 (Camarota & Zeigler, 2018). As the immigration population has increased, the US melting pot also showed distinctions related to cultural values, traditions, and worldviews.

Along with this increase in the US immigrant population has come a shift in the origins of these immigrants. During the 1960's, Europeans and Canadians were the largest immigrant groups (84%) in the US, followed by Mexicans (6%), South and East Asians (4%), and immigrants from other countries (3%), such as Cuba, Jamaica, and Nigeria. Over time, these demographics have shifted. As of 2016, only 13.2% of immigrants arrived from Europe and Canada (Radford & Budiman, 2018). Among the new immigrants arriving in the US, Asian immigrants have outnumbered Hispanic immigrants 37% to 31%, respectively (Budiman, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2018). Since 2016, immigrants from South and East Asia represent a large

proportion of the US immigrant population (27%), and Mexican immigrants follow closely behind with 26%. These data also show that Latin Americans represent 24.5% of the US immigrant population, and less than 10% are from other countries in the Caribbean and Africa (Lopez et al., 2018; Pew Research Center, 2015).

This shift in the demographics of the US immigrants from the 1960's to present day is due to changes in various laws and regulations over time. These changes have also shifted the nation's political climate, and views toward immigrants of color. To that end, the US society have accepted, rejected, or provided support for certain immigrant groups based on immigration policies. For example, the Hart-Celler Act, also referred to as the Immigration Act of 1965, approved under President John F. Kennedy's administration, was legislation that contributed to a shift in the origins of immigrants coming to the US (LeMay & Barkan, 1999; Rumbaut, 1997). The Immigration Act of 1965 lifted the national origin quota system put in place in 1924 to limit the number of immigrants of color who were allowed entrance into the US from certain countries such as China, Korea, and the Philippines (LeMay & Barkan, 1999; Rumbaut, 1997).

Other US immigration laws and policies that have contributed to the shift in the demographics of immigrants in the US were the Refugee Act of 1980 and the Immigration Act of 1990 (LeMay & Barkan, 1999; Rumbaut, 1997). The Refugee Act in 1980 reduced restrictions on immigration by allowing more immigrants from war-torn areas to enter the US. The Immigration Act of 1990 was initially intended to attract immigrants from underrepresented countries in Europe (i.e., Ireland, United Kingdom). Though it did not have the intended effect on European immigrants, it did result in an increased number of Black immigrants to the US. The Immigration Act also allowed reunification of immediate family as well as provided residence status for those entering the US for employment (LeMay & Barkan, 1999). Due to

these changes in immigration policies over time, the number of immigrants entering the US from predominately Black areas, such as the Caribbean and Africa, has also increased.

While more immigrants from continental Africa and the Caribbean are in the US, currently, Caribbean immigrants currently represent majority of the foreign-born Black population (Pew Research Center, 2015). The highest number of Black immigrants originates from countries such as Jamaica (18%) and Haiti (15%) compared to those coming from the continent of Africa (4%; Anderson, 2015, 2016; Lopez et al., 2018). Though the majority of Black immigrants are from the Caribbean, those from the African diaspora account for roughly 8% of the US Black population and are projected to increase to 16.5% by 2060 (Anderson, 2015). The largest number of Africans emigrate from Ethiopia (5%) in East Africa, and West African countries such as Nigeria (6%), Ghana (4%), and Liberia (2%). Immigrants from these African nations, as well as immigrants from other nations have been able to take advantage of the opportunity to gain permanent US residence. Though these immigrants may access opportunities that were unavailable in their native country, they also encounter new stressors as a result of the cultural shift between their native country and the US.

Scholars have identified this experience of shifting from one's own culture and norms to another as acculturation (Berry, 1980). Acculturation was initially defined by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) as the result when groups of individuals from different cultures have continuous contact with subsequent changes in the original cultural pattern of either or both groups. Undergoing these changes can result in physical and mental health issues. For instance, the task of grocery shopping may appear simple to those who are natives of a country. However, immigrants in the host country may experience frustration and stress in obtaining groceries due to the need to travel to multiple and specific stores to obtain ingredients for their ethnic meals.

This example may seem miniscule, but it represents how stress occurs and accumulates during the acculturation process. Stress associated with the acculturation process has been labeled acculturative stress (Berry et al., 1987).

As expected, many immigrants arriving in the US experience an acculturation process that involves daily stressors associated with adjusting to the culture of their host country. Acculturation has been found to affect immigrants coming to the US in various ways. Some of these effects include mental health issues, socioeconomic status, and the cultural inclusivity of the society of settlement (Berry et al., 1987). Some of these stressors may also extend to food and dietary changes, economic challenges, and language barriers. The stressors that are most prominent will vary based on an individual's cultural context of origin. For example, Black immigrants from African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Liberia share a commonality to US citizens in that the English language is their country's primary language. Therefore, language as a barrier after arrival to the US may have a minimum effect on their adjustment. While language may not be a challenge for individuals arriving from these countries, they face other acculturation challenges (e.g., feeling of belonging, adapting to a new culture, or reestablishing a vocational identity) that impact the shift in cultural contexts. Due to these challenges, it is important to explore acculturation for Black African immigrants. This study focuses specifically on Liberians/Liberian Americans.

Liberians are a particular group of West Africans who have a strong historical connection and familiarity with the US. Therefore, developing research to understand this group is important because Liberia is ranked sixth in countries of migrants from Africa to the US and third in countries of migrants from West Africa to the US (McCapps et al., 2012). This high rank of immigrants can be explained by the 15-year civil war that displaced many Liberian citizens,

forcing them to adjust to life in the US and raise their children in a society outside their cultural norm. By virtue of raising a family outside of one's culture of origin, it is expected that these children and their parents may have a different lens in which they view the world. Additionally, each generation may identify differently, which can lead to familial stress and disconnect (Foner, 2016; Johnson, 2016; Onyenekwu, 2015). While the influence of the acculturation process has been studied in the social science literature, certain groups, such as Asians and Hispanics, have had more visibility than others, such as those from the Caribbean and Africa (Orjiako & So, 2014; Sall, 2019). Immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa are assumed to blend in and share cultural similarities with US-born Blacks. Indicative of such assumptions are the limited studies with immigrants from predominately Black societies despite evidence that suggests race and ethnicity are predictors of acculturation (Phinney & Onwughalu, 1996; Pittman et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2008; Waters, 1994). As a result of these limited studies, the current study also explores acculturation in three generations (first-generation, 1.5-generation, second-generation) of Liberian immigrants.

For Liberians, other Africans, and Black immigrants in the US, in addition to managing their acculturation process, which involves many changes (e.g., climate, food, language etc.), they must contend with understanding how the mere existence of their skin color is a mark for dehumanization and oppression (Foner, 2016; Fries-Britt et al., 2014). Exposure to the American racial system is a central component of the Black immigrant experience (Foner, 2016). Therefore, these immigrants must learn about the racial hierarchy in the US and their place on it. As they untangle racial discrimination, they also learn to form a meaning behind their Blackness, and the issue of their identity is reconstructed. For example, Johnson (2016) pointed out that while first-generation Black immigrants conscious distancing from US-Blacks is grounds for

affirmation of their homeland identities, it is also largely a reaction to not wanting to be “Negro or American-Black” (p. 54). As first-generation immigrants distance themselves, their children the 1.5-generation (anyone who came to the US between the ages of 12-17 years) and second-generation (anyone who was born in the US to one or both immigrant parents)—may embrace a racial identity “without contradiction” and move back and forth between ethnic and racial identities depending on the situation. In this way, their children become instrumental in assisting the first-generation understand the US Black experience (Foner, 2016; Johnson, 2016). These immigrants learn that in the US context, race often subsumes culture and ethnicity, commonly ignoring possible distinctions among people of the same race who vary in ethnicity and nationality (Clark, 2008; Foner, 2001; Fries-Britt et al., 2014). To that end, the present study also explores differences in racial identity across three generations of Liberian immigrants.

For this reason, it is important to explore race as a variable that influences family’s acculturation process. Although Liberians and other immigrants from predominately Black societies may fit the same racial profile as US-born Blacks, they have unique ethnic backgrounds that can influence their acculturation process. Often dismissing Black ethnic identities, mainstream White America tends to view race and ethnicity interchangeably for Blacks in America by failing to recognize any ethnic heterogeneity within the racial category of Black, however, to say the diversity in Blackness is vast is an understatement (Mensah, 2014; Ogundipe, 2011). Due to the immense variation of Blackness, African immigrants develop ethnic pride as an integral way to navigate and buffer against discrimination (Rong & Brown, 2002). Furthermore, ethnic identity provides a sense of rootedness and serves as a source of resilience for African immigrants (Ogundipe, 2011; Porte & Rumbard, 2003; Rong & Brown, 2002). Equally important to note about ethnic identity in the Black African immigrant population is the

hybridity of 1.5 and second generation as a means of accepting and negotiating their identities (Lorick-Wilmot, 2015; Onyenekwu, 2015). Similar to other ethnic groups (e.g., Asians, Latinos), Black immigrants in the US have constructed a unique concept of ethnicity, thus these various ethnic identities should be recognized to avoid the perpetual monolithic grouping of the US Black population.

After all, the monolithic approach implies that generations of immigrants from the Caribbean and across the African diaspora share the same sociocultural experiences—while the same ideology is not assumed with those from Asia (Korean, Japanese, India), or with Latinx/Hispanic (Mexican, Cuban, Colombia) background. While African and Caribbean immigrants might have some shared cultural experiences, there are other profound factors that influence their experiences, including the kind of acceptance or rejection each group receives from the US culture. That is, immigrants from the Caribbean may be more accepted through exoticization of the culture, language and dialects, familiarity of the Caribbean, and its proximity to the US. In contrast, those from Africa may be rejected and seen as uncivilized due to many Americans' lack of accurate knowledge about Africa (Bethea, 2005; Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Jackson & Cothran, 2003; Johnson, 2016). This lack of knowledge can be due to various sources, including scholarly research. The present study explores differences in racial identity across three generations of Liberian immigrants.

Given the lack of knowledge, and prior research indicating that one's generational status can affect their acculturation, it is important to not only examine acculturation but to explore its effects across multiple generations. Other studies have found that race and ethnicity are predictors of acculturation (Phinney & Onwughalu, 1996; Pittman et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2008; Waters, 1994). For these reasons, the present study will focus on exploring the levels of



acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity attitudes in each of the three generations (first, 1.5, and second) of Liberian immigrants and their children. This study addresses the limited visibility of Black African immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, specifically Liberia in the social science literature, as well as the limited examination of potential differences in racial, and ethnic identity across generations.

There are several benefits of understanding the differences within and across these three generations. One of which is to gain the unique perspective of how each generation views themselves and their acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity. Another benefit of this research is that it moves toward untangling the complex web of identity as it relates to recent African descendants residing in the US. Finally, the study recognizes and explores the diversity of Black identities and possible psychological effects of racial and ethnic identity in this group.

This study has implications for counseling psychologists and other mental health practitioners working with Liberians who want to understand the experiences and potential psychological and sociocultural barriers that are unique to Liberian immigrants and their children living in the US. Additionally, this study can add to the scarce literature on the experiences of Liberians and their children who entered the US as refugees and asylees, work visa, family sponsorship, and diversity visa, among others. The importance of these various modes of entrance is significant in the amount of support, level of security, or acceptance and rejection Liberians and their children may receive in the US society.

For a better understanding of Liberians as a group, Chapter II of this study first provides a concise history of Liberia as a nation. Next, it offers a brief overview of the culture of the Liberian people, such as respectability, family structure, religion, and food. The chapter

concludes with a review available literature on acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity as they relate to Black, African, and Liberian immigrants.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the present study is to explore acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity that is unique within and across generations of Liberian immigrants in the US. With this focus in mind, the first section of this literature review will provide the historical context of Liberia as a nation, the culture, and the Liberian people. The purpose of the historical context is to provide a clearer sense of Liberians as a group of West Africans. It is important to note that, given the limited literature on Liberia, the section relating to the culture and people of Liberia relies heavily on the work of Dunn-Marco et al. Next, the literature review will focus on acculturation and acculturative stress that may contribute to Liberians' health and well-being in the US. The third and fourth sections of the literature review will examine ethnic identity and racial identity. Understanding these identities in Liberian immigrants and their children will provide insights to how three generation (first, 1.5, and second-generation) of Liberians view themselves in the US where Black identity is ascribed, and ethnicity is ignored among the Black population. The final section of the literature review will focus on the purpose of the current study to illustrate the gaps in the social science, specifically psychology literature on the scarcity of research on Liberians. The section will conclude with the research questions and hypotheses for the study.

#### **History of Liberia**

Liberia is located northwest of Sierra Leone, north of Guinea, and east of the Ivory Coast in West Africa. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA, 2020) estimated the population of Liberia to be 5,073,296 in July 2020. The country is 111,369 square kilometers, which is comparable in size to the US state of Tennessee. Although English is the official language, Liberia has over 20

different ethnic groups, each of which has their own language. Liberia has 15 counties and nine major ethnic groups (CIA, 2018). According to the Liberian Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (2008), these nine major groups represent the following percentage of the country's population: Kpelle (20.3%), Bassa (13.4%), Grebo (10%), Gio (8%), Mano (7.9%), Kru (6%), Lorma (5.1%), Kissi (4.8%), and Gola (4.4%). While these various ethnic groups in Liberia represent indigenous Liberians, who inhabited the land before its founding, historical accounts of Liberia usually begin with the American Colonization Society (ACS).

Liberia means “land of the free” and was taken over in the early 1800's by the ACS for freed slaves<sup>1</sup> from the United States post-trans-Atlantic slave trade (CIA, 2018). The ACS was comprised of a group of White American men who believed that Blacks would only be successful if they were returned to Africa. Based on the racist beliefs of these men (Kendi, 2016), they promoted the policy to resettle free slaves in Africa at the cost of the native African people who inhabited the land before the arrival of the freed slaves, while the ACS forcefully settled the freed slaves (Braak et al., 1999). The ACS governed Liberia until 1847 when the country became independent. Between 1816 and 1867, the ACS resettled nearly 10,000 freed slaves and several thousand Africans from other slave ships (CIA, 2018).

In settling Liberia, the freed slaves, also referred to as Americo-Liberians, were described as adopting and imposing the Western, Christian values of White Americans (Sawyer, 2008; World Health Organization [WHO], 2017) beliefs onto the native/indigenous people in their set up to run the country. As an example of such ideology, native people of Liberia were excluded from citizenship and land ownership, and the majority of the country's population were excluded

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<sup>1</sup>The decision to use of the word “slaves” versus “enslaved Africans” is to pay homage to the indigenous natives who do not consider themselves or their ancestors freed slaves.

from holding any major public office and having voting rights (Haddow, 2015). Sawyer and Kieh (2008) noted that the constitution of Liberia in 1847, which contained these restrictions, marked the beginning of a divided country and led to a 15-year civil war between the native people and the Americo-Liberians. Liberia remained segregated between the natives and the Americo-Liberians until 1944 when the native people were given the right to vote, own land, and hold leadership roles in the government (Kieh, 2008). However, between 1944 and 1980, the country's social, economic, and political life continued to be controlled by the Americo-Liberians, also referred to as the True Whig Party (TWP), though they only comprised 3% of the population (Eros, 1995; Mutisi, 2012).

In 1980, military leader Samuel Doe staged a *coup d'état* that overthrew the government and executed then President William R. Tolbert, Jr. Doe's action escalated the conflict between Americo-Liberians and the native Liberians (Mutisi, 2012). Doe, a descendant of the native people, promoted only members of his ethnic group during his time as president and dominated the country's political and military life (Eros, 2005). Similar to Doe's tactic, on December 24, 1989, Charles Taylor led a group of rebels and invaded Liberia from the borders of the Ivory Coast and overthrew the Liberian government. After seven years of conflict and instability, Taylor was elected to office in 1997 (CIA, 2018; WHO, 2017). His presidential role lasted until 2000, when major fighting resumed amid accusations of poor leadership and corruption (CIA, 2018; WHO, 2017).

After several years of leadership by a transitional government and the major presence of the United Nations, the country held a democratic election in 2005. This election brought Africa's first female President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, to office (CIA, 2018). In November 2017, the country elected former Liberian football star, George Weah, as Johnson-Sirleaf's predecessor

(CIA, 2018). The ease in transition of power after the recent election was perceived as positive indication for peace from the country's political leaders.

Although the country continues to work toward redevelopment, the civil war of the 1980s and late 1990s to 2000s in Liberia displaced over 250,000 citizens (CIA, 2018). Such disturbance has left the country heavily dependent on foreign aid, which is a sign of instability for many of its citizens. As a result, many Liberians have immigrated to the United States due to their close ties and familiarity with American culture. Such familiarity (e.g., language, hierarchical stratification) are thought to be useful for adjusting to life in the United States. However, while Liberians who emigrate to the US may have some familiarity with US culture, they may also experience major unforeseen cultural differences. Some of these differences, including respect, family structure, religion, and food or dietary improvising, can lead to adjustment issues for Liberians. The next section will provide a brief overview of Liberia as a society, people, and culture for a better understanding of potential challenges Liberian immigrants and their children may encounter when adjusting to life in the US.

### **Culture of Liberia**

Although Liberia is home to over nine different ethnic groups characterized as tribes, there is a shared culture as a nation. Broadly, the culture and values of Liberia reflects a synthesis of US, British, and Canadian cultures with indigenous/native Liberian cultures. Examples of these shared cultural values are respect for family and other members of the community, family structure, religion, and food. These shared cultural values are explored more below.

## **Respect**

Respect governs the behavior of Liberian children toward their parents and elders within and out of the community (Dunn-Marco et al., 2005; WHO, 2017). Respect can be as simple as speaking to an elder, bowing before them, or offering a seat to them. In school settings, students show respect to their teachers through obedience. Students are to trust the knowledge of their teachers and may not challenge them. Teachers are permitted to physically discipline students whose behaviors are disruptive and disrespectful. A switch, often taken from a tree, a rattan, or a ruler, are all used by teachers to discipline students. Another aspect of respect in Liberian culture is the use of honorifics when children address adults. For example, adding a “handle” (title), such as uncle, aunty, Mr., Ms., mister, old ma, old pa, papay, or old pop to an adult’s name within and out of the community acknowledges their seniority (Dunn-Marco et al., 2005; WHO, 2017). Addressing adults in the community with a title before their name provides a sense of family and connection that emphasizes a collectivist society that is common to Liberians. In terms of adults showing respect for each other, age and position of power is the determinant of the level of respect one adult gives to another (Dunn-Marco et al., 2005).

## **Family Structure**

The familial structure of Liberia is primarily patriarchal (Dunn-Marco et al., 2005). Women are expected to care for the children and the home, while men are expected to provide for the family through farming or other work outside the home. Both nuclear and extended families are significant in Liberian culture. It is common practice for two or more generations to live in the same home with the oldest male and female as the pillars of the home.

In Liberia, dating and marriage are frequently regarded as an agreement between families (Dunn-Marco et al., 2005). Although there is a general practice of monogamy, some tribal

groups practice polygamy. In terms of selecting a spouse, individuals commonly choose partners who are in their tribe and are familiar with the sub-culture of their tribe, community, and religion.

## **Religion**

In Liberia, the two most commonly practiced religions are Christianity and Islam (WHO, 2017). According to the Liberian Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (2008), 86% of the population identifies as Christians, while 12.2% are Muslims. Christianity was brought to the country by Americo-Liberians, and Islam was brought by traders from Guinea (Dunn-Marco et al., 2005). Religious traditions practiced by the indigenous people are witchcraft, animism, and totemism. The culture of Liberia is accommodating of multiple faiths; it is not uncommon that one who identifies as Christian may also practice witchcraft or animism (Dunn-Marco et al., 2005).

## **Food**

Traditional food served in Liberia varies among ethnic groups. Most groups have their specialty or prefer food based on their county's geographical location and the resources that have been available to them on the land. For example, the Bassa tribe is known for fufu, which is comparable to a dumpling and made from cassava. The Grebo and Kru are known for their signature dish, palm butter (thick curry-like sauce), which is made from palm nuts. Rice is thought of as the primary food for most Liberians (Dunn-Marco et al., 2005) and is eaten daily as a part of every meal. Additional foods included in a Liberian's diet are corn, sweet potato, yams, and fresh fruits and vegetables. Meals in Liberia are prepared fresh daily and typically include fish, meat, and poultry (Dunn-Marco et al., 2005). Women are generally expected to visit the market daily to purchase ingredients for the meal. Regarding mealtime, Liberians typically eat



when the food is ready (Dunn-Marco et al., 2005). Children are often attended to for breakfast. However, lunch can be leftovers or simply skipped. In Liberia, many working adults and school children go home for lunch or visit a cookshop at lunchtime. Cookshops are small home-ran restaurant shops that offer freshly made meals for sale. Snacks in Liberia also vary from roasted cassava, roasted plantain, plantain chips, sugar canes, and milk candy. These snacks are considered street food that is often sold during lunchtime or late in the evening after dinner. The diets of most Liberians are considered organic and fresh. Although high in cholesterol, Liberian nutrition is also high in starch and protein. The high cholesterol and protein are considered important for their diet primarily because most Liberians eat one large meal daily.

In sum, the cultural values of the Liberian people are unique and integrative reflection of the indigenous people, White colonizers, and Americo-Liberians. The 15-year civil war in Liberia has left many displaced and resettled in the US on account of the relatively close ties between Liberia and the US. It is likely that many Liberians will continue to seek refuge in calling the US home while Liberia regains stability. Due to the widespread influence of the Americo-Liberians, the cultural similarities between Liberia and the US, as well as the English language, reduces some of the adjustments Liberians undergo in the transition to the US. On the other hand, food preparation, consumption, and ingredients may contribute to other issues of adjustment—changes in society norms and expectations, family structure, or educational environment, which may impact family dynamics and behavior. For example, women contributing to the household income through employment outside the home, or parents relying on their children for tasks related to literacy can foster a sense of independence or dependence. These adjustments can affect multiple generations of Liberians and their children's acculturation, which is adjustment to a new culture and environment in the US (Berry, 1997).

## **Acculturation**

This section will first provide an overview of acculturation from its initial conceptualization in the social science literature to the present understanding of the construct. The conceptualization will include acculturation from a cultural or group level as well as from an individual or psychological level. As an outcome of acculturation in immigrant groups, acculturative stress will also be discussed. Next, this section will discuss acculturation and race as an added layer of acculturative stress for immigrants of color, particularly Black immigrants. Due to the stressors Black immigrants encounter, acculturative strategies are developed as a protective or coping mechanism: for that reason, acculturative strategies will be reviewed. Lastly, empirical studies on acculturation and acculturative stress among Liberians and other Black immigrant groups will be provided. The empirical studies will discuss five research studies that highlight sub-Saharan Africans, East African, and West Africans, including Liberians. This section of the paper will conclude by highlighting gaps in the literature on acculturation and discuss the current study's focus on acculturation attitudes across and within multiple generations of Liberian Americans.

### **Conceptualizing Theories of Acculturation**

The literature on acculturation is complex and layered with varying terms and definitions (Wright, 2013). The earliest definition of the term acculturation came from the fields of sociology and anthropology (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Sociologist Robert Park (1914) can be credited for providing the initial framework of acculturation, a three-stage model consisting of acculturation: contact, accommodation, and assimilation. In this model, Park posits that contact between a group of people from a different culture forces them to develop ways to accommodate each other in order to minimize or avoid conflict (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Wright, 2013).

Eventually, cultural assimilation occurs when immigrant groups learn to integrate aspects of the dominant culture in their heritage culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003). In the end, Park suggests that cultural assimilation is progressive and irreversible, leading to a blend of cultures and intermarriage (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Park, 1914; Wright, 2013).

Building on Parks' theory of acculturation, twenty-two years later, anthropologists Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) expanded on acculturation as the phenomenon that occurs when groups of individuals of different cultural backgrounds come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural pattern of the two different cultural groups. Although the idea of acculturation was initially conceptualized as a change that occurs on a group level, Graves' (1967) work with three different ethnic groups (Anglo-Americans, Spanish-Americans, and Native Americans) suggested otherwise. Graves found that, in addition to the group level, acculturation has an important influence at the individual (psychological) level as well.

Graves (1967) further indicated that on the psychological level, the immigrant is influenced directly by the cultural contexts of the society of origin and the society of settlement. With the addition of the psychological component of acculturation, Teske and Nelson (1974) provided a more comprehensive psychological definition that distinguished acculturation from assimilation (Wright, 2013). Teske and Nelson (1974) posited that acculturation included changes in material traits, behavior patterns, norms, institutional changes, and importantly, values at both the individual and group level.

By the 1970's acculturation became an interest in the field of psychology (Berry, 1970; 2004). However, researchers' discussion on the topic focused on a unidirectional linear progression where immigrants were expected to move from the culture of origin towards the host

culture in identification, values, and practices (Ryder et al., 2000; Schwartz et al., 2013). In contrast to the focus on direction, Berry (1980) conceived acculturation as a bidimensional process that allows two identities to exist independently (Agebemenu, 2016; Gordon, 1964; Ryder et al., 2000; Schildkraut, 2007, Wright, 2013). The concept of acculturation as bidimensional refers to the various components (i.e., cultural practices, cultural values, and cultural identifications) that are assumed to change for the members of each group when two cultures are in contact with each other (Phinney et al., 2006; Schwartz et al., 2010). Furthermore, a bidimensional approach recognizes the importance of multicultural societies, minority individuals and groups, and that individuals have a choice in the matter of how far they are willing to go in the acculturation process (Padilla & Perez, 2003).

For example, cultural practices (customs, traditions), values (individualism, collectivism), or identification (attachment to cultural groups) may vary from person to person as well as on the group level. That is, one may endorse certain values and practices in certain contexts (e.g., work versus home), identify both with the host culture and culture of origin, and live in communities where the host culture and culture of origin are encouraged to coexist (Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). While some prefer to blend both cultures, others choose to maintain a separation of cultures due to perceived conflicts (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Chen et al., 2008; McDermott-Levy, 2009). Acculturation as a bidimensional concept allows variability in multiple cultural identities and the strength in which it is displayed by the individual or group (McDermott-Levy, 2009; Ryder et al., 2000). Ryder et al. also argue that utilizing Berry's bidimensional model constitutes a broader and more valid framework for understanding acculturation.

While Berry's theory and model of acculturation has been widely adopted in the psychology literature to research immigrants' settlement in a new homeland, other researchers have proposed a reconceptualization and expansion of the theory (Arends-Toth & Van de Vijver, 2006; Bourhis et al., 1997; Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Luque et al., 2006; Padilla, 1980). Researchers such as Schwartz et al. (2010) have proposed moving beyond the "one size fits all" perspective, which assumes that regardless of the type of migration (voluntary or involuntary), the migrant's acculturation level can be classified as high or low for the receiving culture's acquisition and the heritage culture's retention (Rudmin, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2010). Instead of a high and low perspective for acculturation level, Schwartz et al. (2010) argue that acculturation is a multidimensional process that involves merging the immigrants' heritage cultural and receiving cultural practices, values, and identifications.

The argument here is that Berry's (1980) bidimensional model of acculturation does not take into consideration the rate at which immigrants' process of acculturation change—and for some, the process may not change at all. That is to say, certain values may not change. Furthermore, that change in one dimension of acculturation (e.g., learning the new language) may not imply changes in other dimensions (e.g., interdependence to independence), or if they do, that such changes will be at the same rate or in the same direction. Due to the various ways in which acculturation can manifest (e.g., customs, traditions, values, identifications) among immigrants, Schwartz et al. (2010) posited that the concept of acculturation can easily become a layered construct (e.g., behavioral acculturation, value acculturation, or identity acculturation).

While Schwartz et al.'s (2010) point is valid, Berry's framework is inclusive of the physical (i.e., new housing, environment, population) and biological changes (i.e., nutritional status, and exposure to new illness) that should be included when considering the effects

acculturation has on the individual or at the group level (Berry & Kim 1988). In addition to the physical and biological consideration, the framework is inclusive of both group and cultural variables, as well as individual and psychological variables. Although the critique and argument presented by previous researchers including Schwartz et al. (2010) to expand on Berry's bidimensional model of acculturation are valuable, the present study will use Berry's framework because numerous researchers have validated the use of this framework and, to date, it remains the most widely used and empirically supported model to explain immigrants' experiences of acculturation (Abe-Kim et al., 2001; Dere et al., 2010; Huynh et al., 2009; Ryder et al., 2000). To that end, the remainder of this review on acculturation will expand on Berry's theory. Gaining a better understanding of the theory from a cultural or group level as well as the individual or psychological level can contextualize the adjustments Liberians and other Black immigrants as well as immigrants of color from non-western societies encounter in their transition to the US.

### **Cultural or Group Level Acculturation**

Cultural or group level acculturation is the broad concept that refers to the interaction of two groups coming into contact with each other; it is the change in the culture of one group (Berry, 2005). Berry (1997) described the group level as the merging of one's society of origin and the society of settlement. Both societal contexts must first be understood in order to understand the acculturation process for different immigrant groups. Berry (1997; 2005) suggested that the conditions faced by a person in the society of origin (i.e., political, economic, demographic) may be a basis to understanding their motivation for migration. Richmond (1993) referred to this concept as a "push/pull factor". The push is explained as a reaction to negative characteristics that are limiting in the society of origin. An example of the push factor is being denied education due to one's gender. The pull is generally positive characteristics in the society

of settlement—for example, access to education regardless of one’s gender. Richmond (1993) also called these positive characteristics proactive for migrants who seek to maximize their advantage in the society of settlement.

Berry (1997) suggested that in the society of settlement, factors such as multicultural ideologies, ethnic attitudes, and social support can have an important influence on the group. To illustrate, consider the society of settlement’s multicultural ideology. A multicultural society may be more inclusive of immigrants by showing support through available resources and policies that are important for maintaining diversity. Immigrants who enter the US as refugees provide an illustration of this concept. These immigrants may be issued necessary documents by the government to obtain housing, work, and attend school. Likewise, a society that is not accepting of cultural inclusivity may also have policies in place to maintain a monoculture society. These societies may seek to minimize or eliminate diversity through policies that maintain segregation. Such policies may include issuing a ban on those emigrating from certain regions of the world, or issuing a quota on visas granted to individuals from certain countries.

Berry (1997) postulated that as a result of these societal contexts, the migrant’s group level of acculturation might be manifested in numerous ways (e.g., physical, biological, economic, social, and cultural). For instance, at a physical level, there is a change in population. Individuals may go from frequently seeing those who resemble them in physical features to seeing fewer of those resemblances. On a biological level, there may be health concerns due to changes in diet, climate, or emotional regulations (Agbemenu, 2016; Daramola, 2012). Economically, there may be a change in social class status when moving from one’s native country to another country. Culturally, there will be a range of changes to navigate, including limitations in the expression of native culture, language barrier, and a shift or readjustment of

values. With regard to social change, there is a potential loss of community and support. All of these group level changes due to acculturation can also affect the individual at the individual or psychological level.

### **Individual or Psychological Acculturation**

The concept of psychological acculturation refers to changes that occur at an individual level, with the immigrant influenced directly by the cultural contexts of the society of origin and the society of settlement (Graves, 1967). At the psychological level, change can manifest through behavioral shifts, which occur when movement is away from what was previously learned in the society of origin to behaviors that occur more frequently in the new society (Berry, 1980).

Behavioral shifts can become problematic when the new behavior interferes with old values, attitudes, abilities, and motives (Berry, 1992). Berry (2005) explained that while acculturation at a group level is taking place, individuals differ in their participation, with some individuals moving at a faster pace than the group, and others moving slower than the group, or at the same pace of the group. For example, an individual can be perceived as moving at a faster pace by demonstrating autonomy in a decision-making process instead of consulting with other family members if collectivism is the group value.

At the psychological or individual level of acculturation, there are five main features: (a) acculturation experience, (b) appraisal of experience, (c) strategies used, (d) immediate effects, and (e) long-term outcomes (Berry, 1997; 2005). Acculturation experience is situated in life events of dealing with two cultures that are in contact with each other. During the appraisal of experience phase, the individual considers the meaning of the experience, evaluates and appraises the situation (i.e., evaluates whether stressors are benign or an opportunity). When individuals see the stressor as an opportunity, they are likely to employ basic coping strategies to



reduce the conflict between the two cultures. Although the individual may develop strategies to cope with the changes in cultures, there is an immediate effect that arises from the physiological and emotional reactions of the stress to the new living situation. An illustration of an emotional reaction is an immigrant who demonstrates healthy coping strategies in the work environment but struggles to connect emotionally to the community due to language, food, and other barriers. While the immigrant may continue to experience psychological and emotional reactions to the new environment, increased stability and adaption to the new setting can reduce the long-term negative/emotionally reactive responses to these changes (Berry, 1997).

Adaption to the new culture (psychological, socio-culture, physical) requires the individual to learn new behaviors that are appropriate for the new culture (Berry, 2005). An individual must let go of certain features of their previous culture to accommodate the new one. This negotiation of what to purge and what to adapt is referred to as cultural shedding (Berry, 1992). Berry suggests that culture shedding must occur in order to make room for the new culture. In the process of learning and adapting new behaviors, one might experience varying degrees of conflict. The result of these conflicts leads to what Berry refers to as acculturative stress.

### **Acculturative Stress**

Acculturative stress refers to adverse effects in the physical, psychological, social, and health status of individuals as a result of undergoing acculturation (Berry, 2006; Berry et al., 1987; Rudmin, 2009). Simply stated, acculturative stress is the reaction in response to life events that are rooted in the experience of acculturation (Berry, 2005). Acculturative stress is one of the many changes that occur during the continuous contact of two cultures and can affect individuals or groups at various levels. Acculturative stress can particularly impact individuals or groups

depending on the reason for migration. For example, Berry et al. (1987) examined the level of acculturative stress in people who identified with five different cultural statuses: native people, refugees, sojourners, ethnic groups, and immigrants. Native people were defined as those who were already inhabitants of North America (e.g., Ojibway [Chippewa]) and were met by European settler colonialists. In such a case, the arriving settlers would have experienced acculturative stress as they had to become acclimated to a new environment and way of life. Berry et al. (1987) defined refugees as those with little to no choice in their migration due to safety for their life. An example of refugees in the US can include Liberians, Somalis, Syrians, or Bosnians. Sojourners, such as international students, were considered temporary immigrants who did not seek to establish permanent social network in the host society. Ethnic groups (e.g., Irish American, Polish American) were described as those who were more permanently settled and established. Finally, immigrants were defined as those voluntarily involved in the acculturation process. These are individuals who willingly chose to leave their home countries for personal reasons.

Depending on the reason for migrating, migrants may experience high or low acculturative stress. According to Berry et al. (1987), immigrants had the lowest level of acculturative stress compared to other groups, such as those identified as sojourners, who had the highest level of acculturative stress; while those identified as refugees and ethnic groups showed intermediate levels of acculturative stress. Voluntary movement was given as the explanation for immigrants' low level of acculturative stress, specifically, those who sought migration as an opportunity for better life outside of their country of origin. Other variables in support of immigrants' low acculturative stress included the similarities between their country of origin and the host country. In another study, Berry and Kim (1988) found that immigrants who

experienced the least shift in culture change (e.g., New Zealand to Australia) and were least resistant (voluntary versus involuntary) to the acculturative process experienced a lower level of acculturative stress than others whose experiences were different.

While cultural shift and motivation for migration are major elements to acculturative stress, researchers have also identified language as a significant factor that influences acculturative stress (Berry et al., 1987; Minde, 1985; Okafor et al., 2013; Organista et al., 1980). Minde (1985) found that students from the United States and United Kingdom living in Canada reported lower stress level due to cultural similarities than students from India, Africa, South America, and Hong Kong. A common similarity in which students identified was English proficiency. Other researchers have also found that English knowledge was correlated with lower stress levels when comparing the differences between host country and home country (Berry et al., 1987; Schwartz et al., 2010). While English proficiency is an important variable in understanding acculturative stress in all cultural groups who immigrate to English-speaking countries, it is a critical variable in understanding immigrant groups in the US (Schwartz et al., 2010). English is the main language of verbal communication with the host (US) society, and the inability to communicate in the host language can increase stress and lead to mental health issues (Berry et al., 1987; Okafor et al., 2013; Organista et al., 1980; Yost & Lucas, 2002). Consequently, language barriers can influence how immigrants adapt to the host culture.

Along with language barriers, other factors associated with acculturative stress among immigrants are social support and religion. Due to an already established relationship and common interests, immigrants with family support in the host country and those with religious ideology consistent with the host culture experience less stress (Adedoyin et al., 2018; Odera, 2007). While immigrants who arrive independently and have religious practices or values (e.g.,

Islam, Buddhist, collectivist) different from the US may experience more stress and less support (Adedoyin et al., 2018; Berry et al., 1987). Similar to language, social support, and religion, another common factor that has influenced immigrants' level of acculturative stress is socioeconomic status (SES). Immigrants with lower SES experience higher levels of acculturative stress than immigrants with higher SES who are seen as contributing to the host country's economy (Hansson et al., 2010; Hovey et al., 2002, 2004; Steiner, 2009).

Acculturative stress has also been noted to have a significant influence on the mental (e.g., depression, anxiety, substance use, self-esteem) and physical health (e.g., high blood pressure, migraines, panic attacks) of immigrants (Clarke, 2017; Miranda et al., 2005; Singh, 2017). The intersection between perceived discrimination, racism, and immigration have been shown to be associated with lower levels of both physical and mental health (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). For example, Makwarimba et al. (2010) reported that Somali and Chinese immigrants experienced mental health challenges due to the barriers that they faced during the migration process. Participants indicated that their feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and distress were linked to the separation from their family in addition to the lack of social support when they migrated. Though mental health has consistently been linked to having an influence on immigrants, it is also worth noting that immigrants are more likely to seek out help from non-mental health practitioners such as elders in their community or faith leaders (Akekeye et al., 2014; Fenta et al., 2006; Orjiako, 2011; Bart-Plange, 2015).

In addition to mental and physical health, another source of acculturative stress is intergenerational conflicts that is caused by differing degrees of acculturation between parents and children (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). One longitudinal study of second-generation immigrants showed that when children master the language and cultural norms of the host country (US)

more quickly than their parents and disconnect from the ethnic culture, parents' ability to act as protectors and authorities in their childrens' lives diminishes (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Thus, parents' inability to connect with their children in a way that maintains support within the family and ethnic communities can increase mental health risk for both the children and parents. As previously highlighted, levels of acculturative stress and its influence across and within immigrant groups may differ at the group and individual level. It should not be assumed that all groups and all individuals within these groups, or that all generation of immigrants and their families experience the same acculturation process since this approach ignores the unique aspects of various cultures and individual differences (Berry & Sam, 1997; Devos & Banaji, 2005; Ferguson & Birman, 2016; Schwartz et al., 2006; Schwartz et al., 2010).

In short, available literature shows numerous factors such as voluntary or involuntary migration, presence or absence of a language barrier, availability of social support, similarities or differences in religion, intergenerational conflict, mental and physical health affect individuals' acculturative stress. This is important because while many immigrants endure these stressors, Black immigrants must address an additional tier of acculturative stress, that being race. Though often dismissed, race can have a profound impact on Black immigrants' acculturation process (Ogundipe, 2011).

### **Acculturation and Race**

Ignoring the unique differences in each immigrant group is to impose a singular acculturation narrative for all immigrants from a specific region. Black immigrants represent one group that is frequently assumed to experience the same acculturation process. The limited research on the acculturation process of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa and Caribbean countries typically reduces them to a monolithic group, with the assumption that these two

groups share the same experience. This kind of reduction of two separate groups minimizes their intragroup cultural differences. Failure to differentiate African immigrants from Caribbean immigrants overlooks the acculturative stress that is unique to each group based on their country of origin and unique acculturation experiences (Owaka, 2015). In contrast, the literature provides more clarity in distinguishing Asian (e.g., Chinese, Taiwanese, and Japanese) and Latinx (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban) immigrants, as there is a clear delineation between these ethnic groups. To that point, the social science literature on acculturation and acculturative stress with regard to the Asian and Hispanic immigrant population is heavily saturated, providing the most visibility to these groups (Bart-Plange, 2015; Chae & Foley, 2010; Obasi & Leong, 2010; Rudmin, 2009).

Due to the focus on Asian and Latinx immigrants, other immigrant groups, such as those from the Caribbean and the continent of Africa, are often overlooked in the acculturation literature (Clarke, 2017). Relatively few researchers have focused on immigrants from predominately Black countries (e.g., Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa). In fact, in a literature review by Kuo (2014), only one study focused on immigrants from other cultural groups (i.e., Middle East, Africa) that were not from East Asian or from South American countries. This neglect of Black immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa supports the need for additional research to identify ways in which this unique immigrant population processes acculturation and copes with acculturative stress.

Blacks as a racial group are comprised of diverse ethnicities and nationalities; therefore, Blacks who are immigrants or recent descendants of immigrants are still a minority within their overall racial group in the US (Bart-Plange, 2015). Neglect to the growing population and diversity among Black immigrants ignores the fact that these immigrants frequently enter the

host country with a different level of knowledge and understanding of structure and power, depending on their country of origin. Furthermore, similar to other immigrant groups (e.g., Asians, Hispanic), Black immigrants experience a variety of economic, social, cultural, and prejudice stressors in adjusting to life in the US. However, unique to their immigrant experience is encountering racial discrimination in a highly racialized US society (Bart-Plange, 2015; Mwangi & Fries-Britt, 2015). Considering the fact that Black immigrants have to adjust to the experience of being a racial minority in addition to being a “minority within a minority” status renders them “invisible” (Bart-Plange, 2015; Sellers et al., 2006; Takyi, 2002). These immigrants also encounter the challenge of acculturating to mainstream US culture and Black American culture, as well as understanding the stigma of inferiority and discrimination associated with institutional barriers that Black Americans face regularly. The issues of race, racism, and discrimination that Black immigrants experience are different from non-Black immigrants; thus, these immigrants may use different strategies to address their unique acculturation experience. This reality indicates the need for more research to focus on the specific nuances of Black immigrants’ acculturation in the US.

Among Black immigrants, acculturation and race exist as a process where acculturation influences Black immigrants’ racial identity (Agwu, 2009; Choi et al., 2001; Ferguson et al., 2012; Thelamour & Johnson, 2017). Berry and Sam (1997) draw attention to the power differences between immigrants and the host culture. In the context of this writing, power difference is referred to as a system designed to maintain social and economic inequality based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and other marginalized identities (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Johnson, 2017). Due to historical and ongoing racial tension between Blacks and Whites in the US, race as a power position is relevant for Black immigrants (Mwangi & Chrystal, 2014). Race

becomes relevant because Black immigrants may have a limited understanding of certain issues around race that are salient in their new host country but may not as salient back home.

Wamwara-Mbugua and Cornwell (2010) noted the importance of distinguishing African immigrants' country of origin as they migrate into a racially stratified society. The significance of the distinction is that some Africans emigrate from countries that were once colonized by the United States or Great Britain. West African countries, such as Ghana, Liberia, and Nigeria, are examples of such colonization. Immigrants from these countries may experience similar acculturation processes because language and familiarity with Western culture are not significant factors in their acculturative stress. However, race and ethnic differences may contribute significantly to their acculturative stress because these Black immigrants become exposed to learning which immigrant groups are received as favorable and unfavorable. Through this exposure, Black immigrants learn how much access and resources are available to an individual based on the pigmentation of their skin (Mwangi & Chrystal, 2014; Rohmann et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., 2010; Segal & Mayadas, 2005). An example of such learning experience might be witnessing how a White South African immigrant is treated or perceived in comparison to a Black West African immigrant. In addition to learning the role of race, they may also learn to navigate acculturative stressors related to race by identifying more closely with their heritage culture (e.g., ethnicity). Developing modes to navigate acculturative stressors is termed *acculturative strategies*. These strategies are employed by immigrants for various reasons (i.e., embracing the host culture, maintaining heritage culture).

### **Acculturation Strategies**

Acculturation strategies refer to the various ways people seek to engage in the acculturation process (Berry, 1980). These strategies are based on two components: (a) the



attitudes of the individuals' preference about how to acculturate, and (b) the individual's behaviors that are exhibited daily. Berry identified four acculturation strategies that have been developed to help understand the process of the dominant and non-dominant groups. These strategies are (a) assimilation, (b) separation, (c) integration, and (d) marginalization.

The assimilation strategy is one in which the non-dominant group has no desire to maintain the culture of origin (Berry, 1980). An example of this strategy is when immigrants willingly abandon their own culture and seek to practice, adapt, and emulate the dominant culture. The second type of strategy is separation. This strategy is used when an individual chooses to hold on to the culture of origin and avoid interaction with those in the new culture. For instance, immigrants may be showing separation when they are insulated with the culture of origin and decline any interaction with the dominant culture.

When an individual seeks to maintain the heritage culture while participating in the dominant culture, it is referred to as integration, the third type of strategy (Berry, 1980). An example of integration strategy is when an immigrant can maintain aspects of the native culture while still adapting features of the dominant culture. However, for integration to occur, the dominant culture must be accommodating of the immigrant.

Finally, marginalization is the strategy used when there is no interest in maintaining one's heritage culture, nor is there interest in having relations with the host culture due to exclusion (Berry, 1997). To illustrate, an immigrant who neglects the native culture and rejects the dominant culture has chosen marginalization. Marginalization was the least successful because of the loss of one's own culture, as well as rejection from the dominant culture (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Berry, 1997; Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). Berry indicated that acculturation strategies employed by the non-dominant group has shown to be related to positive

adaptions. Integration has been suggested as the most successful strategy when used by immigrants because it incorporates flexibility, willingness for mutual accommodation, and involvement in two cultural communities.

While Berry's (1980) model of acculturation broadly captures immigrants' post-migration experience in the US, there is a presupposition that integration as the most successful strategy is applicable to Black immigrants. In fact, it can be argued that these immigrants are excluded from integration due to the convergence of race and ethnicity that are obstacles to acculturation and their strategies because Black immigrant must find compatible ways to make sense of their Blackness (American Psychological Association [APA], 2017; Landry, 2018). To that end, few studies have exclusively focused on Liberians and other Black African immigrants' acculturation and acculturative stress. The empirical studies discussed in the next section will review the limited literature on this topic and highlight the various ways acculturation or acculturative stress affects Liberians or other African immigrants in the US.

### **Empirical Studies on Acculturation and Acculturative Stress in Liberian Immigrants**

The purpose of this section is to provide a review of the literature relevant to acculturation and acculturative stress in Liberian immigrants. In order to provide accuracy in the literature on this population, a broad search on the topic was first completed with various keywords, followed by a narrowed search for specific inclusion of Black immigrants from continental Africa. A *PsycINFO* search on the term *acculturation* or *acculturative stress* from publication date 1960 to 2019 yielded 1,224 results. The selection of publications to review for this literature review was based on the following search criteria: immigrants, sub-Saharan, and Blacks. The search was narrowed to focus on *Black immigrants*, *Africans*, *West Africans*, and specifically *Liberians*. In the literature search for Black immigrants, 19 studies populated while

15 studies emerged when Africans were specifically added. When the search was edited to include West Africans, zero studies were available—and one study was identified when Liberians were added to the revised search terms. Topics for the 15 studies relating to Africans ranged from addressing the relationship between acculturative stress and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Elli et. al., 2008; Lincoln et al., 2016), to the role of religion coping (Adedoyin et al., 2016; Agyekum & Newbold, 2016), alcohol and drug use (Miranda et al., 2005; Tran, Lee, Burgess, 2010), body image and perception (Williams, 2006), identity formation (Wolde, 2017; Kalu, 2018), and psychological outcomes of immigrants (Clarke, 2017; Joseph, 2014; Wright, 2013).

An examination of these studies revealed that they did not meet the criteria to be included in this literature review as the samples were composed of self-identified Hispanics, Asians, and second-generation Africans. Second-generation Africans were excluded due to their non-immigrant status, which may exempt them from certain experiences that are unique to those emigrating from their country of origin to the host country. For the purpose of this dissertation, the five studies being reviewed met the indicated criteria (e.g., Black immigrant, African, West African, or Liberia). Specifically, the samples included Liberians and other Black immigrant groups such as Kenyans, and Nigerians. The review will begin with one study broadly focusing on sub-Saharan Africans, followed by two studies on Kenyans, and one study each on Nigerians and Liberians, respectively.

Orjiako and So (2014) examined the role of acculturative stress factors on mental health and help-seeking behavior of sub-Saharan African immigrants. The study used archival data from the New Immigrant Survey (NIS; Jasso et al., 2006). Participants were 669 adults who were 18 years old and over and who were admitted into the US for permanent residence programs.

These participants self-identified as Black, non-Latino and held citizenship in a country in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Africa). Berry's (1997) acculturation framework was used as a guide for this study, and the measure used was the NIS questionnaire. The NIS questionnaire included sections on demographics, health care status and daily activities, migration history, and social variables. English language proficiency, education, family support, and length of time lived in the US were used as predictor variables. Depressive symptoms and help seeking behavior were identified as outcome variables.

Results showed that English proficiency was negatively associated with depressive symptoms (Orjiako & So, 2014). These authors also found that neither support system nor religion were statistically significant in predicting depressive symptoms, and immigrants with family support or religious belief were not exempt from experiencing psychological distress as a result of acculturative stress. Furthermore, the study did find, however, that English proficiency and education were positively associated with help-seeking behaviors. Immigrants who were proficient in English and had higher levels of education were more connected to the host society than those who lacked formal education. Those immigrants who were proficient in English and had higher education also possessed better awareness of Western society and resources available to detect mental health symptoms and sought support more often than immigrants with poor English proficiency who lacked formal education (Orjiako & So, 2014). These findings are important because English proficiency, education, and availability of a support system are critical variables that contribute to acculturative stress among sub-Saharan African immigrants (Berry et al., 1987; Orjiako & So, 2014; Padilla, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2010).

While this study supports the literature on immigrants and English proficiency, one limitation of this study was that it did not include a scale to measure acculturative stress. The

addition of an acculturative scale would have provided more depth and accuracy for the study. That is, there would have been a better comparison for how participants responded to the scale questionnaire in addition to the NIS questionnaire. The study also did not accurately capture the length of time participants had lived in the US because the authors calculated the difference between the date participants completed the survey and the month and year the participant first left their country of birth. The authors indicated using this method was due to the limitation of the NIS regarding duration of US residency. This limitation could be addressed in future studies by assessing duration of US residency, as this is an important factor in understanding acculturative stress for Black immigrants.

While Orjiako and So (2014) broadly focused on sub-Saharan African immigrants, Odera (2007) examined acculturation, coping styles, and mental health of first-generation Kenyan immigrants in the US. Though this study is limited to Kenyan immigrants, it is valuable in that it contributes to the psychology literature in understanding factors that influence acculturation in Black immigrants from Africa in the US who are from the East region of the sub-Sahara. Participants in Odera's study included 209 adults between the ages of 18 to 55 years old with a median age of 31 years. The survey was primarily conducted on the Internet and included participants from 33 states, with Maryland having the highest number of participants. The study used a demographic questionnaire to obtain participants' age at the time of survey, age at migration, gender, marital status, income/socioeconomic status, educational level, birthplace, and occupation pre- and post-migration. Participants were also asked to indicate length of time they lived in the US, reason for migrating, and current immigration/visa status.

Results from Odera's (2007) study indicated that acculturative stress, social support, religious coping, and length of stay in the US all affected depressive symptoms. However, length

of stay was the only variable that affected somatic symptoms (e.g., palpitation, back or neck pain, bloating, issues of nerves). The overall findings on the effects of acculturative stress, social support, religious coping, and length of stay on subjective health indicated that length of stay (as a continuous variable) significantly affected subjective health only when coping strategies were not accounted for in the study. However, when length of stay was used categorically, immigrants who reported having lived in the US for a period of more than 10 years evaluated their subjective health more positively than those who had been in the US for less than 10 years.

Additional results from Odera (2007) indicated that acculturation and demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, length of stay in the US, and immigration status) were influenced by transnationalism. Transnationalism was defined as the maintenance of occupations or activities that requires social contacts over time, across national borders and/or across cultures (Portes, 1999). The relevance of transnationalism is important because it can promote stability, continuity, or connectedness for immigrants with the host culture or culture of origin. The examination of the effect of demographic factors and transnationalism on coping strategies indicated immigration status was the only demographic variable that affected social support. Religious coping was affected by age, length of stay in the US, transnationalism, and immigration status.

Given findings that acculturative stress, social support, religious coping, and length of stay in the US were all associated with depressive symptoms in Black immigrants (Odera, 2007), further exploration of other mental health components relating to the generational influence of acculturation and acculturative stress amongst African immigrants is warranted. This research is important because it provides evidence that contingent on the acculturation process, acculturative stress may become detrimental to the mental health of immigrants—thus, inducing psychological

distress and other health concerns. Additionally, these findings highlighted the psychological and physiological effects of acculturation and acculturative stress on African immigrants from Kenya. It is also important to highlight the study's sample size, which allowed for statistically significant results to be detected.

Nonetheless, a limitation of the study is the instrumentations used. They were modified from the original versions to fit the sample population, without providing evidence demonstrating the reliability and validity of using these measures with the intended population. Therefore, the generalizability of the study to the intended population may be compromised. Future research could address these limitations by utilizing psychometrically valid measures without deviating from the intended use of the instruments.

With the same population, Wamwara-Mbugua and Cornwell (2010) conducted a qualitative study that examined Kenyan immigrants' acculturation in the United States. Thirty participants residing in a Southern US city were interviewed. The participants' ages ranged from 21 to 57 years old. The length of time participants resided in the United States ranged from two months to 14 years. Participants ethnically identified as Kenyan or with an ethnic tribe from Kenya. The study found that participants' most salient issues related to acculturation were speaking English with an accent and learning about being racially categorized as Black. Although fluent in English, participants realized that their accent communicated that they were "other", thus affecting their acculturation process as new residents in the US. Participants reported that in their home country, they were not perceived as speaking with accents (Wamwara-Mbugua & Cornwell, 2010). Regarding being Black, the participants reported feeling like a member of the marginalized group. They noted that being Black in the United States had a different meaning than being Black in Kenya (Wamwara-Mbugua & Cornwell 2010).

In this study, participants shared their experience of discrimination due to the color of their skin (Wamwara-Mbugua & Cornwell, 2010). For instance, one participant indicated learning to look at the world through racial lenses after being followed in a shopping environment. The authors concluded that the process of immigrants' acculturation is not simple, but rife with conflict, negotiation, and pain. This research is significant because it illustrated that although these Black immigrants were proficient in English, they still experienced communication barriers in the host society. Additionally, the findings highlighted that learning about race influenced their adjustment in the US. Despite providing nuance that is critical to understanding Black immigrants' experience in the US, one limitation of this study is the participants' length of time in the US. The minimum of two months is a brief time in the acculturation process, as it may not fully capture other experiences, such as school, work, or family adjustment. Though not indicated in this study, it can also be speculated that participants feeling "other" more acutely could be due to the culture within the southern region where participants lived. Future studies can address these limitations by increasing the length of time immigrants have lived in the US as well as investigating the experiences of other Black immigrants from various parts of the US.

Shifting the focus to West Africans, in a qualitative study Adewunmi (2015) explored acculturative stress and coping strategies of 10 Nigerian women who were born in Nigeria and emigrated to the United States as adults (18 years old or over). This study is important because Nigeria has the most immigrants in the US from West Africa. Gaining a better understanding of this population can offer insights that may be relevant for other West African immigrants, such as Liberians. The participants' ages ranged from 43 to 64 years old. The length of time participants resided in the US ranged from nine to 32 years. The women in this study did not



enter the US as partners, spouses, mother, or child of a visa holder. They also did not gain entrance to the US through work, refugee status, or other government organization sponsorship. Instead, the participants migrated independently as the primary applicant. Prior to entering the US, seven of the 10 participants were college graduates and three were high school graduates. Participants were recruited through a snowball method in Sacramento, CA.

Adewunmi's (2015) study found that the three most common acculturation stressors reported were: (a) economic, social, and cultural hardships, (b) disappointment due to misconception or unrealistic expectation of life in America, and (c) communication barriers. Example of economic, social, and cultural hardship participants reported were difficulty accessing resources (e.g., food stamps), separation from family/childcare, and adjustment to the weather and cuisine. Disappointment described by participants included the inability to make money easily or work numerous jobs with a student visa. In terms of communication, they reported frustration due to repetition of their message when interacting with others. Participants reported coping with these stressors by adopting a positive, hardworking attitude, relying on their faith, enrolling in school, and gaining support from friends, family, and their community. While the study identified other stressors that immigrants experience in terms of the unknown expectations of life in the US, it was limited due to its small sample of all Nigerian women who resided in the same city. Future studies can expand on these findings by increasing the number of participants, including participants from a wider array of geographical locations, including male participants, and specifying reasons for immigrating to the US. These changes may affect the result if participants in various locations are clustered in a community, or if the male counterparts receive more support and resources, or have fewer concerns about childcare.

Finally, Imungi (2008) examined acculturative stress and psychological distress in adult

female Liberian refugees living in the United States. For this mixed method study, 27 participants were recruited to complete seven measures that focused on demographics, social support, physical health, religiosity, pre-migration traumatic experience, depression and anxiety, and acculturative stress. From the 27 participants, 17 agreed to an interview for the qualitative portion of the study. Participants were recruited through a snowball method from a refugee resettlement agency in Lansing, Michigan. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 55 years old. The average length of time participants resided in the US was 3.5 years with a range of 3 months to 7 years.

Results from Imungi's (2008) study showed that particular sociodemographic factors contribute to acculturative stress and psychological distress among participants. More acculturative stress was related to younger, not older participants at resettlement, poor English fluency, low religiosity, more pre-migration trauma experiences, and elevated post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (PTSD). Psychological distress on the other hand was found to be related to older age, poor English fluency, lower perception of one's personal health, more pre-migration experiences, and elevated PTSD.

Three major themes emerged from the qualitative analysis in Imungi's (2008) study: (a) fleeing Liberia (flight), (b) seeking asylum in neighboring countries, such as Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, or Guinea, and (c) resettling in the US. They described their flight experience as abrupt and unplanned. The unplanned nature of the flight from Liberia led to many families being separated. A few participants reported being able to reunite with their family years later, while others were still unaware of the whereabouts of their loved ones. Participant's asylum experience in neighboring countries included lack of stable income and adequate food, challenges with school integration, discrimination and mistreatment due to their identity as Liberian, and

language/accent barriers. They also reported lack of access to basic resources, such as hospitals, in addition to being targets when there was instability in the asylum country. While resettling in the US, some participants reported that they felt lured to the US with false promises and would have preferred to go back home. For example, one participant discussed arriving in the US during winter and was housed in an apartment without heat. Others reported receiving social support from various individuals, institutions, and organizations. Within these major themes and sub-themes in flight, such as loss (loved ones, friends, community) were reported, scarcity of resources, financial difficulty, concern for family, and discrimination were reported in seeking asylum in neighboring countries. The importance of religion, support, and discrimination were sub-themes of their resettlement in the US.

The strength of Imungi's (2008) study is that Liberian immigrants were the primary participants in the study and thus it contributes to the social science literature by contextualizing their unique acculturation experience. One limitation of the study was the sample size for the quantitative analyses since 27 participants are insufficient for establishing statistically and practically significant results. Another limitation was the sampling of the target population, which was drawn from a non-randomized group residing in the same city; therefore, generalizability of the study's results is limited. Finally, with the exception of the Hopkins Symptoms Checklist (HSCL-25) and the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire-Revised (HTQ-R), the quantitative measures used had not been normed on refugees, Africans, or Liberians. Consequently, the validity of the findings may have been compromised as a result of using these instruments. Despite these limitations, this study is valuable because it exclusively highlights acculturative stress and psychological distress among Liberian immigrants.

In summary, the social science and psychology literature moderately addresses the

various ways in which acculturation and acculturative stress affects Black immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. However, regionally, it inadequately addresses acculturative stress that is unique to those from West Africa, and specifically to Liberian immigrants, as evidenced by only one study on this group. The measures used in a few studies, such as Odera (2007), Imungi (2008), and Orjiako and So (2014), were normed on other immigrant groups (e.g., Hispanic, Vietnamese, Bosnian, Cambodian) and not specifically on Black immigrants, African immigrants, West Africans, or Liberians.

In addition, English language comprehension and fluency have posed concerns. Evidence in previous studies (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Berry et al., 1987; Lay & Nguyen, 1998; Padilla, 2006) showed that higher English language fluency is associated with lower acculturative stress in immigrants but does not account for those with thicker accents and discrimination they may encounter due to their accents. Although Liberians are native speakers of the English language, their distinct dialect, and unfamiliarity with standard American English can create stressful communication barriers, which are not accounted for in Imungi's (2008) study. Furthermore, acculturation may look different for Liberians who immigrated to the US before the civil war (voluntary) than those who immigrated due to the war (involuntary). Also, given their parents' purpose of migration and acculturative stress, children of these immigrants may also have a different experience. Thus far, only a single study exclusive to acculturation and Liberian immigrants has focused on a small group of female Liberian refugees resettled in a specific area in the US (Imungi, 2008). Compared to other African and West African groups, it is clear that there is limited research evidence for understanding acculturation in Liberian immigrants within the US.

To fill this gap in the literature, the present study focuses on acculturation in Liberians

who entered the US at various times, for various reasons, with diverse residence status, as well as explore acculturation in three generations of these immigrants and their children. The present study addresses the gaps between generations related to family support, parent/child connection, strategies generations may use to cope with acculturation, and English proficiency and education as they each relate to acculturation across the generations of Liberian immigrants. The limited research on the influence of acculturation on Liberians as both individuals and as a group residing in the US is cause for this research. The study examines whether differences in acculturation exist between first-generation, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans.

Alongside coping with the natural stress of acculturation, Liberians and other Black immigrants must psychologically adjust and learn a new meaning of identity. The subsequent section will focus on Black immigrants and ethnic identity because they are often minimized as a homogenous group. However, each group of Black immigrants, including Liberians, have a unique experience that it is worth investigating.

### **Black Immigrants and Identity**

A key aspect of understanding an immigrant's narrative is learning how they view themselves in the host society. The purpose of the current section is to examine the cultural identities of Black immigrants in the US. The section will first broadly discuss cultural identity before transitioning to explore ethnic identity because it can be argued that the latter cannot exist without the former. Next, a brief overview of the complex rebranding of identity Black immigrants undergo will be provided. Finally, an overview of available studies that address ethnic identity in Black immigrants, Africans, or Liberians will be thoroughly reviewed. The review will also address the gap in the literature on the Liberian immigrant population in

particular while offering areas for future studies to focus on. Addressing this gap is important because generations of Liberians residing in the US may develop different ways of understanding their identity.

### **Cultural Identity**

Cultural identity refers to the ways in which individuals define themselves in relation to the group (e.g., nationality, heritage, ethnicity, race, and religion) to which they belong (Schwartz et al., 2008). The foundation of cultural identity is based on scholarship and research on social identity (Tajfel, 1978), Erikson's (1968) psychosocial model, and Marcia's (1966) model of adolescent identity.

Social identity, as defined by Tajfel (1978, 1981), is part of an individuals' self-concept that derives from knowledge of a person's membership of a social group (or groups), together with value and emotional significance attached to that membership. Social identity theory is an important basis for studying and understanding cultural identity because people have the need for classification, to divide themselves into a group, and use their group membership to construct identity, thereby gaining self-esteem, security, and a sense of belonging (Yan, 2018). However, prior to Tajfel's (1978, 1981) scholarship, Erikson's psychosocial model laid key groundwork for the study of cultural identity.

Erikson's (1963, 1968) theory of psychosocial development consists of eight stages and describes the development and changes in personality across the course of a lifespan. It has been considered one of the most influential theories on how individuals develop from childhood to later life (Erikson, 1968). A key component of this theory is ego identity, which refers to the sense of self that emerges as a result of social interactions and experiences and reflects the continuity or sameness of a person (Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson, this emergence of

identity occurs during the fifth stage, identity versus role confusion, and is associated with adolescence (approximately ages 12-18). During this stage, adolescents are described as “in search of an identity,” which occurs through exploration of their values, beliefs, and goals. Ego identity formation on adolescent identity suggests that identity is developed through a psychosocial process that involves placing oneself in society and developing a sense of belonging.

As an extension and refinement of Erikson’s (1963) work, Marcia (1966) proposed the identity status theory. Countering that adolescents experience an identity crisis—resolution versus confusion, Marcia contended that an individual’s sense of identity is primarily based on the exploration of choices and commitments made on various life domains (e.g., vocation, gender roles, relationship, religion). A crisis occurs when an adolescent’s values and choices are reevaluated and is resolved when a commitment is made to a specific role or value. Exploration of choices refers to a period where the individual is choosing among meaningful engagements. Commitment refers to the degree of personal investment the individual exhibits (Marcia, 1966). Based on a combination of exploration of choices and commitments, Marcia proposed four ego identity statuses that describe adolescents’ negotiation of an identity: (a) identity diffusion, (b) identity foreclosure, (c) identity moratorium, and (d) identity achievement. These four identity statuses are ways in which adolescents are believed to come to know their identity, singularly, or in combination of exploration and commitment.

According to Marcia (1966), identity diffusion occurs when an individual has neither explored options nor committed to a choice. Foreclosure occurs when the adolescent has not experienced a crisis (or explored choices) but is committed, potentially conforming to the expectations of others about the future. Identity moratorium is characterized by indecision, in

which the adolescent is in crisis, exploring various choices, but has not made a commitment to a choice. Identity achievement refers to an individual who have experienced crisis (explored) and made a commitment. Tajfel's (1978) social identity theory focused on the affective component of identity, self-concept, and belonging. Erikson (1968) emphasized the process of identity development, while Marcia (1966) allowed researchers to classify individuals, based on their degree of exploration and commitment. The relevance of these theories has been instrumental to cultural identity and the factors affecting cultural identity from the perspective of psychology (Yan, 2018).

Despite the influence of social identity, ego identity, and identity statuses on the foundation of cultural identities, these theories are considered too general to be completely applicable to individuals whose identity formation is due to specific cultural experiences that are beyond those of members of the dominant society. As a result, numerous cultural identity theories have been developed, such as gender (Kohlberg, 1966), race (Cross, 1971, 1991), ethnicity (Phinney, 1989), sexual orientation (Cass, 1979; D'Augelli, 1994), and disability status (Abberley, 1987). Because the focus of this study is on the cultural identities of race and ethnicities, only these two sets of cultural theories are examined in-depth.

### **Ethnic Identity**

Ethnic identity has been defined as a sense of belonging to a cultural group, knowledge and preference, active involvement, and attitude toward a cultural group (Phinney, 1990). Ethnic identity can be thought of as central to the development of personal identity and can be helpful in understanding the psychological influence ethnicity has on various racial and ethnic groups (Maldonado, 1975; Phinney, 1992; Redway, 2014). The conceptual framework for the study of ethnic identity has derived from a variety of disciplines (i.e., sociology, anthropology,



psychology). As a result, ethnic identity has been studied using an eclectic theoretical approach such as social identity theory, acculturation and cultural diversity, culture conflict, and identity formation (Phinney, 1990; 1992). Despite the varied theoretical underpinnings of ethnic identity, it can be thought of as similar to other identities, in that, ethnic identity is constantly evolving (Phinney, 1990). Furthermore, prior work on the importance of identity as it relates to racial minority groups, such as Cross' Nigrescence Theory (Cross, 1971), Asian American Identity Development (Kim, 1981), and Atkinson's et al. (1983) Minority Identity Development, to name a few, has cultivated and revitalized the identity movement, particularly ethnic identity due to its similarity to other identity models (Phinney, 1990).

While there is no widely agreed upon definition of ethnic identity, the construct of ethnic identity has been documented as critical to an individual's self-concept, psychological well-being, and a major component to how individuals cope with discrimination (Chavira & Phinney, 1991; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2002). In fact, studies have shown that perceived discrimination by immigrants has a significant influence on their identity (Imoagene, 2017; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Redway, 2014).

The evolution of ethnic identity in response to developmental, social psychological, and contextual factors vary over time, and there can be considerable variation in the images that individuals construct of the behaviors, beliefs, values, and norms that characterize their group, together with their understandings of how these features are reflected in themselves (Ferdman & Horenczyk, 2000; Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind, 1999; Marcia et al., 1993). There is a complex dynamic that involves ethnic minority individuals living in the US regarding their identity and behavior. One ethnic minority group faced with those questions are Black immigrants.

As Black immigrants enter the US from the Caribbean and Africa, they encounter barriers

that are layered with historical tensions between native Blacks and Whites dating back to the Atlantic slave trade. Due to such tension, their integration into the US society becomes a unique experience that is shaped by the interaction of Black racial identity and their ethnic identities. According to Rogers (2001), these immigrants gain access to both racial and ethnic markers of group identification, and as a result “Black ethnic” have the option of identifying with a distinct ethnic identity. Among the various groups of Black immigrants, existing scholarship has primarily focused on Black immigrants from the Caribbean. While much is known about the experiences and identity of Caribbean immigrants and their children, scholars have neglected to give visibility to those from continental Africa, particularly since Black Africans are poised to become the largest Black immigrant group in the US (Anderson & Lopez, 2018; Redway, 2014; Sall, 2019; Waters, 1994). As indicated by Sall (2019), by virtue of such diversification in the US Black population, it is important that scholars explore the experiences of these new Black immigrants who are giving new meaning to what it means to identify as Black or African American in the US.

Although there is limited research about the identity of African immigrants in counseling psychology literature, particularly those from the region of West Africa, findings have consistently shown three identities that emerge in West African immigrants from the three most emigrated countries in West Africa, that is, Nigeria, Ghana, and Liberia (Awokoya, 2012; Clark, 2008; Emeka, 2019). The common identities among these immigrants are African American, hyphenated American (e.g., Liberian, Nigerian), and ethnic identity (Aikhoje, 2011; Clark, 2008; Haddow, 2015; Kebede, 2017; Lorick-Wilmot, 2015; Waters, 1994). It has been noted that when Black African immigrants self-identify as African American, they are referring to their direct lineage to the continent of Africa, as well as new adaptation to life in the US (Clark, 2008;

Ludwig, 2019).

On the other hand, rather than simply being African or African American, a hyphenated identity acknowledges one's cultural heritage and delineates a non-native Blackness (Haddow, 2015; Smalls, 2014). Based on the various forms of identity that Black immigrants can subscribe to while living in the US, the social science literature indicates that said identities vary from one generation to the next (Amoah, 2014; Awokoya, 2012; Emeka, 2019; Lorick-Wilmot, 2015). The change or modification of identity highlights that ethnic identity is developmental and can shift at various points in one's life until reaching stability. The developmental process of ethnic identity has been an area of interest in the literature for social scientists.

For instance, drawing from Marcia's (1966) work, Phinney (1989) developed the ethnic identity theory. Phinney (1989) identified four ways in which ethnic identity formed in racial/ethnic minority adolescents: (a) diffused, (b) foreclosed, (c) moratorium, and (d) achieved. Diffusion refers to an individual who has not engaged in exploration of their ethnicity. Foreclosure is defined as no exploration of one's ethnicity, but there is clarity of one's ethnicity. In moratorium, there is evidence of exploration, but there is some confusion about the meaning of one's ethnicity. In achieved, there is evidence of exploration that is accompanied by clear, secure understanding and acceptance of one's ethnicity.

Phinney (1992) later conceptualized the theory from Erikson's (1968) work and developed a theoretical model of ethnic identity for diverse groups. The purpose of the model was to generalize ethnic identity in a way that was relevant and relatable to various ethnic minority groups, such as African Americans, Hispanics, Jewish Americans, Asians among others who were American born, as well as those who immigrated to the US (Phinney, 1992). In this model, Phinney (1992) examined three constructs of ethnic identity formation: (a) positive ethnic

attitudes and sense of belonging, (b) ethnic identity achievement, and (c) ethnic behaviors or practices. A positive feeling towards one's ethnic group and sense of belonging refers to the individual's attachment to the group. This attitude refers to the degree of pride or negative attitude one expresses toward one's group (Phinney, 1992). Ethnic identity achievement refers to the secure sense of self. Ethnic identity achievement involves an exploration of the meaning of one's ethnicity, such as history, traditions, and values, which leads to security of one as a member of an ethnic minority group (Phinney 1992). Behaviors and practices refer to the level of involvement in social activities with members of one's group, and participation in cultural traditions. In other words, to what extent does one practice what is preached by other members of the group, and to what extent is the person invested in the culture and tradition to pass down to the next generation.

Phinney's (1989) ethnic identity model represents a significant contribution to ethnic identity research (Yip, 2014). Phinney's model (1989) has been found to be an important aspect of adolescence ethnic identity development (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2006). For instance, ethnic identity has been related to their psychological well-being (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2002), academic achievement (Smith et al., 1999), and ability to cope with discrimination and racism (Dubow et al., 2000). However, the model was developed with the notion that those who have reached the achieved identity also have a positive attitude toward their ethnic identity. This assumption may be inaccurate because one can develop a clear understanding of their ethnicity and yet internalize negative views about their ethnic identity.

Additionally, the ethnic identity of the Black sample participants in Phinney's (1989) model was not recorded while other participants' ethnic identity was (e.g., Mexican, Japanese, Vietnamese). This dismissal and lack of recognition that Black participants did not have an

ethnic background is problematic and perpetuates the monolithic grouping of the US Black population. It can be argued that though Phinney's (1989) model was intended to mirror Erikson's (1968) process of development by understanding ways individuals explore their ethnic identity and develop an understanding of how they feel about the group membership (focusing on the process), it instead centered around an individual having a positive response to their ethnic group (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004).

Umaña-Taylor et al. (2004) contended that Phinney's (1989, 1990, 1992) view of ethnic identity departed too far from the perspectives of social identity researchers Erikson and Marcia. The authors assert that their ethnic identity model is more consistent with Erikson's theory (1968) and Marcia's (1980) conceptualization of identity. Umaña-Taylor et al. proposed three components of ethnic identity formation: (a) exploration, (b) resolution, and (c) affirmation. Exploration refers to the degree to which individuals have explored their ethnicity and the individual understands what it means to be a part of their ethnic minority group. These individuals have invested in learning about their traditions, history, and culture by attending cultural events, reading about their history, visiting the country, and openly discussing with their families about their culture. Through exploration, these individuals arrive at resolution, meaning that they have accepted their ethnic identity and its meaning to them. Unlike Phinney's (1992) model, Umaña-Taylor et al. posit that a resolution of one's ethnic identity is not necessarily associated to positive affect. The third component, affirmation is the positive or negative affect individuals associate with their resolution. For example, two people of the same ethnic group who explore and resolve their ethnic identity may each reach a different conclusion about how positively or negatively they feel towards their ethnic minority group.

Umaña-Taylor et al. (2004) claim that this new model composed of the three domains of

ethnic identity construct more accurately captures individuals whose ethnicity is an important aspect of their social selves. Contingent upon the level of engagement in the process of exploration, individuals are able to resolve feelings about ethnicity by choosing to affirm, resent, or deny their ethnicity. Umaña-Taylor's et al.'s (2004) model of ethnic identity is an improvement from Phinney's (1992) model, as it allows for examining identity statuses that is consistent with Erikson's (1968), Tajfel's (1981), and Marcia's (1966) work on identity. However, a critique of the model is that it still lacks clarity relating to the amount of vacillation one may encounter as they explore, resolve, and affirm. In other words, the theory appears unidimensional and leaves no room for re-exploration or integration of dual identities. In the model, it is assumed that once exploration, resolution, and affirmation have been reached, individuals become stable in their ethnic identity. Stability in one's ethnic identity can be strong or weak at various periods in one's life, particularly when living as an ethnic minority in a society. Though the literature on ethnic identity as a developmental process has increased over the years, there is still little information regarding within and between group differences of ethnically diverse Black population (Phelps et al., 2001). The lack of research on intragroup differences of Black population can be due to socialization of Black immigrants and native Blacks as well as the US Black history.

### **Black Identity**

Research on Black identity dates as far back as the 1930s, particularly with the landmark study of Kenneth and Mamie Clark (1939). Although findings on Black identity initially suggested that one's personality can be linked to their social identity (Horowitz, 1939), later researchers found no correlation between the two (Clark & Clark, 1939; McAdoo, 1970; McWhorter, 1984). In fact, researchers have learned that personality plays a minimal role in

Black identity (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Similar to social class, gender, and race, Blackness is ascribed by society (Cross, 1971, 1991; Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Therefore, Blacks who immigrate to the US learn to navigate their ascribed Black identity based on an understanding of society's influence on identity.

Black immigrants who enter the US encounter a myriad of challenges that lead to a fluid yet complex understanding of their identity. Accordingly, the identity of a Black immigrant is one that is negotiated and reconstructed during their migration experience (Amoah, 2014). These immigrants, and more so their children, face confusion about who they are and who they are expected to be. Thus, they must imprint their ethnicity and racial identities in the US (Amoah, 2014; Schwartz et al., 2006). Due to their socialization in countries where Black individuals represent a large percentage of people around them, many Black immigrants lack awareness of and are disconnected from the US context of racialization (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). Although they may understand the role of gender, tribalism, or clannism that divides society into classes, they differ in their perception of the role of race and racism in the US (Asante, 2012; Dominguez et al., 2009; Johnson, 2016). In essence, few are socialized to be aware of a hierarchical system based on race, thus making race and racism less salient to these immigrants' identity (Dominguez et al., 2009; Nsangou & Dundes, 2018).

Similar to other immigrant narratives, Black immigrants often come to the US to take advantage of opportunities that are less available in their home countries. There is less focus on what is not afforded to them because of skin color and more focus on the potential to achieve (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Nsangou & Dundes, 2018). With race absent from their cognitive lens, Black immigrant parents often expect their children's behavior to align with that of their country of origin (e.g., Ghanaians, Nigerians, or Liberians) while at the same time they are expected to

compete and succeed as Americans (Amoah, 2014). Based on this expectation to succeed as Americans, these children of Black immigrant parents must redefine their identity in terms of the US system of race relations and hierarchies (Amoah, 2014; Benson, 2006). Thus, these children use their African roots of ethnic food, language, customs, family dynamics, and dress to distinguish themselves from native-born Blacks and to increase favorability in the racial hierarchy of the US (Nsangou & Dundes, 2018; Kasinitz, 2008).

Moreover, these immigrants begin to learn that their generational status may impact their views of their identity, specifically their ethnicity. As these immigrant parents and their children unpack their layered identities (e.g., African, Black, female, or male) and place emphasis on their African roots, they also simultaneously learn through the varied collections of incidents what attributes play a role in how others perceive them (Ibrahim, 2008; Kuver, 2009). Although they may perceive themselves as members of ethnic groups, such as Nigerian, Ghanaian, Liberian, among others, through the lens of the American racial hierarchy, they are seen first as Black (Lindsay, 2018). These immigrants and their children come to a place of realization that one is not born Black, but rather becomes Black (Asante, 2012; Ibrahim, 2008). As they develop their lens on becoming Black, other social and cultural group identities, such as ethnicity, may be considered in relationship to their Blackness. Thus, the next section of this writing will focus on empirical research on ethnic identity and Black immigrants.

### **Empirical Studies on Ethnic Identity and Black Immigrants**

As indicated previously, ethnic identity in Black immigrants may develop differently due to their socialization into their ethnic group and their lack of historical knowledge about ethnicity for Blacks in the US. This literature review will review five studies related to Black immigrants' ethnic identity. To begin, a guideline on how the studies were selected will be specified followed



by two qualitative studies on 1.5-generation Ghanaians and second-generation Nigerians, one quantitative study that focuses first- and second-generation Nigerians and concludes with two studies on first- and second-generation Liberians. Critiques of the research will be given followed by suggestions for future studies and the importance of exploring generational difference in identity among Liberian immigrants.

A *PsycINFO* search on *ethnic identity* and *Black immigrants* resulted in 306 publications (142 scholarly journals, 100 dissertation/theses, and 64 books). The content of the initial search fell within the following areas: psychological functioning, racial and ethnic differences, socialization, education and social class, and Black/African Caribbean immigrants in the US. The search was narrowed to *ethnic identity*, *Black immigrants*, and *African*, which yielded 146 results. The content of these results included ethnic misidentification, acculturation, psychological distress, racial hierarchy in the US, perception and discrimination, and Black identity development. Finally, for specificity, the search was narrowed to include Liberians. This search resulted in the identification of five publications. The following five studies are being reviewed as they met the search criteria by focusing on the examination of ethnic identity in Black immigrants, Africans, and Liberians.

In a qualitative study, Yeboar (2007) examined the socialization and identity of second-generation Ghanaian immigrant children and their parents using ethnographic research methods. Fifteen Ghanaian immigrant families from Cincinnati, Ohio participated in this study. Yeboar found that socioeconomic class, age, birthplace of children, parents' employment status, and place of residence were linked to ethnic socialization and identity. For example, higher SES immigrants reported having the flexibility to use their Ghanaian names, Western names, or both. However, families who fell into the lower SES range reported the tendency to use Western

names or support the use of Western names in all social and educational spaces for their children. These families believed that the use of non-ethnic names could advance them or their children through mainstream America.

Yeboar (2007) also found that 71% of the participants who were born in the US were not comfortable with their ethnic names. However, 60% of the second-generation participants who were not US-born nor born in their parents' homeland but immigrated to the US at a young age did not express embarrassment of their ethnic names. These participants reported taking pride in their ethnic names and did not believe their success or lack of success would be attributed to their names. Yeboar (2007) concluded that the identity of second-generation Ghanaians changed based on the place, situation, and audience. Second-generation Ghanaian immigrants preferred to express ethnic and national identity in spaces such as home, church, religious gatherings, or social events with other second-generation Ghanaian peers. National identity in this context refers to the participant's affiliation and identity with another country (e.g., Ghana, Nigeria, and Liberia). Additionally, second-generation participants refrained from expressing their national and ethnic identities when around their US peers to avoid being viewed as an outsider. Parents, on the other hand, attempted to maintain their ethnic identity and traditions by influencing their children in their socialization at home and other places. Furthermore, parents described their employment status, SES, and other factors as potential barriers to them and their children's success.

Though Yeboar's (2007) study contributed to the literature on Black immigrants from West Africa by highlighting generational differences in ethnic identity, there are several limitations. One of which is that the study uses a small sample from the same community. The 15 participants in this study were geographically from the same area; therefore, it is likely that

they have had similar socialization and influences within their community. Another drawback is the study did not provide an in-depth description of the demographics of the participants, such as age, gender, and class standing (e.g., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 10<sup>th</sup> grade). Finally, Yeboar (2007) did not include the length of time the participants' parents had lived in the US, or the age in which some participants emigrated from their country of birth that was not their parent's country of origin. These limitations are important to acknowledge because they neglect adolescent (12-18 years) as an important period of identity development, as well as the potential influence of country of birth openness to a multicultural society (Berry, 1997; Erikson, 1968; Padilla & Perez, 2003)—therefore, these are areas which future research can show attention.

In a similar fashion as Yeboar's (2007) study, Okpalaoka (2009) examined how West African girls in the US learned to negotiate their ethnic identities in home and school contexts. The qualitative study included four adolescent girls who self-identified as 1.5-generation and second-generation immigrants. Participants' ethnic background was Ghanaian ( $n = 2$ ) and Nigerian ( $n = 2$ ), who were recruited from a local college preparatory high school in a mid-sized US Midwestern city. Data were collected using semi-structured personal interviews, group interviews, and participants' journals.

Okpalaoka (2009) reported five themes that emerged from the study. The first theme was the participants' experiences with stereotypes of Africans by African Americans and the participants' own stereotypes of African Americans, which seemed to influence their choice of ethnic identity. The mutual tension between the participants and their African American peers generated from their peers holding strong views on Africa as a dark continent with wild animals roaming free while African immigrant participants bought into media ideologies of their US-born counterparts being lazy and unwilling to work. The second theme was the role of personal

agency in the participants' choice of ethnic identity construction. All except one participant exercised their agency in negotiation of sociocultural and ethnic identities. These participants indicated they were able to think for themselves while at the same time willing to respect their parents' authority.

The third theme in Opalaoka's (2009) study was family standards and expectations played a role in relation to the participants' socio-cultural practices, choice of peers, and academic achievement. Participants believed that their parents' expected significant allegiance to the family's ethnic identity, so much that their parents wanted them to choose an African identity, sometimes in opposition to an "American or African American identity" (p. 211). The importance of immigrant peers for participants' ethnic identity was the fourth theme. Participants found different levels of support from their peers in school. For three of the participants who identified as second-generation immigrants, they experienced more flexibility in their choice of friend group—vacillating between friendships with other Africans, African Americans, or a diverse spectrum of individuals. It is important to note that the participant who identified as 1.5-generation encountered challenges with peer relationships due to her age of migration (adolescent), her accent, and being held back academically. Finally, the participants' experience with culturally responsive pedagogy regarding the treatment of Africa in the curriculum influenced their ethnic identity. Through a culturally inclusive pedagogy of Africa via textbooks and history, teachers attempt to offer a balanced picture of the continent, along with participants' input on inaccurate information, left them feeling pleased and reinforced positive feelings about their identity.

Okpalaoka (2009) concluded that mutual stereotypes and negative perceptions influenced participants' choices to identify as African. Participants also voiced their freedom to exercise and

negotiate what ethnic and cultural values to adopt and which to abandon. For example, participants' adopted values of respect for authority and academic success, and abandoned ideas of marriage based on ethnicity instead of love. The study also indicated that participants described their ethnic identities as strengthened when they experienced a balanced presentation of Africa throughout their curriculum.

Okpalaoka's (2009) study provided insight to the current literature on ethnic identity among West African females and intergenerational differences about ethnic and racial identity. However, the limited sample size in the study reduced generalizability to West African girls. Additionally, the study is restricted in its geographical location. Thus, the study does not provide a wider perspective of the experiences of how West African girls negotiate their ethnic identities in home and school. A final limitation to Okpalaoka's (2009) study is its focus on self-identified females only. Future research should include male and female participants from different locations because these social identities can influence their experience. Future studies should also consider examining how 1.5- and second-generation immigrants construct their identity, keeping in mind the impact of time spent in their country of origin as well as the impact of time spent in the US for their first-generation parents.

In addition to these qualitative studies, one study utilized a quantitative approach to examine ethnic identity in African immigrant population. Aikjoje (2011) examined the social and family support and bicultural ethnic identity in 199 first- and second-generation Nigerian immigrants living in New York City area. The participants' age ranged from 19 to 70 years old. This study found that age was negatively associated with the preference of a Western identity. Also, the longer Nigerian Americans lived in the US, the greater their tendency to prefer a Western identity. Results from the study also found that first- and second-generation Nigerian

immigrants maintained their ethnic identity when it was viewed positively by their peers. First and second-generations Nigerians also maintained their American identity when it was encouraged and supported by family. Aikjoje concluded that these individuals have a unique opportunity to select what is relevant to them from each culture (Nigerian and American) with flexibility and freedom to maintain dual identities. Through the acceptance of both a Nigerian identity and American identity, participants seem to develop hyphenated identities to represent how they see themselves (Aikjoje, 2011).

Though Aikjoje's study reviewed showed strength in the sample size in addition to emphasizing generational differences in how West African immigrants navigate their identities, it shared a similar limitation to the first two studies as it relates to location. Aikjoje (2011) collected samples from an area where Nigerian Americans often gathered. In doing so, it increased the chance that the majority of the participants were likely to lean towards maintaining their ethnic identity. Another limitation of the study is the use of the SL-Nigerian (1987) instrument. The SL-Nigerian (Suinn-Lew, 1987) is a 26-item scale, with the first 21-items from the original scale: evidence of reliability of the scores were at coefficient alpha of .88. However, items 22-26 had yet to be tested or validated. Thus, these new items could have influenced the scores of the instrument. Future research can address this concern by using a more reliable and valid measure.

While the studies reviewed thus far have focused on West Africans from Nigeria and Ghana, the next two studies narrow the focus specifically on Liberians. Haddow (2015) examined the transformation of identity in Liberian immigrants living in the US. This qualitative study was conducted through a series of in-depth interviews with 25 participants (13 youth and 12 adults) who resided in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and were reported to have a diverse

educational (e.g., high school, bachelors, masters) background. Participants were considered youth if they were between the ages of 18 to 35 years old (6 males and 7 females), while adult participants were considered at 36 years or older (5 men and 7 women). Haddow (2015) expanded the age of youth to 35 years old based on the idea that most participants who came as young children in the early 1990s would be above the age of 25 years old at the time of the data collection. Participants were asked to identify the length of time they had resided in the US as well as their form of entry into the US (e.g., Diversity Visa Program, Family Visa Program, or Refugee Resettlement Program).

Haddow (2015) found that ethnic identity was critical in participants' identification, wavering between pride and dissonance. Older participants indicated that they had to renegotiate their identity, which often meant creating a new Liberian identity that was not inclusive of their ethnic tribe in Liberia. These participants asserted that for the purpose of unifying as one in America, their tribal affiliation had to become less salient. Haddow also reported that first- and second-generation Liberian immigrants retained their ethnic (Liberian) identity and adopted an American identity. The purpose of this hybrid cultural identity was to adjust and remain open to a new culture and environment, while maintaining some of their native values and traditions. The author found that although both youth and older participants encountered some conflicts as a result of the clash of Liberian and American cultures, they managed to permit the new culture and their ethnic identity to coexist for the advancement of themselves, their family, and their community.

Haddow's study builds on the idea of how intergeneration of Liberians navigates their identities. The primary limitation of Haddow's (2015) study was majority of the participants derived from the same area in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Participants from a centralized

location may have shared experiences and community influence. That is to say, it is not shocking that the majority of the participants were from the same tribal group in Liberia. While the sampling was not intentional, it minimized the generalizability of the study to Liberian immigrants in the US. Another limitation of the study was the lack of clarity on who the author characterized as first-generation and second-generation. Future studies should provide a clear definition of generations as well as seek participants from various ethnic backgrounds.

Finally, collecting data in a similar location as Haddow (2015), that is the US east coast, Ludwig (2019) examined the identity formation of second-generation Liberian American refugees in Staten Island, New York. The author used two different data sources for this study. The first was from a long-term ongoing ethnographic study beginning in 2009, which included a subset of in-depth interviews and follow-up interviews with twelve 1.5-generation Liberians. Participants' ages ranged from 16 to 43-years-old. The participants were from four different Liberian ethnic (tribal) groups of various educational backgrounds, unspecified by the author. The second data source was a survey of 1.5-and second-generation Liberian youth ( $N = 110$ ) from the International Rescue Committee (IRC) between 2008 and 2010. Participants in this sample were 46% male and 51% female, with their age ranging from 9 to 24 years old. The final data source used was from a focus group conducted by the IRC with 40 first-generation Liberian immigrant parents between 2009 and 2010.

Ludwig (2019) found that majority of the second-generation Liberian Americans between the ages of six and 22 years struggled to embrace a Liberian identity. Ludwig interpreted the struggle to be due to their exposure to internalized negative stigmas at school and in the community. An example of such stigma was others' (e.g., peers, teachers) assuming that the second-generation Liberians were refugees like their parents. Ludwig also found that the second-



generation Liberians had a complicated relationship with their parents, which created a challenge in developing an affirming cultural identity. Second-generation Liberians considered their parents' illiteracy, social class, and lack of education as embarrassing, and therefore wanted to disassociate themselves from being Liberian. Finally, the study indicated that the second-generation identity was shaped from a sense of belonging to a community. Participants grew to appreciate their ethnic culture from daily encounters with other Liberians, food, and traditional celebrations in the community.

Though Ludwig's (2019) study included 1.5-generations in highlighting the generational differences relating to ethnicity, the study lacked clarity in the description of the methodology used to gather data from the three sources. Additionally, the study had a limited focus on social class and immigrant status of Liberian Americans, that being low-income and refugees. Future studies should include Liberians from all SES background and immigration status as this can provide clarity on stressors that may or may not be prominent for various groups.

In brief, the studies highlighted in this review provide several takeaways for the literature on ethnicity and Black immigrants. These studies demonstrate the importance of a multi-generation lens to broadly examine ethnic identity among African immigrants and Liberians specifically. It also stresses the need for the present study as only two studies focused on Liberian ethnicity and one that is quantitative. Additionally, geographical region is limited for all five studies. Due to the limitations of the studies mentioned (e.g., small samples, location, measurement), the current study will address the gap in the literature based on increased sample sizes, variance in location, SES, immigration status, and generational status of Liberian immigrants and their children. Furthermore, the current study utilized a psychometrically valid instrument to measure the construct of ethnic identity based on the developmental, social, and

contextual factors in which the construct was initially developed by researchers. To fill these gaps in the current literature, the present study examined ethnic identity across and within multiple generations of Liberian immigrants. More specifically, it addresses the following research questions relating to ethnic identity in Liberian immigrants: Do differences in ethnic identity exist between first-generation, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans ethnic identity?

While it is important to explore ethnic identity among Black immigrants, it is clear that racial identity must be simultaneously examined for this group. The present study also investigated racial identity in Black immigrants with a focus on Liberian immigrants and their children. As established, identity is a critical aspect of development, and ethnic identity can be thought of as central to persons' identity (Phinney, 1992). However, little is understood about how different generations of Black immigrants mold their ascribed social identity of Blackness as a race in the US. The next section will discuss racial identity and Black immigrants.

### **Black Racial Identity**

Although racial identity and ethnic identity are two distinct constructs, they are often used interchangeably when referring to Black people in the US (Helms & Talleyrand, 1997; Quintana, 2007). To maintain the separate characteristics of these constructs, the following section will focus on Black racial identity.

Over the years, the increased scholarship on Black racial identity has produced variations in the definition. For example, Helms (1990) defined racial identity as a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group. Sellers et al. (1998) defined racial identity as the significance and qualitative meaning that individuals attribute to their membership within the Black racial group

within their self-concepts. Cross and Vandiver (2001) defined racial identity as the various ways Black people make sense of themselves as social beings rather than as a constellation of personality traits.

In addition to conceptualizing Black racial identity, scholars were also seeking to understand and describe the impact of the Civil Rights Movement on the shift that occurred from Negro to Black identity (For more details, see Cross, 1991; Helms, 1990). Thus, modern-day research on Black racial identity theories began in the late sixties and seventies, with the work of multiple scholars (Cross, 1971; Jackson, 1976; Milliones, 1980; Thomas, 1971). As a result, several Black racial identity models emerged to help facilitate understanding the change, including Cross' (1971, 1991), Helms (1990), and Sellers et al. (1998). Cross' (1971) theory however, emerged to prominence due to its simplicity, measurement, and iterations by Helms (1995), Cross (1991), and Cross and Vandiver (2001).

Due to the intent of the current study and the racial identity measure that will be used, racial identity will be defined using Cross and Vandiver's (2001) definition and conceptualized through the lens of Cross's nigrescence theory. Therefore, the review of literature focuses and thoroughly summarizes only Cross's nigrescence theory for context and a more comprehensive understanding of Black immigrants and their children's racial identity attitudes. The section will conclude with five empirical studies that focus on scholarship on Black racial identity and Black immigrants.

### **The Original Nigrescence Theory and Model**

In 1971, Cross identified five stages described as the process of becoming Black, using the French term *nigrescence* to depict the process. These stages were labeled *Pre-Encounter*, *Encounter*, *Immersion-Emersion*, *Internalization*, and *Internalization-Commitment*. In the pre-

Encounter (stage 1), Cross (1971) theorized that Blacks subscribe to a pro-White identity and take on an anti-Black stance that diminishes their Blackness. Such individuals were said to have low self-esteem, impaired personality, and poor mental health functioning (Cross, 1971).

The Encounter stage (stage 2) is characterized by Blacks seeking to reexamine their beliefs about the role of race in America (Cross, 1971). This re-examination usually occurs when individuals experienced a critical racial incident or a series of incidence that negated their pro-White or pro-American identity. These individuals could resolve the conflict inside by returning to the Pre-Encounter stage or continue the reexamination of their race, which would propel them to the next stage, Immersion-Emersion (Cross, 1971).

The Immersion-Emersion (stage 3) is twofold. It chronicles how individuals move from their old identity to a new one. The first aspect of this stage, immersion, is glorifying all things Black, and demonizing all things White. The second aspect of the stage, emersion, refers to another reexamination of identity and the balancing of heavy latent emotions with rationality.

Emersion moves the individual to stage 4, Internalization (Cross, 1971). According to Cross, internalization lends acceptance to the individual's old and new worldviews. Although individuals in the internalization stage are more satisfied and secure with themselves, they are not committed to a plan or action. In other words, one can progress to a state of psychological Blackness and stop developing (Cross, 1971).

Psychological progression from stage four propels movement into the next stage, Internalization-Commitment (stage 5), which is characterized by commitment to a plan to change the Black community (Cross, 1971). Blacks in this stage are not only confident in their own standards of Blackness, they also have internalized their newfound identity, are committed to social change and have a deep sense of Black communalism (Cross, 1971). Individuals in stages

4 and 5 are considered to have internalized a Black identity and thus are more psychologically healthy than the prior stages.

After a critical review of empirical studies on Black racial identity (Cross, 1991; Cross & Vandiver, 2000; Nobles, 1989; Parham, 1989), several shortcomings were identified in the original nigrescence model (NT-O). The model was first critiqued for using a stage-model when the formation of identity is not developmental. This concern was underscored after Parham (1989) introduced the concept of “recycling” to the model. In essence, racial identity attitudes are not believed to be static or terminal but in flux depending on the circumstances and experiences. New experiences or encounters are always likely, thus propelling individuals to constantly recycle through the process of identity formation (Parham, 1989). Another concern was the treatment of Black Nationalism as a negative racial identity. Black Nationalism was included in stage 3 and associated with the romanticization of Blacks and the demonization of Whites (Nobles, 1989). Through an exhaustive review of the psychological experiences of being Black, Cross (1991) also critiqued his own theory, which is described with the revised nigrescence model.

### **The Revised Nigrescence Model**

In *Shades of Black: Diversity in African American Identity*, Cross (1991) introduced the revised nigrescence model (NT-R). Cross made a number of theoretical changes. Borrowing from social identity theory, Cross argued that self-concept was composed of two facets, *personal identity* (PI) and *reference group orientation* (RGO). PI can be described as traits or dynamics (e.g., anxiety, self-esteem, depression-happiness, introversion-extroversion) that appear to be evidenced in all human beings regardless of race, class, gender, or culture. RGO seeks to discover differences in values, perspective, group identities, lifestyle, and worldviews (Cross,

1991). In other words, RGO seeks to discover what events or symbols within culture or subgroup stimulates those PI traits (Cross, 1991). RGO is primarily reflected in the nigrescence model. Secondly, it was no longer viewed that psychological functioning was linearly related to the stages, in which Pre-Encounter individuals would have a low functioning and internalization individuals would have a high functioning. As a third change, the intensity of RGO, was based on the importance of race, which could range from low, neutral, to high salience, and the valence of the orientation, positive or negative. For example, it is possible for an individual to have a low salience for race, a high positive race salience, or high negative race salience. Within each stage, more than one identity was believed to be present, which was added as the fourth change to the model. In the fifth and final change, removed Black Nationalist from the Immersion-Emersion stage.

In this revision, the original five-stage model (Pre-Encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-Commitment) remained, but an elaboration of identities was made within each stage. The revised nigrescence model describes the Pre-Encounter stage as a re-socializing experience that seeks to change a preexisting identity (non-Afrocentric) to one that is Afrocentric (Cross, 1991). The pre-encounter stage (stage 1) now describes two identities: *Assimilation* and *Anti-Black*. Assimilation refers to those individuals who adopt a pro-American or mainstream attitude and do not view race as important. In contrast, Anti-Black identity refers to Blacks who hold negative views of other Blacks (miseducation) and their own Blackness (deep self-hatred; Cross, 1991). As a result of this reconceptualization, all individuals with a Pre-Encounter racial identity were not considered to be psychologically unhealthy, only those who had an Anti-Black racial identity, specifically, Self-Hating identity.

The Encounter stage (stage 2) remains the same: a questioning of racial identity based on

a critical or a series of racial incidents. In the third stage, Immersion-Emersion stage, the same identities are present, but one is labeled and described somewhat differently. The glorification of being Black is called *Intense Black Involvement*, reflecting intense emotions that immerse the individuals in all things Black (e.g., literature, art, dress, vernacular). However, all who are considered Black Nationalists are no longer included here, only the ones who reflect the intensity of emotions and the romanticizing of being Black. The anti-White identity remains the same from the original model.

In the fourth and fifth stages of Internalization and Internalization-Commitment, three identities are described: *Nationalist*, *Biculturalist*, and *Multiculturalist*. The group Black Nationalist is moved from stage three to four and five. Being Black is the only identity that is salient, and the focus is placed on empowering the Black community. Biculturalist is focused on at least two cultural identities with Blackness being one. And the Multiculturalist identity refers to a focus on at least three or more identities, such as gender and sexual orientation fused with their Blackness (Cross, 1991). Finally, all individuals in the Internalization stages are not automatically considered psychologically healthy because of their positive Black identity. Personal identity (personality traits, disposition, temperament) may affect how individuals function more so than their racial identity.

### **The Expanded Nigrescence Model**

The third iteration of the nigrescence model, the expanded version (NT-E; Cross & Vandiver, 2001) emerged out of the development of the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS; Vandiver et al., 2000), which was intended to measure identities in the revised model. The expanded nigrescence model (Cross & Vandiver, 2001) is significantly different from the original (Cross, 1971) and the revised model (Cross, 1991) in several ways.

One of those differences is that the expanded model (2001) is no longer a stage-model. The focus is on Black racial attitudes and the stages are referred to as themes of racial attitudes (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Two, there is a universe of racial attitudes, potentially infinite, and the ones highlighted in NT-E reflect common racial attitudes but are not exhaustive of the racial identity attitudes of Blacks. Cross and Vandiver (2001) posit that though the names of identities are different and defined as such, there continues to be some similarities across all iterations of the nigrescence model. Furthermore, the expanded model retained Cross' (1991) conceptualization of self-concept and the revised relationship between racial identity and psychological functioning.

The three themes of racial attitudes are *Pre-Encounter*, *Immersion-Emersion*, and *Internalization*. There are three racial identities under Pre-Encounter: (a) *Assimilation*, (b) *Miseducation*, and (c) *Self-Hatred*. Assimilation refers to a person's pro-American identity. Miseducation refers to individual's stereotypical views of Blackness while Self-Hatred is characterized as an individual who has profound negative feelings about themselves because they are Black (Cross and Vandiver, 2001). An individual who is in Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred is one who dislikes their Blackness and everything associated with being Black. Immersion-Emersion still contained the two attitudes of anti-White and Intense Black Involvement.

Under Internalization, four racial identities are now described: (a) *Black Nationalist*, (b) *Biculturalist*, and (c) *Multiculturalist Racial*, and (d) *Multiculturalist Inclusive*. Black Nationalist is referred to as an individual who stresses an Afrocentric perspective about themselves, Black people, and the surrounding world. Biculturalist is a Black person who gives equal importance to "Americanness" as well as Africanity (Blackness) and engages in Black issues and culture but also openly engages in aspects of the mainstream culture. Multiculturalist Racial is an individual



whose Black identity is fused with one other social category such as gender, while a Multiculturalist Inclusive is a type of Black person whose identity is shared between three or more social categories or frame of references (e.g., Black, Hispanic, male, gay; Cross & Vandiver, 2001).

Overall, Cross and Vandiver (2001) indicate that the nigrescence theory tries to explain why some Black people show long-term interest in Black problems and Black culture and others interest diminishes. These theorists also reiterate that while the revised nigrescence model (NT-R; Cross, 1991) can be applied and viewed as stages when studying Black identity change, the expanded nigrescence model (NT-E; Cross & Vandiver, 2001) can be applied when focusing on social experiences from infancy through early adulthood (NT-E; Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Therefore, from a psychological perspective, the concept of nigrescence, or becoming Black has been conceptualized as a process and a life-enhancing journey (Worrell et al., 2001).

### **Black Racial Identity and Black Immigrants**

Race in the US can be linked to a history of oppression and inequality (e.g., poor education system, poor housing, lack of employment opportunities). Due to the challenging sociocultural and historical realities encountered by Blacks in the US, Black racial identity has been characterized as one of the most empirically examined psychological variables among African Americans (Beasley & McClain, 2020 Cokley & Vandiver, 2011). That being said, there is also a richness and diversity within Black experiences that range from historical ties, intersectionality (race, gender, class), nationality, and ethnicity, to name a few, that bring one to a Black consciousness.

Though the literature on Black racial identity in the US has primarily aimed to understand native Blacks, and rightly so, limited research has also examined racial identity as it extends to

the diversity among the Black population in the US (Redway, 2014). The growing diversity within the US Black population affects not only the relations between Americans and Black immigrants, but also the perceptions and attitudes between the US native Blacks and Black immigrants. Few scholars have noted the significant changes and stress Black immigrants undergo in their transition to the US society, considering the fact that they have to adjust to being a racial minority and the stigma of inferiority and discrimination that is associated with it (Redway, 2014; Sellers et al., 2006; Waters, 1994). In addition to this, little is known about how various generations of these immigrant children learn to become Black as they become further remove from their parent's immigrant status and are viewed as native Black.

According to Rong and Brown (2001), the process in which racial identity happens among immigrants may be different from that of their children. While this notion is clear, what is unclear, is the manner in which their children, grandchildren, and later generations understand racial identity, considering said descendants have direct lineage to the origins of their ancestors, at least more extensively than most native Blacks. This concept is important because even with knowledge of their direct lineage, having the native Black experience may impact their development and how they view themselves. Moreover, the examination of Black racial identity in immigrants and their children is one that is worth exploring as it may or may not closely resemble that of native Blacks.

Scholars have found that upon arrival to the US, the emphasis on race as a defining self-concept is irrelevant to Black immigrants, yet due to the prominence of racial categorization in the US, race as a self-concept is developed in this population (Lorick-Wilmot, 2015; Thomas, 2018). For example, research on native Blacks has found that racial identity accounts for variations in race-related stress, while the increased length of stay in the US has accounted for

race-related stress in Black immigrants that converges to that of native Blacks (Case & Hunter, 2014; Jones et al., 2007; Rogers, 2001; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Thomas, 2018). Such convergence can be seen as solidarity in understanding the disparities caused by racism and desire for equity in the American society. This conjunction of immigration and race complicates ethnic and race relations and influences identity formation of Black immigrants and their children (Tormala & Deaux, 2006).

### **Empirical Studies on Black Racial Identity and Black Immigrants**

The primary use of Cross's theory in the present study is due to a key precept of the nigrescence theory—that is personality plays a minor role in Black identity because Blackness is a social identity or RGO variable (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Given the multidimensionality of this assumption, it seemed appropriate to utilize this theory and measure for Liberian immigrants as they learn to understand Blackness as an ascribed social identity in a racially stratified society and as their children's socialization patterns develop in the home, school, and the community. Accordingly, the next section will review studies on Black racial identity and Black immigrants to show the recent and significant research on this population as well as lean toward understanding the literature thus far on Black immigrants. The section will first provide a step-by-step search procedure to locate relevant studies, followed by a review of each study.

In this section, five empirical studies on Black racial identity and Black immigrants will be reviewed and critiqued. The review will begin with qualitative research and conclude with quantitative studies to highlight the insufficient number of quantitative studies on Black African immigrants. A *PsycINFO* search was conducted on the term *Black racial identity*, *Black immigrants*, and *Black African immigrants* to locate studies relevant to the present study. The search resulted in 126 publications with the above keywords (40 scholarly journals, 49

dissertation/theses, and 37 books). The content of the writing fell within the following areas: racial and ethnic identity construction, shared identity and belonging, psychological well-being, and gender differences. For further specification, the two additional terms were included in the search, *West African immigrants* and *Liberian*. This additional specification resulted in zero studies. The search was revised to exclude the term *Liberian*, and the revision resulted in 10 studies (3 scholarly journals, 5 dissertation/theses, and 2 books). These studies focused on racial identity formation of Black immigrants or children of Black immigrants living in the US, career, gender, and Black immigrants' conception of whiteness. For the purpose of this literature review, the five studies by De Walt (2009), Asante (2012), Habecker (2012), Lindsay (2018), and Benson (2006) support the relevance and focus on examining racial identity in Black immigrants and their children.

De Walt's (2009) qualitative case study examined the identity of first-generation Africans using the expanded nigrescence theory. The study was described as an instrumental case study that also incorporated ethnographic techniques for the qualitative approach. Meaning, it is a case study to examine a particular issue and provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. Participants were six undergraduate students (three males, three females) at a mid-size university in a Northern US city. Participants met the criteria of being born to parents who immigrated from sub-Saharan Africa. However, one participant immigrated to the US when they were less than a year old. Their parents' countries of origin were Sudan, Ethiopia, and Nigeria. Data was collected using a pre- and post-test of the CRIS (Vandiver et al., 2000) and a series of interviews with each participant. The CRIS was used to assess students' sense of identity and to identify any racial attitude changes before and after the interviews. However, a time span was not provided between the pre-and post-test. The author indicated that the CRIS

was used to provide descriptive data only and not statistical analyses.

De Walt's (2009) study identified five areas that emerged from the qualitative data. The first was the distinction between "African American" and "Black" identities, which was a selective ownership of both identities with a superficial awareness of the historical context of both. The second area was contextual identity shifts made by first-generation immigrants. This referred to participants' comfort or ability to opt in and out of their multiple identities, which allowed them to choose their identity based on their social circumstance. The third area that emerged from the findings was problems with Afrocentricity and its application to first-generation African immigrants, that is, the idea of placing African ideals at the center of behavior and culture. Afrocentricity as an idea does not apply to people who are raised by continental African parents because elements of their African culture and traditions are organically infused in their upbringing.

The fourth area in the study was problems with miseducation and its application to first-generation African immigrants. This relates to the disconnect that occurs because participants learned about their African heritage and customs from their homes in ways that were empowering, yet they were subjected to miseducation and denied exposure of African American significance in US history. The final area that emerged was stereotype and race image anxiety. This referred to being the only Black person in an all-White setting, regardless of how they perceived themselves and their identity. Stereotype and race image anxiety connected participant's historical assumptions that are typically perceived of Black Americans.

De Walt (2009) found that participants were distinct in their identity choice between African American and Black. They saw themselves as "true African Americans" because of their African heritage and American citizenship status. Similarly, participants' multiple identities and

comfort with both allowed them selectivity in their identity shifts, which often occurred as a protective or defensive strategy against prejudice, stereotype, and discrimination (De Walt, 2009). De Walt indicated that participants' identity shifts were associated with their experiences of stereotypes. The study further suggested that findings of miseducation and Afrocentricity were related to stereotype and racial attitudes by the participants.

Regarding participants' pre and post-test CRIS scores, De Walt reported in the Pre-Encounter stage, two participants' assimilation attitude scores decreased, one participant score did not change, and three participants' scores increased. The miseducation subscale pre- and post-test scores indicated three increased scores and three decreased scores, while the self-hatred subscale pre- and post-test scores indicated a decrease in two participants' scores, one participant with no change in score, and a score increase in three participants. In the Immersion-Emersion stage, anti-White attitudes scores showed two participants' scores increased and four of their scores decreased. De Walt reported that in the final stage of Internalization, Afrocentricity attitudes of the participants indicated one with a decrease in score, two with no change and three with an increase in score. In contrast, the Multicultural Inclusiveness attitudes of participants pre- and post-test showed one decrease, one no change, and four increases in scores.

De Walt's (2009) study built on prior empirical evidence that children of foreign-born Blacks have shown some flexibility in the formation of their racial identity within the US context (Kusow, 2006). However, a severe limitation of the study is the author's selective use of the CRIS. After all, using the CRIS to merely provide descriptive data on such small sample size, as well as the inappropriate scoring of the scale did not allow for the intended utilization of the instrument, which is to provide a better measure of participants' racial attitudes. Future studies can expand on this by using the CRIS for its intended purpose and with a sizeable sample.

Similar to De Walt's (2009) study utilizing an eclectic group of Africans, a qualitative study by Asante (2012) examined how African immigrants experienced racialization and developed a Black consciousness. Participants were 23 sub-Saharan Africans from Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Gambia, Somalia, Ethiopia, Benin, and Niger. While the author did not specify the sample size of the participants from each country, participants were students (nine women, and 14 men) attending a Mid-Western university in the US and were between the ages of 18- to 30-years old. The length of time of participants lived in the US ranged from three months to four years. Participants were divided into two focus groups based on time in the US (3 months to 3 years and 4 years or more). The creation of the two groups was to examine whether the length of stay in the US will be related to the emerging themes.

Asante's (2012) results based on both focus groups found that participants who lived in the US for more than 4 years were likely to identify racism and were more sensitive to racism than those with less time in the US. Asante also found that female participants were more likely to express their disapproval for racism than males. Participants who have lived in the US for more than 3 years were more likely to downplay or dismiss critical race incidence by reframing that racism served as a motivation for achievement. To illustrate, one participant reported that being the only Black person in his class, his instructor and peers did not expect much from him. As a result, he used the negativity to fuel his academic motivation.

Further findings from the study indicated that participants from both groups were likely to identify as African and not by nationality. Their pan-African identity was seen as a unification that ignored ethnic and national differences. Participants also reported experiencing a cognitive shift from ethnic consciousness to racial consciousness through the experience of racism. As participants learned about the subordinate position of their race in the racial hierarchy, they

negotiated their Blackness by distancing themselves from African American culture to minimize being perceived negatively (Asante, 2012).

Findings from Asante's (2012) study have contributed to the literature by highlighting that through increased exposure to racial experiences Black immigrants learn to negotiate race and ethnicity in the US. The study also contributes to the social science of Black African immigrant literature by illustrating the impact length of time in the US may have on the potential influence on their perspective of race and racism. The study is limited in its purposeful sampling in that participants were all students from mostly upper middle class or middle-class families in Africa. Additionally, by conducting a focus group, participants may have changed their responses to align with other participants. These limitations could be addressed in future research through random sampling and individual interviews prior to participating in a focus group interview.

Similarly, Habecker (2012) examined the identity choices of Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants living in the United States, specifically those who view themselves as Habasha. Habasha is a unique identity to those from specific ethnic groups in Ethiopia (Amhara and Tigrinya) and Eritrea (Tigrinyan). Participants were interviewed through a semi-structured format and informal conversations. The ethnographic case study explored those who identified as Habasha and their navigation of America's racial hierarchy. Participants were 50 first-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants who resided in Washington, DC. The author reported that participants were from diverse social classes, legal statuses, and professions.

Findings from Habecker's (2012) study indicated that these first-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants viewed their Habasha identity as separate from ethnic and racial identities because of the emphasis on not looking Black—that is, Habasha having ambiguous



features not often associated with native Blacks. The findings also indicated that participants constructed their own spaces in order to maintain their identity by living in an insulated community without the daily exposure to American racial issues. A few participants maintained that, despite having a higher educational attainment and being unemployed, they did not view this contradictory status as a sign of racism. The author concluded that Habasha Ethiopians and Eritreans in Washington, DC were not assimilating into mainstream America, and they did not identify with the Black experience of racism. Though Ethiopians and Eritreans are officially considered Black in the US, participants rejected Black as a racial identity and were trying to preserve their Habasha identity through isolation from mainstream America. A limitation of the study is the lack of the participants' demographics (e.g., age, gender, and education). The study also did not provide length of time participants resided in the US. Implications of this study shows the influence of ethnic enclaves on immigrants' identity. Future research should include missing variables (e.g., age, gender, time lived in the US) in addition to random sampling in various Ethiopian and Eritreans communities. Future samples should also include school age participants due to their exposure in the education system.

More recently, Lindsay (2018) conducted a qualitative study that examined the racial identity of Somali refugees who resided in the Midwest. A narrative methodology was used to collect and analyze the data. Participants were seven Somali refugees (three females, four males) who resided in North Dakota. Participants' ages ranged from 23 to 33 years, and they immigrated to the US between the ages of 8 to 21. The author conducted an interview with each participant.

Lindsay's (2018) findings were that participants seemed to progress from a state of racial ignorance and innocence to an increased awareness and understanding of the centrality of race in

the US. The author asserted that Somali refugees in the Midwest had developed a racial identity in the US context through four distinct stages. The first stage was *Pre-Migration* and was reflected through participants' perceptions about race prior to entering the US. Participants indicated that race was unimportant and not considered in their country of origin. The second stage was *Unexamined Racial identity*, where participants initially perceived race and racial identity as irrelevant and did not have an impact on them. The third stage as described by the author was *Race Becoming Important*, in which participants learned more about US history and were exposed to racism and racialization. The final stage in which Somali refugees from the Midwest developed a racial identity was called *Race Important for Survival*, which required participants to consider racial identity as the most salient aspect of their identity. Participants indicated learning that race was more important than their ethnicity and nationality, meaning they were perceived as Black before Somali.

Lindsay (2018) expanded the limited research on the racial identity of Black Africans in the US through this examination of Somali refugees who are leading the US in Black immigrants' population. Nonetheless, a limitation of the study was the lack of representation from the 40 and over age groups. Another limitation was potential language barrier. As indicated by the author, English was not the first language for participants because they did not speak English prior to arriving in the US.

In contrast to the qualitative studies previously discussed, Benson (2006) examined the racial identities of native-born Blacks (Black Americans) and Black immigrants from several different countries who currently reside in the US. Data were collected from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality (MCSUI) household survey administered between 1992 and 1994 in Boston, Atlanta, Detroit, and Los Angeles. Participants were 2,251 native-born Blacks and 233

foreign-born Blacks from Puerto Rico ( $n = 29$ ), Haiti ( $n = 41$ ), the Dominican Republic ( $n = 20$ ), Central America ( $n = 29$ ), West Indies ( $n = 80$ ), and Africa ( $n = 29$ ). Data about specific country of origin in Africa and Central America were not available. The average length of time participants reported residing in the US was 13 years.

The author asked the following questions: (a) Do all Black migrants subscribe to the same sense of racial group identification and racial group consciousness as Black Americans? (b) Do native and ethnic identities exceed racial group identification, giving rise to a distinct set of attitudes that divide Black immigrants by place of origin? Benson also examined two dimensions of racial identity. The first was racial group identification, which was defined as the degree to which individuals shared a common racial identity. The second was racial group consciousness, which was defined as the meaning Black people attached to their racial identity.

Benson (2006) found that participants who resided in the US longer identified as Black, and that most Black immigrants reported developing a shared racial group identity with native-born Blacks over time. This study also found that Black immigrants who attained higher levels of education and were in the labor market were likely to have shared racial group identification than those who had lower levels of education. Similarly, Black immigrants who lived in neighborhoods with fewer Blacks were also likely to view their Blackness as a shared racial group identification. Benson found that in contrast to racial group identification, Black immigrants' racial group consciousness was strikingly different. The study showed that Black immigrants did not have a consistent perception of how race operates in the labor and housing market. For example, Africans perceived discrimination as affecting their mobility in the labor market, but Haitians perceived discrimination in the housing market. Results from the study also found that housing and educational attainment were associated with racial group consciousness.

Regarding Black immigrants' native origin, results indicated that while most Black migrants developed a shared racial group identity with native-born Blacks over time, how they interpret their American racial identity varies by native origin.

Benson's (2006) quantitative measure of the construct of Black identity is important because it contributes to the literature by examining racial identities in Black immigrants from various areas due to the large number of participants and the various locations in which participants resided. However, there are some limitations to the study. One limitation of the study is that 96% of the sample were drawn from two cities (Boston and Los Angeles), which do not, as indicated by the author, have the largest population of Black immigrants in the US. Another limitation of the study is the uneven distribution of Black immigrants. There were more participants from the Caribbean region than Central American and Africa. Another concern is the measurement of Black identity. The measures utilized in the study were not standard racial identity scales, and the development and psychometric properties of the measures were not reported. Finally, the study does not report the age in which the immigrants entered the US. Previous studies shown that age of migration influence identity (Awokoya, 2012; Rong & Brown, 2002; Waters, 1994; 2014).

Taken together, the findings from these studies provide mixed evidence that Black immigrants and children of these immigrants reject their ascribed racial identity (Asante, 2012; Habacker, 2012). For example, Habacker's (2012) findings suggests that some Black immigrants from Ethiopia and Eritrea reject Black as a racial identity based on their lack of physical traits that are often attributed to Black racial group. In other studies, it appears that Black immigrants have negotiated their racial identity based on a host of variables such as length of time in the US, English language proficiency, educational attainment, and SES (Asante, 2012; Benson, 2006; De

Walt, 2009; Lindsay, 2018). While these findings contribute to the literature as they have participants from various parts of continental Africa (e.g., Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria), many of the studies provided insufficient demographic information (age, gender, immigration status [visa type, refugee, naturalized citizen] and time in the US) to actually examine the unique meaning of racial identity for various Black immigrants based on their experiences of race in the US. For example, research regarding Black immigrants' identity has found that age of entry to the US, along with the length of time resided in the US are both significant influencers on their formation of racial identity (Asante, 2012; Kusow, 2006; Waters, 1999). Another issue of concern is that the majority of the studies conducted were qualitative. This approach is problematic because it is limiting in its generalization to Black African immigrants in the US. Furthermore, the studies mentioned do not address multi-generational identity, instead, participants' age range were in the same generation, resided in the same a community, or had similar immigration status.

Based on the literature review, there are several pathways in which future research can take to increase understanding of Black racial identity in Black immigrants. One of which is increasing quantitative studies that includes this population. Increasing quantitative studies will help provide more evidence for generalization. In doing so, future research should also focus on how different subgroups of sub-Saharan African immigrants develop a racialized identity after immigrating to the US. A third suggestion is to integrate an understanding of identity from different generations of these immigrants. Finally, utilizing participants from various areas will provide a broader understanding of their experiences, particularly because certain areas in the US have more diversity than other areas. With an understanding of the gap in the current literature, the aim of the present study is to explore racial identity in three generations of Liberian

immigrants residing in the US.

There are limited studies on Black immigrant racial identity in the US, specifically, Liberian immigrants. It is critical to understand this variable because it relates to various generations of Black immigrants who may or may not reside in the same home. Identifying the difference in this population can increase researchers understanding of their sociocultural, interpersonal, and psychological perception and well-being. To date the present study is the first to address this topic in Liberian immigrants from a quantitative lens. The study was guided by the following research question concerning racial identity: Do differences in racial identity attitudes exist between first-generation, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans?

### **The Present Study**

Liberian immigrants are arguably among the least studied groups of Africans and West African immigrants in the social science literature. This study aimed to explore acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity in three generations of Liberian immigrants. Understanding race and ethnicity in these generations of Liberians is important because as Black immigrants, they undergo significant changes and stress in their transition to the US in addition to their new status as a minority. Living as a minority in the US society may heighten these immigrant's ethnic identity, which researchers have found may increase or decrease at various periods in one's life (Choi et al., 2001; Schwartz et al., 2010; Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008).

A better understanding of this group can also improve treatment intervention for psychologists and mental health providers that imparts awareness into why and how each generation respond to issues regarding race and ethnic identity. Furthermore, despite the link between acculturation and mental health, the effects of acculturation on the mental health of the

immigrant population are not well understood, particularly with Black Africans (Caldwell et al., 2010; Lara et al., 2004). Therefore, exploring acculturation levels in these three generations of Liberian immigrants will provide insight to the tension caused by acculturation within and across generations.

Few studies have examined acculturative stress in sub-Saharan African immigrants and have shown that English language proficiency is associated with lower acculturative stress (Orjiako & So, 2014; Schwartz et al., 2010). Nonetheless, Black English-speaking immigrants from Africa with thick accents experience higher acculturative stress (Wamwara-Mbugua & Cornwell, 2010). In addition to English proficiency, researchers have found other factors that lead to acculturative stress include education, social class, age of migration, and length of stay in the US (Agbemenu, 2016; Okafor et al., 2013; Orjiako & So, 2014). The effect of some of these factors as they relate to Liberian immigrants is critical for researchers because Liberians are the third leading group of West Africans in the US.

In addition to undergoing acculturative stress, Liberians and other Black immigrants are introduced to a racial hierarchical society. As they learn the meaning of being perceived as Black in America, these immigrants and their children utilize several strategies to negotiate their identities. Such strategies include developing dual identities (ethnic identity, Black identity, American identity), utilizing or negating their ethnic names, or rejecting Blackness to distance themselves from native Blacks to avoid negative stereotypes (Akiba, 2007; Asante, 2012; Habacker, 2012; Yboar, 2007). However, what is still unclear is how acculturation influences the identity (race and ethnicity) of these immigrants and their children. Furthermore, studies that have come close to addressing this topic among West African immigrants have not narrowly examined these variables in Liberian immigrants living in the US.

This is important because as first-generation Liberians are learning to adjust and re-socialize in a highly racialized society, they must also balance maintaining their ethnicity and developing ethnic pride in their 1.5- and second-generation children who are continuously exposed to the ideology of race as the determination of their place in the US society (e.g., education, peers, extracurricular activities). Thus far, there is a dearth of literature when examining acculturation and acculturative stress, ethnic identity, and racial identity in African immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, West Africa, and specifically Liberia.

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of acculturation, ethnic, and racial differences within and across generations of Liberian immigrants by examining the salience of these identities among first-generation, 1.5-generation, and second-generation Liberians. This study is unique due to the culture similarities Liberians share with Americans (e.g., values, dress, and language). It is significant in its aim to contribute to helping future researchers understand the experiences that influence acculturation and identity within various generations of Liberian immigrants. Additionally, while literature appears to address racial identity and ethnic identity as one construct, the present study addressed them separately using psychometrically sound measures.

Findings from this study establishes the importance of understanding if race and ethnicity are important in how generations of Liberians identify and respond to acculturation in addition to how mental health and health care providers, educators, and community members alike can provide appropriate care and support for this population.

### **Research Questions**

1. Do differences in acculturation (as measured by the SMAS subscales of dominant society immersion and ethnic society immersion) exist between first-generation, 1.5-, and



second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans?

2. Do differences in ethnic identity (as measured by the EIS subscales of exploration, affirmation, and resolution) exist between first-generation, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans?
3. Do differences in racial identity attitudes exist between first-generation, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans racial identity attitudes?
4. Does generational status, age, and time-lived in the US influence acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity of Liberian/Liberian Americans?

### **Research Hypotheses**

Hypothesis 1. It is expected that there will be a difference between generational status and acculturation scores.

- a. It is expected that there will be a significant difference in acculturation scores (dominant society immersion, ethnic society immersion) between first-generation and 1.5-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans.
- b. It is expected that there will be a significant difference in acculturation scores (dominant society immersion, ethnic society immersion) between 1.5- and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans.
- c. It is expected that there will be a significant difference in acculturation scores (dominant society immersion, ethnic society immersion) between first- and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans.

Hypothesis 2. It is expected that there will be a difference between generational status and ethnic identity.

- a. It is expected that there will be a significant difference in ethnic identity

(exploration, affirmation, and resolution) between first-generation and 1.5-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans.

- b. It is expected that there will be a significant difference between 1.5- and second-generation ethnic identity (exploration, affirmation, and resolution).
- c. It is expected that there will be a significant difference between first- and second-generation ethnic identity (exploration, affirmation, and resolution).

Hypothesis 3. It is expected that there will be a difference between generational status and racial identity attitudes.

- a. It is expected that there will be a significant difference in racial identity attitudes between first- and 1.5-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans.
- b. It is expected that there will not be a significant difference in racial identity attitudes between 1.5 and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans.
- c. It is expected that there will be a significant difference in racial identity attitudes between first- and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans.

Hypothesis 4. Generational status, age, and time live in the US is expected to influence acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity of Liberian/Liberian Americans.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to document the method and procedures used to conduct and analyze the data obtained in this study. First, a description of the participants is provided. Next, the instruments and their psychometric properties are discussed. The pilot study is briefly described, followed by the procedures used to collect data. A quantitative design was used to explore the generational difference of acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity in Liberian immigrants and their children living in the US.

#### **Participants**

The sample consisted of participants who self-identified as Liberian or Liberian American residing in the US for a minimum of two years and under an immigration status of non-visitor. The study's sample initially consisted of 336 self-identified Liberians or Liberian Americans. The data was screened for completeness, in which 59 surveys were identified and removed due to insufficient data for analysis. Data were considered insufficient if all the responses were left blank or if participants completed partial sections of the survey, such as the background questionnaire. An a priori power analysis was executed using the G\*Power 3.1 program to assess the necessary sample size needed to detect significant findings (Faul et al., 2007). Given an alpha of .05, a power level of .95, and a moderate effect size of 0.3., a minimum sample size of 111 was required.

A final sample resulted in 277 total participants. One hundred sixty-eight (60.6%) of the sample identified as female and 109 (39.4%) as male. Participants self-identify as heterosexual ( $n = 265$ , 95.7%), bisexual ( $n = 9$ , 3.2%), gay ( $n = 2$ , .7%), or other ( $n = 1$ , .4%). Also, participants' ages ranged from 12 to 76 years old ( $M = 34.38$ ,  $SD = 16.16$ ). In terms of

generational status, 119 (43%) participants identified as first-generation, 65 (23.5%) as 1.5-generation, 93 (33.6%) as second-generation. With respect to participants' residential status, 241 (77.3%) self-identified as US citizens, 58 (20.9%) reported being permanent residents (Green Card), and five (1.8%) as other (e.g., diplomats). One hundred forty (50.5%) participants identified their nationality as Liberian, 107 (38.6%) as Liberian American, and 30 (10.8%) as American.

For participants who were not born in the US, 173 (97.7%) identified their country of birth as Liberia. However, 108 (61%) of the non-US born participants identified their country of citizenship as the US, while 64 (36.2%) identified Liberia. Though Liberia does not permit dual citizenship (Manby, 2010), five ( $n = 5\%$ ) of the participants reported dual citizenship status with both Liberia and the US. The mean age in which participants immigrated to the US was 21.27 ( $SD = 12.00$ ). The mean length of time participants had lived in the US was 18 years ( $SD = 11.99$ ). See Table 1 for additional sociodemographic information of participants.

## **Measures**

### **Demographic Questionnaire**

A demographic questionnaire was used to collect participants' age, gender, sexual orientation, generational status (e.g., first, 1.5, or second), race, ethnicity, and nationality (Liberian, Liberian American, American, or other). Other information in the demographic questionnaire included marital status, number of children, occupation, income, religious affiliation, length of time lived in the US, age at the time of immigration to the US, and residential status (i.e., permanent resident, visitor, and citizen). Finally, the questionnaire asked participants to indicate how often they visit Liberia and their intentions or desire to move back one day.

## **Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale**

The Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale (SMAS; Stephenson, 2000) is a 32-item scale designed to measure behavioral and attitudes of acculturation across various ethnic groups. The current study utilized SMAS because it coincides with Berry's bidimensional model of acculturation. Conceptualization of the scale is based on the recognition that acculturation is a complex, multidimensional process of learning that occurs when individuals and groups come into continuous contact with different societies (Celenk & Van de Vijver, 2011; Fox et al., 2013; Huynh et al., 2009; Stephenson, 2000). In a systematic review as well as a meta-analysis of available acculturation instruments aimed at identifying strengths and weaknesses of scale descriptors, psychometric properties, and conceptual and theoretical structure, the SMAS was one of only three that met the guidelines for choosing or developing acculturation instruments (Celenk & Van de Vijver, 2011; Huynh et al., 2009). The SMAS was also selected for this study due to the number of items and the diverse sample size in comparison to the General Ethnicity Questionnaire–Abridged, which has 77 items (GEQ; Tsai et al., 2000), and the Vancouver Index of Acculturation, which the sample participants comprised of predominately Chinese undergraduate students (VIA; Ryder et al., 2000). Furthermore, the SMAS can be used for all ethnic populations and age groups in addition to identifying relationships between generational status (Stephenson, 2000).

The SMAS consists of two subscales that are expected to reflect two independent dimensions, a 15-item dominant society immersion subscale (DSI), and a 17-item ethnic society immersion subscale (ESI). A sample item on the DSI is “I have never learned to speak the language of my native country” while a sample item on the ESI is, “I attend social functions with people from my native country.” Each subscale measures language, interaction, media, and food.

The subscales are also designed to reflect knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes of the dominant and ethnic culture. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*false*) to 4 (*true*), and scores are averaged based on each subscale, with a lower score indicating higher levels of acculturation.

Stephenson (2000) reported a reliability estimate (Cronbach's alpha) for the scores of .86 for the entire scale. The sample consisted of 436 ethnically diverse participants including African Americans, Asian Americans (e.g., India, Cambodia, Japan), Hispanic Americans (e.g., Bolivia, Cuba, Mexico), African decent (e.g., Liberia, Jamaica, Guyana), and European American (e.g., Greece, Sweden, Poland). Participant's age ranged from 18 to 73 years, 30% male and 70% female. Generational status of participants consisted of first, second, third, and fourth generation, while education ranged from seventh grade to graduate education (Stephenson, 2000). An exploratory factor analysis on the SMAS identified two-factor solution eigenvalues of 10.05 for ethnic society immersion (ESI) and 4.34 for dominant society immersion (DSI). The reliability estimates of the scores reported were .97 and .90, respectively. In this same study, a confirmatory factor analysis for the scale resulted in inconsistent findings (Stephenson, 2000). However, Stephenson (2000) indicated that the adjunct fit statistics provided adequate levels for acceptable fit (GFI = .91, IFI = .90, and CFI = .90). The participants were recruited from diverse cities, such as New York area, Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts, and a large public northeastern university.

Initial convergent validity was established using The Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II (ARSMA-II; Cuellar et., 1995), which included a sample of five generations of Mexican, Mexican American, and White non-Hispanic university students living South Texas. Discriminant validity was established through a positive correlation between the

SMAS and the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS; Marin & Gamba, 1996). The author argued that at the time of the study, there were no published instruments for any of the ethnic groups included in the study that were consistent with the conceptualization of the acculturation process. That is, these were reliable measures of acculturation through a bidimensional approach, and both measures reflected the operationalization of acculturation.

### **Ethnic Identity Scale**

The Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS; Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bámaca-Gómez, 2004) is a 17-items scale with three subscales, exploration (7 items) affirmation (4 items) and resolution (6 items). Exploration is the degree to which individuals have explored their ethnicity. A sample item on this subscale is, “I have attended events that have helped me learn more about my ethnicity.” Resolution is the degree to which individuals have resolved what their ethnic identity means to them. A sample item on this subscale is, “I am clear about what my ethnicity means to me.” Finally, affirmation is the affect (positive or negative) that they associate with their resolution (Umaña-Taylor et. al., 2004). A sample item on this subscale is, “My feelings about my ethnicity are mostly negative.” Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*does not describe me at all*) to 4 (*describes me very well*) and are scored based on each subscale. Higher scores on each subscale are indicative of greater exploration, resolution, and affirmation.

Reliability estimates of the EIS scores have ranged from .86 to .92 in prior studies (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). An exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses conducted with data from ethnically (i.e., White American, African American, Asian American, and Latinx) and geographically diverse data set of students attending a four-year college and adolescents in high school from the West and Midwest supported a three-factor structure (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004; Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007). The authors indicated that convergent validity was

established through correlation with the Familial Ethnic Socialization Measure (FESM; Umaña-Taylor, 2001) which consisted of Mexican-origin adolescent participants, while discriminant validity was established through correlation with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1979).

### **Cross Racial Identity Scale**

Racial identity was measured using the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS; Vandiver et al., 2000). Racial identity was defined as the various ways “Black people make sense of themselves as social beings rather than as a constellation of personality traits” (Cross & Vandiver, 2001, p. 380). The CRIS is a 40-item scale with 30 scorable items and 10 filler items designed to measure six racial attitudes based on the expanded nigrescence model (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). These six subscales are Pre-Encounter Assimilation (PA), Pre-Encounter Miseducation (PM), Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred (PSH), Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW), Internalization Afrocentric (IA) and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive (IMCI).

The Pre-Encounter Assimilation as indicated by Vandiver et al. (2002) is maintaining a pro-American identity. A sample item is, “I think of myself as American and seldom as a member of a racial group.” The Pre-Encounter Miseducation accentuates negative views and stereotypes of African Americans. A sample item on this subscale is “Blacks place more emphasis on having a good time than on hard work.” The Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred scale describes hatred about being Black. A sample item on this subscale is “I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black.” The Immersion-Emersion Anti-White scale describes an individual’s dislike and distrust of Whites. A sample item is, “I hate White people.”

Internalization Afrocentric refers to Black empowerment and success based on the work of other Blacks. A sample item on this subscale is, “Black people will never be free until we



embrace an Afrocentric perspective.” The Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive scale describes Black self-acceptance and acceptance of other cultural groups. A sample item on this subscale is, “I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective which is inclusive of everyone.” The subscales have five items each that are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The average score is then computed for each subscale; higher scores indicate higher attitudes on the subscale. The CRIS is interpreted based on all six subscale scores (Vandiver et al., 2002).

The internal reliability estimates (Cronbach’s alpha) of the CRIS scores have ranged from .78 to .89 (Vandiver et al., 2002). A six-factor structure of the CRIS scores has been supported using exploratory and confirmatory analysis (Gardner-Kitt & Worrell, 2007; Vandiver et al., 2002, 2004; Worrell & Watson, 2008). Convergent validity was examined through bivariate correlation with subscales on the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity scale (MIBI, Sellers et al., 1997) that consisted of African American college students at a predominantly Black university and predominantly White university. Discriminant validity was established through bivariate and canonical correlation using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965), Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1984, 1991), and the Big Five Inventory (BFI; John et al., 1991).

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted to establish the study’s viability due to the range in age and education of expected participants. The pilot study also determined the clarity of the questions, amount of time it took participants to read the instructions and complete all survey measures. Through the student investigator’s network, participants were recruited and contacted via email, text, and phone calls. A total of 11 participants completed the pilot study ( $n = 4$  males,  $n = 7$

females). A further breakdown of the pilot study participants included three minors ( $n = 2$  females,  $n = 1$  male) between the ages of 12-17 years old and eight adults ( $n = 5$  females,  $n = 3$  males). They were provided specific instructions as well as the expected time commitment to complete the survey. After completing the survey, participants were contacted to discuss their experience. They provided feedback about the length of time it took them to complete the survey, lack of clarity in language, and anonymity of participating in the study. Analysis from the pilot study were not ran due to the small sample size.

### **Procedures**

Participants for the current study were recruited through emails and social media (i.e., Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram). For example, an email script and flyer that included the study's link were sent to various community leaders requesting that the study be forwarded to their listserv (See Appendix A and B). In terms of social media, the flyer with the link to the study was posted on various pages. Participants who identified as minors were required to provide permission from a parent or guardian to participate (See Appendix C for parents' permission and Appendix D for assent form). To ensure consent was received for a minor participant, parents were required to provide their email. They received a notification thanking them for giving consent for their child to participate in the study. Participants 18 years or older were also required to sign a consent (See Appendix E).

Approval to conduct research with human participants was granted by Western Michigan University Human Subject Institutional Review Board (HSIRB; Project # 20-03-12; See Appendices F, G, and H). All study participants completed an informed consent (See Appendix E) and assent form when appropriate (See Appendix D) before they participated. They were informed that anyone who self-identified as Liberian, was 12 years or older, was born in the US

to one or both parents who are Liberian or was born in Liberia and has lived in the US for two years or more was eligible to participate. Participants were informed that the study was voluntary, and they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The survey was distributed using Qualtrics, a secure web-based survey software (See Appendix B). Participants were able to complete the survey at any location with any device that connected to the Internet. They were informed that the survey would take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. As an incentive for their participation, they were provided an additional link at the end of the survey to enter their name with an email address for a drawing for one of three gift cards (Target, \$15; iTunes/Apple store \$15; Visa, \$25). The purpose of the separate link was to maintain participant's anonymity in their survey responses. Participants were also informed that adults' and minor participants' drawings would be from each of their respective pools. Due to the background questionnaire's immigration status, participants were reminded that no personal information would be associated with their responses (See Appendix I).

Upon viewing the electronic flyer with the survey link, participants clicked on the link to begin the survey. A brief introduction of the student investigator's background was provided. After clicking the next button, participants were asked to answer the first two questions that screened their eligibility to participate in the study. Once screened, participants were asked to select one of the two survey links. The first link was for adults (18 years or older), and the second was for minors (12-17 years). After selecting the appropriate link, they were provided details about the study, confidentiality and privacy, risks and benefits, compensation, and to whom questions about the study can be directed. If adult respondents agreed to participate, they electronically signed the consent form and continued participation. If an adult agreed for their minor to participate, they electronically signed the consent form, followed by the minor agreeing

to participant by signing the assent form. All participants completed the measures in the same order, which began with ethnic identity, racial identity, and acculturation (See Appendices J, K, and L).

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This study aimed to explore differences in acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity attitudes within three generations of Liberian/Liberian Americans living in the US. This chapter presents the results of the current study. These results are presented in three sections: preliminary analysis, descriptive analyses, and inferential analyses. The inferential analyses section addresses the research questions and hypotheses.

#### **Preliminary Analyses**

The variables under investigation are generational status (first, 1.5, and second) of self-identified Liberian/Liberian Americans, acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity. The data were visually inspected for outliers. The assumption of normality was examined using normal Q-Q plots, histograms, box plots, skewness, and kurtosis values. Skewness values ranged from .13 to -1.00. These values indicate acceptable symmetry of the distribution because with a reasonably large sample skewness does not make a substantive difference in the analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001; 2018). Kurtosis values were also acceptable, with the highest value being 6.60. When the sample size is 200+, the risk associated with high kurtosis values is reduced (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001; 2018). The final sample consisted of 277 participants ( $n = 119$  first-generation;  $n = 65$  1.5-generation,  $n = 93$  second-generation) after 59 surveys were identified and removed due to insufficient data for analysis. Data were considered insufficient if all the responses were left blank or if participants completed partial sections of the survey, such as the background questionnaire.

## **Descriptive Analyses**

### **Acculturation**

Participant acculturation level was measured with the Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale (SMAS; Stephenson, 2000). The SMAS consists of two subscales that are expected to reflect two independent dimensions, a Dominant Society Immersion subscale (DSI) and an Ethnic Society Immersion subscale (ESI). The mean score for first-generation Liberians on the DSI subscale was 3.52 ( $SD = 0.32$ ), 3.13 ( $SD = 0.51$ ) for 1.5-generation, and 3.35 ( $SD = 0.33$ ) for second-generation. These scores indicate that first-generation participants are more immersed in the dominant culture than 1.5- and second-generations. Regarding the ESI subscale, the mean score for first-generation was 3.10 ( $SD = 0.49$ ) 1.5-generation for 3.28 ( $SD = 0.45$ ), and 2.80 ( $SD = 0.69$ ) for second-generation. The scores indicate that 1.5-generation were more immersed in the ethnic society culture.

### **Ethnic Identity**

Participant's ethnic identity was measured with the Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). The EIS consists of three subscales, Exploration, Resolution, and Affirmation. On the Exploration subscale, the mean score found for the first-generation was 23.04 ( $SD = 4.82$ ), 21.54 ( $SD = 4.72$ ) for 1.5-generation, and 21.37 ( $SD = 4.97$ ) for second-generation. This indicates that first-generation were more explorative of their ethnic identity.

The Resolution subscale showed an average score of 14.52 ( $SD = 2.09$ ) for first-generation, 13.20 ( $SD = 2.99$ ) for 1.5-generation, and 12.33 ( $SD = 3.57$ ) for second-generation. These scores indicate that first-generation immigrants had higher scores on resolving the meaning of their ethnicity than 1.5- and second-generation. Finally, the mean scores of first-generation on the Affirmation subscale was 22.07 ( $SD = 2.52$ ), while 1.5-generation was 22.80

( $SD = 1.80$ ) and second-generation was 22.27 ( $SD = 2.71$ ). The score on this subscale indicates that 1.5-generation have a more positive or negative affirmation of what their ethnicity means to them compared to their first- and second-generation counterparts.

### **Racial Identity**

Participant's racial identity was measured with the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS; Vandiver et al., 2000). The CRIS consist of six subscales, Pre-Encounter Assimilation (PA), Pre-Encounter Miseducation (PM), Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred (PSH), Immersion-Emersion Anti-White (IEAW), Internalization Afrocentric (IA) and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive (IMCI). The average score found for first-generation on the Pre-Encounter Assimilation scale was 13.78 ( $SD = 6.27$ ), 10.93 ( $SD = 5.24$ ) for 1.5-generation, and 12.63 ( $SD = 6.40$ ) for second-generation. This indicates that first-generation were more assimilative in their aim to claim a pro-American identity.

On the Pre-Encounter Miseducation subscale, first-generation mean score was 11.89 ( $SD = 6.47$ ), 1.5-generation was 11.33 ( $SD = 5.39$ ), and second-generation was 11.05 ( $SD = 6.24$ ). This indicates that first-generation had more negative views and held stereotypes of African Americans. However, on the Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred subscale, the average score for first-generation was 8.29 ( $SD = 5.25$ ), while 1.5-generation was 12.76 ( $SD = 6.78$ ), and second-generation was 13.03 ( $SD = 7.41$ ). This indicates that second-generation held more internalized negative feelings about being Black than first- and 1.5-generation.

Regarding the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, the mean scores reported for first-generation was 6.37 ( $SD = 2.62$ ), 11.29 ( $SD = 5.46$ ) for 1.5-generation, and 11.58 ( $SD = 5.68$ ) for second-generation. The score reported indicates that second-generation demonstrated more distrust and dislike towards White people. On the Internalization Afrocentric subscale, the mean

score for first-generation was 16.66 ( $SD = 7.12$ ), for 1.5-generation, the mean score was 18.92 ( $SD = 4.24$ ), and for second-generation, the mean score was 19.52 ( $SD = 5.47$ ). The score on this subscale indicates that second-generation embraced an Afrocentric perspective more than first- and 1.5-generation. Finally, on the Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive subscale, first-generation mean score was 29.16 ( $SD = 4.29$ ), 1.5-generation mean score was 25.71 ( $SD = 4.85$ ), and second-generation was 26.40 ( $SD = 4.79$ ). This indicates that first-generation were more accepting of Black culture and cultural groups.

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis, correlations, and reliability estimates of scores for all measures used in the study are reported in Table 2. Subscale scores on each measure were also examined and are reported.

### **Inferential Analysis**

A series of multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted to examine the study's first three research questions: (1) Do differences exist between first-generation, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans acculturation scores (as measured by the SMAS subscales of Dominant Society Immersion and Ethnic Society Immersion)? (2) Do differences exist between first-generation, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans' ethnic identity (as measured by the EIS subscales of Exploration, Affirmation, and Resolution)? (3) Do differences exist between first-generation, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans racial identity attitudes (as measured by the CRIS subscales of Pre-Encounter Assimilation, Pre-Encounter Miseducation, Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred, Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, Internalization Afrocentric, and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive)? Generational status (defined as first, 1.5, and second) was identified as the independent variable, while acculturation (as measured using two subscales of the SMAS), ethnic identity (as measured



by three subscales of the EIS), and racial identity (as measured by the six subscales on the CRIS) were the dependent variables. In addition to the MANOVAs, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to answer the final research question in the study. This question examined, Do generational status, age at immigration, and time lived in the US influence acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity of Liberian/Liberian Americans.? The two covariates were age at time of immigration to the US and length of time live in the US. The following sections include results from the MANOVAs with each research question, followed by the MANCOVA results.

### **Assumptions of MANOVA**

Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted to answer the research questions in the current study. The three necessary conditions for MANOVA are (a) multivariate normality (e.g., each variable must follow a normal distribution, and Mahalanobis distance must fall below critical values), (b) homogeneity of the variance-covariance matrices (e.g., the correlation between any two dependent variables must be the same in all groups), and (c) independence of observations (e.g., observations are statistically independent of one another). With regard to multivariate normality, though meeting this assumption is strongly suggested, the robustness of MANOVA reduces the need to meet this assumption in all cases because MANOVA is relatively robust to violations of the assumptions (Bray & Maxwell, 1985). In the present study, MANOVA assumptions were examined using Box's M test, and appropriate test such as Pillai's Trace test statistics were used when assumptions were violated.

### **Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)**

Separate MANOVAs were performed to investigate group differences in acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity based on generational status. The three dependent variables

used were: acculturation (as measured by SMAS subscales of ethnic society immersion and dominant society immersion), ethnic identity (as measured by the EIS subscales of exploration, affirmation, resolution), and racial identity (as measured by the CRIS' subscales of Pre-Encounter Assimilation, Pre-Encounter Miseducation, Pre-Encounter Self-Hate, Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, Internalization Afrocentricity, Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive). The independent variable was generational status (first, 1.5, and second). Table 3 illustrates the means and standard deviation between the three groups examined.

A MANOVA was run to address the first research question, Do differences in acculturation (as measured using the Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation subscales of dominant society immersion and ethnic society immersion) exist between first-generation, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans? Results revealed statistically significant mean group differences in acculturation based on generational status,  $F(4, 492) = 16.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .120$ ; and observed power of 1.00. Follow-up Tukey's honestly significant difference comparison reveal statistically significant mean differences across the three generations on the dominant society immersion subscale. First generation Liberians ( $M = 3.52$ ) had higher scores than second-generation ( $M = 3.35$ ) on the dominant society immersion subscale, and second-generation Liberian Americans ( $M = 3.35$ ) had higher scores than 1.5-generation participants ( $M = 3.13$ ). Dominant society immersion refers to the extent to which individuals adopt or adhere to dominant society values, beliefs, and behaviors whereas ethnic society immersion refers to the extent to which individuals hold on to or adopt beliefs, values, and behaviors believed to be a part of their ethnic heritage. These results suggest that first-generation are more likely to adhere to dominant society values, beliefs, and behaviors compared

to second-generation Liberians. Also, second-generation Liberians are more aligned with dominant society values, beliefs, and behaviors compared to 1.5-generation Liberians.

For the ethnic society subscale, results revealed statistically significant mean differences across generations with first-generation participants ( $M = 3.10$ ) having higher scores than second-generation Liberians ( $M = 2.80$ ) on this subscale. Also, 1.5-generation participants ( $M = 3.28$ ) had higher scores than second-generation Liberians ( $M = 2.80$ ) on the ethnic society subscale. These results suggest that first- and 1.5-generations are more likely to hold values that are more aligned with their ethnic group compared to second-generation Liberian Americans. These results indicate that second-generation Liberians are less immersed in their ethnic society culture than their first- and 1.5-generation counterparts.

These results supported the first hypotheses: (1a) It is expected that there will be a significant difference between first-generation and 1.5-generation acculturation scores (dominant society immersion, ethnic society immersion), (1b) It is expected that there will be a significant difference between 1.5- and second-generation acculturation scores (dominant society immersion, ethnic society immersion), and (1c) It is expected that there will be a significant difference between first-generation and second-generation acculturation scores (dominant society immersion, ethnic society immersion). Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c were supported on the dominant society immersion subscale, while hypotheses 1b and c were supported on the ethnic society immersion subscale. A summary MANOVA of the group differences on acculturation is reported in Table 4.

The second research question examined whether there are any differences in ethnic identity (as measured by the Ethnic Identity Subscales of exploration, affirmation, and resolution) between first-generation, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans.

A second one-way MANOVA was conducted to assess for mean differences in ethnic identity based on generational status. The results indicated statistically significant group differences exist on ethnic identity based on generational status,  $F(6, 544) = 6.59, p < .001$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .068$ ; and observed power of .999. A follow-up Tukey's honestly test of significant difference comparison indicated statistically significant mean differences between first- and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans on the exploration subscale, with first-generation ( $M = 23.04$ ) having higher scores than second ( $M = 21.37$ ) generation. This result indicates that to some degree, first-generation participants have explored their ethnic identity more than second-generation Liberian Americans. The affirmation subscale, however, showed non-significant results for any generational status variables

For the ethnic identity resolution subscale, results showed statistically significant mean differences between first-generation and 1.5-generation Liberians, with first-generation Liberians ( $M = 14.52$ ) reporting higher scores than 1.5-generation Liberians ( $M = 13.20$ ). Results also showed statistically significant mean differences between first-generation ( $M = 14.52$ ) and second-generation Liberian Americans ( $M = 12.33$ ) on the ethnic identity resolution subscale. With these differences indicating that first-generation Liberians have resolved their ethnic identity to a greater degree when compared to 1.5- and second-generation Liberian Americans.

While this result supports hypothesis 2c that it is expected that there will be a significant difference in ethnic identity (exploration, resolution) between first- and second-generation Liberians, it also indicates that first-generation spend more time exploring their ethnicity more than second-generations, and that first-generation are resolving their identity more compared to 1.5 and second-generations. That is, they are giving more time to exploring this identity. With regard to the resolution subscale, first-generation reported higher scores than both 1.5-

generation and second-generation—supporting hypotheses 2a—it is expected that there will be a significant difference between first-generation and 1.5- generation ethnic identity (exploration, resolution). First generation scored higher than 1.5-generation on both subscales of exploration and resolution. A summary MANOVA of group differences on the ethnic identity subscales is reported in Table 5.

The third research question evaluated whether there are mean group differences in racial identity attitudes (as measured using the six subscales of the Cross Racial Identity Scale) between first-generation, 1.5, and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans. Thus, a third one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine the mean difference between racial identity attitudes and generational status. Results showed statistical significance between racial identity and generations,  $F(12, 498) = 7.32, p < .001$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .150$ ; and observed power of 1.00.

A follow-up Tukey's honestly significant difference test comparison was conducted to pinpoint which group showed statistical significance with each other. The results revealed mean group differences between first-generation ( $M = 13.78$ ) and 1.5-generation ( $M = 10.93$ ) on the Pre-Encounter Assimilation subscale, which supports hypothesis 3a, that it is expected that there will be a significant difference in racial identity attitudes between first and 1.5-generation. The difference between these two groups indicates that first-generation Liberians maintained a pro-American identity when assimilating into American society. Additionally, there were mean group differences between first-generation ( $M = 8.29$ ) and 1.5-generation ( $M = 12.76$ ) Liberians on the Pre-Encounter Self-Hate subscale as well as first-generation ( $M = 8.29$ ) and second-generation ( $M = 13.03$ ) on the same subscale. These differences indicate that 1.5- and second-generation Liberian Americans experienced greater dislike and internalized negative perceptions of themselves compared to first-generation Liberians.

Regarding Immersion-Emersion Anti-White subscales, there were statistically significant mean differences between first ( $M = 6.37$ ) and 1.5 ( $M = 11.29$ ) generations, and first ( $M = 6.37$ ) and second-generation ( $M = 11.58$ ). The differences between these groups indicates that first-generation Liberians may have a greater dislike and distrust of White people than 1.5- and second-generation Liberian Americans. Additionally, first ( $M = 16.66$ ) and 1.5- ( $M = 18.92$ ) generations, as well as first ( $M = 16.66$ ) and second ( $M = 19.22$ ) showed statistically significant mean group differences on the Internalization Afrocentricity subscale. First generation is lower than 1.5- and second-generation on this subscale which means they are less likely to engage in Black culture and Afrocentric way of life. Finally, there was a statistical significance mean difference between first ( $M = 29.16$ ) and 1.5- ( $M = 25.71$ ) generation on the Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive subscale as well as first ( $M = 29.16$ ) and second ( $M = 26.40$ ) on the same subscale. First generation is higher than 1.5 and second-generation on this scale which means in comparison, first-generation participants were more accepting of themselves racially as a Black person, as well as belonging to other cultural groups. More so, that parents (first generation) were able to concurrently hold and accept multiple beliefs of themselves and others than children (1.5 and second generation).

The overall findings from the third research question supports hypothesis 3a: It is expected that there will be a significant difference between first- and 1.5-generation racial identity attitudes. These differences showed first-generation scores were higher than 1.5-generation on the Pre-Encounter Assimilation, Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive subscales, while 1.5-generation scores were higher than first-generation on the Pre-Encounter Self-Hate and Internalization Afrocentricity. The findings also support hypothesis 3b, that it is expected that there will not be a significant difference between 1.5- and

second-generation racial identity attitude. Results did not show statistically significant mean differences between 1.5- and second-generation on any subscales of the racial identity measure. Finally, the findings support hypothesis 3c, which states, it is expected that there will be a significant difference between first- and second-generation racial identity attitudes. These differences showed first-generation scores were higher than second-generation on the Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive subscale while second-generation scores were higher than first-generation on the Pre-Encounter Self-Hate, Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, and Internalization Afrocentricity. A summary MANOVA of racial identity is reported in Table 6.

The final research question examined whether generational status, age at the time of immigration, and length of time lived in the US influence acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity attitudes of Liberian/Liberian Americans. Table 7 illustrates the descriptive statistics for generations as well as for age of immigration and length of time lived in the US. Three separate multivariate analyses of covariances (MANCOVAs) were conducted to explore these questions. Results of evaluation of assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, linearity, and multicollinearity were satisfactory based on the sample. Covariates were judged to be adequately reliable for covariance analysis. The Box's M, which tests the equality of covariance matrices across groups, was statistically significant (Box's M = 24.16;  $p < .01$ ). Thus, Pillai's Trace test statistic was used to examine multivariate statistical significance.

The first MANCOVA was utilized to investigate group differences in acculturation (as measured by Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation subscale ethnic society immersion and dominant society immersion) among first-generation and 1.5-generation Liberian immigrants after controlling for age at the time of immigration and length of time lived in the US. Second-

generation Liberian/Liberian Americans were not included as independent variables due to their birthplace being in the US. The results of the first MANCOVA revealed that when holding age and length of time constant, length of time was a significant covariate and generational status was statistically significant,  $F(2, 153) = 4.34, p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .054$ , observed power of .746. A follow-up univariate ANOVA revealed significant group differences with regards to dominant society immersion on the acculturation subscale  $F(1, 154) = 8.50, p < .01$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .052$ , observed power of .826. Specifically, statistically significant adjusted mean differences for first-generation ( $M = 3.52$ ) scores were higher than 1.5 ( $M = 3.12$ ) generation on the dominant society immersion subscale. Indicating that regardless of age at immigration and length of time lived in the US, first-generation Liberians were more likely to immerse in the US dominant culture compared to 1.5-generation Liberians. A summary MANCOVA is reported in Table 8.

A second MANCOVA test was conducted to investigate the group differences in ethnic identity (as measured by Ethnic Identity subscales Exploration, Resolution, and Affirmation) among first-generation and 1.5-generation Liberian immigrants after controlling for age at the time of immigration and length of time lived in the US. Assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, linearity, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations. The Box's M, which tests the equality of covariance matrices across groups, was statistically significant (Box's  $M = 23.05; p < .01$ ), thus Pillai's Trace test statistic was used to examine multivariate statistical significance.

Results indicated that when holding age at time of immigration and length of time lived in the US constant, length of time was a significant covariate. However, group differences in ethnic identity based on generational status was not statistically significant,  $F(3, 171) = 1.86, p = .138$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .032$ . However, there were statistically significant difference between length of



time lived in the US and ethnic identity,  $F(3, 171) = 8.135$ ,  $p < .01$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .125$ , observed power of .991. A follow-up univariate ANOVA revealed length of time was significant to the dependent variable exploration  $F(1, 173) = 9.60$ ,  $p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .053$ , observed power of .869. Specifically, statistically significant adjusted mean differences for first-generation ( $M = 23.00$ ) scores were higher than 1.5-generation ( $M = 21.45$ ) on the exploration subscale. These results indicate that first-generation Liberians were likely to invest more time in exploring the meaning of their ethnicity compared to 1.5-generation Liberians. Results also revealed that length of time was significant for the dependent variable resolution  $F(1, 173) = 24.58$ ,  $p < .01$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .124$ , observed power of .999. Furthermore, there were statistically significant adjusted mean differences between first- ( $M = 14.51$ ) and 1.5-generation ( $M = 13.16$ ). This finding indicates that the first-generation Liberian immigrants also resolved what their ethnic identity meant to them in a new country compared to 1.5-generation Liberians. A summary MANCOVA is reported in Table 9.

A final MANCOVA was performed to investigate the group differences in racial identity attitudes (as measured by the Cross Racial Identity sub-scales Pre-Encounter Assimilation, Pre-Encounter Miseducation, Pre-Encounter Self-Hate, Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, Internalization Afrocentricity, and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive) among first-generation and 1.5-generation Liberian immigrants while controlling for age at the time of immigration and length of time lived in the US. Assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, linearity, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations. The Box's M, which tests the equality of covariance matrices across groups was statistically significant (Box's  $M = 99.11$ ;  $p < .01$ ), thus Pillai's Trace test statistic was used to examine multivariate statistical significance.

The results revealed that when holding age at time of immigration and length of time lived in the US constant, length of time was a significant covariate and generational status was statistically significant,  $F(6, 152) = 3.29, p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .115$ , observed power of .926. A follow-up univariate ANOVA showed significant group differences to three racial identity subscales: Pre-Encounter Self-Hate  $F(1, 157) = 4.89, p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .030$ , observed power of .595; Immersion-Emersion Anti-White  $F(1, 157) = 18.02, p < .01$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .103$ , observed power of .988; and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive  $F(1, 157) = 5.31, p < .05$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .033$ , observed power of .629. Specifically, statistically significant adjusted mean differences between first-generation ( $M = 8.29$ ) scores on the Pre-Encounter Self-Hate scale were lower than 1.5-generation ( $M = 12.89$ ). Similarly, the mean differences between first-generation ( $M = 6.42$ ) on the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White were also lower than their 1.5 ( $M = 11.39$ ) counterparts. Finally, first-generation reported higher scores ( $M = 29.23$ ) than 1.5- ( $M = 25.56$ ) generation on the Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive. These results suggest that compared to first-generation, 1.5-generation Liberian immigrants experienced more internalize dissonance about their identity and more distrust of White people. Furthermore, compared to 1.5-generation, first-generation were more self-accepting and accepting of other cultural groups. A summary MANCOVA is reported in Table 10.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to explore acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity that is unique across generations of Liberian immigrants in the US. Specifically, the research sought to explore differences in acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity across three generations of self-identified Liberian/Liberian Americans. A related purpose of the study was to contribute to the body of literature that has examined acculturation and identity in Black immigrants and their children living in the US. This final chapter will be divided into several sections that will expand on the findings in the study and provide a discussion on the interpretation of the results, report limitations of the study, identify directions for future research, and offer implications for clinical and academic work.

#### **Acculturation**

The first research question sought to explore whether there were any differences in acculturation between three generations of Liberians. As expected, the findings indicate there are differences in acculturation between generations of Liberian/Liberian Americans. There were significant differences across the three generations (first, 1.5, and second) on the dominant society immersion subscale of acculturation, with first-generation immigrants having higher scores in comparison to 1.5- and second-generation—the dominant society immersion subscale captures participants' knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes of the dominant society. On this scale, first-generation scores were higher than 1.5- and second-generation, while second-generation Liberian Americans had higher scores than their 1.5-generation counterparts in their immersion into the dominant norms of the US. The higher scores of first-generation compared to 1.5- and second-generation could be explained by their exposure to the workforce, and other systems of

the dominant society in which they are involved. Additionally, the higher scores of first-generation compared to second-generation can also be explained by first-generation seeking connection with their second-generation US-born children while the second-generation may serve as a guide for their first-generation parents on how to navigate a secondary culture. On the other hand, higher scores of second-generation in comparison to 1.5-generation could be attributed to second-generations' status as native born and familiarity with the norms of the dominant society. Finally, second-generation scoring higher than 1.5-generation could be explained by school and peer group socialization. Though both generations may be immersed in the dominant culture because they can be considered biculturalist, second-generation do not have to adjust in ways that 1.5-generations do. It should be noted that overall, the differences across these three groups can be explained by the two-year minimum length of time first-generation and 1.5-generation participants had lived in the US while second-generation participants were US-born. The generational status of these participants is important because from the newly arrived immigrants who are still adjusting and embracing the new culture, to those who have lived in the US for some years, and those who were born in the US, to some degree, each group have immersed and participated in the dominant society culture.

Given the generational status of participants, English language proficiency can also explain the significant difference that was found between first-generation scoring higher than 1.5-generation, first-generation scoring higher than second-generation, and second-generation scores being higher than 1.5 on the dominant society immersion subscale. Some of these differences included feeling at home in the US, comfort with speaking English, or thinking and speaking English. For instance, from the sample, 32.8% of participants identified Liberian dialect (Liberian English) as their native tongue, 17.5% standard American English, 48.6% indicated

speaking both, and 1.1% indicated other (Liberian tribal language). Consistent with past research, fluency in the host culture's language reduces acculturative stress for many immigrants (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Berry et al., 1987; Imungi, 2008; Padilla, 2006). With English as Liberians' national language, these participants may have reduced stress in their transition and stay US and may be able to immerse themselves more into the dominant culture of their host country.

Moreover, 91.7% of the participants identified as Christians, and 95.7% identified as heterosexual. These numbers allow for immersion into the dominant US culture as 70.6% of the US population identify as Christian while 86.7% identify as heterosexual (Jones, 2021; Pew Research, 2015). With these immigrants mirroring the dominant society, regardless of participants' generational status, there may be decreased acculturation concerns due to shared identities across generations and the host society. Furthermore, the average length of time participants have lived in the US was 18 years, which is a significant amount of time to integrate into the host culture. Given the indicated demographics, it can be inferred that Liberians may experience minimum language barriers with communication, even with their accents. Higher English proficiency affords them participation within the dominant society in ways that are not limiting. Such ways can include involvement with religious gatherings, seeking help and support when needed, and acceptance by the dominant society through a shared heteronormative lens (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Adewunnmi, 2015; Berry et al., 1987; Imungi, 2008; Padilla, 2006).

With respect to the acculturation subscale ethnic society immersion, first-generation reported higher scores than second-generation, and 1.5-generation had higher scores than second-generation Liberians on the ethnic society immersion scale. The ethnic society immersion

subscale captures knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes of ones' ethnic culture. Some of these differences include speaking their native language, familiarity with the history of Liberia, or connection to relatives in Liberia. A possible explanation for these differences is that second-generation Liberians are not immersed in all things Liberian compared to first-generation and 1.5-generation Liberians/Liberian Americans. These second-generation individuals are receiving dual messages about their identity—one from their home and community and other messages from society at large, making it challenging to fully immerse in their ethnic society culture.

The non-significant findings between first-generation and 1.5-generation Liberians on the ethnic society immersion subscale could be explained by the fact that both generations have had an authentic exposure to their ethnicity. That is, they have first-hand lived experiences amongst Liberians or other Africans with similar cultural identities. Therefore, immersing or insulating in their ethnicity or ethnic enclaves while living in the US does not allow for a bidimensional experience.

The overall findings on generational status and acculturation of Liberian immigrants extends the literature in a few ways. One of which is the utilization of appropriate psychometrics in measuring the construct of acculturation. Meaning, this study utilized a measure designed for groups from various backgrounds, including Africans. In contrast, previous studies such as Aikjoje (2011) used measures not intended for their sample or modified measures to fit their samples without testing for evidence of reliability and validity of the measure. The findings also expand the limited understanding of acculturation between generations of Liberian/Liberian Americans. The present study provides an understanding of how first, 1.5, and second-generation Liberians experience acculturation. That is, the study revealed how immersed each generation perceived themselves in their ethnic culture or the dominant culture. Prior to this study, few

researchers examined differences between generations of Liberian immigrants and acculturation. Understanding these differences is important because it provides insight related to how intergeneration of these Liberian immigrants navigate their interactions with others based on their level of acculturation, particularly first-generations and 1.5-generations, who were less engaged in their ethnic culture than their second-generation counterparts. The findings from the present study support the literature on the immigrant population who experience less acculturative stress due to similarities between their country of origin and the host country (Adedoyin et al., 2018; Kim & Berry, 1988; Okafor et al., 2013; Schwartz et al., 2010).

The decreased acculturative stress due to similarities between immigrants and the host culture is important because it can serve as a motivation to integrate into the new society. Furthermore, cultural similarities can also serve as a reason to immigrate—as prior research has shown, voluntary migration can also decrease acculturative stress (Berry et al., 1987). While participants in the present study experienced less stress, evidenced by first-generations who scored higher than 1.5-generations and second-generation Liberians, and second-generation Liberians who scored higher than 1.5-generation on immersion in the dominant society culture. These results contradict Imungi's (2008) study that showed more acculturative stress was related to younger, not older Liberians. A potential explanation for this contradiction may be due to the sample. Imungi's study focused on female refugees only, whereas the present study included participants with various immigration status, were married, and were college educated. As a result, this study serves as a foundation for future studies in examining acculturation and Liberian immigrants from all backgrounds.

## **Ethnic Identity**

One of the central focuses of this study was to explore ethnic identity across the three generations of Liberians/Liberian American participants. The second research question examined whether differences in ethnic identity as measured by the Ethnic Society Immersion subscale existed between first-generation, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans. Findings revealed significant differences only between first- and second-generation Liberian Americans on the Exploration subscale of ethnic identity. Because first-generation reported higher mean scores compared to second-generations, the statistical significance between the two groups indicates that first-generation Liberians are more likely to explore their ethnic culture than second-generation—meaning that at some point, first-generation individuals displayed more interest in exploring what their ethnicity means to them as an individual who is also an immigrant member of the US society. Through food, history, news, language, and community, these individuals may have spent more time exploring what it means to be Liberian. It is likely that first-generation Liberians grew to appreciate their ethnicity due to leaving their home compared to second-generation who did not experience migration. Additionally, similar to Opalaoka's (2009) findings that first-generation Ghanaian and Nigerian parents expected their children to have significant allegiance their ethnic identity, in this sample of first-generation Liberians, exploration may simply be demonstrated through their desire to implant heritage, culture, and traditions into their second-generation children. In addition to first-generation's influence, second-generation may have explored their ethnicity for deeper understanding and connection as well as a barrier to distance themselves from native Blacks, as prior research has shown (Asante, 2012; Foner, 2016; Habacker, 2012).



In contrast, the ethnic identity resolution subscale revealed that first-generation had higher mean scores than second-generation Liberians, as well as statistically significant difference between first-generation and 1.5, with first-generation having higher scores on ethnic identity resolution. The Resolution subscale captures the degree to which individuals have resolved what their ethnic identity means to them. The significant findings between first- and second-generation Liberians on this subscale suggests that first-generation with the higher scores have spent time exploring their ethnicity. Therefore, through exploration, there is a natural tendency to eventually reach a resolution of what their ethnicity means to them. This finding aligns with Ludwig's (2019) finding that second-generation Liberians struggled to embrace a Liberian identity due to internalized negative stigma at school, in the community, and assumptions that they are immigrants like their parents. However, statistically significant difference of first-generation having higher scores than 1.5-generation Liberians brings a new perspective to the literature. For 1.5-generation Liberians compared to second-generation in this sample, though there was no exploration of their ethnicity, there is clarity on resolving their identity. For these individuals, they are likely "othered" much sooner than their second-generation counterparts for reasons such as unfamiliarity with school culture, norms, and accents that indicate immigrant status. These 1.5s are caught in the middle of not having a parental status as their first-generation counterparts, but also not having a natural native status like second generation Liberian Americans. Thus, they may learn earlier that they are simply not enough. Through such experience, they may sooner arrive at resolving what their ethnicity means to them.

The non-significant outcome between first- and 1.5-generation Liberians on the Exploration subscale, which measures the degree to which individuals have explored their

ethnicity is perplexing because past research showed first- and 1.5 -generation of Liberian immigrants learned to renegotiate their identity upon immigrating to the US (Haddow, 2015). Though this negotiation can be interpreted as exploring and developing the meaning of one's ethnic identity in a new country, the non-significant outcome on exploration between first- and 1.5-generation could mean a few things. First, that both generations have already explored their ethnicity and are grounded in what it means to them; second, it may suggest that other identities are being explored. For first-generation Liberians, it may be vocational identity, and for 1.5-generation Liberians, it may be adolescence.

With respect to the Affirmation subscale, the findings suggest that there was no significant difference between first, 1.5, and second-generation Liberians. The Affirmation subscale on this measure is the positive or negative effect one associates with their ethnic resolution. One reason for the non-significant results between generations could be participants' early awareness of the positive or negative meaning attached to their ethnicity, that is, others perception of their foreign identity due to distinctions (e.g., accents, direct lineage to continental Africa). Therefore, they may feel more positively about their ethnicity. On the other hand, participants may have adopted a hybrid identity in which they draw only from the positive aspects of being Liberian and American (Haddow, 2015). Another reason for the non-significant outcome between generations on the Affirmation subscale could be that participants felt obligated to respond positively due to social desirability, particularly because the measure prompted and requested that they provide their ethnicity prior to beginning the assessment.

This study's overall findings support the second research questions that examined whether differences exist between first-, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberians/Liberian Americans ethnic identity. The study expands the literature in a few ways. It utilized a

psychometrically valid instrument to measure the construct of ethnic identity based on the developmental, social, and contextual factors in which the construct was initially developed. Utilizing a valid instrument to measure ethnicity is important for a few reasons. First, this measure was normed on participants from various backgrounds, including African Americans, which increases the inclusion of those from the diaspora and, subsequently, Liberians. Second, previous studies (Haddow, 2015; Okpalaoka, 2009; Yeboar, 2007) provide qualitative findings, which can be useful, but have potential for subjective interpretations of the researchers' thoughts, ideas, and other biases. Additionally, studies such as Aikjoje (2011), which lends and qualitative perspective to ethnicity among African immigrants, simply modified a measure without testing its validity. The use of an appropriate measure is also important because of the limited quantitative studies available on ethnicity and Liberians. Based on the literature to date, Ludwig (2019) is the only study to provide a quantitative lens. The present study addresses the gap in the literature on ethnic identity among Liberians in the US by providing a quantitative lens through a robust sample size and a clear definition of generational status. Additionally, this study provides variation in participants' SES and immigration status. Addressing these variables is important because the construct of ethnic identity has primarily been studied in Asians and Latinx individuals, giving minimum visibility to those from the African diaspora. Therefore, providing clarity in the literature as it relates to ethnic identity and Liberians can help move towards more curiosity in research amongst Black Africans.

### **Racial Identity**

The third research question in the present study asks whether differences exist on racial identity attitudes between generations of Liberians/Liberian American. Racial attitudes were conceptualized using the expanded nigrescence model (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). The study's

results revealed statistically significant mean differences between first- and 1.5-generations on the Pre-Encounter Assimilation subscale with first-generation participants reporting higher mean scores than 1.5-generation Liberians. The Pre-Encounter Assimilation subscale focuses on maintaining a pro-American identity. The higher scores of first-generation compared to 1.5-generation on this subscale seems indicative of first-generations' eagerness or excitement to be American and be accepted by American society. Thus, an earlier encounter with the US culture may push individuals toward a pro-American identity. Pre-Encounter Assimilation identity can also be considered a way to integrate into the new society. It suggests that participants could have immigrated with a level of ignorance or innocence and attempted to integrate into their new society, only to discover that the color of their skin will not permit easy transition into the new society. This adds to the literature in a different way because prior studies have shown that Black immigrants focus more on distancing themselves from native Blacks (Asante, 2012; Foner, 2016; Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Johnson, 2016). While there is much validity to these prior studies, there is also a gap in how these immigrants arrived at taking such protective coping measures. That is, based on the results of the present study, their initial reaction in the US culture post-immigration is to become part of a diverse society where they are simply American.

The study's results also revealed statistically significant differences between first- and 1.5-generation, with 1.5-generation having higher mean scores on the Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred subscale, as well as first- and second-generation, with second-generation having higher scores on the Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred subscale. The Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred subscale focuses on an individual who dislikes their Blackness and things associated with Blackness. The higher scores of 1.5- and second-generations on the Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred could be due to contextual identity shifts in the generations. These groups develop an understanding of the stereotypes and

negativity related to their Blackness and internalize these perceptions. Additionally, depending on school, social group, and other environmental exposure, participants may experience prejudice and racism from native-born Blacks and White Americans. The mean difference of these immigrants on the Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred subscale provides a new lens in which researchers can explore. There is more transparency to these immigrants' process, particularly because of their tendency to emphasize their ethnicity rather than their Blackness or racial group membership. It can be inferred that these immigrants go through a period in which they dislike their African identity, as it is Black, as their Blackness in a racial context. Their Self-Hatred can derive from not being Black enough for the native-Blacks, and not being native-Black enough for their White counterparts.

There were also mean differences between first and 1.5, as well as first and second on the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White subscale. First-generation reported lower scores than both 1.5- and second-generation on the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White subscale, which focuses on an individual who demonizes all things White. These results imply that due to rejections from their attempt to assimilate and being othered by Whites, Liberians gain a new understanding of system barriers and oppression as a result of racism. Even more, these generations to some degree increased their exposure and understanding of Black history in the US while questioning and decreasing their trust for Whites. In other words, these participants realize and understand that while their identity as Liberian is essential, the subordinate position of their race has to become the most salient in the US.

Relating to the Internalization Afrocentricity and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive subscales, first- and 1.5-generation and first- and second-generation Liberians/Liberian Americans were also statistically significant. First-generation Liberians reported lower scores

Internalization Afrocentricity than both 1.5- and second-generation Liberians. At the same time, first-generation Liberians reported higher scores than both 1.5- and second-generation Liberians on Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive. The polarizing differences between these groups on the two subscales for first-generation is intriguing. The Internalization Afrocentricity focuses on an individual who stresses an Afrocentric perspective about themselves and the world around them. Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive, on the other hand, is an individual whose identity is shared between three or more social categories. It can be inferred that 1.5- and second-generations' gravitation towards the Internalization Afrocentricity subscale allows participants to openly express pride in their Liberian identity and possessing direct access to their roots and heritage. Whereas, for first-generation Liberians, Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive endorsement allows participants the flexibility of merging their ethnicity and their developed Black identity along other identities, such as vocation, gender, and learner in a new culture. Through this self-expression, participants create the cognitive space and inclusion for multiculturalism.

Concerning the lack of mean differences between the three generations and the Pre-Encounter Miseducation subscale, this finding does not come as a surprise for a few reasons. One is that both first- and 1.5-generation participants in this study were previously exposed to living in a predominately Black society. Therefore, through initial education, knowledge, traditions, and engagement with kinfolds, these individuals have had a stable foundation and representation of Blackness in their society. Additionally, it is likely that because second-generation Liberians are also exposed to Liberian culture and language in their homes and educated on specific aspects of their identity, they simultaneously combat external negative views of Blackness.

This study overall supports the third research question that examined whether there are any differences in racial identity attitudes between first, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberians/Liberian Americans. It should be noted that only 10% of the study participants self-identified as Black while 57% identified as African, 29% identified as African American, and less than 2% identified as multiracial or other. These findings extend the limited literature on Liberians/Liberian Americans in the US in a few ways. The study illustrates a clear pattern of how these immigrants come to deidentifying as Black. It also adds to the literature by providing a new perspective on what serves as a buffer and stability for these immigrants, that being education. With non-significant findings on the Pre-Encounter Miseducation, which focuses on an individual's stereotypical views of Blackness, these immigrants are not relying on the miseducation of institutions to develop a view of Blackness. Instead, they are developing their views, albeit positive or negative, of racial attitudes through their individual experiences—supporting De Walt's (2009) study that indicated participants' identity shifts were associated with their experiences of stereotypes.

In short, the present study adds to the literature in a few ways. The study utilized a psychometrically valid instrument to measure racial identity through a quantitative lens. Utilizing a valid instrument is important because without validity, it is difficult to know if the construct being measuring is capturing what it is intended to measure. Prior studies such as Benson (2006) fail to use a standard racial identity measure, thus highlighting a major limitation. The findings in this study on racial identity attitudes of Liberian immigrants and their children are inconsistent with the mixed evidence that Black immigrants and their children reject their ascribed racial identity or how they negotiate their racial identity (Asante, 2012; Benson, 2006; De Walt, 2009; Habacker, 2012; Lindsay, 2018). Such inconsistency could be due to the identity of the

participants in the study. Participants in the reported studies had other salient identities (i.e., Muslim) and language barriers that could have contributed to how they negotiated their racial identity. Additionally, the instrument used such as the CRIS to measure race as a construct in De Walt's (2009) study was inappropriately used. Furthermore, other qualitative methodology used were subjective to the researchers (Asante, 2012; Habacker, 2012; Lindsay, 2018). Finally, the inconsistency between the present study and past research may be due to variation of participants SES, education, occupation, or location. Past studies did not provide sufficient demographics of participants (Benson, 2006; De Walt 2009; Habacker, 2012; Lindsay, 2018). It should be noted that this inconsistency could also be related to the length of time participants have lived in the US, giving them a more complex view of identity. The average length of time participants from the present study have lived in the US was 18 years.

This study's final research question examined whether generational status, age at immigration, and length of time lived in the US influence acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity attitudes of Liberians/Liberian Americans. In terms of acculturation, results revealed differences in the adjusted means when age at the time of immigration and length of time lived in the US were held constant. First-generation reported higher scores on the dominant society subscale of acculturation than 1.5-generation. The results found between acculturation and generational status is not surprising, however the higher score of first-generation compared to 1.5-generation is surprising because participants who immigrate at a younger age may be expected to have higher acculturation scores, particularly on the dominant society immersion subscale, than those who immigrate at an older age. Such expectation may come from the assumption that participants who immigrate at a younger age (1.5 generation) are likely to identify more with the dominant culture than those who immigrate at an older age (first



generation) and can be seen as more established in their culture.

Though the result does not support the hypothesis that age at the time of immigration will influence acculturation, it supports the bidimensional model of acculturation. That is, it provides an understanding of acculturation from a group level and an individual level. It also suggests that while age may not influence acculturation, other variables such as language, family SES, education, or purpose of immigration may influence acculturation. Generational status, as well as the length of time lived in the US, on the other hand, revealed statistical significance. This significance, however, was only shown on the dominant society immersion subscale of ethnic identity. This finding suggested that participants who have lived in the US for an extended time, in addition to their status as first or 1.5-generation, may identify with the shared similarities of the dominant culture than their ethnic culture.

As far as generational status, age, and length of time lived in the US as an influence on ethnic identity, results revealed non-significant differences with age and generational status. While this finding does not support the direction of the hypothesis, the finding could be due to participants' sense of belonging within their community. In contrast to those findings, the length of time lived in the US revealed statistical significance to exploration and resolution on the ethnic identity subscales where first-generation scores were higher than 1.5-generation on both subscales. Compared to 1.5-generation Liberians, the higher scores of first-generation participants exploring their ethnic identity in the context of a new society makes sense. They may be attempting to negotiate and understand how their ethnic identity and new culture can coexist with minimum disruption to their sense of self.

Similarly, the significant influence of resolution on this subscale with first-generation having higher scores than 1.5-generation Liberians could be explained by first-generation

Liberians developed understanding of their Liberian identity within the context of American society. Thus, they are learning to create a hybrid identity that provides flexibility with an affiliation for both Liberian identity and American identity. The non-significance of affirmation, in turn could be due to participants' predeveloped positivity toward their ethnicity; 50% of participants in the sample identified their nationality as Liberian, 38.6% Liberian American, and 10.8% American. This suggests that the positive affirmation effect in which they have associated their ethnicity is not challenged. Instead, what becomes a challenge is understanding, developing a new meaning, and accepting that meaning of their ethnicity in an American context.

Finally, generational status, age, and length of time lived in the US as an influence on racial identity attitudes yielded a non-significant difference with age at the time of immigration. Although the hypothesis does not support this result, it suggests that perhaps participants may have immigrated with a certain level of ignorance or innocence related to knowledge and awareness of race.

With respect to the generational status of first- and 1.5-generations, and the covariate length of time lived in the US, results were significant. Specifically, length of time was significant with the following subscales on the CRIS: Pre-Encounter Assimilation, Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred, Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive. Recall that Pre-Encounter Assimilation is maintaining a pro-American identity. The relationship to the length of time lived in the US and generational status on this subscale is unsurprising as one can guess these new immigrants may arrive with eagerness to assimilate and claim an American identity. Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred, which describes hatred about being Black, also serves as an interesting scale to have an association between length of time and first- and 1.5-generation. It is possible that after a period of time, these immigrants begin to internalize

stereotypes and negative messages about their Blackness. They may even become resentful of the meaning of Blackness and Black identity. Regarding Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, which captures dislike and distrust of Whites, these immigrants most likely move into a cognitive space of realizing the insidious conspiracy of White supremacy. Finally, the significance between first- and 1.5-generation and length of time lived in the US on the Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive, which describes Black self-acceptance and acceptance of other cultural groups demonstrates two things. First is that these immigrants have learned the importance of race in the US and accept themselves as Black. Secondly, that accepting their Blackness in a racial hierarchy society does not negate their other identities. These first- and 1.5-generation Liberian immigrants' racial attitudes seems clear, particularly because the average length of time participants have lived in the US was 18 years.

The generational status of first- and 1.5-generations as an influence on racial identity attitudes on the other hand only showed statistical significance with Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred where first-generation scored lower than 1.5-generation, Immersion-Emersion Anti-White where first-generation also scored lower than 1.5-generation, and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive where first-generation has higher scores. The significance of Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred again suggests the initial pre-encounter of learning the subordinate meaning of Blackness in various spaces. Participants may feel “othered” due to their Blackness in some spaces and “othered” due to their ethnicity in another space.

However, the significance of Immersion-Emersion Anti-White with 1.5-generation scoring higher than first-generation Liberians could suggest increased education and shared racial identity. That being, these immigrants learn and understand the Black and White binary from a historical and systematic context, which creates a shift in their attitudes. Finally, the

statistical significance of Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive with first-generation Liberians scoring higher than 1.5-generation participants could be due to education, SES, and sensitivity to other marginalized groups.

Given that only three of the six CRIS subscales showed statistical significance for first- and 1.5-generation Liberians, it is suspected that given their initial socialization in a predominately Black society, this sample of first- and 1.5-generation Liberians may have more latitude in their racial identity attitudes. Furthermore, it is possible that for the first- and 1.5-generations, the racial attitudes of Pre-Encounter Assimilation, Pre-Encounter Miseducation, and Internalization Afrocentricity do not threaten their knowledge and stability in their identity. In fact, it can be suggested that this is where ethnicity becomes a buffer when trying to understand and race.

The overall findings for the research question reveal that generational status, age, and length of time live in the US influence acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity extends the literature. While some findings did not support the direction of the hypothesis, others did. For example, age at the time of immigration did not significantly influence acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial attitudes. However, the length of time live in the US and generational status was significant with acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial attitudes. This study also adds to the literature due to its quantitative analysis, the sizeable number of participants, variation in participants' demographics, English language proficiency, and the variance in their geographic location. The study also extended the literature as it used a psychometrically validated instrument to measure the construct of racial identity.

Overall, when simply looking at each generation individually and their reported scores per subscale, first-generation scored higher on the acculturation dominant society immersion

subscale and second-highest on the ethnic society immersion. On the ethnic identity subscales, first-generation also scored higher on exploration and resolution with no significance on the affirmation subscale. Finally on the racial identity scale, first-generation scored higher on Pre-Encounter Assimilation but had the lowest score on Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred, with no significance on the Pre-Encounter Miseducation subscale. First generation also had the lowest scores on both Immersion-Emersion Anti-White and Internalization Afrocentricity. They however, scored higher on the Internalization Multiculturalist subscale. Given these scores, it appears that first-generation may have more balance and flexibility in their ethnic and racial identity based on their acculturation.

Regarding 1.5-generation profile on each subscale, on the dominant society immersion subscale of the acculturation scale, 1.5 had the lowest score but had the highest score on the ethnic society immersion subscale. They were less engaged in the dominant culture and more engaged in their ethnic culture. On the ethnic identity scale, the exploration subscale showed no significance for 1.5-generation. Nonetheless, this group had the second highest score on the resolution subscale. Indicating they were able to resolve the meaning of their identity without exploring. The affirmation subscale on the other hand showed no significance for 1.5-generation. The racial identity profile for 1.5-generation showed they scored second highest on the Pre-Encounter Assimilation but no significance on the Pre-Encounter Miseducation subscale. This group also scored second highest on the Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred, Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, and Internalization Afrocentricity. Finally, 1.5-generation scored lower on the Internalization Multiculturalist subscale. For 1.5-generation on the racial identity scale, they appear to struggle the most with contextualizing race as a central identity to the self.

Lastly, looking at second-generation Liberians as a group on each subscale

measurement, this group scores were the lowest on both the dominant society immersion and ethnic society immersion subscales of acculturation. With regards to the ethnic identity scale, second-generation scores were lower on the exploration subscale. Second generation also had the lowest score on the resolution subscale with no significance on the affirmation subscale. For the racial identity scale, second-generation showed no significance on both the Pre-Encounter Assimilation and Pre-Encounter Miseducation subscales. They however scored highest on the Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred, Immersion-Emersion Anti-White, and Internalization Afrocentricity. Meanwhile, on the Internalization Multiculturalist subscale, second-generation had the next highest score. Based on their scores on each subscale, second-generation appears to have the most confliction between the culture in which they were born into and the one they inherited. Again, this group seem the most sensitive to the dual messages from home and society at large. The profile of these groups individually indicate trends in which clinicians, educators, and future researchers can consider when working with first-, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian/Liberian American.

### **Limitations**

Given that there is limited research on the Liberian population, the present study is significant since it adds to the quantitative literature on the acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity attitudes of three generations of Liberians living in the US. However, like all studies, the current investigation is not without limitations. One limitation of doing quantitative research with specific racial and ethnic minority groups, such as the Liberian population, is that available instrumentation is not exclusively validated on Liberians. This limitation highlights the necessity for additional research studies to be conducted to validate the existing measures of

acculturation, racial identity, and ethnic identity on this population and create specific measures to assess the needs and experiences of the Liberian immigrant population.

Another limitation was the use of an online survey. When using an online survey, the researcher lacks control of the environment and participants sharing responses compared to administering paper and pencil in-person surveys. An aspect of control that the researcher loses through an online survey is not knowing if participants are genuinely eligible and meet the criteria to participate in the study. Additionally, with online surveys, the researcher is unaware if participants are taking the survey multiple times. Though survey software has developed ways to detect duplicate submission (e.g., IP addresses), there is no guarantee that participants did not use different devices at various times. Furthermore, the researcher opted not to track participants' IP addresses due to sensitive immigration status questions. While these are important limitations to acknowledge, online survey methods are also beneficial as they allow eligible participants locally, regionally, and nationally to participate. The casting of a wide net was important in this study because previous research on the Liberian population has been limited to specific regions in the US (e.g., East Coast).

A third limitation of this study is the demographic composition of the sample. As reported earlier, over half of the sample was female, heterosexual, Christian, and held US citizenship. Thus, the study's generalizability is limited because it does not accurately represent Liberians who differ based on gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and other intersecting identities. Research shows that immigrants who have more than one marginalized identity tend to experience more challenges and barriers (Orjiako & So, 2014; Seng et al., 2012; Schwartz et al., 2010). As a result, Liberians who have another minority identity within Liberian spaces and in the larger societal context may have a different experience than what is reported in the current

study. Future research can address this limitation by focusing on different subgroups of Liberians (e.g., LGBTQ, Muslims) to examine their stressors related to acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity as well as stressors related to their other marginalized identities.

A fourth limitation to the study was the uneven sample sizes across generations. Recall that 1.5-generation garnered the lowest number of participants in comparison to the first- and second-generation. It is suspected that gathering more 1.5 participants may have yielded significant outcomes on age at the time of immigration as an influence on acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity attitudes.

A fifth limitation to the study is that data were collected during the peak of a global coronavirus pandemic. Schools and businesses were closed due to stay-home orders; therefore, with the exception of essential workers (e.g., Post-mates, healthcare), many participants were likely home. As a result, participants likely had more time to reflect on their experiences. In direct conflict with confounding variables, the study focused on three generations. It is possible that three generations of Liberians/Liberian Americans living in the same household could have had one person complete the survey three different times for each individual. It is also possible that participants may have completed the survey together and shared their responses.

Coupled with a pandemic, an added limitation to this study are screen and survey fatigue. Due to what can be considered a swift and intense transition to on-line work and learning, participants may have experienced fatigue from already engaging in online activities that required extensive use of cognitive energy. Considering the survey's length, participants may not have been at their full mental capacity to complete the survey. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the survey was collected during a heightened period of another civil rights protest across the US related to the murder of an unarmed Black man and woman at the hands of



the police. Given these national and global events, it is fair to assume that it could have influenced participants' responses related to racial identity and ethnic identity. The media highlighted exposure of race-based violence and dismissal of humanizing Black bodies may have influenced participants' responses.

### **Research Implications**

Due to the limitations of the present study, future research should aim to reduce the limitations found in this study. Given these identified limitations, there are several recommendations for future studies. The first recommendation is for future researchers to explore Liberians' experiences with each variable individually by investigating acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity separately as way understand this group unique experiences in the US. By doing this, the time request for participants will severely decrease—the present study required up to 30 minutes from participants to complete the three measures. Completing one measure may only take 10 minutes or less and will decrease survey and screen fatigue of participants. Due to the limited participation from 1.5-generation participants, a recommendation to increase this group sample is to consider a snowball sampling strategy and recruit more participants from locations with a dense Liberian immigrant population.

Another recommendation for future research is to be aware of the challenge in gathering large samples online and in-person, yet to consider a hybrid data collection approach. Researchers should consider combining both an on-line survey and in-person data collection. In-person recruitment will help increase rapport and trustworthiness of the researcher to the community to counteract distrust historically marginalized groups report towards researchers (Goulds, 1996; Tucker, 1996). Given this is a vulnerable population due to their immigration status, perhaps only those with protected legal status may choose to participate in an online

survey. Thus, collecting data in-person may increase rapport and induce less intimidation or suspicion for undocumented individuals.

A third recommendation would be to consider a longitudinal study that measures acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity attitudes of the three generations of these immigrants. This approach may better capture the change, if any, for the first- and 1.5-generations or the lack thereof for the second-generation Liberians. A longitudinal approach may also more accurately show where, when, and how the differences between generations emerge. This knowledge would be helpful for designing interventions that enhance the academic, vocational, and relational development of this group. It may also help researchers identify coping strategies to support immigrant families experiencing intergenerational differences.

A fourth recommendation is to investigate coping strategies by adding a mental health assessment to understand approaches participants employ as they transition into the US as well as those strategies used across multiple generations. Investigating the difference in the three generations' acculturation and identity along with their coping style will add to the literature and provide insight for future support in clinical settings. Researchers should be cautious in utilizing existing mental health measures in research keeping in mind that individuals who are highly acculturated may share similar attitudes towards mental health than those who are not as acculturated based on their generational status.

In addition to what has been indicated, due to the dearth of research on Liberians, future studies can build on the present study by (a) exploring the impact of migration on Liberians and their children in the US, (b) examining Liberians' attitudes on seeking mental health support due to generation differences, (c) investigating the impact of first-generation Liberians reconstructing

their racial and ethnic identities, and (d) exploring the social influence on race and ethnicity on their overall outcomes in academic and vocational settings.

Finally, future researchers should explore how socio-demographics affect Liberians' acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity. The majority of the population in the present study were married, heterosexual, Christians, college-educated, and were legally residing in the US. It is important to understand if these demographics influenced participants' flexibility in terms of acculturation or identity. Along with the indicated suggestion, future researchers should also explore how the differences in acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity between these generations are impacting each other.

### **Implications for Clinicians**

Several important implications can be drawn from this study's findings for mental health clinicians. The clinician must be aware that differences do exist between generations of Liberians/Liberian Americans' acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity. These differences likely affect how Liberians perceive therapy and approach the therapeutic setting. For clinicians in all settings (e.g., private practice, universities, etc.), it is crucial to be mindful of imposing Western, Eurocentric values while working with Liberian/Liberian American clients. There is a high level of stigma related to mental illnesses and seeking mental health services among the African community (Nsamenang, 2014; Obasi & Leong, 2009). Due to these stigmas, clinicians must work to build rapport with individuals in the community by displaying genuine interest and curiosity for the community and their culture.

Once the client has bought into the idea of psychotherapy as another route to help with distress, the clinician must prepare their clients for what to expect in counseling during the informed consent process. Such preparation includes providing psychoeducation on the stages of

counseling, what happens in counseling, and explaining the role of the therapist and client (Ibrahim et al., 1997). Additionally, clinicians should explore cultural beliefs about therapy with clients due to individuals varying acculturation levels. It is possible that a first-generation Liberian immigrant may view therapy as invasive and display more hesitation and distrust for the process than their 1.5- or second-generation counterparts (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Saechao, 2012). It is imperative that clinicians refrain from making assumptions about a Liberian/Liberian American clients' experiences or imposing Eurocentric cultural values on them. For instance, if a client is presenting to therapy due to cultural conflicts with their family members, it is important to take into consideration acculturation or differences in racial identity and ethnic identity, as these intergenerational differences may create stress for the client and their family system. For example, rather than encouraging Liberian clients to "set boundaries" or "distance" from families, a culturally competent approach involves keeping in mind a collectivistic cultural framework (Hofstede et al., 2010; McCarthy, 2005; Oyserman et al., 2002). Research on collectivistic clinical approaches have shown that clients' values converge with counselor values in certain conditions (McCarthy, 2005). Therefore, if the client is from a collectivist culture and the counselor value orientation is individualism, interventions aiming to exercise individuation may cause more distress, interpersonal, and intrapersonal conflicts for the client (Hofstede et al., 2010; Oyserman et al., 2002; Williams, 2003). It might be more supportive to help clients explore what cultural norms, boundaries, and merging could look like for them.

Additionally, clinicians must understand that though first-, 1.5-, and second-generations are immersed in the dominant society culture when it comes to acculturation, first- and 1.5-generation Liberians may not be immersed in their ethnic society culture. Furthermore, clinicians should understand that while first- and second-generations may spend more time exploring their

ethnicity, 1.5-generations do not. However, all three generations (first, 1.5, and second) arrive at a resolution of their ethnicity. With this in mind, family therapy with participants as such may require clinicians to explore each individuals' experience and how they arrived at resolving what their identity means to them. Furthermore, clinicians can support families in therapy by highlighting the complexity of identity development due to individual characteristics, family dynamics, sociopolitical, and historical influence. This level of psychoeducation allows empathy from one generation to the next while also allowing space to process new information about individuals within a family unit.

Finally, the clinician must also consider the range of attitudes each generation carries relating to race and their personal experience. Those attitudes include differences between first- and 1.5-generations relating to their "pro-American identity" (Pre-Encounter Assimilation), differences between first and 1.5, as well as first and second relating to both Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred and Immersion-Emersion Anti-White. Similarly, first- and 1.5-generation and first- and second-generation Liberians also showed differences on the Internalization Afrocentricity and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive of the CRIS. By being aware of these differences between generations of Liberians/Liberian Americans, clinicians can increase connection and effectiveness of their therapeutic work with these clients. Clinicians can also show competency in working with this population and consequently helping to decrease mental health stigma and enhance mental health service utilization.

Furthermore, clinicians can increase outreach in marginalized communities and communities of color. Through increased visibility, clinicians can better assess for mental health stressors that are culturally relevant for these groups and be sensitive to intragroup differences that are present. Saechao et al. (2012) noted that because stress (e.g., discrimination,

acculturation, language barriers, parenting, etc.) are complicated by co-occurring mental health symptoms, it is important to highlight access to utilization of mental health services.

In addition to engaging in efforts to increase mental health service utilization for Liberians/Liberian Americans, it is important that counseling psychologists expand beyond their individual intervention and skills to incorporate advocacy efforts. Counseling psychologists can exercise client advocacy by adjusting their roles to the needs of the client (Vera & Speight, 2003). Doing such may include consulting and working to influence public policy that benefits immigrants, identifying and helping clients access other community resources such as legal assistance, particularly affordable immigration attorneys, employment agency, healthcare, or family support aid (Vera & Speight, 2003). Counseling psychologists' advocacy may also include connecting clients with other immigrant population for shared resources. For example, a psychologist working with a first-generation Liberian immigrant client who is concerned about the financial cost of exporting certain goods (e.g., food, clothing) to family back in Liberia may consider supporting the client with contacting various shipping companies or connecting the client with other immigrants in the community who are aware and knowledgeable of the needed resources. By advocating and adjusting their roles to the client's need, the psychologist is building rapport with the client and demonstrating care and respect for the client's collectivistic culture.

Overall, clinicians working with Liberian immigrants and their families should consider identity differences within the different generations. The exploration piece is central to supporting clients. Clinicians must understand that their role is to help their client explore their options through therapy and support them with developing their cultural identity. Exploration can be done with client by utilizing assessment tools or activities that will engage the client in

processing their presenting concerns. Additionally, the clinician role when working with Liberian/Liberian American families should be to assist them with understanding the various ways they see themselves versus their family perception of them, versus how the world sees them. By exploring and gain a better understanding these perceptions, clients may better recognize and mold a cultural identity that feels more tailored to them based on their unique experience.

### **Implications for Educators**

With respect to faculty and other educators, it is essential to diversify campus and other educational settings to include a cross generation of Black immigrant students with varying acculturation levels and ethnic backgrounds. Such diversity provides various perspectives on issues of multiculturalism and enriches campus experience around differences within and between groups. The present study found a difference between 1.5- and second-generation Liberian/Liberian Americans' exploration of their ethnic identity. That is, 1.5 Liberians did not explore their ethnicity, while second-generation engaged in exploration. Due to the dual identity of being African and Black in the US, it may be helpful for educators to ensure their curriculum is culturally representative of Africans and Black contributions in various disciplines. This is important because inclusion of more diverse perspectives in the curriculum may assist with Liberians' identity with exploration, affirmation, and resolution. Additionally, this type of inclusion can also be linked to emerging adulthood and exploration of identity for these immigrants.

As indicated in Okpalaoka's (2009) study, culturally inclusive pedagogy offers a balanced picture of students' ethnicity through the curriculum. Furthermore, educators must consider the influence mainstream US society often place on racial and ethnic minority groups to

conform and assimilate to mainstream culture—resulting in immigrants losing essential parts of their cultural identities and experiencing significant barriers when they do not assimilate and adopt US dominant cultural values. With such knowledge, educators can become advocates who seek to eradicate barriers by acknowledging the unique cultural values of various ethnic groups that are within the same racial classification. Educators can serve a key role in dismantling the monolithic belief of Blackness by actively inviting, engaging, and celebrating the differences of Blackness in the US educational institutions.

In addition, educators should consider the psychological distress 1.5- and second-generation Liberian students experience. These students may experience conflicts between their first-generation parents' push to promote traditional Liberian values such as community, cooperation, obedience, and subordination. At the same time, a Eurocentric approach may focus on competition, individualism, and encouragement to challenge and vocalize opposing perspectives. The opposite worldviews can be evident in the classroom. Therefore, educators must understand that due to these differences, students may unintentionally become silent and non-participatory in class.

In sum, future researchers, clinicians, and educators hold a key role in skewing how these immigrants not only perceive themselves, but how they are perceived by peers, and the general society at large. Researchers should invest in learning more about Liberian immigrants and their children in the US because this group is on the rise of West African immigrants in the US. Liberians have a close connection to the US, which increase their motivation to immigrate to the US. Furthermore, by investing in Liberians, future researchers can explore mental health across generations of this population as well as continue to investigate identity within and between generations. Subsequently, this investment will lead to a better understanding of the US Black



population. Regarding counseling psychologists and other mental health providers, working with Liberian immigrants and their families provide an opportunity to serve as an ally to a marginalized group as well as influence their views of what therapy is, and how it can empower a community. Finally, educators also serve advocates and agents of change in enriching the classroom narratives regarding what is taught and through whom lens are information shared.

### **Conclusion**

The current study explored differences in acculturation, ethnic identity, and racial identity in first-, 1.5-, and second-generation Liberian immigrants and their children. The findings from this study confirm that generations of Liberians within the same household can hold different views of the world in which they live—giving a different meaning to each of their experience, highlighting the importance of visibility and representation, even in what may appear monolithic. Therefore, it is important that mental health clinicians, educators, and other prominent groups become agents of change by exercising curiosity and inclusivity in their respective environments. Findings from this study can be critical to researchers, clinicians, and educators developing a better understanding of acculturation, race, and ethnicity in these three generations of Liberian/Liberian Americans due to the significant changes and stress they undergo in their transition to the US and learning their status as a racial minority. Additionally, these findings can help improve pathways for a better understanding of acculturation and mental health within Liberians and other Black West African immigrants, a population with arguably the least visibility in the counseling psychology literature.

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**Table 1**  
*Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants*

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Marital Status		
Single	49	25
Married	113	57.7
Divorced	24	12.2
Widowed	3	1.5
Living with someone	7	3.6
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	265	95.7
Gay	2	.7
Bisexual	9	3.2
Other (e.g., Trans)	1	.4
Reason for immigrating to US		
Education	49	27.7
Family Reunification	86	48.6
Work Opportunities	8	4.5
Other (e.g., civil war)	34	19.2
Language Spoken		
Liberian English	58	32.8
Standard American English	31	17.5
Both	86	48.6
Other (Tribal language)	2	1.1
Religion		
Christian	254	91.7
Muslim	10	3.6
Agnostic/Atheist	9	3.4
Other (e.g., spiritual)	4	1.4
Education		
Less than High School	71	25.6
High School	16	5.8
Some College	35	12.6



**Table 1 Continued**

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Two-year degree	18	6.5
Four-year degree	64	23.1
Education		
Professional degree	57	20.6
Doctorate	16	5.8
Family Income		
\$0 – \$14,100		4.1
\$14,101 – \$53, 700		33.9
\$53,701 – \$85,500		22.2
\$85,501 – \$163,300		29.8
\$163,301 – \$ 207,350		6.4
\$207, 351 – \$ 518,400		2.9
more than \$518,401		.6

**Table 2**

*Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliability Estimates between scores on EIS, CRIS, and SMAS*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. DSI	----												
2. ESI	-.193**	----											
3. EXP	.323**	.201**	----										
4. AFF	-.102	.097	.221**	----									
5. RES	.325**	.217**	.659**	.199**	----								
6. PA	.305**	-.043	-.057	-.287**	-.055	----							
7. PM	.046	-.005	-.034	-.264**	-.115	.332**	----						
8. PSH	-.374**	-.131*	-.402**	-.227**	-.575**	-.004	.210**	----					
9. IEAW	-.520**	.055	-.243**	-.043	-.367**	-.131*	.020	.529**	----				
10. IA	-.183**	.144	.027	-.028	-.037	-.051	.154*	.147*	.275**	----			
11. IMCI	.459**	-.025	.311**	.134*	.376**	-.013	-.156*	-.295**	-.396**	-.154*	----		
12. Age	.285**	-.118	.033	-.161*	.149*	.196*	.125	-.269**	-.395**	-.178*	.314**	----	
13. Time	.601*	-.186*	.264*	.044	.394**	.231**	-.027	-.350**	-.333*	-.011	.267**	.089	----
<i>M</i>	3.37	3.05	22.13	22.30	13.48	12.69	11.47	10.99	9.35	18.20	27.36	21.28	18.39
<i>SD</i>	.41	.59	4.89	2.45	3.02	6.16	6.13	6.81	5.22	6.08	4.84	9.52	11.99
Alphas	.77	.87	.85	.89	.61	.78	.87	.91	.89	.82	.77	.16	.16
Skewness	-0.69	-0.67	-0.52	-2.18	-1.00	0.85	0.91	1.02	1.06	0.14	-0.39	1.27	0.56
Kurtosis	-0.21	-0.63	-0.75	6.60	-0.08	0.37	0.22	0.08	0.13	-0.21	-0.30	3.41	-.111

Note: *N* varies between 249 and 277 because of missing data. Ethnic Identity subscales include EXP = Exploration, RES = Resolution; AFF = Affirmation. CRIS subscales include PA = Pre-Encounter Assimilation; PM = Pre-Encounter Miseducation; PSH = Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred; IEAW = Immersion- Emersion Anti-White; IA = Internalization Afrocentricity; IMCI = Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive. Acculturation subscales include DSI = Dominant Society Immersion; ESI = Ethnic Society Immersion. Age = age at immigration; Time = length of time lived in US. *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation, Alpha = Cronbach's alpha. Coefficients bolded for significance at \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01.

**Table 3**  
*Descriptive Statistics by Group: Generational Status*

SMAS, EIS, CRIS, Age, Time		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skew	Kurtosis	Alphas	<i>n</i>
<b>Acculturation</b>							
First-Generation						.75	
	DSI	3.52	0.32	-0.88	0.72		101
1.5-generation	ESI	3.10	0.49	-0.47	-0.69		101
						.63	
	DSI	3.13	0.51	-0.03	-1.28		63
	ESI	3.28	0.45	-1.43	1.48		63
Second-Generation						.79	
	DSI	3.35	0.33	-0.44	-0.39		85
	ESI	2.80	0.69	-0.15	-1.33		85
<b>Ethnic Identity</b>							
First-Generation						.84	
	EXP	23.04	4.82	-0.74	-0.47		119
	RES	14.52	2.09	-1.44	1.76		119
	AFF	22.07	2.52	-2.11	6.92		119
1.5-generation						.85	
	EXP	21.54	4.72	-0.29	-0.83		65
	RES	13.20	2.99	-0.64	-0.95		65
	AFF	22.80	1.80	-1.73	2.90		65
Second-Generation						.89	
	EXP	21.37	4.97	-0.46	-0.83		93
	RES	12.33	3.57	-0.51	-1.09		92
	AFF	22.27	2.71	-2.19	5.74		93
<b>Racial Identity</b>							
First-Generation						.73	
	PA	13.78	6.27	0.51	-0.33		107
	PM	11.89	6.47	0.94	0.40		107
	PSH	8.29	5.25	2.49	7.72		107
	IEAW	6.37	2.62	2.67	8.12		107
	IA	16.66	7.12	0.42	-0.77		105
	IMCI	29.16	4.29	-0.86	0.47		105
						.71	
	PA	10.93	5.24	1.18	1.37		63
	PM	11.33	5.39	0.46	-0.96		63
	PSH	12.76	6.78	0.35	-1.27		63
	IEAW	11.29	5.46	0.35	-1.05		63
	IA	18.92	4.24	-0.52	0.49		63
	IMCI	25.71	4.85	-0.15	0.03		63
Second-Generation						.81	
	PA	12.63	6.40	1.06	1.07		88
	PM	11.05	6.24	1.06	0.34		88
	PSH	13.03	7.41	0.53	-0.95		88
	IEAW	11.58	5.68	0.55	-0.58		88
	IA	19.52	5.47	0.44	0.67		88
	IMCI	26.40	4.79	-0.07	-0.28		88
Age		21.28	18.39	1.27	0.18	.16	177
Time		18.39	11.99	.57	-0.11	.16	177

Note: Ethnic Identity subscales include EXP = Exploration, RES = Resolution; AFF = Affirmation. CRIS subscales include PA = Pre-Encounter Assimilation; PM = Pre-Encounter Miseducation; PSH = Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred; IEAW = Immersion-Emersion Anti-White; IA = Internalization Afrocentricity; IMCI = Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive. Acculturation subscales include DSI = Dominant Society Immersion; ESI = Ethnic Society Immersion. Age = age at immigration; Time = length of time lived in US

**Table 4**  
*MANOVA Summary Table: Acculturation*

Test	Value	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	p	$\eta p^2$	power
Pillai's Trace	.240	16.79	4, 492	.000	.12	1.00
Wilks' Lambda	.774	16.77 <sup>b</sup>	4, 490	.000	.12	1.00
Hotellings's Trace	.275	16.76	4, 488	.000	.12	1.00
Roy's Largest Root	.169	20.84 <sup>c</sup>	2, 246	.000	.14	1.00

Note: b = Exact statistic. c = The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

**Table 5**  
*MANOVA Summary Table: Ethnic Identity*

Test	Value	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	p	$\eta p^2$	power
Pillai's Trace	.135	6.59	6, 544	.000	.07	.999
Wilks' Lambda	.866	6.72 <sup>b</sup>	6, 542	.000	.07	1.00
Hotellings's Trace	.152	6.85	6, 540	.000	.07	1.00
Roy's Largest Root	.137	12.43 <sup>c</sup>	3, 272	.000	.12	1.00

Note: b = Exact statistic. c = The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

**Table 6**  
*MANOVA Summary Table: Racial Identity*

Test	Value	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	p	$\eta p^2$	power
Pillai's Trace	.300	7.32	12, 498	.000	.15	1.00
Wilks' Lambda	.706	7.85 <sup>b</sup>	12, 496	.000	.16	1.00
Hotellings's Trace	.407	8.37	12, 494	.000	.17	1.00
Roy's Largest Root	.383	15.91 <sup>c</sup>	6, 249	.000	.28	1.00

Note: b = Exact statistic. c = The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

**Table 7***Descriptive Statistics by Group: Generational Status*

SMAS, EIS, CRIS, Age, Time		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
<b>Acculturation</b>				
First-Generation	DSI	3.52	0.32	96
	ESI	3.12	0.49	96
1.5 Generation	DSI	3.12	0.51	62
	ESI	3.28	0.45	62
<b>Ethnic Identity</b>				
First-Generation	EXP	23.00	4.77	113
	RES	14.51	2.12	113
	AFF	22.04	2.54	113
1.5 Generation	EXP	21.45	4.71	64
	RES	13.16	2.99	64
	AFF	22.78	1.81	64
<b>Racial Identity</b>				
First-Generation	PA	13.82	6.39	99
	PM	11.81	6.62	99
	PSH	8.29	5.41	99
	IEAW	6.42	2.71	99
	IA	16.99	7.14	99
	IMCI	29.23	4.27	99
1.5 Generation	PA	10.97	5.27	62
	PM	11.42	5.39	62
	PSH	12.89	6.76	62
	IEAW	11.39	5.45	62
	IA	19.09	7.14	62
	IMCI	25.56	4.74	62
Age		21.27	9.52	177
Time		18.39	11.99	177

Note: Ethnic Identity subscales include EXP = Exploration, RES = Resolution; AFF = Affirmation. CRIS subscales include PA = Pre-Encounter Assimilation; PM = Pre-Encounter Miseducation; PSH = Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred; IEAW = Immersion-Emersion Anti-White; IA = Internalization Afrocentricity; IMCI = Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive. Acculturation subscales include DSI = Dominant Society Immersion; ESI = Ethnic Society Immersion. Age = age at immigration; Time = length of time lived in US.

**Table 8**  
**MANCOVA Summary Table: Acculturation**

	Test	Value	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta p^2$	power
Age at immigration	Pillai's Trace	.006	.425 <sup>b</sup>	2, 153	.655	.006	.118
	Wilks' Lambda	.994	.425 <sup>b</sup>	2, 153	.655	.006	.118
	Hotellings's Trace	.006	.425 <sup>b</sup>	2, 153	.655	.006	.118
	Roy's Largest Root	.006	.425 <sup>b</sup>	2, 153	.655	.006	.118
Length in US	Pillai's Trace	.309	34.223 <sup>b</sup>	2, 153	.000	.309	1.00
	Wilks' Lambda	.691	34.223 <sup>b</sup>	2, 153	.000	.309	1.00
	Hotellings's Trace	.447	34.223 <sup>b</sup>	2, 153	.000	.309	1.00
	Roy's Largest Root	.447	34.223 <sup>b</sup>	2, 153	.000	.309	1.00
Gen Status	Pillai's Trace	.054	4.341 <sup>b</sup>	2, 153	.015	.054	.746
	Wilks' Lambda	.946	4.341 <sup>b</sup>	2, 153	.015	.054	.746
	Hotellings's Trace	.057	4.341 <sup>b</sup>	2, 153	.015	.054	.746
	Roy's Largest Root	.057	4.341 <sup>b</sup>	2, 153	.015	.054	.746

Note: a= design: Intercept + Age\_at\_immigration + Length\_in US + GenStatus \* Age\_at\_immigration \* Length\_in US. b = Exact statistic. c = The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

**Table 9**  
**MANCOVA Summary Table: Ethnic Identity**

	Test	Value	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta p^2$	power
Age at immigration	Pillai's Trace	.014	.786 <sup>b</sup>	3, 171	.503	.014	.217
	Wilks' Lambda	.986	.786 <sup>b</sup>	3, 171	.503	.014	.217
	Hotellings's Trace	.014	.786 <sup>b</sup>	3, 171	.503	.014	.217
	Roy's Largest Root	.014	.786 <sup>b</sup>	3, 171	.503	.014	.217
Length in US	Pillai's Trace	.125	8.135 <sup>b</sup>	3, 171	.000	.125	.991
	Wilks' Lambda	.875	8.135 <sup>b</sup>	3, 171	.000	.125	.991
	Hotellings's Trace	.143	8.135 <sup>b</sup>	3, 171	.000	.125	.991
	Roy's Largest Root	.143	8.135 <sup>b</sup>	3, 171	.000	.125	.991
Gen Status	Pillai's Trace	.032	1.861 <sup>b</sup>	3, 171	.138	.032	.477
	Wilks' Lambda	.968	1.861 <sup>b</sup>	3, 171	.138	.032	.477
	Hotellings's Trace	.033	1.861 <sup>b</sup>	3, 171	.138	.032	.477
	Roy's Largest Root	.033	1.861 <sup>b</sup>	3, 171	.138	.032	.477

Note: a= design: Intercept + Age\_at\_immigration + Length\_in US + GenStatus \* Age\_at\_immigration \* Length\_in US. b = Exact statistic. c = The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

**Table 10***MANCOVA Summary Table: Racial Identity*

	Test	Value	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	p	$\eta p^2$	power
Age at immigration	Pillai's Trace	.057	1.533 <sup>b</sup>	6, 152	.171	.057	.580
	Wilks' Lambda	.943	1.533 <sup>b</sup>	6, 152	.171	.057	.580
	Hotellings's Trace	.061	1.533 <sup>b</sup>	6, 152	.171	.057	.580
	Roy's Largest Root	.061	1.533 <sup>b</sup>	6, 152	.171	.057	.580
Length in US	Pillai's Trace	.157	4.735 <sup>b</sup>	6, 152	.000	.157	.988
	Wilks' Lambda	.843	4.735 <sup>b</sup>	6, 152	.000	.157	.988
	Hotellings's Trace	.187	4.735 <sup>b</sup>	6, 152	.000	.157	.988
	Roy's Largest Root	.187	4.735 <sup>b</sup>	6, 152	.000	.157	.988
Gen Status	Pillai's Trace	.115	3.296 <sup>b</sup>	6, 152	.004	.115	.926
	Wilks' Lambda	.885	3.296 <sup>b</sup>	6, 152	.004	.115	.926
	Hotellings's Trace	.130	3.296 <sup>b</sup>	6, 152	.004	.115	.926
	Roy's Largest Root	.130	3.296 <sup>b</sup>	6, 152	.004	.115	.926

Note: a= design: Intercept + Age\_at\_immigration + Length\_in US + GenStatus \* Age\_at\_immigration \* Length\_in US. b = Exact statistic. c = The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

## Appendix A: Human Subject Institutional Review Board Letter of Approval

# WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: April 1, 2020

To: Beverly Vandiver, Principal Investigator  
Breezie Gibson, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: IRB Project Number 20-03-12

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Examining the Social Attitudes of Liberian American Children and Adults” has been **approved** under the **exempt** category of review by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may **only** be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes to this project (e.g., ***add an investigator, increase number of subjects beyond the number stated in your application, etc.***). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation.

In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

**A status report is required on or prior to (no more than 30 days) March 31, 2021 and each year thereafter until closing of the study. The IRB will send a request.**

**When this study closes, submit the required Final Report found at <https://wmich.edu/research/forms>.**

**Note: All research data must be kept in a secure location on the WMU campus for at least three (3) years after the study closes.**



**Appendix B: Continual Human Subject Institutional Review Board Letter of Approval**

# WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: March 2, 2021

To: Samuel Beasley, Principal Investigator  
Breezie Gibson, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: WMU IRB Project Number 20-03-12

This letter will serve as confirmation that the changes to your research project titled “Examining the Social Attitudes of Liberian American Children and Adults” requested in your memo received February 14, 2021 (to remove Beverly Vandiver as PI and replace with Samuel Beasley) have been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

**Approval Termination:**

**March 31, 2022**

## Appendix C: Approval to Change Principal Investigator

# WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: March 2, 2021

To: Samuel Beasley, Principal Investigator  
Breezie Gibson, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: WMU IRB Project Number 20-03-12

This letter will serve as confirmation that the changes to your research project titled “Examining the Social Attitudes of Liberian American Children and Adults” requested in your memo received February 14, 2021 (to remove Beverly Vandiver as PI and replace with Samuel Beasley) have been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

**Approval Termination:**

**March 31, 2022**

## **Appendix D: Parent or Guardian Permission Form**

### **Parent or Guardian Permission Form**

**Western Michigan University**

**Department of Counselor Education & Counseling Psychology**

**Principal Investigator:** Beverly J. Vandiver  
**Student Investigator:** Breezie J. Gibson  
**Title of Study:** Examining the Social Attitudes of Liberian American children and adults

**STUDY SUMMARY:** This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you decide whether you want your child to take part in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The purpose of the research is to: explore the social attitudes of Liberian adults and their children. If you give permission for your child to take part in the research, your child will be asked to share their demographic information and share their social attitudes about how they see themselves. Your child's time in the study will take 30 minutes. Possible risk and costs to your child for taking part in the study may be discomfort from answering sensitive questions. Potential benefits of your child taking part in the study is that they might find the questions interesting about their social attitudes and stimulate questions in talking to others about them. Another benefit to your child participating in this study is that the general findings may be helpful for educators, social support providers, and policy makers on how they can better understand and assist Liberians and their children living in the US. The alternative to taking part in the research study is not to allow your child participate.

Your child is invited to participate in this research project titled " *Examining the Social Attitudes Liberian American children and adults* " and the following information in this consent form will provide more detail about the research study. Please ask any questions if you need more clarification and to assist you in deciding if you wish your child to participate in the research study. You are not giving up any of your legal rights or that of your child by agreeing to take part in this research or by signing this consent form. After all of your questions have been answered and the parent permission form reviewed, if you decide to allow your child to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign this parental permission form.

#### **What are we trying to find out in this study?**

The purpose of this study is to understand the social attitudes of Liberian adults and their children living in the US.

#### **Who can participate in this study?**

Participants must be 12 years or older. Participants will be anyone who was born in Liberia and came to the U.S. or anyone who was born in the U.S. but has at least one parent who was born in Liberia.

#### **Where will this study take place?**

The study will occur across the U.S. cities in which a number of Liberians has settled, such as Columbus, Ohio; Wooster, Massachusetts; and the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia area (DMV).

**What is the time commitment for participating in this study?**

The time commitment will be for one session of only 15-30 minutes.

**What will your child be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?**

Your child will first be provided a brief description of the purpose of the study, followed by instructions about the informed consent and answering any general questions about the study. If your child agrees to participate, your child will then be asked to complete four measures that will ask about their background and their various social attitudes as a result of living in the US. They will be informed that there are no right or wrong answers, just what they believe or have experienced.

**What information is being measured during the study?**

What will be measured is your background and your social attitudes about various areas of living in the U.S.

**What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?** No risk is expected by your child participating in the study. If you have any questions prior to or during the study, you may contact *Breezie J. Gibson* at **614-531-7330**.

**What are the benefits of participating in this study?** There are no direct benefits to your child.

**Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?**

There are no costs associated with participating in this study, except you and your child's time.

**Is there any compensation for participating in this study?**

Participants will have a chance to win one of three gift cards (Target, \$15; iTunes/Apple store, \$15; Visa, \$25) upon completion of the measures and entering their names in the drawing.

**Who will have access to the information collected during this study?**

The Principal Investigator and the Student Investigator will have access to the information. However, your child response will be completely anonymous. Your child will be asked to not put their name on any of the measures. All of their responses will be confidential. This study may be presented at a conference or published in a journal. However, the information will be based on a summary of everyone who has participated, not on one person.

**What will happen to my child's information collected for this research project after the study is over?**

Your child's information will be kept at WMU in the principal investigator's office in a lock cabinet. The PI will be the only person with access to the locked file. Your child's information

will be retained and converted to an electronic dataset, and encrypted on a USB drive/online storage. Only the PI and SI will have access your child's information. The data and dataset will be kept for a minimum of three years at WMU after the study. Your child's information will not be used by or distributed to investigators for other research.

**What if you or your child want to stop participating in this study?**

You or your child can choose to stop your child's participation in the study at anytime for any reason. You or your child will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your child's participation. If you choose to stop your child's participation or they choose to stop, they will not be eligible to enter their name for a gift card. Your child must complete 95% of the measures in order to be eligible for the drawing.

The investigator can also decide to stop your child's participation in the study without your or your child's consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact Beverly J. Vandiver at 269-387-0709 or the Breezie J. Gibson at 614-531-7330. You may also contact the Chair, Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (WMU IRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

-----  
I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to allow my child to take part in this study.

---

Please Print Your Name

---

Participant's signature

---

Date

## **Appendix E: Assent Form**

### **Western Michigan University Counselor Education & Counseling Psychology**

**Principal Investigator:** Beverly J. Vandiver, PhD  
**Student Investigator:** Breezie J. Gibson, MA  
**Title of Study:** Examining the Social Attitudes of Liberian American Children and Adults

You are invited to be in this research project titled "*Examining the Social Attitudes of Liberian American Children and Adults*"

#### **Why are we doing this study?**

We are doing a research study about who you are and how you see yourself. A research study is a special way to find out about something.

#### **Why am I being asked to be in the study?**

We are inviting you to be in the study because of your age (12-17 years), where you were born (US or Liberia), or one of your parents being a Liberian.

#### **What if I have questions?**

You can ask questions if you do not understand any part of the study. If you have questions later that you don't think of now, you can talk to me again or call me (614-531-7330).

#### **If I am in the study what will happen to me?**

If you decide that you want to be part of this study, you will be asked to take 30 minutes of your time to complete the study by reading and following all the directions carefully and filling in answers that applies only to you.

#### **Will I be hurt if I am in the study?**

There are some things about this study you should know. You will be asked to take your time and read the directions carefully. It could take up to 30 minutes for you to finish answering all the questions, you might feel uncomfortable about some of the questions, and you might not know all the answers. These things are okay. There are no right or wrong answers, just what you think. That is what we are interested in: What you think.

#### **Will the study help me?**

If you are in the study it may not help you to get better or benefit you. The study may help us, your teachers, and other professionals (doctors, counselors) to have a better understanding of who you are and how to better support you and your family. But we don't know for sure that these things will happen.

#### **Do I have to be in this study?**

You do not have to be in this study, if you do not want to be. If you decide that you don't want to be in the study after we begin, that's OK too. Nobody will be angry or upset. We are discussing the study with your parents and you should talk to them about it too.

**What happens after the study?**

When we are finished with this study we will write a report about what was learned. This report will not include your name or that you were in the study.

**Assent:**

If you decide you want to be in this study, please print/write your name. If you decide that you don't want to be in the study, even if you have started in the study, then all you have to do is tell us you want to stop.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Print your name) would like to be in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date of assent)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of person who obtained assent)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature of person who obtained assent and Date)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Principal Investigator name)

\_\_\_\_\_ (PI signature and Date)

## **Appendix F: Consent Form**

### **Western Michigan University Department of Counselor Education & Counseling Psychology**

**Principal Investigator:** Beverly J. Vandiver  
**Student Investigator:** Breezie J. Gibson  
**Title of Study:** Examining the Social Attitudes of Liberian American Children and Adults

**STUDY SUMMARY:** This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you decide whether you want to take part in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The purpose of the research is to: explore the social attitudes of Liberian adults and their children. Breezie J. Gibson will serve as the Student Investigator for this dissertation for the requirements of a doctor of philosophy. If you take part in the research, you will be asked to provide some personal information as well as read and follow directions to complete four measures that will ask you to respond based only on your social attitudes and experiences as a result of living in the US. Your time for the study will take 30 minutes. Possible risk and costs to you for taking part in the study may be discomfort from answering sensitive questions. Potential incentive for taking part in the study is getting a chance to win one of three gift cards. Your alternative to taking part in the research study is not to take part in it.

You are invited to participate in this research project titled “*Examining the Social Attitudes of Liberian American Children and Adults.*” The following information in this consent form will provide more detail about the research study. Please ask any questions if you need more clarification and to assist you in deciding if you wish to participate in the research study. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by agreeing to take part in this research or by signing this consent form. After all of your questions have been answered and the consent document reviewed, if you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign this consent form.

#### **What are we trying to find out in this study?**

The purpose of this study is to understand the social attitudes of Liberian adults and children living in the U.S.

#### **Who can participate in this study?**

Participants must be 12 years or older. Participants will be anyone who was born in Liberia and came to the U.S. or anyone who was born in the US but has at least one parent who was born in Liberia.

#### **Where will this study take place?**

The study will take place in two ways, one is online electronically (Qualtrics), and the second is in person by focusing on US cities where there is a critical mass of Liberians living, such as the following but not exclusive: Columbus, Ohio; Wooster, Massachusetts; and the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia area (DMV). The SI will travel to these locations to collect data.



**What is the time commitment for participating in this study?**

The time commitment will be for one session of only 30 minutes.

**What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?**

You will first be provided a brief description of the purpose of the study, followed by instructions about the informed consent and answering any general questions about the study. You will then be asked to complete four measures that will ask about your background and your various social attitudes as a result of living in the US. There are no right or wrong answers, just what you believe or have experienced.

**What information is being measured during the study?**

What will be measured is your background and your social attitudes about various experience of living in the US.

**What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?**

Risk of participating in this study is that some participants may experience mild discomfort in answering questions about their racial attitudes, ethnic attitudes, or acculturation. There is a chance that some individuals may also experience some mild discomfort when completing the demographic form. These risks will be minimized in three ways: (a) assuring participants that various thoughts are expected and that we are interested in their opinions; (b) highlighting the information on the consent about contacting the PI/SI or HSIRB; and (c) reminding them once they complete the study about who to contact if they have further questions or concerns.

**What are the benefits of participating in this study?**

One benefit is that you might find the questioning interesting about your social attitudes and stimulate questions in talking to others about them. Another benefit to participating in this study is that the general findings may be helpful for educators, social support providers, and policy makers on how they can better understand and assist Liberians and their children living in the US.

**Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?**

There are no costs associated with participating in this study, except your time.

**Is there any compensation for participating in this study?**

Participants will have a chance to win one of three gift cards (Target, \$15; iTunes/App store, \$15; Visa, \$25) on completion of the measures and entering their names in the drawing.

**Who will have access to the information collected during this study?**

The Principal Investigator and the Student Investigator will have access to the information. However, your replies will be completely anonymous. You are asked to not put your name on any of the measures. All of your responses will be confidential. This study may be presented at a conference or published in a journal. However, the information will be based on a summary of everyone who has participated, not on one person.

**What will happen to my information collected for this research after the study is over?**

Your information will be kept at WMU in the principal investigator's office in a lock cabinet. The PI will be the only person with access to the locked file. Your information will be retained and converted to an electronic dataset, and encrypted on a USB drive/online storage. Only the PI and SI will have access your information. The data and dataset will be kept for a minimum of three years at WMU after the study. Your information will not be used by or distributed to investigators for other research.

**What if you want to stop participating in this study?**

You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. If you choose to stop, you will not be eligible to enter your name for a gift card. You must complete all the measures in order to be eligible for the drawing.

The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact Beverly J. Vandiver at 269-387-0709 or the Breezie J. Gibson at 614-531-7330. You may also contact the Chair, Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (WMU IRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

-----  
I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

---

Please Print Your Name

---

Participant's signature

---

Date

## **Appendix G: Initial Recruitment Email**

Hello! My name is Breezie J. Gibson, I was born in Monrovia, Liberia and came to the US when I was 12 years old. Prior to coming to the US, I lived in Accra, Ghana for two years.

I am currently a doctoral student (working on completing my PhD) in Counseling Psychology at Western Michigan University. I would like to invite you to participate in a study that will assist me in learning about Liberians social attitudes and experiences of living in the US.

To be eligible to participate in this study, you must (a) identify as first-generation, 1.5, or second-generation Liberian, (b) be a US citizen, or hold a permanent resident status [Green Card] or, (c) have lived in the US for a minimum of two years. A first generation is anyone who came to the US as an Adult (19 years or older). A 1.5-generation is anyone who come to the US as an adolescent (between ages 12-18 years) or younger. A second-generation is anyone who was born in the US with at least one parent who was born in Liberia.

The study consists of answering four measures and is anticipated to take approximately 15-20 minutes. For the completion of the study and your time, there is an opportunity to enter your name into a drawing for one of three gift cards (\$ 15 iTunes, \$25 Visa, or a \$15 Target). If you are interested in participating, kindly inform [community leader name] who will direct you to where I will be located in the building or stay after [community event].

For questions or more information about this study, please feel free to contact the student investigator, Breezie J. Gibson, at breezie.j.gibson@wmich.edu or (614) 531-7330. You may also contact the principal investigator, Dr. Beverly J. Vandiver, at Beverly.j.vandiver@wmich.edu, or (269) 387-0709.

Thank you for your time and consideration in assisting me with this effort.

Appendix H: Recruitment Flyer



**Are you a Liberian who  
was born in Liberia or  
the US? Are you 12 years  
or older**

If your answer is **YES**, please click on the link  
([https://wmich.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV  
\\_ctJwMqR0m13jTtb](https://wmich.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ctJwMqR0m13jTtb)) to complete a short  
survey that will help bring visibility and  
better understanding of Liberians and their  
children who are living in the US.  
**You could win a Target, Visa, or Apple  
store gift card.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE FEEL FREE TO  
CONTACT BREEZIE J. GIBSON  
614-531-7330  
BREEZIE.J.GIBSON@WMICH.EDU

## **Appendix I: Demographic Questionnaire**

### **Instructions**

To assist me in making sure the information you provide is helpful, it is important that you complete the survey without assistance from others. It is also important that you do not engage in anything else while completing the survey. You may experience the questions as redundant, this is to ensure you are giving the study your attention. The study may also be easier to complete using a smart phone or a fast internet connection. Thank you for your assistance and contribution to improving the Liberian community in the US.

### **Criteria**

Where were you born?

- ☐ Liberia
- ☐ United States
- ☐ Other-please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Have you lived in the US for 2 years or more?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### **Section I**

In this section, I am asking for your background information so that I can better understand your responses. Please read carefully and answer all questions.

1. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other- Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

2. Sexual Orientation

- ☐ Heterosexual
- ☐ Gay
- ☐ Lesbian
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Other- Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

3. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

4. My generational Status is... ☐ First-generation (1<sup>st</sup>)- Born in Liberia but came to the US when I was 18 years or older ☐ 1.5 generation - Born in Liberia but came to the US when I

was between 12-17 years old o Second-generation (2<sup>nd</sup>)- Born in the US but have parent who were born in Liberia o Other – Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

5. I identify primarily as...(select the option that best applies to you. Select only one option).
- ☐ African
  - ☐ Hispanic Black
  - ☐ African American
  - ☐ Multi-Racial
  - ☐ Black
  - ☐ West Indian/Caribbean Black
  - ☐ Other- Please specify \_\_\_\_\_
6. I identify primarily my nationality as...(select the option that best applies to you. Select only one option).
- ☐ Liberian
  - ☐ American
  - ☐ Liberian American
  - ☐ Other- please specify \_\_\_\_\_
7. How old were you when you came to the US? \_\_\_\_\_ years-old (ex: 12 years-old).
8. What was your primary reason for immigrating to the US?
- ☐ Education
  - ☐ Family Reunification
  - ☐ Work Opportunities
  - ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
9. My current status as a resident is...(select only one option). Please keep in mind that your responses are anonymous.
- ☐ United States citizen
  - ☐ Permanent Resident of the US (Green Card)
  - ☐ Visitor
  - ☐ Other-please specify \_\_\_\_\_

If you were **NOT** born in the United States, please answer questions **10-13**.

10. Country of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

11. Country of Citizenship \_\_\_\_\_

12. Native Language
- ☐ Liberian dialect (Liberian English)
  - ☐ Standard American English
  - ☐ Both

o Other-please specify \_\_\_\_\_

13. How long have you lived in the United States? \_\_\_\_ years

14. How often do you visit Liberia? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Do you plan to move back to Liberia permanently in the future?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16. What is your religious affiliation?

- ☐ Christian
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Unaffiliated (i.e., atheist or agnostic)
- ☐ Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

17. My highest educational level is...(select only one option).

Less than high school	Professional degree
High school graduate	Doctorate
Some college	
Two-year degree	
Four-year degree	

## Section II

18. My relationship status is...(select only one option).

- ☐ Single (never married)
- ☐ Married o Divorced
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Living with someone

19. What is the total number of children you have? \_\_\_\_\_

20. Are you currently employed or prior to COVID-19, were you employed?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Retired o Other-please specify \_\_\_\_\_

21. What is your current occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

22. On average, how many hours do you work per week (ex: 0, 20, 30, or 40) \_\_\_\_\_

23. What is the best estimate of your annual household income before taxes?

Between \$0 and \$14,100	Between \$163,301 and \$207,350
Between \$14,101 and \$53,700	Between \$207,351 and \$518,400
Between \$53,701 and \$85,500	More than \$518,401
Between \$85,501 and \$163,300	



## Appendix J: Ethnic Identity Scale

### Ethnic Identity Scale (Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bámaca-Gómez, 2004)

The U.S. is made up of people of various ethnicities. Ethnicity refers to cultural traditions, beliefs, and behaviors that are passed down through generations. Some examples of the ethnicities that people may identify with are Mexican, Cuban, Nicaraguan, Chinese, Taiwanese, Filipino, Jamaican, African American, Haitian, Italian, Irish, and German. In addition, some people may identify with more than one ethnicity. When you are answering the following questions, we'd like you to think about what YOU consider your ethnicity to be.

Please write what you consider to be your ethnicity here \_\_\_\_\_ and refer to this ethnicity as you answer the questions below.

	Does not describe me at all	Describes me a little	Describes me well	Describes me very well
1. My feelings about my ethnicity are mostly negative.	1	2	3	4
2. I have not participated in any activities that would teach me about my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4
3. I am clear about what my ethnicity means to me.	1	2	3	4
4. I have experienced things that reflect my ethnicity, such as eating food, listening to music, and watching movies.	1	2	3	4
5. I have attended events that have helped me learn more about my ethnicity	1	2	3	4
6. I have read books/magazines/newspapers or other materials that have taught me about my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4
7. I feel negatively about my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4
8. I have participated in activities that have exposed me to my ethnicity	1	2	3	4
9. I wish I were of a different ethnicity	1	2	3	4
10. I am not happy with my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4
11. I have learned about my ethnicity by doing things such as reading (books, magazines, newspapers), searching the internet, or keeping up with current events.	1	2	3	4
12. I understand how I feel about my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4
13. If I could choose, I would prefer to be of a different ethnicity.	1	2	3	4
14. I know what my ethnicity means to me.	1	2	3	4
15. I have participated in activities that have taught me about my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4
16. I dislike my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4
17. I have a clear sense of what my ethnicity means to me.	1	2	3	4

## Appendix K: Cross Racial Identity Scale

### Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) (Vandiver et al., 2000)

Instructions: Read each item and indicate to what degree it reflects your own thoughts and feelings, using the 7-point scale below. There are no right or wrong answers. Base your responses on your opinion at the present time. To ensure that your answers can be used, please respond to the statements as written, and place your numerical response on the line provided to the left of each question.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree

Sample items from the CRIS and their respective domains:

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. “I am not so much a member of a racial group, as I am an American” (Pre-Encounter Assimilation).

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. “Blacks place more emphasis on having a good time than on hard work” (Pre-Encounter Miseducation).

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. “I go through periods when I am down on myself because I am Black” (Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred).

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. “I have a strong feeling of hatred and disdain for all White people” (Immersion-Emersion Anti-White).

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. “I see and think about things from an Afrocentric perspective” (Internalization Afrocentricity).

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. “As a multiculturalist, I am connected to many groups (Hispanics, Asian Americans, Whites, Jews, Gays & Lesbians, etc.)” (Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive).

## Appendix L: Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale

### Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale

Below are a number of statements that evaluate changes that occur when people interact with others of different cultures or ethnic groups. For questions that refer to “country of origin” or “native country,” please refer to the country from which your family originally came. For questions referring to “native language,” please refer to the language spoken where your family originally came.

	False	Partly False	Partly True	True
1. I understand English, but I’m not fluent in English.	1	2	3	4
2. I am informed about current affairs in the United States.	1	2	3	4
3. I speak my native language with my friends and acquaintance from my Country or origin.	1	2	3	4
4. I have never learned to speak the language of my native country.	1	2	3	4
5. I feel totally comfortable with (Anglo) American people.	1	2	3	4
6. I eat traditional foods from my native culture.	1	2	3	4
7. I have many (Anglo) American acquaintances.	1	2	3	4
8. I feel comfortable speaking my native language.	1	2	3	4
9. I am informed about current affairs in my native country.	1	2	3	4
10. I know how to read and write in my native language.	1	2	3	4
11. I feel at home in the United States.	1	2	3	4
12. I attend social functions with people from my native country.	1	2	3	4
13. I feel accepted by (Anglo) Americans.	1	2	3	4
14. I speak my native language at home.	1	2	3	4
15. I regularly read magazines of my ethnic group.	1	2	3	4
16. I know how to speak my native language.	1	2	3	4
17. I know how to prepare (Anglo) American foods.	1	2	3	4
18. I am familiar with the history of my native country.	1	2	3	4

19. I regularly read an American newspaper.	1	2	3	4
20. I like to listen to music of my ethnic group.	1	2	3	4
21. I like to speak my native language.	1	2	3	4
22. I feel comfortable speaking English	1	2	3	4
23. I speak English at home.	1	2	3	4
24. I speak my native language with my spouse or partner	1	2	3	4
25. When I pray, I use my native language.	1	2	3	4
26. I attend social functions with (Anglo) American people.	1	2	3	4
27. I think in my native language.	1	2	3	4
28. I stay in close contact with family members and relatives in my native country	1	2	3	4
29. I am familiar with important people in American history.	1	2	3	4
30. I think in English.	1	2	3	4
31. I speak English with my spouse.	1	2	3	4
32. I like to eat American foods.	1	2	3	4